



Bible and Theology Department

"Shaping Servant-Leaders"

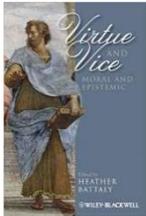
— Syllabus —

COURSE NUMBER and TITLE: BTH 941
Epistemology and Christianity
CREDIT HOURS: 4
SEMESTER: SUMMER 2019
COURSE DAY/TIME: June 3-7, 2019 M-F,
8:00AM-5:00 PM
LOCATION: AGTS 229

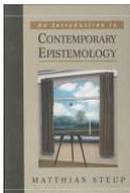
INSTRUCTOR: Brandon Schmidly, Ph.D.
PHONE: 417.865.2815 Ext. 214
OFFICE: Trask 214
EMAIL: schmidlyb@evangel.edu
OFFICE HOURS: by appointment

REQUIRED TEXT:

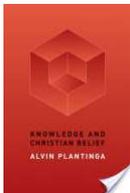
(see "expanded research" below for instructions on additional reading)



Battaly, Heather, ed. *Virtue and Vice: Moral and Epistemic*. Metaphilosophy Book 13. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 256 pages. ISBN: 978-1444335620



Steup, Matthias. *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996. 232 pages. ISBN: 978-0130370952



Plantinga, Alvin. *Knowledge and Christian Belief*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015. 144 pages. ISBN: 978-0802872043



Van Til, Cornelius. *The Reformed Pastor and the Defense of Christianity and My Credo*. Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1971. 93 pages. ISBN: 978-0875524900

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP)

Steup, Matthias, "Epistemology", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/epistemology/>

Bishop, John, "Faith", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/faith/>

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (IEP)

Faith and Reason

<http://www.iep.utm.edu/faith-re/#SH7a>

Other Links:

Cornelius Van Til and Alvin Plantinga: A Brief Comparison, James N. Anderson
http://www.proginosko.com/docs/cvt_ap_comp.html

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY MISSION:

The purpose of Assemblies of God Theological Seminary is to train men and women to fulfill the mission of the Church as taught in Scripture—*Shaping servant leaders with knowledge, skill and passion to revitalize the Church and evangelize the world in the power of the Spirit.*

EVANGEL UNIVERSITY MISSION:

Evangel University is a comprehensive Christian university committed to excellence in educating and equipping students to become Spirit-empowered servants of God who impact the Church and society globally.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

This course will focus on various problems of epistemology as they relate to the Christian faith and biblical hermeneutics. It will seek to demonstrate the necessity of a consistent Christian epistemology, developing principles necessary if one wants an adequate account of knowledge. Major individuals covered include Plantinga, Polanyi, and Van Til. Topics covered include foundationalism, coherentism, and the justification of knowledge. Some attention will also be given to presuppositional apologetics as part of a fully orbbed epistemology.

COURSE PREREQUISITES:

There are no prerequisites.

COURSE PURPOSE:

This course rounds out the Ph.D. BTh program, preparing the student to engage in various epistemological issues as they relate to the biblical hermeneutics and Christian thought.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. **History of Epistemology and Christianity:** We will begin with an overview of the history of views regarding epistemology and Faith by reading the "Faith and Reason" entry in the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
 - a. Historically, what has been the primary epistemological goals of human beings?
 - b. Historically, what are the notable shifts in assumptions about knowledge?
 - c. What historical views have been sufficiently discredited, which are still viable?
2. **Contemporary Epistemology and Epistemological Concepts:** next, come to understand current views and issues of contemporary epistemologists. Note, some texts are from the 90's, but they provide a good explanation of some of the most relevant topics. Other contemporary issues that have arisen since these text were written will come up in future readings: Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology ch1- 4, Steup SEP sections 2,4, and 6, Battaly: Virtue and Vice:) Notes: Steup Chapter 2 – You do not need to spend too much time on the superveneince sections, unless you are interested. Chapter 3 - mainly read through page 54, don't spend too much effort on the rest, unless you are interested.

Questions to consider:

- a. What is the main concern of epistemology? How does this connect with Christianity?
 - b. As best as you can tell, what is knowledge? Is it really important?
 - c. What is the main obstacle to knowledge?
 - d. What is Belief and what is Truth? How do they relate?
 - e. What is Justification? (will be discussed at much greater length in chapter 4)
 - f. What is the relationship between knowledge, evidence, and certainty? Can we have knowledge even when we are not certain?
 - g. What is propositional knowledge?
 - h. What is a priori knowledge, and do you think we humans have it?
 - i. What are the main concerns when it comes to justifying a belief?
 - j. For the sections on Foundationalism, Coherentism, Reliabilism, consider the study questions at the end of Steup's chapters.
 - k. Do Virtue approaches to epistemology offer a better way forward?
3. Christian Epistemology (Plantinga's Knowledge and Christian Belief and Van Til's My Credo.
 - a. What are the main concerns for each author? How does each view contribute to a Christian understanding of Knowledge?
 - b. How does a Christian understanding of knowledge position Christians in conversation with non-Christian epistemologists?
 4. Expanding research
 - a. Go in depth on any topic related or perhaps other to things introduce in the readings above, or perhaps other related views of epistemology (look at section 6 of Steup's SEP entry: Epistemology) At this point, you will have had about 1000 pages of required reading. For your final project you will need to read an

additional 1500 to 2000 pages. Produce a reading list of materials germane to your continued research interest, and submit the reading to the instructor for approval.

b. Other Suggested Topics

- i. Pentecostal contributions to Epistemology (See Yong's Thinking in Tongues)
- ii. Experience and personal affectations on knowledge (See Polanyi's Personal Knowledge)
- iii. Faith and Science (See Plantinga's Where the Conflict Really Lies)

ATTENDANCE:

In that the seminar meeting of the course is for one week, attendance at all sessions is important. Absence for more than one day will necessitate a withdrawal from the course.

COURSE OUTCOMES:

Course Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Know and have a familiarity with influential figures in historical and contemporary epistemology.
2. Comprehend the concepts and terminology of contemporary epistemology.
3. Evaluate the arguments and problems in epistemology.
4. Apply epistemology to Theological and Christian beliefs and practices.
5. Articulate and argue for their own view of knowledge and apply it to their Theological studies.

All Program Learning Outcomes, EU 20, and Faith, Work, and Economics outcomes are supported but are not assessed.¹

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Pre-meeting studies:
 - a. Students should submit a 3-page reflection paper for each text. These should be submitted as you complete each reading and not turned in all at once. I look for you to take issue with any arguments that you do not find compelling by offering a cogent objection to the argument.
 - b. Students should advance a thesis in a short (roughly 8-page) thesis defense paper on any topic from the initial reading. (We may review each other's papers.)
2. Final Project: The second paper should be from expanded research and approximately 15-20 pages. It will also be a thesis-defense paper. It can be on completely new topic, or an expansion on the first paper.

¹ All AGTS Program Learning Outcomes, EU 20 and FWE outcomes are found on the website: <https://agts.edu/current-students/academic-policies/>.

- a. Papers should be formatted according to Turabian-SBL2 academic style.
3. Phone conversations: I would like to have at least two 15-20 minute phone conversations before our in-service meeting. Please schedule a time with me that works for you.

ASSESSMENT:

Grades will be based, primarily, on the papers. Missing student-instructor appointment and failure to complete reading assignments will reduce the final grade.

DUE DATE:

The final due date for this course is found on the email from the Faculty Administrative Assistant that accompanies this syllabus. All written work for the course is due by that date. Any exception to that date must be negotiated with the professor well in advance of that date and, except in the case of extreme extenuating circumstances, will involve a grade reduction penalty.

GRADING SCALE: COURSE COMMONS DEFAULT GRADING SCALE PROVIDED BELOW

A	94 to 100%	C	74 to < 77%
A-	90 to < 94%	C-	70 to < 74%
B+	87 to < 89%	D+	67 to < 70%
B	84 to < 87%	D	64 to < 67%
B-	80 to < 84%	D-	61 to < 64%
C+	77 to < 80%	F	0 to < 61%

— *Schedule* —

- June 3, 2019:
 - AM: Review basic concepts in epistemology and arguments associated with them
 - PM: Skepticism and Problems with the traditional view and responses.
- June 4, 2019:
 - AM: Historical philosophers and their views
 - PM: Foundationalism vs. Coherentism
- June 5, 2019:
 - AM: internalism vs. externalism
 - PM: evidentialism vs. reliabilism
- June 6, 2019:
 - AM: Virtue epistemology
 - PM: Epistemology & Christianity
- June 7, 2019:
 - AM & PM: Epistemology & application to Theology, hermeneutics, etc.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

As people of Christ, members of the broader academic community, and future professionals, it is incumbent upon every member of the Evangel community to employ and encourage integrity in all our academic and professional pursuits. Any and every instance of academic dishonesty compromises the mission of Evangel University and violates the standards we hold as people of Christ and practitioners within our professional fields. Students are expected to understand and avoid all forms of academic dishonesty, which includes falsification, cheating, collusion, and plagiarism.

As members of the Evangel community, students share the responsibility to deter and report academic dishonesty. Should a student become aware of a violation of academic integrity, he or she is encouraged to report the incident to a faculty member or department chairperson.

It is the responsibility of the faculty to address any and all acts of academic dishonesty. Sanctions for violations of academic dishonesty can include but are not limited to a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade for the course, suspension from school, or expulsion from the university. Evangel's policy on academic integrity, as published in the Student Handbook, appears in Section VIII. University Policies: Academic Integrity.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN THE CLASSROOM:

- *It is expected that electronic devices will be used during class to support the students' learning. Any use of technology that substantially degrades the learning environment, promotes dishonesty or illegal activities is prohibited.*
- *Cell phones should only be used for academic purposes during class. It is not permissible to answer cell phones or engage in text messaging while class is in session. Should an emergency situation arise that requires you to use your cell phone, please make the professor aware of the circumstances.*

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS:

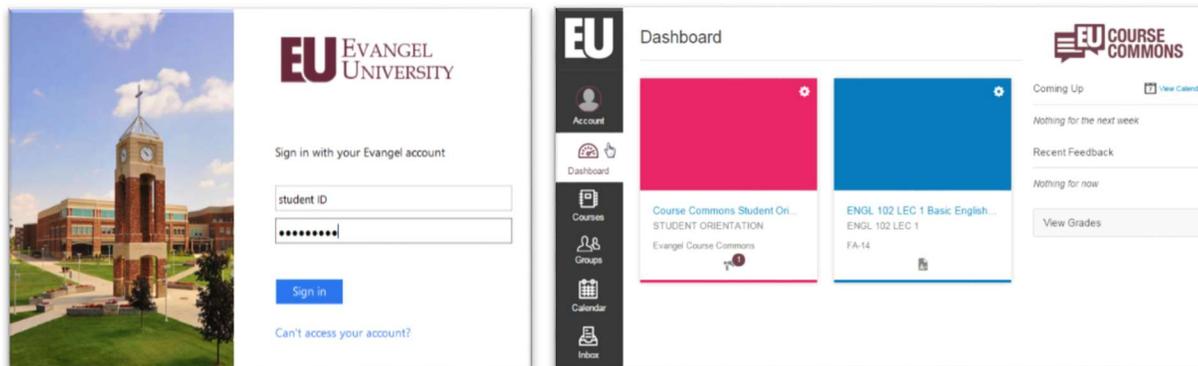
Evangel University is committed to equal educational opportunities for students with disabilities in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the American with Disabilities Act as amended (ADA). Academic Support, a division of the Center for Student Success, is the office designated by Evangel University to review disability documentation, determine reasonable accommodations, and develop plans for the provision of such accommodations.

If you have already established accommodations through Academic Support and receive accommodation memos, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as soon as possible (accommodations are not retroactive). If you have not yet established accommodations, but have a disability or health condition (permanent or temporary) that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, you are welcome to contact Academic Support staff in the Center for Student Success (ZM-208; 417-865-2815 x.8215) so that accommodations can be

arranged. See the Disability and Academic Accommodations Handbook for further information on the accommodations process.

— COURSE COMMONS Information —

This course will use *COURSE COMMONS*, Evangel's learning management system. There are links to *COURSE COMMONS* in the Student Portal and the Evangel website. The login page for *COURSE COMMONS* is <https://courses.evangel.com/>.

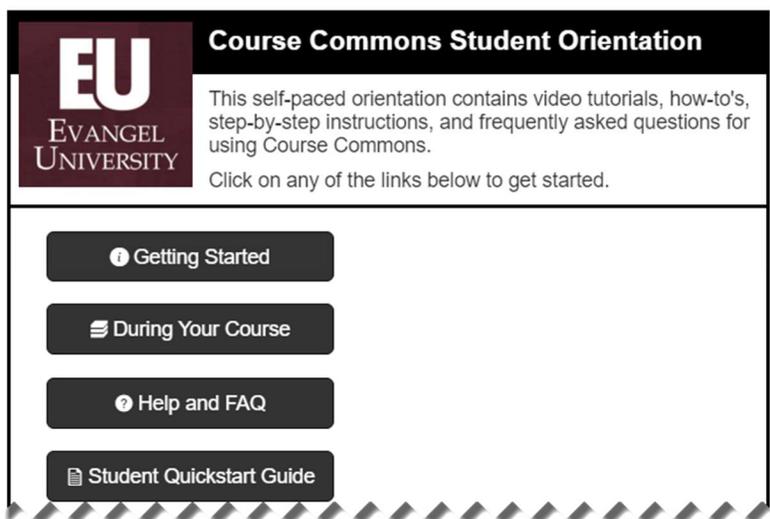


**Use your
Evangel**

username and password to login.

COURSE COMMONS STUDENT ORIENTATION

All Evangel students have access to the [Course Commons Student Orientation](#). If you are new to *COURSE COMMONS* you are encouraged to take advantage of this excellent resource. As part of your course preparation, this will help you make the most of the features that are available to you as a student.



ACCESSING THE COURSE IN COURSE COMMONS

Access your courses list by clicking on the Courses icon on the Global Navigation menu on the left of the screen. You can also click on the course card on the Dashboard.

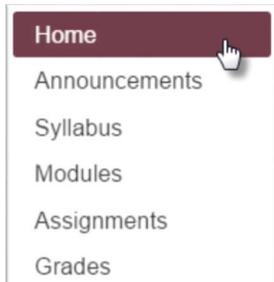
To customize your Courses list, see the following Help Guide: [How do I customize my Courses list?](#)

Students will have access to this course in *COURSE COMMONS* seven (7) days before the official beginning of the semester. Students have until seven (7) days after the semester begins to complete financial registration. If financial registration is not completed by the seventh day, course access will be revoked.

After the end of the semester, students will have read-only access to the course through *COURSE COMMONS*. Only access to already submitted work, course resources and grades will be available.

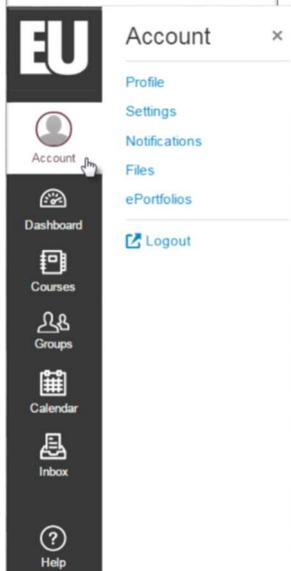
ACCESSING COURSE CONTENT IN COURSE COMMONS

The professor controls the availability of course content and features. Some items may be unavailable until a date set by the professor.



You can navigate the course content and features using the Course Navigation menu on the left. This menu can be customized by the professor, so it may differ from course to course, depending on what features the professor has chosen to make available.

You can collapse the Course Navigation menu to focus on the page content. Click on the menu icon in the upper left (which looks like 3 lines). You can expand the menu by clicking on the menu icon again.



All course content (syllabus, modules, course materials, assignments, online quizzes, online discussions, grades, etc.) can be accessed using the links in the Course Navigation menu. Students can adjust their personal settings in *COURSE COMMONS*. Click on the Account icon to access the Account menu.

On the **Profile** page, you can add a profile picture to your account. You can also edit your display name, which will show to your instructor and peers throughout *COURSE COMMONS*.

The **Settings** link allows you to add additional contact methods (personal email or cell phone number for text message alerts) to your account. You can also add external services, like Twitter, Skype or Google Drive.

The **Notifications** link allows you to customize *what* notifications you receive from *COURSE COMMONS* and *how* and *when* you receive them. This is a student-centered feature that allows you to optimize your notifications to help you stay connected to what is happening in all your courses.

For more information, see the following pages in the *COURSE COMMONS* Student Orientation: [How to Update your Profile and Settings](#) and [How to Update Your Notifications Preferences](#).

ACCESSING GRADES IN COURSE COMMONS

All course grades will be recorded and shown through *COURSE COMMONS*. Simply click the "Grades" button on the lower right of the Dashboard to access your grades for all courses. You can also use the Grades link in the Course Navigation to access your grades for this course.

For more information on how to check your grades and what you can do from the Grades page, see the following page from the *COURSE COMMONS* Student Orientation: [How to Check My Grades](#).

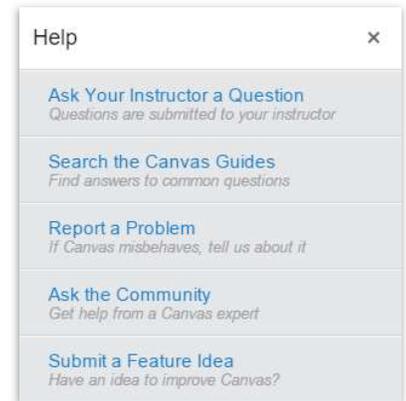
HOW TO GET HELP WITH COURSE COMMONS

Help is never more than a few clicks away! You can access the Help menu from any page in *COURSE COMMONS*.

Click on the Help icon in the lower left corner of the screen. Because the *COURSE COMMONS* is powered by the Canvas Learning Management System, all help guides and helpdesk tickets will reference Canvas.

From the Help menu, you can send a message to your instructor, search the Canvas Help Guides, or report a problem.

You can browse and search the Help Guides using the following link: <https://community.canvaslms.com/community/answers/guides/>.



COURSE COMMONS TROUBLESHOOTING

Do you have a question about a quiz, an assignment, or another item in the course? Contact your professor.

Are you having technical problems with COURSE COMMONS? Click the Help icon, click "Report a Problem" and complete the form to file a ticket for a personal response from the support team. Please be sure to include a thorough description of the problem.

Are you having trouble with your Evangel account (username and password)? Contact the IT Helpdesk at 417-865-2815 ext. 8368 (phone), helpdesk@evangel.edu