Instructor: Beth Silverstein  
Pronouns: She, her, hers  
Email: silvers2@uwm.edu  
Office: Curtin 685  
Office Hours: TR 9:30-10:30  
Course Time: TR 12:30-1:45  
Location: EMS

**Course Description:**  
This course is an introduction to epistemology, the branch of philosophy that concerns itself with knowledge. The course will introduce students to discussions of fundamental questions about knowledge including the idea of a theory of knowledge, problems with the philosophical conception of knowledge, and the relation of knowledge to skepticism.

**Required Text:** *Epistemology* by Richard Feldman (2003)

**Course Objectives:**  
By the end of the course

- The student will understand concepts of knowledge, belief, truth, and skepticism  
- The student will be able to critically assess alternative approaches to theories of knowledge  
- The student will know and be able to distinguish several different theories of knowledge and critical objections to such theories  
- The student will have a repertory of resources and skills with which to analyze and criticize philosophical theories and arguments  
- The student will be able to articulate and defend their own ideas with clarity, consistency and coherence.  
- The student will be able to respectfully engage in philosophical discourse with a group of their peers

**Course Requirements:**

**Critical Reflection Papers (15%)**  
Critical reflection papers are tools to help you grasp the material you will be reading, prepare for class, and to develop critical thinking skills. They also act as a tool to allow you to check in with the instructor regularly throughout the course in a private manner, and to ask questions or leave comments you may not feel comfortable sharing with the entire group. Students will complete a critical reflection paper for each required reading. Critical reflections papers are due on the date for which the reading is assigned. Papers must be turned in to D2L 10 minutes prior to class start. No late papers will be accepted with one exception: if a student misses class due to an excused absence the critical reflection paper is due on the day the student returns from that absence. Papers must be typed. This reflection paper will have three sections. The paper should be presented in outline form.

1. The paper will begin by stating as clearly and concisely as possible the main idea of each reading required for that day. The statement of the main idea of the the
readings should be one sentence, written in the students’ own words. The objective here is to show basic comprehension of the material read.

(2) In the second section of the paper, the student will write one or two sentences critically evaluating some particular idea, argument, example, or objection presented in each reading. The student should say why the idea, argument, example, or objection seems reasonable or not. Student should write from their own perspective using “I” statements and using evaluative language. This section should show engagement with the reading. This section should be three to four sentences long.

(3) The paper will conclude with at least one thoughtful question that the material raised for the student and which might be the basis for class discussion. This section should be about one sentence long.

You must turn in a critical reflection every day there is an assigned reading. These papers are due on the day the reading is listed on the syllabus.

**Movie Writing Assignments (30%)**

We will watch two films in the course. For each of these films you will be given a brief writing assignment that will require you to relate the film and to the course content and readings. Details to follow. Failure to complete the movie writing assignments will result in an F for the course.

**Midterm Exam (15%)**

Students will take a midterm exam. The exam will consist of true/false, matching and multiple-choice, and fill-in-the-blanks questions. Failure to complete the midterm exam will result in an F for the course.

**Final Exam (20%)**

Students will take a comprehensive final exam at the end of the course. The exam will consist of true/false, matching, multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions. Failure to complete the final exam will result in an F for the course.

**Participation (20%)**

1) **Discussion participation** – Participation can mean different things for different students. At a minimum participation means coming to class prepared, having done the readings, and listening respectfully to the lectures and class discussions. There will be some information that will be conveyed as a lecture, but questions are always welcome. Much of the class, however, will be discussion based. We all have different comfort levels when it comes to talking in class. It is my hope that in this space we will foster a learning community where everyone feels comfortable participating in class discussions. It is my expectation that you will make an effort to actively engage in class discussions if you are able, and that if this is something you find difficult that we can find a way to work on this together. Please feel free to contact me privately if you are concerned about your ability to actively participate in class.

2) **Attendance** – Attendance is required. You are allowed one unexcused absence, after that your course grade may be dropped one-third of a grade for each unexcused absence (e.g. from a B+ to a B for one unexcused absence). Absences will only be excused in serious cases and will require documentation. You must attend the entire class, tardiness and/or leaving class early count as an unexcused absence.
**Extra Credit**
Throughout the semester there will be opportunities for students to attend events or listen to speakers on campus for extra credit. The instructor will announce such opportunities in class. Students are encouraged to also upcoming share events with the class. To receive extra credit students only need to take a selfie of themselves at the event or bring in a program from the event.

**Inclusivity Statement:**
We all come to this class with a diversity of life experiences. We are all here to learn from each other. Each of us has our own unique perspective. We will be reflecting on what it means to believe and to know. Some of our fundamental ways of understanding our world will be questioned. Some of the ideas we discuss may come into direct conflict with your own world view. In those moments of philosophical challenge, I ask that you pause, reflect, and attempt to articulate and share your thoughts. Learning can be difficult and uncomfortable. As a community of learners, it is important that we respectfully ask questions, share ideas, and express our opinions as we work through new and challenging ideas.

Each student has a right to a safe learning environment. It is my role as your instructor to facilitate our discussions so that all of those who wish to participate have ample opportunities. We all have a shared responsibility to create a space that is welcoming and encouraging, but we also have a shared responsibility to speak up if we witness language or behavior that is harassing, violent, or discriminatory.

In this course on knowledge, belief, and truth, it is my hope that we are able to not only come to an understanding of what it means to know and to believe and for things to be true, but also to understand how knowledge is both generated and legitimized, or delegitimized, within certain power structures. (This statement is modified from one presented by CETL’s LGBTQ+ Inclusivity Workshop)

**General Policies:**
- Students are expected to adhere to the guidelines set up in a Community Agreement which students will create collaboratively at the beginning of the course.
- The following university web page provides more information about your rights and responsibilities as a student: [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf).
- Please contact me as soon as possible if you require any special accommodations in order to complete the requirements for this course, or if you have any questions, concerns, or anything you need me to know to make sure that this space is one in which you can succeed.

**Campus Resources:**

**Accessibility Resource Center**
414-229-6287 | uwm.edu/arc

**Campus IT Support (Help Desk)**
414-229-4040 | gettechhelp.uwm.edu

**Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL)**
414-229-4319 | uwm.edu/cetl
Assigned Readings and Class Schedule

Getting Started

T 9/4  Introductions, Create Community Agreement, Syllabus Review
R 9/6  Go over community agreement. What does “brave” mean?
       Start Movie: 12 Angry Men
T 9/11 Movie and Discussion: 12 Angry Men
       Move Assignment I: Twelve Angry Men distributed
R 9/13 Pair and Share movie response discussion
T 9/18 Twelve Angry Men Discussion – What is knowledge? What do you know?
       Movie writing assignment due
The standard view
R 9/20 Feldman Chapter 1
T 9/25 Feldman Chapter 1

Knowledge is Justified True Belief
R 9/27 Feldman Chapter 2
T 10/2 Feldman Chapter 2

Objections to Knowledge as Justified True Belief
R 10/4 Feldman Chapter 3
T 11/9 Feldman Chapter 3

Evidentialist Theories
R 10/11 Evidentialism/Clifford - Feldman Chapter 4 p.41-47
T 10/16 Objections to Evidentialism - Feldman Chapter 4 p.47-52
R 10/18 William James {D2L}
Movie Writing Assignment II: Doubt distributed
T 10/23 Movie: Doubt
R 10/25 Movie and Discussion: Doubt

MIDTERM
T 10/30 Exam Review
Movie Writing Assignment Due
R 11/01 Midterm Exam

Foundationalism
T 11/6 Cartesian Foundationalism - Feldman Chapter 4 p. 52-60
R 11/8 Coherentism – Feldman Chapter 4 p. 60-70
T 11/13 Modest Foundationalism – Feldman Chapter 4 p. 70-80

Nonevidentialist Theories
R 11/15 The Causal Theory – Feldman Chapter 5 p. 81-86
T 11/20 Truth Tracking – Feldman Chapter 5 p. 86-90
R 11/22 THANKSGIVING BREAK
T 11/27 Reliablist – Feldman Chapter 5 p. 90-99

Skepticism
T 12/4 Feldman Chapter 6 p. 108-119
R 12/6 Feldman Chapter 6 p. 119-129
T 12/11 Feldman Chapter 7 p. 130-141
R 12/13 Feldman Chapter 7 p. 141-150

Review and Exam
F 12/14 Exam Review TBD
Final Exam during exam week