

# Knowledge & Reality

PHIL 280, Spring 2011

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How do you know you're not dreaming? What is knowledge, and what kinds of knowledge can we have? What makes you the same person you were before going to sleep last night? Do people have free will? We will examine philosophical answers to these questions as we explore central issues in metaphysics and epistemology.

**Meeting Time:** Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:00-11:45 in Parker 111

**Course Objectives:** As a result of this course, you should be able to

- Identify major issues, schools of thought, and problems in epistemology and metaphysics
- Analyze arguments and critically evaluate controversial theories and articles
- Apply an understanding of readings and other course materials to formulate your own assessment of various topics relating to knowledge and the nature of reality.

**Readings:** Most of our readings will be from the following sources, which are available at the KSC Bookstore:

- Pritchard, Duncan. *What is this thing called knowledge?* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Conee, Earl and Theodore Sider. *Riddles of Existence*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Coursepack

Please bring the assigned book or article with you to EVERY class. It is essential that you always have that day's readings with you, as we will frequently do close analysis of the text in class.

**Blackboard:** The course syllabus and assignments will be posted on Blackboard, and you will submit most assignments via Blackboard. You can access the site through your MyKSC page. Once logged in, click on the appropriate course link. You should check the course site regularly for announcements and updates.

### Course Requirements:

- Regular attendance and active class participation.
- Readings for each class, as stated on the syllabus. Note that *all* of the readings listed for each day are required.
- Reading responses. Twice during the semester, homework exercises will require you to respond to some aspect of that day's reading. These responses will be about 400-500 words long.
- Discussion board postings: Six times during the semester, you will be required to post a few paragraphs on the Discussion Board.
- Quizzes. There will be three quizzes. The purpose of these quizzes is to ensure that you are keeping up with the reading. Your two highest quiz grades will be counted; the lowest will be dropped.
- Midterm exam, in class.
- Final exam, during the regular examination period in early May.

**Grading:** Your course grade will be calculated out of a total of 1000 points, distributed as follows:

- 50 points for active class participation, thorough preparation, and attentiveness
- 120 points for quizzes (2 x 60 points each for your two highest quiz grades)
- 210 points for discussion board postings (6 x 35 points each)
- 120 points for reading responses (2 x 60 points each)
- 250 points for the midterm exam
- 250 points for the final exam

### Overall Course Grade Scale

Numerical Grade	Letter Grade
940-1000	A
880-939	AB
830-879	B
780-829	BC
730-779	C
680-729	CD
600-679	D
Below 600	F

**Etiquette:** To help ensure a productive and friendly class environment, please follow these guidelines:

- *Silence cell phones before class begins.*
- *Do not send text messages*, sleep in class, read magazines, or engage in other activities unrelated to course material.
- Arrive promptly to all class sessions. If unavoidable circumstances delay your arrival, come in quietly and take your seat without disrupting the class.
- Treat your classmates and the instructor respectfully in class discussions.
- Do not begin packing your books before class is over!

**Attendance and Class Participation:**

- Active class participation is an essential part of this course. You should read the assignments thoroughly and arrive at class prepared to participate.
- You are permitted three absences with no penalty. I do not make a distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences – if you miss class for ANY reason, you are considered absent. These absences are intended for use in case of illness. Each absence beyond the permitted three will be penalized by deducting 10 points from your class participation grade. (If you need to miss more than three classes because of college-sanctioned scheduled events, you must provide me with a written list of the dates and reason the absences are necessary by the end of the second week of classes.)
- If you do miss a class, you are responsible for finding out what you missed and getting copies of materials and assignments. Missing class does not excuse you from assignments due that day.
- No make-ups will be available if you miss a quiz due to absence or late arrival. A missed quiz will just count as your lowest quiz grade, which will be dropped.
- Repeated tardiness will adversely affect your grade. If you arrive very late or leave early, it will count as half of an absence.

**Late Assignments:**

- Late reading responses will automatically lose 10 points for any lateness, even if they are turned in later that day. They will be accepted up to a week after they are due, so it is still better to turn them in late than not at all. However, the substantial 10-point penalty will be strictly enforced, since writing the responses after discussing the topic in class provides an unfair advantage. No responses will be accepted more than a week late.
- Discussion board postings will generally be due by 9am. This gives me time before class to incorporate the postings into that day’s plans. Postings that are done late but still before class time will automatically lose 5 points. Postings that are done after the start of class time will receive no credit, since they no longer serve the desired purpose.
- You must take the quizzes and exams at the scheduled time to get credit for them. Exceptions will only be made in emergencies (documentation from a doctor and/or your advisor or dean will be required), or for compelling reasons when alternative arrangements are made *in advance*.

**Inclement Weather:** In case of inclement weather, you should call my office after 8:00am to see whether class will be held that day. If it is cancelled, a dated cancellation message will replace my regular voicemail greeting. If there is no cancellation message, you should assume that class will take place as scheduled.

**Students with disabilities:** If you have a disability that may impact your work for this course, please come talk to me about it as soon as possible, so that we can arrange any necessary accommodations.

**Academic Integrity:** I encourage you to discuss course material with your classmates, and we will often engage in collaborative work in class and on discussion boards. Sharing ideas in this manner is an important part of learning. However, you must complete all written work on your own.

You are responsible for being familiar with Keene State's Policy on Academic Honesty (<http://www.keene.edu/policy/academichonesty.cfm>), and for following that policy. ***Evidence of plagiarism will be taken very seriously and will result in disciplinary action.*** If you have any questions about what kind of collaboration is or is not allowed, please ask.

You are NOT allowed to do any of the following:

- Present someone else's work as if it were your own
- Copy reading responses, discussion board postings, or other written work from another student
- Allow your written work to be copied
- Share "answers" to reading response questions. While you're welcome to work together at understanding the readings, when it comes time to actually write out your detailed response to specific assignment questions you must do this on your own. If you're unsure whether you're sharing too much information, err on the side of caution and work independently.
- Use a direct quotation or close paraphrase from the text or any other source (including internet sources) without proper citation
- Give or receive help on in-class exams and quizzes
- Engage in other actions that violate the Keene State College Policy on Academic Honesty

You ARE allowed to do the following:

- Discuss readings and other course materials with your classmates
- Attend office hours for help understanding assignments, readings, and lectures
- Discuss the *general* concepts behind assignments with your classmates, without sharing specific "answers" to questions in the assignment
- Quote from readings or other sources with proper citation
- Copy class notes from another student who was in class on a day you missed, or lend your notes to a classmate
- Study for exams together

**Emergency Operations:** In the event that the College closes for a major disaster, all students are responsible for regularly checking their e-mail, voicemail, and Blackboard for information on alternative course delivery procedures and course work submission. Alternative delivery methods are subject to change depending on the nature of the emergency. Students will be responsible for completing their assignments and ensuring that they have completed all of the core requirements for their courses before they will receive a final grade for the course.

## *Knowledge & Reality Syllabus (1<sup>st</sup> half)*

Readings should be completed before the class for which they are assigned.

ALWAYS bring that day's reading to class.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Written Work</b>
Wednesday, January 19	Introduction		
Monday, January 24	Types of knowledge	Pritchard, p.3-7 and 10-17	
Wednesday, January 26	Defining Knowledge	Pritchard, p.20-29; Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" (coursepack)	Discussion Board A
Monday, January 31	Justification	Pritchard, p.31-40	
Wednesday, February 2	Descartes' skepticism	Descartes, <i>Meditations 1 and 2</i> (coursepack)	Reading response 1
Monday, February 7	Reliabilism	Pitchard, p.54-64	
Wednesday, February 9	Perception and illusion	Pritchard, p.69-77	Quiz
Monday, February 14	Testimonial knowledge	Pritchard, p.80-88	
Wednesday, February 16	<i>A priori</i> vs. <i>a posteriori</i> ; Induction	Pritchard, p.91-99 and p.100-110	Discussion Board B
Monday, February 21	TBA	TBA	
Wednesday, February 23	Induction	Goodman, "The New Riddle of Induction" (coursepack)	
Monday, February 28	The problem of other minds	Pritchard, p.129-135; Sacks, "Island Hopping" and "Pingelap" (library reserve)	Discussion Board C
Wednesday, March 2	Subjective experience	Nagel, "Bat Sonar" (coursepack)	Quiz
Monday, March 7	Causal theories of reference	Putnam, "Brains in a Vat" (coursepack)	
Wednesday, March 9	<b>Midterm Exam</b>		Midterm Exam

## *Knowledge & Reality Syllabus (2<sup>nd</sup> half)*

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Readings should be completed before the class for which they are assigned.

ALWAYS bring that day's reading to class.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Written Work</b>
Monday, March 21	Intro to metaphysics	Sider & Conee, p.1-6	
Wednesday, March 23	Arguments for the existence of God	Sider & Conee, Ch.4	Discussion Board D
Monday, March 28	Necessity and Possibility	Sider & Conee, Ch.9	
Wednesday, March 30	Time	Sider & Conee, Ch.3	Discussion Board E
Monday, April 4	Time	Le Poidevin, "Arrows of Time" (coursepack)	
Wednesday, April 6	Causation	Hume, "Of the Idea of Necessary Connection" (coursepack)	Reading Response 2
Monday, April 11	Free will and determinism	Sider & Conee, Ch.6; Clark, "Moral Luck" (coursepack)	
Wednesday, April 13	TBA	TBA	Quiz
Monday, April 18	Material Constitution	Sider & Conee, Ch.7	
Wednesday, April 20	Personal identity	Sider & Conee, Ch.1	Discussion Board F
Monday, April 25	Personal identity	Dennett, "Where Am I?" (coursepack)	
Wednesday, April 27	Course wrap-up		