

## **PY5319: Recent Topics in Moral Theory**

### ***The Ethics of Conversation***

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**Meetings:** Wednesdays 11-1. Initially on Teams, perhaps in person later in the semester.

We will update you on the location if so.

#### **Description:**

We are social creatures. As a result, we have to find a way to live together in various overlapping social groups—families, places of work, cities, nations, and so on. This requires near constant *communication*, and frequently involves discussion of moral and political issues. It's obvious, especially recently, that there are lots of potential pitfalls and key ethical questions about communicating with others in this way. This class aims to critically examine some of those issues. It will cover interconnected topics in ethics, moral psychology, moral responsibility, political philosophy, and epistemology. Most of the readings are from philosophical journals or books, but we have supplemented these with readings from more popular venues. Many of the issues we will discuss in this module are playing out in public life, so there is much to gain from looking beyond academic journals.

#### **Expectations and Assessment:**

1. You are required to do the assigned readings before the seminar each week. You are also strongly encouraged to do at least some of the supplementary readings. Some weeks there will be quite a lot of reading, and many of the readings can be difficult. Since this is a postgraduate module, we expect you to work hard to understand them as well as you can, and come to class prepared to discuss them.
2. There is one *essay* for the module, due **7 December 2020**. This can be on a topic of your choosing, but must relate to the content of the module. It must be no more

than 5,000 words. Your final grade for the module is determined by this essay. Your final grade for the module is determined by your grade on this essay.

3. In addition, you must submit an *essay plan* no later than three weeks before the essay is due— by **16 November 2020**. This will not be marked, but you are required to submit it in order to receive a mark on your essay. This should be around 1,000 words and include your topic, a plan for how the essay will go, and some readings you'll use.

### **Weekly Structure:**

We will use the following structure, whether online or in person:

- The first 30-45 minutes of the class will be an interactive lecture to introduce the topic for the week. Questions at this stage are encouraged.
- A fifteen minute break, during which time you should write down some issues or questions to discuss in the second half. Online, you can put these in the meeting chat; in person, just have them ready for when we reconvene.
- Second hour: open discussion of the papers and topic more generally, guided by lecturers and especially by your questions and comments.

### **SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS**

*Subject to change, but you will be given plenty of notice.*

#### **Week 1: Talking Things Out**

##### **Required Readings:**

- P.F. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment" in *Proceedings of the British Academy* (1962), Vol. 48, pp. 1-25.
- Daniela Dover, "Criticism as Conversation" forthcoming in *Philosophical Perspectives* (2020), pp. 1-36.

##### **Supplementary Readings:**

- 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.
- Anthony Simon Laden, *Reasoning: A Social Picture*, Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Cheshire Calhoun, "Responsibility and Reproach" in *Ethics* (1989), 99(2): 389-406.

## **Week 2: Anger**

### **Required Readings:**

- Macalester Bell, *Hard Feelings: The Moral Psychology of Contempt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), Ch. 1 (Sections 1-3), pp. 25-48. [Also read the Introduction if you can]
- Amia Srinivasan, "The Aptness of Anger" in *The Journal of Political Philosophy* (2018), Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 123-144.

### **Supplementary Readings:**

- Macalester Bell, *Hard Feelings: The Moral Psychology of Contempt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
- Martha Nussbaum, "Anger, Child of Fear" in *The Monarchy of Fear: A Philosopher Looks at Our Political Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), Ch. 3, pp. 63-97.
- Arlie Russell Hochschild, "The Deep Story" in *Strangers in their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (New York: The New Press, 2018), Ch. 9, pp. 135-153.
- William Hazlitt, "On the Pleasure of Hating" (1821) in *The Plain Speaker: The Key Essays* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), ed. Duncan Wu, pp. 102-114.
- Adrienne Martin, 'Owning Up and Lowering Down: The Power of Apology' (2010), *The Journal of Philosophy* 107(10): 534-553.

## **Week 3: Civility**

### **Required Readings:**

- Cheshire Calhoun, "The Virtue of Civility" in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (2000), Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 251-275.
- Scott F. Aikin & Robert B. Talisse, *Why We Argue (And How We Should): Second Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2019), Part III, pp. 175-213.

### **Supplementary Readings:**

- 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.
- VIDEO: Teresa Bejan, "Is Civility a Sham?" *Ted Talk* (14 mins – on ted.com)
- 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.

- Dan Sperber & Hugo Mercier, "Reasoning about Moral and Political Topics" in *The Enigma of Reason: A New Theory of Human Understanding* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), Ch. 17, pp. 299-315.
- James E. Campbell, *Polarized: Making Sense of a Divided America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), Ch. 2 & Afterword, pp. 39-59, 247-257.

#### **Week 4: Epistemic Injustice**

##### **Required Readings:**

- Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, Oxford University Press, 2007, Chapter 1, "Testimonial Injustice", pp. 9-30
- Robin A. Dembroff and Dennis Whitcomb, "Content-Focused Epistemic Injustice", forthcoming in *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*, pp. 1-34 (<https://philpapers.org/archive/DEMCFE-2.pdf>).

##### **Supplementary Readings:**

- Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, Oxford University Press 2007
- Alison Bailey, "On Anger, Silence and Epistemic Injustice", *Royal Philosophy Supplement* (2018) 84: 93-115.
- Andrew Peet, "Epistemic Injustice in Utterance Interpretation", *Synthese* (2017), 194(9): 3421-3443.

#### **Week 5: Deep Disagreement and Conspiracy Theories**

##### **Required Readings:**

- Cass R. Sunstein, "Conspiracy Theories" in *Conspiracy Theories & Other Dangerous Ideas* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016), Ch. 1, pp. 1-33.
- Scott F. Aikin, "Deep Disagreement, the Dark Enlightenment, and the Rhetoric of the Red Pill" in *Journal of Applied Philosophy* (2019), Vol. 36(3), pp. 420-435.

##### **Supplementary Readings:**

- Scott F. Aikin & Robert B. Talisse, *Why We Argue (And How We Should): Second Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 53-65.
- M.R.X. Dentith, "Debunking Conspiracy Theories" forthcoming in *Synthese* (2020), pp. 1-15.
- Michael Hannon, "Political Disagreement or Partisan Badmouthing?", Unpublished manuscript, <https://philpapers.org/archive/HANPDO-2.pdf>.
- Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics" (1963) in *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Vintage, 2008), Ch. 1, pp. 3-41.

- Andrew Marantz, "How a Liberal Scholar of Conspiracy Theories Became the Victim of a Right-Wing Conspiracy Theory" in *The New Yorker*, December 27th, 2017 (Available online).
- Steven Poole, "Why Bad Ideas Refuse to Die" in *The Guardian*, June 28th, 2016 (Available online).
- John Naughton, "Populism and the Internet – a Toxic Mix Shaping the Age of Conspiracy Theories" in *The Guardian*, November 25th, 2018 (Available online).
- John Bargh, "At Yale, we conducted an experiment to turn conservatives into liberals. The results say a lot about our political divisions" in *The Washington Post*, November 22nd, 2017 (Available online).
- VIDEO: Cass R. Sunstein, "Why Conspiracy Theories are Rational to Believe" (13.5 min video – Vox – YouTube).
- VIDEO: Contrapoints, "The Apocalypse" YouTube (24 mins).
- VIDEO: Netflix, "Behind the Curve"

**– Week 6: Independent Learning Week – No Class –**

**Week 7: Chambers & Bubbles**

**Required Readings:**

- Regina Rini, "Fake News and Partisan Epistemology" in *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* (2017), Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 43-64.
- C. Thi Nguyen, "Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles" in *Episteme* (2020), Vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 141–161.

**Supplementary Readings:**

- Alex Worsnip, "The Obligation to Diversify One's Sources: Against Epistemic Partisanship in the Consumption of News Media" in *Media Ethics: Free Speech and the Requirements of Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 2019), eds. Carl Fox & Joe Saunders (eds.), Ch. 13.
- Adam Etinson, "Some Myths About Ethnocentrism" in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* (2017), Vol. 96, No. 2, pp. 209-24.
- Hi-Phi Nation Podcast, Season 2, episode 10 on Echo Chambers

**Week 8: Lying, Bullshitting, and Gaslighting**

**Required Readings:**

- Kate Abramson, "Turning up the lights on gaslighting" in *Philosophical Perspectives* (2014), Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 1-30.
- Alex Barber, "Lying, Misleading, and Dishonesty", *Journal of Ethics* (2020), 24: 141-164.

### **Supplementary Readings:**

- Thomas Carson, "Lying, Deception, and Related Concepts" in *The Philosophy of Deception*, ed. C. Martin, Oxford University Press 2009
- Harry Frankfurt, *On Bullshit*, Princeton University Press, 2005
- Don Fallis, "What is Lying?", *Journal of Philosophy* (2009), 106(1): 29-56.
- Don Fallis, "Lying and Deception", *Philosophers' Imprint* (2010), 2010(11): 1-22.
- Thomas Carson, *Lying and Deception: Theory and Practice*, Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Cynthia Stark, "Gaslighting, Misogyny, and Psychological Oppression", *The Monist* (2019), 102(2): 221-235.

### **Week 9: To Platform or Not to Platform?**

#### **Required Readings:**

- Jeremy Waldron, *The Harm in Hate Speech* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), Ch. 4, "The Appearance of Hate", pp. 65-105.
- Robert Mark Simpson & Amia Srinivasan, "No Platforming" in *Academic Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), ed. Jennifer Lackey, Ch. 11, pp. 1-30.

#### **Supplementary Readings:**

- Kate Manne and Jason Stanley, "When Free Speech Becomes a Political Weapon" in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 13th, 2015.
- Jeremy Waldron, *The Harm in Hate Speech* (Harvard University Press, 2012)
- Bari Weiss, "Resignation Letter" 2020, <https://www.bariweiss.com/resignation-letter>.
- Mark Fisher, "Exiting the Vampire Castle" *Open Democracy UK*, Nov 29th, 2013.
- "A Letter on Justice and Open Debate" in *Harper's Magazine*, July 7th, 2020.
- Jonathan Haidt & Greg Lukianoff, "The Coddling of the American Mind" in *The Atlantic*, September 2015 issue.

### **Week 10: Grandstanding**

#### **Required Readings:**

- Justin Tosi and Brandon Warmke, "Moral Grandstanding" in *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (2016), 44(3): 197-217
- Justin Tosi and Brandon Warmke, "Moral Grandstanding as a Threat to Free Expression" forthcoming in *Social Philosophy and Policy*.

#### **Supplementary Readings:**

- Tosi and Warmke, *Moral Grandstanding: The Use and Abuse of Moral Talk*, Oxford University Press 2020

- Neil Levy, "Virtue Signalling is Virtuous", forthcoming in *Synthese* (<http://ezproxy.st-andrews.ac.uk/login?url=http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11229-020-02653-9>).

## **Week 11: Hypocrisy**

### **Required Readings:**

- Macalaster Bell, "The Standing to Blame: A Critique" in Coates and Tognazzini, eds., *Blame: Its Nature and Norms*, Oxford University Press 2013
- Kyle Fritz and Daniel Miller, "Hypocrisy and the Standing to Blame" in *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* (2018), Vol. 99, pp. 118-139.

### **Supplementary Readings:**

- R. Jay Wallace, "Hypocrisy, Moral Address, and the Equal Standing of Persons", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 38(4): 307-341, 2010.
- G.A. Cohen, "Casting the First Stone: Who Can, and Who Can't, Condemn the Terrorists?", *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 58: 113-136.
- Daniela Dover, "The Walk and the Talk", *Philosophical Review* (2019), 128(4): 387-422.
- Angela Smith, "On Being Responsible and Holding Responsible", *The Journal of Ethics* 11(4): 465-484, 2007.
- Marilyn Friedman, "How to Blame People Responsibly", *Journal of Value Inquiry* (2013), 47: 271-284.
- Matt King, "Attending to Blame", *Philosophical Studies* (2020), 177: 1423-1439.
- Patrick Todd, "A Unified Account of the Standing to Blame", *Noûs* (2019), 53(2): 347-374.
- Benjamin Rossi, "The Commitment Account of Hypocrisy", *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* (2018), 21: 553-567.