PHL 8101 Syllabus: Evidence

Basic Course Information

Semester: Fall 2021
Location: Zoom (https://ryerson.zoom.us/j/93038371510)
Professor: Liz Jackson (please call me Liz)
Email: lizjackson111@ryerson.ca
I’m on email: M–F before 5pm Eastern
Office hours: By appt. (see below for more info)

Course Description

This seminar in epistemology is focused on evidence. The course will have three units. The first explores the nature of evidence. We’ll look at different conceptions of evidence and different sources of evidence. The second unit is about evidentialism, the idea that rational belief is determined by the evidence. We’ll explore both arguments for evidentialism and challenges to evidentialism, including topics like moral and pragmatic encroachment, practical reasons for belief, and self-justifying beliefs. The final unit will explore whether evidence can be permissive, and we’ll discuss arguments for and against permissivism and applications of permissivism. See here for a complete schedule.

Assignments and Grading

Participation and Reading Questions (20%)
  ● Come to class ready to participate in discussion (all meetings will be discussion-based).
• Because this class is discussion based, it’s very important that you **do the readings**. I have intentionally made the reading list manageable, but I ask in turn that you actually do them.

• You are also required to **submit one question or comment** about *each* of the week’s readings (so two per week) by **Wednesday (the day before class) at 11:59pm**. You will submit these via the forums at D2L. These questions serve three purposes: (i) guiding class discussion, (ii) accountability to keep up with the readings, (iii) a way for less-extroverted people to earn participation points. I will also share your questions with the guest speakers.

• Note: if you want more readings on a certain topic (e.g. because you are considering writing a paper on that topic), there are both optional and suggested readings on the schedule document.

**Presentation (15%)**

• Pick one reading (guest speaker readings excluded) and do a 15–20-min presentation summarizing the reading. If you’d like, you can use the last 5 min to bring up critical comments about the reading, but this is optional. After the presentation, we’ll have 15–20-min of Q&A.

• When you present, please **make a handout** (1-2 pages) so the class can follow along with your presentation. Please try to keep it to 2 pages max. There is skill in making a good handout and choosing what information is the most important.

• You do not need to submit a question or comment about the paper you’re presenting on.

**Midterm paper (25%): ~1500–2000 words**

• I will distribute suggested essay topics and a grading rubric. This paper is purely exegetical.

**Final paper topic and outline (5%)**

• I will distribute suggested essay topics and a grading rubric.

• A few weeks before the final paper is due, you will choose a paper topic and submit that plus an outline of what you plan to cover in the paper.

**Final paper (35%): ~2500–3000 words**
• This paper will go beyond mere exegesis.
• Due during finals week.

A note on paper submission: I grade blindly, so I ask that you do not submit papers with your name, only your Ryerson student ID number. Papers will be submitted via a Google form.

A note on paper length: While there’s a suggested word count for your papers, quality is much more important than quantity. I strongly prefer a tightly-argued paper to a long, rambling paper without much substance. If your paper is excellently argued, clear, and well-written, but below the suggested word count, you won’t get any points off. In other words: meeting a word count won’t be on the grading rubric.

Course Policies

Schedule: A full course schedule is available at this link. Please refer to this sheet for links to readings and assignment due dates.

Office hours: Email me to set up an appointment on Zoom. (Weekday afternoons normally work best.) I’m available to meet to help with a number of questions, including (but not limited to):
• Questions about the readings.
• Questions about your presentation/ideas or feedback on content or your handout.
• Questions about midterm or final papers.
• Professional development questions, including applying to PhD programs, conferences, and publishing.
• Note: If you need help, especially on a presentation or paper, please do not wait to ask until right before the due date. (E.g. I normally won’t be able to meet Thursdays before class to discuss presentations).
Email: I’m also available to answer questions via email. However, it’s preferable to keep email for shorter questions; for longer discussions (e.g. philosophical questions) you should set up a Zoom meeting with me.
- Minus exceptional circumstances (e.g. traveling or sickness), I will respond to your emails within 24 hours (M–F). I am normally off email on weekends.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is representing another’s work as your own. To put it simply: DO NOT PLAGIARIZE. Just don’t do it. I take plagiarism very seriously. To discourage plagiarism, I am generous with extensions for late work. I promise things will work out better if you communicate with me, rather than plagiarizing.
- If you consult a resource in your writing, cite it. If you paraphrase a resource in your writing, cite it. If you quote a resource in your writing, cite it. (I don’t care how you cite it—you can describe or link it in a footnote, in parenthesis, or in a bibliography at the end.)
- Failure to cite your sources is a serious matter, and could result in an academic dishonesty charge. For more information on academic dishonesty, see Ryerson’s Academic Integrity website.

Late Penalty: Late work will be deducted one-third letter grade for each day late (A to A-, etc.). (Weekends count as one day.) However, I am flexible and generous with extensions if you talk to me ahead of time, because (i) pandemic and (ii) to discourage plagiarism.

Alternate Arrangements: Students are required to inform their instructors of any situation which may have an adverse effect upon their academic performance, and must request any accommodations according to the relevant policies and well in advance. Failure to do so will jeopardize any academic appeals.
- Ryerson University’s complete policy concerning alternate arrangements for medical and compassionate reasons may be found here.
- Medical Considerations: In order for alternate arrangements to be made on medical grounds, a student must provide, within three working days, (1) a Ryerson Medical Certificate and (2) an Academic Consideration Form. Both documents must be submitted to the student’s program department. They can be found here.
• **Religious Observance:** If a student needs accommodation due to religious observance, they must submit (1) a Request for Accommodation of Student Religious, Aboriginal and Spiritual Observance Form and (2) an Academic Consideration Form, within the first two weeks of classes, or, for a final examination, within two weeks of the posting of the examination schedule. If the required absence occurs within the first two weeks of classes, or the dates are not known well in advance as they are linked to other conditions, these forms should be submitted with as much lead time as possible in advance of the required absence. Forms must be submitted to the student’s program department. They can be found [here](#).

• **Compassionate Considerations:** In order for alternate arrangements to be made on compassionate grounds, the student must deliver, within three working days, an Academic Consideration Form, along with appropriate documentation (if necessary), to the student’s program department. This form can be found [here](#).

• Alternate arrangements will only be made on the basis of circumstances that are both (1) legitimate and (2) unforeseeable. Some examples of circumstances that typically fail to meet one or both of these conditions are: extra-curricular activities, employment obligations, multiple deadlines / academic workload, and computer malfunctions.

**Ryerson Code of Conduct:** Ryerson University’s [Student Code of Academic Conduct](#) defines academic misconduct, the processes the University will follow when academic misconduct is suspected, and the consequences that can be imposed if students are found guilty of misconduct. Further information is also available at [www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity). Ryerson University’s [Student Code of Non-Academic Conduct](#) covers, among other things, disruption of learning and teaching.

**Accessibility:** I am committed to providing all students with the resources needed for their success. Please inform me of any way I can assist you to enjoy and thrive in this course. Ryerson’s [Student Learning Support](#) cluster provides valuable programs and initiatives for academic accommodation, English language support, math support, study skills and transition support, and writing support.
Ryerson University Mental Health Statement: At Ryerson, we recognize that things can come up throughout the term that may interfere with a student’s ability to succeed in their coursework. These circumstances are outside of one’s control and can have a serious impact on physical and mental well-being. Seeking help can be a challenge, especially in those times of crisis. Below are resources we encourage all Ryerson community members to access to ensure support is reachable.

Website: https://www.ryerson.ca/mental-health-wellbeing

If support is needed immediately, you can access these outside resources at any time:

- **Distress Line** — 24/7 line for if you are in crisis, feeling suicidal or in need of emotional support (phone: 416–408–4357)
- **Good2Talk** - 24/7 hour line for postsecondary students (phone: 1-866-925-5454)

Pandemic: We are currently living in an extraordinarily difficult season in the history of human beings. I’m committed to helping you learn in an environment where you are supported, especially this semester. **If, at any point in the semester, you face COVID-19 related difficulties, please let me know how I can support you more effectively.** For information about COVID at Ryerson, see https://www.ryerson.ca/covid-19/

Zoom link: Liz Jackson is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: PHL 8101: Evidence
Time: This is a recurring meeting Meet anytime

Join Zoom Meeting
https://ryerson.zoom.us/j/93038371510

Meeting ID: 930 3837 1510
One tap mobile
+15873281099,,93038371510# Canada
+16473744685,,93038371510# Canada
Dial by your location
   +1 587 328 1099 Canada
   +1 647 374 4685 Canada
   +1 647 558 0588 Canada
   +1 778 907 2071 Canada
   +1 204 272 7920 Canada
   +1 438 809 7799 Canada
   +1 646 558 8656 US (New York)
   +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)
   +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
   +1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)
   +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)
   +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
Meeting ID: 930 3837 1510
Find your local number: https://ryerson.zoom.us/u/adQY6T0gkU

Join by SIP
93038371510@zoomcrc.com

Join by H.323
   162.255.37.11 (US West)
   162.255.36.11 (US East)
   115.114.131.7 (India Mumbai)
   115.114.115.7 (India Hyderabad)
   213.19.144.110 (Amsterdam Netherlands)
   213.244.140.110 (Germany)
   103.122.166.55 (Australia Sydney)
   103.122.167.55 (Australia Melbourne)
   149.137.40.110 (Singapore)
   64.211.144.160 (Brazil)
   149.137.68.253 (Mexico)
   69.174.57.160 (Canada Toronto)
   65.39.152.160 (Canada Vancouver)
   207.226.132.110 (Japan Tokyo)
   149.137.24.110 (Japan Osaka)
Meeting ID: 930 3837 1510