

# Epistemology

Gabe Dupre

May 2, 2020



## Course Overview

What do we know? and how do we know it? These are the questions of Epistemology: the study of knowledge. For large parts of the history of philosophy, these questions have been perhaps the central philosophical questions. It has been thought that in order to answer questions about what the world is like, we must first understand how we can know about the world. In this course, we will survey classical and contemporary accounts of what knowledge is and how it is acquired.

The course will be divided into several modules. We will start by looking at classical work showing what makes these issues difficult and important. We will then turn to important 21<sup>st</sup> Century debates concerning the analysis of knowledge, aiming at a full account of the conditions under which some piece of information can correctly be said to be known. This work seeks to identify what we know by first identifying what it is to know. We will then turn to recent approaches to knowledge which invert this strategy: we first look at what we know, and then seek to work backwards from this to figure out how such knowledge can be attained. We will look at two of the paradigmatic methods for acquiring knowledge: perception and science. We will then ask: what is it about these which enable the generation of knowledge, drawing on work in philosophy of science and psychology. This will suggest a ‘naturalised epistemology’, which identifies the conditions on knowledge through empirical observation of the world.

## Reading Schedule

Readings marked with a ‘\*’ are recommended, not required.

- **Week 1: Why Care About Epistemology?**
  - Hume, D. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Excerpts)
  - Descartes, R. *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Excerpts)
  - FILM: *The Matrix*
- **Week 2: Justified True Belief**
  - Plato. *Theatetus*
  - Gettier, E. *Is Knowledge Justified True Belief?*
  - \* Russell, B. *The Problems of Philosophy*
- **Week 3: Causation and Reliability**
  - Goldman, A. *A Causal Theory of Knowing*
  - Goldman, A. *What is Justified Belief?*
  - \* Nozick, R. *Philosophical Explanations* (Excerpts)
- **Week 4: Problems with Reliabilism**
  - Conee, E. and Feldman, R. *The Generality Problem for Reliabilism*
  - Brandom, R. *Insights and Blindspots of Reliabilism*
  - \* Kripke, S. *Nozick on Knowledge*
- **Week 5: Contextualism**
  - DeRose, K. *Contextualism and Knowledge Attributions*
  - DeRose, K. *Solving the Skeptical Problem*
- **Week 6: The Idea of Naturalized Epistemology**
  - Kitcher, P. *The Naturalist’s Return*
  - \* Neurath, O. *Anti-Spengler*
- **Week 7: Naturalized Epistemology: Scientific Epistemology I**
  - Oreskes, N. *Why Trust Science?* (Excerpts)
  - Kitcher, P. *The Division of Cognitive Labour*
  - \* Smart, J.J.C *Philosophy and Scientific Realism* (Excerpts)

- **Week 8: Naturalized Epistemology: Scientific Epistemology II**
  - O'Connor, C. and Weatherall, J. *The Misinformation Age* (Excerpts)
  - \* Cartwright, N. *Are RCTs the Gold Standard?*
- **Week 9: Naturalized Epistemology: Psychology I**
  - Kornblith, H. *In Defense of Naturalized Epistemology*
  - \* Quine, W. v. O. *Naturalized Epistemology*
  - \* Sosa, E. *The Raft and the Pyramid*
- **Week 10: Naturalized Epistemology: Psychology II- Perception**
  - Burge, T. *Perceptual Entitlement*
- **Week 11: Naturalized Epistemology: Psychology III- Memory**
  - Hacking, I. *Rewriting the Soul* (Excerpts)
- **Week 12: Naturalized Epistemology: Psychology IV- Criticisms**
  - Kim, J. *What is Naturalized Epistemology?*