

IMAGINATIVE CAPACITIES AND LIMITATIONS IN MORAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Seminar in Topics: Philosophy of Psychology, 16:730:676
Fall 2023, Wednesday: 10am – 1pm
Rutgers University – New Brunswick, 106 Somerset Street, 5th Floor Seminar Room
Canvas Page: <https://rutgers.instructure.com/courses/246945>

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In this course we will explore the ways in which imagination both enables and constrains our engagement with other people. Standard philosophical methodology focuses on the causal roles and normative status of belief and desire, and downplays ‘non-propositional’ states like imagination, emotion, and interpretation. But these ‘other’ states also occupy a pervasive role in our cognitive and social lives. We will focus especially on perspectival imagination: trying on an alternative point of view, orientation, or standpoint while holding (relatively) fixed how one takes the world to be.

We’ll begin by surveying some key theoretical notions of perspective in cognition, epistemology and social theory, and how they contribute to explaining interpersonal interaction. How do mind-reading and empathy support and distort our understanding other persons? In the second part of the course, we’ll explore normative and practical implications for moral and political life. Regarding moral engagement, we will focus on implications for respect, consent and love. Regarding politics, we will consider what existing democratic institutions require of us (and our imaginative capacities), and what practices and reforms might be needed to support and sustain democracy, as well as implications for imagining and inaugurating alternative political structures.

Readings will be drawn from a range of traditions and subdisciplines, ranging from cognitive science to critical theory; no one will be expert in all of them. Fostering a conversation that brings these views into productive conversation requires charity, humility, and respect. Everyone should read both required readings each week. There is no expectation that anyone (including the instructors) will have read the ‘other’ readings: these are optional avenues for further exploration. But please do bring them into the discussion if you do read them! Just be prepared to explain their relevance briefly and accessibly.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Active reading, weekly posting, & engaged in-class participation (25% of total grade).

By **Tuesday at 10 AM**, everyone should post a **brief** question about one of the two assigned readings on the **weekly forum**. The post must discuss something you genuinely don’t understand, and should be anchored in a specific part of the text. (Not a fancy counterexample or a general rant.)

Undergraduates are expected to meet and discuss the reading together in advance of class, and to post a collective comment/question to the forum.

- Writing: **Research option:** 20–25-page paper; c. 7000 words (50% of total grade). **DUE 12/22**
Ideally, a paper with the shape and feel of a publishable article.

Non-research option: 6-page focused analysis or ‘squib’.

- For **all registered students:** a final presentation (10-minute presentation, 10-minute discussion; 25% of total grade). **DUE 12/13**

A ‘dry run’ of your paper; it should engage critically with and build in a productive way on one of the assigned readings and use a handout or PowerPoint to aid presentation.

- Auditors are welcome and are expected to do the reading and post comment/questions.

ACCESSIBILITY

We want this class to be a great experience for all of you, and all of you are entitled to equal access to educational opportunities at Rutgers. Students with disabilities are encouraged to speak with us and/or to avail themselves of the services provided by the Office of Disability Services if that would be helpful: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the Rutgers University policies on plagiarism and academic integrity. Penalties for violations of these policies can be severe, including an automatic failing grade for the course and worse. This document provides a comprehensive overview of those policies:

<https://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/current.pdf>

PLAN FOR COURSE AND READINGS		
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Date	Topic	Readings
9/6	Interpretation and Imagination Intro; Interpretive Perspectives	<u>Required Readings:</u> Elisabeth Camp: “Perspectives and Frames in Pursuit of Ultimate Understanding” (esp. §§1&2) <u>Other Readings:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sebastian Watzl: “Attention as Structuring of the Stream of Consciousness” • Wayne Wu: “Attention as Selection for Action” • Wayne Wu: “On Attention and Norms: An Opinionated Review of Recent Work”
9/13	Standpoints, Ideologies, & Cultural Imaginaries	<u>Required Readings:</u> Sally Haslanger: “Ideology in Practice: What Does Ideology Do?” Alison Wylie: “Why Standpoint Matters” <u>Other Readings:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sally Haslanger, “Culture and Critique” • Elizabeth Anderson: “Knowledge, Human Interests, and Objectivity in Feminist Epistemology” • Chandra Mukerji: “The Cultural Power of Tacit Knowledge: Inarticulacy and Bourdieu’s <i>habitus</i>” • Stoetzler, M. & Yuval-Davis, N. (2002) Standpoint Theory, Situated Knowledge and the Situated Imagination. <i>Feminist Theory</i> 3(3): 315–333.
9/20	Imaginative Frames	<u>Required Readings:</u> Rachel Fraser: “Narrative Testimony” Elisabeth Camp & Carolina Flores: “Identity Labels as Interpretive Frames for Building Agency” <u>Other Readings:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samuel Johnson, Avri Bilovich and David Tuckett: “Conviction Narrative Theory” (<i>BBS</i> target article, with commentaries) • Elisabeth Camp: “Perspectives in Imaginative Engagement with Fiction”, “Imaginative Frames for Scientific Inquiry” • C. Thi Nguyen: “Games and the Art of Agency”

<p>9/27</p>	<p>Understanding and engaging others</p> <p>Theory of mind & Perspective taking</p>	<p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <p>Shannon Spaulding: “Mindreading beyond belief”</p> <p>María Jimena Clavel Vázquez and Adriana Clavel-Vázquez: “Robustly embodied imagination and the limits of perspective-taking”</p> <p><u>Other Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark Ho, Rebecca Saxe & Fiery Cushman: “Planning with Theory of Mind” • Evan Westra: “Stereotypes, theory of mind, and the action-prediction hierarchy” • Shannon Spaulding: “Mind Misreading” • Heidi Maibom, “What Can We Learn From Taking Another’s Perspective?” • Jean Decety & Jessica Sommerville: “Shared Representations Between Self and Other: A Social Cognitive Neuroscience View” • Daniel Batson et al: “Perspective Taking: Imagining How Another Feels Versus Imaging How You Would Feel” • Adam Galinsky et al: “Why It Pays to Get Inside the Head of Your Opponent: The Differential Effects of Perspective Taking and Empathy in Negotiations”
<p>10/4</p>	<p>Empathy</p>	<p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <p>Olivia Bailey, “Empathy and the Value of Humane Understanding”</p> <p>Adam Morton: “Empathy for the Devil”</p> <p><u>Other Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shannon Spaulding: “Empathy Skills and Habits” • L. A. Paul: “The Paradox of Empathy” • Olivia Bailey, “Empathy with Vicious Perspectives? A Puzzle about the Moral Limits of Empathetic Imagination” • Sukaina Hirji: “Outrage and the Bounds of Empathy” • Frederique de Vignemont: “The Co-Consciousness Hypothesis” • Grace Helton & Chris Register: “Hot-Cold Empathy Gaps and the Grounds of Authenticity” • Paul Bloom: “Empathy and Its Discontents”

10/11	Loving Attention	<p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <p>Maria Lugones: “Playfulness, ‘World’-Travelling, and Loving Perception”</p> <p>Iris Murdoch: “The Idea of Perfection”</p> <p><u>Other Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martha Nussbaum: “‘Finely Aware and Richly Responsible’: Literature and the Moral Imagination” • Chris Mole: “Attention, Self and <i>The Sovereignty of Good</i>”
10/18	Ignorance & Prejudice	<p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <p>Charles Mills, “White Ignorance”</p> <p>Jessie Munton: “Prejudice as the misattribution of salience”</p> <p><u>Other Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miranda Fricker: Epistemic Injustice • Jose Medina: Color Blindness, Meta-Ignorance, and the Racial Imagination • Janine Jones, “Disappearing Black People Through Failures of White Empathy” • Emile Bruneau et al: “Denying Humanity: The Distinct Neural Correlates of Blatant Dehumanization” • David Livingstone Smith: “Paradoxes of Dehumanization”
10/25	Respect & Consent	<p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <p>Iris Marion Young, “Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought”</p> <p>Ella Kate Whiteley: “A Woman First and a Philosopher Second”</p> <p><u>Other Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rae Langton: “Love and Solipsism,” “Projection and Objectification” • Daniela Dover: “The Conversational Self” • Hilde Lindemann: “Holding One Another (Well, Wrongly, Clumsily) In A Time of Dementia” • Quill Kukla: “A Nonideal Theory of Sexual Consent” • Alexander Guerrero, “The Epistemology of Consent” • Joy Shim and Shen-yi Liao, “Ethics and Imagination”

11/1	Democratic Ideals	<p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <p>Samuel Freeman, “Deliberative Democracy: A Sympathetic Comment”</p> <p>Melissa Williams, “The Uneasy Alliance of Group Representation and Deliberative Democracy”</p> <p><u>Other Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lani Guinier, <u>The Tyranny of the Majority: Fundamental Fairness in Representative Democracy</u> • Thomas Christiano, <u>The Constitution of Equality</u> • Gordon Graham, “What is Special About Democracy?” • Jon Elster, “The Market and the Forum: Three Varieties of Political Theory” • Jane Mansbridge, “Rethinking Representation”
11/8	Problems for Democracy	<p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <p>Robert Talisse, <u>Overdoing Democracy</u> (Chapters 3 and 4)</p> <p>Alexander Guerrero, <u>Lottocracy</u>: “Bad Press” and “Vicious Partisanship”</p> <p>Susanna Siegel, “Salience Principles for Democracy”</p> <p><u>Other Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walter Lippmann, <u>Public Opinion</u> • C. Thi Nguyen: “Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles” • Liliana Mason, <u>Uncivil Agreement</u> • Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels, <u>Democracy for Realists</u> • Ilya Somin, <u>Democracy and Political Ignorance</u>
11/15	Improving our democracy: trust and understanding across difference and disagreement	<p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <p>Danielle Allen, <u>Talking to Strangers</u> (excerpts)</p> <p>Robert Talisse, <u>Overdoing Democracy</u> (Chapter Five)</p> <p><u>Other Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iris Marion Young, <u>Justice and the Politics of Difference</u> • Diana Mutz, <u>Hearing the Other Side</u> • Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R., “A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory” • Kevin Vallier, <u>Trust in a Polarized Age</u>

<p>11/29</p>	<p>Improving our democracy: education, norms, and social practices</p>	<p><u>Required Readings</u></p> <p>Vanessa Wills, “‘And He Ate Jim Crow’: Racist Ideology as False Consciousness”</p> <p>Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò, “Being-in-the-Room Privilege: Elite Capture and Epistemic Deference”</p> <p>Jennifer Morton, “The Miseducation of the Elite”</p> <p>Liam Kofi Bright, “White Psychodrama”</p> <p><u>Other Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (particularly “On Violence”) • John Dewey, Democracy and Education, The Public and Its Problems Chapters 5 and 6
<p>12/6</p>	<p>Improving our democracy: institutional change</p>	<p><u>Required Readings</u></p> <p>Alexander Guerrero, Lottocracy, Chapters 9, 11, 13</p> <p>Lisa Herzog, Citizen Knowledge (Chapters 1, 10, 11)</p> <p><u>Other Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avashalom Schwartz, “Political Imagination and its Limits” • Andrew Rehfeld, The Concept of Constituency • H��l��ne Landemore, Open Democracy
<p>12/13</p>	<p>Mini conference</p>	