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# EPISTEMOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

**Bachelor in Philosophy, Politics, Law and Economics PPLE  
SEP-2023 EPSS-PP.3.M.A**

Area Humanities

Number of sessions: 30

Academic year: 23-24

Degree course: THIRD

Number of credits: 6.0

Semester: 1º

Category: COMPULSORY

Language: English

Professor: **JULIÁN MONTAÑO ALCÓN**

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DPHil (Universidad de Navarra), MPhil (Universidad de Glasgow), MBA (IE Business School), BPhil (Universidad de Sevilla). Professor Julián Montaña's research engages in central issues in epistemology (the nature of justification, relativism, testimony), social philosophy (communitarianism, cultural relativism, the concept of tradition, social & common goods) and philosophy of education (the concept of innovation, the place of the Humanities in Higher Education, the nature of the educational institutions). Among their interests are also Frege, P. T. Geach, Analytical Thomism and the Scottish Enlightenment. Currently he researches about the epistemology of testimony of the XVIII c. Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid and how knowledge is transmitted in a community or tradition. Other topics of interest include: logic and argumentation, Iris Murdoch and T.S. Eliot. He has developed in the past his professional career in marketing, in industries different to higher education, especially media and entertainment, with positions in Pearson Group and Walt Disney Television international.

Currently he is Vice Dean for Academic Innovation at IE Law School.

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## SUBJECT DESCRIPTION

Epistemology —from the Greek word *epistēmē* (read as “epistēme”), “knowledge” or “science”— is the study of the nature, varieties and sources of knowledge. Epistemology is one the ancient branches of philosophy and —as it happens with almost everything in philosophy— its foundations were laid by Plato, who envisaged many of the key problems about the concept of “knowledge”.

We will study both the different channels through which we acquire truth; and the ways in which we make sure those channels are safe so that we can avoid being simply lucky in getting the truth. “Truth”, “Justification”, “Evidence”, “Belief”, are some of the main concepts we will learn to manage with precision in this course.

Students of the Bachelor in Philosophy, Politics, Law and Economics must also be familiarised not only with the concept of “knowledge” but also with the concept of “understanding”, specially “understanding other people”. This is the subject matter of the Social Sciences, which peculiar epistemological status we will study in the second part of the course. “Meaning”, “Action”, “Intention”, are some of the main concepts we will familiarize with in the second part.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- Recognised the philosophical and technical use of the main concepts in Epistemology and Philosophy of Social Sciences. Explain the main contemporary positions and arguments and their links with classic positions.
- Articulate arguments for and against different theories of “belief”, “truth” and “justification”, on hand; and “understanding” and “explanation” on the other.
- Evaluate the different epistemological positions and stances regarding the status of Social Sciences so as to incorporate them into their own ideas about human beings and society.

## TEACHING METHODOLOGY

Learning Activity	Weighting	Estimated time a student should dedicate to prepare for and participate in
Lectures	30.0 %	45.0 hours
Discussions	9.33 %	14.0 hours
Exercises in class, Asynchronous sessions, Field Work	9.33 %	14.0 hours
Group work	0.0 %	0.0 hours
Individual studying	51.33 %	77.0 hours
TOTAL	100.0 %	150.0 hours

## PROGRAM

### SESSION 1 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

#### The challenge of knowledge.

*Book Chapters: Pojman, L. P., Part I, in The Theory of Knowledge: Classical and Contemporary Readings, 3rd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), readings 1 (Plato), 2 (Plato) and 4 (Chisholm) (See Bibliography)*

*Book Chapters: Fine, G., “Knowledge and True Belief in the Meno”, Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy 27 (2004), pp. 61–62 (CED)*

## **SESSION 2 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

The challenge of knowledge.

## **SESSION 3 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Scepticism. Two kinds of scepticism. The Scottish response.**

*Book Chapters: Thomas Reid, Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man [1785], ed. D. Brookes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002) VI, V (CED)*

*Book Chapters: Pojman, L. P., "Skepticism", in The Theory of Knowledge; readings 1 (Descartes) and 2 (Hume) (See Bibliography)*

## **SESSION 4 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Scepticism. Two kinds of scepticism. The Scottish response.**

## **SESSION 5 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Perception and the senses.**

*Book Chapters: Thomas Reid, An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense [1764], ed. D. Brookes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), VI (CED)*

*Book Chapters: Pojman, L. P., "Perception: Our Knowledge of the External World", in The Theory of Knowledge; readings 1 (Locke), 2 (Berkeley), 3 (Stace) and 5 (Searle) (See Bibliography)*

## **SESSION 6 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Perception and the senses.**

## **SESSION 7 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**The Analysis of Knowledge.**

*Article: The Inescapability of Gettier Problems (Zagzebski, L., The Philosophical Quarterly 44:174 (1994), pp. 65-73) (CED)*

*Book Chapters: Pojman, L. P., "The Analysis of Knowledge", in The Theory of Knowledge; readings 1 (Gettier), 2 (Goldman) and 6 (Feldman) (See Bibliography)*

## **SESSION 8 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**The Analysis of Knowledge.**

## **SESSION 9 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Justification.**

*Book Chapters: Pojman, L. P., "Theories of Justification (I): Foundationalism and Coherentism", in The Theory of Knowledge; readings 1 (Descartes) 2 (Audi), 5 (Dancy), 7 (Sosa) and 9 (Haack) (See Bibliography)*

## **SESSION 10 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Justification.**

## **SESSION 11 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Justification II.**

*Book Chapters:* Pojman, L. P., "Theories of Justification (II): Externalism and Internalism", in *The Theory of Knowledge*; readings 1 (Goldman), 2 (Lehrer) and 5 (Plantinga) (See Bibliography)

## **SESSION 12 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Justification II.**

## **SESSION 13 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Truth.**

*Book Chapters:* Lynch, M. P., "Truth", in *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology*, eds. S. Bernecker and D. Pritchard, D. (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 3-13 (CED)

*Article:* Truth and God (Geach, P., *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supp. 61 (1982), pp. 83-97) (CED)

## **SESSION 14 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Truth.**

## **SESSION 15 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Midterm Exam.**

## **SESSION 16 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**A Priori Knowledge.**

*Book Chapters:* Pojman, L. P., "A Priori Knowledge", in *The Theory of Knowledge*; readings 1 (Kant), 4 (Quine), 5 (Grice) and 7 (Kripke) (See Bibliography)

## **SESSION 17 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Induction.**

*Book Chapters:* Pojman, L. P., "Induction", in *The Theory of Knowledge*; readings 1 (Hume), 2 (Russell) 6 (Goodman) (See Bibliography)

## **SESSION 18 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Testimony.**

*Book Chapters:* Geach, P., "Knowledge and Belief in Human Testimony", in *The Past and the Present: Problems of Understanding*, ed. A. Hegarty (Oxford: Grandpont, 1993), pp. 15-24 (CED)

*Book Chapters:* David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* [1756], ed. T. L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), section 10 (CED)

*Book Chapters:* Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* [1764], ed. D. Brookes (Edinburgh: c, 1997), chapter VI (CED)

## **SESSION 19 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Testimony.**

## **SESSION 20 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

Virtue Epistemology.

*Book Chapters:* Kvanvig, J. L., "Virtue Epistemology", in *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology*, pp. 199-207 (CED)

*Book Chapters:* Zagzebski, L., *On Epistemology* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2009), chapter 4: "Trust and the Intellectual Virtues", pp. 77-104 (CED)

## **SESSION 21 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**In class presentations of individual research.**

My catalogue of Intellectual Virtues.

## **SESSION 22 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**In class presentations of individual research.**

My catalogue of Intellectual Virtues.

## **SESSION 23 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Understanding.**

*Book Chapters:* Zagzebski, L., "Recovering Understanding", in *Knowledge, Truth and Duty: Essays on Epistemic Justification, Responsibility and Virtue*, ed. M. Steup (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 235-251 (CED)

*Book Chapters:* Grimm, S. R., "Understanding as an Intellectual Virtue", in *The Routledge Handbook of Virtue Epistemology*, ed. H. Battaly (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 340-351 (CED)

## **SESSION 24 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Human Action and Intention.**

*Book Chapters:* Taylor, C., "What is Human Agency?" in *Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 15-44 (CED)

*Book Chapters:* Taylor, C., "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man" in *Philosophical Papers 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 15-57 (CED)

## **SESSION 25 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Human Action and Intention.**

## **SESSION 26 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Causal and Non-Causal explanations. Reductionism and predictions.**

*Article:* *The Function of General Laws in History* (Hempel, C. G., *The Journal of Philosophy* 39:2 (1942), pp. 35-48) (CED)

*Book Chapters:* MacIntyre, A., "The Character of Generalizations in Social Science and their Lack of

*Predictive Power*”, in *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), pp. 88-108 (CED)

## **SESSION 27 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Rules, conventions, customs, traditions.**

*Book Chapters:* Winch, P., “The Nature of Meaningful Behaviour”, part 2 of *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 40-65 (CED)

## **SESSION 28 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Relativism.**

*Book Chapters:* Pojman, L. P. “Challenges and Alternatives to Contemporary Epistemology”, in *The Theory of Knowledge; readings 4 (Rorty) and 5 (Levin)* (See Bibliography)

*Book Chapters:* MacIntyre, A., “Colors, cultures and practices”, in *The Tasks of Philosophy: Selected Essays, Volume I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 24-51 (CED)

## **SESSION 29 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Relativism.**

## **SESSION 30 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Final Exam.**

## **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Evaluation will be partially based on the student’s participation in the class. Active participation—both in quality and in frequency—in sessions is, therefore, essential.

In sessions 21 & 22 there will be a short public presentation of small piece of research.

In sessions 15 and 30 an exam will assess the knowledge and comprehension of the key questions studied hitherto. Final grade’s exams component will be the average of both grades.

Each student has four attempts over two consecutive academic years to pass this course.

Attendance at 70% of the classes is mandatory and an absence of more than 30% will result in a grade of 0.0 for the subject. In addition, students not fulfilling the attendance requirement will automatically lose two attempts to pass the course and will thus only have two last attempts to do so during the following academic year.

criteria	percentage	Learning Objectives	Comments
Individual Work	15 %		
Other	50 %		Exams
Class Participation	35 %		

## **RE-SIT / RE-TAKE POLICY**

**Retake Exam**

If a student's course grade is below 5.0, the student is required to take the retake exam to pass the course. The maximum grade that students can obtain in the retake exam period is 8.0. A student who has missed over 30% of the class meetings will not be allowed to take the retake exam but will only have two attempts left to pass the course during the following academic year. Students who are in third or fourth call should contact the teacher during the first two weeks of the course. The final course grade in the third call will be determined with a midterm and a final exam. Alternatively, at the beginning of the course students may opt to attend classes, in which case the evaluation criteria for the first call as set forth above will apply. If a student's course grade in this third call is below 5.0, the student is required to take the retake exam to pass the course. The maximum grade that students can obtain in the retake exam period is 8.0.

### **Code of conduct in class**

1. Be on time: Students arriving more than 5 minutes late will be marked as "Absent". Only students that notify in advance in writing that they will be late for a specific session may be granted an exception (at the discretion of the professor).
2. If applicable, bring your name card and strictly follow the seating chart. It helps faculty members and fellow students learn your names.
3. Do not leave the room during the lecture: students are not allowed to leave the room during lectures. If a student leaves the room during lectures, he/she will not be allowed to re-enter and, therefore, will be marked as "Absent". Only students that notify that they have a special reason to leave the session early will be granted an exception (at the discretion of the professor).
4. Do not engage in side conversation. As a sign of respect toward the person presenting the lecture (the teacher as well as fellow students), side conversations are not allowed. If you have a question, raise your hand and ask it. If you do not want to ask it during the lecture, feel free to approach your teacher after class. If a student is disrupting the flow of the lecture, he/she will be asked to leave the classroom and, consequently, will be marked as "Absent".
5. Use your laptop for course-related purposes only. The use of laptops during lectures must be authorized by the professor. The use of social media or accessing any type of content not related to the lecture is penalized. The student will be asked to leave the room and, consequently, will be marked as "Absent".
6. No cellular phones: IE University implements a "Phone-free Classroom" policy and, therefore, the use of phones, tablets, etc. is forbidden inside the classroom. Failing to abide by this rule entails expulsion from the room and will be counted as one absence.
7. Escalation policy: 1/3/5. Items 4, 5, and 6 above entail expulsion from the classroom and the consequent marking of the student as "Absent." IE University implements an "escalation policy": the first time a student is asked to leave the room for disciplinary reasons (as per items 4, 5, and 6 above), the student will incur one absence, the second time it will count as three absences, and from the third time onward, any expulsion from the classroom due to disciplinary issues will entail 5 absences.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **Compulsory**

- Pojman, L. P. (2003). *The Theory of Knowledge: Classical and Contemporary Readings*. 3rd. Wadsworth. ISBN 0534558224 (Digital)

Pojman's is the source of many of the assigned readings. Other materials are

provided through Blackboard for preparation of each session.

### **Recommended**

- Bernecker, S. and Pritchard, D. (eds.). (2011). *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology*. Routledge. ISBN 0415722691 (Digital)

A useful book for guidance, consultation and reference.

### **BEHAVIOR RULES**

Please, check the University's Code of Conduct [here](#). The Program Director may provide further indications.

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Please, check the University's Attendance Policy [here](#). The Program Director may provide further indications.

### **ETHICAL POLICY**

Please, check the University's Ethics Code [here](#). The Program Director may provide further indications.

