

Virtue Epistemology

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Epistemology (roughly: the theory of knowledge) has, for much of the latter part of the 20th century at least, focused on properties of beliefs. For example, under what conditions is a belief justified, or rational? What further property must a justified true belief possess in order to count as knowledge? These are very important questions, though—at least from the perspective of virtue epistemology—they get at only part of what epistemologists should care about. In short, the traditional approach has given a bit too much attention (comparatively speaking) to properties of *beliefs*, and too little to the properties of the *believers* themselves.

Here are some questions virtue epistemologists tend to ask: What makes a *person* good from an epistemic or intellectual point of view? What kind of qualities do such individuals possess? What is it, specifically, about such qualities that makes their possessors good inquirers? Some virtue epistemologists think that by first answering these kinds of questions about intellectual character, we'll be in a better position to resolve various traditional epistemological questions that have proven elusive, including the Gettier problem, and the problem of accounting for what makes knowledge more valuable than mere true opinion. Other virtue epistemologists, however, are less interested in the theoretical usefulness of intellectual virtues in resolving traditional problems and would rather investigate intellectual character in its own right. For example—regardless of whether or why knowledge might arise out of intellectual virtue—we might ask: what is intellectual humility, and why is it valuable? How do we become open-minded? What kinds of emotions and/or motivations are characteristic of intellectually virtuous persons, and how can they be acquired?

In this course, we will critically examine these and many other questions that feature in contemporary debates about virtue epistemology. The class will have 17 lectures (see Honours Timetable), and each lecture will have one assigned 'main' reading along with several additional/optional readings (listed at the end of the syllabus). Because virtue epistemology is a blossoming field, it is (I think, at least!) important to stay current. I will accordingly update the additional readings on the syllabus in light of new and forthcoming work, as relevant, though I'll keep the main readings set as they are.

Along with the lectures, there will be four tutorials (see Tutorials below, for dates, times and key discussion questions).

Lecture slides and handouts will be posted to the course Moodle site following each lecture (though not everything discussed in class will be on the handout, so attendance

is strongly encouraged!) Students will be assessed on the basis of one essay and one exam—see ‘Requirements’ below for details. Please don’t hesitate to drop me an e-mail if you have any questions!

REQUIREMENTS

30% SHORT PAPER

An essay of 2000 words (limit), corresponding with the material from lectures 7-8 (see schedule below).

Essay question: Please answer either one of the following two questions. (1) Do testimony cases pose a problem for (robust forms of) virtue epistemology? If so, why? If not, why not? (2) Do fake barn cases pose a problem for (robust forms of) virtue epistemology? If so, why? If not, why not?

For helpful advice for writing a philosophy paper, see Jim Pryor’s advice here. Short paper due 11:59pm, 13 March.

70% EXAM

One two-hour final examination. The exam will consist of four essay questions, of which you will be required to answer two. In order to avoid overlap with the short paper assignment, there will not be an exam question covering the material from lectures 7 and 8. Exam date to be announced.

LECTURE SCHEDULE

LECTURE 1: 9 JANUARY

Motivations for Virtue Epistemology I: Internalism and Externalism.

Required reading

Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 29-43.

Additional reading

Alston, “Epistemic Desiderata.”

Plantinga, “Justification in the 20th Century.”

Greco and Turri, “Virtue Epistemology.”

LECTURE 2: 12 JANUARY

Motivations for Virtue Epistemology II: Coherentism and Foundationalism.

Required reading

Sosa, "The Raft and The Pyramid: Coherence versus Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge."

Additional reading

Hasan and Fumerton, "Foundationalist Theories of Epistemic Justification."
Olsson, "Coherentist Theories of Epistemic Justification."

LECTURE 3: 16 JANUARY

The Structure of Intellectual Virtues I: Sosa's 'Triple S' Model.

Required reading

Sosa, "How Competence Matters in Epistemology."

Additional reading

Sosa, *Judgment and Agency*, 95-106.

LECTURE 4: 19 JANUARY

The Structure of Intellectual Virtues II: Zagzebski's Neo-Aristotelian Model.

Required reading

Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 165-196.

Additional reading

Zagzebski, "Virtue in Ethics and Epistemology."
Axtell, *Knowledge, Belief, and Character: Readings in Virtue Epistemology*, Introduction.

LECTURE 5: 23 JANUARY

Knowledge as Success Through Virtue I: Greco's Causal-Explanatory Salience Model.

Required reading

Greco, *Achieving Knowledge: A Virtue-Theoretic Account of Epistemic Normativity*, Ch. 5.

Additional reading

Greco, "Knowledge as Credit for True Belief."
Greco, "What's Wrong with Contextualism?"

Carter, “Robust Virtue Epistemology as Anti-Luck Epistemology: A New Solution.”

LECTURE 6: 26 JANUARY

Knowledge as Success Through Virtue II: Sosa’s ‘Triple A’ Model.

Required reading

Sosa, *A Virtue Epistemology: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge, Volume I*, Ch. 2.

Additional reading

Sosa, *A Virtue Epistemology: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge, Volume I*, Ch. 7.

Miracchi, “Competence to Know.”

Turri, “Knowledge as Achievement, More or Less.”

LECTURE 7: 30 JANUARY

Virtue Epistemology, Credit and Luck I: Testimony.

Required reading

Lackey, “Why We Don’t Deserve Credit for Everything We Know.”

Additional reading

Lackey, “Knowledge and Credit.”

Riggs, “Two Problems of Easy Credit.”

Kallestrup and Pritchard, “Robust Virtue Epistemology and Epistemic Anti-Individualism.”

Greco, “A (Different) Virtue Epistemology.”

Greco, “Knowledge, Testimony, and Action.”

LECTURE 8: 2 FEBRUARY

Virtue Epistemology, Credit and Luck II: Environmental Luck.

Required reading

Pritchard, “Anti-Luck Virtue Epistemology.”

Additional reading

Kallestrup and Pritchard, “Virtue Epistemology and Epistemic Twin Earth.”

Kelp, “Knowledge: The Safe-Apt View.”

Jarvis, “Knowledge, Cognitive Achievement, and Environmental Luck.”

Littlejohn, “Fake Barns and False Dilemmas.”

Pritchard, “Epistemic Risk.”

LECTURE 9: 13 FEBRUARY

Virtue Epistemology and the Challenge from Epistemic Situationism.

Required reading

Alfano, “Expanding the Situationist Challenge to Responsibilist Virtue Epistemology.”

Additional reading

Alfano, “Expanding the Situationist Challenge to Reliabilism About Inference.”

Olin and Doris, “Vicious Minds.”

Carter and Pritchard, “Epistemic Situationism, Epistemic Dependence and the Epistemology of Education.”

Turri, “Epistemic Situationism and Cognitive Ability.”

16 FEBRUARY (NO CLASS: SH READING PARTY)

LECTURE 10: 20 FEBRUARY

Reflective Knowledge I: Reflective Knowledge, Scepticism and Circularity.

Required reading

Sosa, *Reflective Knowledge: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge, Volume II*, Ch. 9.

Additional reading

Sosa, *Reflective Knowledge: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge, Volume II*, Ch. 7.

Sosa, “Knowing full well: the Normativity of Beliefs as Performances.”

LECTURE 11: 23 FEBRUARY

Reflective Knowledge II: Fully Apt Judgment.

Required reading

Sosa, *Judgment and Agency*, Ch. 3.

Additional reading

Sosa, *Judgment and Agency*, Ch. 4.

Sosa, *Judgment and Agency*, Ch. 7.

Carter, “Sosa on Knowledge, Judgment and Guessing.”

LECTURE 12: 27 FEBRUARY

Virtue Epistemology and the Value Problem I.

Required reading

Greco, *Achieving Knowledge: A Virtue-Theoretic Account of Epistemic Normativity*, Ch. 6.

Additional reading

Sosa, "Value Matters in Epistemology."
Kvanvig, *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*, Ch. 4.

LECTURE 13: 2 MARCH

Virtue Epistemology and the Value Problem II.

Required reading

Pritchard, "Knowledge and Final Value."

Additional reading

Brady, "Appropriate Attitudes and the Value Problem."
Carter, Jarvis, and Rubin, "Knowledge: Value on the Cheap."
Riggs, "Understanding, Knowledge, and the Meno Requirement."

LECTURE 14: 6 MARCH

Virtue Responsibilism I: Responsibilist Virtues.

Required reading

Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, Ch. 6.

Additional reading

Battaly, "Virtue Epistemology."
Baehr, "Character, reliability and virtue epistemology."
Montmarquet, "Epistemic Virtue."
Sylvan, "Responsibilism Out of Character."

LECTURE 15: 9 MARCH

Virtue Responsibilism 2: Intellectual Humility.

Required reading

Whitcomb et al., “Intellectual Humility: owning our limitations.”

Additional reading

Tanesini, “Intellectual Humility as Attitude.”

Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology*.

Church and Samuelson, *Intellectual Humility: An Introduction to the Philosophy and Science*, Ch. 1.

LECTURE 16: 13 MARCH

Extended Virtue Epistemology.

Required reading

Pritchard, “Cognitive Ability and the Extended Cognition Thesis.”

Additional reading

Palermos, “Knowledge and Cognitive Integration.”

Vaesen, “Knowledge Without Credit, Exhibit 4: Extended Cognition.”

Kelp, “Extended Cognition and Robust Virtue Epistemology.”

LECTURE 17: 16 MARCH

Collective Virtue Epistemology.

Required reading

Kallestrup, “Group Virtue Epistemology.”

Additional reading

Wright, “The Stoic Epistemic Virtues of Groups.”

Brady, “Group Emotion and Group Understanding.”

Broncano-Berrocal and Carter, “Group Polarization as an Epistemic Vice.”

TUTORIAL SCHEDULE

TUTORIAL 1: GROUP 1 (25 JANUARY, 3-4PM, 525 OAKFIELD AVE); GROUP 2 (26 JANUARY, 3-4PM, 525 OAKFIELD AVE)

Discussion Questions.

1. Which provides more compelling motivation for virtue epistemology: considerations to do with epistemic internalism and epistemic externalism or considerations to do with foundationalism and coherentism?

2. Are there any other potential solutions past these impasses, apart from what virtue epistemology has to offer?
3. What are the key features of Sosa's SSS model and Zagzebski's Neo-Aristotelian model, and how do they differ? What are the strongest objections to each model, and how might defenders of each model best reply to these objections?
4. To what extent do you take Sosa's model and Zagzebski's model to be compatible with one another? Explain.

TUTORIAL 2: GROUP 1 (8 FEBRUARY, 3-4PM, 525 OAKFIELD AVE); GROUP 2 (9 FEBRUARY, 3-4PM, 525 OAKFIELD AVE)

Discussion Questions.

1. Sosa and Greco both embrace the general slogan that knowledge is a kind of success *because of* intellectual virtue. But they unpack this locution differently. Explain how their models differ on this point and which you take to have the advantage and why.
2. Explain Lackey's counterexample to robust forms of virtue epistemology and how it differs from Pritchard's objection from environmental epistemic luck.
3. Which of the two strategies of objection is stronger, and what are the most promising lines of defence that a proponent of robust virtue epistemology might have available?
4. Can you think of any other objections to the material adequacy of the core robust virtue epistemology account of knowledge?

TUTORIAL 3: GROUP 1 (1 MARCH, 3-4PM, 525 OAKFIELD AVE); GROUP 2 (2 MARCH, 3-4PM, 525 OAKFIELD AVE)

Discussion Questions.

1. Reconstruct, as best as you can, what you take to be the premises and the conclusion of the core epistemic situationist critique of virtue epistemology? Is the argument sound?
2. Evaluate Sosa's argument in *Reflective Knowledge in the Best Circles*.
3. What is a fully apt judgment?
4. What is the value problem, and can virtue epistemology offer a compelling response? If so, why, if not, why not?

TUTORIAL 4: GROUP 1 (15 MARCH, 3-4PM, 525 OAKFIELD AVE); GROUP 2 (15 MARCH, 3-4PM, 525 OAKFIELD AVE)

Discussion Questions.

1. What is virtue responsibilism? Is virtue responsibilism incompatible with the kind of virtue epistemology we find in Greco and Sosa?
2. Evaluate Baehr's argument in Ch. 6 of *The Inquiring Mind*.
3. What is intellectual humility, and in what respects might this be an epistemically valuable trait to possess?
4. Is the case stronger for extended intellectual virtues (i.e., by extended cognition) or (non-summativist) collective intellectual virtues?

READINGS

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