

PHIL 3300 THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Spring 2023 (IVC: Canvas)

MWF / 9:40am-10:30am

What is the cost of lies? It's not that we'll mistake them for the truth. The real danger is that if we hear enough lies, then we no longer recognize the truth at all. - *Chernobyl* (2019)

Course content and objectives: This course examines theories of knowledge, with emphasis on the social and moral value of knowledge, ethics and methods of fixing belief, and phenomena such as disinformation and epistemic injustice. The first ten weeks will be lecture and discussion (via video conference) of these topics, building to five weeks of small group work on research papers and a group presentation. At the end of the course, students will articulate and defend their own ideas in an original research paper and group presentation. The first two-thirds of the course build up to this project, using textbooks and classic articles to sketch the theoretical landscape of epistemology today. The last third of the course will be devoted to original research, with students working in groups to develop their arguments and improve their writing and presentation skills. 3 Credits, no prerequisite

Contact Information:

Melinda Fagan, Sterling M. McMurrin Professor of Philosophy

email: mel.fagan@utah.edu

Office Hours: Monday 4-5pm and by appointment

Office hours will be via Zoom (see Canvas for link). To set up an appointment, please send an email. For most class issues, it is more efficient to meet face-to-face (or face-to-screen). Please use email only to set up an appointment or to ask very quick specific questions about the course.

Course format: IVC (Interactive Video Conferencing): Class will meet at the scheduled time, on video-link. These meetings will be on Zoom, which you can access through Canvas. If you're unfamiliar with Canvas, please consult the 'Canvas Getting Started Guide for Students' for information and tutorials < <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701>>.

Required Texts:

[1] David Coady (2012) *What To Believe Now*. Wiley-Blackwell. [Bookshelf]

[2] Richard Feldman (2003) *Epistemology*. Prentice-Hall.

[3] José Medina (2013) *The Epistemology of Resistance*. Oxford University Press. [Bookshelf]

All other readings posted on *Canvas* (links on syllabus schedule).

Teaching and Learning Methods: Primarily discussion, with short lectures interspersed. Students are expected to read assigned texts carefully before class, and come to class meetings prepared to discuss key issues and ideas. Class meetings are via Zoom video-conference. Assignments are structured so students build up to more challenges projects later in the semester.

Course Outcomes: At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- identify key issues and arguments relating to important theories of knowledge

- understand issues and problems in emerging areas of epistemological research
- connect abstract issues in theory of knowledge to concerns of everyday life and society
- articulate major ideas and debates about the social roles and value of knowledge
- work constructively with other students in planning a final project

Grading and Evaluation:

The grading scale for this course is as follows:

≥100	A+	88-89	B+	78-79	C+	68-69	D+	0-59	F
93-99	A	83-87	B	73-77	C	63-67	D		
90-92	A-	80-82	B-	70-72	C-	60-62	D-		

Each requirement contributes a number of points toward the overall grade, corresponding to the percentage stated (max total=100). No curve.

Requirements:

1. *Participation* (20%) Participation in this class has two components: synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous participation means attending class meetings (via Zoom) – arriving on-time, contributing to class discussion, and participating in various class exercises and activities. Thoughtful participation in class discussions is an important component of this course. Please come to each zoom meeting prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Asynchronous participation means completing various activities using assigned readings and online materials (primarily short video-lectures). If you have to miss a synchronous activity for reasons beyond your control (i.e. excused absence), then makeup options will be made available upon request.

2. *Quizzes* (30%) Online quizzes are scheduled at various times throughout the semester (see ‘Class Schedule’ for details). These are designed to test your understanding of key points in an assigned reading or to prepare for a class activity. Quizzes are due **before** the associated class meeting in the course schedule (see ‘Schedule’). Six quizzes total will count toward your final grade (5% each). There are ten quizzes total; you can skip four without affecting your grade.

3. *Short paper* (20%) One short paper on key topics (details to be announced in class). Papers are due by the start of class on the dates indicated in the course schedule. Late papers will be accepted only in cases of excused absence. Two papers are assigned, but only one counts toward your final grade; you can skip one without affecting your grade for the course.

4. *Group presentation* (30%) One 30-minute presentation, at the end of semester. Presentations will be via Zoom video-conferencing, using screen-sharing for slides. A grading rubric for presentations will be provided with the assignment.

Schedule of Topics and Readings:*

Week 1 Traditional analysis of knowledge

1/9 M Class overview, aims, and requirements

1/11 W Analysis of knowledge **Quiz 1**

- Feldman Ch2 (8-24)

- video ‘Analyzing knowledge’

* May be subject to change. Any changes will be announced more than a week in advance. Changes, if any, will not reduce the time available for completing assignments.

Quiz 1 (online, take before class meeting)

- 1/13 F Evidentialism
- Feldman Ch4, §§0-1 (39-49)
 - recommended/optional: McWilliams (2021) ‘Evidentialism and belief polarization’

Week 2 Fixation of belief

1/16 M **no class, MLK Day holiday**

- 1/18 W Fixation of belief (I) **Quiz 2**
- video ‘Fixation of belief – reading and study guide’
 - Peirce (1877) ‘The Fixation of belief’ < <http://www.peirce.org/writings/p107.html>>
- Quiz 2** (online, take before class meeting)

- 1/20 F Fixation of belief (II) **Quiz 3**
- review Peirce (1877), quiz answers, class notes
 - Exercise: example of a belief and method of ‘fixation’
- Quiz 3** (online, take before class meeting)

Week 3 Ethics of belief

- 1/23 M Clifford on the ethics of belief
- video ‘What should you believe?’ (includes Discussion Question for class)
 - Clifford ‘The ethics of belief’
 - Feldman’s commentary (Chapter 4, Section Ia)

- 1/25 W James’ response
- James ‘The will to believe’

- 1/27 F New reflections **Quiz 4** **Paper 1 assigned**
- Coady ‘Other values’ (pages 10-12)
 - Basu (2019) ‘To avoid moral failure...’
- Quiz 4** (online, take before class meeting)

Week 4 Skepticism

- 1/23 M Skepticism and theories of knowledge
- Feldman Ch6 §§I-II (108-114)
 - Paper 1 assignment discussion

- 1/25 W Cartesian skepticism **Quiz 5**
- Descartes ‘Meditation One’ (excerpt)
 - Feldman Ch4 Section IIIa-b (pages 52-55)
 - Feldman Ch6 §IIIC (114-117)
- Quiz 5** (online, take before class meeting)

- 1/27 F Responding to skepticism

- Moore 'Proof of an external world'
- Soames 'Moore's proof...' {optional: full paragraphs on p.15 to p.18 before 'The Proof'}
- Feldman Ch4 Section III d (page 69), Ch6 §IVa-c1 (pages 119-123)

Week 5 New directions: knowledge and social values

- 2/6 M Beyond traditional epistemology
Paper 1 due (Canvas upload, before class meeting)
 • Coady 'Institutional gullibility and political skepticism' (pages 172-173)
- 2/8 W Day of Collective Action
- 2/10 F Epistemic injustice: basic ideas and examples **Quiz 6**
 • Fricker (2003) 'Epistemic injustice' (Section 4 pages 164-169 only)
Quiz 6 (online, take before class meeting)

Week 6 Epistemic oppression

- 2/13 M Epistemic injustice, continued
 • Dotson 'A cautionary tale' (pages 24-35 only)
- 2/15 W Epistemic injustice, criticized
 • Medina Chapter 2, Section 1 (pages 56-70) 'Excess of epistemic authority...'
 • Dotson 'A cautionary tale' (pages 35-42)
- 2/17 F Epistemic oppression and meta-blindness **Quiz 7** **Paper 2 assigned**
 • Medina Chapter 2, Section 2 'The vice...' (pages 70-75)
 • recommended/optional: Dotson (2018) 'Accumulating epistemic power'
Quiz 7 (online, take before class meeting)

Week 7 Break

holiday and Professor away

{work on Paper 2; paper consults/extra OH by appointment on Thurs-Fri}

Week 8 The epistemology of resistance

- 2/27 M Introduction and basics
 • Medina 'Foreword'
 • Medina 'Introduction' (esp. pages 3-4, 7-12, 23-24)
- 3/1 W Active ignorance **Paper 2 due**
Paper 2 due (Canvas upload, before class meeting)
 • Medina Chapter 1, Section 1 (pages 27-40) 'Active ignorance...'

- 3/3 F Epistemic others **Quiz 8**
• Medina Chapter 1, Section 2 (pages 40-48) ‘Lucidity...’
Quiz 8 (online, take before class meeting)

[SPRING BREAK 3/4-3/12]

Week 9 The epistemology of resistance, continued

- 3/13 M Principles of epistemic friction
• Medina Chapter 1, Section 3 (pages 48-55) ‘Resistance...’
- 3/15 W Correcting meta-blindness
• review Medina Chapter 2, Sections 1 and 2
• Medina Chapter 2, Section 3 (pages 75-89)
- 3/17 F Imposed silences
• Medina Chapter 3, Sections 1 and 2 (pages 90-109)

Week 10 Group presentation assignment

- 3/20 M Group presentation – options and discussion
• presentation grading rubric
• class of 2020 ‘Atlas’
- 3/22 W **no class, Professor away** {informal group discussion}
- 3/24 F **no class, Professor away**
• **Group presentation plan due {online}**

Week 11 The epistemology of resistance, concluded

- 3/27 M Responsible agency
• Medina Chapter 3, Section 3 (pages 109-118) ‘Our hermeneutical responsibilities...’
• Medina Chapter 4, Section 1 (pages 119-132) ‘Responsible agency...’
- 3/29 W Culpable ignorance
• Medina Chapter 4, Section 2 (pages 133-145) ‘Betraying one’s responsibilities...’
- 3/31 F Culpable ignorance, continued
• Medina Chapter 3, Section 3 (pages 145-161) ‘Social division of cognitive laziness’

Week 12 Bullshit and other problems

- 4/3 M On bullshit’ **Quiz 9**

- Zagzebski Ch1 §IV (19-22)
 - Wakeham (2017) Introduction and survey of philosophical accounts (pages 15-18)
- Quiz 9** (online; take before class meeting)

4/5 W Rumors and misinformation

- Coady Chapter 4 ‘Rumors and rumor-mongers’ (esp. pages 86-99)
- 2020 paper ‘False advertising’

4/7 F Conspiracy theories

- Coady Chapter 5 ‘Conspiracy theories and conspiracy theorists’ (pages 110-135)
- 2020 paper ‘Conspiracy theories’

Week 13 Expertise and its erosion

4/10 M Who to trust?

- Coady ‘What is an expert?’ (pages 28-33) {from ‘What is an expert?’ to ‘Reductionism’}
- Goldman and O’Connor (Section 3.6 only)

4/12 W The Dunning-Kruger effect **Quiz 10**

- Dunning (2011) ‘The Dunning-Kruger effect’ (Sections 1-3 only; pages 248-265)
- Quiz 10** (online, take before class meeting)

4/14 F “Propaganda of unreality”

- Pomerantsev, P (2019) ‘To unreality - and beyond’

Week 14 Group presentation workshop

M 4/17 presentation workshop, consultation

W 4/19 **No class, Professor away**

F 4/21 **No class, Professor away**

Week 15 Group presentation and discussion

M 4/24 Last class! **Group presentation and feedback**

University policies:

- *The Americans with Disabilities Act:* The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.
- *Addressing Sexual Misconduct:* Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. Please see < <https://oeo.utah.edu/how-can-we-help/sexual-misconduct.php> > for more information about campus policies, resources, and reporting.
- *University Safety Statement:* The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.
- *Drop/Withdrawal deadlines:* The last day to drop classes without a permission code is Fri., Jan 20; the last day to withdraw is Friday, March 3. Please check the academic calendar for more information pertaining to dropping and withdrawing from a course. Withdrawing from a course and other matters of registration are the student's responsibility.
- *Standards of Academic Conduct:* To ensure the highest standards of academic conduct are promoted and supported at the University, students must adhere to generally accepted standards of academic honesty, including but not limited to refraining from cheating, plagiarizing, research misconduct, misrepresenting one's work, and/or inappropriately collaborating. For more information, see <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>
- *Accommodation Policy:* Absences due to participation in officially sanctioned University activities, government obligations, and religious obligations are excused, as a matter of university policy (see <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php>, Section O). If you have any scheduling conflicts with assignment due dates for these reasons, please let me know asap so accommodations can be made in advance.

- *Student code*: The Student Code (see: <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>) applies throughout the course. If you have specific questions about its application in this course, consult me asap.
- *Wellness*: Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness at www.wellness.utah.edu or 801-581-7776.
- *Student names and personal pronouns*: Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name as well as "Preferred first name" (if previously entered by you in the Student Profile section of your CIS account, which managed can be managed at any time). I will honor you by referring to you with the name and pronoun that feels best for you in class or on assignments. Please advise me of any name or pronoun changes so I can help create a learning environment in which you, your name, and your pronoun are respected. If you need any assistance or support, please reach out to the LGBT Resource Center: <https://lgbt.utah.edu/>
- *Diversity/inclusivity statement*: It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups.
- *Veterans Center*: If you are a student veteran, the University of Utah has a Veterans Support Center. Please visit their website for more information about what support they offer, a list of ongoing events and links to outside resources: <http://veteranscenter.utah.edu/>. Please also let me know if you need any additional support in this class for any reason.
- *Learners of English as an Additional/Second Language*: If you are an English language learner, please be aware of several resources on campus that will support you with your language and writing development. These resources include: the Writing Center (<https://writingcenter.utah.edu/>) and the English Language Institute (<http://eli.utah.edu/>). Please let me know if there is any additional support you would like to discuss for this class.

Course policies:

- *Advising*: see <https://philosophy.utah.edu/academicadvising.php>
- *Attendance and punctuality*: Success in this course requires showing up. Regular attendance is expected of everyone enrolled (see <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php>, Section O). Participation in discussion obviously requires attendance, so absences reduce this portion of your grade. In addition, many ideas and arguments relevant to the written

assignments will be discussed in class. So absence puts one at a serious disadvantage. If you miss more than two classes consecutively, please see me asap to catch up on material you've missed. If you are absent on a day that an assignment is due, you will need to show that the absence is excused (due to illness, emergency, or similarly unavoidable circumstance) before handing in that assignment. If you are aware of any scheduling conflicts with class meetings, please see me asap so accommodations can be made in advance. For details on accommodations other than scheduling, see Section Q of the Accommodations Policy (<http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php>). Punctuality is also expected. Arriving late to class will result in a lower participation grade for that day.

- *Deadlines*: All written material is due by the time of class meeting, on the date noted in the course schedule. Exceptions can be made only for excused absence situations. Plan ahead, and start early!
- *Electronic etiquette*: Please turn off all electronic devices during class, except those required for video-conferencing, note-taking and to access texts.
- *Plagiarism*: "Plagiarism" means the intentional unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person's work in, or as a basis for, one's own work offered for academic consideration or credit or for public presentation. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, representing as one's own, without attribution, any other individual's words, phrasing, ideas, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode or content of expression (see 'Student Code'). Proper acknowledgment means using a citation to indicate where you make use of another person's words or ideas. Citations may be in footnotes, or inserted in the main text; in either case, they should include the author surname and publication date. A bibliography with full citation information should appear at the end of your essay or paper (see course handouts for details and format). If you are unsure how to correctly cite a source or have questions about how the Student Code applies to written work, please consult me or an academic advisor.

The following statement discusses interpersonal violence that has occurred on our campus and resources available. It may evoke feelings of distress or past trauma by individuals who have experienced situations involving interpersonal violence. We wanted to acknowledge as well that this situation does not describe every victim’s experience and certain communities may be at a higher risk for these experiences.

Lauren’s Promise—I will listen and believe you if someone is threatening you.

Lauren McCluskey, a 21-year-old honors student athlete, was murdered on October 22nd 2018, by a man she briefly dated on the University of Utah campus. *We must all take actions to ensure that this never happens again.*

If you are in urgent need of support, call 911 and/or the Utah crisis line at 800.273.8255. If you are experiencing interpersonal violence, sexual assault, domestic violence, and/or stalking, please report it to me and I can connect you to resources. **Here are additional sources of support and help:**

Resource	Phone #	Hours	Affiliation
McCluskey Center for Violence Prevention:	TBD	TBD	University
Center for Student Wellness, Victim Survivor Advocate:	801.581.7776	8-5	University
Office of Equal Opportunity:	801.581.8365	9-5	University
University Department of Public Safety:	801.585.2677	24 hrs	University
University of Utah Neuropsychiatric Institute	801.587.3000	24 hrs	University
Utah Domestic Violence Coalition:	800.897.5465	24 hrs	State
<u>Rape Recovery Center 24-hour Crisis Line:</u>	801.467.7273	24 hrs	State
<u>Domestic Violence Link Line:</u>	800.897.5465	24 hrs	State
<u>Stalking Helpline:</u>	800.621.4673	24 hrs	State
Rape Recovery Center Crisis Line:	801.467.7272	24 hrs	State

Mandatory reporters are university employees, including students in paid leadership positions, who are required to report sexual misconduct to the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action per university regulations. Examples of mandatory reporters include:

- Professors and other faculty
- Administration and staff (non-mental health)
- Resident advisors
- Student employees
- Campus police or campus security officials
- Athletic coaches/assistants

Confidential resources are employees not required to report any identifying information regarding an incident of sexual violence to the university. Survivors of sexual misconduct can speak openly to confidential resources about their experiences without their names or extensive details about their experience being reported to the Title IX coordinator or law enforcement.

- University Counseling Center:
- University Hospitals Chaplin
- Student Athlete Support Services
- Center for Student Wellness Victim Advocates
- Women’s Resource Center

Class Norms: (adapted from Chalmers' Rules and Ned Markosian's Classroom Rules)

1. Norms of respect

- 1.1. Be nice, don't be mean. Be respectful.
- 1.2. Don't interrupt.
- 1.3. Don't roll your eyes, make faces, laugh at a classmate, etc., especially if you are disagreeing with someone.
- 1.4. Don't be incredulous. Encourage exploring conceptual space.
- 1.5. Acknowledge your interlocutor's insights.
- 1.6. Object to theses, don't object to people.
- 1.7. If you notice someone else violating 1.1-6, speak up right away, even if—especially if—you are not the victim.

2. Norms of constructiveness

- 2.1. Objections are great, but it's also always OK to be constructive and build on a previous comment. Even the most destructive objection can often be cast in a constructive way and provide positive insights.
- 2.2. Philosophy is not a zero-sum game. Don't worry about impressing anyone or 'winning'.
- 2.3. You don't need to keep pressing the same objection (individually or collectively) once it has been heard or acknowledged.
- 2.4. Try to identify unstated assumptions and premises, and ask whether these are reasonable or justified.
- 2.5. Try applying the ideas under consideration to new contexts, or under different conditions.
- 2.6. Every once in a while, someone should offer a big picture comment to help us avoid getting lost in details.

3. Norms of inclusion

- 3.1. Don't monopolize the discussion. Leave room for others to speak.
- 3.2. Raise one question or comment at a time (then go back in the queue).
- 3.3. Acknowledge previous comments where appropriate.
- 3.4. Try to build on the points that have been made by others. Seek to connect the point under consideration to previous points or the larger discussion.
- 3.5. It's OK to ask a question that you think may be unsophisticated or uninformed.
- 3.6. Don't use unnecessarily offensive examples.

4. Metanorms

- 4.1. When norms are violated, I will aim to gently point this out. Others should feel free to say something or signal to me that I should. If it's more comfortable, it's fine to quietly point out violations after class.
- 4.2. If I violate the norms, feel free to say so then or afterwards.
- 4.3. Try not to be defensive when a violation is pointed out; try to be respectful when pointing out a violation.
- 4.4. Remember that it's quite possible to violate these norms without being a bad person. (I've certainly done so!)
- 4.5. Respect your instructor's enforcement of these norms.