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COURSE DESCRIPTION: Throughout the history of philosophy skeptical arguments have been used to challenge our claims to knowledge regarding ethics, religion, philosophy, science, and even ordinary beliefs about the external world. This course is an in-depth study of issues surrounding skepticism including: the nature of knowledge and rationality; external world skepticism; scientific skepticism; whether disagreement in ethics, religion, philosophy, etc. undermines our claims to knowledge in those areas; similarities and differences between various skeptical arguments; and why it might be important to study skepticism even presuming we reject the skeptical conclusions.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES: As a result of studying these topics students will gain a wide range of knowledge and develop a number of skills whose value extends well beyond the classroom. There are five main goals of this course. The first two are specific to the course material. The last three pertain to more general skills that are necessary for success in any field.

- Achieve an understanding of influential views, arguments, and problems in epistemology.
- Develop a critical perspective on those views, arguments, and problems.
- Improve one's ability to interpret texts and reconstruct arguments.
- Improve one's ability to *evaluate* arguments.
- Improve one's ability to carefully and clearly communicate ideas and arguments both verbally and in writing.

TEXTS: All readings will be posted on ICON.

RECOMMENDED:

- For general strategies for writing your papers see Jim Pryor's "Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper" (the best introduction to writing philosophy papers I've ever come across) at <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>
- A list of additional readings

GRADING SCALE:

A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
100-98	97-93	92-90	89-87	86-83	82-80	79-77	76-73	72-70	69-67	66-63	62-60	59-0

GRADING: I'll use plus/minus grading, but note that I'll only award an "A+" in extraordinary circumstances. Your final grade will be calculated on the basis of 2 papers, 2 take-home exams, a presentation, and 5 reading responses.

PAPERS: 40% of your grade comes from two paper assignments (15% for the 1st paper; 25% for the 2nd). Detailed instructions and grading criteria for the assignments will be provided (at least) a week prior to the due dates both in class and on ICON. *Note: I'll give an option to rewrite the 1st paper in light of my comments. If the rewrite shows either no or only relatively minor improvement then your initial paper grade will remain unaffected. If the rewrite shows noteworthy improvement then your initial paper grade will receive a 1/3rd letter grade boost. If the rewrite shows outstanding improvement then your initial paper grade will receive a 2/3rd letter grade boost.*

EXAMS: 35% of your grade comes from three exams (15% for exam 1 and 20% from the final). These will be take-home exams and will consist of short answer and essay questions.

PRESENTATION: 15% of your grade comes from an in-class presentation. In these presentations you will give a 15-20 min. presentation on the reading for the day. Do not just summarize the reading. The presentation is meant to be a discussion starter concerning the week's topic and reading; your

presentation ought to focus in on raising questions, objections, or defenses of a particular argument or thesis discussed in the reading.

READING RESPONSES: 10% of your grade will come from five short 1-page reading responses meant to offer you a more informal way of exploring questions, arguments, and objections that may be currently underdeveloped. Responses are to be turned in the class *before* we discuss the reading (these, in turn, will be used in order to facilitate discussion).

ATTENDANCE: Attendance will not *directly* affect your grade. However, attendance can affect your grade indirectly. This class is difficult and you likely won't do well without attending. Moreover, participation in class discussion can raise your final grade *up to* 1/3rd of a grade.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: I will use turnitin.com. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment and will be reported to the college. *Trust me... Plagiarism is not in your best interest; I will catch you!*

NOTES ABOUT THE SCHEDULE: Readings are tentative and may be altered depending on how class discussion develops.

READINGS

WEEK 1	Gettier: Is Justified True Belief Knowledge Descartes: 1 st Meditation
WEEK 2	Unger: A Defense of Skepticism Stroud: The Problem of the External World
WEEK 3	Moore: Proof of an External World & Four Forms of Skepticism Huemer: Selections from <i>Skepticism and the Veil of Perception</i>
WEEK 4	Vogel: Internalist Responses to Skepticism Nozick: Knowledge and Skepticism
WEEK 5	Pritchard: Sensitivity, Safety, and Antiluck Epistemology
WEEK 6	DeRose: Solving the Skeptical Problem Greco: Agent Reliabilism
WEEK 7	Fumerton: Externalism and Skepticism Bergmann: Externalist Responses to Skepticism
WEEK 8	Selections from S.E.P. article "Scientific Realism" Laudan: "A Confutation of Convergent Realism"
WEEK 9	Plantinga: The Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism
WEEK 10	Street: A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value
WEEK 11	Feldman: Epistemological Puzzles Regarding Disagreement Kelly: The Epistemological Significance of Disagreement
WEEK 12	Cohen: A Defense of the (almost) Equal Weight View
WEEK 13	Elgin: Persistent Disagreement
WEEK 14	Alexander & Weinberg: Analytic Epistemology and Experimental Philosophy Nagel: Intuitions and Experiments
WEEK 15	Goldberg: Disagreement, Defeat, and Assertion

Teaching Policies & Procedures

Administrative Home. The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS [Student Academic Handbook](#).

Electronic Communication. University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address. Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences. (*Operations Manual*, III.15.2. Scroll down to k.11.)

Accommodations for Disabilities. A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. See www.uiowa.edu/~sds/ for more information.

Academic Fraud. Plagiarism and any other activities when students present work that is not their own are academic fraud. Academic fraud is a serious matter and is reported to the departmental DEO and to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum. Instructors and DEOs decide on appropriate consequences at the departmental level while the Associate Dean enforces additional consequences at the collegiate level. See the CLAS Academic Fraud section of the [Student Academic Handbook](#).

University Examination Policy requires that students be permitted to make up examinations missed because of illness, mandatory religious obligations, certain University activities, or unavoidable circumstances. Excused absence forms are available at www.registrar.uiowa.edu/forms/absence.pdf.

Final Examination Policies. Final exams may be offered only during finals week. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. Students should not ask their instructor to reschedule a final exam since the College does not permit rescheduling of a final exam once the semester has begun. Questions should be addressed to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum.

Conflicts in Final Exams. CLAS is instituting a new final exam scheduling process and, as such, the final exam time will not be scheduled until the 5th or 6th week of the semester. **It is your responsibility to notify the registrar if there is a conflict between the final exam for this class and your other final exams.** A student who has (a) two examinations scheduled for the same period or (b) more than three examinations scheduled for the same day, should file a request for a change of schedule at the Registration Center, 30 Calvin Hall.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint. Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit the instructor, then the course supervisor, and then the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident. See the CLAS [Student Academic Handbook](#).

Understanding Sexual Harassment. Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI [Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment](#) for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather. In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Public Safety [web site](#).

Student Classroom Behavior. The ability to learn is lessened when students engage in inappropriate classroom behavior, distracting others; such behaviors are a violation of the [Code of Student Life](#). When disruptive activity occurs, a University instructor has the authority to determine classroom seating patterns and to request that a student exit immediately for the remainder of the period. One-day suspensions are reported to appropriate departmental, collegiate, and Student Services personnel (Office of the Vice President for [Student Services](#) and Dean of Students).

Absences. Except in cases of illness or emergency, you should let your instructor know beforehand if you need to be excused from attendance. You can do this either by providing an Explanatory Statement of Absence from Class form (available at <http://www.uiowa.edu/registrar/forms/absence.htm> or from the Registration Center, 30 Calvin Hall) or a statement from a responsible official documenting the times of your participation in an authorized University activity. In the case of emergency or serious illness, please contact your instructor as soon as possible and offer appropriate documentation so that we can discuss your options. If you are absent for more than five days, you may ask the Registration Center to tell each instructor the reason. Instructors may request further documentation of the absence. In addition, you may ask clinicians at Student Health (4189 Westlawn, 5-8392) to discuss your illness and possible accommodations with your instructor if you have health problems.