

PHIL 4621/6621: Political Epistemology

Instructor: Ege Yumuşak

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Office Hours: by appointment

Time: TR 1:45pm-3:14pm

Location: McNeil 410

The concepts of truth, belief, evidence, and knowledge are central to politics. Political epistemology is concerned with how we acquire knowledge as social beings and what we ought to believe as political subjects. In this course, we will be concerned with questions centered around living in a society with epistemic ailments—a society where individuals believe wrongly and social structures obscure knowledge. We will seek to better understand problems that arise from this condition by discussing psychological phenomena such as adaptive reasoning, linguistic tools such as propaganda, and the ideal of deliberative democracy.

While I won't presume past knowledge of these debates, the course will be rigorous with an ambitious reading load. Each week, you'll prepare responses to study questions in pairs. In addition, you will write one critical short paper (with an argument map) and one long paper.

Course Materials

All materials will be available online. We will read most chapters of Linda Zerilli's *Democratic Judgment*, Lea Ypi and Jonathan White's *The Meaning of Partisanship*, and Simone Weil's *On the Abolition of Political Parties*. You may purchase these books if you prefer owning books.

Grading

Participation (20% of course grade) – You are expected to attend every session having done the readings carefully. In addition to attendance, I expect you to engage in constructive philosophical dialogue. What we learn in this class will depend heavily on the quality and diversity of class discussion, especially discussion you generate by listening and responding to each other.

Presentation (20% of course grade) – Students will prepare responses to study questions and present them in class over the course of the semester.

Papers (midterm 25%, final paper 35% of course grade) – A short (4-5 pp) paper due at midterm (optional for graduate students); a longer paper due at the end of the semester (10-12 pages for undergraduates, 15-20 pages for graduate students). Both papers will include a cover page consisting of an argument map. Midterm is due the Friday before spring break (midnight); final paper is due May 4 (midnight).

Course Readings

Jan. 16 Intro meeting

Jan. 21 & 23 Hannah Arendt, "Lying in Politics. Reflections on the Pentagon Papers"; "On Politics and Truth", "Philosophy and Politics"

Jan. 28 & 30 Linda Zerilli, *Democratic Judgment*, Chapters 1 & 4

Feb. 4 & 6 John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason"; Cambridge Companion entry; David Enoch, "Political Philosophy and Epistemology: The Case of Public Reason"

Feb. 11 & 13 Linda Zerilli, Chapters 5 & 6

Feb. 18 & 20 Jürgen Habermas, "Deliberative Politics: A Procedural Concept of Democracy"; "Reconciliation through the Public Use of Reason: Remarks on John Rawls's Political Liberalism"; Rawls's reply to Habermas

Feb. 25 & 27 Gerry Mackie, "Does deliberation change minds?"; Christian List, "Democratic deliberation and social choice: a review"

Mar. 4 & 6 Linda Zerilli, Chapters 9 & conclusion

Mar. 18 & 20 Thomas Kelly, "Disagreement, Dogmatism, and Belief Polarization"; Emily McWilliams, "Evidentialism and Belief Polarization"; Bavel et al, "The Partisan Brain"

Mar. 25 & 27 White & Ypi, *The Meaning of Partisanship*, Chapters 1 & 3

Apr. 1 & 3 Dan Kahan, "Ideology, motivated reasoning, and cognitive reflection"; Iyengar et al, "The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States"; Westen et al, "Neural bases of motivational reasoning"

Apr. 8 & 10 White & Ypi, Chapters 4, 5, 7

Apr. 15 & 17 Jost et al, "System justification theory"; "Political Ideologies and their Social Psychological Functions"; Broockman et al, "Does Affective Polarization Undermine Democratic Norms or Accountability? Maybe Not"

Apr. 22 & 24 Jeremy Waldron, 'Political Political Theory: An Inaugural Lecture', White & Ypi, Chapter 10

Apr. 29 Weil, *On the Abolition of All Political Parties*