

Week One

Knowledge

What is it?

(Belief? True Belief? Justified True Belief?)

How do you justify beliefs? Are there different kinds of justification? What is the best form of justification?

Sense Perception. Probably the best form of justification. I believe it when I see it. But senses are fallible, imperfect. Examples of deception of our senses? Rene Descartes.

Look into space. What do you see?

http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/socialsciences/pppecorino/INTRO_TEXT/Chapter%201%20Introduction/Philosophy_and_Wonder.htm

Are the senses the only method of justification? Empiricism – The senses are our only path to knowledge. (John Locke).

But what about our minds? Reasoning? Judgment?

Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish these (sense perception and judgment) since we unconsciously bring judgments to our sense impressions. Here is a simple example:

<https://realtheatre.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/duck-rabbit-illusion.jpg>

Our senses are all seeing the same image, but we see it “as” something, making a judgment about what it is. So judgment is inextricably bound up with sense perception.

Reasoning is a necessary condition for much of our best knowledge of the world. Examples?

Do we need a combination of both our senses and reason? It seems so. We need our senses. But our judgment or use of reason has to correct our senses (and memory). And often we need our sense to correct our judgments.

How does reason correct our senses? In what way can our senses go wrong? Or the judgments based on them. Personal story. Examples.

Optical Illusions

<http://gizmodo.com/5981603/20-optical-illusions-that-might-break-your-mind>

http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/games/illusions/lots_of_illusions.htm

http://www.michaelbach.de/ot/size_silhouette/index.html

But our reasoning and judgment can go wrong too. Examples:

Cognitive Biases:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cognitive_biases

Research cognitive biases and explain two of them with specific examples

Failed Scientific Theories: Flat earth, geocentric solar system, special creation, luminescent aether

In this class we will be focusing mostly on developing the reasoning component of knowledge. That is we will be focusing on logic. While it is possible to learn how to be a better perceiver, or observer that will not be the focus of this class. Logic is essentially, the science of reasoning. We will be studying three areas of logic in this class. I have chosen these areas because I think they are the most useful areas of logic to apply in every day life and in the academic environment:

1. The evaluation of arguments.
2. The analysis of language and how it affects our reasoning.
3. Recognizing and avoiding logical fallacies.

The Evaluation of Arguments.

We will begin with learning how to evaluate reasoning. Arguments are pieces of reasoning, and as you will see there are better and worse ways to reason. Our text for the first few weeks of class is here:

http://www.cengagebrain.com/shop/content/hurley03835_0495503835_02.01_chapter01.pdf

You should take careful notes as we cover this material. I will give you indications of what you should be noting as we go along. Quizzes can be given at any time. You may use one side of a 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper on the test of this material. No notes may be used on the quizzes.