

Philosophy 4330: Epistemology
Spring 2015, final Paper Assignment

Instructions: Write an argumentative paper on some topic that we have discussed in class. The paper should be between 1200 and 2000 words. The paper must critically engage at least some assigned readings from the class. You may wish to read additional material that was not assigned, however, this is not necessary. I would be happy to help you find relevant readings.

Due Date: You must submit your paper through Blackboard by Thursday, May 7th at 1:30 pm. This is the time of our scheduled final – but there will be no in-class final exam. Remember that these papers will be graded anonymously so do not write any identifying information (such as your name or your R#) on the paper.

Grading: This paper will constitute 30% of your final grade.

References: All sources used in the writing of your paper must be properly referenced. This applies to material in the course readings, other published material, lecture notes from this class and other classes, material 'published' on the internet, and ideas contributed verbally by other students. Failure to follow these guidelines may result in a lowered grade or even an automatic F in the course; it may also lead to charges being brought before the university. If you have any questions about these issues, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Topic:

You may choose to write about any topic relevant to our class. But it must actually be relevant to the readings we did and what we talked about in class. For example, a paper arguing that we should believe that there is intelligent life somewhere in the universe is in some sense relevant to epistemology, but it is not relevant to our class and you would receive a failing grade.

If you are not sure if your chosen topic is relevant, ask me. Here are some sample topics that are relevant and questions at the right level of generality for this paper:

- 1) What is epistemic justification? [For example, is an internalist or an externalist theory right? Should our theory of justification be normative? Is justification necessary for knowledge?]
- 2) Can the concept of knowledge be analyzed?
- 3) Is it possible to respond to the skeptic?
- 4) Should epistemology be naturalized? How?
- 5) Kahneman gives lots of reasons to think that humans have flawed intuitions about lots of kinds of cases. How should this affect our philosophical theories that apparently rely on intuitions like standard analytic epistemology? Or our moral theories?
- 6) Gendler and Kahnmen both suggest, but do not really argue carefully for, the position that epistemic and moral norms can conflict in cases where the base rates of something reflect correlations between variables in the population that we sometimes ought to ignore. Are they right? About which kinds of cases? What should we say about such cases?