Knowledge, Ignorance, and Power 2017-18

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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, epistemic objectification, and ideology and propaganda.

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.
1. Introduction: ‘Malestream’ 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


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


*Primary Reading*


*Advanced Readings*

A number of the things we’ll read later on the course will build on Collins’s work, particularly the papers by Kristie Dotson.

4. Active Ignorance

*Background*


Kevin McKenna, 2015, ‘We Scots must face up to our slave trading past’, *The Guardian*. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/nov/22/scots-must-face-up--to-slave-trading-past

*Primary Readings*


(If you only have time to read one thing, go for the Mills.)

**Advanced Readings**


**5. Testimonial Injustice and Epistemic Violence**

**Background**


**Primary Reading**


**Advanced Reading**


**Additional Recommended Literature on Testimonial Injustice**


6. Hermeneutical Injustice

*Background*

None

*Primary Reading*


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

*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.

Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr., ‘Relational Knowing and Epistemic Injustice: Towards a Theory of *Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance*, *Hypatia* 27: 715-35. Available online through the University library.

7. Disability Pride

*Background*

*What is it Like to be a Philosopher*, interview with Elizabeth Barnes, available here: [http://www.whatisitliketobeaphilosopher.com/elizabeth-barnes/](http://www.whatisitliketobeaphilosopher.com/elizabeth-barnes/)


*Primary Readings*

Elizabeth Barnes, 2016, *The Minority Body*, chapters 4 and 6. Available online through University library. (If you only have time to read one of these, focus on chapter 6. But chapter 4 is important too.)

*Advanced Readings*


8. Epistemic Exploitation

*Background*

Previous readings on epistemic injustice and ignorance.

*Primary Readings*


*Advanced Readings*

9. Epistemic Objectification

Background

Rae Langton, ‘Feminism in Epistemology: Exclusion and Objectification’, section 3 (this is a repeat from week 1 – we’re focusing on the final section this time around).

Primary Reading


Advanced Readings

Martha Nussbaum, 1995, ‘Objectification’, Philosophy and Public Affairs 24, 249-91. Available online through University library. (Note: this paper includes some quotations of explicit and violent pornography throughout.)


10. Propaganda and Ideology 1

Background

The Unmute Podcast, episode 1, interview with Jason Stanley. Available at: http://unmutetalk.podbean.com/e/episode-001-jason-stanley/

Primary Reading


11. Propaganda and Ideology 2 & Revision

Background


Primary Reading


Advanced Reading