



PHILOSOPHY
department

MARGARET GILBERT

UC Irvine

“Notes Toward a General Epistemology”

MONDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2024

2:00–4:00PM

A&H Building, Room 0426. Snacks will be provided.

Call the philosophical theory that focuses on the cognitive states of individual human beings **individual epistemology**. As I have argued elsewhere, there is room for a distinct discipline of **collective epistemology** that focuses on collective epistemic states, referenced in such sentences as “Jack and Jill believe Maria is happy” where this is *not* understood as short for “Jack and Jill *both* believe Maria is happy.” A central question for collective epistemology, then, is: What do collective beliefs amount to? Now, one would think that the findings of individual epistemology would have some bearing on collective epistemology, but what bearing exactly? I have argued elsewhere that one should not assume at the outset that all the points and distinctions developed in discussion of the individual case apply to the collective one. This does not mean that one should assume that none of them do. In this talk, focusing on my own account of collective belief, I note some central assumptions about belief within individual epistemology, and consider them in relation to the collective case, arguing that they apply in both. This discussion can be seen as part of a **general epistemology** that aims to uncover features of belief shared by, at a minimum, human individuals and human groups, and potentially going beyond that.

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