

# What Is Knowledge?

## Johns Hopkins University Summer 2020

Instructor: Cara Cummings

Email Address: [ccummi15@jhu.edu](mailto:ccummi15@jhu.edu)

### Course Description

In this course we will address the topic of knowledge. We will be asking ourselves the following questions and more: How can I trust my beliefs? What is happening when I believe something false? Can I guess the right answer and still be said to know it? What if the stakes are high and I have a lot riding on the answer, can I still be said to know? No previous coursework in philosophy is assumed.

### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will have had an introduction to academic philosophy. They will also learn to construct and assess arguments for philosophical positions. Doing so will strengthen their critical thinking skills in all disciplines and even outside of academic life.

### Course Format

The course will consist of two weekly videos that will be pre-recorded so that you can watch them at your leisure. On Tuesdays I will upload a lecture on that week's material. You should do the reading before watching the video (and probably again after). Once you have viewed the video, you will send me your questions, due by Wednesday at midnight. On Fridays I will upload a video in which I answer all of your questions.

### Reading Schedule

Week One: Doubt

First Meditation, René Descartes

Week Two: Where Does Knowledge Come from?

Second Meditation, René Descartes

Week Three: False Beliefs

*Theaetetus* (187a-202d), Plato

Week Four: Counterexamples to Alleged Cases of Knowledge

“Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”, Edmund Gettier

*Thought* (142-149), Gilbert Harman

Week Five: Do Our Circumstances Matter for Knowledge?

“Contextualism and Knowledge Attributions” (**Section I**), Keith DeRose

“Contextualism, Skepticism and the Structure of Reasons” (**Section I**), Stewart Cohen