

**Philosophy 244: Epistemic Normativity [revised 3/29/2011]**  
**Harvard University, Spring 2011**

**Instructor:** Prof. Selim Berker

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*Office hours:* Tuesdays, 1-3pm

**Course Description:**

Recent work on the nature, structure, and ultimate grounds of epistemic normativity. Topics include: doxastic voluntarism; the deontic conception of epistemic justification; pragmatic reasons for belief; Pascal's wager; the value of knowledge and true belief; the aim of belief; epistemic consequentialism; and analogies between epistemic and moral norms.

**Time and Place:** Mondays, 2-4pm, in Emerson 310

**Course URL:** <http://my.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k76946>

All handouts, announcements, and readings will be available through the course website. You must login using your Harvard PIN or using an XID (for auditors without a Harvard PIN) to see all of the site's content.

**Course Admission Policy:**

This is a graduate-level course; undergraduates (and students in a graduate program other than philosophy) will be allowed to take the course for credit only under special circumstances.

**Readings:**

Each week's readings will be available for photocopying in Robbins Library in Emerson Hall and for downloading on the course website.

**Requirements:**

The breakdown of grades will be as follows:

30% *Seminar attendance and participation.*

Evaluation will be based on attendance, preparation, and contributions to discussion. For those of you who don't feel comfortable talking during class, discussing material during office hours may count toward your contributions to discussion.

70% *Final paper.*

A final paper of approximately 20 to 25 double-spaced pages will be due by 5pm on Fri., May 13. Student are highly encouraged to meet with the instructor during the course of the semester to discuss their final paper topic.

## Meeting and Reading Schedule:

NOTE: Readings listed in brackets are optional.

*Mon., Jan. 24:* Introduction: The Clifford-James Debate

W. K. Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief,” §I

William James, “The Will to Believe”

*Mon., Jan. 31:* Deciding to Believe, pt. 1

Bernard Williams, “Deciding to Believe”

[Barbara Winters, “Believing at Will”]

[Jonathan Bennett, “Why Is Belief Involuntary?”]

Pamela Hieronymi, “Controlling Attitudes” [skip or skim the footnotes]

*Mon., Feb. 7:* Deciding to Believe, pt. 2

William Alston, “The Deontological Conception of Epistemic Justification”

Richard Feldman, “Voluntary Belief and Epistemic Evaluation”

*Mon., Feb. 14:* Practical Reasons for Belief

Thomas Kelly, “The Rationality of Belief and Some Other Propositional Attitudes”

Richard Foley, “Pragmatic Reasons for Belief”

*Mon., Feb. 21:* NO CLASS – HOLIDAY

*Mon., Feb. 28:* Pascal’s Wager

Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, §233

Alan Hájek, “Pascal’s Wager” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

Alan Hájek, “Waging War on Pascal’s Wager”

*Mon., Mar. 7:* The Value of Knowledge

[Plato, selections from *Meno*]

[Jonathan Kvanvig, “Why Should Inquiring Minds Want to Know?: *Meno* Problems and Epistemological Axiology”]

Linda Zagzebski, “The Search for the Source of Epistemic Good”

Alvin Goldman & Erik Olsson, “Reliabilism and the Value of Knowledge”

Dennis Whitcomb, “Epistemic Value,” §2.1

[Duncan Pritchard, “Recent Work on Epistemic Value,” §§1-3]

*Mon., Mar. 14:* NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

*Mon., Mar. 21:* The Value of True Belief

Ernest Sosa, “For the Love of Truth?”

Hilary Kornblith, “Epistemic Normativity”

*Mon., Mar. 28:* Truth as the Constitutive Aim of Belief

David Velleman, “On the Aim of Belief”

Gideon Rosen, “Does Belief Aim at the Truth?”

*Mon., Apr. 4:* NO CLASS

*Mon., Apr. 11:* Truth as the Standard of Correctness for Belief

Nishi Shah, “How Truth Governs Belief”

Nishi Shah & David Velleman, “Doxastic Deliberation”

[Allan Gibbard, “Truth and Correct Belief”]

[Kristen Bykvist & Anandi Hattiangadi, “Does Thought Imply Ought?”]

*Mon., Apr. 18:* Truth as the Primary Epistemic Goal

Marian David, “Truth as the Epistemic Goal”

Stephen Maitzen, “Our Errant Epistemic Aim”

[Marian David, “Truth as the Primary Epistemic Goal: A Working Hypothesis”]

[Wayne Riggs, “Balancing Our Epistemic Goals”]

*Mon., Apr. 25:* Against Epistemic Teleology, pt. 1

Thomas Kelly, “Epistemic Rationality as Instrumental Rationality: A Critique”

Stephen Grimm, “Epistemic Normativity”

*Mon., May 2:* Against Epistemic Teleology, pt. 2

Selim Berker, “Epistemic Teleology and the Separateness of Propositions”

[Wayne Riggs, “The Value Turn in Epistemology”]

*Date TBA:* Epistemic Companions-in-Guilt, pt. 1: Replying to Mackie [OPTIONAL CLASS]

[J. L. Mackie, “The Subjectivity of Values”]

Terence Cuneo, *The Normative Web: An Argument for Realism*, ch. 1-4

[Jonas Olson, “Error Theory and Reasons for Belief”]

*Date TBA:* Epistemic Companions-in-Guilt, pt. 2: Replying to Street [OPTIONAL CLASS]

[Sharon Street, “A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value”]

Sharon Street, “Evolution and the Normativity of Epistemic Reasons”

**Final paper due by 5pm on Fri., May 13. [NOTE CHANGE IN DATE.]**