

Ask the BIG QUESTIONS about KNOWLEDGE!

PHIL 421 Theory of Knowledge

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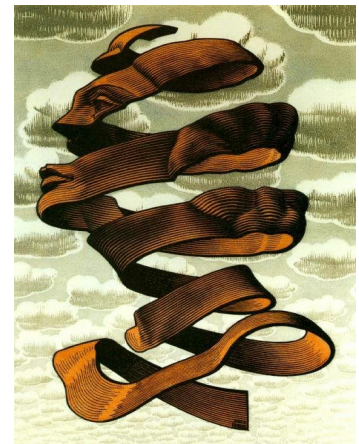
[LS Elective, Writing Intensive, & PHIL credit, 3c-01-3sh] *

PREREQUISITES: Open to all juniors or seniors, all philosophy majors or minors, and others by instructor permission. Satisfies LS Elective and Writing Intensive requirements as well as philosophy major and minor.

You have spent most of your life in school where you are supposed to gain knowledge. Have you ever wondered what knowledge is, or whether knowledge is even possible? Is knowledge justified true belief? Do all normal adults have a kind of common sense knowledge that serves as a reliable foundation for our system of beliefs, or must we settle for something less? Should we be skeptical about certain things or even constantly question everything? Are some sources of knowledge more reliable than others are? Is science the most reliable source? Is science truly "objective," or is it influenced by society, politics, and gender? Are our five senses more reliable than our reason and intuition? When should we trust our senses: always, only under certain conditions, or never? Is it possible to have knowledge of things we cannot experience with our senses, such as right and wrong, or God?

Is knowledge absolute and universal--the same for all humans in all cultures throughout history, or does knowledge vary from culture to culture, or from one period in history to another? Do men and women process knowledge the same way or differently?

We rely on experts for specialized knowledge. In school, we learn from teachers. When sick, we rely on doctors. When we want to know what is happening in the world, we watch CNN. But some experts are better than others. How do we tell the reliable experts from the unreliable ones? Should we trust what others say unless we have reason to doubt their truthfulness? Or should we rely only on those with demonstrated competence?



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