

PHILOSOPHY 320: SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY
M 2:30-3:50 PM/W 1:00-2:20 PM
HAHNE & CO. BUILDING 421
FALL 2019

Instructor: Cameron Domenico Kirk-Giannini
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Our social positions — characterized by factors like race, gender, sexual orientation, and affluence — shape the trajectories of our lives in myriad ways, determining to a significant extent whether we experience subordination or privilege, whether we are given the benefit of the doubt or received with suspicion, and whether we are regarded in culture as normal or deviant. But what *are* these factors in terms of which we define our social positions? What is the ontological status of categories like race and gender? And what are the mechanisms whereby our social positions shape our lives and others' perceptions of us?

This course is an introduction to social philosophy focusing on three of its most dynamic subfields: social metaphysics, social epistemology, and social philosophy of language. In social metaphysics, we will discuss the metaphysics of social construction as it pertains to three socially significant categories: race, gender, and sexual orientation. In addition to asking descriptive questions about these categories, we will engage with the ameliorative tradition, which seeks to replace our existing understandings with ones that better serve the purpose of promoting of social justice. In social epistemology, we will explore

the contributions of the feminist tradition and the recent literature on epistemic injustice before considering applications to the philosophy of race, disability, and sexual orientation. In social philosophy of language, we will focus on the ways in which language can be used to establish, reinforce, exercise, and occasionally subvert relations of power between individuals and groups. In particular, we will study the power of generic language and slurs to shape how we think about members of particular social groups and the ways in which certain speech acts can be used to subordinate, silence, and control.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- By critically engaging with the course material, you will gain a detailed understanding of some of the most important issues in contemporary social philosophy, including epistemic injustice, the power of language to shape our social reality, and the metaphysics of race, gender, and sexual orientation.
- The topics covered in the course will also serve as convenient introductions to major concepts in metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of language, such as: metaphysical dependence, social construction, knowledge, justification, testimony, semantic content, expressive meaning, and speech acts.
- Through class discussion and structured writing exercises, you will develop crucial philosophical abilities like reconstructing and evaluating arguments, articulating ideas in conversation, and writing clearly and cogently.

TEXTBOOK

There will be no textbook for this course. All readings will be made available online.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

There will be three significant course requirements. First, you will be required to attend class and participate in discussion of the course material. Second, there will be two 900-1200 word papers. Third, there will be a midterm examination (~1.5 hours) covering roughly the first half of the course material and a final examination (~1.5 hours) covering roughly the second half of the course material.

Grades will be determined as follows:

- Attendance and class participation: 20%
- Papers 1 & 2 : 40%
- Midterm exam (**November 04, 2019: 2:30 - 3:50 PM**): 20%
- Final exam (**December 23, 2019: 3:00 - 6:00 PM**): 20%

SEMESTER OVERVIEW

Week 1 (Week of Monday 9/2):

Reading: None

9/4 (W): First Meeting (Introduction)

PART I: SOCIAL METAPHYSICS

Week 2 (Week of Monday 9/9):

Reading: Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?"

9/9 (M): Discussion (I)

9/11 (W): Discussion (II)

Week 3 (Week of Monday 9/16):

Reading: Katharine Jenkins, "Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of *Woman*"

9/16 (M): Discussion (I)

9/18 (W): Discussion (II)

Week 4 (Week of Monday 9/23):

Reading: Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Illusions of Race"

9/23 (M): Discussion (I)

9/25 (W): Discussion (II)

Week 5 (Week of Monday 9/30):

Reading: Charles Mills, "'But What Are You Really?' The Metaphysics of Race"

9/30 (M): Discussion (I)

10/2 (W): Discussion (II)

Week 6 (Week of Monday 10/7):

Reading: Robin Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?"

10/7 (M): Discussion (I)

10/9 (W): Discussion (II)

PART II: SOCIAL EPISTEMOLOGY

Week 7 (Week of Monday 10/14):

Reading: Elizabeth Anderson, "Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science"

10/14 (M): Discussion (I)

10/16 (W): Discussion (II)

Week 8 (Week of Monday 10/21):

Reading: Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, Chapter 1 (“Testimonial Injustice”) and Chapter 2 (“Prejudice in the Credibility Economy”)

10/21 (M): Discussion (I)

10/23 (W): Discussion (II)

PAPER 1 DUE BY 5:00 PM EDT ON FRIDAY, 10/25

Week 9 (Week of Monday 10/28):

Reading: Elizabeth Barnes, *The Minority Body*, Chapter 4 (“Taking Their Word for It”)

10/28 (M): Discussion (I)

10/30 (W): Discussion (II)

Week 10 (Week of Monday 11/4):

Reading: Cameron Domenico Kirk-Giannini, “Gaslighting in Axiology”

11/4 (M): MIDTERM EXAM

11/6 (W): Discussion (I)

Week 11 (Week of Monday 11/11):

Reading: Charles Mills, “White Ignorance”

11/11 (M): Discussion (II)

11/13 (W): Discussion (I)

PART III: SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

Week 12 (Week of Monday 11/18):

Reading: Sarah-Jane Leslie, “Carving Up the Social World with Generics”

11/18 (M): Discussion (I)

11/20 (W): Discussion (II)

Week 13 (Week of Monday 11/25):

Reading: Elisabeth Camp, “Slurring Perspectives”

11/25 (M): Discussion (I)

11/27 (W): NO CLASS — FRIDAY CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 14 (Week of Monday 12/2):

Reading: Rae Langton, “Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts”

12/2 (M): Discussion (I)

12/4 (W): Discussion (II)

Week 15 (Week of Monday 12/9):

Reading: Jennifer Saul, “Dogwhistles, Political Manipulation, and Philosophy of Language”

12/9 (M): Discussion (I)

12/11 (W): Discussion (II)

PAPER 2 DUE BY 5:00 PM EST ON FRIDAY, 12/13

FINAL EXAM 3:00-6:00 PM EST ON MONDAY, 12/23

ATTENDANCE

During each class meeting, I will distribute a unique attendance code to each student present. You are responsible for filling out the online attendance form with your name, email, and unique attendance code. To do this, visit <http://www.cd.kg/teaching/> and click on the 'Attendance' link next to the name of this course. **Forms must be completed within 24 hours of the end of each class session.**

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Vocal participation in class is an extremely important part of learning to do philosophy. I will be keeping track of who participates in class. This will enable me to both assign participation grades and ensure that those who have spoken less have priority when they wish to participate. There will be numerous opportunities to participate during both discussion sessions and lecture sessions. Feel free to ask a question at any time — remember, it's likely that someone else in the class has the same question and would benefit from you asking!

COURTESY

In this course, we will be discussing issues about which some students may have strong feelings. For this reason, it is important that all classroom discussion be conducted calmly and respectfully.

Professional courtesy and consideration for our classroom community are especially important with respect to topics dealing with differences such as race, color, gender and gender iden-

tity/expression, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, disability, age, and veteran status.

Meaningful and constructive dialogue requires mutual respect, a willingness to listen, and tolerance of opposing points of view. Respect for individual differences and alternative viewpoints will be maintained at all times in this class. Our choices of words and use of language are critical components of respectful discourse as we work together to achieve the full benefits of creating a classroom in which all people can feel comfortable expressing themselves.

LATENESS POLICY

Assignments may be turned in late, but will be subject to a one-letter-grade penalty per day late (a one-letter-grade drop is the difference between an A and a B and between a B+ and a C+).

If you would like an extension on an assignment, you must notify me at least 24 hours in advance of the deadline for that assignment. Extensions will be granted on a discretionary basis.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University's educational and research missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community.

Academic Integrity Policy: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academicintegrity-policy/>

COLLABORATION

There are two kinds of collaborators. *Reviewers* offer comments on a pre-existing piece of writing. They are not responsible for the writing or major aspects of the argument of the pieces on which they comment. You are encouraged to seek reviewers for your pieces of writing. Please acknowledge your reviewers by name in a footnote at the end of your essay.

Co-authors enter into the creative process with the author. They are responsible for significant parts of the writing and/or argument of the pieces which they co-author. You are not permitted to submit co-authored work for credit in this course.

CORRUPT FILES

It is your responsibility to ensure that you provide your written work to me in a format I can access. If you submit a corrupt file, I will do my best to notify you as soon as possible. It is then your responsibility to send me another copy of the file in a timely manner. This means it is very important that you open and read emails from me. If I request a second copy of a file and you do not reply in a timely manner, I will regard the assignment as not having been submitted.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Every effort will be made to accommodate students who present a valid Letter of Accommodations. For more information, see: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/my-accommodations/letter-of-accommodations>

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

I am happy to accommodate special needs related to students' religious practices. However, I require that you notify me in writing within the first two weeks of class if you will need such accommodation at any point during the semester.

COUNSELING SERVICES

Counseling services are available at the Counseling Center, Room 101, Blumenthal Hall. For more information, call (973) 353-5805 or visit <http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu/>. Please note that I am required to report certain sensitive information you might relate to me to the University.

NO EXTRA CREDIT

There will be no opportunities to earn extra credit in this course.