**PHIL 153: Ways of Knowing**

Fall, 2022

MW, 12:30pm-1:45pm, Maguire 104

*Instructor:* Benjamin Elzinga

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Office Hours:

Tuesday 3pm-4pm, Online

(Log on to *Canvas*, navigate to this course, click on the “Zoom Conferencing” tab, and *scroll down* to “Office Hours”)

Course Description:

The focus of this course is the concept of a lived epistemologies. A lived epistemology is any concrete commitment to a view of knowledge which has a significant impact on how one goes about forming beliefs. Such commitments needn’t be fully articulated or involve awareness of official epistemic categories. They instead express our largely pre-theoretical attitudes towards our existential situation as finite agents interacting with a complex world. We will explore how lived epistemologies develop through passionate collisions in our personal lives using the work of Søren Kierkegaard as a guide, touching on topics like objectivity, bullshit, irony, skill, despair, commitment, faith, and others.

Course Goals:

1) Students will gain knowledge and appreciation of some of the deep problems in the history philosophy and will also have an opportunity to grapple with more contemporary issues.

2) Students will develop a set of analytic tools that will help them to find answers to hard theoretical questions, whether philosophical questions or questions that arise in their broader engagement with the world.

Required Texts:

All other required materials for the course will consist of philosophical articles or brief excerpts from larger philosophical works distributed via Canvas.

Course Requirements:

Your course grade will be based on the following:

1) 4 Short Papers (each worth 12% of total grade)

Short Papers (3 pages long) will be based on a predetermined prompt and will ask you to either summarize, critique or apply ideas we have discussed in class.

2) 1 Medium Length Paper (17% of total grade)

The final paper (5 pages long) will require you to develop your own topic based on the course material.

3) Assignments (20% of total grade)

1. Short reflections on Monday’s material will be due at beginning of that session (8%).
2. There will be an in-class assignment every Wednesday (8%).
3. Two students will share their reflections every Monday (4%).

4) Participation (15% of total grade)

The material that we are going to cover in this class may be difficult and likely to be unfamiliar. Thus, careful attention to each text will be expected and required. There will always be some opportunity for you to ask pressing and important questions, bring up something you find confusing, raise an objection against something we've read, etc.

Your participation grade will be determined by your active, participation in class. Receiving full credit will require zero unexcused absences and a consistent effort to genuinely engage with the material and with your classmates each time we meet.

Late Work and Extensions:

Late papers will automatically be penalized 1/3 of a grade (A- to a B+, B+ to a B, etc) for each day that they are late. Extensions may be possible but only if requested and approved before the due date.

Grading:

These are the general criteria I use for assigning specific grades on written work. What matters most is not the content of your ideas, but the expression of them.

A: original ideas very clearly expressed and organized; full grasp of the material and its implications; especially insightful reflection on the relevant texts

B: reasonably original ideas clearly expressed and organized; good grasp of the material and its implications; good reflection on the relevant texts

C: adequate expression and organization of ideas; adequate grasp of the material and its implications; adequate reflection on texts

D: inadequate expression and organization of ideas; inadequate grasp of the material and its implications; inadequate reflection on texts

F: mostly for serious sins of omission, like turning in only part of an assignment

Academic Integrity

This course will be conducted under the strictest standards of academic integrity. Plagiarism or other forms of dishonesty are contradictory to the goals of this class and hence, will not be tolerated. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be referred to the Honor Council for investigation, and I reserve the right to fail a student for the entire course in the case of demonstrated violation. Please see *The Undergraduate Bulletin* or, for more information, visit the university’s Honor System website at http://www.georgetown.edu/honor. The website has useful guidelines about what constitutes plagiarism and how to cite properly.

Health Resources

1. Student Health Center

“The health center is staffed by Family Practice faculty physicians and nurse practitioners with particular training and experience in college health, and who are dedicated to providing high quality health care.”

* <http://www3.georgetown.edu/student-affairs/health/index.html>
* Ground Floor, Darnall Hall

2. Counseling and Psychiatric Service

“CAPS offers a broad range of psychological and psychiatric services that attempt to balance the unique needs of individual students with the broader demands of a diverse campus community.  Accordingly, in order to best serve the needs of our campus at large, open-ended or extended psychotherapy and medication maintenance services are limited and cannot be routinely offered.  Such service offerings are based on staff availability and student need.”

* <http://caps.georgetown.edu/>

3. Health Education Services

“Health Education Services is comprised of health professionals who are available to help students deal with a range of personal health issues, including pregnancy, alcohol and drug use and abuse, adult children of alcoholics, eating disorders, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, sexual health, stress management, and general health promotion. In addition, Emotional Intelligence is an area of interest and expertise for the staff of Health Education Services.  All services are individualized, confidential, and free for students, unless otherwise stated.  Staff members are also available to facilitate training and educational programs in these areas.”

* http://www3.georgetown.edu/student-affairs/healthed/staff.html

**Course Schedule:**

**(subject to revision)**

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| **#** | **Date** | **Topic** | **Reading** |
| **Title** |
| 1 | 8/24 | Introduction  | N/A |
| 2 | 8/29 | The Present Age | Kierkegaard, “The Present Age” |
| 3 | 8/31 | The Present Age | Kierkegaard, “The Present Age” |
|  | 9/5 | Holiday: No Class (but class will be held the next day!) |  |
| 4 | 9/6 | Objectivity  | Selections from Daston & Gallison, *Objectivity* |
| 5 | 9/7 | Objectivity  | Selections from Daston & Gallison, *Objectivity* |
| 6 | 9/12 | Desire & Instrumental Reason | Derek Parfit, Reasons & Persons, Taylor, The Ethics of AuthenticityHorkheimer, “Means and Ends” |
| 7 | 9/14 | Desire & Instrumental Reason | Cont. |
| 8 | 9/19 | Consumerism | “The Dependence Effect”, “The Sexual Sell”, “Advertising in the Age of Accelerated Meaning” |
| 9 | 9/21 | Bullshit | Frankfurt, *On Bullshit* |
| 10 | 9/26 | Despair & Absurdity  | Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*;Hannay, “Kierkegaard and the variety of despair” |
| 11 | 9/28 | Post-Truth | Fuller, *Post-truth: Knowledge as a Power Game* |
| 12 | 10/3 | Irony | Cross, “Neither either nor or: The perils of reflexive irony”Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* |
| 13 | 10/5 | Ethics & Choice | Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* |
|  | 10/10 | No Class |  |
| 14 | 10/12 | Ethics & Choice | Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, cont.Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person” (Optional) |
| 15 | 10/17 | Ethics & Choice | Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, cont. |
| 16 | 10/19 | Ethics & Choice | Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, cont. |
| 17 | 10/24 | Skill & Commitment | Dreyfus & Dreyfus, “A five-stage model of the mental activities involved in directed skill acquisition” |
| 18 | 10/26 | Skill & Commitment | Barbara Montero, *Thought in Action: Expertise and the Conscious Mind*, selections. |
| 19 | 10/31 | Skill & Commitment | Haugeland, “Authentic Intentionality”  |
| 20 | 11/2 | Against Choice  | Taylor, Responsibility for Self |
| 21 | 11/7 | Pyrrhonian Skepticism | Sextus Empiricus, Outlines of Pyrrhonism, bk 1 |
| 22 | 11/9 | Review | Dreyfus & Rubin, “You can't get something for nothing: Kierkegaardand Heidegger on how not to overcome Nihilism” |
| 23 | 11/14 | Fear and Trembling  | Fear and Trembling, Preface, Attunement, and Speech in Praise of Abraham  |
| 24 | 11/16 | Fear and Trembling | Fear and Trembling, Outpouring from the Heart |
| 25 | 11/21 | Fear and Trembling | Fear and Trembling, Problemata 1 |
|  | 11/23 | No Class |  |
| 26 | 11/28 | The Ethics of Belief | William James, "The Will to Believe" (Required); W.K. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief" (Required)Heather Douglas “Inductive Risk and Values in Science” (not required) |
| 27 | 11/30 | Art, Intuition & the Absolute | Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, selections |
| 28 | 12/5 | Art, Intuition & the Absolute | Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, selections |
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