

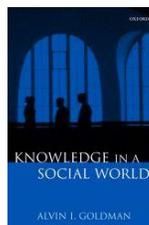
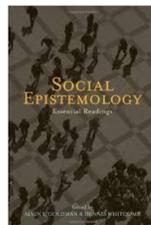
Social Epistemology:
Bennett Holman
University of California,
Irvine

Description: This course addresses philosophical perspectives on knowledge. It briefly considers two extremes of knowledge: The isolated asocial knower and the social construction of knowledge. The course then traces out what an epistemology must look like if it acknowledges knowledge is social, while denying that it is merely social. Within this framework, new questions come to the fore: How should the testimony of others be treated? What is the epistemological implication of disagreement? How should testimony be handled when it comes from an expert? After a first brush with these questions in abstract, the class looks at several different specific epistemic contexts (Science, Medicine, Law) as test cases for philosophic accounts. In conclusion, students are asked to consider whether, given the diversity of epistemic contexts, any general answer can be given to the basic questions of social epistemology, or if such questions must be contextualized to be answered meaningfully.

Materials:

Reading material will come from three main texts for the class:

1. *Social Epistemology: Critical Readings* (Ed. A. Goldman; D. Whitcomb, 2011)
2. *Knowledge in a Social World* (A. Goldman, 1999)
3. *The Trouble with Medical Journals* (R. Smith, 2005)



All the other required readings listed below are available as PDFs or links from the course's webpage.

Students should also refer to the University General Catalog about standard policies and procedures.

Week	Topic	Readings
1	Intro to the course/ Justified True Belief	❖ Descartes, Meditations I-IV
2	Symmetry principle	❖ Making of Modern Science (108-124) Catastrophism and Uniformitarianism ❖ Barnes, Barry and Bloor, David (1982), "Relativism, Rationalism, and the Sociology of Knowledge," ❖ Goldman (1999) "Epistemology and Post-Modern Resistance" (Ch. 1: <i>Knowledge in a Social World</i>)
3	Conceptions of Social Epistemology	❖ Goldman: "A Guide to Social Epistemology" (S.E. Ch 1) ❖ Boghossian: "Epistemic Relativism Defended" (S.E. Ch. 2) ❖ Fricker: "Rational Authority and Social Power: Towards a Truly Social Epistemology (S.E. Ch. 3)
4	Testimony (Paper 1 due)	❖ Goldman: Testimony (Ch. 4: <i>Knowledge in a Social World</i>) ❖ Millar (2010): Knowing from Being Told ❖ Neta (2010): Can <i>A Priori</i> Entitlement be Preserved by Testimony
5	Testimony	❖ Lackey: "Testimony: Acquiring Knowledge from Others" (S.E. Ch. 4) ❖ Shapin (1995): "A Social History of Truth Telling: Knowledge, Social Practice and the Credibility of Gentlemen."
6	Peer Disagreement	❖ Sosa (2010): "The Epistemology of Disagreement" ❖ Lackey (2010): "A Justificationist's view of the Epistemic Significance of Disagreement"
7	Peer Disagreement (Paper 2 due)	❖ Elga: "Reflection and Disagreement" (S.E. Ch. 8) ❖ Kelly: "Peer Disagreement and Higher Order Evidence (S.E. Ch. 9)
8	Experts	❖ Goldman: "Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust" (S.E. Ch. 6) ❖ Haack (2005): "Disentangling Daubert: An Epistemological Study in Theory and Practice"
9	Group Knowledge	❖ List: Group Knowledge and Group Rationality: A Judgment Aggregation perspective (S.E. Ch. 10) ❖ Petit: Groups with Minds of Their own (S.E. Ch. 11)
10	Social Epistemology in Science (Paper 3 due)	❖ Goldman (1999) Science (Ch. 8: <i>Knowledge in a Social World</i>)

11	Well-ordered Inquiry	❖ Kitcher (1993) <i>The Organization of Cognitive Labor</i> (Ch. 8: <i>The Advancement of Science</i>)
12	Actor-Network Theory	❖ Latour (1987) <i>Opening Pandora's Black Box</i> (From: <i>Science in Action</i>) ❖ Latour (2005): <i>On the Difficulty of Being an ANT</i> (From <i>Reassembling the Social</i>)
13	Medical Communication (Paper 4 due)	❖ Goldman (1999) <i>The Technology and Economics of Communication</i> (Ch. 6: <i>Knowledge in a Social World</i>) ❖ Smith (2005): <i>The Nature of Medical Journals</i> (Ch. 2: <i>The Trouble with Medical Journals</i>)
14	Medical Publication	❖ Lee (2013): "The Limited Effectiveness of Prestige as an Intervention on the Health of Medical Journal Publications" ❖ Smith (2005): <i>The Process of Medical Publishing</i> (Ch. 3: <i>The Trouble with Medical Journals</i>) ❖ Smith (2005): <i>Problems in Publishing Medical Research</i> (Ch. 4: <i>The Trouble with Medical Journals</i>)
15	Legal epistemology	❖ Goldman (1999) <i>Law</i> (Ch. 6: <i>Knowledge in a Social World</i>) ❖ Laudan <i>Thinking about Error in the Law</i> (S.E. Ch. 12)
Final		

Requirements:

1. Active and informed participation: Students are expected to come to class prepared and ready to engage in an informed discussion of the material. Students are expected to actively participate in classroom discussions. Participation includes asking questions, raising objections, offering defenses, commenting on the significance of a point, clarifying an argument or a claim, and drawing out the connections between an issue from our current discussion and issues raised in our other readings. Substantial contributions can raise your grade.

2. Topic papers (50%): Over the course of the class students will write 4 papers (950-1450 words (roughly 3-4 pages), papers will lose 5 points for every 100 words (or any portion thereof) outside the limit). The papers will be spread out over the class. For each paper, students may choose to write on one of three topics. For example, the first paper may be written on either the topics for meeting 1, 2 or 3. A prompt is provided for each paper. The prompt is focused on clarifying the topic and understanding the arguments covered in the reading. Students should make reference to (**and cite!**) the material, but should express the ideas in their own words (i.e. no long block quotes). Citations should be MLA style. The purpose of these papers is to learn to digest and understand philosophic arguments (i.e. these are not research papers). Accordingly, students **should not** use outside resources to answer questions. Evidence of outside research will be considered cause to reduce a grade, or in

extreme cases lose all credit. Students may confer with each other, but all writing should be done independently. Significant overlap in student papers is academic dishonesty.

Because students may be new to philosophy, two accommodations have been made. The first is that papers will be of increasing impact on the final grade (The first paper is only 5%, the second is 10%, the third 15% and the fourth 20%). This is intended to help students gain experience in writing such papers and incorporate feedback on early papers in hopes that future papers will be of higher quality. The second accommodation is a “get out of jail free card.” If after lecture, you wish to rewrite or amend your paper you may get a 3-day period to do so. However, this is not intended to be an extension. You may only exercise this option if you had already submitted an honest attempt at writing the paper in the first place. A rushed or incomplete paper will not qualify for this exception and will be graded as is. Refusals to allow you to use this option will be at my discretion. Each student may use this option only once per quarter. To do so, simply send me an email after the lecture. Please send it the same day so that I can begin grading and turn back papers to students in a timely manner. There will be **no penalty** for exercising this option.

3. Final exam (50% of final grade): Includes short answer and essay questions. The short answer responses will involve summarizing the main argument of a paper read for class. The exam covers the entire term’s required material, as well as any additional material covered in lectures, but with greater emphasis on the latter part of the term.

To greatly benefit “future you” I strongly recommend that as we go along you create a study sheet for each article that summarizes: (1) The larger philosophic topic that is being address; (2) The argument made by the author; (3) The conclusion of the author.

4. Academic Integrity: Plagiarism, cheating, etc. will not be tolerated and the University policy on Academic Honesty will be followed strictly. Students who have any questions or uncertainty whatsoever about this policy are responsible for meeting individually with the instructor to discuss the policy. Anyone found violating this policy will receive an F for the course and will be reported to the appropriate University officials. I am extremely firm on this matter.

5. Disabilities: It is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor in advance of the need for accommodation of a University verified disability. I will gladly provide the required accommodations.

6. Preferred names and gender pronouns: I would like to make every effort to create a safe space. If you have a preferred name or gender pronoun that is not reflected in the roster, please let me know.