Epistemology Study Questions

1. Answer each of the following:
   i) Give a clear, accurate sketch of Descartes' epistemological project. What was he trying to do? Why?
   ii) Give a clear, accurate explanation of (a) chains of justification and (b) the inverted pyramid of knowledge, as these were explained in class
   iii) Give a clear, accurate explanation of the role that certainty plays in Descartes' project
   iv) Give a clear, accurate explanation of Cartesian doubt and of the role that Cartesian doubt plays in Descartes' project
   v) Descartes offers three arguments aimed at showing that we cannot be certain about the vast majority of our beliefs. Give a clear, accurate sketch of each of these three arguments, and the types of beliefs they purport to cast doubt on

2. Answer each of the following:
   i) Give a clear, accurate sketch of Descartes' Cogito argument
   ii) Explain the difference between veridical and phenomenological senses of words like 'perceive' and 'see'
   iii) Give a clear accurate sketch of Descartes’ argument to bridge the gap between phenomenological perception and the external world
   iv) In class, it was suggested that this argument is circular. Explain what a circular argument is, and why it is a bad thing for an argument to be circular
   v) Give a clear, accurate explanation of the alleged circularity in Descartes argument

3. Answer each of the following:
   (i) Give a clear, accurate sketch of Locke's proposal for penetrating the screen of perception. Which 2 key features of our perceptions does Locke think are important, and what does he think each of those features indicate about the nature of the matter that typically causes perceptions?
   (ii) Give a clear accurate description of the philosophical view that we called “naive representationalism” and how it uses the notions of resemblance and causation to relate matter to the perception
   (iii) Explain the two skeptical objections that Locke raises against naive representationalism that were discussed in lecture
   (iv) Give a clear, accurate account of Locke’s “limited representationalism”
(v) Give a clear, accurate sketch of Locke’s distinction between primary and secondary qualities, and give a few examples of each
(vi) Explain why Locke thought that this distinction is important and how he thought his epistemological picture provided a response to Descartes’

4. Answer each of the following:
   (i) Berkeley claims that physical objects are made of ideas. But he also claims that this theory does not lead to skepticism, while Locke’s competing theory, according to which physical objects are made of matter, does lead to skepticism. Explain what Berkeley means by skepticism
   (ii) Give a clear, careful explanation of Berkeley’s distinction between physical objects and matter
   (iii) Explain how Berkeley uses this distinction to defend the claim that his theory does not lead to skepticism
   (iv) Berkeley offers an avalanche of arguments against the sort of limited representationalism defended by Locke. Give a clear, accurate sketch of three (3) of these arguments

5. Answer each of the following
   (i) Explain why the existence of unperceived objects poses a problem for Berkeley
   (ii) Give a clear, accurate sketch of Berkeley’s solution to this problem
   (iii) Do you think Berkeley’s proposed solution is plausible? Why or why not?
   (iv) Explain the similarities and differences between Berkeley’s account of reality and the account in The Matrix.

6. Answer all of the following:
   (i) Give a clear, accurate definition of the following:
       a. Valid deductive argument
       b. Sound deductive argument
   (ii) Give an example of a valid deductive argument that is not sound
   (iii) In class we asked why the conclusion of a deductive argument must be true if the premises are, and an answer was presented. Give a clear, accurate sketch of that answer
   (iv) Give a clear accurate explanation of the idea of a valid deductive argument form. Your answer should include at least two illustrations of different valid deductive argument forms
   (v) Give a clear, accurate sketch of the way in which the concept of a valid deductive argument form was central to the development of computer science

7. Answer all of the following:
   (i) What is an enumerative inductive argument
       a. To the next case? Give an example
       b. To a generalization? Give an example
   (ii) What is an inference to the best explanation? Give an example from
science and one from everyday life. Your examples should include details about the premises and conclusions of these arguments.

(iii) Explain what distinguishes these three sorts of arguments from valid deductive arguments.

8. Answer all of the following:
   (i) Explain what the “problem” is in Hume’s problem of induction.
   (ii) Give a clear, accurate and detailed sketch of Hume’s “skeptical answer” to this problem. Your answer should include:
         a. A discussion of the two candidate methods Hume considers for attempting to justify inductive inferences
            1. Deductively
            2. Inductively
         b. A explanation of Hume’s argument that neither of these methods can successfully justify inductive inferences.
   (iii) In class it was argued that appeal to the concept of probability does not provide a way around Hume’s skeptical challenge. Give a clear, accurate sketch of that argument.

9. Answer all of the following:
   (i) Paul offers an argument from analogy between vampires and parents – explain the analogy, and the relevant features the two analogs are alleged to have in common.
   (ii) Explain what Paul means by a transformative experience, and describe a couple of examples of your own, explaining why they are transformative.
   (iii) Explain Paul’s argument that
         a. You cannot rationally decide to become a parent.
         b. You cannot rationally decide to not become a parent.
   (iv) Explain what Paul thinks her argument shows about epistemology, more specifically what it implies about our current methods for assessing the rationality of different decisions.