

**Human Conduct and Values:
Knowledge
An Unexamined Life is not Worth Living
IDH 3034/4007
Fall 2017
MWF, 1:00-1:50 p.m.
Room: Paul Cejas Architecture Bldg. 171**

Being human involves both knowing and acting (at the very least, in addition to being or existing). In this course we will deal with the problem of knowledge from the perspective of three influential thinkers: Rene Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*; W. V. Quine's "Epistemology Naturalized"; and Martin Heidegger's later philosophy (particularly his "Letter on Humanism," "What is Metaphysics?," and "On the Essence of Truth").

To place the approaches of these thinkers in context, we will read Richard Feldman's *Epistemology* as a useful guide into some the major issues regarding knowledge that will help us understand what Descartes (d. 1650), Quine (d. 2000), and Heidegger (d. 1976) are arguing, for or against.

Among the questions we will try to answer in this course are: Are we animals trapped in a struggle of survival in which human values and knowledge have a provisional or purely instrumental value (Quine)? In contrast to this view, 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 (Descartes)? Are we ultimately dependent for knowledge, rationality, value, and truth on something much deeper, what Heidegger calls *Being*, a reality many think has to do with God, although Heidegger has strongly denied it?

This course is designed to challenge students to *think* and to *reflect critically* about the nature of knowledge, reason, and value.

In the second half of the course (Spring 2017) 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, 6) Ethical Egoism, and 7) Subjectivism.

Honors Fellows	Office	Office Hours	Phone
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Required Texts/Readings:

Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641), Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 978-0521558181.

Richard Feldman, *Epistemology* (Pierson, 2002). ISBN: 9780133416459

Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings of Martin Heidegger*, 2nd edition, Harper Perennial. ISBN: 978-0061627019. The required readings from *Basic Writings* are:

Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth"

Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?"

Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism"

Supplementary readings that will be made available online:

W. V. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," (1951), in *From a Logical Point of View*.

_____, "Epistemology Naturalized" (1969), in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*.

Other learning tools:

The Matrix

Requirements

1. Students will write two essays (3-4 pages per essay) on topics/questions distributed by the instructor. These questions will address the fundamental problems or issues presented by the course materials (60% of grade).
2. Presentation based on reading. Minimum of 2-3 pages. Student will present the main points of the reading for that day. This is an expository presentation dealing with the assigned text or article (20% of grade).
3. Gettier-type case. One (1) page example of a Gettier-type case (10% of grade).
4. Class attendance (10% of grade)
 - 2 excused attendances with no point reductions
 - 3 absences, 1 point reduction of total score of 100 points.
 - 4 absences, 3 point reduction of total score of 100 points.
 - 5 absences, 5 point reduction of total score of 100 points.
 - 6 or more absences, 10 point reduction of total score of 100 points.

Honors Convocation

Honors Convocation Week: TBA

University Requirements

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

FIU Academic Misconduct Statement

Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellence in 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 to demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct that 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 Honors College Student Handbook.

Academic misconduct includes:

- *Cheating – The unauthorized use of books, notes, aids, electronic sources, or assistance from another person with respect to examinations, course assignments, field service reports, class recitations or other work; or the unauthorized possession of examination papers or course materials, whether originally authorized or not. Cheating violates both University and College codes.*
- *Plagiarism – The use and appropriation of another’s work 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 ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including Internet sources, commits plagiarism. Plagiarism violates both University and College codes.*
- *Unacceptable behavior – Students who show repeated or egregious disrespect for classmates or instructors, are disruptive, or consistently violate course rules are subject to the sanctions of the Honors College.*

Registration in this course implies an acceptance of and compliance with the Honors College policies for students and the FIU Code of Academic Integrity. *Please refer to the following documents for additional information:*

FIU Code of Academic Integrity – <http://www.fiu.edu/~dwyere/academicintegrity.html>

FIU Honors College Student Handbook – <http://honors.fiu.edu/handbook0910.html>

FIU Honors College Plagiarism Policy – http://honors.fiu.edu/current_policy_plagiarism.html

Religious Observances

Every effort will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students whose religious practices coincide with class requirements or scheduling. Please make sure to notify your instructor at the beginning of the semester of which dates you will be absent or any anticipated problems with completing course work.

Physical, Mental and Sensory Challenges

Every effort will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students who are so challenged. Should you require accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center, if you have not done so already.

Honors College Requirements

Student Portfolios

The Honors College will be using a portfolio method to assess students’ learning outcomes. The portfolio method allows for maximum flexibility in gauging student learning. Students decide (with instructor consultation) what “artifacts” or assignments to include for consideration in their portfolios to demonstrate successful achievement of each of the student learning outcomes over the 4-year Honors experience. Portfolios provide a rich context for students to show what they have learned and to explain their learning process. Because the Honors curriculum is meant to be thought-provoking and reflective, student self-assessment through portfolios will facilitate learning and provide in-depth assessment. Each course will include at least one assignment that could potentially fit portfolio requirements. For more information on the student learning outcomes and constructing a portfolio for your senior year, see honors.fiu.edu/portfolios.

Citizenship Requirements

All members of the Honors College are expected to be active citizens of the College, the university, and the community at large. To be a committed Honors College student is to take advantage of enhanced learning opportunities and to assume a leadership role in the world. All College members are expected to participate in the community-building activities listed below:

- Attend one Honors Excellence Lecture per academic year and one Honors Colloquium per semester (fall and spring). (Attendance will be taken).
- Participate in the Honors College Convocation each Fall. (Attendance will be taken).

- Attend at least three Honors Hour sessions per semester or enrichment events specified by the Honors College as satisfying this requirement. (Attendance will be taken).
- Perform at least *twenty* hours of Community Service per academic year (summer excluded) either through the Honors College service partnerships (Sweetwater, Overtown Youth Center, etc.) or through other community service projects and/or events. If you want to apply this service to your graduation portfolio, be sure to document your hours.

GL Learning Outcomes

GL Learning Outcomes for IDH 2003-4

- Global Awareness: Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the interrelatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural issues, trends, and systems.
 - **Course Learning Outcome:** Students will demonstrate knowledge of the interrelated dynamics (social-cultural, political, economic, etc.) that shape the actions of multiple figures in diverse cultural contexts.
- Global Perspectives: Students will be able to develop a multi-perspective analysis of local, global, international, and intercultural problems.
 - **Course Learning Outcome:** Students will be able to analyze the multiple causal forces that shape the perspectives of historical individuals/persons — economic, political, sociological, technological, cultural, etc.
- Global Engagement: Students will be able to demonstrate a willingness to engage in local, global, international, and intercultural problem solving.
 - **Course Learning Outcome:** Students will demonstrate a willingness to engage in negotiation regarding actions of global import within the context of the class simulation.

GL Learning Outcomes for IDH 3034-5

- Global Awareness: Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the interrelatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural issues, trends, and systems.
 - **Course Learning Outcome:** Students will demonstrate knowledge of the interrelated global dynamics (social-cultural, political, economic, etc.) that shape aesthetics, values, and authority in diverse cultural contexts.
- Global Perspectives: Students will be able to develop a multi-perspective analysis of local, global, international, and intercultural problems.
 - **Course Learning Outcome:** Students will be able to analyze the multiple global forces that shape their understanding of aesthetics, values, and authority — economic, political, sociological, technological, cultural, etc.
- Global Engagement: Students will be able to demonstrate a willingness to engage in local, global, international, and intercultural problem solving.
 - **Course Learning Outcome:** Students will be able to develop solutions to local, global, international, and/or intercultural problems related to aesthetics, values, and authority.

Assignments must be able to assess the students' ability to demonstrate these outcomes. We will be collecting them at the end of the academic year (spring).

Honors College Important Dates – Fall Semester

Convocation Week: TBA
 Excellence Lecture TBA
 Fall Awards Assembly: TBA

Fall 2017

- Week 1 Introduction, Syllabus Requirements; Survey: Ways of Knowing and Scepticism
Required Reading: Feldman, 8-24; Descartes, *Meditation I*.
- Week 2 The Standard View
Required Reading: Descartes, *Meditation II & III* (up to page 45 in the margin); Feldman, 25-38.
- Week 3 The Limits of the Standard View
Required Reading: Feldman, 108-129, 141-155; *Meditation III* and selection from *Meditation V*; Gettier-Type Case in Feldman. The skeptical implications of the “Dream” and “Evil Genie” arguments.

The Matrix (selected scenes)
- Week 4 The Standard View Modified II: Historical Review: From Hume (Kant-Frege-Russell-Carnap) to Quine
Required Reading: Feldman, 39-60.
- Week 5 The Standard View Modified III: W. V. Quine: Coherentism vs. Modest Foundationalism and Fallibilism
Required Reading: Feldman, 60-78, 90-99; Quine, selections from “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” and “Epistemology Naturalized.”
- Week 6 The Standard View Modified IV: The End of Knowledge? Naturalism and Conceptual Relativity
Required Reading: Feldman, 166-190.”
- Week 7 The Turning: Heidegger’s Later Thinking: From Hegel to Heidegger
Required Reading: “What is Metaphysics?”
- Week 8 Heidegger: Metaphysics
Required Reading: Heidegger, “What is Metaphysics?” (concluded)
- Week 9 Heidegger, Truth
Required Reading: Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth”
- Week 10 Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth” (concluded)
- Week 11 Heidegger: Humanism
Required Reading: Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism”
- Week 12 Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism” (continued)

- Week 13 Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism" (continued)
- Week 14 Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism" (concluded)
- Week 15 Wither Knowledge, Wither Rationality