

Scheme of work: Epistemology

This scheme of work for AS/A-level Philosophy (7171/7172) is designed to help you plan your teaching.

What is knowledge?

The tripartite view

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| **Week** | **Teaching notes** | **Anthology references** | **Key concepts** | **Skills development** | **Assessment** |
| 1 | Important to lay the groundwork for this topic, eg key epistemological definitions such as ‘belief’, ‘knowledge’, ‘truth’, and ‘justification’ and key concepts such as ‘necessary and sufficient conditions’.  This and an exposition of the tripartite view will take a week. | Plato, *Meno*  Zagzebski, L, *What is knowledge?*, 1999, in Greco, J, Sosa, E, *The Blackwell guide to epistemology* 92–116 | * Truth * Belief * Justification * Knowledge * Propositional, acquaintance and ability knowledge | Activities focusing on:   * understanding the definitions of key terms and distinctions * the generation of examples to demonstrate understanding. | Some practice definitional questions.  Some practice at an ‘outline the argument’ type question, eg ‘outline the tripartite view of knowledge’. |

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| 2–3 | Issues with the tripartite view.  The issues concerning the claim that J, T and B are individually necessary for knowledge, will take a week.  The key issue surrounding the claim that J+T+B is sufficient for knowledge can take up to a week. It probably doesn’t have to though. | Gettier, E, *Is justified true belief knowledge? Analysis*, 23 (6): 121–123 | Necessary and sufficient conditions | Activities focusing on:   * understanding the nature and structure of arguments * discussing the relative merits of different objections to a position * the generation of examples to demonstrate understanding * the drawing of and supporting of appropriate conclusions. | A homework exam style ‘outline the argument’ type question focused on one of the arguments against J+T+B being necessary for knowledge.  Some in-class practice at generating students’ own examples to support the Gettier argument. |
| 4–5 | Responses: alternative post-Gettier analyses/ definitions of knowledge.  Weeks 4 and 5 each take two possible responses to the claim that J+T+B is not sufficient for knowledge. Easily enough here for a full week, once each is explored in detail. | Descartes, *Meditations on first philosophy*, 1 | * Infallible * Certainty * Epistemic virtue | Activities focusing on:   * discussing the relative merits of different objections to a position * the generation of examples to demonstrate understanding * the drawing of and supporting of appropriate conclusions. | Planning an essay style question in the lesson. Compare answers.  Completing an essay style question for homework. |
| 6 | This period of time can be used for any areas that need further attention, and/or for formative and summative feedback. |  |  | Activities focusing on all three types of exam questions. | A practice exam question (all three types of question) for homework or in class under exam conditions. |

Perception as a source of knowledge

Direct realism

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| **Week** | **Teaching notes** | **Anthology references** | **Key concepts** | **Skills development** | **Assessment** |
| 7 | Lots of ways to start this topic, eg perceptual illusions/animal senses, etc.  Direct realism is fairly straightforward, thus the issues (which all hinge on the distinction between appearance and reality) can be approached fairly quickly. However, given the complexity of some of the responses to the issues this topic will continue into Week 8. | Russell, B, *The problems of philosophy*, chapter 1 | Perception  External world  Mind-independent | Activities focusing on:   * understanding the definitions of key terms and distinctions * understanding the nature and structure of arguments * the generation of examples to demonstrate understanding. | Some practice definition questions.  Planning an ‘outline the argument’ type question as a class. |

Indirect realism

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| **Week** | **Teaching notes** | **Anthology references** | **Key concepts** | **Skills development** | **Assessment** |
| 8 | The distinction between direct and indirect theories of perception is key to introducing Indirect realism. So too is the causal nature of the theory. The issues with Direct realism might be started towards end of week. | Russell, B, *The problems of philosophy*, chapter 1  Locke, J, *An essay concerning human understanding*, book 2, chapter 8, book 4, chapter 11 | * Direct vs indirect theories of perception * Causation * Representation | Activities focusing on:   * the drawing of and supporting of appropriate conclusions * understanding the definitions of key terms and distinctions * the generation of examples to demonstrate understanding. | Some practice definition questions.  Planning an essay-style question as a class.  Students complete for homework. |
| 9 | The issues with indirect realism can be complex and require a full week. | Russell, B, *The problems of philosophy*, chapter 2  Berkeley, G, *Three dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*  Trotter Cockburn, C, *A letter from an anonymous writer to the author of the Minute philosopher index*, Appendix to Berkeley, G, *Theory of vision vindicated and explained* | * Scepticism | Activities focusing on:   * discussing the relative merits of different objections to a position * the drawing of and supporting of appropriate conclusions. | Planning independently during lesson of an ‘outline the argument’ type question. |

Berkeley’s Idealism

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| **Week** | **Teaching notes** | **Anthology references** | **Key concepts** | **Skills development** | **Assessment** |
| 10 | The distinction between realist and non-realist/anti-realist theories of perception is key here.  Berkeley’s idealism will easily take a week to do properly (including the primary/secondary qualities distinction). | Berkeley, G, *Three dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*  Locke, J, *An essay concerning human understanding*, book 4, chapter 11 | * Realist vs anti- realist theories of perception * Mind-dependent * Primary vs secondary qualities | Activities focusing on:   * understanding the definitions of key terms and distinctions * understanding the nature and structure of arguments * the generation of examples to demonstrate understanding. | Some practice definition questions for home work. |
| 11 | Issues with idealism can be tricky and will take a week. | Berkeley, G, *Three dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* | * Solipsism | Activities focusing on:   * discussing the relative merits of different objections to a position * the drawing, and supporting, of appropriate conclusions. | Planning an essay style question in the lesson. Compare answers. |
| 12 | This period of time can be used for any areas that need further attention, and/or for formative and summative feedback. |  |  | Activities focusing on all three types of exam questions. | A practice exam question (all three types of question) for homework or in class under exam conditions. |

Reason as a source of knowledge

Innatism

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| **Week** | **Teaching notes** | **Anthology references** | **Key concepts** | **Skills development** | **Assessment** |
| 13 | An introduction to the topic, including an introduction to key terms, plus looking at innatism should take roughly a week. | Plato, *Meno*, from 81e  Leibniz, G, *New essays on human understanding*, book 1 | * A priori vs a posteriori * Analytic vs synthetic * Necessary vs contingent * Rationalism vs empiricism | Activities focusing on:   * understanding the definitions of key terms and distinctions * the generation of examples to demonstrate understanding. | Some practice definitional questions in class and for homework. |
| 14 | Exploring the empiricist responses to innatism will take a week. | Locke, J, *An essay concerning human understanding*, book 1, chapter 2  Hume, D, *An enquiry concerning human understanding*, section 2 | * Tabula rasa * Ideas and impressions * Simple and complex ideas | Activities focusing on:   * understanding the nature and structure of arguments * discussing the relative merits of different objections to a position. | An ‘outline the argument’ style question to plan and write in class. |

The intuition and deduction thesis

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| **Week** | **Teaching notes** | **Anthology references** | **Key concepts** | **Skills development** | **Assessment** |
| 15 | The intuition and deduction thesis, including a discussion of issues surrounding it, will take a week. | Descartes, *Meditations on first philosophy*,1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 | * Intuition and deduction * Clear and distinct ideas * A priori | Activities focusing on:   * understanding the nature and structure of arguments * the drawing of and supporting of appropriate conclusions. | An essay style question. Planned in class, completed for homework. |
| 16 | The previous week set the groundwork for this section. Specific empiricist criticisms should take about a week. | Hume, D, *An enquiry concerning human understanding*, section 4 | * Rationalism vs empiricism | Activities focusing on:   * understanding the definitions of key terms and distinctions * on the generation of examples to demonstrate understanding. | Some practice definitional questions in class and for homework. |

The limits of knowledge

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| **Week** | **Teaching notes** | **Anthology references** | **Key concepts** | **Skills development** | **Assessment** |
| 17–18 | This can be covered in a week, particularly if students already have knowledge of Descartes’ approach from the ‘Reason as a source of knowledge’ section.  This section is, in part, an application of previous positions to the issue of scepticism. | Descartes, *Meditations on first philosophy*,1, 2, 3, 5 and 6  Locke, J, *An essay concerning human understanding*  Berkeley, G, *Three dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* | Scepticism  Local vs global scepticism  Reliabilism  Direct realism | Activities focusing on:   * understanding the definitions of key terms and distinctions * the generation of examples to demonstrate understanding.   Activities focusing on:   * understanding the nature and structure of arguments * the drawing of and supporting of appropriate conclusions. | Some practice definitional questions in class and for homework.  An essay style question. Planned in class, completed for homework. |