

Some Topics in Epistemic Value and Normativity
Spring 2015
Friday 1-4pm

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Overview:

This seminar will look at (mostly) contemporary work on epistemic normativity, and the role of value in epistemology. Is epistemic rationality importantly different from practical rationality, or is it a restricted kind of practical rationality? Should we understand epistemic rationality in consequentialist terms? Another important question lies at the heart of these debates: what is the relationship between epistemic rationality and truth? We probably won't answer any of these questions, but maybe we will make some progress.

Students enrolled for credit must write a final paper. Your grade will be determined by your grade on the paper. There are also three more necessary conditions to pass the class: attendance, one presentation during the semester, and a (brief) presentation of your final paper idea in the last class session.

Presentation guidelines:

Choose two papers to present during the course of the semester. The presenter should make a handout giving an overview of the relevant reading and lead discussion for part of that class meeting. Final paper presentations will work the same way.

Paper guidelines:

Your final paper can be on any topic we cover, or on any other relevant topic in epistemology (provided that you run it by me first). Aim for 20-25 pages double-spaced. I suggest that you look start thinking about this early on, and perhaps try to present on a topic that you are interested in writing about. If you're looking for more inspiration, I've listed a few extra papers in each topic at the end of this syllabus. However, it is not necessary to read anything beyond what we discuss. I will schedule meetings with you individually toward the end of the semester to discuss paper ideas.

Schedule:

1/16/15 Voluntarism and the goals of belief

Clifford, W. K. [1876] "The Ethics of Belief," section 1
James, William. [1896] "The Will to Believe"

1/23/15 Voluntarism and normativity

Alston, William. [1988] "The Deontological Conception of Epistemic Justification"

Feldman, Richard. [2001] "Voluntary Belief and Epistemic Evaluation".

1/30/15 Practical reasons for belief?

Pascal, Blaise. [1660] *Pensées*, Section 233.

Kelly, Thomas. [2002] "The Rationality of Belief and Some Other Propositional Attitudes."

Rinard, Susanna. [ms] "No Exception for Belief"

2/6/15 The value of true belief

Ernest Sosa, [2000] "For the Love of Truth?"

Kornblith, Hilary. [1993] "Epistemic Normativity"

2/13/15 Epistemic consequentialism

Kelly, Thomas. [2003] "Epistemic Rationality as Instrumental Rationality: A Critique"

***2/20/15 Epistemic consequentialism, cont.**

Berker, Selim. [2013] "Epistemic Teleology and the Separateness of Propositions."

*I have to miss class 2/20. I'll send around a Doodle to reschedule.

2/27/15 The value of truth, formal version. Part 1: background

Bayesianism primer; no reading.

Optional: Hajek, Alan. [2008] "Arguments For – Or Against? – Probabilism"

3/6/15 Spring break, no class

3/13/15 Part 2: epistemic utility theory

Joyce, James. [2009] "Accuracy and Coherence: Prospects for an Alethic Epistemology of Partial Belief" (skip the last two sections)

Hajek, Alan. [2008] "Arguments For – Or Against? – Probabilism" Sec. 5

***3/20/15 Part 3: problems with epistemic utility theory**

Maher, Patrick. [2003] "Joyce's Argument for Probabilism"

Carr, Jennifer. [ms] "Accuracy and the Aim of Belief."

*I have to miss class 3/20. I'll send around a Doodle to reschedule.
***Also this week(ish): individual meetings about paper topic ideas for those taking the class for credit*

3/27/15 Part 4: giving up on epistemic value, back to practical value.

Gibbard, Allan. [2008] "Rational Credence and the Value of Truth"

4/3/15 No class

4/10/15 A different approach: the value of ascribing rationality.

Schafer, Karl. [2014] "Doxastic Planning and Epistemic Internalism"
Greco, Daniel and Hedden, Brian. [ms] "Uniqueness and
Metaepistemology"

4/17/15 Ascribing rationality, continued.

Dogramaci, Sinan. [2012] "Reverse-Engineering Epistemic Evaluations"
Dogramaci, Sinan and Horowitz, Sophie. [ms] "An Argument for
Uniqueness About Evidential Support."

4/24/15 Student paper presentations

Extra (optional!!) reading suggestions... I may add more later as they occur to me

Voluntarism:

Hieronymi, Pamela. "Controlling Attitudes"

The value of rationality:

My paper: "Immoderately Rational"

Madison, Brent. "Epistemic Value and the New Evil Demon"

The value of rationality (okay, knowledge) ascriptions:

Craig, Edward. "Knowledge and the State of Nature" (a book, not a paper)

Epistemic Utility Theory:

Lots of resources here: <http://fitelson.org/coherence/>

Also look at this syllabus: <http://perezcarballo.org/files/teaching/phil742.pdf>

Epistemic Consequentialism:

Berker, Selim. "The Rejection of Epistemic Consequentialism." [quite similar to the paper we'll read in class.]

Stalnaker, Robert. "Epistemic Consequentialism."