

Philosophy 290: Objectivity

Spring 2023

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Office Hours: Thursday 12-2pm

Seminar overview

This seminar will examine various conceptions of objectivity as they pertain to issues in metaphysics, epistemology, meaning, and ethics. These issues include whether the world has an objective, perspectival-independent nature; whether there are objectively correct and incorrect methods by which to form beliefs or achieve scientific consensus; whether utterances (or thoughts) have meanings (or contents) independent of their interpretations; and whether there are objectively correct and incorrect ways to live. While these are a disparate collection of topics, one aim of the seminar is to look at whether and how conceptions of objectivity in one domain bear on those in others.

Readings

Specific topics and weekly reading selections will be drawn from the reference list below and tailored to the interests of seminar participants. All reading selections will be made available as PDF documents through the bCourses site. Each week, please read the selections and post a question or comment on the material in bCourses by Sunday evening before the seminar.

Coursework

EITHER one substantial (5000-7000 word) paper OR one shorter (3000-4000 word) paper + a class presentation. All papers due by Friday May 12th (last day of the semester). You may work at your own pace but here is a suggested timeline:

- By March 31st: meet with me to discuss preliminary ideas
- By April 14th: submit a paper plan for comments
- By April 28th: submit a first draft for comments

List of potential topics and readings

1. Is structure objective?

Dasgupta, Shamik. Manuscript. "Objectivity as a Normative Notion". (19 pages)

Sider, Ted. 2011. *Writing the Book of the World*, Chapter 1: "Structure". (8 pages)

Sider, Ted. 2011. *Writing the Book of the World*, Chapter 4: "Substantivity". (23 pages)

Williams, Bernard. 1985. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Chapter 8: "Knowledge, Science, Convergence". (23 pages)

2. Is truth objective?

Dasgupta, Shamik. Manuscript. "Undoing the Truth Fetish: The Normative Path to Pragmatism". (31 pages)

Field, Hartry. 1994. "Deflationist Views of Meaning and Content", *Mind* 103(411): 249-285. (36 pages)

Field, Hartry. 2001. "Attributions of Meaning and Content", in *Truth and the Absence of Fact* pp. 157-174. (17 pages)

Field, Hartry. 1982. "Realism and Relativism". *The Journal of Philosophy* 79(10): 553-567. (13 pages)

Lewis, David. 1984. "Putnam's Paradox", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 62(3): 221-236. (15 pages)

Putnam, Hilary. 1981. *Realism, Truth, and History*, Chapter 2: "A Problem About Reference". (26 pages)

Putnam, Hilary. 1981. *Realism, Truth, and History*, Chapter 3: "Two Philosophical Perspectives". (25 pages)

Putnam, Hilary. 1990. *Realism With a Human Face*, Chapter 1: "Realism With a Human Face", Part II: Relativism. (11 pages)

Putnam, Hilary. 1990. *Realism With a Human Face*, Chapter 2: "A Defense of Internal Realism". (12 pages)

Putnam, Hilary. 1982. "Reply to Two Realists", *The Journal of Philosophy* 79(10): 575-577. (3 pages)

Sider, Ted. 2011. *Writing the Book of the World*, Chapter 3: "Connections". (22 pages)

3. Is reality objective?

Dasgupta, Shamik. 2015. "Inexpressible Ignorance", *Philosophical Review* 124(4): 441-480. (39 pages)

Hofweber, Thomas. 2019. "Idealism and the Harmony of Thought and Reality", *Mind* 128(511): 699-734. (36 pages)

Nagel, Thomas. 1986. *The View From Nowhere*, Chapter 6: "Thought and Reality". (19 pages)

4. Is subjectivity real?

Nagel, Thomas. 1986. *The View From Nowhere*, Chapter 1: "Mind". (14 pages)

Fine, Kit. 2005. "Tense and Reality", in *Modality and Tense: Philosophical Papers*, pp. 261-320. (59 pages)

Fine, Kit. 2006. "The Reality of Tense", *Synthese* 150(3): 399-414. (16 pages)

5. Are there objective epistemic reasons?

Anderson, Elizabeth. 1995. "Knowledge, Human Interests, and Objectivity in Feminist Epistemology", *Philosophical Topics* 23(2): 27-58. (31 pages)

Boghossian, Paul. 2001. "How Are Objective Epistemic Reasons Possible?", *Philosophical Studies* 106: 1-40. (40 pages)

Douglas, Heather. 2016. "Values in Science", in *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Science*, edited by Paul Humphreys. (21 pages)

Field, Hartry. 2009. "Epistemology Without Metaphysics", *Philosophical Studies* 143: 249-290. (41 pages)

Kuhn, Thomas. 1974. "Objectivity, Value Judgment, and Theory Choice", in *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in the Scientific Tradition and Change*. (12 pages)

Lacy, Hugh. 1999. *Is Science Value Free? Values and Scientific Understanding*, Chapter 3: "Cognitive Values". (21 pages)

Longino, Helen. 1990. *Science as Social Knowledge: Values and Objectivity in Scientific Inquiry*, Chapter 2: "Methodology, Goals, and Practices". (22 pages)

Longino, Helen. 1990. *Science as Social Knowledge: Values and Objectivity in Scientific Inquiry*, Chapter 3: "Evidence and Hypothesis". (24 pages)

- Longino, Helen. 1990. *Science as Social Knowledge: Values and Objectivity in Scientific Inquiry*, Chapter 4: “Values and Objectivity”. (21 pages)
- Longino, Helen. 1995. “Gender, Politics, and the Theoretical Virtues”, *Synthese* 104(3): 383-397. (14 pages)
- Longino, Helen. 1996. “Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Values in Science: Rethinking the Dichotomy”, in *Feminism, Science, and the Philosophy of Science*, edited by Nelson and Nelson. (19 page)
- Misak, Cheryl. 2000. *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and deliberation*, Chapter 2: “Truth, Inquiry and Experience: A Pragmatist Epistemology”. (54 pages)
- Putnam, Hilary. 1981. *Reason, Truth, and History*, Chapter 5: “Two Conceptions of Rationality”. (23 pages)
- Putnam, Hilary. 1981. *Reason, Truth, and History*, Chapter 6: “Fact and Value”. (22 pages)
- Rorty, Richard. 1991. “Solidarity or Objectivity?”, in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*. (14 pages)

6. Are there objective practical reasons?

- Dasgupta, Shamik. Manuscript. “The Meta-ethics of Artificial Intelligence: Are We Beholden to Normative Joins?”. (28 pages)
- Eklund, Matti. 2017. *Choosing Normative Concepts*, Chapter 1: “Ardent Realism”. (17 pages)
- Eklund, Matti. 2017. *Choosing Normative Concepts*, Chapter 2: “Alternative Normative Concepts”. (27 pages)
- Korsgaard, Christine. 2008. “Realism and Constructivism in Twentieth-Century Moral Philosophy”, in *The Constitution of Agency*. (24 pages)
- Putnam, Hilary. 1992. “Bernard Williams and the Absolute Conception of the World”, in *Renewing Philosophy*. (27 pages)
- Sepielli, Andrew. 2021. “Quietism and Counter-Normativity”, *Ergo* 7.
- Williams, Bernard. 1985. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Chapter 8: “Knowledge, Science, Convergence”. (23 pages)
- Williams, Bernard. 1985. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Chapter 9: “Relativism and Reflection”. (18 pages)