ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW

The purpose. The purpose of this writing assignment is to have you demonstrate your understanding of (i) the nature and purpose of epistemology, (ii) a large and important class of relevant concepts that we have discussed thus far, and (iii) a variety of issues that epistemologists investigate.

The assignment. To meet the stated purpose, you are to answer the three questions listed below. This is writing assignment is to be your work alone. Note well. First, make sure that you both read carefully and answer every part of each question. Also, do not mistake stating a claim or idea as being sufficient for explaining that claim or idea. They are not the same thing! Second, since this is an essay exam, your answers need to follow basic format for essays (which includes, but is not limited to having an introduction and making sure that your answers do not involve grammatical or spelling errors). Make sure that you allow yourself enough time to proof read your work; I will take off points for egregious writing errors.

Format. Your assignment is to conform to the following guidelines. Ignore these at your own peril! Your grade will suffer if you fail to follow these.

1. Each essay is to:
   - Be no more than 800 words (please note the word count at the end of the essay),
   - Be double-spaced,
   - Have one-inch margins,
   - Typed using twelve-point Times New Roman font,
   - Be printed in black ink, and
   - Have a title that indicates which question you are answering.

2. Do not put your name on your assignment. Instead, you are to write your employee ID followed by your course section number, e.g., 12345678/PHIL412, at the end of each essay. (You can find your employee ID on the “Personal Information” tab in the My Calpoly Portal.)

3. You do not need a separate title page. Please staple each individual essay and paper clip the three essays together.

4. While you need to provide an introduction to the topic you will discuss, there is no need to provide a broad, general introduction (e.g., “Throughout history, epistemologists have tried to analyze knowledge.”). The key is to get to the point. Give only enough introductory information so that your reader can clearly understand what the specific issue is and why it is of some philosophical interest.

An important note on resources. The only resources that you are allowed to use for this assignment are the assigned course texts and any information that I gave you in class. Any use of other resources (either implicitly or explicitly) will result in an automatic ‘F’ for the assignment. Ignore this at your peril!

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. The standard view and the goal of epistemology. As we discussed in class, we are working on the assumption that the standard view is true. First, discuss what exactly that view says, why we are assuming it’s true, and what reason(s) that one might offer for making that assumption. (Note: make sure that your discussion makes clear and explicit any theses that the standard view entails as well as reveals how our assuming the standard view relates to the primary goal(s) of epistemology.) Second, briefly discuss the view I called ‘philosophical skepticism’ and why if true, the standard view is false. Third,
critically discuss whether or not it is reasonable to assume that the standard view is correct if philosophical skepticism is true.

2. The varieties of knowledge and the conceptual relations between them. As we discussed, there are many types of knowledge. Historically, epistemologists have been primarily interested in one particular type: propositional knowledge. In so doing, they have made attempts to determine the conceptual relation between propositional knowledge and the non-propositional knowledge-types. First, discuss the various types of knowledge (include a plausible example of each in your discussion) and identify what makes the propositional knowledge-type importantly different from the non-propositional varieties. Second, select two of the non-propositional knowledge-types that you discussed and show how exactly epistemologists have attempted to show that those knowledge-types can be reduced propositional knowledge. Third, critically discuss whether or not those attempts succeed.

3. The Traditional Analysis of Knowledge and the Gettier-style objection. As we discussed, epistemologists have tended to think that The Traditional Analysis of Knowledge (hereafter, TAK) is the right analysis of propositional knowledge. However, that analysis sustained to a devastating “blow” in 1963 when Edmund Gettier raised his now famous Gettier-style counterexamples. In this “post-Gettier” world, epistemologists have been trying to determine what to say about TAK in light of Gettier’s attack. First, state and explain TAK. Second, discuss what exactly Gettier-style objections are intended to tell us about TAK and how exactly that type of objection is said to challenge the plausibility of the TAK analysis. (Note well: when discussing how Gettier-style objections challenge the plausibility of TAK, you are to construct an original Gettier-style counterexample of your own; you are not to use the cases offered by Gettier or other authors.) Third, discuss the main types of responses to Gettier-style objections that we considered in class. Finally, select one of those types of responses and critically discuss any purported problems that that response faces.