2014

290-05D Theory of Knowledge

Cheryl McKinley

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Xavier University
Fall Semester 2014
Theory of Knowledge, 3 Cr. Hrs.
PHIL 290 05D (90456)
Conaton Learning Commons, Room 405 (Wednesdays 6:00pm – 9:45pm)
Semester (10/21/14 – 12/19/14)

Lecturer: Cheryl McKinley
Department of Philosophy, Hinkle Hall

My email: mckinleyc@xavier.edu (best way to contact me)

Office Hours: before class 5-6pm in Conaton Learning Commons (be sure to email me first to make prior arrangements)

Textbooks:
Plato, Theaetetus (Hackett)
Rene’ Descartes, Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy, 4th, ed. (Hackett)
Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The World of Perception (Routledge)

Welcome to Theory of Knowledge!
Ancient and modern philosophers will help us reflect on some fundamental questions about knowledge. What does it mean to know something? How does perception contribute to knowledge? What is science? What is education? Is there any absolute, objective truth?
We will not settle these questions, but you will become more aware of them and will explore, criticize, and defend some possible answers. In this way, you may become more thoughtful and articulate.

Policies
Plagiarism is using someone else’s words or ideas, either as originally stated or rephrased, without giving credit to the source (such as a website, book, article, or another student’s writing). Plagiarism is dishonest and unacceptable. Whenever you use any sources other than the assigned texts, you must cite them. To learn more about plagiarism and methods of citation, visit http://www.xavier.edu/library/xu-tutor/Preventing-Plagiarism.cfm. Any plagiarism will result in an F for the course, and your dean will be notified of the incident. “It was an accident” or “I didn’t mean to” are
not valid excuses; plagiarism is defined by the fact that your work uses someone else’s work without giving credit, and you are responsible for the work that you turn in.

**Students with disabilities**

*Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should contact the Learning Assistance Center at 513-745-3280 on the Fifth Floor of the Conaton Learning Commons, Room 514, to coordinate reasonable accommodations.*

**Attendance** is taken each class meeting.

**Handouts are posted in Canvas** and may include, but not limited to, class notes, syllabus, announcements, or important web links.

**Turn off (or silence)** and put away cell phones and technological devices. Laptops must be used responsibly.

**Papers** must be turned in on-time. Late papers will result in an automatic point reduction (refer to the paper instruction handout). Papers may be submitted through Turnitin for suspected plagiarism. Refer to Xavier University Policy on student plagiarism.

**Incompletes:** Refer to the university catalog for the policy on incompletes.

**Quizzes** are given at the beginning of class. If you are late or miss a class, email for make-up paper instructions. There is no make-up for the final exam.

**Course grade:** determined by exam scores, paper, and group work/debate (must attend for points)

- **Exams:** Final 300
- **Quizzes:** 5 @ 20 points 100
- **Response Papers:** 5 @ 80 points 400
- **Total points for the course** 800
Grading Scale:

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<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<td>744 – 800</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>720 – 743</td>
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<td>696 – 719</td>
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<td>664 – 695</td>
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Tentative reading assignments (subject to change at the instructor’s discretion)

Read all the assigned readings before coming to class.

Wed 10/22  What is knowledge?

Plato, *Theaetetus* through 148d (pp. 1-10)

Socrates as midwife; is knowledge perception?

Plato, *Theaetetus* 148e-144c (pp. 10-19)

A relativistic theory of reality:

Plato, *Theaetetus* 155d-160e (pp. 19-26)

Wed 10/29  Objections to relativism: Q-2

Q-1  Plato, *Theaetetus* 161a-168c (pp. 26-36)

Relativism and the philosophical life:

Plato, *Theaetetus* 168d-179b (pp. 36-50)

Response Paper 1 Due
Wed 11/5 Implications of Heracliteanism:

Q-2 Plato, *Theaetetus* 179c-184a (pp. 50-56)

Knowledge is not perception:

Plato, *Theaetetus* 184b-186e (pp. 56-60)

How is false judgment possible?

Plato, *Theaetetus* 187a-191b (pp. 60-67)

Memory as a wax block:

Plato, *Theaetetus* 191c-196c (pp. 67-73)

Response Paper 2 Due

Wed 11/12 Memory as an aviary; knowledge is not true judgment:

Q-3 Plato, *Theaetetus* 196d-201c (pp. 73-80)

Is knowledge true judgment with an account?

Plato, *Theaetetus* 196d-201c (pp. 80-93)

The search for certainty:

Descartes’, *Discourse on Method*, Part I (pp. 1-6)

Method and morals:

Descartes’, *Discourse on Method*, Parts 2 and 3 (pp. 6-18)

Response Paper 3 Due

Wed 11/19 Radical skepticism: Descartes’, *Meditation One* (pp. 59-63)

Q-4 I think, therefore I am: *Meditation Two* (pp. 63-69)

Concerning God, That He Exists: *Meditation Three* (pp. 69-80)

Descartes’ metaphysics: Descartes’ *Discourse on Method*, Part 4 (pp. 18-22)
Descartes’ physics:
Descartes’ *Discourse on Method, Part 5* (pp. 23-33, focus on 23-25 and 31-33)

The promise of science and technology:
Descartes’ *Discourse on Method, Part 6* (pp. 33-44)

Response Paper 4 Due

Wed 11/26  No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday

Wed 12/3  Science, perception, and space:
Q-5  Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception, Lectures 1-3* (pp. 31-51)

Animals, mind and body, and art:
Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception, Lectures 4-6* (pp. 53-76)

Response Paper 5 Due

Wed 12/10  A new age:
Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception, Lecture 7* (pp. 77-83)
(By “classical,” Merleau-ponty means early modern, like Descartes)

Review and Final Exam