

# Unit 4 Epistemology

## Unit 4 Challenges and Opportunities for Learning

Epistemology becomes clearer to students when it is connected to their own learning process, as well as the different ways students are divided into groups such as applied, academic, gifted, LD, etc. Dreams and mysticism may be of interest to students, as well as connections to the philosophy of science. Superhuman abilities in perception or cognition are often of particular interest to teens, as are optical illusions.

Questions of realism and relativism are difficult to manage in this unit, as is the perplexing topic of the *linguistic turn* in philosophy. Comparing and contrasting how we sense or perceive, or how we come to know some things (and not others), with how animals sense and perceive or across different human cultures can help bridge these gaps.

## Unit 4 Culminating Activity (assessment of learning)

The Unit 4 culminating activity—Film Project: Approaches and Issues in Epistemology—is a framework around which students develop their knowledge and understanding of epistemology. Use the ideas that follow to help your students begin working towards completion of their film project.

### Description of Culminating Activity

Form small student groups (two to five) to collaborate in the development of a short film (approximately three to five minutes). Each film will explain either one (or more) approach to epistemology or relevant issues in epistemology. The films will be presented in class during a film festival (the final day of the culminating activity). The films may even be posted on YouTube. See BLM 10.2 for a list of suggested film topics. Approve each group's film topic to avoid overlap of topics among groups.

### Learning Goals

Students use appropriate philosophical terminology and computer technology in reporting on different issues and philosophical approaches to questions of how humans know and how humans develop reliable forms of knowledge.

### Learning Skills

The development of learning skills and work habits is an integral part of a student's learning (Growing Success, p. 10). Specifically, teaching and assessment of these learning skills—responsibility, collaboration, independent work, organization, self-regulation, and initiative—will enhance students' success in the culminating activity, entire course, and post-secondary life.

Use BLM E Learning Skills Tracking Sheet to track students' learning skills for this unit and for the culminating activity.

### Prior Learning Needed

Familiarize yourself with the software students will use to make their short films (e.g., Windows Live Movie Maker).

See online tutorials for Windows Live Movie Maker (student led/voice), such as:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=je\\_yJ-qHMFs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=je_yJ-qHMFs)

## Materials Needed for Culminating Activity

- LCD projector, screen, and notebook computer for presentation of films
- BLM 10.2 Unit 4 Culminating Activity, Film Project: Approaches and Issues in Epistemology (*Assessment of Learning*)

## Motivational Strategies for Engaging Students

Play off the interest generated by the YouTube clips on amazing savants like Stephen Wiltshire and Daniel Tammet (see Teaching Strategy 3 for suggested YouTube clips), and use these films as exemplars for your students when they produce their films. How do animals see things differently, or how would a person blind from birth know what a sky or mountain looks like? Are there variations in how different human groups perceive and conceive, or are these human abilities transcultural universals? How have different cultural traditions addressed these problems associated with knowing, such as those in India or China, or among Aboriginal peoples?

## Accommodations

Pairing two film groups to offer each other constructive criticism and useful feedback throughout the process may help groups with fewer human resources or less initiative.

Frequent progress checks by the instructor will help the group to select a manageable, focused topic. It can also keep the group members on topic and deepen their inquiry as they go through Chapters 10-12, not becoming too ambitious in the scope of their film, but considering alternative theories (Chapter 11) and making applications to everyday life (Chapter 12).

A word wall could be created to decode perplexing terms like *phenomenalism* or *epistemological realism* and *relativism*.

## Differentiated Instruction (alternative assessment opportunities)

If a student or group of students would prefer to do a different kind of culminating activity, this project could be differentiated from the start. Consider these options: (1) Run a two-on-two formal parliamentary debate, arguing opposite sides of an epistemological issue; (2) Write a Manga-style comic book to illustrate the epistemological topic (see <http://www.mangafox.com/>); (3) Write an expository essay, using any one of the 10 prescribed titles from the International Baccalaureate programs Theory of Knowledge course. Theory of Knowledge prescribed titles for November 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011 are found here:

<http://www.tuition.com.hk/ib/#TOK>

## Assessment Criteria

The Unit 4 culminating activity assessment criteria appear on BLM 10.2.