University of St Andrews — Department of Philosophy
PY4664: Ethics of Conversation

Semester 2 2021-22

30 Credits

<u>TABLE OF CONTENTS</u>

<u>**KEY MODULE INFORMATION**</u>

Lectures: Tuesday 9-11, online to start, then (hopefully) Butts Wynd Room 11
Seminars: Beginning in Week 2
    Group 1: Wed 10-11, Old Union Building Saunders Room
    Group 2: Wed 11-12, Arts Seminar Room 9
    Group 3: Wed 12-1, Arts Seminar Room 9
    Group 4: Wed 1-2, United College Quad Room 32

Module convenor and lecturer: Dr Justin Snedegar, js280@st-andrews.ac.uk
Office hour: Tuesdays 11-12 on Teams

- Send me a message on Teams during my office hour if you would like to chat, and I will call you when I am free.

Co-lecturer: Dr Adam Etinson, ae45@st-andrews.ac.uk

Office hour: Tuesdays 1-2 on Teams

- Send me a message on Teams during my office hour if you would like to chat, and I will call you when I am free.

<u>**Assessment:**</u> 100% Coursework

1. 10 minute seminar presentation, due TBC: 15%
2. 1500 word critical reflection, due 4 March: 30%
3. 150 word essay plan, due 1 April: not marked but must be submitted
4. 2500 word essay, due 20 April: 55%

<u>**GENERAL INFORMATION**</u>

Seminars: You must sign up on MMS for the weekly seminar right after the first lecture. Seminars begin in Week 2.

Module Description: This module is about ways that conversations about important but difficult issues, especially moral and political ones, can go well or badly. It will touch on topics from social epistemology, the philosophy of language, ethics, moral psychology, moral responsibility, and social and political philosophy. Specific topics may include moral criticism, anger, civility, hypocrisy, polarisation, epistemic injustice, trust, lying, gaslighting, echo chambers, conspiracy theories, Fake News, free speech, no platforming, and others. We'll be thinking about how to understand these ideas, what roles they play in our social and political lives, and what the ethical issues surrounding them may be.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the module, students will be able to:

- Read, think, and write critically about issues of public concern.
- Gain an understanding of philosophical concepts and of how to apply them to issues of public concern.

Module requirements: Adequate reading, demonstrable engagement with the module content, regular attendance at tutorials and lectures, submission of all coursework, are all requirements of this module. Students with **four or more absences for whatever reason from lectures and/or seminars will fail the module** with a grade of 0X, which does not permit re-assessment. Please note that at Honours level, accurate lecture attendance records are kept. **Students are required to submit all elements of the coursework to pass the module**. Reassessment will be permitted for those who fail the module with an overall grade of at least 4.0.

Workload: This module is worth 30 credits; hence it should typically occupy half of your working week, i.e., approximately 18 hours per week, of which three are spent in class**.** You will neither achieve the grade of which you are capable, nor gain much satisfaction from the course, unless you plan your study accordingly.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is 100% coursework and consists of three marked components and one unmarked but required component, outlined below. Marking is on the University 20-point scale: see the Undergraduate Marking Criteria on p. 35 of the Undergraduate Handbook.

Please note the following requirements for the coursework:

- Coursework must be submitted via MMS.
- Essays must be word-processed and double-spaced. **Please use the essay template provided on the Moodle page for the module.** In particular, you **must** submit any coursework **in Word format** only
- Essays will be marked anonymously so **do not include your name** anywhere in the document.

- On the first page of your coursework, write your matriculation number, the module name and number, the title, and the word count.
- Your **bibliography** must give full details of all sources consulted. If you quote from or paraphrase any of those sources in your essay, you must give clear references that allow the sources to be identified in the bibliography. Further information about academic integrity and plagiarism can be found in the University's *Good Academic Practice* policy and in our *Undergraduate Handbook*.

Components:

Seminar Presentation (15%):

Deadline: **TBD** in consultation with the lecturers.

Task: The presentations should guide us through one of the week's main required readings. If two students are presenting one week, they should make sure to present on different readings (a second can be selected from the recommended reading list), or at least on different sections of the same reading, if necessary. The presentation should give an overview of the text and alert us to problems and possible answers that may not be immediately obvious. Each presentation should last for about **10 minutes**. The presentation should be accompanied by a handout (of a maximum of two pages), which must be uploaded to MMS. Presenters should be able to answer some questions from their peers after the presentation, and are responsible for raising 2-3 questions for discussion.

Evaluation Criteria: Clarity of presentation (40%); Critical engagement (40%); Delivery (20%).

Note: *All* students will be expected to come to class prepared with questions, not just that week's presenter(s).

Critical Reflection (30%):

Word Limit: **1500** words

Deadline: **Friday, 4 March (Week 6)**

Task: For this short exercise, you are asked to reflect on how something you've experienced, read (e.g., in a newspaper article, journal article, or book), seen (e.g., in a movie), or otherwise learned of *outside* the course syllabus bears on one of the debates discussed *in* the assigned course readings. The basic idea is to get you to think about, and apply the debates discussed in class, to something encountered in your own life, experience, and learning. Because the outside material is likely to be something the instructor is unfamiliar with, it is very important that you explain as much about it, as clearly and carefully, as possible. As a general rubric, make sure you: (i) Clearly and carefully explain the reading, experience, insight, fact, or event that you want to bring forward for discussion; (ii) show exactly how it bears on a central debate discussed in the module; and (iii) outline further questions or concerns raised by (i) and (ii).

Criteria: The criteria for this assignment will be essentially the same as for an essay. So, consider this practice for the final essay. Generally, research papers will be assessed on the basis of (i) lucidity, (ii) effort, (iii) relevance to the chosen question, (iv) independence of thought, (v) argumentative charity; and (vi) comprehension of the relevant readings.

Essay Plan (Ungraded):

Word Limit: **150** words

Deadline: **Friday, 1 April (Week 10)**

Task: In preparation for the final essay, you must submit an *essay plan* no later than three weeks before the essay is due. This will not be marked, but you are required to submit it to receive a mark on your essay. This should include your topic and a brief plan for how the essay will go. You should include a list of readings you plan to use (not included in word count).

Final Essay (55%):

Word Limit: **2500** words

Deadline: **Wednesday, April 20 (Week 13)**

Task: The purpose of the final essay is for students to critically reflect on a key issue discussed in the course materials, or closely related thereto. The short word limit means you need to be concise!

Criteria: See undergraduate student handbook. Generally, research papers will be assessed on the basis of (i) lucidity, (ii) effort, (iii) relevance to the chosen question, (iv) independence of thought, (v) argumentative charity; and (vi) comprehension of the relevant readings.

Note: Essays must not exceed 2500 words; you must provide a word count at the end of your essay. Include everything in the word count except your bibliography and title page; that is to say, the word count must include footnotes, quotations, etc. Please note that we implement the word count policy strictly. Where the word limit is exceeded, *even by one word*, the following penalties will be applied: 1 mark for work that is over-length, then a further 1 mark per additional 5% over.

LECTURES

Lectures will be two hours long, with a break in the middle. Each week there will be a reading that will form the basis for at least part of the lecture. We intend for the lectures to be interactive so you should read this in addition to the seminar reading and come prepared with questions or comments.

SEMINARS

Seminars will be one hour long, and will involve at least one student presentation which is intended to start discussion of the assigned readings.

Each week there will be a reading that will form the basis of at least part of the interactive lecture and a reading for discussion in seminars. The student presenters will be responsible for presenting the seminar readings. There are also some recommended background readings.

Readings can be found on the online reading list, link on Moodle.

Week 1: Talking Things Out

This week will introduce different ways of interacting with others, especially when those interactions involve criticism.

Lecture: Daniela Dover, "Criticism as Conversation", in *Philosophical Perspectives* (2019), Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 26-61.

No seminars in week 1.

Recommended:
- P.F. Strawson, "Freedom and resentment", in *Proceedings of the British Academy* (1962), Vol. 48, pp. 1-25.
- Coleen Macnamara, "'Screw you!' & 'Thank you'" in *Philosophical Studies* (2013), Vol. 165, pp. 893-914.
- Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Repair: Reconstructing Moral Relations after Wrongdoing*, Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Cheshire Calhoun, "Responsibility and Reproach" in *Ethics* (1989), 99(2): 389-406.

Week 2: Anger

This week examines the role of *anger* in conversation. Standardly, anger is dismissed as a threat to reasoned dialogue, and rational judgment or behaviour in general. The readings for this week argue that anger can, on the contrary, be both apt and productive, in many instances.

Lecture: Amia Srinivasan, "The Aptness of Anger" in *The Journal of Political Philosophy* (2018), Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 123-144.

Seminar: Sukaina Hirji, "Outrage and the bounds of empathy", forthcoming in *Ethics*. Preprint: https://philpapers.org/archive/HIROAT.pdf.

Recommended:
- Macalester Bell, *Hard Feelings: The Moral Psychology of Contempt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
- Martha Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
- Marilyn Frye, "A Note on Anger" in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1983), pp. 84-94.
- William Hazlitt, "On the Pleasure of Hating" (1821) in *The Plain Speaker: The Key Essays* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), ed. Duncan Wu, pp. 102-114*.*

- Myisha Cherry & Owen Flanagan (eds.) *The Moral Psychology of Anger* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019)

Week 3: Apologizing & Forgiving

In our moral lives, and moral conversations, we will inevitably have to deal with moral *wrongs*. Such wrongs seem to create new duties - on both victim and perpetrator. In this week's readings, we examine some possible duties of perpetrators (to apologize) and counterpart duties of victims (to forgive).

Lecture: Jeffrey S. Helmreich, "The Apologetic Stance" in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (2015), Vol. 43, No. 2, pp. 75-108.

Seminar: Margaret Urban Walker, "Forgiveness" in *Moral Repair: Reconstructing Moral Relations after Wrongdoing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 151-190.

Recommended:
- Pamela Hieronymi, 'Articulating an Uncompromising Forgiveness" in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (2001), Vol. 62, No. 3, pp. 529-555.
- Adrienne M. Martin, "Owning up and Lowering Down: The Power of Apology" in *The Journal of Philosophy* (2010), Vol. 107, No. 10, pp. 534-553.
- Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Repair: Reconstructing Moral Relations after Wrongdoing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- Nick Smith, *I Was Wrong: The Meaning of Apologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- Jeffrie Murphy & Jean Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
- Linda Radzik, *Making Amends: Atonement in Morality, Law, and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Week 4: Conversing Well

Productive conversation, including about moral or political issues, requires that we interact with one another with *charity* and *civility*. What does this involve, and what is it good for? How, if at all, might it make moral and political conversation go *better?*

Lecture: Nathan Ballantyne, "The Fog of Debate", in *Social Philosophy & Policy* (Forthcoming): https://philpapers.org/archive/BALFOD.pdf

Seminar: Cheshire Calhoun, "The Virtue of Civility", in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (2000), Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 251-275.

Recommended:
- Nathan Ballantyne, *Knowing Our Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).
- Clifton Mark, "'ContraPoints' is Political Philosophy Made for YouTube" in *The Atlantic,* January 6, 2019.
- David Bornstein, "Recovering the (Lost) Art of Civility in *The New York Times,* October 29th, 2018.

- Jonathan Haidt, "The Intuitive Dog and Its Rational Tail in *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Penguin, 2013), Ch. 2, pp. 27-52, 67-71.

Week 5: When to Keep Quiet

Sometimes, and about some topics, we should *not* engage others in conversation. In what situations is this true, and why?

Lecture: Linda Radzik, "On the virtue of minding your own business", *Journal of Value Inquiry*, 46(2): 173-182, 2012.

Seminar: Maggie O'Brien, "Easy for you to say", Forthcoming in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*.

Recommended:
- Cressida Gaukroger, "Privacy and the importance of 'getting away with it'", *Journal of Moral Philosophy*, 17: 416-439, 2020.
- Linda Radzik, "On minding your own business", *Social Theory and Practice*, 37(4): 574-598, 2011.
- Matt King, "Attending to blame", *Philosophical Studies*, 177: 1423-1439, 2020.
- Thomas Nagel, "Concealment and exposure", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 27(1): 3-30, 1998.
- Jack Woods, "Ordinary wrongdoing", Forthcoming in *Oxford Studies in Normative Ethics*. https://www.jack-woods.com/uploads/2/4/4/0/24407769/ordinarywrongdoing_finaldraft.pdf.
- George Sher, "A wild west of the mind", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 97(3): 483-496.

Week 6: Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy—or at least *charges* of hypocrisy—permeate public discourse. What exactly is it, and is appealing to hypocrisy to silence critics legitimate?

Lecture: Jessica Isserow & Colin Klein, "Hypocrisy and moral authority", *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*, 12(2): 191-222, 2017.

Seminar: Daniela Dover, "The walk and the talk", *Philosophical Review*, 128(4): 387-422, 2019.

Recommended:
- K. Fritz & D. Miller, "Hypocrisy and the standing to blame", *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 99: 118-139, 2018.
- Macalester Bell, "The standing to blame: a critique", in *Blame*, eds. Coates and Tognazzini, Oxford University Press, 2013.
- G.A. Cohen, "Casting the first stone", in *Finding Oneself in the Other*.
- Angela Smith, "How to blame people responsibly", *Journal of Value Inquiry*, 47: 271-284, 2013.
- Patrick Todd, "A unified account of the standing to blame", *Noûs*, 53(2): 347-374, 2019.

Week 7: Trust

This week we examine the nature of trust and some of its roles in our lives, especially in communicating with others.

Lecture: Katherine Hawley, "Trust, distrust, and commitment", *Noûs*, 48(1): 1-20, 2014.

Seminar: C. Thi Nguyen, "Trust and sincerity in art", *Ergo*, 8: 21-53, 2021. https://journals.publishing.umich.edu/ergo/article/1139/galley/131/view/.

Recommended:
- Karen Jones, "Trust as an affective attitude", *Ethics*, 107: 4-25, 1996.
- Karen Jones, "Trustworthiness", *Ethics*, 123(1): 61-85, 2012.
- Richard Holton, "Deciding to trust, coming to believe", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 72: 63-76, 1994.
- Annette Baier, "Trust and anti-trust", *Ethics*, 96(2): 231-260.
- C. Thi Nguyen, "Trust as an unquestioning attitude", forthcoming in *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*. https://philpapers.org/go.pl?id=NGUTAA&aid=NGUTAAv1
- C. Thi Nguyen, "Transparency is surveillance", fc in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, https://doi.org/10.1111/phpr.12823
- Katherine Hawley, *How to be Trustworthy*, Oxford UP, 2019.

Week 8: Gaslighting

One way abusers, oppressors, and others who destroy the possibility of good faith, productive conversation can coerce their victims into agreeing with them and so doing what they want is by *gaslighting* them—undermining the confidence their victims should have in their own perceptions and evaluations of the world.

Lecture: Kate Abramson, "Turning up the lights on gaslighting", *Philosophical Perspectives*, 24(1): 1-30, 2014

Seminar: Sophia Dandelet, "Epistemic coercion", *Ethics*, 131(3): 489-510, 2021.

Recommended:
- Natascha Rietdijk, "Post-truth politics and collective gaslighting", forthcoming in *Episteme*: https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2021.24
- Cynthia Stark, "Gaslighting, misogyny, and psychological oppression", *The Monist*, 102(2): 221-235, 2019.
- Thomas Carson, "Lying, deception, and related concepts", *The Philosophy of Deception*, Martin, ed., Oxford UP, 2009.
- Harry Frankfut, *On Bullshit*, Princeton UP, 2005.

Week 9: Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles

A healthy public discourse, as well as individual epistemic success, evidently involves input from different, often in some sense opposed, sources. A common worry is that many of us are trapped in epistemic bubbles or echo chambers, and so do not receive such input.

Lecture: C. Thi Nguyen, "Echo chambers and epistemic bubbles", *Episteme*, 17(2): 141-161, 2020.

Seminar: Alex Worsnip, "The obligation to diversify one's sources: against epistemic partisanship in the consumption of news media", *Media Ethics: Free Speech and the Requirements of Democracy*, Fox and Saunders, eds., Chapter 13, Routledge, 2019.

Recommended:
- Elizabeth Anderson, "Epistemic bubbles and authoritarian politics", in *Political Epistemology*, eds. Edenberg and Hannon, pp. 11-30, Oxford, 2021.
- Regina Rini, "Fake News and partisan epistemology", *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, 27(2): 43-64, 2017
- Adam Etinson, "Some myths about ethnocentrism", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 96(2): 209-224, 2017.
- Hi-Phi Nation Podcast, Season 2, episode 10 on Echo Chambers

Week 10: Conspiracy Theories

Many people are taken in by conspiracy theories, which is (often) bad both for them individually and for public discourse. This week we think about what conspiracy theories are and what is bad about them.

Lecture: Quassim Cassam, *Conspiracy Theories* (New York: Polity Press, 2019), Chs. 1 & 4, pp. 1-31, 92-126.

Seminar: Cass Sunstein, "Conspiracy theories", in *Conspiracy Theories & Other Dangerous Ideas*, Simon & Schuster, Chapter 1, 2016.

Recommended:
- Quassim Cassam, *Conspiracy Theories* (New York: Polity Press, 2019).
- Rachel Fraser, "Epistemic FOMO" in *Cambridge Humanities Review* (), Issue 17: https://cambridgereview.cargo.site/Dr-Rachel-Fraser
- M.R.X. Dentith, "Debunking conspiracy theories", *Synthese* (2020), pp. 1-15.
- Michael Hannon, "Disagreement or badmouthing? The role of expressive discourse in politics", in *Political Epistemology*, eds. Edenberg and Hannon, Oxford, 2021.
- *VIDEO:* Netflix, "Behind the Curve"

Week 11: To Platform or Not to Platform?

Much of this module examines the duties of participants in conversation. But what about the duties that third parties (e.g., publishers, universities, social media platforms) might have to stop conversation, and/or speech, altogether? What are the ethics of content moderation or, as it is sometimes called, "No Platforming"?

Lecture: Jeffrey Howard, "Platform Justice" in *Dangerous Speech: Incitement and the Ethics of Expression* (DRAFT), Ch. 6.

Seminar: Robert Mark Simpson & Amia Srinivasan, "No Platforming" in *Academic Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), Ch. 11, pp. 187-210.

Recommended:

- Jeffrey Howard, "Terror, Hate and the Demands of Counter-Speech" in *British Journal of Political Science* (2021), Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 924-939.
- Barath Ganesh & Jonathan Bright, "Countering Extremists on Social Media: Challenges for Strategic Communication and Content Moderation" in *Policy & Internet* (2020), Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 6-19.
- George Sher, "Debate: Taking Offense" in *Journal of Political Philosophy* (2020), Vol. 28, No. 3, pp. 332-342.
- Jeremy Waldron, "Debate: Taking Offense: A Reply" in *Journal of Political Philosophy* (2020), Vol. 28, No. 3, pp. 343-352.
- Emily McTernan, "Taking Offense: An Emotion Reconsidered" in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (2021), Vol. 49, No. 2, pp. 179-208.
- Thi Nguyen, "How Twitter Gamifies Communication" in *Applied Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), ed. Jennifer Lackey, pp. 410-436.
- Jonathan Haidt & Greg Lukianoff, "The Coddling of the American Mind" in *The Atlantic,* September 2015 Issue.