PHIL 235: Graduate Seminar in Epistemology

Fridays, 9am-12pm.
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Office Hours: Fridays, 12-1pm and by appointment.

Course Description
The topic of the course will be the problem of external world skepticism. We will consider how the problem arises and what the most influential contemporary responses to it are. We will also study Eli Hirsch’s new book *Radical Skepticism and the Shadow of Doubt*, which will be the topic of the Philosophy Department’s annual conference, as well as papers on skepticism by other speakers at the conference.

Readings
All readings will be available on LATTE, though it is recommended that students buy *Radical Skepticism and the Shadow of Doubt*.

Requirements
- Attendance and participation at the Department’s conference on March 24
- In-seminar presentation
- Presentation of Term Paper
- Term paper (15-20 pages)

Note: If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis and need to have special accommodations for this class, please see me immediately.

Academic Dishonesty will be reported to the Department of Student Development and Conduct. Students are responsible to inform themselves about what constitutes dishonesty. If in doubt, please ask me, and see “Rights and Responsibilities” at: http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srcs/rr/index.html

Four-Credit Course (with three hours of class-time per week)
Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

Learning Goals
General goals are to learn how to carefully read important contemporary texts, to extract and evaluate philosophical arguments from them, and to critically engage with, and build upon these arguments. The particular goals are to get an understanding of the problem of skepticism and its responses. Students will also consider to what extent ethical questions and are connected to problems of knowledge.

For more information, see the Philosophy Department’s learning goals at: http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/philosophy/undergrad/learninggoals.html
Schedule of Readings

1/12  Descartes, *Meditations I & II*

1/19  Stroud, *Significance of Philosophical Scepticism*, ch.1

1/26  **Class to be Rescheduled!**
Moore, “Proof of an External World”
Pryor, “The Skeptic and the Dogmatist”

2/2  Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, Introduction
Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, ch.8 “Scepticism” (selection)
Williams, *The Project of Pure Enquiry*, Appendix III on Dreaming

2/9  Leite, “Austin, Dreams and Skepticism”
Leite, “How to Take Skepticism Seriously”

2/16  Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, ch.11 “Assertion”
Marušić, “The Self-Knowledge Gambit”

3/2  Rinard, “Reasoning One’s Way out of Skepticism”
Rinard, “Pragmatic Skepticism”
(3/2-3/3 Harvard Conference on the Ethics of Belief)

3/9  Schoenfield, “Meditations on Beliefs Formed Arbitrarily.”

3/16  Hirsch, *Radical Skepticism and the Shadow of Doubt*, parts I & II

3/24  Brandeis Conference on Hirsch’s *Radical Skepticism and the Shadow of Doubt*

4/13  Lewis, “Elusive Knowledge”
Brister, “Feminist Epistemology, Contextualism, and Philosophical Skepticism”
Marušić, “Skepticism between Excessiveness and Idleness”

4/20  McDowell, “Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space”

4/25  Presentations of Term Papers
(Brandeis Friday)

*Term Paper due 4/27 (though extensions are available upon request)*