Philosophy 135: Theory of Knowledge
Instructor: Berislav Marušić
Office: Mandel Center for the Humanities 109
Office Hours: Tuesdays 3-5pm and by appointment
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Course Description
The course will explore three central topics in the theory of knowledge: The first topic is the project of analyzing knowledge: What are necessary and sufficient conditions for knowing? The second topic is the problem of philosophical skepticism: How, in light of Descartes’s famous arguments, is it possible to know anything? The third topic concerns ascriptions of knowledge. When do we correctly ascribe knowledge to others and ourselves? And does whether we know something depend on what our practical interests are?

Requirements
- Midterm 10%
- First Paper (3-4 pages) 25%
- Second Paper (3-4 pages) or rewrite and expansion of first paper (6-8 pages) 25%
- Final 20%
- Participation 20%

Graduate students may opt to substitute a term paper of 15-20 pages for the other assignments.

Laptop Policy: Please do not use laptops or other devices with screens in class.

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 overview of classic twentieth-century theory of knowledge, to explore the problem of philosophical skepticism, and to gain familiarity with some important current research projects in epistemology.
For more information, see the Philosophy Department’s learning goals at:
http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/philosophy/undergrad/learninggoals.html

Academic Dishonesty
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! See also: http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srsc/index.html

Disability
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. I am very happy to make the relevant arrangements.

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.).
Schedule of Readings and Assignments

All readings will be available on LATTE. Please bring (printouts of) readings to class!

1. The Analysis of Knowledge
1/18, 1/23, 1/25, 1/30, 2/1, 2/6, 2/8, 2/13, 2/15

Plato, Meno, brief selection.
Edmund Gettier. “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”
Laurence BonJour. The Structure of Empirical Knowledge, pp. 36-45.
Timothy Williamson. Knowledge and Its Limits, Ch.11, “Assertion.”

Midterm: February 15.

2. Skepticism

René Descartes. “The First Meditation.”
Barry Stroud. The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism, ch.1.

First Paper due: April 7.

3. Contextualism, Relativism and Pragmatic Encroachment
4/19, 4/24, 4/26, 5/1, 5/3

David Lewis. “Elusive Knowledge.”
Jeremy Fantl and Matthew McGrath, “Evidence, Pragmatics, and Justification”
John Hawthorne, Knowledge and Lotteries, Ch.1, “Introducing the Puzzle”

Second Paper due: May 3.

Final Exam, TBD.