

# The Ethics and Epistemology of Stereotypes

PHI 265 (Seminar option: PHI 440)

Connecticut College, Fall 2016

TuTh 9-10:15 a.m., New London Hall, Room 400

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## I. Course Description

In this course, we will examine epistemological and ethical questions surrounding stereotypes and the forms of prejudice to which stereotypes can give rise. (We will focus, in particular, on stereotypes and prejudices concerning race). Epistemological questions about stereotypes and prejudice largely concern their *psychological status*. Some of these questions include: How do stereotypes and prejudices take root in our minds? How might language affect the development of stereotypes and prejudice? How can we know about, and try to regulate, the stereotypes and prejudices we hold, if, as many social psychologists suggest, these are often largely unconscious and relatively automatic? How do the stereotypes we have about certain social groups (including racial groups) impact the ways in which we form beliefs and gain knowledge from the testimony of members of those groups? Ethical questions about stereotypes and prejudice concern their *moral status*. For example: What, if anything, is morally problematic about stereotyping, as such? What is (individual) racism, and what makes it morally problematic? Can it ever be morally justifiable to treat people in certain ways on the basis of stereotypes about their social-group membership? (For example, can racial profiling be morally justifiable?) What, if anything, is morally problematic about forms of humor that exploit stereotypes and prejudicial attitudes?

## II. Course Goals

1. *Mastering Content*. You will develop a broad understanding of the many complex philosophical issues that surround the nature of stereotypes and prejudice.
2. *Reading and Thinking Philosophically*. You will develop your ability to identify and critically assess arguments in a variety of both philosophical and non-philosophical texts.
3. *Writing Philosophically*. You will develop your ability to reconstruct, explain, and evaluate philosophical arguments in written work.
4. *Talking Philosophically*. You will develop your ability to communicate your ideas and engage with the ideas of others in discussion.

## III. Required Readings

All readings are available on [Moodle](#). The readings are available there as files under folders, labeled by week.

I strongly encourage you to print out the reading to bring to class. Printing each paper costs you a lot less than a course reader with all of the same readings would have cost you, due to copyright fees. (This is why I didn't create a course reader!)

I will allow you to bring laptops/tablets with the electronic copies of the papers. But

if having a laptop/tablet at all impedes your ability to participate and be actively engaged in discussion, this will negatively affect the participation portion of your final grade.

#### **IV. Course Requirements**

I am offering this course at two levels: PHI 265, and PHI 440 (senior seminar for the major). Please make sure you check in with me if you are taking the class as PHI 440.

I've split the two sets of requirements below:

##### **Breakdown of final grade (for students taking this course as PHI 265):**

1. Attendance & Participation, 10%
2. Weekly Question/Response, 10%
3. Guided seminar session, 10%
4. Paper 1, ~3-4 pages, 10%
5. Paper 2, ~3-4 pages, 15%
6. Paper 3, ~3-4 pages, 20%
7. Paper 4 (final), 5-7 pages: 25%

(Page ranges are calculated for double-spaced pages.)  
See below for instructions for each paper.

##### **Breakdown of final grade (for students taking this course as PHI 440):**

1. Attendance & Participation, 10%
2. Weekly Question/Response, 10%
3. Guided seminar session, 10%
4. Paper 1, ~3-4 pages, 10%
5. Paper 2, ~3-4 pages, 15%
6. First Draft of Final Paper, ~5-7 pages, 20%
7. Final Paper, ~10-15 pages, 25%

(Page ranges are calculated for double-spaced pages.)  
See below for instructions for each paper.

#### **V. Descriptions of Course Requirements (for both 265 and 440 students):**

**1. Attendance and participation, 10%.** This course is designed to be a small seminar. As such, absences will be noticed. If you miss more than four class sessions (which is equivalent to 2 weeks of class) without explanation or a doctor's note, you may fail the course even if you complete all the assignments.

You will also be expected to participate and be actively engaged in discussion. This includes regularly raising and responding to questions, communicating your views and

reactions to the texts to the group, and contributing in other ways toward making our classroom a thought-provoking, collegial space.

**2. Weekly Response, 10%.** You should submit a question or response to the reading for Tuesday to me (via email) every Monday night by 8 p.m. (You can skip this on the week that you are leading discussion.) Your question/comment can concern any aspect of the material assigned for Tuesday. I may use your questions to structure our Tuesday discussions.

Your question or comment can take a number of different forms. Perhaps you have a question about something that you found confusing. Or perhaps you found some claim an author makes totally implausible, and you want to explain why you think it's implausible, in a way that might lend itself to discussion with the group.

Whether you submit a question or comment, try to provide a little context for it. For example, if you're confused about what the author is trying to argue, try your best to explain what the author might be saying, and what you find confusing about it. If you find some claim the author makes implausible, explain try to explain what the claim is, and *why* it strikes you as implausible.

**3. One guided seminar session, 10%.** You will guide discussion for one of our seminar meetings. You will be expected to "set up" the day's reading (by going through the major points of the reading, and explaining whatever major arguments are presented in that reading) and come with some questions to spur discussion. You may choose the session you will lead. I will pass around a sign-up sheet during the second week of class.

- You must meet with me beforehand to go over what you plan to present and which questions you plan to use to set up discussion. I am happy to answer any questions you have about the material, and/or help you brainstorm about what to cover and what questions to ask, but do come to our meeting prepared with concrete ideas about how you plan to structure the discussion.

- I encourage (but don't require) you to provide a well-crafted handout that clearly and concisely explains the view or argument you want to present on, along with reactions you had to the text and questions you want to raise for discussion.

Handouts should not exceed approx. 2 pages.

## **VI. For 265 students only**

**Papers 1-3, ~3-4 double-spaced pages.** The three papers you will write during the semester will have roughly the following structure: You will identify a view or argument from anything we have read so far in the course, carefully explain it, and evaluate it, by offering some objections to it or by defending it from potential objections. In evaluating it, you will need to make sure that you clearly identify the central component of the view or argument that you want to assess.

**Paper 4 (final), ~5-7 double-spaced pages.** Due on the last day of finals. This paper will ask you to do the same thing you did on your previous papers, as well as expand your critical assessment. You can do this by including more of an argumentative back-and-forth: you might, for example, explain what a *potential objection* to the evaluative claim you've made might be; why that potential objection might be persuasive; and why it doesn't succeed.

(You'll receive further instruction on these papers as we proceed through the term.)

## VII. For 440 students only

**Papers 1-2, ~3-4 double-spaced pages.** The two (non-final) papers you will write during the semester will have roughly the following structure: You will identify a view or argument from anything we have read so far in the course, carefully explain it, and evaluate it, by offering some objections to it or by defending it from potential objections. In evaluating it, you will need to make sure that you clearly identify the central component of the view or argument that you want to assess.

**Final Paper.** Due on the last day of finals. The purpose of the final paper is to get you to philosophically frame a question of your choice, and try to make progress answering that question, in part by critically examining how others have approached that question. You will bring in outside sources to bear on the topic of your choice.

**Proposal.** Your proposal for the term paper should be kept relatively short and be structured around a couple of specific questions that you want to address. You should also indicate how you plan to address the questions you've developed. (The proposal will be assessed just on a Pass/No Pass basis, and will count in the "attendance and participation" portion of your final grade.)

**Draft, ~5-7 double-spaced pages.** This paper will ask you to do the same thing you did on your previous papers in the term, as well as expand your critical assessment. You can do this by including more of an argumentative back-and-forth: you might, for example, explain what a *potential objection* to the evaluative claim you've made might be; why that potential objection might be persuasive; and why it doesn't succeed.

**Final, ~10-15 double-spaced pages.** This builds off the draft you submitted and received comments on. You should incorporate the feedback I've provided on your draft, as well as bring in outside sources into your discussion, in order to expand your critical assessment. Think of this as bringing more philosophers into a conversation that's already underway. For example, you can look at an author who argues against the view(s) you've assessed in your draft, and then critically respond to that. I'm happy to brainstorm with you about what other authors to look at and how to expand the draft you've provided.

## VIII. Course Policies

- **The classroom environment.** This course is designed as a small-group seminar with an emphasis on discussion. Think of this course as a shared group effort to raise and carefully work through some tough questions about complex and sensitive topics. In the spirit of this shared effort, it is important that we treat each other charitably and respectfully, even when we disagree. This involves keeping in mind that we each come to the discussion from different backgrounds and with different life experiences. And so the difficult questions we will raise in this course about stereotypes and prejudice will naturally affect each of us

differently. Treating each other charitably and respectfully does *not* mean that we cannot challenge or question each other's viewpoints. But it does mean that, when we do, we should do so in an attempt to work together to get clearer about some issue or make progress on a question, not to silence or intimidate each other. Your fellow classmates are your most valuable interlocutors, and they should be treated as such.

- **Office Hours.** At a small college like ours, office hours are an important extension of the classroom. In office hours, we can talk one-on-one about philosophical problems you want to understand better, or about how to improve your philosophical writing, or anything else related to philosophy (which is pretty much anything!).

- **Feedback on papers before due date.** I am happy to talk with you in office hours (or by appointment) about anything regarding levels attempts, as well as give you extensive written feedback on outlines of papers.

- **Late papers.** All papers should be emailed to me by 11:59 p.m. of the due date. Every day that your paper is late, your paper grade will go down a "step." (For example, if your paper is one day late, then if your paper is an A paper, you will get an A-.) I will accept late papers up to 5 days after the due date; after 5 days, you will receive a zero on the assignment.

If you need an extension, please get in touch with me no later than 48 hours in advance of the deadline. I won't grant extensions after that period, except in cases of documented medical or family emergencies.

- **Grades.** How are final grades calculated? First, the letter grades for each element of the final grade are converted into a number on the 4.0 scale. (A = 4.0, A- = 3.7, B+ = 3.3, B = 3.0, and so on). Then, these numbers are weighted to reflect the percentage of each element of the final grade. (For example, if you have an A for attendance/participation (10%), that is  $4.0 \times .10 = .4$ .) Finally, those weighted numbers are summed. That number is then converted back to a letter grade, and that is roughly your final grade. I'm happy to keep you updated on your current grade in the class. Just ask.

You may receive a "slash grade" on an assignment (e.g., B/B+). Slash grades also correspond to a precise number on the 4.0 scale (e.g., a B/B+ = 3.15).

## **IX. Campus Policies (Statements Provided by the College)**

### **The Connecticut College Honor Code**

Academic integrity is of the utmost importance in maintaining the high standards of scholarship in our community. Academic dishonesty is considered to be a serious offense against the community and represents a significant breach of trust between the professor, the classmates, and the student. There are many forms of academic dishonesty including plagiarism, submitting the same work in two courses without prior approval, unauthorized discussion or distribution of exams or assignments, and offering or receiving unauthorized aid on exams or graded assignments. Students violating the Honor Code may be referred to the college's Honor Council for resolution.

### **Academic Resource Center**

The Academic Resource Center (ARC) offers services to support your academic work such as study skills workshops, time management, coaching and tutoring. Our offices are located on the second floor of Shain Library. Please visit us or call 860-439-5294 for more information or to schedule an appointment.

### **Writing Center**

The Roth Writing Center provides one-to-one peer tutoring (free of charge) to help student writers of all abilities during all stages of the writing process. To make an appointment, call [860-439-2173](tel:860-439-2173) or stop by the Writing Center at 214 Blaustein. If you're a confident, experienced writer we can help you to push your ideas and polish your style; if you're a relatively inexperienced and not-so-confident writer we can also help you, by working on grammar or organization or whatever you need. Writing Center tutors are trained to help you to discover what you think through writing. Working with a tutor gives you the opportunity to share your work-in-progress with an actual reader, so that you can get useful feedback on that work *before* you have to turn it in for a final grade. For further information, visit the Writing Center web page at <http://write.conncoll.edu/>.

### **Office of Student Accessibility Services**

If you have a physical, mental or learning disability, either hidden or visible, which may require classroom, test-taking, or other reasonable modifications, please see Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible. If you have not already done so, please be sure to register with the Office of Student Accessibility Services. You can do so by going to the Office of Student Accessibility Services, which is located in the Academic Resource Center (ARC) on the second floor of Shain Library in Room 236, or by contacting the Office at 860-439-5240 or 860-439-5428, or by email to [sas@conncoll.edu](mailto:sas@conncoll.edu).

## X. Course Schedule

The present syllabus is (very much) subject to revision! I may decide to switch out certain articles, depending on how our discussion proceeds. I've also left space toward the end of the semester to tackle any issue that we would like to address, or an issue we'd like to delve into more deeply.

Date	Topic	Some Guiding Questions	Readings
Tu 8/30, <b>Week 1</b>	Hello		
<b>UNIT I: Stereotypes in Language and in Cognition</b>			
Th 9/1	Introduction to early theorizing about stereotypes and prejudice	What are some of the central themes of Allport's early discussion of stereotypes and prejudice?	G. Allport, <i>The Nature of Prejudice</i> (1954), Chapters 2 and 10 (in Chapter 10, focus mainly on p. 170 – end.)  <i>Optional:</i> W. Lippmann, <i>Public Opinion</i> (1922), “Stereotypes”
Tu 9/6, <b>Week 2</b>	Generics and generalization	Can the use of generic statements contribute to our essentializing certain social groups?	S-J. Leslie, “Carving up the Social World with Generics” (2014)  <i>Optional:</i> M. Rhodes, S-J Leslie, and C. Tworeck, “Cultural Transmission of Social Essentialism” (2012).
Th 9/8		Can the use of generic statements contribute to prejudice?	S-J. Leslie, “The Original Sin of Cognition: Fear, Prejudice, and Generalization” (in press)
Tu 9/13, <b>Week 3</b>	“Prejudice with compunction”	How should we characterize the forms of prejudice that seemingly operate below the surface of explicitly prejudicial attitudes?	1. G. Allport, <i>The Nature of Prejudice</i> (1954), Chapter 20, “Inner Conflict”  2. P. Devine, “Breaking the Prejudice Habit: Allport's ‘Inner Conflict’ Revisited” (2005)

Th 9/15		What is “aversive racism”? Do tests like the IAT support the aversive racism hypothesis? How?	<p>1. Take the Implicit Association Test (IAT). (<a href="#">Click here.</a>)</p> <p>2. A. Pearson, J. Dovidio, and S. Gaertner, “The Nature of Contemporary Prejudice: Insights from Aversive Racism” (2009)</p> <p><i>Optional:</i> T-N. Coates, “Black-on-Black Racism: The Hazards of Implicit Bias,” <i>The Atlantic</i> (2014) (<a href="#">Click here.</a>)</p>
Tu 9/20, <b>Week 4</b>	A philosophical characterization of implicit bias: Alief	What is “alief”? How does the concept of alief help us think about implicit bias?	<p>T. Gendler, “Alief in Action (and Reaction)” (2008)</p> <p><i>Optional:</i> - Short (four-minute) YouTube introduction to the concept of alief. (<a href="#">Click here.</a>)</p>
Th 9/22	The epistemic costs of implicit bias	Are there epistemic costs to living in a society structured by race?	<p>T. Gendler, “On the Epistemic Costs of Implicit Bias” (2011)</p> <p><i>Optional follow-up:</i> J. Mugg, “What <i>Are</i> the Cognitive Costs of Racism? A Reply to Gendler” (2013)</p>
Tu 9/27, <b>Week 5</b>	Implicit bias and responsibility	Can we be held responsible for having implicit biases?	J. Holroyd, “Responsibility for Implicit Bias” (2012)
Th 9/29			N. Washington and D. Kelly, “Who’s Responsible for This? Moral Responsibility, Externalism, and Knowledge About Implicit Bias” (2016)
Tu 10/4, <b>Week 6</b>	<b>FALL BREAK</b>		
Th 10/6	Testimonial injustice	Can you <i>wrong</i> a person by failing to believe what they tell you, due to a	<p>M. Fricker, <i>Epistemic Injustice</i> (2007), Chapters 1 &amp; 2</p> <p><b>Paper 1 (PHI 440): Due Sunday, 10/9</b> <b>Paper 1 (PHI 265): Due Sunday, 10/9</b></p>



Tu 10/11, <b>Week 7</b>		stereotype you hold against them?	I. Maitra, "The Nature of Epistemic Injustice" (2010), pp. 195-207, section 1-5.
Th 10/13	Hermeneutical injustice	Can you <i>wrong</i> a person by inhibiting their ability to develop the concepts necessary to help make sense of their own experience?	M. Fricker, <i>Epistemic Injustice</i> (2007), Chapter 7
Tu 10/18, Week 8	Mid-semester review		
<b>UNIT II: The Ethics of Stereotypes</b>			
Th 10/20	Theories of racial prejudice	What is (individual) racism? How does an account of what racism <i>is</i> help explain what makes racism <i>morally wrong</i> ?	K. A. Appiah, "Racisms" (1990)
Tu 10/25, Week 9			J. Garcia, "The Heart of Racism" (1996)
Th 10/27			T. Shelby, "Is Racism in the Heart?" (2002)
Tu 11/1, Week 10	Stereotyping: A Moral Analysis	What is morally problematic about stereotyping?	L. Blum, "Stereotypes and Stereotyping: A Moral Analysis" (2004)
Th 11/3	Statistical discrimination and treating people as individuals	Is it wrong to treat someone on the basis of statistical facts about that person's group-membership?	K. Lippert-Rasmussen, "We Are All Different": Statistical Discrimination and the Right to be Treated as an Individual" (2011)
Tu 11/8, Week 11	** Election year interlude: implicit racial messages in	How do implicit racial messages in	T. Mendelberg, <i>The Race Card</i> (2001), Chapter 4

	politics **	political messaging influence voters?	<p><i>Optional:</i> T. Mendelberg, <i>The Race Card</i> (2001), Chapter 3.</p> <p><b>Paper 2 (PHI 440): Due Sunday, 11/6</b>  <b>Paper 2 (PHI 265): Due Sunday, 11/6</b></p>
Th 11/10	Racial profiling in policing: An introduction	What are the arguments in favor (and against) racial profiling implicit in these pieces from the popular press?	<p>1. Two short pieces from the popular press:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- R. Cohen, "Racism vs. Reality," <i>The Washington Post</i> (2013) [<a href="#">Link here.</a>]</li> <li>- T-N. Coates, "The Banality of Richard Cohen and Racist Profiling," <i>The Atlantic</i> (2013) [<a href="#">Link here.</a>]</li> </ul> <p>2. D. Harris, <i>Profiles in Injustice</i> (2002), Chapter 4, "The Hard Numbers: Why Racial Profiling Doesn't Add Up"</p>
Tu 11/15, Week 12	Arguments in favor, and against, racial profiling	Is racial profiling morally defensible?	M. Risse and R. Zeckhauser, "Racial Profiling" (2004)
Th 11/17			A. Lever, "Why Racial Profiling is Hard to Justify: A Response to Risse and Zeckhauser"
Tu 11/22, Week 13			J. Reiman, "Is Racial Profiling Just?: Making Criminal Justice Policy in the Original Position" (2011)
Th 11/24	<b>THANKSGIVING</b>		
Tu 11/29, Week 14	Stereotypes and the ethics of humor	What makes racist or sexist humor <i>wrong</i> ? Can people be held responsible, or blamed, for laughing at objectionable jokes? If so, how?	M. Bergmann, "How Many Feminists Does It Take To Make a Joke? Sexist Humor and What's Wrong With It" (1986)
Th 12/1	Stereotypes and the ethics of humor (continued)		M. Philips, "Racist Acts and Racist Humor" (1984)
			<p><b>Draft of Final Paper (PHI 440): Due Sunday, 12/4</b>  <b>Paper 3 (PHI 265): Due Sunday, 12/4</b></p>
Tu 12/6, Week 15	Choice of topic		

Th 12/8	Choice of topic/ wrap-up		
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**\* PHI 265 & PHI 440: Final Paper due December 19 (last day of finals), by 5 p.m.**