

Epistemology: Capita Selecta (A000143)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0

Study time 150 h

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 1)

Dutch

Gent

lecture

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Vanrie, Wim

LW01

lecturer-in-charge

Beck, Pieter

LW01

co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

[Master of Science in Teaching in Arts and Humanities \(main subject Philosophy\)](#)

crdts

5

offering

A

[Master of Arts in Philosophy](#)

5

A

[Research Master of Arts in Philosophy](#)

5

A

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

Rule-following, Ludwig Wittgenstein

Position of the course

When a child learns to calculate, they do not merely learn specific sums such as '2 + 3 = 5' and '7 + 8 = 15'. The child also acquires the ability to autonomously solve new sums. What the child learns, thus possesses a generality that goes beyond the specific examples with which they are confronted during the learning process. We can capture this generality by saying: the child learns a rule. But how exactly should we understand this? What happens when the child, based on a finite set of examples, suddenly acquires the ability to solve a potentially infinite number of sums? How is it even possible to generalize a finite set of examples so as to know the correct answer in all cases?

This gives an initial impressino of the epistemological issues arising around the theme of 'rule-following,' as it is presented in the famous passages from Ludwig Wittgenstein's 'Philosophical Investigations.' We study the debates that have arisen around this topic, including the discussions of Kripke and McDowell. We reflect on what this issue can teach us about the nature of our epistemic practices.

Contents

We start from the so-called 'rule-following paradox' as it is presented by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his 'Philosophical Investigations'. We combine an exegetical examination of these passages with the posing of broader questions about the logical status of rules within our epistemic practices.

Initial competences

No specific initial competences are required for this course.

Final competences

- 1 Being able to autonomously navigate and reflect on the exegetical debates surrounding Wittgenstein's rule-following paradox
- 2 Having insight in the core questions about rule-following, and being capable of framing these within the broader domain of epistemology.
- 3 Being capable of autonomously developing and defending a position in these debates.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

Teaching methods

Lecture

Extra information on the teaching methods

The classes consist of a presentation and discussion of the course material.
Lecture recordings will only be made upon request for students with a special status to whom this facility has been granted.

Study material

Type: Handbook

Name: On Certainty

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Author : Ludwig Wittgenstein

ISBN : 978-1-40515-929-6

Available in the Library : Yes

Type: Syllabus

Name: Primary texts

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

Additional information: Additional texts will be made available through Ufora or the library.

References**Course content-related study coaching**

After appointment, by the teacher.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Oral assessment, Written assessment open-book

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Oral assessment, Written assessment open-book

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible

Extra information on the examination methods

- Continuous assessment: A writing task on the issues discussed in the classes.
- End-of-term: Exam with written and oral component testing the student's understanding of the covered topics.

Calculation of the examination mark

- Continuous: 70%
- End-of-term: 30%
- Only the total grade determines whether one has passed the course.

Facilities for Working Students

- Class attendance is not mandatory, but highly recommended.
- No online/digital facilities (lectures take place on campus, without recordings).
- It is possible to take the exam at a different time within the regular exam period.

- Possibility to receive feedback at another time: by appointment.
- For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy