

PHIL 540 — Seminar in Epistemology: Ethics of Belief

Graduate Seminar, 2022W1: September–December 2020

Course Meetings: Wednesdays 10am–1pm (in-person)

Instructor: Jonathan Ichikawa

the latest version of this syllabus will always be available at bit.ly/PHIL540-2022.

[jump to list of readings](#)

This is a graduate seminar, primarily intended for graduate students in philosophy. The topic is the ethics of belief — including questions about the degree to which epistemology is a normative discipline, to be understood via an analogy with ethics, as well as questions about the moral significance of belief itself.

Topics and texts

The selection of topics and readings for this seminar is still in progress; interpret the list of readings and topics below as one possible idea of a shape the seminar may take.

Eligibility

This course is primarily for UBC MA and PhD philosophy students. We are also open to including others on a case-by-case basis. If you are an advanced undergraduate or a graduate student in another discipline, you may require instructor approval to join the seminar; please get in touch with me before registering.

If you are interested in *auditing* the course you should also contact me.

Course Expectations

This is a discussion-driven graduate seminar. The seminar meetings will be structured around student presentations and discussion, so it is essential that you attend all course meetings, read all required readings, come prepared to discuss them and ready to participate. Don't expect to merely listen and learn.

Because of the emphasis on discussion, in-person synchronous participation is required. (If scheduling or public health constraints make this difficult, we may end up moving some meetings online; these would still be synchronous.)

Seminar meetings will not be recorded.

Assessments

You will be assessed on the basis of your performance on regular weekly assignments, including presentations (40%), and a final (6000 word) research paper and related material (60%).

Schedule of course meetings with required readings

This space will include the planned schedule and list of required readings for PHIL 540. Links to articles will either take you directly to pdfs, or to PhilPapers pages or UBC library pages that provide links. Everything should be accessible for free with UBC library access. If you don't have a PhilPapers account we recommend that you create one, indicating your UBC affiliation. Links from that site will take you to the UBC library website where you'll be prompted to enter your UBC credentials for access to electronic resources.

Week 1 | September 7: TBA

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Week 2 | September 14: TBA

- TBA

Week 3 | September 21: TBA

- TBA

Week 4 | September 28: TBA

- TBA

Week 5 | October 5: TBA

- TBA

Week 6 | October 12: TBA

- TBA

Week 7 | October 19: TBA

- TBA

Week 8 | October 26: TBA

- TBA

Week 9 | November 2: TBA

- TBA

[midterm break]

Week 10 | November 16: TBA

- TBA

Week 11 | November 23: TBA

- TBA

Week 12 | November 30: TBA

- TBA

Week 13 | December 7: TBA

- TBA

Topics and Readings

Here is a list of relevant material. Some of it will be covered in the course as required readings on a schedule TBA; some are recommended supplemental readings.

Background/Overviews

- Clifford, The Ethics of Belief
- James, *The Will to Believe*
- Feldman, [The Ethics of Belief](#)
- P. Van Inwagen “Is it Wrong, Everywhere, Always and for Anyone to Believe Anything on Insufficient Evidence?”

Positive Epistemic Norms

It is widely agreed that it is sometimes epistemically wrong to believe some things — when they're unsupported by evidence, for example. Can it be epistemically wrong to decline to believe things?

- Jonathan Ichikawa, Epistemic Courage — book in progress, manuscript to be made available to seminar participants
- Mona Simion, [Resistance to Evidence and the Duty to Believe](#)
- Mark Nelson, [We Have No Positive Epistemic Duties](#)
- Goldberg, Should have Known

Epistemology and Action

- Hawthorne and Stanley, Knowledge and Action
- Brown, J. “Knowledge and Practical Reason.”
- Ichikawa, Contextual Injustice

- Ichikawa, *Epistemic Courage*
- Gardiner, [Banal Skepticism and the Errors of Doubt: On Epistemicism about Rape Accusations](#)
- Ichikawa, Jarvis, and Rubin, Pragmatic Encroachment and Belief–Desire Psychology

Non-Epistemic Reasons to Believe?

- Gil Harman “Pragmatism and Reasons for Belief”
- R. Pasnau “Snatching Hope from the Jaws of Epistemic Defeat”
- Berislav Marušić, [The Ethics of Belief](#)
- Susanna Rinard [Against the New Evidentialists](#)
- Susanna Rinard, [No Exception for Belief](#)
- Shah, N. A New Argument for Evidentialism
- Hiernonymi ‘The Wrong Kind of Reason’
- Mark Schroeder, ch. 7 of *Reasons First*
- Pamela Hieronymi, [The Wrong Kind of Reason](#)

Doxastic Wronging

- Stroud, “Epistemic Partiality in Friendship”
- K. Hawley “Partiality and Prejudice in Trusting” Synthese 2014 (191) 2019-2045.
- Arpaly and Brinkerhoff, “Why Epistemic Partiality in Overrated”
- Basu, R. ‘Can Beliefs Wrong?’
- Basu, R. and Schroeder, M. [Doxastic Wronging](#)
- Cécile Fabre [III—Doxastic Wrongs, Non-Spurious Generalizations and Particularized Beliefs](#)
- Schroeder, ‘When Beliefs Wrong’
- Gardiner, “Evidentialism and Moral Encroachment”
- Berislav Marušić & Stephen White, [How Can Beliefs Wrong?: A Strawsonian Epistemology](#)
- Sophie Dandalet, Epistemic Coercion

Moral and Pragmatic Encroachment

- Michael Pace, [The Epistemic Value of Moral Considerations](#)
- Jason Stanley and John Hawthorne, “Knowledge and Action”
- Sarah Moss, “Moral Encroachment”
- Alex Worsnip, [Can Pragmatists Be Moderate](#)
- Gardiner, “Evidentialism and Moral Encroachment”
- Bollinger, Varieties of Moral Encroachment

Faith and Epistemology

- Lara Buchak, Can It Be Rational to Have Faith?
- Jonathan Ichikawa, Faith and Epistemology

Mandatory Syllabus Statement about UBC's Values and Policies

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious and cultural observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available [here](#).