

Mind and Knowledge

Course Instructors: Dr. Lau and Dr. Johnson

Paper 2 Topics

Here are some specifics

- **Deadline: Monday 17 December 2012.** You must submit an online copy to <http://www.turnitin.com> before 10pm **17 December 2012**. Class ID = 5720696, Enrolment password = pw1012.
- You must also submit a hardcopy to the philosophy dept before 9am **18 December 2012**. A collection box will be placed outside the dept office after office hours on **17 December**. Staple all sheets together. Save paper and don't use a cover sheet.
- Use 11 or 12 point times font. Single spacing with normal margins.
- The paper should be 4-6 pages. Points may be deducted for papers that are significantly longer or shorter than 4-6 pages.
- Write down your full name, student ID, and the name of your tutor. You will get zero marks if you still do not know your tutor's name.
- Late submission: -20% for each day that is late (i.e. -20% one hour after the deadline, -40% if two days late, ...)
- Citation format: Use either the American Psychological Association or Harvard author-date format. (one of them but not both!)

1. What is knowledge? In class, we considered several theories of the essence of knowledge. Explain what the essence problem is (explain what we meant when we asked, “what is knowledge?”) and then defend an account of knowledge. You can defend an account that we discussed in class (e.g. “knowledge = perception”), or you can defend a modified version of such an account (e.g. “knowledge = perception + intuition”). Make sure to discuss the arguments we considered against each account, and explain either why the objection isn't satisfactory or how your modifications avoid the objections. It might be helpful to consult:

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/knowledge-analysis/>

2. Skepticism. In class, we considered several skeptical challenges (equipollence, the dream argument, Descartes' evil demon) and different responses to them (accept skepticism, become an idealist, reject the skeptical premise). Defend an answer to the question “Is knowledge possible?” Make sure to address the arguments we considered in class. If you think knowledge is possible, then explain what you would say to Sextus or a Cartesian skeptic; if you think knowledge isn't possible, then explain what you would say to Moore or others who argue that this goes against common sense. It might be helpful to consult: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/skepticism/>

3. The problem of other minds. In class, we examined the problem of other minds, which suggests that we can't know that other people have propositional attitudes (beliefs, desires) or

conscious inner lives (phenomenal states). Explain the problem of other minds clearly, and how it differs from global skepticism. Defend a response to the problem of other minds—argument from analogy, a behaviorist response, an inference to the best explanation, or an argument of your own devising (or the skeptical position that you honestly cannot know whether others have minds). Make sure to address the problems with view you defend (for example, accepting skepticism involves rejecting common sense). It might be helpful to consult:

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/other-minds/>

4. The problem of induction. In class, we will consider the problem of induction: how can we infer from what is observed to what is unobserved? We will consider several responses to the problem: that the laws of nature, the uniformity of nature, or the success of our theories justify us in such beliefs. Explain the problem of induction clearly, and defend a response to the problem: either accept skepticism, or endorse one of the other responses we considered (or one of your own devising). It might be helpful to consult: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/induction-problem/>

5. You are free to write a paper not covered in the topics above. For example, you may want to write a more specific paper, that discusses in detail one of the arguments or positions covered in class. Or you may want to write a paper that combines topics we've discussed: for example, you might talk about whether strategies for responding to the problem of other minds work in responding to global skepticism more generally. We recommend that you don't get too ambitious, and that you stick to what has been covered in class (though it is perfectly acceptable to bring in outside knowledge and reading, don't write on topics that we haven't discussed).