

**Human Conduct and Values:  
Knowledge  
An Unexamined Life is not Worth Living  
IDH 3005  
Fall 2009  
MWF, 1:00-1:50 p.m.**

Being human involves both knowing and acting (at the very least, in addition to being or existing). In this course we will deal with several approaches to knowledge, from Cartesian Foundationalism to Naturalized Epistemology and Relativism. Some serious thinkers suggest we know very little or nothing (Socrates: "I only know that I know nothing"). Are we animals trapped in a struggle of survival in which human values and knowledge have a provisional or instrumental value, or are we rational agents capable of ascending to realm of values and concepts that yield what we normally call "knowledge" that transcends our animal or biological nature? This course is designed to encourage students to become self-conscious thinkers, who can reflect critically about the nature of knowledge, not only as understood by the Western intellectual tradition but by the Eastern as well. In addition, we will explore the possibility of "knowing" from a non-scientific perspective that invokes both God and feelings (the "sense of the heart," as Jonathan Edwards would put it) as the very foundation of knowledge itself.

In the second half of the course (IDH 3006) we will approach the concept of an examined life via the exploration of selected views of human values and conduct: 1) "Might Makes Right," 2) "Divine Command," 3) Kantian ethics, 4) Utilitarianism or Consequentialism, and 5) Ethical Relativism and Subjectivism.

<b>Honors Fellows</b>	<b>Office</b>	<b>Office Hours</b>	<b>Phone</b>
Professor Dan Alvarez <a href="mailto:alvarezd@fiu.edu">alvarezd@fiu.edu</a>	DM 458A	TR, 11:00-11:45 a.m.	348-2354

**Required Texts/Readings:**

Richard Feldman, *Epistemology*, ISBN: 978-0133416459, Prentice Hall.

Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, ISBN: 978-0521558181, Cambridge University Press.

W. V. Quine, "Things and their Place in Theories," from *Theories and Things* (Harvard, 1981).

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**Other learning tools:**

*The Matrix*

*What the Bleep do we Know*

**Honors Convocation**

Honors Convocation – TBA

**FIU Academic Misconduct Statement**

Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas, and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University.

All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

**Requirements**

Students will write three (3) essays on topics/questions distributed by the instructor. These questions will address the fundamental problems or issues presented by the course materials.

## ***Plagiarism Policy***

Plagiarism is one form of academic misconduct, and the Honors College adopts the definition of the university's Code of Academic Integrity, according to which plagiarism is

*The deliberate use and appropriation of another's works without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student's own. Any student who fails to give credit for the ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including internet sources, is guilty of plagiarism.*

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

1. Term papers acquired online or from other sources;
2. Copying of original material without attribution;
3. Use of other students' work;
4. Copying and pasting, verbatim, information from Internet sources, without quotation marks and correct citation.

Charges of Academic Misconduct may be brought against an Honors student by an Honors faculty member. For more information concerning this matter, all students are urged to review the following website:

<http://honors.fiu.edu/plagiarism.htm>

Course Evaluation will be based on the following:

Fall 2009

M Aug. 24 Introduction, Syllabus, Requirements

W Aug. 26 Survey: Ways of Knowing  
*Required Reading:* Feldman, 1-7

F Aug. 28 Discussion

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M Aug. 31 The Standard View  
*Required Reading:* Feldman, 8-24.

W Sept. 2 The Standard view, continued

F Sept. 4 Discussion

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M Sept. 7 The Standard View Modified  
*Required Reading:* Feldman, 25-38.

W Sept. 9 The Standard View Modified, continued

F Sept. 11 Discussion

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M Sept. 14 Evidentialism & Cartesian Foundationalism  
*Required Reading:* Feldman, 39-60; Descartes, *Meditations*, 12-23.

W Sept. 16 Evidentialism & Cartesian Foundationlism, continued

F Sept. 18 Discussion

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M Sept. 21 Cartesian Foundationalism  
*Required Reading:* Descartes, *Meditations*, 24-36.

W Sept. 23 Cartesian Foundationalism, continued

F Sept. 25 Discussion

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M Sept. 28 Coherentism vs. Modest Foundationalism  
*Required Reading:* Feldman, 60-78.

W Sept. 30 Coherentism vs. Modest Foundationalism, continued

F Oct. 2 Discussion

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M Oct. 5 Reliabilism  
*Required Reading:* Feldman, 90-99.

W Oct. 7 Reliabilism, continued

F Oct. 9 Discussion

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M Oct. 12 Film: *The Matrix*

W Oct. 14 Film: The Matrix

F Oct. 16 Film: The Matrix, concluded

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M Oct. 19 Skepticism I  
*Required Reading:* Feldman, 108-129.

W Oct. 21 Skepticism I, continued

F Oct. 23 Discussion

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M Oct. 26 Skepticism II  
*Required Reading:* Feldman, 141-155.

W Oct. 28 Skepticism, continued

F Oct. 30 Discussion

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M Nov. 2 Naturalized Epistemology  
*Required Reading:* Feldman, 166-176; Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized."

W Nov. 4 Naturalized Epistemology, continued

F Nov. 6 Discussion

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M Nov. 9 Relativism  
*Required Reading:* Feldman, 177-190

W Nov. 11 Relativism, continued

F Nov. 13 Discussion

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M Nov. 16 Quine, "Things and Their Place in Theories."

W Nov. 18 Quine, continued

F Nov. 20 Discussion

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M Nov. 23 Film: *What the Bleep do We Know*

W Nov. 25 Film: *What the Bleep do We Know*, concluded

F Nov. 27 **THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY (NO CLASSES)**

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M Nov. 30 After Quine?

W Dec. 2 A new Socrates?

F Dec. 4 Discussion

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