In this course, we examine three varieties of philosophical skepticism. In the first two cases, the skeptical positions are radical and difficult, if not impossible, to believe, yet the arguments advanced for them have proven compelling and intractable. The first stems from David Hume’s reasoning about induction, which threatens our justification for nearly all our beliefs about the future (e.g., that the sun will rise tomorrow), as well as for many of our beliefs about the past and the present. In the second part of the course, our subject is skepticism of the external world, according to which we do not know or have good reason to believe that, for instance, what appears to be in front of us (this piece of paper, or electronic screen) is in fact there. We will look at two such arguments for this conclusion and several contemporary ways of responding to them. In the third part of the course, we turn to the epistemic significance of various forms of “higher-order” evidence, such as evidence of epistemic peer disagreement, of the impact of one’s upbringing, of directional reasoning, and of path-dependence. Taken together, these considerations point to a third variety of skepticism. The readings in this third part are taken almost entirely from the last 15 years.

Texts
David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford)  
[Available for purchase at The Literary Guillotine, 204 Locust St., one and a half blocks west of Pacific St. in Downtown Santa Cruz. (Tel.#: 457-1195)]

Selected readings posted on eCommons

Course Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percent of Semester Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quiz 1 <em>(Oct 15)</em></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper (due <em>Oct 22</em>, 1000-1200 words)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz 2 <em>(Nov 12)</em></td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in Team Discussions &amp; Reports</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper (due <em>Dec 13</em>, 1700-2000 words)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Policies and Suggestions

1. The reading assignments for this course are often relatively short, but they all require close study. A good strategy would be to read the assignment carefully before we discuss it in lecture and then to read it again soon after our discussion. (Reading assignments appear directly below the date for which they are assigned. See Course Calendar below.)

2. The reading schedule below is tentative and could change to accommodate the pace and interests of the class. It is your responsibility to be aware of any announcements made in class or by email concerning changes to the reading schedule.

3. The prerequisites for this course are PHIL 9, and PHIL 11 or 22 or 24, and PHIL 100A or 100B or 100C. Students who have not fulfilled these prerequisites need special permission from me to enroll.

4. Please drop by during my office hours. I’m always happy to continue class discussion or to discuss other philosophical matters or issues concerning the course. If I’m already talking with someone, be sure to knock so I know you’re waiting.

5. My email is jellis@ucsc.edu. Feel free to email me about any administrative matters (deadlines, appointments, syllabus, etc.). Please do not email me with philosophical questions. Explaining a philosophical matter often requires more than a few sentences and in my courses is best reserved for office hours and appointments.

6. Policy on late papers: Each day a paper is late, one third of a grade will be deducted (i.e., a B+ moves to a B, a C to a C-, etc.). All days count—weekend days, holidays, etc.

7. If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me as soon as possible, preferably within the first week of the quarter. Contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at drc@ucsc.edu for more information.

8. You are responsible for being familiar with UCSC’s policies on plagiarism and proper sourcing. Plagiarism is a grave offense, which I take very seriously. Informational resources on plagiarism and proper citations can be found at:

   http://library.ucsc.edu/help/howto/citations-and-style-guides

   http://nettrail.ucsc.edu/

Here is a link to the Division of Undergraduate Education’s Student Guide to Academic Integrity:

   http://undergraduate.ucsc.edu/acd_integrity/student.html
COURSE CALENDAR

PART 1: Skepticism from the Problem of Induction

Sept. 26 Introduction to Course

Oct. 1 Hume’s Problem of Induction
   Hume, David, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, sections 2 & 4

Oct. 3 Hume’s Problem of Induction and His Skeptical Solution
   Hume, David, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*
   Review section 4; read section 5

Oct. 8 Responding to the Problem of Induction
   Salmon, Wesley, “An Encounter with David Hume”
   Strawson, P.F., “The ‘Justification’ of Induction”

Oct. 10 The New Riddle of Induction
   Stroud, Barry, from *Hume* (excerpt)
   Goodman, Nelson, “The New Riddle of Induction”

Oct. 15 Wrapping Up Induction
   Quiz #1—starts at beginning of class
   No new reading

PART 2: Skepticism of the External World

Oct. 17 The Dreaming Argument
   Descartes, René, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditations 1 & 2
   Stroud, Barry, “The Problem of the External World”

Oct. 22 Skeptical Hypotheses and Anti-Skeptical Strategies

   Paper #1 (1000-1200 words) due in class at 12:00pm sharp
   Pollock, John, “A Brain in a Vat”
   DeRose, Keith, “Responding to Skepticism” (excerpt)
   Moore, G.E. “Proof of an External World” (excerpt)
Oct. 23: 7:00pm – 9:30pm

**Film Showing:** *Abre Los Ojos*
Location: TBA

Oct. 24 Argument from Semantic Externalism

Putnam, Hilary, “Meaning and Reference”
Putnam, Hilary, “Brains in Vats”

Oct. 29 Semantic Externalism (cont’d); Chalmers’ Approach

Review Putnam papers
Chalmers, David, “The Matrix as Metaphysics”

Oct. 31 Davidson’s Anti-Skeptical Argument

Davidson, David, “Three Varieties of Knowledge”
Davidson, David, “Epistemology Externalized”

Nov. 5 Contextualism

DeRose, Keith, “Solving the Skeptical Problem”

Nov. 7 Insensitivity & Independence; Wrapping Up Skepticism of the External World

Ellis, Jonathan, “From Insensitivity to Independence: An Anti-Skeptical Argument” (draft)
Hume, David, Conclusion of Book 1 of *A Treatise of Human Nature*
Stroud, Barry, “Hume's Scepticism: Natural Instincts and Philosophical Reflection”

**PART 3: Skepticism from “Higher-Order” Evidence**

Nov. 12 Disagreement

**Quiz #2—starts at beginning of class**

Reading:
Christensen, David, “Epistemology of Disagreement: The Good News”
Kelly, Thomas, “Peer Disagreement and Higher-Order Evidence”
Nov. 14  Disagreement (cont’d)

Elga, Adam, “Reflection and Disagreement”
McGrath, Sarah, “Moral Disagreement and Moral Expertise”
van Inwagen, Peter, “We’re Right. They’re Wrong”

Nov. 19  Path-Dependence and Belief Polarization

Kelly, Thomas, “Disagreement, Dogmatism, and Belief Polarization”
Lord, Charles, et al. “Biased Assimilation and Attitude Polarization”
Nickerson, Raymond, “Confirmation Bias: A Ubiquitous Phenomenon in Many Guises”

Nov. 21  The Impact of Upbringing

Cohen, G. A., from If You’re an Egalitarian, How Come You’re So Rich?
Vavova, Katia, “Irrelevant Influences” (draft)

Nov. 26  Motivated Reasoning

Kornblith, Hilary, “Distrusting Reason”
Kunda, Ziva, “The Case for Motivated Reasoning”

Nov. 28  THANKSGIVING—NO CLASS

Dec. 3  Motivated Reasoning (cont’d)

Taylor, Shelley, and Jonathan Brown, “Illusion and Well-Being”
Taylor, Shelley, and Jonathan Brown, “Positive Illusions and Well-Being Revisited”

Dec. 5  Other Forms of Higher-Order Evidence

Reading TBA

Dec. 13  **FINAL PAPER (1700-2000 words) due at 1:00pm** in hard copy, outside my office door