PHILOSOPHY 523 THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

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http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~corlett/Welcome.html
(Professor Corlett's Website)

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Course Description: (Outcomes): Philosophical analysis of the concept of human propositional knowledge, including analyses or discussions of the concepts of acceptance, belief, truth, justification, epistemic responsibility, and luck. Various leading theories of knowledge are enumerated and explored, including foundationalism, reliabilism, and coherentism. Students are expected to learn the contents of these and some other related theories and arguments for and against them such that they will become conversant with such theories at a graduate-level of understanding.

Course Requirements: (Outcomes assessment): All students are required to take two in-class essay-type examinations. These examinations will test the student's ability to understand the contents of the assigned readings and lectures that cover the contents of the above stated course outcomes. The two examinations are designed to test and measure the student's knowledge of the contents of the textbook readings and classroom discussions, and to test and measure the student's competency in English grammar, spelling and usage. This course is taught and students are graded according to standards at highly respected academic institutions throughout the U.S.. Each student is required, for a passing grade in the course, to complete two closed-book and closed-notes, in-class essay-type examinations that are designed to test and measure students' general and philosophical comprehension of the informational contents of the assigned readings especially with regard to philosophical analysis and argumentation. Examination questions and their answers are based on the required readings. Lectures and discussions track many of the

highlights of the assigned readings. Each of these examinations is worth up to 50 points. Scores for each of the examinations are to be added and the course grade is to be determined according to the following scale:

93-100=A 90-92=A-88-89=B+ 83-87=B 80-82=B-78-79=C+ 73-77=C 70-72=C-68-69=D+ 63-67=D 60-62=D-0-59=F

Graduate students are required to take the same two examinations as the undergraduates take, but the *grades* on those examinations will be averaged together with the *grade* on the 20-30 page term paper. They are required to obtain pre-approval of their written term paper proposal no later than the 12th class meeting of the term. Consult the "Requirements for Philosophy Term Papers." Failure to obtain written approval by the Professor for the term paper by the 12th class session will result in a loss of one full grade on the term paper (ex.: from a "B" to a "C") after the term paper has been graded for form and content. As the "Requirements for Philosophy Term Papers" indicates, graduate students are to select a specific argument or analysis found in the assigned readings and make that the focus of the paper.

Important Notes:

Each student is responsible for understanding everything expressed in class by the Professor and by students engaged in discussion with the professor even if the student is absent from class. Absolutely <u>no</u> permission is granted to electronically tape or otherwise electronically duplicate class lectures for any purpose whatsoever as they are the copyrighted property of Professor Corlett.

It is recommended that students take notes well and continuously during each class period.

Students caught cheating on examinations or term papers shall be awarded a grade of "F" for the course and shall be prosecuted to the fullest extent of SDSU regulations!

Class session attendance is crucial for learning the course material well. Students absent from or arriving late to more than two class sessions, regardless of reason, are subject to be dropped from the course with a grade of "F" at the professor's discretion. Students who are absent the first day of class without prior approval from the professor shall be dropped from the course at the professor's discretion.

Examinations may be re-scheduled only if the student obtains approval from the professor *prior* to the examination to be re-scheduled. Otherwise, no re-scheduled examinations are permitted. Since the taking of both examinations is required for a passing grade in the course, a student's missing an examination and not having such approval will cause the student to fail the course. For those obtaining such pre-approval, a re-scheduled examination might not have the same content as the one given to the rest of the class on the original date of examination.

Students with special documented medical needs should avail themselves of Disabled Student Services, SS 1661, and should immediately discuss such needs with the Professor so that such needs might be accommodated for testing purposes.

SDSU Counseling & Psychological Services. If any student feels the need to talk to someone or seek confidential guidance for the benefit of their personal, academic, or social well-being, contact: http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/cps/. Phone number: (619) 594-5220. Address: 5700 Hardy Ave., Suite 4401, San Diego, CA 92115 (4th floor of the Calpulli Center). Hours: Mon.-Fri. 8am-4:30pm.

Expectations of Students: Pursuant to standards at academically respectable universities throughout the United States, students are expected to study the assigned readings and notes for this course at least 6 hours per week (two hours for each hour of registered coursework for this course) and to participate philosophically in classroom discussions.

Required Course Readings:

- 1. Keith Lehrer, *Theory of Knowledge*, Second Edition (Westview Press, 2000);
- 2. J. Angelo Corlett, Analyzing Social Knowledge (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1996).

Students are encouraged to access the required readings legally and in the most cost effective manner.

NOTE: It is illegal to violate federal copyright laws which prohibit the illegal downloading or otherwise illegal accessing of copyrighted materials. Publishers are aggressive and increasingly successful in filing and winning lawsuits against students and others who violate such laws.

Tentative Course Outline:

Session 1: Introduction to Epistemology: The Analysis of Knowledge.

Session 2: Truth and Acceptance.

Session 3: Foundationalism.

Session 4: Foundationalism.

Session 5: Coherentism.

Session 6: Coherentism.

Session 7: Reliabilism and Naturalistic Epistemology.

Session 8: Skepticism.

- Session 9: Examination #1. Graduate students: begin in earnest seeking a term paper topic immediately subsequent to the first examination.
- Session 10: Social Ontology and Social Epistemology.
- Session 11: Foundations of Social Epistemology. Connecting Social Epistemology and Experimental Social Cognitive Psychology. **Graduate students: approval of term paper proposals due without penalty.**
- Session 12: Social Epistemic Reliabilism.
- Session 13: Defending Social Epistemic Reliabilism. The Significance of Social Epistemic Reliabilism.
- Session 14: "Analyzing Social Knowledge."
- Session 15: "Analyzing Social Knowledge." Graduate students: Term papers due in class.
- Final exam week: **Examination #2.** The content of examination #2 is not cumulative of the earlier section of the course.