

**Freshman Seminar 31j**  
**Skepticism and Knowledge**  
Tuesday, 3-5

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Requirements: 3 papers, each 1500 words, due on the following dates:

October 2  
October 30  
December 4

You need not consult any outside sources in writing your papers. But academic honesty requires that any sources you use, including material read in class and ideas suggested by your friends be appropriately cited. If you directly quote someone's words or either use or mention an idea drawn from someone else, you must provide a citation.

In addition to the more formal papers, for each class you are to write a paragraph pertaining to the reading. It may be a question, an objection, or an elaboration of a point you consider significant. These paragraphs will be turned in and read, but not graded. Nonetheless, they are required. You must do them to pass the course. Since they are to form the basis for class discussion, they must be done on time. (You may omit two paragraphs.) The requirements on citing sources apply to informal as well as to formal assignments.

Readings: Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*  
Sextus Empiricus, *Selections from the Major Writings*  
Orwell, *1984*  
Goodman, *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast*  
These books are available in the Coop.  
The other readings are on the course web site.

*Syllabus:*

Sept. 11 Descartes, Rene. *Meditations 1 and 2.*

Sept. 18 Putnam, 'Brains in a Vat' from *Reason, Truth, and History*

Sept. 25 Adler, 'Skepticism and Universalizability'

Oct. 2 Mackie, 'The Subjectivity of Values' from *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong.*  
New York: Penguin, 1977, 15-49.  
**First paper due**

Oct. 9 Orwell, *1984*

Oct. 16 Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, in *Selections of the Major Writings*  
Hackett, 1985, Book I, chapters 1-28.

Oct. 23 Ayer, A. J. 'The Argument from Illusion,' from *Foundations of Empirical Knowledge*. London: Macmillan, 1969, pp. 1-11.

Austin, John, 'The Argument from Illusion,' from *Sense and Sensibilia*, ed. G.J. Warnock, Oxford, 1962, pp. 20-54.

Oct. 30 Moore, G. E. 'Proof of an External World' and 'A Defence of Common Sense' from *Selected Papers of G. E. Moore*, ed. Thomas Baldwin, Routledge, 1993.

Williams, Michael. 'Skepticism and Epistemic Priority' from *Problems of Knowledge*, Oxford, 2001.

### **Second paper due**

Nov. 6 Williams, Michael. 'Knowledge in Context' from *Problems of Knowledge*, Oxford, 2001.

Elgin, Catherine. 'Touchstones of History,' *Logos & Episteme* 1 (2010), 39-57.

Nov. 13 Hume, David. *Treatise on Human Nature* Book I, part IV, Sections 1 and 2 (Of Skepticism with regard to Reason and Of Skepticism with regard to the Senses).

Nov. 20 Russell, Bertrand. 'On Induction' from *Problems of Philosophy*. Oxford, 1912.

Nov. 27 Goodman, Nelson, *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast*. Chapters 3 and 4. Harvard, 1984.

Dec. 4 Stroud, Barry. 'Skepticism and Everyday Life,' from *The Significance of Philosophical Skepticism*. Oxford: Clarendon, 38-82.

Elgin, Catherine, 'Skepticism Aside,' *Skepticism and Knowledge* MIT Press, 2010, 309-324.

### **Third paper due**