

Philosophy with Psychology Induction

Stephen A. Butterfill
< s.butterfill@warwick.ac.uk >

Thursday, 30th October 2025

Contents

| | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------|----------|
| 1 | Why | 2 |
| 1.1 | Epistemology vs the People | 2 |
| 2 | Course Structure | 3 |
| 2.1 | The course | 3 |
| 2.1.1 | Psychology Options | 3 |
| 2.1.2 | Module Registration | 3 |

1. Why

Why are you studying philosophy with psychology? What do you want to achieve and how will you do it?

Whatever your answer, it should probably be based on some ideas about what combining the two disciplines might enable you to know that you could not otherwise know.

Maybe it is helpful to consider one potential reason.

1.1. Epistemology vs the People

Gettier's proposed counterexamples (Gettier 1963) are widely held to show that justified true belief isn't sufficient for knowledge. Here is the leading philosophy encyclopedia:

“as Edmund Gettier showed ... there are cases of [justified true belief] that are not cases of knowledge. [Justified true belief], therefore, is not sufficient for knowledge” (Steup & Neta 2025)

But are Gettier's cases genuine counterexamples? Starman & Friedman (2012) asked non-philosophers to evaluate them and found that they did not reliably treat them as counterexamples. They conclude that:

“the lay concept of knowledge is roughly consistent with the traditional description of knowledge as justified true belief” Starman & Friedman (2012)

Whether this matters depends on the assumptions and aims of your philosophical theory. Perhaps you aim to offer only a theoretically coherent position about how we might think. But if your view rested on truths about how all humans think, that would be a problem.

Some epistemologists do appear to make claims that about an unspecified group of people's minds. Here is one of Warwick's own:

“our fundamental conception of what it is to know that P is itself an explanatory conception ... we think of S's knowledge that P as something that can properly be explained by reference to what S has perceived or remembered or proved or ...” (Cassam 2007, p. 356)

Meanwhile cross-cultural research is starting to provide tools to investigate commonalities and differences between groups of people (Weisman et al. 2021, p. 1359). To what philosophical ends, if any, might it be valuable to know how people actually think?

2. Course Structure

2.1. The course

The Philosophy Handbook tells you what is required:

- VL78 Philosophy with Psychology Handbook Page

The handbook did have a broken link to the psychology modules. The correct link today is:

- Psychology Modules (correct 2025-09-25 but may change)

Do not trust any source of information other than the handbook (including me).

2.1.1. Psychology Options

If you do not have the equivalent of an A-Level in Biology, you must take Brain and Behaviour (PS121) this term.

If you do have the equivalent of an A-Level in Biology, you should probably take Brain and Behaviour (PS121) this term.

According to their module information page (linked above), you need to complete a special form for psychology before the end of week 2:

- Psychology Module Form

2.1.2. Module Registration

You must register for your modules by a deadline each term. The details are here: * Module Registration

References

- Cassam, Q. (2007). Ways of knowing. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, CVII(3), 339–58.
- Gettier, E. L. (1963). Is Justified True Belief Knowledge? *Analysis*, 23(6), 121–123. [Online; accessed 2017-04-06].
- Starmans, C. & Friedman, O. (2012). The folk conception of knowledge. *Cognition*, 124(3), 272–283.
- Steup, M. & Neta, R. (2025). *Epistemology* (Fall 2025 ed.). Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. [Online; accessed 2025-09-29].

Weisman, K., Legare, C. H., Smith, R. E., Dzokoto, V. A., Aulino, F., Ng, E., Dulin, J. C., Ross-Zehnder, N., Brahinsky, J. D., & Luhrmann, T. M. (2021). Similarities and differences in concepts of mental life among adults and children in five cultures. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 5(10), 1358–1368. [Online; accessed 2025-04-10].