

## THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE (PH 1065)

Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology

### MEETING INFORMATION

**Room:** DSPT 3

**Time:** Thursdays at 11.10

**Instructor:** Marga Vega, email: [mvega@dspt.edu](mailto:mvega@dspt.edu)

**Office hours:** By appointment.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a survey of epistemology that brings together Classical philosophy approaches with Contemporary debates. We will study the nature of cognition as well as the main epistemological problems that concern the sources of knowledge: perception, memory, testimony, reason. We will see how from these sources we can develop, justify and structure our knowledge and deal with questions about inference, truth, skepticism and certainty.

### STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

1. Acquire systematic knowledge of the main problems in the Theory of Knowledge (Institutional Goal A2). To achieve this goal, the student will read on selected texts. The student will complete an exam that will help review the general contents of the course.
2. Learn about different traditions and schools of thought and how they have approached different epistemological problems (Institutional Goal A1). To achieve this goal the student will attend lectures that present different historical approaches to Epistemology and actively participate in class.
3. Become familiar with some of Aristotle's and Aquinas' texts on the theory of Knowledge (Institutional Goal A2). To achieve this goal the student will read some texts from Aristotle and Aquinas related to knowledge and truth.
4. Develop critical thought on the problems of the Theory of Knowledge presented (Institutional Goal A3, Institutional Goal B). To achieve this goal the student will write a critical paper on an epistemological topic.
5. Increase the student's background in philosophical readings in the History of Philosophy in what pertains to the theory of knowledge (Institutional Goal A1, A2). To achieve this goal the student will read key papers on the subject.
6. Improve writing and argumentative skills in Philosophy (Institutional Goal A1, A2, A3, Institutional Goal B). To achieve this goal the student will write a critical review paper.

## **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

1. To goal 1. The student will be able to present the key points on the basic features of cognition, the different sources of knowledge, and topics like truth, skepticism, and certainty.
2. To goal 2. The student will be able to compare empiricism and rationalism, realism and nominalism, the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition and the contemporary theories of perception.
3. To goal 3. The student will exhibit command of the basic notions of cognition in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition like the notion of act, faculty, operation, proper and common sensibles, and truth as adequacy.
4. To goal 4. The student will be able to present the key points of the subject in a way that shows knowledge of the basic questions and personal criticism.
5. To goal 5. The student will be familiar with texts from Aristotle, Aquinas and contemporary epistemologists.
6. To goal 6. The student will be proficient in the way of articulating a philosophical problem, critically assessing the arguments and providing her personal input.

## **COURSE FORMAT-METHODOLOGY**

This is a hybrid course consisting in a weekly online lecture, and one weekly meeting where we will discuss the topic addressed by the lecture. Active participation is essential and requires careful reading of the assigned texts and online lecture.

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES**

EXAM: on April 16<sup>th</sup>. 50% of the final grade. The goals of the exam are:

- Review of the course topics.
- Assess that student has an understanding of the main topics of the Theory of Knowledge.
- Prepare for the comprehensive exam (for MA exam option students).

PAPER: on May 21<sup>st</sup>. 50% of the final grade. The paper will be a "critical review paper". The paper should have an argumentative nature not merely expository. The goals of the paper are:

- To become familiar with secondary literature and scholarship in the theory of knowledge, as well as the latest research topics in the area.
- To learn the craft and skill of scholarly papers by reviewing one of them.
- To develop writing and argumentative skills.
- To encourage the student's own thinking and critical appraisal.

**READINGS & BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Aquinas, T., *De Veritate* Question 1, “Truth”.
- Aquinas, T., *Summa Theologiae*. Part I, QQ [16](#), [78](#), [79](#), [84](#), [85](#), [86](#), [87](#). Part I.2, QQ [29](#), [109](#).
- Aristotle, *De Anima*, books II and III.
- Gettier, E., Is Justified True Belief Knowledge? *Analysis*, Vol. 23, No. 6. (Jun., 1963), pp. 121-123.
- Kossman, A. “Substance, Being and Energeia: the Argument of Metaphysics Theta” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Volume II, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.
- Owens, J. *Cognition: An Epistemological Inquiry*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1992, chapters 2, 5-10. ISBN-10: 0268007918. ISBN-13: 978-0268007911. [70 \\$](#).
- Searle, J.R. “Perception”, *Mind, A Brief Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 259-278.
- Searle, J.R., *Seeing Things As They Are: A Theory of Perception*. Oxford University Press, 2015, chapters 1 and 6. ISBN-10: 0199385157 | ISBN-13: 978-0199385157. Hardcover: 21.07 \$. Kindle edition: 14.72 \$
- Vega, M. “What Is the Mark of the Mental: L. Polo’s Retrieval of Aristotle’s *Energeia*,” *Journal of Polian Studies*, vol. 1, 2014, pp. 25-45.
- Vega, M. “Habitual Knowledge of God,” *Journal of Polian Studies*, vol. 3, 2016.

Most of the readings will be provided by the instructor.

**Reference Books**

- Audi, R., *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*, Routledge, 2002.
- Gilson, E., *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge*, Ignatius Press, 1986 [2012].
- Henle, S.J. *Theory of Knowledge*. Loyola, 1983.
- Huemer, M., *Epistemology: Contemporary Readings*, 2002.
- Moser, Paul K. *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology*. Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Polo, L. *Curso de Teoría del Conocimiento*, vols. 1-6. Universidad de Navarra.
- Regis, L.M., O.P. *St. Thomas and Epistemology*. Marquette University Press, 1984.
- Steup, M. and E. Sosa eds., *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*, Wiley-Blackwell 2005.

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Week 1	February 6 <sup>th</sup>	Introduction: What is the Theory of Knowledge	
Week 2	February 13 <sup>th</sup>	How is Cognition Possible at All	Aristotle, <i>De Anima</i> , I, II 1-4 Kosman Vega 2014
Week 3	February 20 <sup>th</sup>	Sensitive Knowledge I	Aristotle, <i>De Anima</i> , II 5-12. Aquinas, ST Q I #78
Week 4	February 27 <sup>th</sup>	Sensitive Knowledge II	Owens, Chapter 2 (The Primacy of the External) Aristotle, <i>De Anima</i> , III 1-3.
Week 5	March 5 <sup>th</sup>	Theories of Perception	Searle, <i>Mind</i> , Chapter 10 Searle, <i>Seeing</i> , Chapter 6
Week 6	March 12 <sup>th</sup>	Problems of Perception	Searle, <i>Seeing</i> , Chapter 1
Week 7	March 19 <sup>th</sup>	Rational Knowledge: Theoretical Reason	Aristotle, <i>De Anima</i> , III 4-7 Owens, Chapter 5 (Abstraction) and 6 (Judgement and Reason) Aquinas ST Q #79 Aquinas ST Q I #84 Aquinas ST Q I # 85
Week 8	March 26 <sup>th</sup>	SPRING BREAK	
Week 9	April 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Truth	Aquinas ST QQ I.2 29, 109 Aquinas <i>De Veritate</i> 1
Week 10	April 9 <sup>th</sup>	Theories of Truth	Aquinas ST Q I.2 16 Owens, Chapter 7 (Truth) Owens, Chapter 8 (Assent)

Week 11	April 16 <sup>th</sup>	EXAM	
Week 12	April 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Noetic Problems Skepticism, Relativism, Error, Opinion Evidence and Certainty	Skepticism Videos Owens, Chapter 9 (Certitude) and 10 (Error, opinion, belief)
Week 13	April 30 <sup>th</sup>	Rational Knowledge: Practical Reason Personal and Intellectual Knowledge	Aquinas ST Q #86 Aquinas ST Q #87 Vega 2016
Week 14	May 7 <sup>th</sup>	Gettier Problem and Answers	Gettier
Week 15	May 14 <sup>th</sup>	Review/Papers	
Week 16	May 21 <sup>st</sup>	PAPER DUE	