

# Skepticism and Naturalism

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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## THIS COURSE

In this seminar, we will try to understand philosophical skepticism and naturalism in their several ancient, modern, Eastern, and Western forms. Our central interest will be to understand the relationships among them, and the visions of science and self that this understanding facilitates.

## TEXTS

Our seminar will focus on these texts, drawn from ancient and modern sources.

1. *The Modes of Skepticism* by Annas and Barnes
2. *Nagarjuna's Middle Way* by Siderits and Katsura
3. *Descartes's Method of Doubt* by Broughton
4. *A Treatise of Human Nature* by Hume
5. *The Quest for Certainty* by Dewey
6. *Sense and Sensibilia* by Austin
7. *Wittgenstein: On Rules and Private Language* by Kripke

It does not matter what edition of these texts you use. The Hammes Bookstore has copies of some titles under this course number and promises to have the others in due time.

In addition to these principle texts, we will read several short pieces: a short excerpt from Reid's *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, Broughton's "Hume's naturalism about cognitive norms," Quine's "Epistemology naturalized," Maddy's "Second philosophy," Garfield's "Epoche and sunyata: skepticism east and west," Goldfarb's "Kripke on Wittgenstein on rules," Arnold's "How to do things with Candrakirti: a comparative study in anti-skepticism."

You don't need to acquire any of these on your own. I shall circulate copies as we come to them.

## REQUIREMENTS

There are three requirements for this course.

The first requirement is to be engaged in the seminar through regular attendance and contributions to our discussion. Please contribute in ways that are helpful to your classmates and in ways that are enjoyable for you.

The second requirement is to compose three papers of textual interpretation. These must be short and focussed on concrete questions of meaning. In a typical paper one will (1) isolate a single passage, (2) present a plausible initial reading of that passage, (3) raise a problem with that reading either by explaining why it is intrinsically implausible under closer scrutiny or by explaining why it is in tension with some other passage, and then (4) present a subtler reading that doesn't suffer from this problem. One can also write an atypical paper in cases where the formula just rehearsed is not suited to getting at the meaning of the text that one is after. In any case, the paper will aim above all else at making clear what's at stake and why it's interesting.

The third requirement is to take one of these three papers and expand it into a self standing essay of philosophical interest.

## NOTE

Please be aware of the University's policies regarding academic honesty, anti-discrimination, and access to education for students with disabilities.

Here is the web-page of the office for students with disabilities:

<http://www.nd.edu/~osd/NEWHOME PAGE.htm>

Here is the Philosophy Department's web-page devoted to academic honesty, with links to information about plagiarism and the University's honor code:

<http://philosophy.nd.edu/undergraduate-program/honesty/>

In addition I am someone you can approach if you have concerns about discrimination or proper scholarly behavior, whether or not the concern is related to this course.

## IMPORTANT DATES

February 19	first paper due	
March 26	second paper due	
April 14	no class	Passover
April 16	no class	Passover
April 23	third paper due	
May 7	final essay due	