

Applied Epistemology

PHI 4930

This course complies with all UF policies. For information on those policies and for a list of campus resources, please see this page: <https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>

I Course Information

- Section 4401
 - Meeting: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays: Period 3 (9:35 – 10:25AM).
 - Location: Matherly Hall 102
- Instructor:
 - Rodrigo Borges
 - Office: Griffin–Floyd Hall, room 314.
 - Office Hours: Mondays and Fridays 3:00PM – 5:00 (or by appointment).
 - Contact Information: rodrigo.borges@ufl.edu.

2 Course Description

This advanced undergraduate seminar explores how epistemological theories apply to pressing real-world issues and social contexts. Moving beyond abstract theoretical frameworks, you will examine how knowledge functions in complex social environments where disagreement, expertise, autonomy, Artificial Intelligence, and power dynamics shape what we know and how we know it.

3 Course Goals

Through engagement with both classical and contemporary literature in social epistemology, you will develop sophisticated tools for analyzing knowledge practices within social and political contexts. You will gain the ability to critically evaluate how knowledge claims function in various social settings, assess the epistemic dimensions of contemporary debates, and apply philosophical frameworks to real-world

knowledge challenges. This course bridges philosophical rigor with practical relevance, making it valuable for philosophy majors and students interested in applying epistemological concepts to contemporary challenges in our complex information landscape.

A link to the General Education Subject Area Objectives can be found here:

<https://undergrad.aa.ufl.edu/general-education/gen-ed-program/subject-area-objectives/>

4 Student Learning Outcome

Through successful completion of this course, students can expect to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Content: identify, describe, and explain the logical structures underlying English. Employ different strategies in order to prove the different logical properties of arguments and sentences.
2. Critical Thinking: identify and analyze the key logical elements that shape thought and reasoning. Reason in abstract logical systems and use logical models to solve problems. Apply logical concepts effectively to real-world situations.
3. Communication: communicate knowledge, thoughts and reasoning more clearly and effectively. Formulate and communicate logical models and arguments clearly and effectively.

5 Reading

There is no required textbook for this course. All required readings will be available on Canvas.

6 Attendance and Classroom Policies

Students are expected to attend class and to have done all assigned reading in advance. Failure to do so will adversely affect students' ability to perform well in this course.

Attendance is required and it will be taken, starting on Friday 8/29, using the iClicker app (see below for iClicker information).

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

- <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

Our class sessions may be audio-visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. However, the recording will not be shared unless you have a valid excuse. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who unmute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voice recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the 'chat' feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials by students or any other party is prohibited.

7 Course Requirements

Six different instruments will be used in order to measure student progress through the course. The name of each instrument, and the relative weight each of them carries in determining your final grade is the following; a brief description of each instrument follows.

Assignment	% of Course Grade
Attendance	5%
Weekly Argument Analysis Briefs	20%
Office Hours Argument Consultation	5%
Midterm 'State of the Debate' Paper	25%
Research Proposal & Prospectus Defense	10%
Final Research Paper	35%

7.1 Attendance

Starting on Friday 8/29, attendance will be taken using the iClicker system. Sign up for it here:

- <https://student.iclicker.com//login>

For this class, you will use the iClicker Student Mobile application (or its web version).

You must create an iClicker account and download the app as soon as possible, but certainly before we start taking attendance on Friday 8/29. I will allow two (2) unexcused absences without penalty. Every other absence must either be excused by your instructor in accordance with UF attendance policy or your grade will incur a penalty of 10% percentage points of the attendance grade. However, once a student accumulates five (5) or more unexcused absences in total (including the 2 free ones) they will receive a zero in their attendance grade (i.e., 10% of their total grade).

This assignment aligns with the Student Learning Outcomes 1, 2, and 3 above.

7.2 Weekly Argument Analysis Briefs

Students submit weekly 300 - 400 word briefs that engage with an assigned reading. The goal is not to summarize, but to practice core philosophical skills. Each brief should isolate a single argument, reconstruct it logically, and offer a concise critical analysis (e.g., raise an objection, question an assumption, or explore an implication). This provides regular, low-stakes practice in foundational analytical writing.

This assignment aligns with the Student Learning Outcomes 1, 2, and 3 above.

7.3 Office Hours Argument Consultation

Once or twice during the semester, each student must schedule a 15 - minute meeting during office hours to discuss one of their weekly briefs. In this one-on-one session, the student will verbally present the argument they analyzed and their critique. This informal presentation helps students practice articulating philosophical ideas clearly and defending their analysis in a conversational setting, improving their verbal acuity and confidence.

This assignment aligns with the Student Learning Outcomes 1, 2, and 3 above.

7.4 Midterm ‘State of the Debate’ Paper

This 6 - 8 page paper serves as a bridge from single-text analysis to original research. Students choose a specific debate from the first half of the course and synthesize the views of at least three authors. The paper should map out the core question, explain each philosopher’s position, and highlight key points of disagreement, concluding by identifying the most significant unresolved issue. This assignment specifically hones the crucial skill of conducting a literature review.

This assignment aligns with the Student Learning Outcomes 1, 2, and 3 above.

7.5 Research Proposal & Prospectus Defense

This two-part assignment formalizes the plan for the final paper.

- **Part A:** Written Proposal: A 1-2 page document submitted mid-semester that includes a specific research question, a provisional thesis statement, a structural outline of the argument, and an annotated bibliography of 5-7 sources.
- **Part B:** Prospectus Defense: After submitting the proposal, each student must schedule a 20-minute office hours meeting to present and defend their project. They will articulate their core thesis and argumentative strategy and respond to critical questions and potential objections. This step is crucial for sharpening their research question and anticipating challenges before they begin writing the final paper.

This assignment aligns with the Student Learning Outcomes 1, 2, and 3 above.

7.6 Final Research Paper

The capstone assignment is a 12-15 page research paper that advances an original thesis on a course-related topic. Building on the feedback from the proposal and prospectus defense, this paper requires the student to move beyond summarizing existing views and construct their own sustained, well-defended philosophical argument. It directly simulates the scope and depth of an honors thesis chapter.

8 Grade Scale

See UF grading policies for assigning grade points at:

- <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

	Grade Scale	Grade Value
A	100 - 93	4.00
A-	92 - 90	3.67
B+	89 - 86	3.33
B	85 - 82	3.00
B-	81 - 79	2.67
C+	78 - 75	2.33
C	75 - 72	2.00
C-	71 - 69	1.67
D+	68 - 66	1.33
D	65 - 62	1.00
D-	61 - 60	0.67
E	59 - 0	0.00

9 Academic Honesty

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states, ‘We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: ‘On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.’ The Honor Code

- <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>

specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class. Plagiarism on any assignment will automatically result in a grade of ‘E’ for the course. Plagiarism is defined in the University of Florida’s Student Honor Code as follows: ‘A student shall not represent as the student’s own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to): a. Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution. b. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.’ Students found guilty of academic misconduct will be prosecuted in accordance with the procedures specified in the UF honesty policy.

10 Students with disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drp>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

11 Online Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester. Students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

12 Office Hours

I strongly encourage you to set up a meeting to discuss anything related to the course. Rodrigo will hold office hours Mondays and Fridays 3:00pm - 5:00pm (or by appointment). To set up an appointment please email me at: rodrigo.borges@ufl.edu.

13 Technical Issues

Please, direct any questions about technical issues you might have to UF Helpdesk. The website is <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>. You may also call them at 352 392 4357.

14 Campus Resources

- Health and Wellness:
 1. U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website (www.umatter.ufl.edu) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
 2. Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website (www.counseling.ufl.edu) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
 3. Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website (www.shcc.ufl.edu).
 4. University Police Department: Visit UF Police Department website (www.police.ufl.edu) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
 5. UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website (www.ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center).

15 Academic Resources

1. E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
2. Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
3. Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
4. Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
5. Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
6. Student Complaints On-Campus: Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage ([here](#)) for more information.
7. On-Line Students Complaints: View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process (www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help/student-complaint-process).

16 Class Schedule

Part I: Foundational Shifts: From Individual to Extended and Social Epistemology

Primary Reading:

- Carter, J. Adam. *Digital Knowledge: A Philosophical Investigation*. Chapters 1–3.

Secondary Readings:

- Goldman, Alvin I. *Knowledge in a Social World*. Introduction and Part I.
- Carter, J. Adam, et al. *Extended Epistemology: An Introduction*. Chapters 1–2.
- Pritchard, Duncan. “Seeing It For Oneself.”

August 22: Course Introduction & The Shift to Digital Epistemology

Reading: Carter, *Digital Knowledge*, Chapter 1.

August 25: External Knowledge and the “Brainbound” View

Reading: Carter, *Digital Knowledge*, Chapter 2.

August 27: A Bi-Level Virtue Epistemology Framework

Reading: Carter, *Digital Knowledge*, Chapter 3.

August 29: Introduction to Social Epistemology

Reading: Goldman, *Knowledge in a Social World*, Introduction and Part I.

September 3: Social Practices and Knowledge

Reading: Continue with Goldman, *Knowledge in a Social World*, Part I.

September 5: The Extended Mind & Extended Cognition

Reading: Carter et al., *Extended Epistemology: An Introduction*, Chapter 1.

September 8: Cognitive Integration and External Devices

Reading: Carter et al., *Extended Epistemology: An Introduction*, Chapter 2.

September 10: Intellectual Autonomy and Epistemic Goals

Reading: Pritchard, “Seeing It For Oneself.”

September 12: Synthesis of Part I

Discussion: Integrating Digital, Extended, and Social Epistemologies.

September 15: Introduction to Part II

Reading: Bland, “Interactionism, Debiasing, and the Division of Epistemic Labour,” Chapter 1.

Part II: Epistemic Practices, Virtues, and Bias in Complex Environments

Primary Reading:

- Bland, Steven. “Interactionism, Debiasing, and the Division of Epistemic Labour” in *Social Virtue Epistemology*. Chapters 1 & 2.

Secondary Readings:

- Carter, J. Adam. “Attention, Expertise, and ‘Wokeness’” in *Social Virtue Epistemology*. Chapter 3.
- Johnson, Casey Rebecca. *Epistemic Care*. Chapters 1 & 4.
- Lackey, Jennifer. “The Epistemic Dangers of Context Collapse Online” in *Applied Epistemology*.
- Morris, Michael. *Knowledge and Ideology: The Epistemology of Social and Political Critique*. Chapters 1 & 2.

September 17: Debiasing Strategies and the Division of Epistemic Labor

Reading: Bland, “Interactionism, Debiasing, and the Division of Epistemic Labour,” Chapter 2.

September 19: Attention as an Epistemic Virtue

Reading: Carter, “Attention, Expertise, and ‘Wokeness’.”

September 22: Epistemic Care and Relational Epistemology

Reading: Johnson, *Epistemic Care*, Chapter 1.

September 24: Evaluating Communities of Inquiry

Reading: Johnson, *Epistemic Care*, Chapter 4.

September 26: The Dangers of Context Collapse Online

Reading: Lackey, “The Epistemic Dangers of Context Collapse Online.” September 28: Midterm
‘State of the Debate’ Paper is due

September 29: Knowledge, Ideology, and Social Critique

Reading: Morris, *Knowledge and Ideology*, Chapter 1.

October 1: Cognitive and Noncognitive Dimensions of Belief

Reading: Morris, *Knowledge and Ideology*, Chapter 2.

October 3: Synthesis of Part II

Discussion: Fostering Virtues in Complex Environments.

October 6: Introduction to Part III

Reading: Goldman, *Knowledge in a Social World*, Chapter 9 (“Law”).

October 8: Veritistic Approaches to Democracy

Reading: Goldman, *Knowledge in a Social World*, Chapter 10 (“Democracy”).

Part III: Expertise, Institutions, and the Epistemology of Law

Primary Reading:

- Goldman, Alvin I. *Knowledge in a Social World*. Chapters 9 (“Law”) and 10 (“Democracy”).

Secondary Readings:

- Gardiner, Gregory. “Legal Epistemology.” *Oxford Bibliographies*.
- Farina, Mirko, and Andrea Lavazza (Eds.). *Philosophy, Expertise, And The Myth Of Neutrality*. Chapters by Jox and Coggon.
- List, Christian, and Philip Pettit. *Group Agency: The Possibility, Design, and Status of Corporate Agents*. Chapter 5.
- Bambauer, Derek E. “The Algorithm Game.”
- Hart, H. L. A. *The Concept of Law*. Chapters V and VI.

October 10: Overview of Legal Epistemology

Reading: Gardiner, “Legal Epistemology.”

Research Proposal is due

October 15: Expertise, Neutrality, and the Law

Reading: Farina & Lavazza (Eds.), Chapters by Jox and Coggon.

October 20: Group Agency and Judgment Aggregation

Reading: List & Pettit, *Group Agency*, Chapter 5 (court example).

October 22: Algorithmic Decision-Making and the Law

Reading: Bambauer, “The Algorithm Game.”

October 24: The Foundations of a Legal System

Reading: Hart, *The Concept of Law*, Chapter V.

October 27: Rules of Recognition, Change, and Adjudication

Reading: Hart, *The Concept of Law*, Chapter VI.

October 29: Synthesis of Part III

Discussion: The Role of Systemic Design on Epistemic Outcomes in Law.

October 31: Introduction to Part IV

Reading: Sahebi & Smart, “The AI-mediated communication dilemma.”

Part IV: Emerging Challenges: AI, Misinformation, and Epistemic Justice

Primary Reading:

- Sahebi, M., and H. E. Smart. “The AI-mediated communication dilemma: epistemic trust, social media, and the challenge of generative artificial intelligence.” *Synthese*.

Secondary Readings:

- Carter, J. Adam. *Digital Knowledge: A Philosophical Investigation*. Chapters 5 & 6.
- Lackey, Jennifer. *Criminal Testimonial Injustice*. Chapters 1–2.
- “Freedom of Speech (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).” Section on AI and Content Moderation.
- Yee, J. T. “Machine learning, misinformation, and citizen science.”
- Goldman, Alvin I., and Dennis Whitcomb (Eds.). *Social Epistemology: Essential Readings*. Part V (Social-System Design).

November 3: The AI Communication Dilemma

Reading: Continue with Sahebi & Smart.

November 5: Epistemology of Machine Learning

Reading: Carter, *Digital Knowledge*, Chapter 5.

November 7: Epistemology of Big Data

Reading: Carter, *Digital Knowledge*, Chapter 6.

November 10: Criminal Testimonial Injustice

Reading: Lackey, *Criminal Testimonial Injustice*, Chapter 1.

November 12: Agential Testimonial Injustice

Reading: Lackey, *Criminal Testimonial Injustice*, Chapter 2.

November 14: AI and Content Moderation

Reading: “Freedom of Speech (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy),” Section on AI and Content Moderation. November 16: Final Research Paper is due

November 17: Machine Learning and Misinformation

Reading: Yee, “Machine learning, misinformation, and citizen science.”

November 19: Social-System Design

Reading: Goldman & Whitcomb (Eds.), *Social Epistemology: Essential Readings*, Part V.

November 21: Applied Epistemology for Real-World Problems

Reading: Continue with Goldman & Whitcomb (Eds.), Part V.

November 24: Synthesis of Part IV

Discussion: Responsible Design and Engagement in the Digital Age.

December 1: Course Wrap-Up and Review

Discussion: Key themes and connections across the course.

December 3: Final Discussion & Future Directions

Discussion: Open questions and emerging research in social and digital epistemology.