

Phil 121: Epistemology and Epistemic Justice
The Ethics and Politics of Knowing

Instructor: Abe Joyal

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Course Description

Throughout history, different people have been taken to possess or lack credibility when they speak in the public sphere. These perceptions of credibility have not been made on consistent grounds, and there has often been good reason to morally question credibility judgments: Galileo's claim that geocentrism is false being punished by the catholic church, the public distrust of black americans testimony that police brutality is a problem, and the gaslighting of women who speak out against sexual harassment are all credibility judgments worth critiquing. This course explores philosophical arguments on how we should assess credibility across various political situations, and the morality involved in these assessments. Students will question such topics as who is responsible for knowing things, when we are obligated to trust or distrust various individuals' testimony, and how political power structures sway our views in potentially harmful ways.

Learning Objectives

- Students should understand and be able to express philosophical positions on the topic of epistemic justice that have been covered in the course. This includes both written and oral explanations of arguments and vocabulary.
- Students should offer independently conceived positions and arguments on topics of epistemic justice. This does not require total originality (citing other sources and arguments is of course vital), but it does require that the students arrive at their own conclusions concerning the topics of the course.
- Students should be able to both describe and practice tactics that can potentially prevent epistemic injustice. The aims of this class are not merely to conceptually grasp injustice, but to actively train against it.

Course Requirements and Grading

Credibility Judgments (30%): Each student will write two short papers (1-3 pages), giving a judgment on the credibility of an individual testimony in a provided case. Students will be given a selection of articles to choose from, each of which gives an example of a questionable claim or testimony. The students will be required to give an evaluation of the credibility of the claim in question, and defend this evaluation using at least one philosophical argument covered in the course. Students will be graded on

their ability to articulate why they think that the testimony should be judged as they judge it, and show why they believe this judgment is morally or politically justified.

Pop Quizzes (15%): Three pop quizzes will be given at random points throughout the course, in order to ensure that students are doing readings. These will be single questions that will be designed to be extremely easy for anyone who did the reading.

Paper Outline (15%): Each student will be required to submit an outline for a 4-7 page paper, either on a provided prompt or an original topic. This outline will be graded on a pass/fail basis (meaning that full credit will be given to anyone who turns in a legible outline that gives a clear thesis relating to the topic of epistemic justice and a sufficiently detailed plan to defend this thesis).

Final Paper (40%): A rewritten version of the midterm draft will likewise be required, and will be letter graded. Students who solve all of the problems pointed out in their first draft will receive an A.

Attendance: While attendance does not directly correlate with a percentage of the final grade, it is mandatory. ***Students who miss more than 10% of the class sessions will fail the class.*** The class will consist of 10, 3 ½ hour long lectures, over the course of five weeks. The only exemptions that will be made will be for demonstrable emergencies.

Resources

Requests for warnings on potentially psychologically harmful content will be made through an anonymous survey, and content notes will be given prior to any of the requested content being discussed.

All readings will be available in pdf on the course website.

Learning Support Services offers resources to help with academic success, free of charge, including writing tutors. For more information visit <http://www2.ucsc.edu/lss/> UCSC's Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides resources and support for students with documented disabilities. Any student who thinks they are in need of accommodation, based on the impact of a disability, should contact me privately to submit their Accommodation Authorization and discuss specific needs, preferably within the first two weeks of the quarter. Please contact the Disability Resource Center at 831-459- 2089 in room 125 Hahn Student Services or by e-mail at drc@ucsc.edu to coordinate those accommodations.

UCSC's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) provides a wide range of short term and long-term mental health services. Counseling services are confidential and free of charge to all UCSC students. For more information, contact CAPS at 831-459-2628 or visit <http://caps.ucsc.edu/>.

Cheating/Plagiarism Policy

Any evidence of plagiarism or cheating will be dealt with in accordance with university policy. For more information, please see the University policy on academic integrity for undergraduate students at http://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_integrity.

Email Policy

As email has become an increasingly ubiquitous form of communication, it has yielded a great deal of convenience and easy access, but it has also incentivized certain negative trends in higher education. The ease of communication has incentivized unclear course design (instructors relying on email to provide clarity), low classroom interaction (students not asking questions that could benefit their peers because they can send an email), dependence on others for explanation of available information (students finding it easier to send an email than to read and independently interpret course materials), and unpaid labor on the part of teaching assistants in particular (the subjectivity of the amount of time spent answering emails results in undercompensation). For these reasons, ***emails will only be answered if the question in the email cannot have been answered in class or office hours***. Questions concerning excused absences or late work can all be answered in class.

Late Work Policy

Due to the short duration of the course, ***no late work will be accepted***. The only exemptions will be for demonstrable emergencies. However, should a student have a question about an assignment that has not been answered in class and they cannot make it to office hours, they can ask this question upon turning in the assignment on time and will be graded charitably given that they didn't know the answer. In other words, if you have a question about an assignment the night before it is due, complete the assignment on the basis of what seems like the most probable answer, make a note to the instructor about the ambiguity, and you will not lose points for assumption.

Course Schedule and Readings

Part One: Knowledge and Justice in Greek Antiquity

Lecture 1:

Plato, *Meno* (complete)

Lecture 2:

Plato, *Republic* (book II, description of ideal city, book VII, allegory of the cave)

Diogenes Laertius, *Description of Diogenes the Cynic* (complete)

Part Two: Politics of Knowing in Early Modern Philosophy

Lecture 3:

Descartes, *Discourse on the Method* (parts 1-4)

Rousseau, *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* (complete)

Part Three: Oppression, Pedagogy and the Force of Knowledge

Lecture 4:

Woolf, *Three Guineas* (part one)

Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* ("On the Training of Black Men")

Lecture 5:

FIRST CREDIBILITY REPORT DUE

Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* ("Panopticism")

Part Four: Empirical Psychology and the Threat of Unconscious Bias

Lecture 6:

Kunda et al, *The Case for Motivated Reasoning* (complete)

Kelly & Roedder, *Racial Cognition and the Ethics of Implicit Bias* (complete)

Part Five: The Current Debate on Epistemic Justice

Lecture 7:

Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (introduction, chapters 1, 2)

Lecture 8:

Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (chapters 3, 4)

Lecture 9:

PAPER OUTLINE DUE

Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (chapter 1)

10:

SECOND CREDIBILITY REPORT DUE

Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (chapter 2)