

# Philosophy 619: Epistemology

Fall 2024

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Course Location and Time: F 11:30 – 14:30, Leacock 541

## Prerequisites:

- Phil 210 – Introduction to Deductive Logic
- Phil 419 – Epistemology
- Phil 415 – Philosophy of Language

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF EPISTEMOLOGY (COURSE DESCRIPTION)

Gettier's 1963 paper marks a pivotal moment in epistemology, fundamentally reshaping the field. In its immediate aftermath, it sparked a wave of philosophical inquiry, leading to numerous novel attempts to analyze the concept of propositional knowledge. In the longer term, it compelled epistemologists to rethink the methodologies and approaches they use to investigate knowledge.

This seminar explores responses to the so-called *Gettier wars*, with a focus on methodological questions about knowledge and epistemology. We examine the knowledge-first response to the Gettier challenge and consider arguments that suggest knowledge cannot be analyzed (Williamson, Zagzebski). Assuming knowledge is unanalyzable, we will then explore alternative approaches in epistemology, such as virtue epistemology, the knowledge-first approach, and others.

While the primary focus will be on epistemology, broader methodological questions about the philosophy of philosophy will also emerge. We will ask: What do we do when we philosophize? What is the goal of philosophizing? What is its methodology? In a more applied context within epistemology, we will consider what contemporary approaches have in common, where their interests converge, and how they diverge. In other words, what should epistemologists do if not analyze knowledge?

## REQUIREMENTS

It is required that students attend the seminar and participate in the discussion. Participants will be required to give up to three seminar presentations of 15 minutes and to prepare a handout of (exactly) one page.

## ASSESSMENT

The final mark will be based on one major paper, which might be the reworking of a seminar presentation (about 20 pages, on a topic to be agreed upon individually). In marking the paper, I

shall take into consideration the extent to which it reflects active engagement in seminar discussion. I shall not accept a paper that might have been written in a different context altogether.

Late papers will be downgraded at a rate of 5% per day (e.g. from 72% to 67%, 90% to 85%, etc.), including weekend days/holidays. Late submissions will not be accepted 10 days after the deadline and the paper will count as 0%. Requests for extensions will be considered (but not automatically granted) only when requested at least 24 hours *before* the paper is due and substantiated at the time of request by a doctor's note documenting illness. Extensions will not be more than seven days.

## **MYCOURSES**

The webpage for this course is located at <http://www.mcgill.ca/lms/>. It will be used to post the syllabus, readings, and periodic announcements. You must check the course webpage regularly. If you have technical problems with MyCourses, contact ICT customer support at: <http://www.mcgill.ca/mycourses/students/help/>.

**IMPORTANT:** *papers must be submitted on MyCourses as MS Word documents.* Submissions by email or in hard copy will not be considered.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

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*No audio or video recording of any kind is allowed in class without the explicit permission of the instructor.*

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.