

LANGARA COLLEGE

Philosophy 2201, Section 001

Sample Final Exam

Section A (about 150 - 200 words each.) This section is worth 30% of the total.

*Answer **two** questions from this section*

1. David Hume claims in the *Enquiry* that, “I venture to assert, as true without exception, that knowledge about causes is never acquired through a priori reasoning, and always comes from our experience of finding that particular objects are constantly associated with one other.” State one or two apparent counter-examples to this claim from the history of physics.
2. State the epistemic Closure Principle, and explain how it can be used by sceptics to argue that our ordinary beliefs about the external world, such as ‘there is a tree over there’, are not cases of knowledge.
3. Thomas Reid attacks indirect realism about perception by saying that, on this view, “the sun and moon which we see are not, as we imagine, many miles distant from us, and from each other, but they are in our own mind”. Is this something that indirect realism is committed to? Explain your answer.
4. How does Jaegwon Kim argue that epistemology can never become a branch of an empirical science such as psychology?
5. Summarise Gettier’s argument for his claim that the traditional JTB conditions are not jointly sufficient for knowledge.

Section B (about 400 words each.) This section is worth 70% of the total.

Answer *two* questions from this section

6. Bonjour says that the idea of *a priori* rational insight “will strike many, perhaps most, contemporary philosophers as unreasonably extravagant, a kind of epistemological *hubris* that should be eschewed by any sober and hard-headed philosophy. ... a standard reaction is to disparage it as objectionably mysterious, perhaps even somehow occult, in character, and hence as incapable of being accepted at face value – no matter how compelling the intuitive or phenomenological appearances may be ...”. On the other hand, rationalists have long argued that small amount of *a priori* knowledge is essential for knowledge generally, especially scientific knowledge. Summarise some of these arguments for rationalism and criticise them.
7. Define the relation of epistemic support between beliefs, and explain clearly the differences between *foundationalism* and *coherentism* concerning the structure of this relation in a belief state. Is any version of either of these views correct? Or is some third view, perhaps a synthesis, preferable? Argue for your conclusion.
8. Explain how a sceptic might motivate doubt about our perceptual beliefs, highlighting all significant assumptions in the argument. Is there any satisfactory answer to the sceptic? If so, then what is it? If not, then must scepticism be taken seriously?
9. Define ‘externalism’ about knowledge, and describe some of the reasons for the recent shift toward externalism in epistemology. Is there something right about externalist theories of justification? If so, then say what externalism has gotten right, and give supporting arguments. Otherwise, argue that externalism is mistaken from start to finish.
10. Explain the difference between a ‘reductionist’ and a ‘direct’ theory of testimony, and also say how these views differ from that of John Locke. Which, if any, of these views of testimony is correct? Give arguments for your conclusion.