

Metaphysics & Epistemology

Winter semester 2024–25

The course deals with two central branches of philosophy, metaphysics and epistemology. It aims to acquaint students with recent and contemporary approaches to various philosophical issues that come under those branches. The character of the course is systematic rather than historical; there is limited coverage of philosophers who lived before the last seventy years. After an introduction, the course discusses some topics in metaphysics, then proceeds to the issue of truth (which comes under both metaphysics and epistemology) and subsequently discusses some topics in epistemology.

We will cover the following issues:

1. **Introduction:** What are metaphysics and epistemology? A survey of those branches.
2. **The problem of universals.** What are universals? Do they exist? If so, where are they?
3. **Causation.** What is it for an event to cause another event?
4. **Freedom and determinism.** Is it possible that our world is deterministic and yet, at least sometimes, we decide and act freely?
5. **Personal identity over time.** What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for a person who exists at a time t and a person who exists at a later time t' to be one and the same?
6. **Necessity and possible worlds.** The concepts of necessity and possibility. The ontology of possible worlds (mainly, D. Lewis's theory about them).
7. **Truth (A).** The correspondence theory of truth and the coherence view on truth.
8. **Truth (B).** Pragmatism about truth, the redundancy theory and minimalism about truth.
9. **Scepticism.** Kinds of scepticism, sceptical arguments, and some answers to them.
10. **Definitions of knowledge.** What are the necessary and sufficient conditions in order for someone to know that something is the case?
11. **Justification of beliefs.** When is a belief justified and not arbitrary?
12. **Induction.** What is induction? The old and the new riddle of induction.
13. **A priori knowledge.** What is a priori knowledge? Is it possible? If so, what can we know a priori?

Reading list:

Textbooks:

Bonjour, L. (2009) *Epistemology: Classic Problems and Contemporary Responses*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.

Lowe, E.J. (2002) *A Survey of Metaphysics*, Oxford: OUP.

Ney, A. (2014) *Metaphysics: an introduction*, Routledge.

Anthologies:

Crane, T. & K. Farkas (eds) (2004) *Metaphysics: A Guide and Anthology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Online resources:

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://www.iep.utm.edu>

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu>

Bibliographic list:

2. Universals

T. Crane. "Universals". In *Philosophy: A Guide through the Subject*; ed. A. Grayling; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

D. Armstrong. *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1989.

A. Oliver. "The Metaphysics of Properties". *Mind* 105 (1996).

WVO Quine. (1948) "On What There Is". *Review of Metaphysics*.

3. Causation

T. Crane. "Causation". In *Philosophy: A Guide through the Subject*; ed. A. Grayling; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

D. Davidson. "Causal Relations". In his *Essays on Actions and Events*; 2nd edition; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001. Also in *Causation*; eds E. Sosa and M. Tooley; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

D. Lewis. "Causation". In his *Philosophical Papers*; vol. II; New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

J. Kim. "Causes and Counterfactuals". In *Causation*; eds E. Sosa και M. Tooley; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

S. Psillos. *Causation and Explanation*. Chesham: Acumen Press, 2002.

4. Freedom and Determinism

A. J. Ayer. "Freedom and Necessity". In his *Philosophical Essays*; London: Macmillan, 1954.

P. Van Inwagen. "The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism". *Philosophical Studies* 27 (1975).

H. Frankfurt. "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility". *Journal of Philosophy* 66 (1969).

T. Honderich. *How Free Are You? The Determinism Problem*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. (Short book for the wider public.)

Ayer's and Van Inwagen's papers are included in *Free Will*; ed. G. Watson; New York: Oxford University Press, 1982. Frankfurt's paper can also be found in the second edition of Watson's *Free Will* (2003).

5. Personal Identity over Time

H. Noonan. *Personal Identity*. London: Routledge, 1989. (A survey. Choose what to read!)

B. Williams. "The Self and the Future". In his *Problems of the Self: Philosophical Papers 1956–1972*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973.

D. Parfit. "Personal Identity". *Philosophical Review* 80 (1971).

D. Parfit. *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984. Part 3.

6. Necessity and Possible Worlds

D. Lewis. *On the Plurality of Worlds*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986. Sections 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.4, 4.1 and 4.2.

A. Plantinga. *The Nature of Necessity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974. Chaps 1 and 4.

7–8. Truth

S. Haack. *Philosophy of Logics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. Chap. 7.

P. Engel. *Truth*. London: Routledge, 2002.

L. Wittgenstein. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Translated by D. Pears and B. McGuinness. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961. Mainly propositions that begin with 1 and 2. (The *Tractatus* should be read in conjunction with one of the good books that explain it. One of them is: R. Fogelin; *Wittgenstein*; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976; chaps 1–4.)
J. L. Austin. “Truth”. *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 24 (1950).
P. Horwich. *Truth*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. Chaps 1 and 7.

9. Scepticism

J. Dancy. *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1985. Chap. 1.
A. Grayling. “Scepticism”. In *Philosophy: A Guide through the Subject*; ed. A. Grayling; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

10. What Is Knowledge?

J. Dancy. *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1985. Chap. 2.
A. Morton. *A Guide through the Theory of Knowledge*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997. Chap. 6.
L. BonJour. *Epistemology: Classic Problems and Contemporary Responses*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002. Chap. 3.
E. Gettier. “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”. *Analysis* 23 (1963).
R. Nozick. “Knowledge and Scepticism”. In *Perceptual Knowledge*; ed. J. Dancy; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
B. Garrett. “Nozick on Knowledge”. *Analysis* 43 (1983).

11. Justification of Beliefs

S. Sturgeon. “Knowledge”. In *Philosophy: A Guide through the Subject*; ed. A. Grayling; vol. 1; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. 3
L. BonJour. *Epistemology: Classic Problems and Contemporary Responses*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002. Chap. 9.

12. Induction

D. Papineau. “Induction and its Problems”. In *Philosophy: A Guide through the Subject*; ed. A. Grayling; vol. 1; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
J. Dancy. *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1985. Chap. 13.
L. BonJour. *Epistemology: Classic Problems and Contemporary Responses*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002. Chap. 4.
N. Goodman. *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast*. 4th edition. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983.

13. A Priori Knowledge

J. Dancy. *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1985. Chap. 14.
L. BonJour. *Epistemology: Classic Problems and Contemporary Responses*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002. Chap. 5.
W. V. O. Quine. “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”. In his *From a Logical Point of View*; 2nd edition, revised; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980.
P. Boghossian και C. Peacocke. *New Essays on the A Priori*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000. (One can read the introduction and then go on with some of the papers that are included. I would recommend P. Horwich’s paper.)