Knowledge, Ignorance, and Power Course Guide 2021-22

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Information about class format and timing is available on the Learn page for the course.

1. Course Aims and Objectives

This course will introduce and examine a range of topics at the intersection of epistemology and political/social/feminist philosophy, examining our actual epistemic practices in light of the relations of power and subordination that exist between differently placed groups in society, and looking at different proposals for how this should shape our theorizing about knowledge and ignorance. Topics covered will include standpoint theory in feminist epistemology, alternative standards for assessing claims to knowledge (such as those offered by Collins’s black feminist epistemology), different varieties of epistemic injustice (including but not limited to the two varieties discussed in influential work by Miranda Fricker: testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice), epistemic exploitation, the epistemology of ignorance, the epistemological significance of pride movements, and the #MeToo movement.

2. Intended Learning Outcomes

This course will allow students to demonstrate core skills in philosophy, including interpreting and critically engaging with philosophical texts, evaluating arguments and theories, and developing one’s one ideas in response to the issues discussed. Students will gain knowledge of some principal theories within analytic feminist epistemology, as well as the main accounts of phenomena such as epistemic injustice and active ignorance, and will be able to write short, clear papers on the topics covered in the class, manifesting the core philosophical skills listed above.

3. Course Content

There is no required text for the course – we will be reading much of Miranda Fricker’s *Epistemic Injustice* and so you may find it convenient to own your own copy of that, but it’s not necessary that you do so since an electronic version of the entire book is available through the library.

Suggested (but definitely not required) background reading:

bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, Pluto Press
Reni Eddo-Lodge, *Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People About Race*, Bloomsbury

Ijeoma Oluo, *So You Want to Talk About Race*, Seal Press

Lorna Finlayson, *An Introduction to Feminism*, Cambridge University Press

1. Introduction: Beyond Mainstream Epistemology

*Background*


*Primary Reading*


*Advanced Reading*


2. Standpoint Epistemology

*Background*

*Hypatia Author Interviews*, interview with Sandra Harding, ‘On Standpoint Theory’s History and Controversial Reception’. Available at: https://youtu.be/xOAMc12PqmI

*Primary Reading*

Elizabeth Potter, 2006, *Feminism and Philosophy of Science: An Introduction*, Routledge, chapter 5. Available online through the university library.


Advanced Readings


Alessandra Tanesini, An Introduction to Feminist Epistemologies, chapter 6.

Kristen Intemann, 2010, ‘25 Years of Feminist Empiricism and Standpoint Theory: Where Are We Now?’, Hypatia 25, 778-96. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/1914570/25_Years_of_Feminist_Empiricism_and_Standpoint_Theory_Where_Are_We_Now

3. Black Feminist Epistemology

Background

Race Matters, audio interview (plus transcript) with Patricia Hill Collins. Available at: http://kgou.org/post/doctor-patricia-hill-collins-works-expand-platform-black-womens-voices

Patricia Hill Collins, 1990, Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment, preface to the first edition and chapter 1. Available online through the University library, but can also be bought as an audiobook.

Primary Reading
Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, chapters 4 and 11. Available online through the University library, but can also be bought as an audiobook.

**Advanced Readings**

A number of the things we’ll read later on the course will build on Collins’s work, particularly in week 6.


**4. Active Ignorance**

**Background**


**Primary Readings**


**Advanced Readings**


Annette Martín, forthcoming, ‘What is White Ignorance?’, *Philosophical Quarterly*. Available online through library.

Alessandra Tanesini, ‘Collective Amnesia and Epistemic Injustice’, in Adam Carter, Andy Clark, Jesper Kallestrup, S. Orestis Palermos, and Duncan


5. Testimonial Injustice

**Background**

Veronica Ivy (published as Rachel McKinnon), 2016. ‘Epistemic Injustice’, *Philosophy Compass* 11, 437-46. Available online through the University library.

**Primary Reading**


**Advanced Reading**


**Additional Literature on Testimonial Injustice**


### 6. Epistemic Violence and Silencing

**Background**


**Primary Reading**


**Advanced Readings**


### 7. Hermeneutical Injustice

**Background**


**Primary Reading**


(If you only have time to read one, make it the Fricker chapter.)

**Advanced Reading**


**8. Epistemic Exploitation**

**Background**


**Primary Readings**


**Advanced Readings**


**9. Disability Pride**

**Background**

*What is it Like to be a Philosopher*, interview with Elizabeth Barnes, available here: http://www.whatisitliketobeaphilosopher.com/elizabeth-barnes/
The Unmute Podcast, episode 26, interview with Elizabeth Barnes. Available at: https://unmutetalk.podbean.com/e/episode-026-elizabeth-barnes-on-disability-and-well-being/

Primary Readings

Elizabeth Barnes, 2016, The Minority Body, chapters 4 and 6. Available online through University library.

Advanced Readings


10. Epistemic Injustice and #MeToo

Background


There are various interviews with Kate Manne that give a good introduction to her work – The Ezra Klein Show, Vox, the Unmute Podcast, and so on.

Primary Reading

Kate Manne, 2018, Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny, Oxford University Press, chapter 6. Available online through the University library, but can also be bought as an audiobook.

**Advanced Reading**

Katharine Jenkins, 2016, ‘Rape Myths and Domestic Abuse Myths as Hermeneutical Injustices’, *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 34: 191-205. Available online through the University library.

Rachel Fraser, 2018, ‘The Ethics of Metaphor’, *Ethics* 128: 728-55. Available online through the University library.


11. **Revision**