UAB
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Epistemology

Code: 100311
ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

Degree	Type	Year
Philosophy	OB	2

Contact

Name: Olga Fernandez Prat

Email: olga.fernandez@uab.cat

Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the end of this document.

Prerequisites

None.

Objectives and Contextualisation

The aim of the Epistemology course is to introduce students to the philosophical analysis of knowledge, focusing on its nature, possibility, limits, and justification. Epistemology, as a fundamental branch of theoretical philosophy, addresses questions such as: What does it mean to know something? How is knowledge different from belief or opinion? How do we know what we know?

In this course, students will reflect on both classical and contemporary issues in the theory of knowledge, including the debate between internalism and externalism, the epistemic value of knowledge, the challenges posed by skepticism, and the nature of justification. Current topics will also be explored, such as social epistemology, cognitive biases, and the impact of information technologies on knowledge formation.

The specific objectives of the course include:

- Critically analyzing major theories on the definition of knowledge, such as the traditional conception (justified true belief) and its revisions.

- Understanding and assessing skeptical arguments and the various philosophical responses that have sought to refute them.

- Examining the criteria for epistemic justification and their relation to truth and reliability.

- Reflecting on the obstacles to knowledge, such as deception, structural ignorance, informational noise, or social biases.

- Developing rigorous argumentative skills and critical reading of both classical and contemporary philosophical textsin the field of epistemology.

Competences

- Act within one's own area of knowledge, evaluating sex/gender-based inequalities.
- Analysing and summarising the main arguments of fundamental texts of philosophy in its various disciplines.
- Placing the most representative philosophical ideas and arguments of a period in their historical background and relating the most important authors of each period of any philosophical discipline.
- Recognising and interpreting topics and problems of philosophy in its various disciplines.
- Students must be capable of collecting and interpreting relevant data (usually within their area of study) in order to make statements that reflect social, scientific or ethical relevant issues.
- Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- Students must develop the necessary learning skills to undertake further training with a high degree of autonomy.
- Students must have and understand knowledge of an area of study built on the basis of general secondary education, and while it relies on some advanced textbooks it also includes some aspects coming from the forefront of its field of study.
- Thinking in a critical and independent manner on the basis of the specific topics, debates and problems of philosophy, both historically and conceptually.
- Using the symbology and procedures of the formal sciences in the analysis and building of arguments.

Learning Outcomes

1. Ability to maintain an appropriate conversation.
2. Analyse the sustainability indicators of the academic and professional activities in this field, integrating the social, economic and environmental dimensions.
3. Autonomously searching, selecting and processing information both from structured sources (databases, bibliographies, specialized magazines) and from across the network.
4. Carrying out a planning for the development of a subject-related work.
5. Carrying out oral presentations using an appropriate academic vocabulary and style.
6. Correctly, accurately and clearly communicating the acquired philosophical knowledge in oral and written form.
7. Demonstrating a personal stance over a problem or controversy of philosophical nature, or a work of philosophical research.
8. Distinguishing and outlining the fundamental content of a philosophical text.
9. Documenting a philosophical issue and contrasting its sources.
10. Effectively communicating and applying the argumentative and textual processes to formal and scientific texts.
11. Engaging in debates about philosophical issues respecting the other participants' opinions.
12. Expressing both orally and in written form, the issues and basic problems of the philosophical tradition.
13. Formulating arguments for and against an issue, using proper vocabulary, conceptual precision and argumentative coherence.
14. Identifying the main ideas of a related text and drawing a diagram.
15. Leading working groups, overseeing collective tasks and working with commitment in order to bring together various positions.
16. Producing an individual work that specifies the work plan and timing of activities.
17. Reading basic philosophical text thoroughly.
18. Recognise and define the common thinking present in a multidisciplinary context.
19. Recognising and using the several forms of reasoning in the history of philosophy.
20. Relating several ideas of the current philosophical debates.
21. Relating the various orders of the philosophical ideas of different authors and historical moments.
22. Solving problems autonomously.
23. Submitting works in accordance with both individual and small group demands and personal styles.
24. Summarising the topics and arguments exposed in a classical philosophical debate.
25. Using specialized knowledge acquired in an interdisciplinary context when debating.
26. Using suitable terminology when drawing up an academic text.

Content

1. Clarification of the Notion of Knowledge

This first unit introduces the central problem of epistemology: what does it mean to "know"? Different types of propositional attitudes are distinguished, and the classical definition of knowledge as "justified true belief" is analyzed.

1.1. Knowing, Believing, Conjecturing

- Differences between knowing and believing: knowledge as a special kind of belief.
- Opinion and conjecture as less robust forms of judgment.
- Cases of intuition, suspicion, or speculation: what epistemic state do they imply?

1.2. Belief, Truth, and Justification

- The classical triad of knowledge and its problematization through counterexamples (e.g., Gettier cases).

1.2.1. Truth and Criteria of Truth

- Theories of truth: correspondence, coherence, and pragmatism.
- The challenge of identifying reliable criteria to determine whether a belief is true.

1.2.2. Truth and Certainty: Skepticism and Relativism

- Skepticism as a fundamental challenge to epistemology: classical arguments (Descartes, Hume) and contemporary responses.
- Epistemic and cultural relativism: is truth dependent on the conceptual framework or social values?

2. Obstacles to Knowledge

- Sources of cognitive distortion: prejudice, unconscious biases, structural ignorance.
- Social and psychological factors that limit or hinder the acquisition of reliable knowledge.
- The role of disinformation, fake news, and information overload in contemporary societies.

3. Epistemic Injustice

- Analysis of the concept developed by Miranda Fricker: testimonial and hermeneutical injustice.
- How social context and power relations affect individuals' credibility as sources of knowledge.
- Structural impacts: epistemic marginalization of minoritized groups.

4. Epistemic Virtues and Vices

- Introduction to virtue epistemology: knowledge as the result of stable intellectual dispositions (honesty, curiosity, impartiality, etc.).
- Analysis of epistemic vices: dogmatism, gullibility, intellectual arrogance, etc.
- The ethical dimension of epistemic practices and responsibility in acquiring and transmitting knowledge.

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Discussion in class of required readings.	10	0.4	3, 8, 12, 10, 26, 13, 14, 17, 1, 23, 20, 21, 22, 24

	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Lectures.	45	1.8	3, 12, 10, 26, 13, 14, 17, 1, 22
Type: Supervised			
Preparation of presentations/written papers.	23	0.92	3, 8, 4, 12, 10, 26, 13, 14, 17, 1, 23, 20, 21, 24
Resolution of doubts.	20	0.8	8, 4, 12, 10, 13, 14, 17, 1, 20, 21, 22, 24
Type: Autonomous			
Required and supplementary readings.	30	1.2	3, 8, 16, 4, 26, 14, 17, 20, 21, 22, 24

The directed activities follow a problem-based learning methodology. These activities are mainly of two types:

a) Theoretical presentations of the subject matter with discussion of related problems, led by the instructor.
b) Argumentation exercises in class based on scheduled readings. Students will read texts that will be discussed collectively, in order to grasp the main ideas and the internal structure of the texts. Class participation will be encouraged so that students acquire the assigned competencies.

Theoretical and practical sessions will alternate throughout the course.

To successfully follow the course, regular attendance and active participation are essential. In addition, students will be required to complete personal readings of important texts.

The Virtual Campus will be used to share materials.

Tutorial sessions will primarily focus on resolving doubts.

To help students plan the course properly, on the first day of class the instructor will upload a detailed course schedule to the Virtual Campus and will set the exam dates on the calendar.

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Assessment

Continous Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Test and/or short answer (First part)	35%	1.5	0.06	3, 8, 9, 4, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24
Test and/or short answer (Second part)	35%	1.5	0.06	2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 4, 12, 10, 26, 13, 14, 17, 23, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24
Written exam of mandatory readings.	30%	19	0.76	2, 3, 6, 25, 7, 8, 9, 16, 4, 12, 10, 5, 26, 13, 14, 15, 17, 1, 11, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24

Continuous assessment

Continuous assessment will be based on:
(i) the grade obtained in a multiple-choice and/or short-answer test on the first part of the course (35% of the

final grade),
(ii) the grade obtained in a multiple-choice and/or short-answer test on the second part of the course (35%),
(iii) the grade obtained in an exam on the mandatory readings (30%).

Continuous assessment assumes regular class attendance and consistent course engagement.

The Department of Philosophy may establish (as in the first semester) a period dedicated to concentrated assessments. The professor will confirm this at the beginning of the course and provide specific exam dates.

Exam dates will be announced on the Moodle calendar with sufficient notice.

Students who, for any reason, cannot attend the scheduled assessments will take the recovery exam directly. These recovery exams will be held between June 22 and July 3, 2026, on dates assigned by the Academic Management Office. No alternative dates will be provided.

At the time of each assessment, the professor will inform students (via Moodle) about the review procedure and date for each activity.

Single assessment

The single assessment will consist of the same components as the continuous assessment, but completed on a single day. The professor will announce the date and time of the exam to students who choose this option.

The final grade will be based on:
(i) multiple-choice and/or short-answer test on the first part of the course (35%),
(ii) multiple-choice and/or short-answer test on the second part (35%),
(iii) exam on mandatory readings (30%).

The same recovery system will apply as in the continuous assessment. The three components (35%, 35%, 30%) will be tested again if needed.

Students may recover components (i), (ii), and (iii), each with the same format and weight: 35%, 35%, and 30%.

Not evaluable Students will receive the grade "Not evaluable" if they have submitted less than one-third of the total assessment activities.

Notes

- Erasmus students who wish to advance an exam must present written justification from their home university.

- Spelling and grammar will be graded. Repeated errors (four or more) will lead to a 10% deduction from the exam score.

- If a student commits any irregularity that significantly affects the evaluation outcome, the activity will be marked 0, regardless of disciplinary actions taken. If multiple irregularities occur, the final grade for the subject will be 0.

- The use of AI technologies is strictly forbidden in any part of this course. Any work that includes AI-generated content will be considered academic dishonesty, graded with 0 (non-recoverable), and may lead to more severe sanctions in serious cases.

Bibliography

1. Textbooks:

J.BLASCO and T. GRIMALTOS, *Introducció a la teoria del coneixement*, València: Pretextos, 2ª edició revisada i ampliada en castellà: Publicacions Unviersitat de València, 2004.

D. QUESADA, *Saber, opinión y ciencia. Una introducción a la teoría del conocimiento clásica y contemporánea.* (a new edition will be published at the beginning of the course).

2. Consultation.

P. Boghossian, *Fear of Knowledge; Against Relativism and Constructivism*, Oxford University Press, 2007.

J. Dancy, E. Sosa and J. Turri (eds.), *A Companion to Epistemology*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1994.

M. Fricker*, Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, Oxford University Press, 2007.

J. Greco and E. Sosa (eds.), *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*, Wiley-Blackwell, 1999.

M. Steup, J. Turri and E. Sosa (eds.), *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

E. Sosa, *Virtue Epistemology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.

3. Web links:

http://plato.stanford.edu/

Software

It is not necessary.

Groups and Languages

Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2025. You can check it through this link. To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject.

Name	Group	Language	Semester	Turn
(PAUL) Classroom practices	1	Catalan	second semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	1	Catalan	second semester	morning-mixed