

PHIL 4372: Theories of Knowledge and Reality

Sam Houston State University

Spring 2024 | CRN: 25510

M/W 4 - 5:15 PM | AB IV 301

Instructor: Dr. Thomas Brommage

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Course Description: This course is a study of issues concerning the basic categories of reality such as individuals and universals, time and change, mind and body. A study of issues in the theory of knowledge such as the distinction between knowledge and belief, the criteria of knowledge, and the justification of knowledge claims is also examined.

Prerequisites: Six hours of philosophy and sophomore standing

Readings:

1. Bertrand Russell, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Logical Atomism* (1918-1919). Originally published as a series of lectures in the *Monist* from 1918–1919 (I-II III-IV V-VI VII-VIII). Also available in a single volume (1985) with an Introduction by David Pears (includes also the 1924 essay “Logical Atomism”)
- 2a. G. E. Moore, “Defense of Common Sense” (1925) in *Contemporary British Philosophy* (2nd series), ed. J. H. Muirhead, 1925. Reprinted in G. E. Moore, *Philosophical Papers* (1959).
- 2b. G. E. Moore, “Proof of an External World’.” (1939) *Proceedings of the British Academy* 25 (5): 273–300.
3. C. I. Lewis, *Mind and The World Order: an Outline of a Theory of Knowledge* (1929). Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York. Reprinted in paperback by Dover Publications, Inc. New York, (1956). ISBN: 9780486265643
4. A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (1946) 2nd ed. Dover Publications, New York. ISBN: 9780486200101
5. J. L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia* (1962). Ed. J. Warnock. Oxford University Press: New York. ISBN: 9780195003079
6. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (1969). Ed. G. E. M. Anscombe. Harper & Row: New York. ISBN: 9780061316869

Important Dates:

First Day of Classes	Tuesday, January 16th
Add/Drop Deadline	Wednesday, January 31st
Spring Break (no class)	Monday, March 11th – Friday, March 15th
Q-Drop Deadline	Wednesday, March 27th
Good Friday (no class)	Friday, March 29th
Course Final	Monday, May 6th (5:30-7:30 PM)

Course Outline: The course divides into two modules, the first covering major texts from rationalist thinkers (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz) and the second covering the empiricist tradition (Locke, Berkeley, Hume). The discussion of Kant's philosophy in the last few weeks of the course will fall outside the scope of either of the papers, but will be included in the final exam.

January 16 – 19	Course Introduction and Context
January 22 – 26	Bertrand Russell, <i>Lectures on the Philosophy of Logical Atomism</i> I-III
Jan 29 – Feb 2	Russell, <i>Lectures on the Philosophy of Logical Atomism</i> IV-VI
February 5 – 9	Russell, <i>Lectures on the Philosophy of Logical Atomism</i> VII-VIII
February 12 – 16	Moore, "Defense of Common Sense" & "Proof of External World"
February 19 – 23	C. I. Lewis, <i>Mind and the World Order</i> I-II; Paper #1
Feb 26 – Mar 1	Lewis, <i>Mind and the World Order</i> III-V
March 4 – 8	Lewis, <i>Mind and the World Order</i> VI-VIII
March 11 – 15	Spring Break (no class)
March 18 – 22	A. J. Ayer, <i>Language Truth and Logic</i> I-III
March 25 – 29	Ayer, <i>Language Truth and Logic</i> IV-V
April 1 – 5	Ayer, <i>Language Truth and Logic</i> V-VIII; Paper #2
April 8 – 12	J. L. Austin, <i>Sense and Sensibilia</i> I-VI
April 15 – 19	Austin, <i>Sense and Sensibilia</i> VII-XI
April 22 – 26	Ludwig Wittgenstein, <i>On Certainty</i> §§1-346
Apr 29 – May 2	Wittgenstein, <i>On Certainty</i> §§347-676; Paper #3
May 6 (5:30-7:30 PM)	Final Exam

Course Evaluation: The main point of evaluation will be three mid-length to critically analyze the readings for that set of texts. Each of the papers should be 1250-1500 words (about 5-6 pages double-spaced), and relevant to a topic in the respective grouping of texts. In addition, there will be More details on due dates and assignment guidelines are posted on Blackboard.

The following weighting will be used to calculate your grade:

Papers	3 x 15% = 45%
Final Exam	25%
Attendance	15%
Participation	15%

Your rounded average of these assignments will determine your grade, based on the following scale:

A	100% - 89.5%
B	89.4% - 79.5%
C	79.4% - 69.5%
D	69.4% - 59.5%
F	59.4% - 0%

Writing Enhanced: This is a “W” course, which means that at least 50 percent of your course grade will derive from writing activities designed to help you master course objectives. Writing in this course is one of the tools your instructor will use to help you learn course material. Some writing activities will require you to draft and revise your work, with or without instructor feedback. Others may not receive a grade but are designed to assist you in critical reflection of the course material. You should approach writing in this course as a tool to use as part of your learning as well as a tool your instructor will use to assess your level of learning.

Attendance and Participation: An attendance sheet will be distributed most class days. It is your responsibility to sign-in on the official roll sheet, otherwise you will be considered absent. Your attendance will be judged as a percentage of the number of days that you attend class. Everyone will have three (3) absences that will not count against his or her grade (should you not use these three absences, your grade will be adjusted up accordingly). For example, if I take attendance 22 times in the semester, and you have attended 17 of those meetings, your attendance grade would be a 91% (20/22). Aside from the absences automatically excused as per this policy, *no additional absences will be considered excused except when required by law or University policy.*

Your participation grade will be a qualitative measure based on your effective in-class participation. For this measure, “effective” participation is a function of the quality—not the quantity—of your in-class participation. In most cases, your participation grade will be no higher than your attendance grade—since, of course, if you’re not in class, then you can’t participate.

Academic Dishonesty: Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Please be aware that plagiarized work and any form of academic dishonesty will result in an “F” on the assignment. [SHSU Academic Policy Statement 810213](#) outlines the definition of academic honesty and the related disciplinary procedures.

You should also familiarize yourself with [Academic Policy Statement 900823](#), which outlines the procedures for students to file an academic grievance should you wish to appeal your grade for reasons other than academic dishonesty. Please read over these policies.

Course Evaluations: In accordance with University policy every student will have an opportunity at a specified date and time near the end of the semester to complete a course evaluation form from the IDEA course evaluation system.

Classroom Conduct: Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university. Cell phones must be turned off before class begins. Students are prohibited from eating in class, using tobacco products, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers, sleeping, talking at inappropriate times, wearing inappropriate clothing, or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in a directive to leave class. Students who are especially disruptive also may be reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with university policy.

For University policies on Student Absences on Religious Holy Days, Students with Disabilities, and Visitors in the Classroom you may view to the official statements on the SHSU Website, <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

Expectations, Suggestions and Mandates for an efficient class:

1. Please arrive to class on time and expect to stay the entire duration of the class. If this is an impossibility, please make every attempt to notify me in advance of tardiness or absence.
2. Especially true in philosophy more than most other subjects, diligence is important. Some of the reading will be difficult since we are looking at some of the most profound ideas in the history of the world. The difficulty of the subject is indirectly proportional to the amount of work put into the course.
3. This is a senior level philosophy class, so prepare for a lot of reading and writing. Expect to have up to ten hours a week of reading and thinking about the material in order to get an “A” for the course. Additionally, for these reasons, attendance is of vital importance. *If you do not attend class or keep up with the reading, do not expect to pass this class!*
4. Please come to class prepared (i.e., any reading assigned read, any questions concerning exercises or lectures prepared, etc.)
5. Please be respectful of each other in the class. There will be times when students disagree about a topic discussed in class. This is a didactic process, not a combative one.
6. Due to the great excess of material and limited time in which we must cover ground, please do not create a disruption for those people who are attempting to learn. Disruptions include blurting out answers, name calling, chiding each other, snoring, etc. Laughing at the Instructor’s jokes is obviously exempted from this policy. In addition, personal audio devices (except those in use to record lectures) and loud crunching snack foods are prohibited from the classroom.
7. Please feel free to make mistakes. We all will from time to time—even your omniscient instructor.
8. Please feel free to make an appointment to discuss the material you do not understand. Waiting until the last moment in the semester to catch up is not advisable. I am excellent at fixing small problems, but horrendous at fixing large ones. The only difference between small and large problems is time.
9. Have fun! The material is only as dry as you make it out to be. Sharpening one’s mind can be an exhilarating process.