PHIL 2200-20
Ways of Knowing
Semester: Spring 2013
Location: Social Sciences Building, Room 2031
Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00am — 12:15pm

Instructor: Dr. Amy Donahue
Email: adonahu3@kennesaw.edu
Phone: 770-423-6624
Office: Social Sciences Building, Room 4092
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:45 — 10:45am, 12:45 — 1:45pm.

Catalogue Course Description:
A philosophical, critical examination of the different ways of knowing and thinking in the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences including ethical and religious perspectives. Emphasis is on the nature and purpose of philosophical inquiry as applied to selected issues within philosophy and the broader implications of these methods and questions for other disciplines and in everyday contexts.

Instructors’s Course Description:
We will critically examine the possibility, nature, and potential risks and advantages of different styles of claiming to know. In the first half of the course, we study classical Greek and Indian accounts of the necessary and sufficient conditions of proper knowledge claims, explore Daoist, Greek, Buddhist, and other skeptical counterarguments, and evaluate efforts by figures such as Gangeṣa, Augustine, and Descartes to respond to these skeptical challenges. In the second half, we look specifically at modern appeals to common sense and explore epistemological, ethical, and political arguments against such appeals.

Learning Objectives:

PHIL 2200 satisfies one of Kennesaw State University’s general education program requirements. It addresses the Critical Thinking learning outcome. The learning outcome states: Students articulate a position on an issue and support it by evaluating evidence relevant to the position, considering opposing positions or evidence, and evaluating the implications and/or consequences of the issue. For more information about KSU’s General Education program requirements and associated learning outcomes, please visit http://catalog.kennesaw.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=10&poid=704
Required Reading:
Select online materials and handouts.

Attendance Policy:
Attendance is mandatory. Students are required to provide a reasonable, documentable explanation for class absences. After three unexcused absences, students lose a full letter grade, to be deducted from class participation, with *each additional unexcused absence*.

Electronic Devices Policy:
The volume on all electronic devices should be turned off in class. Students are welcome to use laptops and smart phones to take notes in class and to look up material relevant to class discussions. However, texting, chatting, or web-surfing during class will negatively affect students’ class participation grades.

Course Assessments/Assignments:
For a grade of “B” or better, students must fulfill the following learning outcomes for this course:

- Demonstrate direct, primary text-based knowledge and understanding of important historical and contemporary texts, arguments, and counterarguments relating to ways of knowing and common sense through argument summaries, midterm and final papers, weekly online discussions, and active classroom participation.
- Write two five to seven page essays on a topic to be assigned, each supporting a clearly stated and philosophically relevant thesis and accurately and subtly representing relevant arguments from assigned primary texts for and against the thesis.
- Actively engage with fellow students’ live and online class contributions. Assist them with their thoughts and pose relevant, informed, and on-topic critical questions.

Students must attend classes, *read course materials*, bring assigned texts to class, *participate in class discussions*, and *promptly complete assignments* unless there are exceptional circumstances that they can document. Each student is expected to treat other members of the class respectfully and to actively participate in class assignments, exercises, and discussions.

Grading:

Grade Calculations
Online Discussions — 12%
Two 2-page argument summaries — 18% (9% each)
First Paper — 25%
Final Paper — 25%
Class participation — 20%

Grading Scale
Students are evaluated on the following scale:

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I—Indicates an incomplete grade for the course, and will be awarded only when the student has done satisfactory work up to the last two weeks of the semester, but for nonacademic reasons beyond her or his control is unable to meet the full requirements of the course. Incomplete grades are only valid after submission of the Incomplete Grade form (signed by both the instructor and student) to the Department Chair's office.

Description of Assignments:
Online Discussions: Posts are required by 9pm the evening before each day of class, from Weeks 2 — 16 (not including Spring Break), on the class’ online discussion board. Each post is worth 0.5 per cent of your final grade.

Each 75—150 word discussion post should be written in conversational English and should demonstrate your direct, personal familiarity with, if not expertise in, the texts and topic for the upcoming class. The instructor will moderate the board primarily to ensure that students are actively and appropriately engaging the relevant primary texts, class assignments, and discussions, and to non-intrusively identify areas of student confusion, interest, and concern that she may address later in class. The discussion board is meant to serve as a place for students, including those who find live class interactions awkward, to raise questions or concerns about class concepts and philosophical perspectives, to try to answer or address classmates’ questions or difficulties, or to attempt to hash out in their own words what a text means. You are welcome to wax poetic about, or go on tirades against, particular philosophers and/or philosophical perspectives, but must also treat other class participants with respect. Your online discussion posts will be evaluated according to the following rubric:

1 point — The post is submitted by 9pm the evening before class, is written in intelligible if not grammatically perfect English, demonstrates personal familiarity with, if not expertise in, the relevant texts (e.g., through direct textual references), is not disrespectful of other
class participants, and does not appear to the professor to substantially repeat an earlier student post.

0 points — Either it is not submitted by 9pm the evening before class, or it isn't written in intelligible English, does not demonstrate personal familiarity with the relevant texts, is disrespectful of other class participants, or appears to the professor to substantially repeat an earlier student post.

**NOTE:** If student online discussion posts regularly seem perfunctory and unsatisfactory to the instructor, she reserves the prerogative to substitute short online quizzes for this component of students’ grades. As with the online discussion posts, these quizzes would primarily aim to assess student completion and comprehension of primary textual reading assignments and grasp of in-class course content.

**Argument Summaries:** Approximately two weeks before your midterm and final papers are due, you must submit a two page, text-based summary of one argument that we have read and studied in class. Each should be double-spaced, with 12 point Times New Roman font and 1” margins, and should follow MLA citation guidelines (see [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/)). We’ll talk about the structure of philosophical arguments in class. Students are also invited to view this Oxford University video podcast’s introduction to arguments in philosophy: [http://media.podcasts.ox.ac.uk/conted/critical_reasoning/talbotcr01-medium-video.mp4?CAMEFROM=podcastsGET](http://media.podcasts.ox.ac.uk/conted/critical_reasoning/talbotcr01-medium-video.mp4?CAMEFROM=podcastsGET). Your summaries must accurately represent and explain 1) a conclusion defended by one particular philosopher whom we have read, 2) the premises that he or she gives to support the truth of the conclusion, and 3) why, according to the author, the premises make the conclusion necessarily or most likely true. Your summaries should appropriately reference the *primary text* (not simply the editors’ introductions or class notes) in ways that prove that your representations and explanations are accurate. Think of these summaries as part of the drafting process for your midterm and final papers. You are welcome to include them verbatim in your papers. The instructor will upload a grading rubric for your written assignments to D2L.

**NOTE:** All student writing should be gender-inclusive, or, in other words, should avoid using gender-specific terms to speak of people in gender unspecified ways. For guidance, please visit [http://marquette.edu/wac/neutral/NeutrallInclusiveLanguage.shtml](http://marquette.edu/wac/neutral/NeutrallInclusiveLanguage.shtml).

**Papers:** Your midterm and final papers should be between 5-7 pages, be formatted with double-spacing, 12 point Times New Roman font, and 1” margins, and follow MLA citation guidelines (see [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/)). Please review KSU’s policies on academic integrity and plagiarism before submission (see below). Time permitting, I am extremely happy to review drafts before written assignments are due and to work with students to improve their academic writing. Graded papers are normally returned no more than two weeks after their due date. The instructor will upload a grading rubric for your written assignments to D2L.
NOTE: All student writing should be gender-inclusive, or, in other words, should avoid using gender-specific terms to speak of people in gender unspecific ways. For guidance, please visit http://marquette.edu/wac/neutral/NeutralInclusiveLanguage.shtml.

Academic Honesty:
The high quality of education at Kennesaw State University is reflected in the credits and degrees its students earn. The protection of high standards of academic integrity is crucial since the validity and equity of the University’s grades and degrees depend upon it.

No student shall receive, attempt to receive, knowingly give or attempt to give unauthorized assistance in the preparation of any work required to be submitted for credit (including examinations, laboratory reports, essays, themes, term papers, etc.). Unless specifically authorized, the presence and/or use of electronic devices during an examination, quiz, or other class assignment is considered cheating. Engaging in any behavior which a professor prohibits as academic misconduct in the syllabus or in class discussion is cheating. **When direct quotations are used, they should be indicated, and when the ideas, theories, data, figures, graphs, programs, electronic based information or illustrations of someone other than the student are incorporated into a paper or used in a project, they should be duly acknowledged.** No student may submit the same, or substantially the same, paper or other assignment for credit in more than one class without the prior permission of the current professor(s).

Students suspected of violating the KSU statement of Academic Honesty will meet with the instructor to discuss the violation AND will be reported to the Department of Student Conduct according to the process outlined at the following link: https://web.kennesaw.edu/scai/content/scai-misconduct-procedures

The instructor has a zero-tolerance policy against plagiarism and will use TurnItIn plagiarism detection services when grading written assignments. **At a minimum, students who plagiarize any part of an assignment will receive an F for that assignment, in accord with KSU's academic misconduct procedures.**

To avoid plagiarizing, including unintentionally plagiarizing, please visit: http://plagiarism.org/
http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml
http://www.library.arizona.edu/help/tutorials/plagiarism/index.html

ADA Compliance:
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Public Law 101-336, gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities. This statute guarantees equal opportunity for this protected group in the areas of public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services and telecommunications.

Should you require assistance or have further questions about the ADA, please contact: Ms. Carol Pope, ADA Compliance Officer for Students 770-423-6443. I will happily work to
meet the access needs of any student who requires reasonable accommodations because of the impact of a physical or mental disability.

**Course Schedule:**

(Reading assignments, activities, and paper deadlines are subject to revision)

Week 1:

1/10 — Class introductions, welcome, and discussion of syllabus and the concept 'knowledge'. What is knowledge? Introduction to the distinction between “knowing how” and “knowing that.” Are belief, true belief, and knowledge different? If so, how? Arguments in philosophy.

Week 2:

1/15 — Discussion post. Reading due — Plato’s Internalism (B&P, pp. 334—343). What, according to Socrates, is knowledge, and how does he justify (i.e., argue for) its difference from, and superiority to, mere belief, and merely true belief? Internalist and externalist models of warrant. Arguments in philosophy.


Week 3:

1/21 — MARTIN LUTHER KING HOLIDAY — NO CLASS. No discussion post.

1/23 — Discussion post. Re-read Locke selection. Discussion of Locke reading. What are “simple ideas,” and how do they feature in Locke’s theory of adequate and inadequate ideas?

Week 4:

1/28 — Discussion post. Reading due — Indian Realism: Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika (B&P, pp. 309—314). What is an “externalist” theory of knowledge? According to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school, in what ways (*pramāṇa*-s) does knowledge happen? When, and only when, are beliefs produced through perception, testimony, and inference valid? Can people really be said to know if they cannot justify their beliefs? If people’s beliefs are produced in the ways that the Nyāya Sūtra-s describe, would it be reasonable to demand that they justify them?

1/30 — Discussion post. Reading due — Chinese Theories of Knowledge — Daoist Skepticism (B&P, pp. 320-328). Recap of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika *pramāṇa*-s. Examination of Zhuangzi’s skeptical arguments. Do creatures and experiences differ so much, and do judgments depend so much on varying subjective conditions, that objective “knowing that” is impossible? What is the problem of the criterion and why does
Zhuangzi think it’s a problem? What does Zhuangzi think he shows by raising the possibility of dreaming? Be prepared to explain and accurately restate Zhuangzi’s skeptical arguments from variability, the interdependence of subject and object, the problem of the criterion, and the possibility of dreaming.

Week 5:

2/5 — Discussion post. Re-read Zhuangzi selection. Continued examination of Zhuangzi’s skeptical arguments from variability, the interdependence of subject and object, the problem of the criterion, and the possibility of dreaming. Review of arguments in philosophy. How might Zhuangzi’s arguments apply to Plato, Locke, or Nyāya?

2/7 — Discussion post. Review internalist and externalist theories of knowledge, and Zhuangzi’s skeptical arguments. Which, if any, of these theories of knowledge make the most sense to you and why? How are these accounts of knowing different from or similar to the perspectives and assumptions that you came to class with? Arguments in philosophy.

Week 6:

2/12 — FIRST ARGUMENT SUMMARY DUE. Discussion post. Reading due — Descartes’ Foundationalism (B&P, pp. 373 — 377) and Descartes’ Dualism of Mind and Body (pp. 264 — 270). Why is Descartes a foundationalist and not a skeptic? What is his answer to the problem of variation and to the skeptical argument from the interdependence of subject and object? What are clear and distinct ideas, and why, according to Descartes, are they an appropriate criterion for objective, certain knowledge?

2/14 — Discussion post. Re-read Descartes selections. Examination of Descartes argument for a rationalist foundationalism. Introduction to Nagarjuna.

Week 7:

2/19 — Discussion post. Reading due — Nāgārjuna’s Skeptical Regress and New Logic Responses to Skepticism (B&P, pp. 314 — 317). What does Nāgārjuna mean to show? How does his argument compare to Zhuangzi’s version of the problem of the criterion? Is Descartes’ foundationalism vulnerable to Nāgārjuna’s critique?

2/21 — Discussion post. Reading due — New Logic Responses to Skepticism (B&P, pp. 317 — 319). What assumptions support Gangeṣa’s dismissal of Nāgārjuna’s skeptical argument? Are all real doubts truly “local doubts?” Why? When should a person have to justify his or her beliefs, what are the appropriate methods of justification, and how can anyone establish what these appropriate methods of justification are without committing the logical fallacies that Nagarjuna predicts?
Week 8:

2/26 — Discussion post. Reading due — Sextus Empiricus’s Skepticism (B&P, pp. 348—356). Are creatures and experiences so varied and diverse that knowledge of external, mind-independent things is impossible? How can anyone be sure that they know, and their feelings of certainty aren’t wed to a fleeting mental state, such as dreams, fevers, or intoxication? What is the problem of the criterion and why does Sextus Empiricus consider it a problem? Be prepared to accurately explain and restate Sextus Empiricus’ skeptical arguments from variation, the possibility of dreaming, and the problem of the criterion.


Week 9:

3/5 — Spring Break — NO CLASS. No discussion post.
3/7 — Spring Break — NO CLASS. No discussion post.

Week 10:

3/12 — MIDTERM PAPER DUE. Discussion post. Reading due — Thomas Reid, “Introduction to the “Philosophy of Common Sense,” and “Of Common Sense” (http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_statictxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=2044&Itemid=27), and Edmund Burke, On Taste, Introductory Discourse (http://www.bartleby.com/24/1/1.html). Introduction to modern common sense philosophies. How common is common sense? What ways of knowing belong to the realm of common sense, and where do the borders of this common space of judgment roughly begin? Do mathematical and logical judgments fall within the realm of common sense or outside of it? What about Locke’s “simple ideas” and Burke’s judgments of taste? Can anyone decide these questions — and what would be the criteria?

3/13 — LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY.
3/14 — Discussion post. Re-read Reid and Burke. How common is common sense? What ways of knowing belong to the realm of common sense, and where do the borders of this common space of judgment roughly begin? Why, according to Burke, are common tastes for objects of sense and imagination naturally assured? Why, according to Burke, do people’s tastes for objects of judgment vary? If all people exerted themselves and were similarly educated, would common tastes for objects of judgment naturally emerge?
Week 11:

3/19 — Discussion post. Reading due — The Intuitionism of Mencius (B&P, pp. 44-52). Why, according to Mencius, do people naturally share similar moral and epistemological tastes and standards. If all people cultivated and hued closely to natural human feelings, would common tastes for objects of judgment emerge? How does Mencius account for variation?

3/21 — MANDATORY LECTURE. No regular class session. Students must attend at least one of two lectures to be held at KSU during the 3/21-3/22 Margins of Philosophy Symposium. Specific details to be announced in class during the weeks before the symposium.

Week 12:

3/26 — Discussion post. Re-reading due — The Intuitionism of Mencius (B&P, pp. 44-52). Why, according to Mencius, do people naturally share similar moral and epistemological tastes and standards. How does Mencius account for variation? If all people cultivated and hued closely to natural human feelings, would common standards of judgment emerge? Be prepared to accurately restate and summarize Reid’s, Burke’s, and Mencius’ arguments for naturally given common sense knowledge.

3/28 — Discussion post. Reading due — Xunzi’s Pessimistic View of Human Nature (B&P, pp. 52 — 57). Recap arguments for naturally grounded common sense knowledge, and begin to explore arguments against the possibility of warranting this kind of belief. Can common sense knowledge about appropriate judgment and behavior be rooted in natural human feelings if appropriate judgment and behavior amounts to restraining, and being conditioned to restrain, natural human feelings and tendencies? If common sense is natural, then why do people apparently need schools, governments, prisons, scientists, and doctors to have this sense?

Week 13:

4/2 — Discussion post. Reading due — Suzanne Kessler, “The Medical Construction of Gender” (uploaded to D2L). Re-reading due — Xunzi’s Pessimistic View of Human Nature (B&P, pp. 52 — 57). Recap Xunzi’s argument against naturally grounded common sense knowledge, and begin critically assessing Xunzi’s theory of socially constructed common sense knowledge. If common sense beliefs, for instance about appropriate judgment and behavior or properly sexed embodiment, are produced by social practices, how can such practices warrant these beliefs as knowledge?

4/4 — Discussion post. The Skepticism of Francisco Sanches (B&P, pp. 399 — 402). If people must be taught common sense beliefs, then how can these beliefs 1) be truly shared, or 2) be warranted as knowledge? Is it
possible to justify a theory of common sense without masquerading incomplete subjective beliefs as complete, objective ones, arguing in a circle, or falling into an infinite regress?

Week 14:
4/9 — SECOND ARGUMENT SUMMARY DUE. Discussion post. Reading due — Susan Rosenfeld, Introduction (uploaded to D2L). Introduction to “postmodern” critiques of modern appeals to common sense knowledge. According to Rosenfeld, what is common sense and what three political-historical developments conditioned its production? Introduction to Lugones. Will any theory of common sense produce a “light side” and a “dark side?” If so, can apparently common sense beliefs be warranted as legitimate ways of “knowing that?”

4/11 — Discussion post. Reading due — Maria Lugones, “The Coloniality of Gender” (uploaded to D2L). Is it possible to make modern, middle-class standards of meaning and value seem common and shared without constructing racialized “light” and “dark” sides of humanity? Compare to Zhuangzi.

Week 15:

4/18 — Discussion post. Reading due — Michael Warner, preface and chapter 1 (pp. vii — 40). What, according to Warner, is “moralism” and how does it contrast with “morality?” Can any set of experiences, judgments, and perspectives appear generally representative and authoritative for a society, species, or culture (i.e., appear as common sense knowledge) without practices that shame and make “others” appear inferior or disorder? Compare with Lugones’ concept of “coloniality” and Rosenfeld’s history of modern appeals to common sense.

Week 16:
4/23 — Discussion post. Reading due — Warner, chapter 2 (pp. 41-80). How, according to Warner, do “stigmaphobe” movements, such as same sex marriage campaigns, participate in moralism? Would moral (i.e., “stigmaphile”) public spaces share common sense knowledge in the ways that Reid, Burke, Mencius, or Xunzi conceive of it?

4/25 — Discussion post. Reading due — Warner, chapter 3 (pp. 81 — 149). Note Warner’s claims that same-sex marriage campaigns seek to “civilize gays.” Would any attempt to ground knowledge in naturally or socially produced “common sense” necessarily produce “light” and
“dark” sides of humanity, manifest in some kind of moralistic civilizing mission? Can it be possible, therefore, to warrant modern appeals to common sense beliefs as legitimate ways of “knowing that?”

Week 17:

4/30 — Last day of class. No discussion post required. Recap of arguments against the possibility and legitimacy of 1) naturally grounded common sense knowledge and 2) socially grounded common sense knowledge. How, if at all, do people know, not only individually, but collectively, as members of societies, cultures, and one species? Where, if anywhere, should the epistemological and ethical limits of appeals to common sense knowledge be drawn, and why?

FINAL PAPER: DUE ELECTRONICALLY MONDAY, MAY 6, BY 12PM THROUGH D2L.