

Testimony, Social Epistemology, and Perceptual Justification

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Office Hours: MF 11-12

Course Description:

This seminar will be on the complex ways in which epistemic properties (primarily *knowledge* and *justification*) interact with social conditions and background beliefs. The course will be roughly divided into three modules. The first section will cover recent work on testimony. We will look primarily at the debate between reductive and non-reductive accounts of testimonial justification, along with Jennifer Lackey's hybrid view (according to which both reductive and non-reductive accounts are incorrect). In the second section, we will cover recent work in social epistemology on collective epistemology, peer disagreement, and the role of race, gender and class in epistemology. Readings for this section will be determined as a group, depending on interest (there is simply too much here to cover in 3-4 weeks). The final module will cover recent work on the epistemic impact of implicit bias and background beliefs on the justification of perceptual beliefs.

Required Texts:

All readings will be made available electronically.

Writing Assignments: Students are expected to read each selection prior to class (preferably more than once). You should take notes while reading, keeping track of questions or issues that arise. For each class, you will be asked to write a 1-2 page response paper on an issue raised by the reading. This can be a question, a reply, an elaboration, or a challenge. The response must be clear, typed, and substantive (more than a recap our outline).

Grading:

Class Presentation: 20% of grade. You will be responsible for making a short in-class presentation and leading discussion for one class reading. This should involve a hand-out (or slides), and enough preparation to get discussion started on the material (a detailed list of topics and questions, etc.)

Option 1: Short, weekly writing assignments. If you chose this option, you must submit each week a (roughly) 2 page writing assignment (given out the week

before). You must complete 8 of these assignments, each worth 10% of your final grade (and therefore, combined worth 80% of your final grade).

Option 2: Long paper. If you chose this option, you will be responsible for a single research paper of 12-15 pages on a topic of your choosing (to be approved in consultation with me). This essay will be worth 80% of your final grade.

Course Policies:

To avoid penalties for late assignments, students must provide official documentation explaining why the assignment could not be handed in on time. Late writing assignments without documentation will not be accepted. Late papers without documentation will receive a late penalty of 1/3 letter grade for each day late, including weekend days (no exceptions).

Tentative Reading Schedule (subject to change):

Part 1: Testimony

- Week 1: Introduction, background, format, etc.
Epistemology Boot Camp
Introduction to Testimony
Background reading: John Greco, "Recent Work on Testimonial Knowledge"
- Week 2: Non-reductionism
Required readings:
Coady, "Testimony and Observation"
Burge, "Content Preservation"
Recommended Readings:
Burge, "Interlocution, Perception, and Memory"
Sosa, "Knowledge: Instrumental and Testimonial"
- Week 3: Reductionism
Hume, "On Miracles"
Elizabeth Fricker, "Against Gullibility"
Recommended readings:
E. Fricker, "Second-Hand Knowledge"
E. Fricker, "Telling and Trusting"
Other readings:
Goldberg, "Reductionism and the Distinctiveness of Testimonial Knowledge"

Lackey, Selections from LFW against Anti-Reductionism

- Week 4: Transmission and Hybrid Views
Lackey, Long selection from LFW
Other readings
Graham, “Transferring Knowledge”

Part 2: Social Epistemology

- Week 5: Social Epistemology: introduction, Collective Epistemology
Readings TBD
- Week 6: Race, Gender, and Class
Readings TBD
- Week 7: Disagreement
Readings TBD

Part 3: Implicit Bias and Cognitive Penetration

- Week 8: Implicit Bias
Tamar Gendler, “On the Epistemic Cost of Implicit Bias”
Andy Egan, “Comments on Gendler”
Begby, “The Epistemology of Prejudice”
- Week 9:
NO CLASS Thanksgiving
- Week 10: Cognitive Penetration
Siegel, “Cognitive Penetrability and Perceptual Justification”
Siegel, “The Epistemic Impact of the Etiology of Experience”
Recommended readings
Goldman, “Internalism, Externalism, and the Architecture of Justification”
- Week 11: Cog Pen Continued
Matthew McGrath, “Siegel and the impact for epistemological internalism”
Fulkerson, “The Testimony of the Senses”