

Syllabus - Knowledge and Interests

Brian Weatherson

January 14, 2020

Instructor

Brian Weatherson
Department of Philosophy
2207 Angell Hall
✉: weath@umich.edu
📄: <http://canvas.umich.edu>
Office Hours: TBA
Seminar: Tuesday: 4-6.25, Philosophy Seminar Room
Last Updated: January 14, 2020

Course Description

I'm currently writing a book defending an interest-relative theory of knowledge. A draft of the book is available at <http://brian.weatherson.org/kahis/>. The plan is to spend the first 6 weeks or so going over key background readings so you can follow the debate in the book, then work through the book itself. By the end you should be fairly up to date with this debate, and you can hopefully see what will be coming next.

Canvas

There is a Canvas site for this course, which can be accessed from <https://canvas.umich.edu>. Course documents (syllabus, lecture notes, assignments) will be available from this site. Please make sure that you can access this site. Consult the site regularly for announcements, including changes to the course schedule. And there are many tools on the site to communicate with each other, and with me.

Readings

There are no books you need to buy for the course. We will work entirely off articles that are available through the university library.

Course Requirements

The default plan is that each student will write **four** short papers, totalling around 8000 words, over the course of the term. Each paper should either be a short Analysis style paper setting out a view and an objection to it, or something like the section of a longer paper where you do something similar. (It's a striking fact that the differences between these are often not great.) The papers can be on any of the readings, including required and recommended readings, and my drafts, that are on the syllabus. The due dates for these are:

1. February 11
2. March 10
3. March 31
4. April 28

If you are planning on working on material like this for a thesis project, then you might want to do a more traditional term paper for the course. If so, you should see me early in the semester about this. You should also do **one** of these short papers, by March 10.

You are also, as always, required to do all the readings, attend class, participate in discussions, etc.

Disability

The University of Michigan abides by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and other applicable federal and state laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability, which mandate that reasonable accommodations be provided for qualified students with disabilities.

If you have a disability, and may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodation, please contact me early in the semester. If you have not already done so, you will also need to register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities. The office is located at G664 Haven Hall.

For more information on disability services at the University of Michigan, go to <http://ssd.umich.edu>.

Plagiarism

Hopefully I don't really need this for a graduate course, but here's the boilerplate text on plagiarism that I include on every syllabus.

You are responsible for making sure that none of your work is plagiarized. Be sure to cite work that you use, both direct quotations and paraphrased ideas. Any citation method that is tolerably clear is permitted, but if you'd like a good description of a citation scheme that works well in philosophy, look at <http://bit.ly/VDhRJ4>

You are encouraged to discuss the course material, including assignments, with your classmates, but all written work that you hand in under your own name must be your own. If work is handed

is as the work of multiple people, you are affirming that each person did a fair share of the work. (Note that when you're submitting work on Canvas, you have to each submit the paper, even if it is co-authored. That way Canvas knows that everyone has turned in work.

You should also be familiar with the academic integrity policies of the College of Literature, Science & the Arts at the University of Michigan, which are available here: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/academicintegrity/>. Violations of these policies will be reported to the Office of the Assistant Dean for Student Academic Affairs, and sanctioned with a course grade of F.

Co-Authorship

You are strongly encouraged to co-author your papers for this class. This isn't required - but I think it helps a lot to work with other philosophers when developing your work.

The only constraint is that you cannot write more than **two** of your short papers with the same co-author.

If you are doing a co-authored longer paper (which would perhaps be a little odd, since this option is primarily meant for people preparing a thesis), then you cannot work with its co-author on any other work.

Course Outline & Readings

The required readings are in **bold**. All other readings are recommended only. Every title is a link to a PhilPapers page that should give you lots of ways to access the paper. I've also included the PhilPapers code for the papers when they are available, so you can go to it directly by typing <http://philpapers.org/rec/> into the search bar, followed by the code.

- 1/14 *Introduction and Organisation*
No reading.
- 1/21 *Recent Work on Knowledge*
Timothy Williamson, **Knowledge as Evidence** (WILKAE)
Timothy Williamson, **Knowing and Asserting** (WILKAA)
Dani Rabinowitz, **The Safety Condition for Knowledge** (RABQSC)
Ernest Sosa, How to Defeat Opposition to Moore (SOSHTD)
Timothy Williamson, Cognitive Homelessness (WILCH)
Amia Srinivasan, Are We Luminous? (SRIAWL)
Matthias Steup and Jonathan Jenkins Ichikawa, The Analysis of Knowledge (STETAO-8)
Timothy Williamson, Conditionalizing on Knowledge (WILCOK)
Marc Alspecter-Kelly, The Sensitivity Principle in Epistemology,
<https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/the-sensitivity-principle-in-epistemology/>
- 1/28 *Contextualism*
Keith DeRose, **Solving the Skeptical Problem** (DERSTS)
David Lewis, **Elusive Knowledge** (LEWEK)
Patrick Rysiew, **Epistemic Contextualism** (RYSEC)
Stewart Cohen, How to Be a Fallibilist (COHHTB)
Jason Stanley, On the Linguistic Basis for Contextualism (STAOTL)
Héctor-Neri Castañeda , The Theory of Questions, Epistemic Powers, and the Indexical Theory of Knowledge (HECTTO)
- 2/4 *Fantl & McGrath*
Jeremy Fantl and Matthew McGrath, **Evidence, Pragmatics and Justification** (FANEPA)
Jeremy Fantl and Matthew McGrath, **On Pragmatic Encroachment in Epistemology** (MCGOPE)
- 2/11 *Stanley and Hawthorne*
Jason Stanley, **Précis of Knowledge and Practical Interests** (STAPOK)
Gilbert Harman, Epistemic Contextualism as a Theory of Primary Speaker Meaning (HARECA-3)
Ram Neta, Anti-intellectualism and the knowledge-action principle (NETAAT)
Stephen Schiffer, Interest-Relative Invariantism (UNKII)
Jason Stanley, **Replies to Gilbert Harman, Ram Neta, and Stephen Schiffer** (STARTG-3)
John Hawthorne and Jason Stanley, **Knowledge and Action** (HAWKAA)
Jeremy Fantl and Matthew McGrath, Critical study of John Hawthorne's *Knowledge and Lotteries* and Jason Stanley's *Knowledge and Practical Interests* (FANCSO)
Richard Feldman, Review of *Knowledge and Lotteries* (FELKAL-3)

- 2/18 *The Lottery and Preface Paradoxes*
 Jennifer Nagel, **The Psychological Dimension of the Lottery Paradox** (NAGTPD)
 Simon Evnine, **Believing Conjunctions** (EVNBC)
 Sarah Moss, **Full Belief and Loose Speech** (MOSFBA)
 Hannes Leitgeb, The Stability Theory of Belief (LEITST-2)
 Julia Staffel, Beliefs, Buses and Lotteries: Why Rational Belief Can't be Stably High Credence (STABBA)
 John Hawthorne, Daniel Rothschild and Levi Spectre, Belief is Weak (HAWBIW)
- 2/25 *Pragmatic Theories of Belief*
 Brian Weatherson, **Can We Do Without Pragmatic Encroachment** (WEACWD)
 Dorit Ganson, **Evidentialism and pragmatic constraints on outright belief** (GANEAP)
 Brian Weatherson, Knowledge, Bets and Interests (WEAKBA)
 Jacob Ross and Mark Schroeder, Belief, Credence, and Pragmatic Encroachment (ROSBKA-4)
- 3/3 *Spring Break*
 From now on the bulk of the readings are in Knowledge: A Human Interest Story, which is shortened to KAHIS in what follows.
- 3/10 *Interests and Questions*
KAHIS, Chapters 1 and 2
 Nilanjan Das, Epistemic Stability, Chapter 3
<https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/107096>
- 3/17 *Belief*
KAHIS, Chapter 3
 Jennifer Nagel, Knowledge ascriptions and the psychological consequences of thinking about error (NAGKAA-2)
 Jennifer Nagel, Knowledge ascriptions and the psychological consequences of changing stakes (NAGKAA)
 Jonathan Weisberg, Knowledge in Action (WEIKIA)
 Jonathan Weisberg, Belief in Psychontology
<https://jonathanweisberg.org/publication/Belief%20in%20Psychontology/>
 Dorit Ganson, Evidentialism and pragmatic constraints on outright belief (GANEAP)
 Jacob Ross and Mark Schroeder, Belief, Credence, and Pragmatic Encroachment (ROSBKA-4)
 Hannes Leitgeb, The Stability Theory of Belief (LEITST-2)
 John Hawthorne, Daniel Rothschild and Levi Spectre, Belief is Weak (HAWBIW)
 Craige Roberts, Information Structure in Discourse: Towards an Integrated Formal Theory of Pragmatics (ROBISI-6)
- 3/24 *Knowledge*
KAHIS, Chapter 4
 Charity Anderson and John Hawthorne, Pragmatic Encroachment and Closure (ANDPEA-5)
 Adam Zweber, Fallibilism, Closure, and Pragmatic Encroachment. (ZWEFCA)

3/31

Evidence

KAHIS, Chapter 5

KAHIS, Chapter 6

Shyam Nair, Must Good Reasoning Satisfy Cumulative Transitivity? (NAIMGR)

Alexander Bird, Is evidence non-inferential? (BIRIEN)

4/7

Close Calls

KAHIS, Chapter 7

Charity Anderson and John Hawthorne, Pragmatic Encroachment and Closure (ANDPEA-5)

Adam Zveber, Fallibilism, Closure, and Pragmatic Encroachment. (ZWEFCA)

John Conlisk, Why Bounded Rationality?

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2729218>

4/14

Critics

To be filled in when we see what kinds of objections people most want to discuss.

4/21

Summary

A chance to go over anything that we didn't get enough time to discuss, and to review final papers.