**A priori knowledge vs. a posteriori knowledge**

These are another two concepts useful for conceptualizing knowledge. They come from Latin. For this reason, when you write these words, *italicize them.*

**A priori knowledge** (ah pre-or-e): propositions known independently of experience; non-empirical knowledge

Literally translates from Latin as “from the former” or “from what comes before”.

A proposition is knowable *a priori* if:
- You can know it on the basis of reason alone
- Is it a tautology (a claim that is true by definition)
- It is arrived at intuitively (be careful here)

Examples:
- Reasoning: if A is greater than B, and B is greater than C, then A is greater than C
- Tautology: all bachelors are unmarried men
- Intuitive: killing people for fun is wrong

**A posteriori knowledge** (ah pahst-ear-e-or-e): knowledge on the basis of experience; empirical knowledge; knowledge of content

Literally translates from Latin as “from the latter” or “from what comes later”.

A proposition is knowable *a posteriori* if you have to go out in the world (get experience) to know it.

Examples:
- Africa is a continent that is bigger than North America
- The declaration of independence was adopted in 1776
- Annapolis High School is located on Riva Road.

If these ideas seem unclear, that is healthy and good. They often are to me. I introduce them now more as tools than as “must-know” concepts. As we move through the course, their use will become evident.

**Lingering questions:**
- Can you arrive at *a priori* knowledge without experience?
- Thus, is there truly such a thing as *a priori* knowledge?
- Which knowledge should we value more: *a priori* or *a posteriori*?
- Which areas of knowledge are known *a priori* or *a posteriori*?
- What role does language play in making propositions?