

# Integrated Studies 002 (Spring 2023): Curiosity: Ancient and Modern Thinking about Thinking

**Ancient Curiosity:** “Hmmm, what is that?” The ancient thinkers that invented philosophy 25 centuries ago started from a question like this. Soon enough that question turned on itself. Someone started to wonder about why we wonder about things, and the study of curiosity was born. Where does that desire to know come from? What kinds of entities feel it? What does it propel them to do? What results do they experience? What results do they produce? We will focus in this part of the course on the extraordinary ideas on these questions that come from two formative thinkers from antiquity: Plato and Aristotle. This will be a deep dive into one of the precious few survivals of human cultural material from the deep past, as a way for us to reflect on an enduring and still mostly unanswered question about human nature. We’ll see that the question of human curiosity pushed Plato and Aristotle to a very broad inquiry, into human nature and the nature of the world that provokes humans to want to know it. If curiosity is a desire for knowledge, these thinkers needed to solve a prior question about what knowledge is in the first place. Is it a perception? An organization of perceptions? Something else altogether? They had to think through where knowledge was generated and resided inside a human being. What is the nature of the mind? Is it reducible to the material organs that make up our tactile selves? And then, where does this desire to know come from? Is it natural to us? A part of our instincts? And if we are acting on instinct, where did our instincts come from? If they come from nature, where did nature’s inclination to produce the impulses that it does produce in us come from?

Then, there are a whole bunch of questions around what kinds of things we know. When we know something, what is it that we know? When we achieve a state of knowledge, something internal to us seems to have changed. What is it that is now inside us that wasn’t inside us before? If we get to know a basketball, it isn’t as though the basketball is now inside us. So, what is? Is the thing inside us our own concoction? That seems to raise doubts about whether it’s real, or just our fantasy. If it’s just our fantasy some corrosive doubts emerge. And if we think it must be real, and not just our own imagination, then where did that thing that we know come from? What is it? And if it exists separately from us, what does this say about the nature of the reality we are curious about?

These are just a few of the questions we’ll spend the semester puzzling over.

**Modern Curiosity:** In this class, we will explore a modern perspective on what curiosity is and what it can do. Traipsing across the fields of philosophy and neuroscience, literature and network science, we will discover that current definitions of curiosity are

remarkably limited. Rather than think of curiosity as a drive to acquire new bits of information, we will come to see that curiosity is a practice of connection. It connects perceptions, facts, and ideas into growing networks of knowledge. And it connects knowers, not only to the things they want to know but also to the networks of people and histories that make knowledge meaningful. Curiosity connects, and it does so within the connective tissues of brain and body, system and society. We will investigate how this new paradigm can reinvigorate the study of the mind (its contours and creativity), and we can reimagine what curiosity really means for social equity and educational practice.

## Teaching Team Information

### **Cognitive Science**

Professor Dani S. Bassett (they/them), 114 Hayden Hall, [dsb@seas.upenn.edu](mailto:dsb@seas.upenn.edu)

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 11:45am-12:45pm and by appointment

### **Ancient Philosophy**

Professor Peter Struck (he/him), 291 Cohen Hall, [struck@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:struck@sas.upenn.edu)

Office Hours: Mondays, 1-3pm, and by appointment

### **Seminars**

Dr. David Dunning (he/him), Cohen Hall 175, [dunningd@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:dunningd@sas.upenn.edu),

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:30-3:00pm and by appointment

Dr. Kristian Taketomo (he/him), Cohen Hall 175, [taketomo@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:taketomo@sas.upenn.edu),

Tuesdays, 12-1:30pm and by appointment

Dr. Julio R. Tuma, Cohen Hall 435, [tuma@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:tuma@sas.upenn.edu), 215-898-4772

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:30-3:25pm and by appointment

# Class Commitments

*Statement on Names and Pronouns.* In our classroom, it is important that we refer to everyone by their names and by their pronouns. Pronouns can be a way to affirm someone's gender, but they can also be unrelated to a person's gender. They are simply a public way in which people are referred to in place of their name (e.g., “he” or “she” or “they” or “ze” or many others). In this classroom, you are invited but not required to share the pronouns you use (or the pronouns you want to use in this particular space), and we ask that all of us commit to being attentive to and using each other’s pronouns. If you accidentally misgender someone or use an incorrect pronoun for them, please simply correct yourself to their pronoun. If during the course you would like us to change the pronoun we are using for you, please let us know.

*Bathroom Statement.* An all-gender bathroom is available in Arch (room G06). Additional all-gender bathrooms are available in Locust Walk 3609 (rooms 107, 209, 306), the Graduate Student Center 3615 Locust Walk (rooms 207, 307), and Robbins House 3537 Locust Walk (rooms 204 and 304). For an up-to-date map of all-gender restrooms on campus, see [here](#).

*Name Designation Statement.* The University of Pennsylvania is committed to providing an equitable and safe experience for students whose birth name and/or legal name does not reflect their gender. Any student, including transgender, genderfluid, genderqueer, gender diverse, non-cisgender and cisgender students who wish to designate a name different from their birth or legal name can do so by editing their Personal Information page in Path@Penn. For additional Preferred First Name, Pronouns, and Gender Identity Information, see <https://sfs.upenn.edu/student-records/update-data>.

*Statement on Course Content.* Recent work across the sciences and the humanities has identified a bias in content engagement. Scholarly work from marginalized gender, racial, and ethnic identities receives less engagement than expected were these factors unrelated to citation, referencing, and syllabus-building practices. In building the syllabus for INTG002, we sought to proactively consider choosing content that reflects the diversity of the field in thought, form of contribution, gender, race, ethnicity, and other factors. We look forward to future work that could help us to better understand how to support equitable practices in the development of course content across the sciences and the humanities.

*Positionality Statement.* In this course we will be canvassing pieces by and/or about a range of scholars whose position, privilege, commitments, and lived experience may be vastly different from our own. Together, our goal in this class is to come to these texts with respect and an eagerness to learn. We are socialized into an unjust and unequal society, and we inherit biases woven into the fabric of that society. We aim to approach the course (and its diverse content) in a way that prioritizes the needs and well-being of scholars from historically and currently marginalized groups. We can do this by listening to our colleagues and fellow students, practicing intellectual humility, and being actively curious about our biases, blindspots, and areas of ignorance.

*Commitment Statement Soliciting Feedback.* At Penn and in this course, we aim to educate and respect students with diverse backgrounds and perspectives. The diversity students bring to class is a resource and an essential feature of university education. We aim to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity, including academic background as well as gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions to improve diversity and inclusivity in the course are encouraged and appreciated.

## **Texts**

### **Ancient Philosophy:**

Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand* (Cambridge) **ISBN-13: 978-0521347624**

Plato, *Phaedo*, David Gallop, trans. (Oxford) **ISBN-13: 978-0199538935**

### **Cognitive Science:**

Main Text: Perry Zurn & Dani S. Bassett, *Curious Minds* (MIT Press; 2022).

Secondary Text, available online through Franklin Library: Perry Zurn and Arjun Shankar, Editors, *Curiosity Studies: A New Ecology of Knowledge* (Minnesota Press; 2020).

## **Seminar Times & Locations:**

Please attend the seminar you registered for/assigned to you:

301 Dr. Tuma, Fridays 10:15-11:05, Hill Seminar Room

- 302 Dr. Tuma, Fridays Noon-12:50, Hill Seminar Room
- 303 Dr. Kristian Taketomo, Fridays Noon-12:50, Hill Club Lounge
- 304 Dr. Kristian Taketomo, Fridays 1:45-2:35, Hill Club Lounge
- 305 Dr. David Dunning, Fridays 1:45-2:35, Hill Seminar Room
- 306 Dr. David Dunning, Fridays 3:30-4:20, Hill Seminar Room

## Assessment and Course Grade Breakdown

You will receive one single grade for Integrated Studies 002.

Each of the two streams and the Seminar is worth 30% of this single grade. The Thursday integrative session is worth 10% of his final grade.

The grade breakdown for each stream is as follows:

### **Ancient Philosophy** (30% of INTG002 grade)

Tutorial - Week of February 13th - Week 5 (10%)

Paper 1 - March 19th at Midnight (30%)

Paper 2 - April 23rd at Midnight (30%)

FINAL - TBD (30%)

### **Cognitive Science** (30% of INTG002 grade)

Paper 1 - February 26th at Midnight (30%)

Paper 2 - April 16th at Midnight (30%)

FINAL - TBD (40%)

### **Thursday Integrative Sessions** (10% of INTG002 grade)

**Seminars** (30% of INTG002 grade)

Attendance & Participation (20%)

Integration Essay 1 - Due Midnight March 3rd (20%)

Group Integration Assignment - Various due dates in weeks 10-13 (30%)

Final Integration Essay 2 - Due Midnight April 25th (30%)

**Policy on Academic Integrity:** Students are expected to follow the Code of Academic Integrity as laid out in the College regulations ( <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity/> ). Violations of the code — i.e., cheating on exams, plagiarism, etc.

— will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct, and will be given a failing grade for the assignment, plus whatever other sanctions are levied by the Office. If you have any questions or doubts about what constitutes a violation of the code, please ask.

<b>Weekly Theme</b>	<b>Tuesday Mornings (Dr. Bassett)</b>	<b>Tuesday Afternoons (Dr. Struck)</b>	<b>Thursday Morning/Integration</b>	<b>Seminars</b>
Jan. 12 Week 0			Introductions, syllabi, expectations	Introductions
Jan. 16-20 Week 1: What is Curiosity?	<b>DB: A modern view of curiosity.</b> What is a modern view of curiosity? Is curiosity about collecting? About acquiring knowledge? About asking questions?	<b>PS: Knowledge and Curiosity in Antiquity</b> What does knowledge look like in ancient Greece? What counts as knowledge? How is it found? What are its functions in society?	<b>Integrative Session led by Dr. Taketomo</b>	<b>Seminars</b>

<p>Jan 23-27 Week 2: How We Know Things</p>	<p><b>DB: Science of curiosity.</b> What is science? What practices characterize scientific inquiry? What are the limitations of scientific inquiry, and how do those limitations impact the practice of science?</p>	<p><b>PS: Plato on how the desire for knowledge shapes the life of Socrates.</b> We'll look at sources of knowledge and modes of testing claims to knowledge.</p>	<p><b>Integrative Session led by Dr. Struck</b></p>	<p><b>Seminars</b></p>
<p>Jan. 30 - Feb. 3 Week 3: Asking Questions</p>	<p><b>DB: Philosophy of curiosity.</b> A philosophical critique of the acquisitional account of curiosity, and a proposal for a connective account.</p>	<p><b>PS: Plato on where knowledge comes from.</b> How questions provoke knowledge to emerge, seemingly out of nowhere.</p>	<p><b>Integrative Session led Dr. Tuma</b></p>	<p><b>Seminars</b></p>
<p>Feb. 6 - 10 Week 4: Body &amp; Mind I</p>	<p><b>DB: Networks of the mind.</b> How does the mind build connective architectures of knowledge? What sorts of architectures might the mind build?</p>	<p><b>PS: Plato on the body.</b> Among the things that we do actually know, we can be confident that the body dies. Given that it's fallible and subject to decay, do we trust it?</p>	<p><b>Integrative Session led by Dr. Dunning</b></p>	<p><b>Seminars</b></p>

<p>Feb 13 - 17: Week 5: Body &amp; Mind II</p>	<p><b>DB: Styles of curiosity.</b> How might distinct styles of curiosity produce different architectures of knowledge?</p>	<p><b>PS: Plato on the mind.</b> If the body is subject to annihilation, is there something else to us that isn't? <b>**Ancient Philosophy Tutorial Due This Week – signup sheets will be available for W and F afternoons / evenings on Canvas**</b></p>	<p><b>Integrative Session led by Dr. Bassett</b></p>	<p><b>Seminars</b></p>
<p>Feb 20 - 24 Week 6: Body &amp; Mind III</p>	<p><b>DB: Styling curiosity in knowledge.</b> How might the individual and collective mind, society and culture, impact the formation of knowledge structures? <b>**Cognitive Neuroscience Paper 1 due at midnight on Sunday February 26th**</b></p>	<p><b>PS: Plato on the afterlife.</b> Curiosity about body and mind leads to a new big picture view of the world.</p>	<p><b>Integrative Session led by Dr. Dunning</b></p>	<p><b>Seminars</b></p>



<p>Feb. 27 - March 3 Week 7: Worlds &amp; Worlding I</p>	<p><b>DB: Walking curiosity.</b> How do thoughts connect while walking? How does the mind traverse a path? What sorts of walks might the mind take?</p>	<p><b>PS: Plato on knowledge</b> The theory of the forms we have seen now gets a deep dive. When we know, what is it that we know?</p>	<p><b>Integrative Session led by Dr. Taketomo</b></p>	<p><b>Seminars</b> <b>**Integrative Essay 1 Due by Midnight (March 3rd)**</b></p>
<p>March 4-12: Spring Break</p>				
<p>March 13 - 17 Week 8: Worlds &amp; Worlding II</p>	<p><b>DB: Back to the neuroscience of curiosity.</b> Where in the brain are knowledge networks built, encoded, and represented? How might neurodiverse minds build knowledge networks?</p>	<p><b>PS: Plato on knowledge.</b> We look at normal life as an experience analogous to living in a cave, and what it would take to get out of it.  <b>**Ancient Philosophy Paper 1 due at midnight on Sunday (19th) night at midnight**</b></p>	<p><b>Integrative Session led Dr. Struck</b></p>	<p><b>Seminars</b></p>

<p>March 20 - 24 Week 9: Different Orientations to Knowledge</p>	<p><b>DB: Curiosity &amp; education.</b> How can we reimagine education to meet diverse connective curiosities in the classroom?</p>	<p><b>PS: Aristotle Basics.</b> Substance, Embodied Matter, and Cause</p>	<p><b>Integrative Session led by Dr. Tuma</b></p>	<p><b>Seminars</b></p>
<p>March 27 - 31 Week 10: Teleology &amp; Tunnelling</p>	<p><b>DB: On silencing curiosity.</b> Is it ever silenced, and if so how? How do institutions structure knowledge to amplify or silence specific voices?</p>	<p><b>PS: Aristotle's Teleology.</b> Aristotle's world is on its way toward an end. How does understanding affect our view of knower, knowing, and the known.</p>	<p><b>Integrative Session led by Dr. Bassett "Tunneling Curiosity"</b></p>	<p><b>Seminars</b></p>
<p>April 3-7 Week 11: Soul &amp; Ethics</p>	<p><b>DB: Ethics of curiosity.</b> Is curiosity always good? Can curiosity cause harm? We'll hear perspectives from feminism, trans studies, and environmental ethics.</p>	<p><b>PS: Aristotle's Soul.</b> Aristotle understands knowing to happen in the soul, which one could translate as mind. What is this?</p>	<p><b>Integrative Session led by Dr. Taketomo</b></p>	<p><b>Seminars</b></p>

<p>April 10-14 Week 12: Sites of knowledge - who is it that knows?</p>	<p><b>DB: Curiosity &amp; revolutions.</b></p> <p>How do scientific and political revolutions depend upon curiosity? What are affiliated resistant practices that support the building of new worlds?</p> <p><b>**Cognitive Neuroscience Paper 2 due Sunday (16th) night at midnight**</b></p>	<p><b>PS: Aristotle's knowing soul.</b></p> <p>We'll examine the soul as a collection of functions that culminates in knowledge- seeking.</p> <p><b>**Ancient Philosophy Paper 2 due Sunday (23rd) night at midnight**</b></p>	<p><b>Integration session led by Dr. Dunning</b></p>	<p><b>Seminars</b></p>
<p>April 17-21 Week 13: Impulses</p>	<p><b>DB: Curiosity &amp; imagination.</b></p> <p>What role does imagination play in scientific curiosity? Does imagination lead to serendipitous discoveries?</p>	<p><b>PS: Aristotle on the desire to understand and the divine.</b></p> <p>We'll look at how Aristotle connects the impulse to know to the divine.</p>	<p><b>Integration session led by Dr. Bassett "Shenanigan Curiosity"</b></p>	<p><b>Seminars</b></p>

<p>April 24 - 25: Final Week: Curiosity &amp; Wonder</p>	<p><b>DB: Curiosity &amp; wonder.</b> What role does wonder play in curiosity, or curiosity in wonder? How does wonder work, and what are its affordances for scholarly inquiry?</p>	<p><b>PS: Aristotle on Wonder; and Distributed Cognition.</b> Our waking minds discover things, but Aristotle thinks our sleeping bodies do too. We'll look at dreams as a source of knowledge.</p>	<p>NO CLASS</p>	<p>NO CLASS</p> <p><b>**Integrative Assignment 2 - Due April 25th at Midnight**</b></p>
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Final assignments in both streams: TBD