



School of Humanities and Languages

**ARTS 2360, Truth and Belief
Semester 1, 2014**

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1. Course Staff and Contact Details			
Course Convenor			
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Consultation Time			
Name		Room	
Phone		Email	
Consultation Time			

2. Course Details	
Units of Credit (UoC)	6
Course Description	<p>This is an intermediate course in metaphysics and epistemology. Traditionally, these are regarded as probably the two most central areas of philosophy. (The first half of the course will be on metaphysics; the second half will be on epistemology.) Philosophy will not have every answer to every question about the nature of reality. But there are some distinctively philosophical questions, to which there are distinctively philosophical answers. And one of the marks of their being philosophical is their being subject to a particular kind of questioning.</p> <p>Metaphysics is the philosophical study of reality. We will focus on such traditional metaphysical topics as these: what it is to have a free will (if indeed anyone ever does); whether there is, or even could be, a supremely good and knowing and powerful god – especially given the apparent suffering in the world; whether there is any meaning to human life; whether there is any harm in death as such; and what makes two different individual things able to be examples of one <i>kind</i> of thing.</p> <p>Epistemology is the philosophical study of knowledge and conceptually related phenomena. We will focus on such traditional epistemological topics as these: what it is for a thought or claim to be true; what it is for a thought or claim to be rationally well supported; what it is for a thought or claim to be knowledge; what it is to have knowledge via the senses; what it</p>

	is to have knowledge purely via reason; and whether it might actually be impossible for us ever to have any knowledge or rational support at all.	
Course Aims	1.	To become familiar with some central philosophical puzzles and the methods available for addressing them.
	2.	To develop the skills involved in carefully reading philosophical texts.
	3.	To acquire, or begin to acquire, a recognizably philosophical attitude, i.e. a mixture of intellectual curiosity and resistance to dogmatism.
Student Learning Outcomes	1.	Demonstrate knowledge of core metaphysical and epistemological problems.
	2.	Learn to identify different types of argument and evaluate their cogency. Demonstrate competency in paraphrasing arguments and weighing counterexamples to them.
	3.	Acquire the skills of writing a clear, coherent and ably argued paper.
Graduate Attributes	1.	Critical thinking and reasoning skills.
	2.	Problem solving skills.
	3.	Creative skills.

3. Learning and Teaching Rationale

Philosophy is a discipline within which there is much critical debate. This can be a way of showing respect for someone's ideas. It can also be about what might appear to be the simplest aspects of an issue. For it is all too easy to take for granted — as being quite clear and simple — much that is actually not so clear or simple. A great deal of philosophical discussion thus tries to clarify questions, before offering and assessing answers to them. In this class we will aim to become better at posing, *and* at answering, some fundamental metaphysical and epistemological questions. Skills of understanding, analysing, reasoning, and imagining will be called upon — and strengthened, hopefully.

4. Teaching Strategies

The course will be taught via a combination of guided and shared inquiry. In other words, it will be a seminar, where the standard lecturing format is allowed to mix a little with the format of a tutorial. The group size is capped at 60 students, and hopefully this will make things a little more familiar and friendly. Each meeting will be structured around my presenting a core thread of material, covering the main issues, claims and concepts of the topic for that week. Students will be encouraged to reflect critically and imaginatively upon those issues, claims, and concepts, and to participate in an atmosphere of inquiry — *active learning*.

This opportunity to improve your ability to think well and philosophically will also place more *responsibility* upon you to do so. It will be up to you to pay attention, to be ready for potentially surprising changes of direction in discussion (always knowing that I will not allow these to divert us too far from the day's main questions), and to note important points without my always having to say which are important points.

Note that you are never required to agree with what you read for the course. But if you do disagree with it, you should think of *good reasons* for why, in your view, it is mistaken.

5. Course Assessment

Assessment Task	Length	Weight	Learning Outcomes Assessed	Graduate Attributes Assessed	Due Date
Exam	TBA	50%	All	All	Formal examination period
Essay	2500 words	40%	All	All	April 16th
Participation	N/A	10%	1-3	All	ongoing

Please Note: In addition to fulfilling the above assessment requirements, students are expected to attend at least 80% of their lectures and tutorials in order to pass the course.

Formal Examination

This course has a formal examination which will be scheduled in the formal examination period from 13 – 30 June 2014. Students are expected to give their studies priority and this includes making themselves available for the entire examination period. Travel commitments made prior to the publication of the final examination timetable are not a valid reason for alternate assessment.

Grades

All results are reviewed at the end of each semester and may be adjusted to ensure equitable marking across the School.

The proportion of marks lying in each grading range is determined not by any formula or quota system, but by the way that students respond to assessment tasks and how well they meet the objectives of the course. Nevertheless, since higher grades imply performance that is well above average, the number of distinctions and high distinctions awarded in a typical course is relatively small. At the other extreme, on average 6.1% of students do not meet minimum standards and a little more (8.6%) in first year courses. For more information on the grading categories see

<https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/academiclife/assessment/GuideToUNSWGrades.html>

Submission of Assessment Tasks

Assignments which are submitted to the School Assignment Box must have a properly completed School Assessment Coversheet, with the declaration signed and dated by hand. The Coversheet can be downloaded from

<https://hal.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/courses/course-outlines/>. It is your responsibility to make a backup copy of the assignment prior to submission and retain it.

Assignments must be submitted before 4:00pm on the due date. Assignments received after this time will be marked as having been received late.

Late Submission of Assignments

Late assignments will attract a penalty. Of the total mark, 3% will be deducted each day for the first week, with Saturday and Sunday counting as two days, and 10% each week thereafter.

The penalty may not apply where students are able to provide documentary evidence of illness or serious misadventure. Time pressure resulting from undertaking assignments for other courses does not constitute an acceptable excuse for lateness.

6. Attendance/Class Clash

Attendance

Students are expected to be regular and punctual in attendance at all classes in the courses in which they are enrolled. Explanations of absences from classes or requests for permission to be absent from classes should be discussed with the teacher and where applicable accompanied by a medical certificate. If students attend less than 80% of their possible classes they may be refused final assessment.

Students who falsify their attendance or falsify attendance on behalf of another student will be dealt with under the student misconduct policy.

Class Clash

A student who is approved a permissible clash must fulfil the following requirements:

- a. The student must provide the Course Convenor with copies of lecture notes from those lectures missed on a regular basis as agreed by the Course Convenor and the student.
- b. If a student does attend a lecture for which they had secured a permitted clash they will still submit lecture notes as evidence of attendance.
- c. **Failure to meet these requirements is regarded as unsatisfactory performance in the course and a failure to meet the Faculty's course attendance requirement. Accordingly, Course Convenors will fail students who do not meet this performance/attendance requirement.**
- d. Students must attend the clashed lecture on a specific date if that lecture contains an assessment task for the course such as a quiz or test. Inability to meet this requirement would be grounds for a Course Convenor refusing the application. If the student misses the said lecture there is no obligation on the Course Convenor to schedule a make-up quiz or test and the student can receive zero for the assessment task. It should be noted that in many courses a failure to complete an assessment task can be grounds for course failure.

7. Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's thoughts or work as your own. It can take many forms, from not having appropriate academic referencing to deliberate cheating.

In many cases plagiarism is the result of inexperience about academic conventions. The University has resources and information to assist you to avoid plagiarism.

The Learning Centre assists students with understanding academic integrity and how to not plagiarise. Information is available on their website: <http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism/>. They also hold workshops and can help students one-on-one.

If plagiarism is found in your work when you are in first year, your lecturer will offer you assistance to improve your academic skills. They may ask you to look at some online resources, attend the Learning Centre, or sometimes resubmit your work with the problem fixed. However, more serious instances in first year, such as stealing another student's work or paying someone to do your work, may be investigated under the Student Misconduct Procedures.

Repeated plagiarism (even in first year), plagiarism after first year, or serious instances, may also be investigated under the Student Misconduct Procedures. The penalties under the procedures can include a reduction in marks, failing a course or for the most serious matters (like plagiarism in an Honours thesis) or even suspension from the university. The Student Misconduct Procedures are available here:

<http://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/policy/documents/studentmisconductprocedures.pdf>

8. Course Schedule

To view course timetable, please visit: <http://www.timetable.unsw.edu.au/>

Week Commencing:	Topic	Lecture Content	Tutorial/Lab Content	Readings
March 3 rd	Free will			RKP, ch. 2;

(Lecture 1: March 5 th)				Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> , sec. VIII; van Inwagen, <i>Metaphysics</i> , ch. 12.
March 10 th (Lecture 2: March 12 th)	Mind and matter			Chalmers, <i>The Conscious Mind</i> , pp. 123-40, pp. 150-171.
March 17 th (Lecture 3: March 19 th)	God and the limits of explanation			Clarke, <i>A Demonstration...</i> , pp. 1-9; Rowe, 'The Cosmological Argument...' pp. 278-292; van Inwagen, <i>Metaphysics</i> , ch. 7.
March 24 th (Lecture 4: March 26 th)	Evolution and design			Nagasawa, <i>The Existence of God</i> , pp. 66-87.
March 31 st (Lecture 5: April 2 nd)	God and evil			RKP, ch. 3; Hume, <i>Dialogues on Natural Religion</i> , Part X; Howard-Snyder, 'Introduction: The Evidential Argument from Evil...', pp. xi-xx; Plato, 'Euthyphro', 10d-11b.
April 7 th (Lecture 6: April 9 th)	Life's meaning & death's harm			RKP, ch. 4 & ch. 5; Study Kit, Wk 6 (Plato, <i>Plato's Republic</i> , 514a-520d; Nozick, <i>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</i> , pp. 42-5; Singer, <i>How Are We To Live?</i> , pp. 194-218; Long and

				Sedley, <i>The Hellenistic Philosophers</i> , pp. 149-54).
April 14th (Lecture 7: April 16 th)	Universals			RKP, ch. 6; Armstrong, pp. 1-20.
April 28th (Lecture 8: April 30 th)	Truth and well supported views			RKP, ch. 7 & ch. 8; Morton, <i>A Guide Through the Theory of Knowledge</i> , ch. 1; Popper, <i>Conjectures and Refutations</i> , ch. 1.
May 5th (Lecture 9: May 7 th)	Knowledge			RKP, ch. 9; Gettier, 'Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?' (available online through Moodle); Bonjour, 'The Myth of Knowledge', pp. 57-83.
May 12th (Lecture 10: May 14 th)	Observation and science			RKP, ch. 10; Berkeley, 'Principles of Human Knowledge', secs. 1-37; Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> , secs I-II.
May 19th (Lecture 11: May 21 st)	Pure reason and philosophy			RKP, ch. 11; Chalmers, 'Why Isn't There More Progress in Philosophy?'
May 26th (Lecture 12: May 28 th)	Sceptical doubts			RKP, ch. 12; Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> ,

				secs IV, V (Part I).

9. Course Resources

Textbook Details

Stephen Hetherington, *Reality? Knowledge? Philosophy!* (Edinburgh University Press: 2003).
Abbreviated above as 'RPK'.

Journals

N/A

Additional Readings

UNSW Study Kit

Websites

JSTOR (TBA)

10. Course Evaluation and Development

Courses are periodically reviewed and students' feedback is used to improve them. Feedback is gathered using various means including UNSW's Course and Teaching Evaluation and Improvement (CATEI) process.

11. Student Support

The Learning Centre is available for individual consultation and workshops on academic skills. Find out more by visiting the Centre's website at:
<http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au>

12. Grievances

All students should be treated fairly in the course of their studies at UNSW. Students who feel they have not been dealt with fairly should, in the first instance, attempt to resolve any issues with their tutor or the course convenors.

If such an approach fails to resolve the matter, the School of Humanities and Languages has an academic member of staff who acts as a Grievance Officer for the School. This staff member is identified on the notice board in the School of Humanities and languages. Further information about UNSW grievance procedures is available at:
<https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/Complaints.html>

13. Other Information

myUNSW

myUNSW is the online access point for UNSW services and information, integrating online services for applicants, commencing and current students and UNSW staff. To visit myUNSW please visit either of the below links:
<https://my.unsw.edu.au>
<https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/ABC.html>

OHS

UNSW's Occupational Health and Safety Policy requires each person to work safely and responsibly, in order to avoid personal injury and to protect the safety of others. For all matters relating to Occupational Health, Safety and environment, see <http://www.ohs.unsw.edu.au/>

Special Consideration

In cases where illness or other circumstances produce repeated or sustained absence, students should apply for Special Consideration as soon as possible.

The application must be made via Online Services in myUNSW. Log into myUNSW and go to My Student Profile tab > My Student Services channel > Online Services > Special Consideration.

Applications on the grounds of illness must be filled in by a medical practitioner. Further information is available at: <https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/SpecialConsideration.html>

Student Equity and Disabilities Unit

Students who have a disability that requires some adjustment in their learning and teaching environment are encouraged to discuss their study needs with the course convener prior to or at the commencement of the course, or with the Student Equity Officers (Disability) in the Student Equity and Disabilities Unit (9385 4734). Information for students with disabilities is available at: <http://www.studentequity.unsw.edu.au>

Issues that can be discussed may include access to materials, signers or note-takers, the provision of services and additional examination and assessment arrangements. Early notification is essential to enable any necessary adjustments to be made.