Course. What is knowledge? Why is it important? How is it possible to come to possess knowledge of something? These questions, important today, were first asked by philosophers long ago, when our planet looked very different from now and the word ‘philosophy’ was a new coinage in the Greek language. In this course, we shall look at the reasons our ancestors had for asking those questions. We shall also look at some of the most important and influential answers given to these in antiquity. The course will include a survey of the earliest attempts of demarcation between knowledge and belief in the Presocratic theories, a discussion of Plato’s concepts of inquiry, belief and knowledge. We shall devote a class to Aristotle’s account of the principles of scientific demonstration, where we’ll discuss the epistemological import of Aristotle’s theory of scientific knowledge. In the last part of the course, we shall look at the most interesting epistemological discussions of the Hellenistic period: Epicurus’ version of strong empiricism, Stoic epistemological foundationalism, Academic criticism of the Stoic theories of ‘cognitive impression’ and Stoic responses. We shall also discuss ancient medical epistemology, particularly the epistemological views of the ancient medical school of Empiricism. We’ll finish by scrutinising the position and arguments of Pyrrhonian sceptics. This course will provide you with a clear map of ancient epistemological debates. You will see that this legacy is actively used by the early modern thinkers, from Descartes and Locke to Hume and Kant.

Assessment. The course is assessed by two essays: midterm (1500 words, 40% of a grade) and final (2000 words, worth 60% of a grade). The essays will be marked within three weeks from the due date. It is essential that your read carefully the feedback you are given; should you have any questions, don’t hesitate to come and speak to me.

Class presentation. All students are encouraged to do a short class presentation on one of the topics (5-10 minutes in the beginning of the class, to start the discussion; there can be from one to three presenters on each topic). This presentation is not marked, but it gives you an opportunity to come to grips with the material and prepare for one of your essays. Also, it is a good way to develop your presentation and discussion leading skills you will need in any path of postgraduate study or work. You are encouraged to come and see me a week before your presentation.

Reading (general)

Primary sources:
R. McKirahan (ed) *Philosophy Before Socrates*, Berkeley, 1994, use 2nd edition Hackett 2011 (available online through the University Library)

Plato, *Meno*  
*Republic*  
*Theaetetus*

Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, *On the Soul*, *Physics* (excerpts)


**Secondary literature:**


Mi-Kyuong Lee, Epistemology after Protagoras, Oxford, 2005
A.A. Long (ed), The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy, Cambridge, 1999
D. Sedley, The Midwife of Platonism, Oxford, 2002
D. Scott, Recollection and experience: Plato’s theory of learning and its successors, Cambridge, 1995
D. Scott, Plato’s ‘Meno’, Cambridge, 2006
G. Striker, Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics [=EHEE], Cambridge 1996
H. Thorsrud, Ancient Scepticism (Ancient Philosophies), Durham and Berkeley, 2010

**Time-table and weekly readings**

*Please note: ‘+’ indicates suggested background reading (especially if you are not familiar with the broader area); * indicates further readings; no prefix means reading is to be done for class. Further readings on specific topics will be recommended in each class.*

**Week 1, Sept. 19:**

**The Problem of Knowledge in Early Greek Philosophy.**
*Introductory survey of approaches. Tasks of the course.*

**Primary sources**

R. McKirahan (ed) Philosophy Before Socrates, Berkeley, 1994 (focus on chapters 7-11, 20)


**Secondary literature**

+C. Osborne, Presocratic Philosophy: A very Brief Introduction, Oxford, 2004

E. Hussey, ‘The beginnings of epistemology: from Homer to Philolaus’ in Everson (ed) Epistemology, 11- 38
J. Lesher, J. ‘Xenophanes’ scepticism’ Phronesis 23, 1-21, 1978

*Mi-Kyoung Lee, Epistemology after Protagoras, Oxford, 2005, chapters 2,3
*J. Warren, Presocratics. Natural Philosophers before Socrates, Stockfield, 2007

Week 2, Sept. 26.


Primary sources:

Plato, *Meno*
Plato, *Republic* V-VII (473C-520D)

Secondary literature:


G. Fine, ‘Knowledge and Belief in Republic V-VII’ in Everson (ed) Epistemology, 85-111

*D. Devereux, ‘Nature and teaching in Plato’s *Meno*’, Phronesis 23/2 (1978), 118-126 (online)
*G. Fine, ‘Knowledge and Belief in the Republic V’, Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie 60/2 (1978), 121–139, reprinted in her Plato on Knowledge and Forms
*D. Scott, Recollection and experience: Plato’s theory of learning and its successors, Cambridge 1995, 3 - 85

Week 3, Oct. 3:

Knowledge is perception. Plato, *Theaetetus* I.

Primary sources:

Plato, *Theaetetus* 151D – 186E

Secondary literature:


**Week 4, Oct. 10:**

**Knowledge is true belief. Plato, Theaetetus II.**

**Primary sources:**

Plato, Theaetetus 187D – 201C

**Secondary literature:**


*D. Barton, ‘The «Theaetetus» on how we think’, Phronesis 44/3(1999), 163-180 (online)
*P. Crivelli, ‘The argument from knowing and not knowing in Plato’s Theaetetus (187 e 5-188 c 8)’, Proceedings of Aristotelian Society 96 (1996), 177-196
*G. Fine, ‘False Belief in the Theaetetus’ in Phronesis 24 (1979), 70 – 80 and in her PKF, 213-224

**Week 5, Oct. 17:**

Knowledge is True Belief with logos. Plato, Theaetetus III.

**Primary sources:**
Theaetetus 201C – 210D

Select secondary literature:


*Shields, Christopher. ‘The logos of “logos”: Theaetetus 206 C-210 B’, Apeiron 32/4 (1999), 107-124
*N. Thaler, Taking the syllable apart: the Theaetetus on elements and knowledge’, OSAP 2011, 201-228

Week 6, Oct. 24:

Aristotle’s theory of knowledge: the knowledge of principles and the theory of learning

Primary sources:

Aristotle, Posterior Analytics I. 1 – 4, 8,10,13; II 1-2, 8-10, 19;
  *Prior Analytics 1.1-7
  *On the Soul, 2.12, 3.1 – 6
  *Physics 1.1, 2.3

Secondary literature:


J. Barnes (ed) Aristotle, Posterior Analytics (commentary)

*J. Allen, Inference from Signs, 13 - 86
*D. Scott, Recollection and experience, 87 - 156

Week 7, Oct. 31.
Epicurean epistemology.

*Primary sources:*

Epicurus, ‘Letter to Herodotus’

*Secondary literature:*


*G. Striker, ‘The problem of the criterion’ in S. Everson (ed), 1990, 143-160 and in her *EHEE*.
*G. Striker, ‘Epicurus on the truth of sense-impressions’ in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 59 (1977), 125 – 42 and in her *EHEE*.

Week 8, Nov. 7:

Stoicism. Impression and assent

*Primary sources:*

C. Brittain, Cicero *On Academic Scepticism*

*Secondary literature:*

+Annas, *Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind*, Berkeley, 1992, chapters 3-4
J. Allen, IFS, 147 - 194

*G. Watson, The Stoic theory of knowledge, Belfast, 1966

Week 9, Nov. 14

Impression and assent: Academic objections

Reading

Primary Sources:

Cicero, On Academic Scepticism, trans., Intro., notes by Charles Brittain, Indianapolis/Cambridge, 2005

Secondary literature:


*Ch. Brittain, Philo of Larisa, Oxford University Press, 2000
*A.A. Long, ‘Arcesilaus in his time and place’ in his From Epicurus to Epictetus, Oxford, 2006, 96 – 113

**Week 10, Nov. 21:**

The Epistemology of the ‘Empiricist’ school of medicine

*Primary sources:*


*Secondary literature:*


*M. Frede, ‘The Method of the So-Called Methodist School of Medicine’ in his Essays on Ancient Philosophy, 261 - 278

**Week 11, Nov. 28: Pyrrhonism**

*Primary sources:*


*Select secondary literature:*

J. Barnes, ‘Some ways of scepticism’, in Everson 1990

*R. Bett, *Pyrrho, his antecedents and his legacy*, Oxford University Press, 2000
*G. Striker, ‘Sceptical strategies’, ibid., 92-115
*G. Striker, ‘The Ten Tropes of Aenesidemus’, ibid., 116-134
*G. Striker, ‘On the difference between the Pyrrhonists and the Academics’, ibid., 135-149