Philosophy 513/Topics in Recent and Contemporary Philosophy: Bias and Objectivity

Princeton University
Spring 2016
Wednesdays 5-7:50
Marx 201

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An examination of select philosophical issues related to the themes of bias and objectivity. A central focus will be on issues arising from the inevitable, but often inordinate, influence of our prior beliefs, preferences and theories on our subsequent judgments, decisions, and assessments of alternatives.

All readings listed below will be available on the Princeton blackboard site for the course under Course Materials. Schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructors.

1. February 3rd. Introduction/Course overview

2. February 10th. Status quo bias and the sunk cost fallacy


3. February 17th. Status quo bias and conservatism about value


4. **February 24th. Belief perseverance and conservatism in epistemology**


5. **March 2nd. Kuhn’s classic account of dogmatism and commitment in science**


Thomas Kuhn, “The Nature and Necessity of Scientific Revolutions” and “The Resolution of Revolutions.” Chapters IX and XII of his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

6. **March 9th. Kripke’s dogmatism paradox**


Gilbert Harman, excerpt from *Thought*. Please read pages 148-149 only.


March 16th—NO CLASS (Princeton University spring break)

7. **March 23rd. Biased assimilation of evidence and belief polarization**


8. March 30th. Bias and perceptual experience


9. April 6th. Irrelevant influences on belief


Miriam Schoenfield, “Permission To Believe: Why permissivism is true and what it tells us about irrelevant influences on belief.” *Noûs* 47 (1) 2013: 193-218.

10. April 13th. Biased intuitions and methodology in ethics


11. April 20th. Is it rational to discriminate against good-looking people?


12. April 27th. Reason-giving and rationalization
