

PHIL 742 | BAYESIAN PERSPECTIVES ON EPISTEMIC VALUE

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In this class we'll be looking at truth-guided approaches to epistemology, particularly from a Bayesian perspectives. Possible questions we'll consider include: What work is there to be done by a theory of epistemic value? Can a theory of epistemic value give support to epistemic norms? (If so, are there norms beyond norms of formal coherence that can be grounded in such a theory? Can a theory of epistemic value be put to use to give an account of the rationality of conceptual change?) Should we think of epistemic rationality on the model of our best theories of practical rationality? Should a theory of epistemic value be sensitive to anything beyond truth and accuracy considerations? What are the loci of epistemic value?

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Meetings: M 12.30–15.00, Bartlett 374

Course website: <http://perezcarballo.org/phil742>

Office hours: CJGM: W 3.15-4.15; APC: TH 11.15-12.15

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Feel free to stop by either of our offices if you want to talk about the readings for the class, or if you have an idea (or a proto-idea, for that matter) you would like to bounce off one of us. If you can't make it to our office hours, email us so we can arrange to meet at some other time.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & EXPECTATIONS

It is a good idea to think of the seminar—whether or not you are enrolled for credit—as a reading group of which you are an active participant.

Students enrolled in this course for credit will have to submit a term paper. You should meet with one of us to discuss your paper topic. This should happen by November 21 at the latest. In addition to the term paper, you will be expected to submit four questions before each class on one of the main readings for that meeting, *unless you*

hear otherwise. Questions will be due on Friday before the meeting where we will discuss the relevant reading. Think of these as the kind of questions you would ask during a Q&A with the author.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Subject to change. All readings will be made available in electronic format. Optional readings are marked with an asterisk.

Foundations and motivation

- 09.09 Epistemic rationality as instrumental rationality
Kelly, “Epistemic Rationality as Instrumental Rationality: A Critique” // Kornblith, “Epistemic normativity”
- 09.16 Is truth overrated? *Elgin visits the seminar.*
Elgin, “True Enough” // Grimm, “The Value of Understanding”*
- 09.23 Epistemic norms: process or state requirements?
Kolodny, “How Does Coherence Matter?”
- 09.30 Challenges to a value-based approach to epistemic normativity
Berker, “The Rejection of Epistemic Consequentialism” // Berker, “Epistemic Teleology and the Separateness of Propositions”*
- 10.07 Challenges to a value-based approach to epistemic normativity
Stalnaker, “Epistemic Consequentialism”

A Bayesian framework

- 10.14 Refresher: the Bayesian toolkit
TBD
- 10.21 Accuracy and probabilism
Joyce, “Accuracy and Coherence: Prospects for an Alethic Epistemology of Partial Belief” // Joyce, “A Nonpragmatic Vindication of Probabilism”*
- 10.28 Accuracy and probabilism (cont’d)
Pettigrew, “Epistemic utility and norms for credence” // Pettigrew, “Epistemic Utility Arguments for Probabilism”*
- 11.04 Cognitive decision theory
Greaves, “Epistemic Decision Theory”

Applications

- 11.11 Rational incoherence. *Caie visits the seminar*
Caie, “Rational probabilistic incoherence”
- 11.18 The Principal Principle
Pettigrew, “A New Epistemic Utility Argument for the Principal Principle” // Pettigrew, “Accuracy, Chance, and the Principal Principle”*
- 11.25 The cost of inquiry
Buchak, “Instrumental Rationality, Epistemic Rationality, and Evidence-Gathering” // Good, “On the Principle of Total Evidence”*
- 12.02 Explanatory value
Pérez Carballo, “Good questions” // Skyrms, *Pragmatics and Empiricism*, chs. TBD

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Berker, S. **Epistemic Teleology and the Separateness of Propositions**. *Philosophical Review* 122.3 (2013), pp. 337–393.
- **The Rejection of Epistemic Consequentialism**. *Philosophical Issues* (forthcoming).
- Buchak, L. **Instrumental Rationality, Epistemic Rationality, and Evidence-Gathering**. *Philosophical Perspectives* 24.1 (2010), pp. 85–120.
- Caie, M. **Rational probabilistic incoherence**. *Philosophical Review* (forthcoming).
- Elgin, C. Z. **True Enough**. *Philosophical Issues* 14.1 (2004), pp. 113–131.
- Good, I. J. **On the Principle of Total Evidence**. *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 17.4 (1967), pp. 319–321.
- Greaves, H. **Epistemic Decision Theory**. Unpublished typescript. 2011.
- Grimm, S. **The Value of Understanding**. *Philosophy Compass* 7.2 (2012), pp. 103–117.
- Joyce, J. M. **A Nonpragmatic Vindication of Probabilism**. *Philosophy of Science* 65.4 (1998), pp. 575–603.
- **Accuracy and Coherence: Prospects for an Alethic Epistemology of Partial Belief**. In: *Degrees of Belief*. Ed. by F. Huber and C. Schmidt-Petri. Vol. 342. Synthese Library. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2009. Chap. 10, pp. 263–297.
- Kelly, T. **Epistemic Rationality as Instrumental Rationality: A Critique**. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 66.3 (2003), pp. 612–640.
- Kolodny, N. **How Does Coherence Matter?** *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 107.1pt3 (2007), pp. 229–263.
- Kornblith, H. **Epistemic normativity**. *Synthese* 94.3 (1993), pp. 357–376.
- Pérez Carballo, A. **Good questions**. In preparation.
- Pettigrew, R. **Epistemic Utility Arguments for Probabilism**. In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by E. N. Zalta. Winter 2011. 2011.
- **Accuracy, Chance, and the Principal Principle**. *Philosophical Review* 121.2 (2012), pp. 241–275.
- **A New Epistemic Utility Argument for the Principal Principle**. *Episteme* 10.01 (2013), pp. 19–35.
- **Epistemic utility and norms for credence**. *Philosophy Compass* (forthcoming).
- Skyrms, B. *Pragmatics and Empiricism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.
- Stalnaker, R. C. **Epistemic Consequentialism**. *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 76.1 (2002), pp. 153–168.