EVIDENCE

Time and Place: Tuesdays 16:15-17:45, 23.21/U1.64
Instructor: Dr. Ioannis Votsis
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Office hours (Room Geb. 23.21/04.86): Wednesdays 11:00-12:00

It is hard to deny that evidence plays a critical role in scientific as well as in everyday deliberations. In this seminar we will attempt to understand this role by examining the notion of evidence and its associated activities. With this aim in mind several descriptive and normative questions will be raised: How is the concept of evidence used in everyday discourse and how is it used in scientific discourse? What ought to count as evidence? How are the concepts of sensory experience, empirical belief, data and evidence related? Under what circumstances does evidence underdetermine the choice between competing theories? Is evidence a theory-dependent notion? If so, can we still reasonably maintain its function as a neutral adjudicator? Is evidence-seeking an indispensable value for a successful knowledge system? What is the best way to quantify the notion of evidence? When can an old piece of evidence lend credence to a new theory? Does evidence of a new type of phenomenon support a theory more strongly than evidence of an established type?

Useful Book:

Coursework:
- One presentation (about 20 minutes) on one of the main readings. [3 credits]
- One essay (about 2,500 words), **deadline 26/01/10**. [3 credits]

NB: Presentations will be assigned on the second week. Suggested essay topics will be distributed in December.

WEEK 1: Introduction

WEEK 2: An Overview

Main Reading:

Further Reading:

WEEK 3: The Seat of Evidence – Observation Statements

Main Reading:
Further Reading:

WEEK 4: The Seat of Evidence – Data

Main Reading:

Further Reading:

WEEK 5: The Problem of Theory-Ladenness

Main Reading:

Further Reading:

WEEK 6: The Problem of Underdetermination

Main Reading:

Further Reading:


**WEEK 7: Evidence and Knowledge**

**Main Reading:**

**Further Reading:**

**WEEK 8: Qualitative Accounts of Confirmation**

**Main Reading:**

**Further Reading:**

**WEEK 9: Bayesianism**

**Main Reading:**

**Further Reading:**

**WEEK 10: The Problem of Old Evidence**

**Main Reading:**

**Further Reading:**

**WEEK 11: Novel Predictions**

**Main Reading:**

**Further Reading:**

**WEEK 12: Evidence in Biology**

**Main Reading:**

**Further Reading:**

**WEEK 13: Evidence in Law**

**Main Reading:**

**Further Reading:**

WEEK 14: Evidence in Medicine

**Main Reading:**

**Further Reading:**

WEEK 15: Uncertain Reasoning

**Main Reading:**

**Further Reading:**

WEEK 16: Science without Evidence?

**Main Reading:**

**Further Reading:**
Votsis, I. (draft) ‘Logic as Ultra-Physics’. 