

Final paper assignment (6-8 pages)

Guidelines for paper from syllabus

- I strongly encourage you to visit me in office hours to discuss outlines and drafts of your paper.
- All papers must be turned in, in printed form, by **5pm on Wednesday, September 24th**, in my office.
- Exceptions to the above policy, such as extensions, must be negotiated **24 hours before** the due date.
- Late papers received by email on the due date will have **2 points** subtracted.
- Late papers received after midnight of the first due date will have **4 points** subtracted every 24 hours.
- Any emailed paper (negotiated or late, only) must contain a working attachment (.doc or .rtf format) to count as turned in. Avoid this problem by including the text of your paper in the body of the email.
- Papers (and exams, of course) must respect the Honor Code and avoid plagiarism. Review CC's understanding of plagiarism here:
<http://www.coloradocollege.edu/academics/honorcouncil/Resources.html>
<http://www.coloradocollege.edu/academics/honorcouncil/Constitution.html>

Assignment

While I think it would be most efficient for you to base your final paper on the work you have done in preparation for your presentation, I would like to offer you choices in case you were not sufficiently interested in your presentation material. So here is a list of paper topics that may either be used by presenters to build on their work, or by other interested parties who would like to go beyond their presentation topic. **Please inform me of your choice of paper topic by Friday, September 19.**

- Examine Bonjour's contention that the "justified true belief" definition of "knowledge" is the traditional one, held by philosophers like Descartes and Locke. To do this, address each of the following questions:
 - Discuss Bonjour's opening example concerning knowledge about the Douglas Fur to explain why he thinks knowledge requires at minimum justified true belief.
 - Do traditional philosophers regard knowledge as a kind of *belief*? What does Bonjour mean by "belief"? How does it compare to what Descartes and Locke say about belief, opinion, or assent? Could they regard one of these as a wider category to which both knowledge and non-knowledge belong? Even if they could, do their actual definitions treat knowledge as a species of belief, or something else?
 - Do traditional philosophers define knowledge in terms of *justification*? How does Descartes relate knowledge to justification? Would he, like Bonjour, allow for the possibility of belief that is justified but not knowledge? How does Locke relate knowledge to justification? Would he think justification could be defined independently of knowledge?
 - Briefly, what difference would it make for epistemology if we did not approach knowledge as a form of justified true belief?
- Examine Plantinga's description of the "deontological" conception of justification, a view he insists is held by both Descartes and Locke. To do this, address each of the following:
 - What is the deontological conception of justification, according to Plantinga?
 - What evidence from Descartes and Locke supports Plantinga's interpretation?
 - Are there any aspects of Descartes and Locke that Plantinga fails to consider in his interpretation? Consider in particular the "teleological" view he ascribes to Lehrer and Cohen in section 3 of his article, and whether this alternative non-deontological account could apply to Descartes and Locke. Also consider Goldman's distinction between guidance and duty as described on 273 of "Internalism Exposed."
 - Briefly, could Descartes and Locke still count as internalists even if they had a non-deontological view of justification?

- Examine Goldman’s critique of internalism, and find parallels in Reid’s theory of common sense. To do this, address each of the following:
 - Explain why Goldman thinks that an internalist conception of justification cannot make sense of the justificatory power of memory. What problem does the ordinary believer face if he must have conscious access to justifiers? What problem does the epistemologist face?
 - Explain why Reid thinks that our acceptance of testimony, especially when we are young, cannot depend upon our gathering independent evidence that the testimony is trustworthy. What problem does the ordinary believer face in finding such evidence? What problem does the epistemologist face?
 - What alternative account of the justificatory power of memory does Goldman provide? How does it differ from the internalist account?
 - What alternative account of the justificatory power of testimony does Reid provide? How does it differ from an evidence-based account?
 - Briefly, compare and contrast Goldman’s and Reid’s different versions of reliabilism.

- Examine Quine’s pragmatism in “Two Dogmas of Empiricism,” and compare it to James’:
 - Explain why empiricist holism leads Quine to abandon the idea that there are (analytic) propositions that are confirmed no matter what.
 - Explain why James thinks there is no such thing as “objective evidence,” and how the empiricist view of knowledge substitutes for the absolutist view.
 - Why does Quine think that if there are no analytic truths, there are still propositions that we will take for granted, such as a belief in physical objects? What pragmatic factors lead us to take such things for granted? (Supplements from “The Nature of Natural Knowledge” may be useful here.)
 - Why does James think that we need not abandon the method of experimental science if there is no purely intellectual way to choose our beliefs? What pragmatic factors permit us to continue scientific investigations that purport to be “dispassionate”?
 - Briefly, compare and contrast Quine’s and James’ likely attitude toward the relationship between religion and science. How does religious feeling seem to fit into the empiricist/pragmatist worldview of each. (Supplements from “Epistemology Naturalized” may be especially useful in answering this question for Quine.)

- Examine Quine’s naturalized epistemology in relation to Hume’s “skeptical solution” to skeptical doubts. To do this, address each of the following:
 - Briefly outline the reasons Hume cites for thinking that beliefs in matters of fact cannot be rationally justified. What role does Hume’s conclusion have in undermining what Quine calls the “doctrinal project” in epistemology?
 - Briefly outline the reasons Quine cites for the failure of the “conceptual project” in epistemology. Why, in principle, can there be no determinate facts about the meaning of our scientific discourse?
 - What does Quine mean when he says epistemology must become a “chapter of psychology”? Explain using his example of the epistemological status of the observation sentence. Also note his parting words about evolution. (Supplements from “The Nature of Natural Knowledge” may also be useful here.)
 - What does Hume mean when he says that our reliance on experience is a matter of “custom and habit”? In what way does this produce a kind of “animal” knowledge?
 - Are there any important differences between Hume and Quine? Consider in particular their attitude towards meaning and/or the relation of ideas. Whose attitude toward this topic is more empiricist?

- Examine Sellars' view of justification as involving placing a belief in the "space of reasons," and its significance for solving various epistemological problems:
 - Does Sellars think that it is enough to count "This is green" as knowledge if tends to be produced in the presence of green objects? Why or why not?
 - What more does Sellars think is required for the observation report "This is green" to count as knowledge? How does his answer here relate to the "space of reasons"?
 - How might it seem that Sellars' answer to this last question leads to a regress problem of the kind described by Bonjour?
 - How does Sellars propose to avoid the regress problem without advocating a kind of foundationalism? Is it a version of coherentism? Or something else?

- **OR: Choose your own topic. You should approve this topic with my by Friday, and it should follow these guidelines. It should *either*:**
 - Examine criticism in a contemporary scholarly journal of one of our contemporary readings, and either defend the criticism or defend our authors against that criticism.
 - Interpret one of our older authors in light of one of our contemporary theories.
 - Propose an original solution to one of the problems raised by any of the philosophers we have read this block.