INTRODUCTION TO EPISTEMOLOGY

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Office hours: Wednesdays, 6:00 – 7:00 P.M and by appointment

DESCRIPTION:
Beginning with the earliest Greek thinkers, the questions of what we can know and how it is that we know anything have been central to philosophy. In this course, we will study both ancient (Plato and Aristotle) and modern (Descartes and Kant) theories of knowledge. We will inquire into the definition, nature, and limits of knowledge, as well as discuss topics such as the external world, the thinking subject, and metaphysics. We will also examine the nature of belief, probability, doubt and certainty, and how objective knowledge is possible. A guiding theme throughout the course is an inquiry into mathematics and logic as paradigms of knowledge. We will also consider how they apply to a knowledge of the soul, God, and freedom. How much objective science can we have? And how much objectivity do we need?

Required Texts:
Additionally, I will be providing a handout of Aristotle’s Categories; you do not need to purchase this book.
All textbooks are on order at Shakespeare & Co. Booksellers (939 Lexington Avenue between 68th and 69th streets; 212 570 0201). Shakespeare & Co. also has a limited number of used copies available at lower prices.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:
This course aims to provide students an introduction to epistemology, both ancient and modern. The course covers basic problems in epistemology, including the nature of knowledge, how we can be certain of what we know, whether perception is a reliable source of knowledge, and the difference between the knowing subject and the known world. It will explore the differences between ancient epistemology and contemporary epistemological theories especially with regard to the last.
In addition, the course will teach basic analytic and critical skills, especially how to read texts carefully paying attention to literary form, structure, context, and nuance. Students will learn how to interpret texts rigorously, to research secondary sources, and to reconstruct an argument in their own language.
Opportunities for class participation will allow students to develop the ability to formulate and discuss ideas, objections, and their own solutions to problems. Regular writing
assignments will give students the opportunity to train their expository writing skills, i.e., organization, clarity, precision, and fluidity of expression. This is a writing-intensive course.

GRADES AND REQUIREMENTS:
1. All students are responsible for a mid-term paper (10 pages min.) which counts toward 50% of their grade.
2. The mid-term paper is on Plato’s *Theaetetus* and consists of responses to three questions, which will be announced in class the week before the submission deadline. You are required to edit your papers for correct spelling and grammar. I reserve the right to reject any paper that does not meet these standards.
3. You will have the option of rewriting your mid-term paper for a better grade if you wish. I do not accept late assignments.
4. There will also be a final exam with two short questions: one on Descartes and the second on Kant. The final exam is 30% of your grade.
5. Regular reading counts toward 10% of your grade.
6. Class participation counts toward a further 10% of your grade.
7. Regular attendance is required; any student who misses more than three classes without notice will have to see me before he/she can continue attending. I take attendance for every session.

SPECIAL NEEDS:
In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (emotional, medical, physical and/or learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1124 to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance please call (212- 772- 4857)/TTY (212- 650- 3230).

ACADEMIC HONESTY:
Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures. A detailed statement about plagiarism is posted on Blackboard and will be distributed before papers are submitted.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND REQUIRED READING:
This course is designed to fit a 14-week semester. The sessions may not correspond exactly to the calendar as discussion may extend beyond one class into the next. It is the student’s responsibility to attend every single class to note the necessary reading material for the next class. In case a student is absent, it is the student’s responsibility to find out what the assigned reading for the next class is. The course is organized into two sections: Part I covers ancient philosophy; Part II covers modern philosophy.

Aug. 26 Thu Classes begin: Fall 2010
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<th>Date</th>
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| Sep. 1 | Wed | Introduction to Plato  
Socrates, Plato, the dialogue form, Sophists versus Socrates |
| Sep. 6 | Mon | No classes: Labor Day |
| Sep. 8 | Mon | Presocratic philosophers (Presocratic philosophy handout)  
Parmenides' stable Being, Heraclitus on flux, Protagoras on relativism |
| Sep. 13 | Wed | Overall structure of the *Theaetetus*  
Dialogical participants, mathematics and midwifery (142a-145c), definition and example (146a-151d) |
| Sep. 15 | Mon | *Theaetetus* (contd.)  
First definition (D1): “Knowledge is perception” (151e-187a)  
The definition of knowledge as perception (151d-c)  
The “cold wind” argument; and the theory of flux (152a-160c) |
| Sep. 20 | Wed | *Theaetetus* (contd.)  
The digression: 172c1-177b7 |
| Sep. 22 | Mon | *Theaetetus* (contd.)  
The refutation of the thesis that knowledge is perception (177c6-186c12)  
Final objection to Protagoras (177c6-179b5), final objection to Heraclitus (179c1-183c2), final refutation of D1 (183c4-187a8) |
| Sep. 27 | Wed | *Theaetetus* (contd.)  
Second definition (D2): “Knowledge is true judgment” (187b-201c)  
First puzzle of misidentification (187e5-188c8), second puzzle about false belief: “believing what is not” (188c10-189b9), third puzzle about false belief: “exchange of understanding” (189b10-190c4) |
| Sep. 29 | Mon | *Theaetetus* (contd.)  
Second definition (contd.): “Knowledge is true judgment” (187b-201c)  
Fourth puzzle about false belief: the wax tablet (190c5-196c5)  
fifth puzzle about false belief: the aviary (196d1-200d4)  
The final refutation of D2 (200d5-201c7) |
| Oct. 6 | Wed | *Theaetetus* (contd.)  
Third definition (D3): “Knowledge is true judgment with an account” (201d-210a)  
The dream of Socrates (201d8-202d7)  
Critique of the dream theory (202d8-206c2)  
Three attempts to understand Logos (206c2-210a9) |
| Oct. 11 | Mon | No class: Columbus day |
Oct. 13 Wed  Conclusion
The theme of death at the beginning and ending of dialogue

Oct. 18 Mon  Theory of knowledge in other Platonic dialogues
The *Sophist* and the *Meno*

Oct. 20 Wed  Review session

Oct. 25 Mon  **Mid-term paper due**
Aristotle’s *Categories*

Oct. 27 Wed  Aristotle’s *Categories*

*Part II: Modern philosophy*

Nov. 1 Mon  **First Meditation**
Method of radical doubt

Nov. 3 Wed  **Second Meditation**
Body; mind; and the “I think”

Nov. 8 Mon  **Third Meditation**
Arguments for the existence of God

Nov. 10 Wed  **Discourse on Method, part 1**
Probability and revealed truth; the need for certainty

Nov. 15 Mon  **Discourse on Method, parts 2 and 3**
A unified edifice of science; the four rules of method

Nov. 17 Wed  **Discourse on Method, part 4**
Doubt; the certainty of the “I think”; and metaphysics

Nov. 22 Mon  **Discourse on Method, parts 5 and 6**
Descartes’ physics and the application of the method

Nov. 24 Wed  Review session

Nov. 29 Mon  Descartes and Kant
“I think, therefore I am”/“the self as phenomenon”

Dec. 1 Wed  **Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics**
Preface and Preamble

Dec. 6 Mon  **Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics (contd.)**
How is pure mathematics possible? (§6-13)
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<td>Dec. 8</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td><em>Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics</em> (contd.)</td>
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<td>How is pure natural science possible? (§14-39)</td>
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<td>Dec. 13</td>
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<td><em>Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics</em> (contd.)</td>
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<td>How is metaphysics in general possible? (§40-56)</td>
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<td><em>Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics</em> (contd.)</td>
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<td>The limits of pure reason (§57-60);</td>
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<td>How is metaphysics possible as a science?</td>
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<td>Dec. 20</td>
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<td><strong>Final exam</strong></td>
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