



Modern and Contemporary Debates in Epistemology 1

(MA Seminar 1)

R. PIŁAT

30 hours / 4 ECTS

Introductory description

The seminar takes up a line of inquiry set by recent book edited by Matthias Steup, John Turri and Ernest Sosa, which covers several current, most debated issues in epistemology: (1) the place of experience in the structure of knowledge; (2) the closure (or lack thereof) of knowledge under entailment; (3) the role of context; (4) skepticism and ways of refuting it; (5) knowledge apriori; (6) justification; (7) the notion and value of evidences; (8) the concept and criteria of truth. In all these issues certain clear cut opposing views can be shown, which helps to evaluate arguments and reveal philosophical assumptions of the parties. By analyzing these debates we shall define open, unresolved problems and make a list of viable topics for future master works of seminar participants. The students will be asked to choose their topics after the first semester and to work their individual projects henceforth. The remaining three semesters will be divided into two parallel activities: (1) keeping track of student's projects and fostering their work by providing context and commenting on the drafts; this part also involves students' presentations of the work done so far; (2) studying further epistemological literature of general relevance, common to all individual projects. Although the departure point of this course is constituted by contemporary debates the historical problem will also be included. The range of possible MA topics extends to epistemological tradition from Descartes to XX century. Contemporary issues will serve as guidelines in searching for relevance of historical views.



Course content

Not all particular topics can be determined for this seminar, especially for its second part, which largely depends on the content and scope of MA projects chosen by participants. The list below contains some introductory topics, which are fixed, and based on the afore mentioned anthology. Two meetings will be devoted to each of the listed topics - “yes” and “no” answers to each question will be analyzed on separate sessions. On the second part of the seminar the topics and readings will be selected in more flexible manner: apart from analytic literature also phenomenological and hermeneutic tradition and methods will be pursued.

- Is knowledge ultimately based on experience? (Readings: Contemporary Debates in Epistemology, chapt. 1)
- Do logical consequences of a sentence expressing a piece of knowledge also express knowledge? (Readings: Contemporary Debates in Epistemology, chapt. 2)
- Can we detach knowledge for its context? (Can a piece of knowledge stop being one in another context?) (Readings: Contemporary Debates in Epistemology, chapt. 3)
- Are there decisive (refuting) arguments against skepticism? (Readings: Contemporary Debates in Epistemology, chapt. 5)
- Do we have any a priori knowledge? (Readings: Contemporary Debates in Epistemology, chapt. 8)
- Can a piece of knowledge have an immediate and local justification? (Readings: Contemporary Debates in Epistemology, chapt. 9)
- What counts as evidence of knowledge? (Readings: Contemporary Debates in Epistemology, chapt. 12)
- Is knowledge primarily about truth? (Readings: Contemporary Debates in Epistemology, chapt. 14)

Requirements of credits – Assessment criteria

(1) essays based on common or individual readings (the latter will usually be connected with MA projects) are due the end of each semester;



- (2) the MA work outline (synopsis) is due the end of the first semester;
- (3) the fragments of the MA work in progress must be presented on seminars systematically – it will not be allowed to present the whole work all at once without presenting and discussing its parts on seminars;
- (4) the whole Master thesis is required in April the second year of the seminar in order to allow time for criticism and correction before the works are due to submission.

References / Literature / Reading list

1. M. Steup, J. Turri and E. Sosa (eds.) *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*, Wiley Blackwell 2014.
2. E. Sosa (ed.) *A Companion to Analytic Philosophy*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford 2005.
3. G. Russell, D. Graff Fara (eds.) *A Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Language*, Routledge, New York 2012.
4. S. Bernecker, D. Pritchard (eds.) *A Routledge Companion to Epistemology*, Routledge, New York 2011.
5. classic works in epistemology starting from Rene Descartes.