

Philosophy 169E  
Fall 2022  
Student Success Center, 216  
TR 12:30-1:50pm

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Office hours TR 2-3pm o.b.a.

## The Value of Truth



*From “Susanna and the Elders”, by Artemisia Gentileschi, 1610*

This course examines a number of doctrines and debates concerning the nature and value of truth—doctrines and debates that exist at the intersection of ethics, the theory of knowledge, and the philosophy of language. What’s valuable, in private life and in public, about believing and speaking the truth? What’s problematic about false beliefs or speaking falsely? When and how are truth-respecting character traits—the disposition to acquire and retain true beliefs while avoiding and shedding false ones (call it accuracy), for example, the disposition to assert only things that one actually believes (sincerity), or the disposition to share beliefs that might be of interest to others rather than keeping them to oneself (candor)—*virtues*?

## Requirements

### Reading and lectures

Carefully reading the assigned texts is important in this course. The lectures go beyond the content of the assigned readings. Regular attendance at lecture is expected, and participation is encouraged.

If you anticipate logistical difficulties being able to regularly attend lecture, let us know and we will try to work something out.

Students should exercise courtesy to their instructors and fellow classmates by avoiding the use of distracting applications during lecture, including email, web browsing, chat programs, etc.

## **Short reflections**

Twice during the quarter, you'll be asked to write a short reflection paper on one of the readings. These reflections should be less than a single page long and should present a comment or a question that I'll try to integrate into lecture. These two reflections will account for 10% of your final grade.

## **Midterm essay**

You'll write a short midterm essay (1200-1500 or so words in length). The essay will account for 40% of your final grade. I'll be handing out possible midterm essay topics in advance.

## **Final essay**

You'll write a final essay (2000-2500 or so words in length). The essay will account for 50% of your final grade. You'll have the option of designing your own paper topic or of writing on one of several possible topics of my design. If you plan to do the former, you'll need to consult me well in advance of the paper's due date.

## **Late Assignments**

Late writing assignments will be penalized one third of one letter grade (i.e., A- becomes B+) every 24 hours, starting ten minutes after the deadline. Exceptions to the lateness policy will be made only in cases I deem exceptional.

## **Accessible Education Information**

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations should submit their request for accommodations to the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) as soon as possible, as it may take up to two weeks for the SDRC to review the request. You can request a letter of accommodation on the R'Ability website.

For more information, please visit the SDRC website ([www.sdrc.ucr.edu](http://www.sdrc.ucr.edu)), visit the CAE at 1228 Student Services Building, or contact them by phone at (951) 827-3861.

# Texts

## Required Book

Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, New edition, 2004). / ISBN-10: 0691117918

## Optional Books

Blackburn, Simon, *Truth: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Allen Lane, 2005)

## Schedule of Topics<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Varieties of deception

1. Michel de Montaigne, from “On Liars” and “On Giving the Lie” (1580), in *Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Charles Cotton (London: Reeves and Turner, 1877).
2. Harry Frankfurt, “On Bullshit”, in his *The Importance of What We Care About: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge UP, 1998).

### 2. Ethics of belief

1. William Clifford, from “The Ethics of Belief” (1877), Part I, in *Lectures and Essays*, ed. Leslie Stephen and Frederick Pollock (London: Macmillan, 1886).
2. William James, from “The Will to Believe”, *The New World*, Vol. 5 (1896): pp. 327-347.
3. Simon Blackburn, *Truth: A Guide*, chapter 1 (*optional*)

### 3. Truth: Finding and making

1. William James, from “Pragmatism’s Conception of Truth”, *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, 4:6 (1907), pp. 141-143.
2. Richard Rorty, from “Relativism: Finding and Making,” in his *Philosophy and Social Hope* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), pp. xvi-xxvii.
3. Paul Boghossian, “Constructing the Facts” and related texts from *Fear of Knowledge: Against Relativism and Constructivism* (Oxford UP 2006), pp. 19-41.
4. Blackburn, chapter 6 (*optional*)

### 4. Life and truth

1. Selected writings of Friedrich Nietzsche:

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<sup>1</sup> Schedule is subject to change

- i. §§1-9 of *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (1886), eds. Rolf-Peter Horstmann & Judith Norman; trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge UP, 2002)
  - ii. §110 and §344 of *The Gay Science, with a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* (1882), ed. Bernard Williams; trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge UP, 2001)
  - iii. §§1-3 of *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* (1874), in *Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale; trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge UP, 1997).
  - iv. “How the ‘Real World’ Finally Became a Fable”, in *Twilight of the Idols, or How to Philosophize with a Hammer* (1888), trans. Duncan Large (Oxford UP, 1998).
- 2. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, chap. 1.
  - 3. Blackburn, chapter 4 (optional)

#### 5. Genealogy of truth and the “state of nature”

- 1. David Hume, from III.2.1-2 (from “Of Justice and Injustice”), in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1738), ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon, 1888/1960)
- 2. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, chap. 2
- 3. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, chap. 3
- 4. Optional: Richard Dawkins, “Memes: The New Replicators,” in his *The Selfish Gene* (1976), 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition (Oxford UP, 2006).

#### 6. Truth, assertion, and belief

- 1. Williams, chap. 4.
- 2. Timothy Williamson, “Assertion” §§11.1-11.3, in his *Knowledge and its Limits* (Oxford UP, 2000), pp. 238-255.

#### 7. Sincerity

- 1. Christine Korsgaard, “Two Arguments against Lying”, in her *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge UP, 1996), pp. 335-362.
- 2. Williams, chap. 5.

#### 8. Accuracy

- 1. Rorty, “Is Truth a Goal of Inquiry?” in his *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers (Volume 3)* (Cambridge UP, 1991), pp. 19-42, esp. pp. 26-29.
- 2. Williams, chap. 6.
- 3. Optional: Primo Levi, “Iron”, from *The Periodic Table*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), pp. 40-52.

## 9. Scientific Truth, Accuracy in Science

1. Max Weber, from “Science as a Vocation” (1918), in *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. and ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Oxford UP, 1946), pp. 129-156.
2. Helen Longino, “Values and Objectivity” from *Science as Social Knowledge: Values and Objectivity in Scientific Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990)
3. Blackburn, chapter 7 (*optional*)

## 10. Historical Truth, Accuracy in History

1. Thucydides, Book 1 §§1-21 of *The War of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians*, ed. and trans. Jeremy Mynott (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013), pp. 3-15.
2. Williams, chap. 7
3. Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt & Margaret Jacob, “Truth and Objectivity” from *Telling the Truth About History* (New York: Norton, 1994)
4. Blackburn, chapter 8 (*optional*)

## 11. Developments in Sincerity: Authenticity and Candor

1. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Fourth Walk”, in *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (1782), trans. Peter France (London: Penguin Books, 2004).
2. Denis Diderot, *Rameau’s Nephew* (1805), see esp. pp. 45-48, 70-79, 108-111.
3. Harry Frankfurt, “The Faintest Passion,” in his *Necessity, Volition, and Love* (Cambridge UP, 1999).
4. Williams, chap. 8

## 12. Truth and political liberalism

1. Judith Shklar, “The Liberalism of Fear”, in *Political Thought and Political Thinkers*, ed. Stanley Hofmann (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 1-20.
2. Williams, chaps. 9-10