

## Epistemology II (A001235)

**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 2025-2026**

B (semester 2)

Dutch

Gent

lecture

independent work

**Lecturers in academic year 2025-2026**

Beck, Pieter

LW01

lecturer-in-charge

**Offered in the following programmes in 2025-2026**

[Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy](#)

**crdts**

**offering**

5

B

**Teaching languages**

Dutch

**Keywords**

Rationality, science, objectivity, historical epistemology, social epistemology, epistemic values and virtues, tacit knowledge, anti-representationalism, expertise, Kuhn

**Position of the course**

In this in-depth course, we will start from a critical reading of Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* to explore various epistemological issues. In doing so, we will focus on interpretations of knowledge that go beyond the definition of knowledge as "justified, true belief." Questions will also be raised about the place of scientific knowledge in our society and its relation to other knowledge practices.

**Contents**

We start from Kuhn's attempt to trace the rationality of scientific practices back to the nature of their historical developmental processes. This analysis contains some innovative epistemological ideas, but has also been criticized for its relativistic and anti-objectivistic implications. We will examine some of these criticisms, but also look at the potential fruitfulness of Kuhn's ideas. Likewise, we will explicitly compare the epistemological implications of Kuhn's work with the view on knowledge central to "classical", analytic epistemology, in which knowledge is defined as "justified, true belief."

We additionally pay attention to the implications of these insights for the place of science in society, in relation to other knowledge practices.... Topics discussed: underdetermination of theories by empirical evidence, theory-ladenness of perception, the historical and social nature of (scientific) knowledge, epistemic values and virtues, non-propositional knowledge, anti-representationalism, rationality, relativism and objectivism, the nature of expertise.

**Initial competences**

The student has successfully completed the course Epistemology I, or has acquired the relevant competences in another way.

**Final competences**

- 1 Having an understanding of the epistemological implications of Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.
- 2 Being able to bring these implications in dialogue with the classical definition of knowledge as "justified, true belief."

- 3 Having an understanding of the epistemological relevance of non-propositional aspects of knowledge such as skills, values, and virtues
- 4 Having an understanding of the relationship between the specific question of the status of scientific knowledge and the broader epistemological question concerning the general nature of knowledge.
- 5 Being able to correctly use crucial concepts used in the debates concerning the rationality of science (paradigm, incommensurability, theory-ladenness, ...).
- 6 Understanding the implications of underdetermination and theory-ladenness for scientific rationality.
- 7 Being able to put the debates concerning the rationality of science in a wider philosophical context.
- 8 Being able to assess the relevance of the debates concerning the rationality of science for the place of science in our society
- 9

#### **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, Independent work

#### **Extra information on the teaching methods**

In preparation for each of the lectures, the students read assigned texts dealing with topics treated in the lecture.

#### **Study material**

Type: Handbook

Name: The Structure of Scientific Revolutions

Indicative price: € 16

Optional: no

Language : English

Author : Thomas Kuhn

ISBN : 978-0-22645-812-0

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : Yes

Available through Student Association : Yes

Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : not applicable

#### **References**

#### **Course content-related study coaching**

By the lecturer, on appointment.

#### **Assessment moments**

end-of-term and continuous assessment

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

Oral assessment, Presentation

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

Oral assessment, Presentation

#### **Examination methods in case of permanent assessment**

Assignment

#### **Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment**

examination during the second examination period is possible

#### **Calculation of the examination mark**

**Essays: 50 %; Exam: 50 %**

#### **Facilities for Working Students**

Facilities:

- 1 Possible exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance

- 2 Possible rescheduling of the examination to a different time in the same academic year
- 3 Feedback can be given during an appointment during and after office hours

Extra information:

For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the faculty of Arts and philosophy