Knowledge, Ignorance, and Power 2018-19

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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, 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 own 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
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/xOAMc12Pqml

Primary Reading

Elizabeth Potter, 2006, Feminism and Philosophy of Science: An Introduction, Routledge, chapter 5.

Advanced Readings

Patricia Hill Collins, 1986, ‘Learning From the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought’, *Social Problems* 33, 14-32. Available at: [http://users.clas.ufl.edu/marilynm/Theorizing_Black_America_Syllabus_files/Learning_from_the_Outsider_Within.pdf](http://users.clas.ufl.edu/marilynm/Theorizing_Black_America_Syllabus_files/Learning_from_the_Outsider_Within.pdf)


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](https://www.academia.edu/1914570/25_Years_of_Feminist_Empiricism_and_Standpoint_Theory_Where_Are_We_Now)

3. **Black Feminist Epistemology**

   **Background**


   **Primary Reading**


   **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**


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

**Advanced Readings**


**5. Testimonial Injustice**

**Background**


**Primary Reading**


**Advanced Reading**

**Additional Recommended 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**

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.


### 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


Advanced Readings


Shelley Tremain, 2018, *Foucault and Feminist Philosophy of Disability*, University of Michigan Press

10. Propaganda and Ideology

Background

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

Primary Reading


Advanced Reading


11. Revision