

Knowledge and Normativity

University of Houston, Fall 2019
ILAS 2350-28686, Knowledge and Methods

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Course Description

The “Knowledge and Methods” course (ILAS 2350-28686) surveys the cognitive methods pertaining to our understanding of diverse disciplines (including natural sciences, mathematics, philosophical logic, social sciences, cultural studies, and the arts). It aims to raise students’ awareness of the distinctive research methods of the diverse disciplines associated with their chosen majors and minors.

This semester (Fall 2019), the course analyzes the relationship between *knowledge and normativity*. It focuses on meaning (Gibbard), ought (Wedgwood), and rule-following (Kripke, Wittgenstein) within the Kantian tradition (Korsgaard) and the Pittsburgh School (Sellars, McDowell, Brandom).

Time and Place

Weekly lectures take place on Friday (11-1 pm) in Melcher Hall 150. Class’s relevant materials (updated syllabus, readings, papers’ guidelines, final exam, class schedule changes) are available on *Blackboard Learn*. Weekly, the teaching fellow (Ms. Smalley) organizes office hours (TBD) to clarify the class subjects. He is also available by appointment for individuals or groups on *Microsoft Teams*.

Requirements and Assessments

Much of the course consists of understanding and writing about the assigned readings. Each lecture has reading assignments, which students should complete before class as lectures will presuppose familiarity with the texts’ materials. The readings are complex and require close study. Also, lectures can introduce material not included in the readings, so attendance at every lecture is crucial if you want to do well. Check the class’s schedule regularly since the readings can change a week before class. Below is the breakdown of your final grade.

- 20% *Attendance and Participation*. Students must be timely in class on Friday between 11-1 pm (excused absences require doctoral notes).
- 60% *Three Papers* (2000 words each). The teaching assistant will suggest modifications for resubmission if needed. Late submissions are accepted within one week but penalized. Detailed guidelines are available on *Blackboard Learn*.
- 20% *Quizzes*. Students must take a quiz on the class materials every Wednesday and a comprehensive quiz (closed notes and closed books) on the same materials at the end of the semester. All quizzes are available on *Blackboard Learn*.

Schedule

- Aug 23 The Nature of Normativity (Wedgwood 1-13)
- Aug 30 What Ought to Be (Wedgwood 17-34)
- Sept 6 The Given (Maher 7-21)
- Sept 13 Belief (Maher 21-41)
- Sept 20 World and Mind (Sellars 127-53)
- Sept 27 World and Mind (Sellars 154-70)
- Oct 4 Modality and Normativity (Brandom 92-116)
- Oct 11 Meaning (Maher 60-80)
- Oct 18 Following Rules (Maher 42-59)
- Oct 25 Kripke’s Wittgenstein on Meaning (Gibbard 53-74)
- Nov 1 Concepts and Intuitions (McDowell 3-23)
- Nov 8 Action, Meaning, and the Self (McDowell 87-107)
- Nov 15 The Normative Question (Korsgaard 7-48)
- Nov 22 Reflective Endorsement (Korsgaard 49-90)

Bibliography

Robert B. Brandom, "Modality and Normativity". In Robert B. Brandom, *Between Saying and Doing* (Oxford University Press 2008: 92-116).

Allan Gibbard, *Meaning and Normativity* (Oxford University Press 2012).

Christine M. Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge University Press 1996).

Chauncey Maher, *The Pittsburgh School of Philosophy (Sellars, McDowell, Brandom)* (Routledge 2012).

John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Harvard University Press 1996).

Wilfrid Sellars, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind". In Wilfrid Sellars, *Science, Perception, and Reality* (Routledge [1956] 1963: 127-96).

Ralph Wedgwood, *The Nature of Normativity* (Oxford University Press 2007).

Writing Support

The UH Writing Center works with undergraduates enrolled in any course who want help with their writing. Whether you need support with any part of your paper or check your final draft, the UH Writing Center can complement the class assistance with additional aid. To learn more about one-on-one consultations or to book an appointment, visit the [Writing-Center-Webpage](#). Here is the link for CLASS's students: [UH-Writing-Center](#).

University Policies

Students must comply with the university policies pertaining to ethics and academic honesty. See the following links and read the documents thoroughly: [Student-Conduct-Policy](#) and [Academic-Honesty](#). For counseling and psychological services, visit [CAPS](#). Request for special accommodations is available here: [Adjustments/Auxiliary-Aids](#). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the University of Houston has issued extraordinary policies listed at the end of the syllabus.