

Epistemology and Methodology (2001-2002)

Aims of Course:

The epistemology and methodology course contributes to the general aims and objectives of the Philosophy Department by bringing students to an understanding of some of the central problems in the theory of knowledge and scientific methodology; to an understanding of some of the most important attempts to resolve such problems; and to be in a position to evaluate some of these attempted solutions.

Objectives:

Students completing the course will have:

- a) Acquired a good sense of the nature and extent of the subject matter of epistemology and of methodology, the relation between them, and their relation to other philosophical areas.
- b) Acquired an appreciation of how the problems under discussion are motivated or generated, by examining particular claims to knowledge and the methods for producing and evaluating scientific theories.
- c) Encountered and evaluated a number of attempts to solve the philosophical problems under discussion.
- d) Acquired an ability to relate the questions discussed to the work of philosophers studied on other papers.
- e) Been encouraged to read with great care and reflected upon some difficult texts, as well as introductory and secondary material.

Course Structure: These lectures take place in a one year cycle. In each year lectures are provided on topics in both Epistemology and Methodology. There are 30 lectures this year.

Course Schedule

Term 1: Tuesdays 11-12, Weeks 1 to 10; David Galloway: Scepticism and Truth Tracking

Starting with G.E. Moore's discussions of radical scepticism, we discuss a variety of 'externalist' responses to skeptical arguments. Nozick's truth tracking approach is examined in detail, along with the varieties of contextualism associated with Dretske, Lewis and DeRose. There is also some discussion of the difficulties posed by a priori knowledge to these approaches.

Term 2, Tuesdays 11-12, Weeks 1-5, Mark Calderon: Induction

The purpose of this course is to look at the problems that arise with inductive inference and to look at accounts of how we should understand such inference. Particular attention will be paid Hume's discussion of Induction, to the inductive justification of induction, to Reichenbach's pragmatic justification of induction, to Strawson on induction and to Goodman's New Riddle of Induction.

Term 2, Tuesdays 11-12, Weeks 6-10, Tim Crane: A Priori Knowledge

These lectures will introduce the idea of a priori knowledge, knowledge which is not justified in

terms of experience, and examine various ways of accounting for such apparent knowledge. The lectures will discuss the distinction between empiricism and rationalism, and whether a priori knowledge should be accounted for in terms of a 'rational insight' or in terms of knowledge of meaning. Finally, we will look at Quine's critique of the a priori and contemporary responses to it.

Term 2, Fridays 2-3, Weeks 1-5, Mike Martin: Perception

The aim of this course of lectures is to examine the various problems of perception – in particular those relating to conflicting appearances and the argument from illusion, and the significance of the possibility of hallucinations which match perfectly veridical perceptions of the world around us. Various philosophical theories of perception will be introduced in relation to these problems and assessed in terms of how they address and solve these problems.

Term 2, Fridays 2-3, Weeks 6-10, Ken Gemes: Explanation

What, if anything is the difference between explanation and prediction? Does explanation need to invoke laws and or causal mechanisms? Are explanations absolute and objective or are they somehow subjective? In answering these questions we will look at texts from Hempel, Salmon, Van Fraassen and Lipton.