

*Philosophy 351 (A01): Epistemology*  
*FALL 2024 [12633]*

*Provisional Draft: This outline is intended only to give students a general sense of what the course is like. It is not the final, official course syllabus.*

**Scheduled class times**

Monday & Thursday, 11:30-12:50 – Building and Room TBD

**Professor**

Patrick Rysiew

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**Course Description and Intended Learning Outcomes**

Epistemology is concerned with such things as knowledge, justification, evidence, rationality, doubt, truth, scepticism, and many other related topics. This course is an examination of current issues and theories in epistemology. Subjects to be addressed include: analyses of knowledge, and whether knowledge admits of an analysis; the debate between foundationalists and coherentists; the internalism-externalism controversy; why we should care about truth; ‘naturalistic’ approaches to knowledge; epistemic normativity; feminist epistemology; whether knowledge is somehow context-dependent; and what the proper response to scepticism might be. Students will read both the introductory textbook and original readings from leading figures in the field. Upon successfully completing this course, students will have a very good sense of what is happening in contemporary epistemology.

**Texts**

- 1) Jack S. Crumley II, *An Introduction to Epistemology*, second edition (Broadview, 2009); ISBN: 9781551119076. Available through the UVic Bookstore,<sup>1</sup> from the publisher,<sup>2</sup> or via online retailers. Be sure to get the correct edition. Two copies will be placed on reserve at the main library.
- 2) A number of additional readings will be made available via the course’s web page (Brightspace). Students are responsible for acquiring copies of these.

**Evaluation**

Students’ grades will be based on:

- a) Two take-home, open-book midterm exams (30% each).
- b) A final paper, approximately 8-10 pages long (30%). Some topics will be suggested. Students may write on a topic of their own design, but only if they obtain the instructor’s permission in advance.
- c) Several quizzes and/or short assignments - details TBA (10%).

In order to be eligible to pass the course, students must successfully complete the two midterms and the final paper.

Beyond the student’s having adequately addressed the topic question(s) on which they write,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.uvicbookstore.ca/text/>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://broadviewpress.com/product/an-introduction-to-epistemology-second-edition/#tab-description>.

evaluation of written work will be based on: evidence of comprehension of the materials and issues addressed; evidence of original and critical thought with regard to that material; the extent to which the student stakes out a position and provides good reasons and arguments for it; the extent to which the student communicates their ideas clearly (using complete and grammatical sentences, correct terms, a clear essay structure, and so on). For the exams and final paper, *the use of outside materials (i.e., any readings not assigned for the course) is permitted only if you have received the instructor's permission ahead of time.* Any materials used for the exams and paper (i.e., any course readings, or posted materials) must be properly cited in the standard way.

Late assignments unaccompanied by a legitimate excuse will be penalized at the rate of 5% per day or portion thereof, to a maximum of 30%.<sup>3</sup>

The standard University grading scheme will be used. Here is an excerpt:<sup>4</sup>

Grade	Point Value	Percentage	Description
A+	9	90 – 100	An A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior, shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
A	8	85 – 89	
A-	7	80 – 84	
B+	6	77 – 79	A B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material. Normally achieved by the largest number of students.
B	5	73 – 76	
B-	4	70 – 72	
C+	3	65 – 69	A C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.
C	2	60 – 64	
D	1	50 – 59	A D is earned by work that indicates minimal command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.
F	0	0 – 49	F is earned by work, which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.

## Expectations

<sup>3</sup> Examples of legitimate grounds for requesting an academic concession (including a late assignment) are listed here: <https://www.uvic.ca/students/academics/academic-concessions-accommodations/request-for-academic-concession/index.php#:~:text=You%20can%20request%20an%20academic,illness%2C%20trauma%20or%20bereavement.>

<sup>4</sup> The full version is here:

<https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/S1AAgoGuV?bc=true&bcCurrent=14%20-%20Grading&bcItemType=policies.>

This course is in-person only; lectures will not be recorded. Students are expected to come to class, to come to class having read the assigned readings, and to be ready to talk and ask questions about the material. Students who miss a class are responsible for any material covered therein, as well as for finding out what announcements, if any, were made. In general, this course is reading- and writing-intensive. It is very important to keep up with the readings and assignments as we go along.

### **Three quick tips for doing well in the course**

1. *Come to class* -- when you must miss, try to let the instructor know ahead of time; afterwards, talk to a class-mate about what happened; ask for their lecture notes and/or visit the instructor in office hours.
2. *Do the readings ahead of time, and read 'actively'* – pay attention to what you're reading, ask yourself what point(s) the author(s) is trying to make, why this matters, what questions you'd like to ask the author, and so on.
3. *If you're having trouble with any of the course material, speak to the instructor right away* -- office hours are not just for crises; they are meant to provide you with an additional everyday means of improving your understanding of the course material.

### **Academic Integrity and Professional Conduct**

Chat GPT is not permitted for this course. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated. It is each student's responsibility to know the University's regulations in this regard. The Policy on Academic Integrity is published in the University Calendar.<sup>5</sup> You can also consult the Libraries' plagiarism guide<sup>6</sup> or the Tri-Faculty Standards for Professional Behavior for Students,<sup>7</sup> which draws together a number of existing UVic policies in one place for ease of reference. Professionalism is expected from all students enrolled in courses in the Faculty of Humanities. As part of professionalism, students, faculty and staff are expected to be familiar with University policies, including the Tri-Faculty Standards.

### **Intellectual property of materials on the LMS website**

All assignments for this course and all materials posted to the LMS website are the intellectual property of the instructor and the University of Victoria. Do not circulate this material or post it to note-sharing sites without the instructor's permission. Posting course materials to note-sharing sites or otherwise circulating course materials without the permission of the instructor violates the Policy on Academic Integrity (link above). Any evidence that you are circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.

### **Academic Supports**

The University has a number of academic support services that may help you in this course, including the Centre for Academic Communication,<sup>8</sup> the Library's Research Support page,<sup>9</sup> and the Library's "Ask Us" service.<sup>10</sup> Information about academic supports can also be found

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<sup>5</sup> [https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/Sk\\_0xsM\\_V?bc=true&bcCurrent=08%20-%20Policy%20on%20Academic%20Integrity&bcItemType=policies](https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/Sk_0xsM_V?bc=true&bcCurrent=08%20-%20Policy%20on%20Academic%20Integrity&bcItemType=policies).

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/plagiarism/index.php>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.uvic.ca/services/advising/advice-support/academic-units/student-code-of-conduct/index.php>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.uvic.ca/learningandteaching/cac/>.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.uvic.ca/library/research-teaching/index.php>.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.uvic.ca/library/research/ask/index.php>.

through the University's Learn Anywhere site.<sup>11</sup>

### **Academic Accommodations**

The University of Victoria is committed to creating a learning experience that is as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me. If you believe you will require academic accommodations to address barriers to your education in this course and you are not already registered with the Centre for Accessible Learning, please do so.<sup>12</sup> The Centre for Accessible Learning is the office designated to make arrangements for accommodations. You can find information about academic accommodations through the Centre for Accessible Learning's website.<sup>13</sup>

**Schedule of Topics and Readings:** TBA, as the start of term approaches. Students who wish to get a head start can begin perusing the required text.

### **Some important administrative dates:**<sup>14</sup>

- Tues., Sept. 17: last day for 100% reduction of fees
- Fri., Sept. 20: last day to for adding first-term courses
- Tues., Oct. 8: last day for 50% reduction of tuition fees. 100% of tuition fees will be assessed for courses dropped after this date
- Thurs., Oct. 31: last day for withdrawing from first-term courses without penalty of failure

*I acknowledge and respect the lək'wəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.*

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<sup>11</sup> <https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/LearnAnywhere/academic-supports/>.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.uvic.ca/accessible-learning/students/how-to-register/index.php>.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.uvic.ca/accessible-learning/index.php>.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/dates/index.php>.