

# SYLLABUS

## *Expert Judgment*

**Instructor:** Carlo Martini  
Raum 01-21 (GW II)  
*Office Hours:*<sup>1</sup> Wednesdays 12:00 - 15:00  
*Email:* carlo.martini@uni-bayreuth.de

**Language:** English

**Typ:** Seminar  
**Semester:** SS 2011  
**Fachgruppe:** Philosophie

**Bereich:**

**P&E Bachelor:** V (BA): Verzahnungsbereich Philosophie / Ökonomie  
**P&E Master:** V (MA)

**Empfehlung:**

**P&E Bachelor:** 4. Semester / 6. Semester  
**P&E Master:** 1. Semester / 2. Semester / 3. Semester / 4. Semester

**Termine:**

Seminar Mi. 10:00 bis 12:00 c. t. Intervall: 7 Tag(e)

*Description of the course.* We rely on experts and their judgment on an everyday basis and to deal with all types of problems. From the banker to whom we ask for suggestions on how to use our money, to the political advisor a diplomat relies on for her most important diplomatic tasks, experts are those whom we rely on in order to acquire new knowledge

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<sup>1</sup>Please note that office hours begin on April 11, 2011

and do so quickly and at a relative low “price”. In this course we will take a *philosophical* as well as a *pragmatic* look at the practice of relying on expert judgment. We will try to understand what is expert judgment, and in what sense it is different from other types of judgments, and what are the major philosophical problems related to expertise and expert judgment. In the second part of this course we will leave those theoretical problems in the background, and look at the practice of relying on expertise and expert judgment from the point of view of the practitioner, for example a scientist or a policy maker. As it is often the case in the interrelation between theory and practice, the goal is for the theory to illuminate the development of practical solutions to the problems related to expert judgment, and for the practice to help the understanding of the theoretical aspects associated with the use of expert judgment.

***Objectives.*** By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- understand the concept of *expert* and *expertise*, especially in relation to the acquisition of knowledge about facts and phenomena in the world;
- be aware of the problems and issues related to the acquisition of knowledge based on the judgments of *experts*;
- have a basic idea of the methods and techniques that can be used for gathering knowledge via the judgment of a group of experts.

### ***Structure of the course***

The course is divided in two main parts. The first part will be mostly theoretical and historical, we will discuss the principal philosophical topics related to expert judgment. The second part will give you an overview and some hands-on experience of the practical problems related to expert judgment. The course concludes with a review of the topics.

### ***Structure of each seminar session***

Apart from the first session, which will be mostly introductory, at the beginning of each seminar session I will give an introduction on the week’s topic (the list of topics is below, see “schedule of classes”). My introduction

will be followed by a discussion, in which you are encouraged to participate. Your participation should be based on the readings (prepared in advance), my own introduction at the beginning of the class, and of course your personal judgment. Each week you are required to:

- read the “required readings”; \*\*\*It may happen that, depending on your commitments, at times you will not be able to go over all the readings in detail. That should be an exception; however, when that is the case, I encourage you to take 15/20 minutes before the class to read the introduction (and abstract, if present) and conclusion of each required reading. In this way you will have an idea of what the discussion will focus on, and will find it easier to contribute to it.
- answer a number of questions that will be given at the end of each lecture on the required readings for the next week. The questions will not be assessed, but they will help you prepare for the discussion. I encourage you to prepare your answers in writing, however that is not a requirement. If you request it, I will collect your written answers and provide a short commentary to assist you with the readings. The discussion part of each seminar session will start off with the questions you are given weekly.

### *Assessment*

- 2 credit points: participation; your participation will be assessed not only on your presence in class, but of course also on your taking part in the discussion by asking question and commenting on other people’s questions. If the number of students enrolled is suitable, we can arrange for short student presentations of some topics of your choice, among the list of topics included in the schedule of classes.
- 8 credit points (for bachelor students): 1 term paper, 2 options:
  - You can write a short mid-term paper (1500 words) about a topic of your choice among the topics provided in the schedule of classes. The deadline for this short paper is Friday, June 10, 2011. This paper will not be assessed but I will provide you with feedback and suggestions for how to extend it into the term paper. The term paper has to be submitted by Monday, July 25, 2011.

The suggested length<sup>2</sup> is 3000 words, although within reasonable limits, I will accept longer papers.

- You can write a term paper (about 3000 words) about a topic of your choice among the topics provided in the schedule of classes. If you decide to write the term paper directly, please discuss the topic with me, the deadline for choosing the topic is Monday, July 4, 2011. You should submit by email (c.martini@uvt.nl) a half-page comment on the topic you intend to write on, addressing what research question(s) you would like to pursue, and the general orientation of your paper. The deadline for submitting the term paper is Monday, July 25, 2011.
- 10 credit points (for master’s students): everything is the same as the 8-points (above), but the suggested length is 4000 words for the term paper.

Please send all submissions by email, including mid-term and term papers, in that way no submission will be lost, I will acknowledge the receipt of your submission within 24 hours, so if you don’t get an email back from me within that period, write me again or contact me directly, as the rare event of an email getting lost or delayed in the web might have occurred.

### *Essay Guidelines*

- The paper should be written in English.
- Guidelines for how to write a paper in analytical philosophy can be found on Prior’s website (<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>). These are very essential and perhaps common-sensical guidelines, however I encourage you to have a look at them and do the following:
  - If the expressions and terms you find in those guidelines sound familiar, or if you remember having read similar guidelines before, then perhaps you already know what the standards for writing a paper in analytical philosophy are, and you can skip reading the whole thing.

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<sup>2</sup>“Suggested length” means that I will accept shorter papers, within reasonable limits. A short and brilliant paper receives still a very good grade. An unexceptional and short paper receives a grade lower than that of an unexceptional paper of the suggested length.

- If, on the other hand, you find unfamiliar expressions, or instructions you had not read or were not told to follow before, perhaps it is worth for you to spend an hour or two familiarizing with Prior’s guidelines.
- If you need a more thorough manual of how to write in philosophy, have a look at Martinich, A.P. (1996). *Philosophical Writing* (2nd edn), Blackwell.

### ***Attendance***

You are expected to attend all the seminar sessions. Absences should be motivated by serious reasons. If possible, please inform me by email ahead of time if you cannot make it to a session.

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## **Schedule of classes**

### **PART I - EPISTEMOLOGY OF EXPERT JUDGMENT**

#### **Week 1 - May 2, 2011: Introduction**

This is an introductory session. In the first half of the session, I will give an overview of the course and go over the syllabus with you. In the second half, I will give an introductory lecture to set the pace for the rest of the course. There are no required readings for this session. However, if you have not taken a course in standard analytical epistemology, I strongly recommend you to read the following texts.

- Steup, Matthias, “Epistemology”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2010 Edition). Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2010/entries/epistemology/>.
- Goldman, Alvin, “Social Epistemology”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2010 Edition). Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2010/entries/epistemology-social/>.

## **Week 2** - May 11, 2011: Epistemology of Testimony

One of the major issues related to expert knowledge is part of a larger problem, namely, how can we have justified beliefs that do not come from our direct experience but from someone else's? This, in broad strokes, is the problem of *testimonial knowledge* in epistemology. This week we will go over the essential issues related to the topic of "testimony", and try to understand what concessions one must make in order to admit that knowledge can come from testimonial sources.

### *Required readings:*

- Coady, C. A. J. 1973. "Testimony and Observation", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 10, pp. 149-55.
- Pritchard, Duncan. 2004. "The Epistemology of Testimony". *Philosophical Studies* 14, pp. 326-348.

## **Week 3** - May 18, 2011: Knowledge and Trust

Can we trust the experts we choose (or sometimes *have*) to rely on? The relation between knowledge and trust is very essential to the understanding of where knowledge comes from; if from our cognitive abilities alone, or the presence of an "ethic of trust" in a community. The article we will discuss this week poses the problem of whether epistemological problems come before or after ethical problems.

### *Required readings:*

- Hardwig, John. 1991. "The Role of Trust in Knowledge" *The Journal of Philosophy* 88 (12), pp. 693-708

## **Week 4** - May 25, 2011: Trusting Experts — A. Goldman

Expert judgment figures among the central issues discussed in *social epistemology*. While social epistemology derives from analytical epistemology, its topics and language are at times quite detached from the ones normally studied by traditional epistemologists. Alvin Goldman's works and philosophical style provide a valuable bridge between the topics discussed in

traditional epistemology, and those studied by social epistemologists. This week we will read and discuss a paper by Goldman on experts.

*Required readings:*

- Goldman, Alvin. 2001. “Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 63 (1), pp. 85-110.

### **Week 5** - June 1, 2011: An Introduction to Social Epistemology

By week 5, the groundwork should have been laid for the topic of expert judgment and social epistemology, the central themes of this course. This week we will have a general discussion on the major features of social epistemology. We will kick off the discussion with Goldman’s book on social epistemology, of which you are required to read an excerpt.

*Required readings:*

- Goldman, Alvin. “Chapter 3 (The Framework)”. In Goldman, Alvin. 1999. *Knowledge in a Social World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 69-100.

### **Week 6** - June 8, 2011: Epistemology of Expertise — the Fundamental Issues

Whenever expert judgment is used for predicting or explaining social or natural phenomena, some of the classical epistemological desiderata need to be relaxed. This week we will dig deeper into the topics introduced in the previous week with Goldman’s text on social epistemology. The paper we will analyze, even though it is an old one, will bring the discussion closer to the *practical* problems related to expert’s deliberation and the use of expert judgment.

*Required readings:*

- Helmer, Olaf and Nicholas Rescher. 1959. “On the Epistemology of the Inexact Sciences.” *Management Science*, (pre-1986) 6 (1): 25-52.

## PART II - EXPERTS AND DECISION MAKING

### **Week 7** - June 15, 2011: Expert-based Decision Making

Decision making is largely a mathematical and statistical science; but it takes the contribution of psychology and behavioral sciences as well to produce “sound expert judgment”. In this session I will highlight the major advantages and drawbacks of expert-based decision making. We will discuss the problem of when and how one should or should not rely on expert judgment, and when instead other methods should be used.

#### *Required readings:*

- Trout, J.D. “Chapter 3 (Can We Rebuild This Mind? A Toolkit for Spotting Biases)”. In Trout, J.D. 2009. *The Empathy Gap*. Viking Adult.
- Aspinall, Willy. 2010. “A route to more tractable expert advice.” *Nature* Vol. 463: 21.

### **Week 8** - June 22, 2011 : The Delphi Method and the Nominal Group Technique

This week I introduce two methods with which expert panels can be set up, and experts made to deliberate. The methods are meant to minimize as much as possible the biases that arise when groups deliberate collectively, and to maximize the contribution of each individual judgment to the collectivity.

#### *Required readings:*

- Rowe, Gene and George Wright. 2001. “Expert Opinions in Forecasting: The Role of the Delphi Technique.” In J. Scott Armstrong *Principles of Forecasting: A Handbook for Researchers and Practitioners*. Norwell (MA): Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- VandeVen, Andrew and André Delbecq. 1971. “Nominal versus Interacting Group Processes for Committee Decision-Making Effectiveness.” *The Academy of Management Journal* 14 (2), pp. 203-212.

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*Please note that on Wednesday, June 29 there will be no class.*  
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**Week 9** - July 6, 2011: Aided decision making, philosophical and practical issues

The goal of this week is to connect some of the practical issues in decision making, encountered in the past couple of weeks, with problems that expert judgment creates for epistemology, seen in the first weeks of this course.

*Required readings:*

- Cooke, Roger M. 1991. *Experts in Uncertainty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Excerpts from chapters 2 and 3 (pp. 3-46).

**Week 10** - July 13, 2011: Then and now: two cases studies of structured group decision making

The readings assigned for this week provide a continuum between the early practical problems that promoted the creation of the Delphi method with the present applications of the same method, which still challenge contemporary scientists.

- Dalkey, N. and Helmer, O. An Experimental Application of the Delphi Method to the Use of Experts” *Management Science (pre-1986)*, Apr. 1963
- Aspinall W. and Cooke R.M. 1998. “Expert judgement and the Montserrat Volcano eruption.” *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Probabilistic Safety Assessment and Management PSAM4, September 13th -18th 1998, New York City, USA*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Excerpts from chapters 2 and 3 (pp. 3-46).

**PART III - EXPERIMENTAL SESSION AND SUMMARY OF THE COURSE**

**Week 11** - July 20, 2011: Mock Experimental Session with Delphi and NGT

The goal of this and the next session is to understand *hands-on*, what the Delphi Method and the Nominal Group Technique are about. In this session we will run a mock experimental session with both techniques. The final part of the seminar session will be dedicated to your impressions and comments on the methods as applied in practice, and their philosophical relevance.

*No required readings*

**Week 12** - July 27, 2011: Summary of the course

The goal of this session is, for me, to provide you with a bird's eye view of what has been accomplished in this course, and for you to get your final questions and comments ready for the discussion. In the first part of the seminar, I will go over the major topics from week 1 to week 11. In the second part of the seminar we will open a general discussion on all those topics.

*No required readings*

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*For any questions on the syllabus or on the organization of the course, feel free to contact me at my email address:  
carlo.martini@uni-bayreuth.de.*  
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