Knowledge, Ignorance, and Power Course Guide 2019-20

Course Organiser and Lecturer: Dr. Aidan McGlynn (amcglynn@staffmail.ed.ac.uk, DSB 6.12, he/him, office hour Thursday 11-12 or by appointment – no office hour in week 1)

Course Secretary: Ann-Marie Cowe (philinfo@ed.ac.uk, Undergraduate Teaching Office DSB G.06)

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 ‘Malestream’ Epistemology

*Background*

Roxane Gay, 2012, ‘Peculiar Benefits’, *The Rumpus*. Available at: [http://therumpus.net/2012/05/peculiar-benefits/](http://therumpus.net/2012/05/peculiar-benefits/)

*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](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*


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 in week 6.

### 4. Active Ignorance

**Background**


**Primary Readings**


**Advanced Readings**


**5. Testimonial Injustice (Video lecture and midterm essay guidance)**

**Background**


**Primary Reading**


**Advanced Reading**


**Additional Literature on Testimonial Injustice**


Aidan McGlynn, 2019, ‘Epistemic Objectification as the Primary Harm of Testimonial Injustice’, *Episteme*. Available online through library.


### 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**


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**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


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

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, 2017, 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.


11. Revision