

Philosophy 550: First Year Seminar

Princeton University
Fall 2022
Mondays 10am-12pm

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Overview. The seminar is divided into two parts, the first of which will last for the first four meetings of the semester, the second of which will last for the final eight. In the first part, we'll look at a handful of seminal works (in metaethics, epistemology, metaphysics, and the philosophy of language) from the second half of the 20th century that have proven to be of lasting significance for the subsequent development of philosophy in the broadly analytic tradition. These include J.L. Mackie's challenge to the objectivity of ethics (via arguments from disagreement and "queerness") and his error-theoretic account of moral discourse; Nelson Goodman's introduction of the method of reflective equilibrium, the new riddle of induction, and 'grue'; Edmund Gettier's decisive refutation of 'the traditional analysis of knowledge'; and Saul Kripke's stunning reversals of philosophical orthodoxies about the nature of necessity, the mechanisms of reference, and a number of related topics. It's understood that some participants in the seminar might be very familiar with these texts while other participants might be completely unfamiliar with them, but we'll approach them in a way that's calculated to provide a worthwhile intellectual experience for everyone, regardless of their level of prior familiarity.

In the second part of the seminar, we'll read a number of *very* recent papers. (All eight of the papers have appeared since 2019, or are yet to appear.) The organizing theme for this part of the seminar will be **norms**, but this will be understood broadly enough so as to cover cutting edge work on *legal proof* (Moss), *bias* (Kelly), *excuses* (Sliwa), *games* (Nguyen), *lying* (Berstler), *hope* (Chignell), *self-defense* (Bollinger), and *voting* (Barnett).

Some mechanics: Each week every student should do the assigned reading and write a *short* (2-3 double-spaced pages; no more than 750 words) paper focused on some aspect of the reading. Please e-mail your papers to me at the above address no later than 24 hours in advance of that week's meeting (i.e., by 10 am on the preceding Sunday). There is one book that you should purchase for the seminar if you don't already own it: Saul Kripke's *Naming and Necessity*. All other readings will be made available online or in some cases sent out via e-mail.

Schedule (subject to change at the discretion of the instructor)

Part 1

1. The Status of Ethics (9/12)

- Mackie, "The Subjectivity of Values." Chapter 1 of his *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (1977).

2. Knowledge, Induction, and Naturalness (9/19)

- Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" *Analysis* (1963).
- Goodman, "The New Riddle of Induction." In his *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast* (1955).

3. Necessity, Reference, etc. (9/26)

- Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (1970/1980), Lecture I.

4. Necessity, Reference, etc. (continued) (10/3)

- Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, Lecture II and Lecture III, up to p.144.

Part 2

5. Bias (10/10).

- Thomas Kelly, "Bias and Norms." Forthcoming in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*.

10/17 No Class, Fall Break

6. Legal Proof (10/24).

- Sarah Moss, "Knowledge and Legal Proof." Forthcoming in the 2023 volume of *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*. Winner of the 2019 Marc Sanders Prize.

7. Excuses (10/31).

- Paulina Sliwa, "The Power of Excuses." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (2019).

8. Games (11/7)

- C. Thi Nguyen, "Games and the Art of Agency" (2019). Reprinted in *The Philosopher's Annual*, as one of 'the ten best papers published in 2019.'

9. Lying (11/14)

- Sam Berstler, "What's the Good of Language? On the Moral Distinction Between Lying and Misleading." *Ethics* (2019).

10. Hoping (11/21)

- Andrew Chignell, "The Focus Theory of Hope." *The Philosophical Quarterly* (2022).

11. Voting (11/28)

- Zach Barnett. "Why You Should Vote to Change the Outcome." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (2020). Reprinted in *The Philosopher's Annual* as 'one of the ten best papers from the literature of 2020.'

12. Self-defense (12/5)

- Rene Jorgensen Bollinger, "The Moral Grounds of Reasonably Mistaken Self-Defense," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (2020). Reprinted in *The Philosopher's Annual* as 'one of the ten best papers from the literature of 2020.'