

Course outline 2

“General Philosophy”

Second-year course, Spring 2019, « Philosophie générale » (L4PH0011TD6)

Belief : Skepticism and Certainty

Course description

Are we ever really justified in believing anything? Or are there some things that are beyond doubt? The objective of this course is to perform a close reading and comparison of two very different philosophical works dealing with problems posed by these questions: Sextus Empiricus' defense of Ancient Skepticism as the only reasonable position and Wittgenstein's enigmatic final work, *On Certainty*, which is partly an attempt to show that philosophical skepticism does not make sense. Each session will focus on the interpretation and discussion of passages from these texts. We will also consider Pascal's response to skepticism, which, in some ways, combines elements of both Wittgenstein's and Sextus'.

Texts

- *Les esquisses pyrrhoniennes*, de Sextus Empiricus, éd. Pierre Pellegrin, Paris, Points, Seuil, 1997

- *De la certitude*, de Ludwig Wittgenstein, tr. J. Fauve, Paris, Gallimard, « Tel », 1987.

-sur cet ouvrage, je conseille le commentaire d'E. Marrou chez Ellipses, coll. « philo-textes ».

Schedule

- [1] 07/02 Presentation of the course. What is it to be a skeptic ? Is skepticism a sincere search for truth?
- [2] 14/02 *Esquisse* I, 1-17 What does the skeptic do and why?
- [3] 21/02 *Esquisse* I, 18-34 Skeptical discourse and how it differs from the rest of philosophy
- [4] 28/02 *Esquisse* II, Do we have a criterion of truth?
- [5] 14/03 *Esquisse* III, Focus on the critique of the pretensions of physics and ethics
- [6] 21/03 Interlude: Pascal's response to Pyrrhonism, fragments from the *Pensées* (to be distributed)
- [7] 28/03 *De la certitude*, §1-232
- [8] 04/04 *De la certitude* §233-430
- [9] 11/04 *De la certitude* §431-555
- [10] 18/04 *De la certitude* § 556-676