**Belief and Knowledge**

Katalin Farkas

4 credits (8 ECTS credits)

Fall term 2017/18

Tuesday and Thursday 9-10:40

Nador 13, room 223

Offered for philosophy PhD students. MA students can also enroll with the instructorʼs permission.

Course outline:

This is an advanced course in the philosophy of mind, with connections to epistemology. The course presupposes familiarity with basic philosophical concepts in the philosophy of mind and epistemology. It focuses on the nature of belief, and its relationship to knowledge. The topic has a rich history and it's instructive to see how our assumptions about knowledge and belief have changed through the history of philosophy. We will begin with Plato's idea that knowledge and belief have different objects, and a more contemporary version of the same idea. Next we will look at the puzzling claim, apparently held by the Pyrrhonian sceptics, that we should suspend all beliefs. Considering how this is possible will lead us to the question of whether we can believe at will, and to investigating the connection of beliefs to actions. Once we have some idea of what beliefs may be, we shall see whether we can have beliefs in dreams, and possible consequences of this to the issue of dream scepticism. In the last part of the course, we will consider forms of knowledge that may not presuppose belief, and the idea that knowledge and belief are distinct mental attitudes.

Learning outcomes:

Students will have an in-depth understanding of some of the most important philosophical debates surrounding the concept of belief. They will have an insight into the historical construction of philosophical issues. They will develop their ability to discern and evaluate arguments in texts, and to present an argued position in a clear and concise manner.

Topics and readings (readings will be available electronically):

1. Belief and knowledge – objects and attitudes

* Plato, Republic, Book V. excerpt (475b-480)
* Vendler, Zeno (1972). ‟On What One Knows” chapter V, sections 1-3 and 8-9 in *Res Cogitans: An Essay in Rational Psychology*. Ithaca [N.Y.] Cornell University Press. pp. 89-93 and112-119

2. Pyrrhonism and the ‟apraxia” charge

* Gisela Striker: “Historical Reflections on Classical Pyrrhonism and Neo-Pyrrhonism” in: Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (ed.) (2004). *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*. Oxford University Press. pp. 13-24
* M. Burnyeat, ‘Can the Sceptic Live his Scepticism?’, in M. Schofield, M. Burnyeat, and J. Barnes (eds), *Doubt and Dogmatism.* Oxford: Clarendon Press 1980,

3. The voluntariness of belief

* Stump, Eleonore (2003) “Will and belief” excerpts, in (2003). *Aquinas*. Routledge. pp. 340-349
* McHugh, Conor (2015). Attitudinal control. Synthese doi:10.1007/s11229-014-0643-7

4. Beliefs and actions

* Gendler, Tamar Szabó (2008). Alief and Belief. *Journal of Philosophy* 105 (10):634-663.
* Schwitzgebel, Eric (2010). Acting contrary to our professed beliefs or the gulf between occurrent judgment and dispositional belief. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 91 (4):531-553.

Recommended: Philosophy TV with Tamar Gendler and Eric Schwitzgebel <https://vimeo.com/14010857>

5. Belief and judgement, cognitive phenomenology

* Price, H. H. (1969) ‟The Dispositional Analysis: Introduction: Believing and Acting as if” Lecture II/1 of Belief London: George Allen and Unwin, pp. 243-266
* Jorba, Marta (2016). Section 1 of: Attitudinal Cognitive Phenomenology and the Horizon of Possibilities. In Thiemo Breyer Christopher Gutland (ed.), The Phenomenology of Thinking. Philosophical Investigations into the Character of Cognitive Experiences. Routledge. pp. 77-96.

6. Instrumentalism, modeling

* Dennett, Daniel C. (1981). True believers: The intentional strategy and why it works. In: *The Intentional Stance.* Pp.13-35
* Crane, Tim (2017). “The Unity of Unconsciousness.” Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society 117 (1):1-21

7. Dream Belief

* McGinn, Colin (2005). ‟Dream Belief” Chapter 7. of *Mindsight: Image, Dream, Meaning*. Harvard University Press. pp. 96-122
* Windt, Jennifer (2015) ‟Are Dreams Subjective Experiences (II)? The Phenomenology of Thinking and the Problem of Dream Belief” excerpts. In her Dreaming, MIT press, pp. 399-458.

8. Knowledge of beliefs

* Byrne, Alex (2008). Knowing that I am thinking. In Anthony E. Hatzimoysis (ed.), *Self-Knowledge*. Oxford University Press.
* Lawlor, Krista (2008). Knowing Beliefs, Seeking Causes. *American Imago* 65 (3):335-356

Recommended: Philosophy TV with Alex Byrne and Brie Gertler on knowing our beliefs. <https://vimeo.com/17020492>

9. Extended Belief, extended knowledge

* Clark, Andy & Chalmers, David J. (1998). The extended mind. *Analysis* 58 (1):7-19.
* Gertler, Brie (2007). Overextending the mind? In Brie Gertler & Lawrence Shapiro (eds.), *Arguing About the Mind*. Routledge. pp. 192–206.

Additional reading: Farkas, Katalin (2015). Belief May Not Be a Necessary Condition for Knowledge. *Erkenntnis* 80 (1):185-200.

10. Non-propositional knowledge – acquaintance

* Conee, Earl(1994) 'Phenomenal knowledge', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 72: 2, 136-150
* Benton, Matthew A. (forthcoming). Epistemology Personalized. Philosophical Quarterly.

11. Is knowledge a mental state?

* Nagel, Jennifer (2013). Knowledge as a Mental State. Oxford Studies in Epistemology 4:275-310.
* Butterfill, Stephen A. (2013). 11. What Does Knowledge Explain? Commentary on Jennifer Nagel,'Knowledge as a Mental State'. Oxford Studies in Epistemology 4:309.

12. Overview, summary.

Conditions for passing the course:

* conscientious attendance, reading of the assigned material, (mental) preparation of answers to all the reading questions, participation in discussions;
* a 10-15 minute presentation based on the readings for a class. Presenters are advised to focus on the reading questions which will be distributed throughout the term. The presentation can be developed into a term paper.
* A 4-5000 word term paper, to be submitted by the end of the term, on a suitable topic related to the course. Please consult the instructor on your topic.

Grading:

* 25% presentation
* 75% term paper
* Informed and active participation in the seminar discussions will be taken into account in borderline cases to improve the grade.