Course Overview
Are individuals experts regarding what is good for them? If someone tells us what is good for her, should we trust her? A number of issues related to this topic have come up in recent philosophical literature, with implications for moral philosophy, political philosophy, and epistemology.

For example, a new influential book by Laurie Paul (UNC) argues that it is irrational to trust the word of others when deciding whether to undergo major life decisions (such as the decision to have a child). Another new book, by Elizabeth Barnes (UVA), argues that disability does not detract from people’s quality of life; instead, it is neutral. A cornerstone of Barnes’ argument is the point that disabled people often report that they prefer to be disabled; Barnes argues that this testimony should be taken at face value. A related debate in moral epistemology concerns the question of whether we should defer to “moral experts” – or whether, as some argue, we need to figure out moral truths for ourselves. At the heart of these issues are moral questions regarding personal autonomy and respect for others’ experiences; on-the-ground questions about what makes for a good life; and epistemological questions regarding the kinds of information we may legitimately get from others without having certain experiences for ourselves.

Assignments and Grading
* One paper, due at the end of the semester, around 20-25p.
* Present 2 papers (talk us through the paper and lead discussion).

Your seminar grade = your paper grade, provided that you do your presentations.

This seminar will count for an epistemology credit, for distribution purposes. If you want to write on an ethics topic to receive ethics distribution credit instead, come talk to me.

Schedule
Week 1 Jan 22
Go over syllabus, sign up for presentations

Week 2 Jan 29 Well-being

Haybron, D. “Do We Know How Happy We Are? On Some Limits of Affective Introspection and Recall”

(Might replace with: a chapter from Anna Alexandrova’s book, A Philosophy for the Science of Well-Being)

**Week 3** Feb 5 **Authority and knowing about others**

Alcoff, L. “The Problem of Speaking for Others”

Fay, B. “Do You Have to Be One to Know One?”

**Week 4** Feb 12 **Self-knowledge**

Moran, R. ch. 2 of Authority and Estrangement

**Week 5** No class

**Week 6** Feb 26 **Self-knowledge**

Velleman, D. “The Self as Narrator” ch. 9 of Self to Self

**Week 7** March 5 **Testimony and transformative choice**

Paul, L. A. Transformative Experience. Ch. 3 (excerpts)

**Week 8** March 19 **Testimony and disability**

Barnes, E. “Taking their word for it”

Barnes, E. “Disability and Adaptive Preference”

**Week 9** March 26 **Detour: adaptive preference**

Nussbaum, M. “Adaptive Preference and Women’s Options”

Bruckner, D. “In Defense of Adaptive Preferences”

**Week 10** April 2 **Is “I’ll be glad” a good reason?**

Harman, E. “‘I’ll be glad I did it’ reasoning and the significance of future desires”
Howard, D. S. “Transforming others and the limits of ‘you’ll be glad I did it’ reasoning”

Week 11   April 9   The problem of moral testimony

McGrath, S. “Skepticism about Moral Expertise as a Puzzle for Moral Realism”

Week 12   April 17 [Class on Tues]   The problem of moral testimony again

Hills, A. “Moral Testimony”

Week 13   April 23   The non-problem of moral testimony

Sliwa, P. “In Defense of Moral Testimony.”

McShane, P. J. “The non-remedial value of dependence on moral testimony”

Week 14   April 30

Student paper presentations