

CONTENTS

1. **Teaching Experience** 1
 1.1 Classes Taught 1
 1.2 Classes Assisted 2

2. **Teaching Methodology** 3

3. **Student Evaluations** 5
 3.1 Quantitative Evaluations 5
 3.2 Qualitative Evaluations 6

4. **Sample Course Material** 8
 4.1 Sample Paper Questions 8
 4.2 Sample Epistemology Syllabus 9

1. TEACHING EXPERIENCE

1.1 **Classes Taught**

Epistemology, Carleton College, Spring 2012

An elective open to upper-level undergraduate, the class serves as an advanced introduction to some of the central questions in the theory of knowledge. The class was part of my teaching load as a Pre-doctoral Faculty Fellow in the Carleton College Philosophy Department. (The syllabus is appended.)

Symbolic Logic, Carleton College, Fall 2011

An elective open to upper-level undergraduates, the class serves as an advanced introduction to the basic concepts and methods of classical sentential and first-order, predicate logic. The class was part of my teaching load as a Pre-doctoral Faculty Fellow in the Carleton College Philosophy Department.

From Socrates to the Matrix, Bloomfield College, Spring 2003

An introduction to central questions in ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics as they arise in Plato's *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Meno*, and *Phaedo*, with analogies and illustrations drawn from contemporary popular culture. This class was part of the Bard College sponsored Clemente Course in the Humanities.

1.2 Classes Assisted

Methods/Problems of Philosophy (Akeel Bilgrami), Columbia University, Spring 2011

An introduction to the methods and problems of philosophy, the course covers topics such as freedom of the will, scepticism, political liberty and power, and the mind/body problem, through a mix of historical and contemporary readings.

Epistemology (Jeffrey Helzner), Columbia University, Fall 2010

An elective open to upper-level undergraduates, the course serves as an advanced introduction to traditional and formal epistemology with emphasis on the norms governing belief formation.

20th Century Philosophy (David Sidorsky), Columbia University, Fall 2009

An elective open to upper-level undergraduates, the course serves as an advanced introduction to some of the more prominent philosophical schools of the previous century, including logical positivism, ordinary language philosophy, phenomenology, and existentialism.

Symbolic Logic (Achille Varzi), Columbia University, Fall 2008 – Spring 2010

A mixed graduate / upper-level undergraduate course serving as an advanced introduction to concepts and methods of classical propositional and predicate logic.

Moral and Political Philosophy (Mario De Caro), Tufts University, Summer 2005

An elective open to upper-level undergraduates, the course provides an advanced introduction to moral and political philosophy through a mix of historical and contemporary readings.

Introduction to Ethics (Nancy Bauer), Tufts University, Spring 2005

A general introduction to ideas of prominent ethical theorists, including Plato, Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, and John Stuart Mill, along with replies and criticisms from contemporary thinkers.

Religion as a Natural Phenomenon (Daniel Dennett), Tufts University, Fall 2004

A mixed graduate / upper-level undergraduate seminar on Dennett's "Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon", taught by the author.

2. TEACHING METHODOLOGY

In my teaching, I have implemented a wide range of strategies to promote careful, analytical reading, thinking and writing.

Analytical Reading

In order to help my students better appreciate the structure of philosophical prose, I have them submit weekly reading summaries composed of “what it says” and “what it does” statements. A “what it says” statement attempts to summarise the content of an assigned reading. A “what it does” statement describes what the author seeks to accomplish via the content presented. Having students complete “what it says” and “what it does” statements prior to in-class discussions not only encourages careful reading, but also increases student awareness of the structure of the papers read, which arguments are most central for the author’s goal, and overall significance of the author’s claims. Another effective strategy for the promotion of careful reading is playing the “believing and doubting game”. When playing the “believing game”, students read a text empathetically, attempting to see matters from the author’s perspective, and (if necessary) trying to walk in the author’s historical/cultural shoes. I have found that describing the exercise as a game makes students more willing to put aside their natural resistance to ideas that differ from their own. When playing the “doubting game”, students adopt the role of devil’s advocate, raising objections to, and looking for weaknesses in, the author’s argument. I have found that when this exercise is undertaken subsequently to the “believing game”, it leads to a more balanced appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of a class reading.

Critical Thinking

One major obstacle to critical thinking, particularly among undergraduates, is intellectual egocentrism—an inability to imagine alternative views on a given issue. In order to push students past their prejudices and natural mental blocks, I have found it highly effective to organise in-class role-playing exercises in which students briefly debate each other in the persona of an assigned philosopher. For example, in my epistemology course at Carleton College, I had four students debate each other, where two pretended to be the externalists, Alvin Goldman and Fred Dretske, and two others pretended to be the internalists, Richard Feldman and Roderick Chisholm. Students were only allowed to use arguments that were consistent with the positions of the thinkers they were role-playing. This exercise allows students to gain a better appreciation of the positions and motivations of the various readings and thinkers covered in class. Moreover, I found that such role-playing was an effective tool in getting members of the class who were reluctant to voice their personal views on a particular issue to be more active. Defending someone else’s views meant that there was much less at stake. Furthermore, students typically found the role-playing format highly stimulating, and it generated a relaxed and fun in-class atmosphere.

Effective Writing

Philosophical writing, if correctly executed, is almost always a type of persuasive writing. In order to better communicate this fact to my students, I have them engage in the following “before reading / after reading” exercise while planning their papers:

Before reading my paper, my readers will believe: _____.

After reading my paper, my readers will believe: _____.

I have found that this simple exercise helps students to keep in mind that their writing aims to take the reader from one set of beliefs or assumptions to another. It also forces them to think about their target audience at the very beginning of the writing process. Left to their own devices, most undergraduates either fail to consider their audience until the very end of the writing process (if at all), or compose papers with the instructor in mind. Failing to consider their audience, or writing with the instructor in mind, often leads students to be less clear in their writing. Students assume that since the subject matter is already familiar to the instructor, there is no need to define technical terms or clarify central concepts. However, often it is only when a student has tried to clarify an idea for someone lacking philosophical training that they recognise how tenuous their own grasp of the material may actually be. Moreover, if students are going to be competent members of a scholarly community, they must learn to write for a wide and varied audience. This means students must be encouraged to write, not for their instructor only, but for variety of readers, some hostile, uncharitable or lacking basic background knowledge. In order to promote greater mindfulness of their audience, I have begun including a specification of the target audience in my description of written assignments. In their first written assignment I have students target a naïve reader, a reader with basic philosophical knowledge in the second, and a knowledgeable but hostile reader in the third. Sample paper questions illustrating the preceding format are included in §4.1, below.

The preceding points are not only useful in promoting high quality philosophical work, but provides students with general tools they can employ in a wide range of academic and non-academic domains. This is as it should be since most of the students enrolled in a given philosophy class will not ultimately pursue full-time careers in philosophy. While, as a philosopher, I take myself to be particularly well positioned to encourage high quality analytical reading, thinking and writing, the skills I aim to impart to my students are ones that may be effectively applied in contexts far removed from the philosophy classroom.

3. STUDENT EVALUATIONS

3.1 Quantitative Evaluations

The following includes *all* responses to *all* quantitative questions for the course evaluations for Methods and Problems in Philosophy, Spring 2011.

Questions:

1. Ability to raise challenging questions:
2. Ability to help clarify course material:
3. Ability to encourage student participation effectively:
4. Responsiveness to student questions, opinions and criticisms:
5. Feedback on assignments and examinations:
6. Ability to communicate effectively with students:
7. Overall effectiveness:

Out of 25 respondents:

Question	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	N/A
1	40% (10)	36% (9)	12% (3)	4% (1)	0% (0)	8% (2)
2	52% (13)	32% (8)	16% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
3	48% (12)	24% (6)	24% (6)	4% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
4	48% (12)	36% (9)	16% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
5	44% (11)	24% (6)	16% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)	16% (4)
6	48% (12)	36% (9)	12% (3)	4% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
7	48% (12)	28% (7)	24% (6)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)

The following includes all responses to all quantitative questions for the course evaluations for Epistemology, Fall 2010.

Questions:

1. Ability to raise challenging questions:
2. Ability to help clarify course material:
3. Ability to encourage student participation effectively:
4. Responsiveness to student questions, opinions and criticisms:
5. Feedback on assignments and examinations:
6. Ability to communicate effectively with students:
7. Overall effectiveness:

Out of 9 respondents:

Question	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	N/A
1	67% (6)	11% (1)	11% (1)	11% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
2	67% (6)	11% (1)	11% (1)	11% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
3	56% (5)	11% (1)	11% (1)	22% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
4	56% (5)	22% (2)	11% (1)	11% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
5	78% (7)	0% (0)	0% (0)	22% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
6	78% (7)	0% (0)	0% (0)	22% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
7	56% (5)	22% (2)	11% (1)	11% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)

3.2 Qualitative Evaluations

The following includes *all* qualitative responses for the course Methods and Problems in Philosophy, Spring 2011.

1. Effective and approachable TA with firm grasp of subject matter knowledge.
2. Always available to explain the complex topics covered in class.
3. He was good, but listened to students less than Bilgrami.
4. Avery did a good job in review sessions and office hours going over course material and answering other questions. I feel though that he needed a bit more time for review sessions because the reviews were often rushed. His grading was appropriate and he provided clear and useful comments.
5. Avery ran the majority of the TA review sessions and he clearly presented summaries of the main points in class and the readings. I cannot say anything about his grading as he did not grade my midterm.
6. Avery was an excellent TA! The only reason the ratings are not all 5's is because of limitations on his ability to do things like "raise challenging questions," due to limited discussion segment time and the need to work quickly through clarification of course material. Always flexible with office hours and willing to help, highly knowledgeable with regard to course materials, and very gifted at teaching that knowledge to others.
7. Avery was an absolutely fantastic TA. His review sessions were very helpful; concise and informative. I was able to meet with him before an exam, and his advice was certainly helpful in allowing me to better prepare; he was clearly passionate about being

a teacher and passionate about philosophy. It was great to have a TA as dedicated and helpful as Avery in a class when the material was sometimes difficult to comprehend.

8. Avery is very quick to respond with e-mail and very good at quickly digesting many lectures worth of material into a condensed overview.

9. Avery is one sharp guy. He carried with him a high degree of confidence and preparedness in his portion of lectures. At the same time, he was extremely approachable and welcome to any questions.

10. Avery was a great TA. He knew the material quite well and was integral in my understanding of the course.

The following includes *all* qualitative responses for the course Epistemology, Fall 2010.

1. Avery led wonderfully productive recitation sessions and was outstandingly helpful in understanding the readings. His guidelines and feedback for the assignments was clear and through. A great TA!

2. Avery was extremely helpful. His weekly discussion sections helped me understand the readings much better, and I feel that I got a lot more out of Thursdays with Prof. Helzner because the readings were clarified during the discussion section. We also had interesting debates and discussions in Avery section. His willingness to help you write papers was very helpful as well, and his comments on the writing assignments were always fair, constructive, and helped my writing in general.

3. Wonderful TA. Always available and very clear.

4. Coolest TA ever.

SAMPLE PAPER QUESTIONS

EPISTEMOLOGY (AVERY ARCHER)

DIRECTIONS: This assignment will assess (i) the quality of your reasoning as reflected in the organisation, clarity and cogency of your reply to one of the questions below, and (ii) your ability to communicate your ideas to a specific audience. In addition to your paper, you are *required* to include a short description (in two or three sentences) of how you have tailored your paper in order to better reach the target audience specified.

QUESTION 1: What do you take to be the most significant difference between A. J. Ayer's account of knowledge and the traditional JTB analysis? Provide textual and argumentative support in favour of your answer. Which of the two analyses do you believe to be superior? Why?

Audience: This paper should target a philosophically unsophisticated reader who has never taken an epistemology class. Your goal is to explain the significance of the relevant concepts and why you have adopted the position you have.

QUESTION 2: According to Nozick, why can't I know that I am not a brain in a tank on Alpha Centauri? Does this, according to Nozick, entail that I do not know that I am now sitting and typing on my computer? Why or why not? Do you agree with Nozick's assessment? Why or why not?

Audience: This paper should target an audience with a very basic knowledge of philosophy (e.g., an undergraduate who has taken an introductory class in philosophy) who has not read Nozick's paper. Your goal is to explain the significance of the relevant concepts and why you have adopted the position you have.

QUESTION 3: Do you think that Feldman's and Conee's reply to the objection that internalism cannot preserve the intuition that we may know that p even if we have forgotten the initial source of our justification for believing that p succeeds? Why or why not?

Audience: This paper should target a hostile reader (i.e., someone who holds the opposite of whatever position you ultimately choose to defend) with a very basic knowledge of the debate between internalist and externalist (e.g., an undergraduate currently enrolled in an Epistemology class). Your goal is to persuade them to accept your view.

SAMPLE SYLLABUS
EPISTEMOLOGY (AVERY ARCHER)

1. Course Description

The primary goal of this course is to introduce students to some of the central issues and questions in the theory of knowledge, with a focus on the conceptual analysis of knowledge and scepticism. Our approach will be primarily textual rather than topical. That is, we will attend to various epistemological issues via a close reading of texts that have played an important role in shaping the contours of the field.

One of the primary goals of this course will be to hone your ability to closely read philosophical texts. Classes will be devoted to analysis and discussion of the assigned readings.

2. Coursework

The grade for the course will be broken down as follows:

1. *Papers* (80%)

- 2 *Short Papers* (20% each): 4-5 double-spaced pages in length.
- *Term Paper* (40%): 15-20 double-spaced pages in length.

2. *Participation* (20%)

- *Class Participation* (10%): Asking questions, answering questions, and engaging in a constructive way in class discussion.
- *Blog Discussion* (10%): I will be posting summaries of some of the core readings on the course blog, along with discussion questions. Students are asked to either respond to these questions, or critically engage other student's responses, in the comments section of the post.

3. Lectures and Readings

I. Gettier and the Nature of Knowledge

Week 1: The Gettier Problem

- J. Ayer, (1956) "Knowing as Having the Right to be Sure" in *The Problems of Knowledge*. (London: Macmillan), pp. 22-34.
- Edmund L. Gettier (1963) "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" in *Analysis*, vol. 23, pp. 121-123.
- Michael Clark, (1963) "Knowledge and Grounds: A Comment on Mr. Gettier's Paper" in *Analysis*, vol. 24, pp. 46-48.
- Richard Feldman, (1974) "An Alleged Defect in Gettier Counterexamples" in *The Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 52, pp. 68-69.

Week 2: Responses to Gettier

- Alvin Goldman, (1967) "A Causal Theory of Knowing" in *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 64, pp. 357-372.
- Keith Lehrer & Thomas Paxson, (1969) "Knowledge: Undefeated Justified True Belief" in *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 66, pp. 225-237.
- Fred Dretske, (1971) "Conclusive Reasons" in *The Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 49, pp. 1-22.

Week 3: Externalist Theory of Knowledge

- David M. Armstrong, (1973) "The Thermometer-Model of Knowledge" in *Belief, Truth and Knowledge*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 162-183.
- Robert Nozick, (1981) "Knowledge", in *Philosophical Explanations*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp.
- Fred Dretske, (1983) "Precis of Knowledge and the Flow of Information", in *Behavioural Brain Sciences*, vol. 6, pp. 55-63.

Week 3: Internalist Theories of Knowledge

- Richard Feldman and Earl Conee, (1988) "Internalism Defended", in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 1-18.
- Roderick M. Chisholm, (1988) "The Indispensability of Internal Justification", in *Synthese*, vol. 74, pp. 285-296.
- Keith Lehrer, (1986) "The Coherence Theory of Knowledge", in *Philosophical Topics*, vol. 14, pp. 5-25.

Week 4: Attributions of Knowledge

- Keith DeRose, (1992) "Contextualism and Knowledge Attributions", in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 52, pp. 913-929.
- Fred Dretske, (1981) "The Pragmatic Dimension of Knowledge", in *Philosophical Studies*, vol. 40, pp. 363-378.

- Roderick Chisholm, (1982) "The Problem of Criterion" in *The Foundations of Knowing*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), pp. 61-75.

First Short Paper Due.

II. Scepticism

Week 5: Scepticism about Knowledge

- Barry Stroud, (1989) "Understanding Human Knowledge in General", in *Knowledge and Scepticism*. (Boulder: Westview Press), pp. 31-50.
- Peter Unger, (1971) "A Defense of Skepticism" in *Philosophical Review*, vol. 80, pp. 198-219.
- Barry Stroud, (1984) "The Problem of the External World" in *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 1-38.

Week 6: Relevant Alternatives

- Robert Nozick, (1981) "Knowledge and Scepticism", in *Philosophical Explanations*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), pp. 172-9, 197-211.
- David Lewis, (1996) "Elusive Knowledge", in *The Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 74, pp. 549-567.

Week 7: Semantic Approaches

- Hilary Putnam, (1981) "Brains in a Vat", in *Reason, Truth and History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 1-21.
- Fred Dretske, (1983) "The Epistemology of Belief" in *Synthese*, vol. 55, pp. 3-19.
- Donald Davidson, (1990) "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge", in *Reading Rorty. Critical Responses to Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers), pp. 120-138.

Second Short Paper Due.

III. Sources of Knowledge

Week 6: Perception

- Bertrand Russell, (1997) *The Problems of Philosophy*. (New York: Oxford University Press) ch. 1-2.
- H. P. Grice, (1961) "The Causal Theory of Perception", in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplement*, vol. 35, pp. 121-152.

- Peter F. Strawson, (1979) "Perception and its Objects", in *Perception and Identity: Essays Presented to A. J. Ayer*. (London: Macmillan), pp. 41-60.

Week 7: Introspection

- Tyler Burge, (1988) "Individualism and Self-Knowledge", in *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 85, pp. 649-63.
- Paul Boghossian, (1989) "Content and Self-Knowledge", in *Philosophical Topics 17.1: Philosophy of Mind*. (Fayetteville, AR.: University of Arkansas Press), pp. 5-26.
- Sven Bernecker, (1996) "Externalism and the Attudinal Component of Self-Knowledge", in *Nous*, vol. 30, pp. 262-75.

Week 8: Memory and Testimony

- Norman Malcolm, (1963) "A Definition of Factual Memory", in *Knowledge and Certainty*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall).
- Michael Huemer, (1999) "The Problem of Memory Knowledge", in *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 80, pp. 346-57.
- C. A. Coady, (1973) "Testimony and Observation", in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 10, pp. 149-55.

Week 9: Induction

- Bertrand Russell, "On Induction", in *The Problems in Philosophy*. (London: William and Norgate), pp. 93-108.
- Hans Reichenbach, "The Pragmatic Justification of Induction", in *Experience and Prediction. An Analysis of the Foundation and the Structure of Knowledge*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp. 346-57.
- Nelson Goodman, (1983) "The New Riddle of Induction" in *Facts, Fiction and Forecast*. (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press), pp. 72-83.

Week 10: A Priori Knowledge

- Saul Kripke, (1980) "A Prior Knowledge, Necessity and Contingency", in *Naming and Necessity*. (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press), pp. 34-9, 48-58.
- W. V. Quine, (1951) "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", *Philosophical Review*, vol. 60, pp. 20-43.
- Philip Kitcher, (1980) "A Priori Knowledge" in *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 89, pp. 3-23.

Term Paper Due.