PHI 335: Social and Political Philosophy

Knowledge, Ignorance, Power

Fall 2022, 4 credits, on-campus course

**Instructor:** Claire A. Lockard

**Office Hours:** Fidelis Hall 328.Tuesdays/Thursdays 1:00-2:00 PM; Wednesdays 10:00-11:00 AM;by appointment via Zoom

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# **Course Description**

Welcome to *Knowledge, Ignorance, Power!* In this class, we will explore the relationship between epistemology (the study of what we know and how we know it) and social/political philosophy.

More specifically, we will work to identify and understand some of the ways that knowledge and ignorance *are themselves* political. We will investigate some of the ways that knowledge and ignorance function not merely for individual people, but for entire communities and sociopolitical systems. We will also explore how knowledge and ignorance are socially produced; to put it another way, we will explore how one’s own particular position in a specific society can shape what they know and what they do not know. We will question how our existing systems and practices of knowledge and ignorance can harm members of marginalized communities and evaluate whether, and to what extent, we are responsible for our ignorance (especially when this ignorance results from or reinforces existing systems of oppression). Along the way, we will also ask: what can be done about these harms? What is already being done to address them? Can problems of knowledge and ignorance be solved by philosophical argumentation, and if not, what other tools and interventions are required?

We will be engaging with analyses of power, knowledge, and ignorance within feminist philosophy, philosophy of race, and queer theory to address and supplement the following questions:

1. How is what we know (and how we know it) related to social and political structures?
2. In what ways is ignorance socially produced (intentionally or unintentionally)? Who benefits from, and who is harmed by this socially produced ignorance?
3. In what ways, and to what extent, are members of marginalized groups harmed by unjust epistemic systems and practices?
4. How can we resist and reimagine dominant habits of knowing, unjust knowledge systems, and patterns of epistemic injustices?

## **Mount Mary University Catalogue Description of PHI335**

Social and Political Philosophy: Study of the person’s relation to civil society based upon the works of classical and contemporary political philosophers. Involves a consideration of the nature of political authority, freedom and human rights.

## **Mount Mary University Mission**

Mount Mary University, an urban Catholic university for women, sponsored by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, provides an environment for the development of the whole person. The University encourages leadership, integrity, and a deep sense of social justice arising from a sensitivity to moral values and Christian principles.

Mount Mary commits itself to excellence in teaching and learning with an emphasis on thinking critically and creatively. The baccalaureate curriculum integrates the liberal arts with career preparation for women of diverse ages and personal circumstances; the programs at the graduate level provide opportunities for both men and women to enhance their professional excellence.

## **Vision**

Mount Mary University is recognized as a diverse learning community that works in partnership with local, national and global organizations to educate women to transform the world.

## **Department Objective**

*Demonstrate the self-knowledge and ethical reflection essential for self-advocacy and leadership for social justice*

## **Course Objectives**

1. Understand the epistemic, social, and political conditions that facilitate various forms of harmful ignorance and epistemic injustice.

*To achieve this goal, you will* ***read and respond to texts*** *from different areas of social and political philosophy, identifying authors’ responses to our key course questions.*

1. Collaborate with colleagues to make philosophical progress on questions about knowledge, ignorance, and power.

*To achieve this goal, you will* ***participate in a peer workshop*** *in which you offer generative feedback on two colleagues’ papers. You will also* ***work together in class*** *to understand course material and apply it to your own life.*

1. Contribute to ongoing philosophical conversations about the role of knowledge and ignorance in our social and political worlds.

*To achieve this goal, you will* ***write a mid-term and final paper*** *in which you offer a direct response to one of the texts we read and place it in conversation with other material from class.*

1. Develop strategies for becoming a more critical, open-minded, and epistemically just knower, and employ these strategies to resist epistemic injustice and problematic ignorance.

*To achieve this goal, you will* ***collaborate in class with your peers****, to analyze the course material, identify examples of harmful ignorance/epistemic injustice, and evaluate the strategies offered for ameliorating it. You will* ***also facilitate one class discussion*** *in which you help your peers connect the week’s reading to a recent example from the news or from your own community.*

## **Required Texts and Materials**

There is no required textbook for this class. All texts will be made available on Canvas. Please email me if you have any trouble accessing them.

## **Mask Policy**

We continue to live and work through a global pandemic. As a step toward keeping one another safe from COVID transmission, **everyone is encouraged to wear masks in this class.** 3-ply masks, including K95, KN95, and KF94 masks are the most effective at preventing the spread of COVID. Masks are available on campus and in each classroom.

## **Technology Policy**

*To be decided as a group*

# **How will your grade be assessed?**

This course is worth 200 points total.

Assignment and Frequency

Percentage of Total Grade

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Daily Summary (21 opportunities, 20 graded) | 30% (3 pts. each) |
| 1. In-Class Assignments and Activities | 20% (40 pts.) |
| 1. Discussion Facilitation | 10% (20 pts.) |
| 1. Workshop Paper | 10% (20 pts.) |
| 1. Workshop Peer Review Forms (2) | 15% (15 pts. each) |
| 1. Final (Expanded and Revised) Workshop Paper | 15% (30 pts.) |

## **Grading Standards**

* A, Excelling: The work primarily demonstrates especially skillful and in-depth understanding, analysis, synthesis, and insight
* B-A/B, Achieving: The work primarily demonstrates competent understanding, analysis, synthesis, and insight with some depth
* C-B/C, Improving: The work primarily demonstrates basic understanding, analysis, synthesis, and insight, but requires further development
* D. Developing: The work primarily demonstrates incomplete or inaccurate understanding, analysis, synthesis, and insight

## **Grading Scale**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Grade | Numerical Equivalent |
| A | 93-100% |
| AB | 88-92% |
| B | 83-87% |
| BC | 78-82% |
| C | 73-77% |
| CD | 68-72% |
| D | 60-67% |
| F | 66% and below |

Please Note: I do not offer extra credit.

All work must be submitted via Canvas. You are responsible for keeping track of assignment due dates, submissions, and grades. I aim to return graded work to them as quickly as possible. As soon as an assignment is graded, it will be available. So, if an assignment does not yet have a grade, it is not yet graded. Your grades will be recorded on Canvas, where you can also find detailed instructions and rubrics. I am happy to discuss outcomes and strategies for maintaining or improving your development in the course.

## **Late Assignments**

Because many of the assignments that you complete for this class are important for you and for your classmates’ progress in the course, all assignments must be turned in on time. If you are unable to meet a deadline, please be in touch with me as early as possible.

It is always better to contact me or to submit a first attempt than it is to submit nothing. I will generally be as flexible as I can about offering extensions without penalizing you, and **you can re-submit any assignment at any time**.Please make sure that you are submitting your workshop papers and your peer reviews on time.

## **Attendance Policy**

This is a discussion-based class, which means that much of the learning and the assessment of that learning happens in class discussion. Class attendance is crucial to each student's learning, and for the class as a whole to make progress. Mount Mary expects students to attend all classes, because students and instructors all have something to contribute to every class. Absences can also make it difficult for you to do your best in the class and we will certainly miss your presence (especially since our class is quite small!). That being said, you might need to miss class occasionally. If you need to miss class, you may do so at any time. You do not need to tell me why or ask to be excused. I do strongly suggest that you get in touch with me about making up in-class assignments and catching up on class material.

## **Short Summary of Required Assignments**

*For detailed descriptions of each assignment, see the Canvas course page.*

1. **Daily They Say/I Say Summary** – For each day that you have a reading, you also have a “They Say/I Say” summary due. This summary should be very short (no more than 150 words), and it will have two parts: (1) a summary of the “They Say”—the views, authors, texts, or situations that the author is responding to; and (2) a summary of the “I Say”—the response that the author themselves offers. As you decide what to include, think about the authors’ central claim/thesis, what issue or problem they are responding to, what main question(s) they are asking, or what key terms they are defining. You won’t be able to cover everything. Your goal, instead, is to capture the most important part(s). These summaries are graded pass/fail. There are 22 opportunities to submit summaries, but I will only grade 20.
2. **In-Class Assignments and Activities** – We will spend most of our time in class discussing the readings, argument mapping, drawing connections between our lives and the material, practicing writing skills, and more. In-class assignments and activities are designed to help us collaborate and explore the day’s text(s) in further depth, identify new questions, and work through confusion. These assignments are graded pass/fail.
3. **Discussion Facilitation –** Part of the aim of this course is to shed light on issues we face in everyday life and to work together to come to a greater understanding of the material than we could on our own. Each student will sign up to facilitate one in-class discussion (between 15 and 30 minutes). Your job is *not* to lecture or present during that whole time! Instead, you will arrive prepared to set up the conditions for a generative, robust discussion of the reading. You might have us do an activity, watch a video, do a brief in-class written reflection, or something else entirely. You will sign up for discussion facilitation slots during Week 2.
4. **Workshop Paper** – For this paper, you will expand one of your summaries. More specifically, you will write a short paper in which you add a second “I Say” to the one you’ve identified in your daily homework: your own. This paper allows you to identify something that the text did not address, offer an objection or agreement, and/or reflect on how the text relates to something that is interesting and relevant to you. This paper is worth 10 percent of your grade. It should be at least 1,500 words long. Be as thorough as you can when you write your draft, because you will receive detailed feedback on it from me and from your peers during the writing workshop. You can include comments in the paper’s margins indicating where you felt stuck, or where you’d most like to have feedback. We will spend time in class working on outlines and thesis statements before the due date. **You can also meet with me to discuss your paper or to get feedback on a draft, but this is not required. The deadline to meet with me is October 11**.
5. **Workshop Peer Review Forms –** During class on October 18 and October 20, we will conduct a writing workshop. At the workshop, you will each be interviewed about your papers. You will also be in charge of interviewing 2 of your classmates about their papers, with the goal of helping them think about how to expand and revise the paper for their final. I will give you a form to complete and give to your peers.
6. **Revised Workshop Paper** – For your final paper, you will expand your workshop paper, engaging with at least one text from after the mid-term. Your focus should be primarily on revising your workshop paper in response to the feedback you received from your peers and from me. You will be evaluated largely on how you incorporated this feedback. Your final paper should be at least 3,000 words long.

# **Class Community and Conduct**

This is a discussion-based class. For us to learn as much as possible from this course and from one another, it is important that we are respectful and curious in our interactions. We will likely be disagreeing with course readings and with one another and sometimes sharing our own experiences as they relate to the readings. These processes are crucial elements of philosophy! But remember to frame disagreement (or even frustration!) in a way that furthers exploration of the material and doesn’t alienate your peers.

## **Academic Honesty and Integrity Statement**

Mount Mary University is an academic community dedicated to the intellectual and social and ethical development of each of its members. As members of this community we all are responsible for maintaining an atmosphere of mutual respect and honesty. Standards for academic integrity provide a structure for the creation of an academic environment consistent with the values of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and the mission of the University. In keeping with these goals, all students are expected to strive for integrity, in academic and non-academic pursuits. Acts that involve any attempt to deceive, to present another’s ideas as one’s own, or to enhance one’s grade through dishonest means violate the integrity of both the student and University. Academic dishonesty in any form has a negative impact on the essential principles of the Mount Mary University Community. Therefore, such acts are treated as a serious breach of trust. A faculty member has the right and authority to deal with academic dishonesty in his or her classroom; however, a student who commits multiple violations against academic integrity shall be subject to administrative disciplinary action as described in the Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy and Procedures.

*If you have questions about whether something qualifies as plagiarism, you are welcome to ask me prior to turning in an assignment!*

# **Additional Important Information**

## **Diversity and Accessibility Statement**

Mount Mary University and the Department of Philosophy are committed to an educational environment that affirms the uniqueness, diversity, and integrity of all students. Similarly, the well-being and success of each student in this course are important to me. I will do my best to ensure that students from all backgrounds and perspectives will be served equitably. The diversity that students bring to this class will be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful and inclusive of the many identities of students in terms of gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, perspective, and other background characteristics. Thus, I encourage students registered in the course to discuss their learning styles and comprehension requirements with me.

Mount Mary University complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (2008) ADAAA which stipulates that the University will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see me or Jackie Wells, Director of Accessibility Services so that such accommodations may be arranged.  To contact Jackie Wells: call (414) 930-3214, email: [wellsj@mtmary.edu](mailto:wellsj@mtmary.edu), office: Student Success Center located on the first floor of Haggerty Library (HL), room 124. Students eligible for accommodations must provide a current accommodation letter to the instructor. Accommodation letters from previous semesters will not be accepted.

I recognize that “accessibility,” as defined by the University, does not encompass all elements of “access,” up to and including language barriers, cultural barriers, economic barriers, or other “invisible” barriers to student learning. If you have trouble with any element of the course, the course materials, or my instruction, please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss ways in which I can make my class more accessible or more inclusive to your learning, even if formal accommodations are not available. All information will be held in the strictest of confidence.

## **Religious Observance Policy**

Mount Mary University's policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. In so doing, faculty are careful not to inhibit or penalize those students who are exercising their rights to religious observance. Students are required to notify the instructor at the beginning of the semester of any absence(s) so appropriate accommodations can be made for the student to have access to the course content that corresponds to the date(s) of religious observances. Policies and procedures are included in the Mount Mary University Catalog online

## **Subject to Revision**

This syllabus is subject to revision. Students will be notified of any changes. Notices of changes will be sent to each student via their Mount Mary email address.

# **Course Schedule**

Please come to class having read and summarized the text listed for that date.

*A \* indicates that this day is available for you to sign up as a discussion facilitator.*

## **Politicizing Epistemology**

*Key question: how is what we know (and how we know it) related to social and political structures?*

Week 1

8/30: No reading due today; in-class reading and activity: Dave Concepción, “How to Read Philosophy” (2004)

9/1: Michel Foucault, “Panopticism” (*excerpt*)

Week 2

September 6: C. Thi Nguyen, “Transparency is Surveillance”

September 8: C. Thi Nguyen, “Transparency is Surveillance” continued

Week 3:

9/13: Patricia Hill Collins, “Black Feminist Thought as Oppositional Knowledge”\*

9/15: Kim Q. Hall, “Queer Epistemology and Epistemic Injustice”\*

Week 4:

9/20: Kyle Whyte, “Against Crisis Epistemology”\*

9/22: No new reading; bring one of your summaries to class for writing skills practice.

## **Epistemologies of Ignorance**

*Key Question: In what ways is ignorance socially produced (intentionally or unintentionally)? Who benefits from, and who is harmed by this socially produced ignorance?*

Week 5

9/27: Nancy Tuana, “The Speculum of Ignorance: The Women's Health Movement and Epistemologies of Ignorance” (2007)\*

9/29: Charles Mills, “White Ignorance,” in *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*\*

Week 6

10/4: Mariana Ortega, “Being Lovingly, Knowingly Ignorant: White Feminism and Women of Color” (2006)\*

10/6: María Lugones and Elizabeth Spelman, “Have We Got a Theory for You! Feminist Theory, Cultural Imperialism, and the Demand for “The Women’s Voice” (1983).\*

Week 7

10/11: José Medina, “Epistemic Responsibility and Culpable Ignorance”\*

10/13: No new reading; **Workshop Paper due by 11:59 PM on 10/13**

Week 8

10/18: WRITING WORKSHOP (Feedback Form due for 2 papers)

10/20: WRITING WORKSHOP (Feedback Form due for 2 papers)

## **Epistemic, Hermeneutical, and Contributory Injustice**

*Key Questions: In what ways are marginalized subjects harmed by unjust epistemic systems and practices? How can we resist these injustices?*

Week 9

10/25: [Elucidations Podcast episode: Kristie Dotson on Epistemic Oppression](https://elucidations.vercel.app/posts/transcript-episode-92).

10/27: Kristie Dotson, “A Cautionary Tale: On Limiting Epistemic Oppression” (2012)

Week 10

11/1: Veronica Ivy, “Gaslighting as Epistemic Injustice”\*

11/3: Emmalon Davis, “Typecasts, Tokens, and Spokespersons: A Case for Credibility Excess as Testimonial Injustice” (2016)\*

Week 11

11/8: María Lugones, “Hard-to-Handle Anger” (2003)\*

11/10: Audre Lorde, “The Uses of Anger: Woman Responding to Racism” (1984)\*

Week 12

11/15: Alison Bailey, “On Anger, Silence, and Epistemic Injustice” (2018)\*

11/17: José Medina and Tempest Henning, “My Body as a Witness: Bodily Testimony and Epistemic Injustice (2019)\*

Week 13

11/22: Discussion Day; no new reading

11/24: Thanksgiving Break

Week 14

11/29: Alexis Shotwell, “Forms of Knowing and Epistemic Resources” (2017)

12/1: To be decided by students

Week 15

12/6: In-class workday (no readings or summaries due)

12/8 : In-class workday (no readings or summaries due)

Exam Week: Dec 12-16. Exam date to be announced when schedule is released; **Final paper due by beginning of exam time.**