

PHIL 330: Social and Political Philosophy

2022-23 Summer Term 2: July 4 – August 11, 2023

Tuesdays 10am-1pm

Thursdays 10am-1pm

UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on in their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site. This acknowledgment represents an active dedication to more just, more accountable relations.

Instructor

Dr. Celia Edell

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Course Description:

The internet is an integral part of the modern era. It has reshaped our identities, relationships, and social-political environment. Living in an internet era raises unique philosophical questions about the social effects and political significance of our online lives. For example, what is (social) identity in the internet age? How do we relate to time/space/people differently online? What are the political costs of deepfakes and echo chambers? Are real friendships possible online? Is it ethical to participate in the public shaming of people online? Do social networks help or hinder political action in our modern world?

This course gives you the opportunity to do philosophy yourself, including bettering your skills at close reading, imaginative and critical thinking, participating in philosophical inquiry and discussion, and in argumentative writing.

By the end of the course, students will be familiar with a range of concepts, arguments, and debates within the emerging field of social and political philosophies of the internet. Students are expected to read the required readings prior to the lectures and to come prepared to analyze the relevant literatures and arguments in discussions and in written assessments.

Pre-requisite: PHIL 230 is strongly recommended.

Details of the Course:

Schedule for each three-hour meeting:

10am-11am: lecture by the instructor

11am-1130am: peer-sharing of QFCs

11.30am-11.45am: break

11.45am-12.50pm: case study and discussion

Assessments of Learning:

Questions for Consideration (QFC): 30 points, with each QFC worth 2.5 points. Every class (twice a week), students will register their attendance in class by handing in a 'Question for

Consideration' at the end of class. This is the only way that attendance will be counted, even if it is only a piece of paper with one's name on it. The purpose of the QFC is to generate class discussion. A QFC will include: (1) a sentence/passage from the text and (2) a philosophical question about the selection or its context. More details will be given in our first class on how to complete this assignment. These will be graded according to the choice of quotation and the critical question raised, contextualized with reference to broader themes in the reading and the course. This should not be longer than 250 words (not including the quoted passage).

Midterm exam: 30 points, to be completed and submitted on Canvas between the dates of July 24-28th. The exam will include short answer questions covering content from the first half of the course (1 paragraph answer each), and a personal reflection essay question (approx. 500 words). The short answer questions will be graded on accuracy and clarity. The essay question will be graded on (1) its connection/relevance to class content, (2) depth in addressing the complexity of the chosen topic, and (3) clarity.

Final essay: 40 points, a 2000-word essay in response to an assigned question. The questions will relate to the material covered in the course. The word limit does not include footnotes or bibliography. You may exceed the word limit by 10% without penalty. Beyond that, points will be deducted. Essays should be typed in Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, double spaced. Please follow a recognized reference style. The essays will be graded according to four criteria: (1) argument and analysis, (2) understanding and interpretation of the literature, (3) structure and organization, and (4) quality of writing (i.e., prose, referencing, bibliography, spelling, grammar, and presentation). The final essay is due on Monday August 14 2023. After that, five points will be deducted each day for lateness. If you have a personal reason (e.g., illness, family concern) to request an extension, please contact me before the deadline to arrange an alternative submission date. Non-submission will result in 0 points.

Schedule of Readings:

Week 1: Online identity

July 4: Stokes, Patrick. (2021). "Online identity". *Digital Souls: A Philosophy of Online Death*, pp. 31–52. London: Bloomsbury Academic. (22 pages)

July 6: Wolfendale, Jessica. (2017), "My avatar, my self: Virtual harm and attachment". *Ethics and Information Technology* 9: 111-119. (9 pages)

Week 2: Privacy and surveillance

July 11: Müller, Vincent (2006), "Some information is too dangerous to be on the internet", *Computers and Society*, Volume 36:1. (11 pages)

July 13: Duffy, Brooke Erin, and Ngai Keung Chan (2019), "'You never really know who's looking': Imagined surveillance across social media platforms", *New Media & Society* 21:1, pp. 119-138. (20 pages)

Week 3: Social-epistemic practices

July 18: Nguyen, C Thi (2018), "Escape the echo chamber". *Aeon*. (13 pages)
<https://aeon.co/essays/why-its-as-hard-to-escape-an-echo-chamber-as-it-is-to-flee-a-cult>.

July 20: Rini, Regina (2020), “Deepfakes and the Epistemic Backstop”, *Philosophers’ Imprint* vol. 20, no. 24. (16 pages)

Week 4: Relationality

July 25: Brincker, Maria (2021). “Disoriented and alone in the “experience machine” - On Netflix, shared world deceptions and the consequences of deepening algorithmic personalization.” *SATS* 22 (1):75-96. (22 pages)

July 27: Elder, Alexis M. (2017), “Humans Aren’t Cows: An Aristotelian Defense of Technologically Mediated Friendship”. *Friendship, Robots, and Social Media*. Routledge Press. (23 pages)

Week 5: Accountability

August 1: Norlock, Kathryn (2017), “Online Shaming”. *Social Philosophy Today* 33:187-197 (15 pages)

August 3: Matheson, Benjamin (forthcoming). “Fame and Redemption: On the Moral Dangers of Celebrity Apologies”. *Journal of Social Philosophy*. (34 pages)

Week 6: Political actions and rights

August 8: Cole, Alyson, & Atuk, Sumru (2019). “What’s in a Hashtag? Feminist Terms for Tweeting in Alliance”. *philoSOPHIA* 9(1), 26-52. (27 pages)

August 10: Reglitz, Merten (2020). “The Human Right to Free Internet Access”, *Journal of Applied Philosophy* Vol. 37:2. (16 pages)

Grading Standards

Specific grading guidelines for essays will be provided later in the course and will be available on the course website.

- 80% to 100% (A- to A+) Exceptional performance: strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
- 68% to 79% (B- to B+) Competent performance: evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.
- 50% to 67% (D to C+) Adequate performance: understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material; acceptable but uninspired work, not seriously faulty but lacking style and vigour.
- 00% to 49% (F) Inadequate performance: little or no evidence of understanding of the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature.

Marks in this course may be scaled (see Calendar, under Grading Practices).

Further reading:

The following range of further readings is provided as background material on the topics covered in the course. These lists are not exhaustive, but offer related traditional readings in the philosophical canon, as well as a few relevant directions of philosophical inquiry. An online resource that provides useful background material on a range of topics is The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://plato.stanford.edu/>). This resource does not replace original texts. Do not cite this source when you could and should read and cite the original work.

Some readings on personal identity and responsibility

- Parfit, Derek. 1995, 'The Unimportance of Identity', in *Identity*, H. Harris (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press; reprinted in Martin and Barresi 2003.
- Locke, John, 1975, "On Identity and Diversity", *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. Nidditch, Oxford: Clarendon Press (original work, 2nd ed., first published 1694); partly reprinted in Perry 1975
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony (1990). "But would that still be me? Notes on Gender, 'Race,' Ethnicity as Sources of Identity". *Journal of Philosophy* 87 (10):75-81.
- Polder-Verkiel, Saskia (2010), "Online Responsibility: Bad Samaritanism and the Influence of Internet Mediation", *Sci Eng Ethics*. 2012 Mar;18(1):117-41.

Some readings on privacy and surveillance

- Bentham, Jeremy (2011). *The Panopticon Writings*. Verso Books.
- Foucault, Michel (1975). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Vintage Books.
- Moore, Alfred. (2018), "Anonymity, Pseudonymity, and Deliberation: Why Not Everything Should Be Connected". *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 26:2, 169-192.
- Marmor, Andrei (2021), "Privacy in Social Media", *The Oxford Handbook of Digital Ethics*.
- Venkatesh, Nikhil (2021), "Surveillance Capitalism: a Marx-inspired account". *Philosophy* 96 (3):359-385.

Some readings on social epistemology

- Goldman, Alvin I. (2010). Why social epistemology is real epistemology. In Adrian Haddock, Alan Millar & Duncan Pritchard (eds.), *Social Epistemology*. Oxford University Press, Usa. pp. 1-29.
- Jennifer Lackey (2010). "Testimony: Acquiring Knowledge from Others" In Alvin I. Goldman & Dennis Whitcomb (eds.), *Social Epistemology: Essential Readings*. Oxford University Press.
- Sullivan, Shannon & Nancy Tuana (eds.), (2007). *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*. Albany, NY: State Univ of New York Pr.
- Nguyen, C. Thi (2018), "Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles", *Episteme* 17:2, pp
- Frost-Arnold, Karen. (2023), *Who Should We Be Online? A Social Epistemology for the Internet*. New York, US: OUP USA.

Some readings on relationality

- Aristotle. (2002). *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Joe Sachs. Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, R. Pullins Company.
- Cooper, J.M. 'Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship'. *Review of Metaphysics* 30 (1976) 619-48.
- Stroud, Sarah. (2006). Epistemic Partiality in Friendship. *Ethics*, 116(3), 498–524.
- Brownlee, Kimberley (2013). “A Human Right Against Social Deprivation”. *Philosophical Quarterly* 63 (251):199-222.
- Briggles, Adam (2008), “Real friends: how the Internet can foster friendship”, *Ethics and Information Technology* 10:71-79

Some readings on accountability and apology

- Aristotle. (2002). *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Joe Sachs. Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, R. Pullins Company.
- Cua, Antonio S. (2003). “The Ethical Significance of Shame: Insights of Aristotle and Xunzi.” *Philosophy East and West* 53.2 (April), 147–202
- Williams, Bernard. (1993). *Shame and Necessity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Brownlee, Kimberley. (2016). “Don’t Call People ‘Rapists’: on the Social Contribution Injustice of Punishment”, *Current Legal Problems*, Volume 69, Issue 1, 2016, 327–352.
- Wringle, Bill (2013). “Must Punishment Be Intended to Cause Suffering?” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 16 (4):863-877.
- Norlock, Kathryn J. (2017). Online Shaming. *Social Philosophy Today* 33:187-197.

Some readings on political action and rights

- Hobbes, Thomas (2006). *Leviathan*. In Aloysius Martinich, Fritz Allhoff & Anand Vaidya (eds.), *Early Modern Philosophy: Essential Readings with Commentary*. Blackwell.
- Young, Iris Marion (2006). “Responsibility and global justice: A social connection model.” *Social Philosophy and Policy* 23 (1):102-130.
- Brownlee, Kimberley (2012). *Conscience and Conviction: The Case for Civil Disobedience*. Oxford University Press UK.
- Zheng, Robin (2019). “What Kind of Responsibility Do We Have for Fighting Injustice? A Moral-Theoretic Perspective on the Social Connections Model.” *Critical Horizons* 20 (2):109-126.

University Policies

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic

standards in all of their actions.

Details of the policies and how to access support are available on [the UBC Senate website](#).

Academic Integrity

The academic enterprise is founded on honesty, civility, and integrity. As members of this enterprise, all students are expected to know, understand, and follow the codes of conduct regarding academic integrity. At the most basic level, this means submitting only original work done by you and acknowledging all sources of information or ideas and attributing them to others as required. This also means you should not cheat, copy, or mislead others about what is your work. Violations of academic integrity (i.e., misconduct) lead to the breakdown of the academic enterprise, and therefore serious consequences arise and harsh sanctions are imposed. For example, incidences of plagiarism or cheating may result in a mark of zero on the assignment or exam and more serious consequences may apply when the matter is referred to the Office of the Dean. Careful records are kept in order to monitor and prevent recurrences. A more detailed description of academic integrity, including the University's policies and procedures, may be found in the UBC Calendar: Student Conduct and Discipline.

Academic Accommodation

Academic accommodations help students with a disability or ongoing medical condition overcome challenges that may affect their academic success. Students requiring academic accommodations must register with the Centre for Accessibility (previously known as Access & Diversity). The Centre will determine that student's eligibility for accommodations in accordance with Policy LR7: Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities. Academic accommodations are not determined by your instructors, and instructors should not ask you about the nature of your disability or ongoing medical condition, or request copies of your disability documentation. However, your instructor may consult with the Centre for Accessibility should the accommodations affect the essential learning outcomes of a course.

Equity and special arrangements:

I will do my best to ensure that all students have a fair and equitable opportunity for participation and success in the course. If you need accommodations to complete your coursework please speak with the Access and Diversity office, if you haven't already: <https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/access-diversity> If you have religious obligations that conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations, these can be accommodated as well. See the university policy on religious holidays at: <http://www.universitycounsel.ubc.ca/policies/policy65.pdf>. Please let me know in advance, preferably in the first week of class, if you will require any accommodation due to religious obligations. If you need to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments, please discuss those with Celia before the drop date, as these do not fall under official accommodations by the university.