Epistemic Injustice, Inequality, 
and the Politics of Metacognition

PHIL 231 (Epistemology)
Spring 2016

Instructor
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Office Hours: Thursdays 2:15 – 3:45, & by appointment
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Course Description

This course is about epistemic injustice and its complicated relationship to social inequality and metacognitive responsibility. A person suffers an epistemic injustice when a wrong is done to them specifically in their capacity as a knower or thinker (Fricker 2007), e.g., in their ability to be understood, to share or acquire knowledge, to understand their epistemic capacities, etc. According to many philosophers and social theorists, harms of this sort have severe ramifications far beyond the epistemic realm. Rooted in trenchant conditions of power and social imagination (as well as some systemic features of human cognition), epistemic injustices exacerbate, fortify, or otherwise cause social inequality, oppression and marginalization, epistemic vice, and epistemic injustice itself, fundamentally thwarting democratic interaction and individual development.

The primary focus of this seminar is recent work by Miranda Fricker, José Medina, and Jason Stanley, each of whom offers a sustained investigation of epistemic injustice. We will study each of their accounts of the nature, source, and impact of epistemic injustice, looking especially at their views of its effect on democratic deliberation, social injustice, and epistemic practices. We will pay special attention to the correctives and obligations that Fricker and Medina (in particular) enjoin us to pursue, correctives and obligations that are themselves specifically epistemic. While the frameworks in which these two philosophers advance their ameliorative programs are similar (in both cases presented in terms of epistemic responsibility, epistemic virtue, and imaginative capacity), their specific proposals differ. Fricker calls for testimonial sensibility and hermeneutical justice; Medina for epistemic friction, kaleidoscopic sensibility, epistemic resistance, and network solidarity. We will investigate precisely what these practices and capacities require, as well as how their form and urgency vary for differently situated individuals.

The readings of the seminar draw from a broad array of disciplines, including social & political philosophy, feminist epistemology, virtue epistemology, philosophy of race, social psychology, analytic epistemology, and philosophy of education.

Texts

There are three central texts:

Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford 2007);
José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations* (Oxford 2013);


In addition to these books (which are all available at The Literary Guillotine), supplementary readings will be posted on eCommons (see readings below).

**Course Requirements**

Course grades will be determined on the following basis:

- In-Class Presentation 25%
- Participation 25%
- Term paper (15-20 pgs., due June 9, 3pm) 50%

Additionally, undergraduates enrolled in the seminar are required to meet as a group once a week to discuss the current content of the seminar.

Students are responsible for being familiar with UCSC’s policies on plagiarism and proper sourcing. Resources on academic integrity can be found here:

- [http://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_integrity](http://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_integrity)
- [http://www.ue.ucsc.edu/ai_resources](http://www.ue.ucsc.edu/ai_resources)

If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please get an Accommodation Authorization from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and submit it to me in person outside of class (e.g., office hours) within the first two weeks of the quarter. Contact DRC at 459-2089 (voice), 459-4806 (TTY), or [http://drc.ucsc.edu/](http://drc.ucsc.edu/) for more information on the requirements and/or process.

**Calendar of Readings**

The reading schedule below is tentative and could change to accommodate the pace and interests of the class. The supplementary readings will be filled in as the quarter evolves.

The first meeting (March 30) will be a brief informational meeting. Instead of a substantial class on March 30, the seminar will have a full meeting during its final exam period (June 7, 12-3).

**April 6**

Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, preface through ch. 2

Supplementary:

- Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Part 4, sections 1 & 2 (1975)
April 13
Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, chs. 3 & 4
Supplementary:

April 20
Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, chs. 5 & 6
Supplementary:

April 27
Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, ch. 7 & conclusion
José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, foreword & introduction
Supplementary:
  - Jane Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics* (1902), selections

May 4
José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, chs. 1 & 2
Supplementary:
  - Iris Marion Young, “Five Faces of Oppression” (1998)
  - Sally Haslanger, “Oppressions” (2012)

May 11
José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, chs. 3 - 5
Supplementary:

May 18
José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, ch. 6 & coda
Supplementary:
  - Alison Bailey, “Strategic Ignorance” (2007)
  - Naomi Scheman “Queering the Center by Centering the Queer: Reflections on Transsexuals and Secular Jews” (1997)
May 25
Jason Stanley, *How Propaganda Works*, preface thru ch. 3
Supplementary:
Victor Klemperer, *Language of the Third Reich* (1947), selections
Randal Marlin, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion* (2002), ch. 4
Susan Stebbing, *Thinking to Some Purpose* (1939), selections

June 1
Jason Stanley, *How Propaganda Works*, chs. 4 & 5
Supplementary:
Susanna Siegel, “Epistemic Evaluability and Perceptual Farce” (2014)
Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations” (2014)

June 7 (12 - 3pm)
Jason Stanley, *How Propaganda Works*, chs. 6 & 7 and conclusion
Supplementary: