

PHIL 532: Seminar in Epistemology

University of Pennsylvania

Spring 2013

This seminar will be organized around Timothy Williamson's *Knowledge and its Limits* (2000). In many ways, Williamson's book has changed the way epistemologists think by introducing a new move in the game, taking KNOWLEDGE as basic. Harman, for example, says that it is "the most important philosophical discussion of knowledge in many years" and that "it sets the agenda for epistemology for the next decade and beyond." Williamson makes a number of epistemological claims, and the majority of the seminar will focus on trying to understand and critique those claims. As you'll see below, for most meetings of the seminar, we will read a chapter of Williamson and some accompanying articles.

1 *Logistics*

Instructor: Prof. Daniel J. Singer – singerd@phil.upenn.edu

Location (in Space and Time): Wednesdays, 3:30 to 6:30 PM in Cohen 493

Office Hours: Mondays, 1 to 2 PM in Cohen 461 (this course only) or by appt

Course Webpage: www.phil.upenn.edu/~singerd/Teaching.html

2 *Requirements for Participants*

Participate!

What makes a graduate seminar work well is that the participants are actively engaged with each other and the material. I expect you to have read and considered the material before each session and come to the seminar prepared to engage with the ideas. Each participant should come prepared with a question or idea to discuss each week.

Lead Discussion

Each enrolled participant in the seminar will be expected to lead the seminar at least twice (time allowing). This will require you to thoroughly digest the material well before the seminar, create a detailed handout about the material, and foster discussion about it. Handouts should include the major arguments you wish to discuss, preferably reformulated in premise-conclusion format. They should also include some potential topics for discussion. The Monday before the first time you lead discussion, you should meet with me in office hours with a draft of your handout.

Writing

Each enrolled participant is expected to write 10 pages at about 350 words per page (and not significantly more). This is a low quantity of writing, but the goal is to produce high quality, research-level, to-the-point arguments (think Analysis-style writing). You can also write two short pieces, if you prefer (and if you have two good, but smaller, ideas). Final papers are due June 17, which is two months after the last seminar meeting date, in my email as a PDF. If you're writing two papers, you must turn one in before May 1.

3 *Special Note*

My main goal is helping you understand the material of the course and advance as a professional philosopher. If you think some aspect of the course or my instruction is hindering those ends, please let me know in person or anonymously at www.phil.upenn.edu/~singerd/Anonymous_Feedback.html. I will try my best to accommodate your individual needs to help you advance in the class.

If you think you may need an accommodation because of a disability or other special circumstance, you should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs either in office hours or via email. You can also contact Student Disabilities Services at www.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc/sds/ or (215) 573-9235. Aspects of the course can be modified to suit your individual needs, so please let me know about your needs as soon as possible. Of course, all communication about personal matters will remain private and confidential.

4 *The Plan*

Here is a *tentative* schedule of the topics and readings. It is subject to change. I will keep this page updated and announce any changes in class.

For January 9

Background on Epistemology and the Book

1. ["The Analysis of Knowledge" on the SEP](#)
2. [E. J. Lowe's review of *Knowledge and its Limits*](#)
3. [Gilbert Harman's review of *Knowledge and its Limits*](#)

For January 16 – Dan Presenting

The Big Picture of *Knowledge and its Limits* and Semantic Externalism

1. [Putnam, Selections from "The Meaning of 'Meaning'"](#)

2. Optional: [Putnam, "Brains in a Vat"](#)
3. Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, Introduction
4. Greenough and Pritchard, *Williamson on Knowledge*, Introduction

For January 23 – Devin Presenting

Internalism vs. Externalism about Content and Justification

1. [Burge, Selections from "Individualism and the Mental"](#)
2. [Greco and Feldman, "Is Justification Internal?"](#) from *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*

For January 30 – Karen Presenting

Can KNOWLEDGE be analyzed into component concepts?

1. Optional: [Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"](#)
2. Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, Chapter 1
3. [Cassam, "Can the Concept of Knowledge be Analysed?"](#)

For February 6 – Alison Presenting

Is knowledge a relation between an agent and the world, or is it a mental state (or both)?

1. Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, Chapter 2
2. [Fricker, "Is Knowing a State of Mind? The Case Against"](#)

For February 13 – Dan Presenting

Does knowledge have distinct internal and external parts? How does knowledge connect up to action?

1. Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, Chapter 3
2. Jackson, "Primeness, Internalism, Explanation"
3. Optional: [Zagzebski, "The Inescapability of Gettier Problems"](#)

For February 20 – Alison Presenting

Can we tell when we know?

1. Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, Chapter 4
2. [Conee, "The Comforts of Home"](#)

For February 27 – Kurt Presenting

What's going on at the margins of knowledge?

1. Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, Chapter 5
2. Section 4 of Sosa, "Timothy Williamson's *Knowledge and Its Limits*"

For March 13 – Justin Presenting

The Surprise Paradox

1. Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, Chapter 6
2. Quine, "On a So-Called Paradox"

For March 20 – Rob Presenting

Must knowledge be sensitive? If so, in what sense?

1. [Selections from Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations*, Chapter 3](#)
2. Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, Chapter 7

For March 27 – Devin Presenting

Knowledge-firsting Skepticism

1. Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, Chapter 8
2. Schiffer, "Evidence=Knowledge: Williamson's Solution to Skepticism"
3. Optional: Foley's review of *Knowledge and its Limits*

For April 3 – Kurt Presenting

Is our knowledge the same as our evidence?

1. Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, Chapter 9
2. Brueckner, "Knowledge, Evidence, and Skepticism According to Williamson"

For April 10 – Karen Presenting

Williamson on Knowledge and Evidence

1. Joyce, "Williamson on Knowledge and Evidence"
2. Goldman, "Williamson on Knowledge and Evidence"

For April 17 – Justin Presenting

The Knowledge Norm for Assertion

1. Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, Chapter 11 (skipping 10!)
2. Weiner, "Must We Know What We Say?"