

**PHIL 570: Seminar in Epistemology**  
**Fall Semester 2020**

Instructor: Ralph Wedgwood

Mondays, 4.30 – 6.50 pm

Online – on Zoom and Blackboard (<https://blackboard.usc.edu/>)

**Course overview**

The topic of this seminar will be what we might call *informal formal epistemology*. That is, we shall consider various formal models of beliefs, and of the various norms and standards that can be used to evaluate beliefs as more rational or less rational. But our focus will not be on the formal properties of these formal models, but on their philosophical interpretation.

The seminar will focus on studying the following three recent books:

- Scott Sturgeon, *The Rational Mind* (Oxford University Press, 2020)
- Sarah Moss, *Probabilistic Knowledge* (Oxford University Press, 2018)
- Julia Staffel, *Unsettled Thoughts: A Theory of Degrees of Rationality* (Oxford University Press, 2019).

Electronic versions of these books are available on the course Blackboard site.

**Work required**

Besides attending class, doing the assigned reading, and participating in class discussions, students who are taking the course for credit should make *one class presentation*, and write *one term paper*, on a subject of their choice, which they should choose in consultation with the instructor. They should schedule two meetings with the instructor – one in the first half of the semester, and another in the second half of the semester – to discuss their term paper plans.

The first draft of the term paper will be due by the last meeting of class (November 11); the final draft will be due ten days later (November 25).

Each student's grade for the course will be based on the class presentation (25%) and the term paper (75%).

## **Students with Disabilities**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability should register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP), and provide us with a statement listing the requested accommodations. (DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8.30 a.m.–5.00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number is (213) 740-0776.)

## **Schedule of readings**

1. 17 August: Sturgeon, *The Rational Mind*, Chapters 2
2. 24 August: Sturgeon, *The Rational Mind*, Chapters 3 and 4
3. 31 August Sturgeon, *The Rational Mind*, Chapters 5 and 6
4. 7 September – No classes: Labor Day
5. 14 September: Sturgeon, *The Rational Mind*, Chapters 8, 9, and 10
6. 21 September: Sturgeon, *The Rational Mind*, Chapters 11 and 12
7. 28 September: Moss, *Probabilistic Knowledge*, Chapter 1 and Sections 2.1–2.2
8. 5 October: Moss, *Probabilistic Knowledge*, Sections 3.5–3.6 and Chapter 5
9. 12 October Moss, *Probabilistic Knowledge*, Chapter 6 and 7
10. 19 October: Staffel, *Unsettled Thoughts*, Chapters 1–3
11. 26 October: Staffel, *Unsettled Thoughts*, Chapters 4–5
12. 2 November: Staffel, *Unsettled Thoughts*, Chapters 6–7
13. 9 November: Staffel, *Unsettled Thoughts*, Chapters 8–10