

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2013-14

PHIL3501G: Epistemology

Winter Term 2016

T: 1:30-2:30 p.m., Th: 1:30-3:30 p.m.

Location: TH 3154

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DESCRIPTION

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy directed at understanding what knowledge is and how we acquire it. Of central importance is the issue of *epistemic justification* – when, if ever, are we justified in claiming that a belief or proposition counts as *knowledge*? Throughout the 20th century, analytic epistemologists have provided different and competing responses to this question. The general approach that they take to this question, namely, to specify necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge, is

However, philosophers critical of standard approaches have sought alternative ways of understanding what knowledge is and how we come to have it. For example, some have turned to those sciences that study human cognitive processes (e.g., cognitive psychology) in order to identify those reasoning strategies most likely – . These philosophers take what is referred to

However, one limitation of naturalized approaches to knowledge is that their legitimacy is to a significant extent contingent on whether those sciences that study human cognitive processes are knowledge generating. This can only be determined if the methods by which these sciences produce knowledge claims are subjected to adequate scrutiny. The domain of philosophy of science that is

are interested in determining when investigative strategies used in science are knowledge generating, when they fail to be, and why. Findings from such analyses are often used as a basis for making suggestions

approaches to understanding what knowledge is and how we acquire it. While we will concern ourselves primarily with assessing the merits and failings of paradigmatic examples of each approach, our ultimate goal is to use the fruits of our analyses to answer for ourselves the questions of what knowledge is and