

“What is Information” Seminar,
with a focus on Human Knowledge
INLS 490(40), Spring 2009
MW 9:30-10:45, Room 208
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This course will focus on *information* in language and knowledge. It will not be an easy course, as most seminars require active and continuous participation by students, but past students for the “what is information” seminars have found them useful and enjoyable. No auditors.

Readings should be completed **before** the class on the date indicated.

Recommended book purchases (or obtain from Library)

Morris, Michael. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language. Cambridge, 2007. Davis Library: P107.M67 2007. \$30.99

Huemer, Michael, editor. Epistemology: Contemporary Readings. Routledge, 2002. SILS Library: BD161.E67 2002. \$34.95. Read this book’s Introduction, which links from the basics of epistemology to the readings in the book, as well as the brief introduction to any chapter in which there are required readings.

Introduction (Jan 12)

Losee, [Discipline Independent Definition of Information](#) (Read **BEFORE** the first class)

Reference (Jan 14)

Morris, Chapters 1 & 2 (pp 5-48)

Definite Descriptions and Proper Names (Jan 26, 28)

Morris, Chapters 3 & 4 (pp 49-93)

Natural Kind Terms and Modalities (Feb 2, 4)

Morris, Chapter 5 & 6 (pp 94-103)

Propositional Attitudes (Feb 9)

Morris, Chapters 7 & 8 (pp 134-172)

Truth (Feb 11, 16)

Morris, Chapter 9 (pp 173-193)

[Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) article on [Truth](#)

Speech Acts & Pragmatics (Feb 18, 23)

Morris, Chapters 12 & 13 (231-270)

Perception (Feb 25)

In Huemer, Chapter 1, read Intro (pp 27-31) and sections authored by Russell (pp. 64-73) and Austin (pp 74-83)

Reason and the A Priori (Mar 2)

In Huemer, Chapter 3, read Intro (pp 125-130) and two sections from among the five sections authored by Kant (pp 142-151), Russell (pp 152-165), Ayer (pp 166-175), Quine (pp 176-193), or Carnap (pp 194-207)

Reasoning Systems (Mar 4)

In Huemer, Chapter 5, read Intro (pp 253-255) sections authored by Carroll (pp 256-258) and Hume (pp 270-274)

Spring Break March 9, 11

Induction and Quantitative Reasoning (Mar 16, 18)

In Huemer, Chapter 6, read Intro (pp 293-297) sections authored by Hume (pp 298-310), Goodman (pp 320-332), Howson & Urbach (pp 344-351) and Stove (pp 352-367)

Justified True Belief as Knowledge (Mar 23, 25, 30)

In Huemer, Chapter 8, read Intro (pp 435-439) and all readings in Chapter 8

Skepticism, or JTB doesn't equal Knowledge (Apr 1, 6, 8)

In Huemer, Chapter 9, read Intro (pp 507-512) and all readings in Chapter 9

Summary of Philosophical Aspects of Information (April 13)

Adams, "The Informational Turn in Philosophy," *Mind and Machines* 13: 471-501, 2003.

Information Economics (April 15, 20)

Read Handout provided by Instructor

Design a Human or a Robot (April 20)

Given the above readings, and the informative processes we have discussed, what would be the characteristics of a rational being that could retain knowledge? Conversely, given this being, what kind of "thought" could occur?

Student presentations (April 22, 27)

Each students will present one article from among the articles on "what is information" from within the ILS literature. Any article addressing this topic in *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* or *Information, Processing, and Management* (or their predecessors) is acceptable, but students should check with the instructor if they wish to use an article from other journals. The presenter will take 8 to 12 minutes to present the ideas in the article (no slides, but handouts will be acceptable).