

University of Guelph

Phil 6220 Epistemology

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Office Hours: Thursday, 1:00-3:00, or by appointment

Semester: Winter 2019

Lecture: Tuesdays 2:30-5:20

Classroom: Philosophy Seminar Room

PHIL 6220: Epistemology of Ignorance

In this course we are going to examine a specific form of ignorance which we might call a motivated non-knowing, in which false beliefs are cultivated and sustained in order to maintain systems of dominance and privilege. We will read recent work in this emerging field (e.g. by Miranda Fricker, Charles Mills, Linda Martin Alcoff, and others), looking at ignorance from the perspective of race and gender, with an eye to determining the different ways in which active ignorance is produced and maintained. A central concern of ours will be on questions of responsibility, complicity, and culpable ignorance.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course you should be able to:

- *Identify* and *critically evaluate* arguments in a way that is clear, accurate, and well reasoned;
- *Understand, explain,* and *assess* major developments in the epistemology of ignorance and the related issues of epistemic injustice and hermeneutical injustice;
- *Argue* successfully for your own view and be able to identify and critically evaluate patterns of argumentative reasoning in the work of others;

Readings (detailed below)

All readings will be available through the library's ARES online course reserves:

<https://ares.lib.uoguelph.ca/ares/>.

Method of Presentation

We will meet on Tuesdays during the winter 2019 semester in the Philosophy Seminar Room. Class time will be divided between lectures, student presentations and class discussion.

Method of Evaluation

1. **10 critical summaries (10%).** At the start of class each week you will be required to hand in a one-page critical summary on one of that week's readings (the choice of which one is yours). The summary will not be graded, but you will receive 1% for doing the work.

There will be 11 opportunities to hand in a summary, so you can come to class empty-handed once and still receive full marks. Note, I will not accept critical summaries that are handed in late, nor will I accept emailed summaries.

2. **Seminar Presentation (20%).** You will be required to give a short (30 minutes or so) presentation on one of the readings. Your presentation may form the basis for one of your papers. As part of this assignment you must prepare a handout to give the class to help them follow along with your presentation. Your handout will count as your 1% for that week's critical summary (which means that you don't need to also do a critical summary that week).
3. **One 5-7-page paper (25%)** on a topic of your choice, which you should discuss with me in advance.
4. **One 10-15-page paper (45%)** on a topic of your choice, which you should discuss with me in advance.

Schedule of Readings

January 8	Introduction & Class Mechanics; general introduction to epistemology and knowledge as JTB Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"
January 15	Standpoint Epistemology Lorraine Code, "Taking Subjectivity into Account" Linda Martin Alcoff, "Epistemologies of Ignorance"
January 22	Epistemic Injustice and Hermeneutical Injustice Miranda Fricker, "Epistemic Injustice and a Role for Virtue in the Politics of Knowing" Miranda Fricker, "Powerlessness and Social Interpretation"
January 29	Motivated Ignorance Peggy McIntosh, "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" Charles Mill, "White Ignorance" Rebecca Mason, "Two Kinds of Unknowing"

- February 5 Hermeneutical Injustice and White Ignorance
 José Medina “Hermeneutical Injustice and Polyphonic Contextualism: Social Silences and Shared Hermeneutical Responsibilities”
 Miranda Fricker, “How is hermeneutical injustice related to ‘white ignorance’? Reply to José Medina’s “Hermeneutical Injustice and Polyphonic Contextualism: Social Silences and Shared Hermeneutical Responsibilities””
 Charles Mill, “White Ignorance and Hermeneutical Injustice: A Comment on Medina and Fricker”
- February 12 Epistemic Injustice and White Ignorance
 Kristie Dotson, “Tracking epistemic violence, tracking patterns of silencing”
 Miranda Fricker, “Epistemic Injustice and the Preservation of Ignorance”
 Miranda Fricker and Katherine Jenkins, “Epistemic Injustice and Trans Experience”
- February 19 **No class – reading week**
- February 26 Feminist Interpretations of Ignorance
 Nancy Tuana, “The Speculum of Ignorance: The Women’s Health Movement and Epistemologies of Ignorance”
 Mariana Ortega, “Being Lovingly, Knowingly Ignorant: White Feminism and Women of Color”
- First Essay Due**
- March 5 Theorizing Ignorance
 Pierre Le Morvan and Rik Peels, “The Nature of Ignorance: Two Views”
 N. El Kassar, “What Ignorance Really Is. Examining the Foundations of Epistemology of Ignorance”
- March 12 Culpable Ignorance
 René van Woudenberg, “Ignorance and Force: Two Excusing Conditions for False Beliefs”
 Rik Peels, “What Kind of Ignorance excuses? Two Neglected Issues”

- March 19 Ignorance and Complicity
 Barbara Applebaum, “White Privilege/White Complicity: Connecting “Benefiting From” to “Contributing to”
 Barbara Applebaum, “Needing Not to Know: Ignorance, Innocence, Denials, and Discourse”
- March 26 White Ignorance and Racial Sensitivity
 Samantha Vice, “How do I live in this strange place?”
 José Medina, “Ignorance and Racial Insensitivity”
- April 2 White Ignorance and White Shame
 Marzia Milazzo, “On White Ignorance, White Shame, and Other Pitfalls in Critical Philosophy of Race”
 Cynthia Townley, “Toward a revaluation of Ignorance”

Second Essay Due

UNIVERSITY STATEMENTS

Email Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. The grounds for Academic Consideration are detailed in the Undergraduate and Graduate Calendars. Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Consideration and Appeals

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml> Graduate

Calendar - Grounds for Academic Consideration

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

Drop Date

Courses that are one semester long must be dropped by the end of the fortieth class day; two-semester courses must be dropped by the last day of the add period in the second semester. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in the Undergraduate and Graduate Calendars. Undergraduate Calendar - Dropping Courses

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml> Graduate

Calendar - Registration Changes

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/genreg-reg-regchg.shtml>

Copies of Out-of-class Assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student. When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required; however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway. Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability. Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to book their exams at least 7 days in advance and not later than the 40th Class Day. More information can be found on the SAS website <https://www.uoguelph.ca/sas>

Academic Integrity

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity, and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community-faculty, staff, and students-to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff, and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that encourages academic integrity. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection. Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor. Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct <https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>
Graduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct <https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

Recording of Materials

Presentations that are made in relation to course work - including lectures - cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a student, or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

Resources

The Academic Calendars are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies, and regulations that apply to undergraduate, graduate, and diploma programs. Academic Calendars <https://www.uoguelph.ca/academics/calendars>