PHIL 303 : Principles of Inquiry: Ways of Knowing

A. Course Description

Credits: 4

Lab Hours/ Weeks: Corequisites: None

Lecture Hours/ Week :

MnTC Goals: Goal LS - Upper Division Liberal Studies , Goal 06 - Humanities/Fine Arts

This course will consider a number of questions about knowledge: What is the difference between knowing that something is true and just believing (or being of the opinion) that it is true? What sorts of methods or modes of inquiry can reliably produce knowledge? Are there various methods for acquiring knowledge or is there really only one method (perhaps something called "the scientific method"). Is science the only reliable 'way of knowing', or are their others (faith or intuition or personal experience or...)? Should we accept claims that non-Western cultures have distinctive 'ways of knowing'? What about the idea that there are (as a popular book title suggests) 'women's ways of knowing'? The course will treat these questions as practical questions: In the public sphere of politics and the marketplace, as well as in our personal lives, claims and counter-claims abound. Many people claim to know one thing or another, and many others claim to know that those very claims are false or ill founded. How can we sort through the spin and the propaganda and figure out what's really going on? How, in particular, can we know what we need to know in order to be good citizens in a democratic society? Part of what we need is to understand better how our minds work and what errors they are prone to. We will also need to think about how the mass media inform and misinform us.


C. Outline of Major Content Areas:

See Course Description for major content areas.

D. Learning Outcomes (General)

1. Analyze claims about the notion of alternative ways of knowing.
2. Map these theoretical questions onto practical issues in the public sphere as well as personal life: How can a citizen sort thru spin and propaganda, filling her obligation to know what she needs to know in order to be a good participant in a democratic society?
3. Understand alternative philosophical responses to classical epistemological questions such as ¿What is the difference between knowing and believing¿? ¿What sorts of methods can reliably produce knowledge¿?
4. Understand the diversity of political motivations, psychological set, and personal interests that construct these issues.

E. Learning Outcomes (MN Transfer Curriculum)

Goal LS - Upper Division Liberal Studies

None

Goal 06 - Humanities/Fine Arts

1. Articulate an informed personal reaction to works in the arts and humanities.
2. Understand those works as expressions of individual and human values within an historical and social context.
3. Demonstrate awareness of the scope and variety of works in the arts and humanities.
4. Respond critically to works in the arts and humanities.

F. Special Information

None