



FACULTY OF ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

**PHIL 661.6 Lec 01**  
**“Topics in Epistemology – Open-Mindedness”**  
**Winter Term 2017**

**Course Outline**

**Lectures: M 3-5:45, SS1253**

**Instructor: Jeremy Fantl**

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**Office Hours: Tu, 10-11:30**

**Course Description:**

Open-mindedness is generally considered a virtue. When someone presents us with powerful arguments that we’re wrong about some controversial but cherished belief, open-mindedness seems to require A) that we rethink that belief and B) that we engage respectfully with the person putting forth those arguments. But is this really what we should do in all the important cases? Or are there important cases in which we can continue to know we’re right even if we don’t engage with those arguments and even if we wouldn’t be able to figure out where those arguments go wrong? Are there important cases in which we shouldn’t engage with arguments presented against our most cherished beliefs? We will consider these and other questions, focusing in the first part of the course on epistemological questions about when knowledge and belief can and should survive the existence of powerful counterarguments and, in the second part of the course, on social and political questions about when we should engage with those who disagree with us.

**Course Learning Outcomes**

This course will provide the opportunity to learn

- the outlines of current debate on the nature and value of open-mindedness
- how to write an extended argumentative paper that takes adequate account of the other side
- how to develop a paper through a draft stage into polished form
- how to take constructive feedback on written work presented in a public setting
- how to engage in respectful dialogue with peers with whom you disagree
- how to present a project in a professional way in an interview setting

**Required/Recommended Texts:**

- Manuscript of *The Limitations of the Open-Mind* (LOM), available on D2L.
- Various philosophical articles, as indicated on the syllabus, below, available via public links or links through the University of Calgary library. Links are listed on D2L.

## Course Assessment

- 6 **précis** (worth 30%) – detailed analyses of single arguments or passages in the assigned reading – of 1 (single-spaced) page max. Précis may be handed in only at the beginning of the class devoted to the relevant reading and you may hand in no more than one per week. Missing précis receive a zero. If it's clear you spent two minutes on it, the précis gets a C. Otherwise, all précis get an A.
- A 20 minute oral **mock interview** (worth 30%) outside of class. You will defend a “project,” as well as your knowledge of the material. Your interview will be held during the week beginning February 13<sup>th</sup>, at a mutually agreed upon time.
- A final term **paper** (worth 40%) of 15-25 pages. All term papers are preceded by a rough draft to be workshopped publicly in class. Drafts are due March 17<sup>th</sup>. Final papers are due April 17<sup>th</sup>. Late papers are marked down 1/3 of a grade for each day late, up to 4 letter grades. Papers not turned in receive a zero. Late drafts reduce the grade of the final paper by 1/3 of a grade for each day late.
- There will NOT be a Registrar-scheduled final exam in this course.

Letter Grades translate to numerical values according to the following scheme:

A+: 98.33	B+: 88.33	C+: 78.33	D+: 68.33	F: 55
A+/A: 96.67	B+/B: 86.67	C+/C: 76.67	D+/D: 66.67	
A: 95	B: 85	C: 75	D: 65	
A/A-: 93.33	B/B-: 83.33	C/C-: 73.33	D/D-: 63.33	
A-: 91.67	B-: 81.67	C-: 71.67	D-: 61.67	
A-/B+: 90	B-/C+: 80	C-/D+: 70		

Final Grades are computed by rounding to the nearest recognized letter grade.

## Syllabus

### Part I: The Epistemology of Open-Mindedness

Date and Topic	Class Activity
1/9, Mon: Intro	
1/16, Mon: What is Open-Mindedness?	Nomy Arpaly, “Open-Mindedness as a Moral Virtue” Jeremy Fantl, LOM, Chapter 1
1/23, Mon: The Epistemology of Disagreement	Thomas Kelly, “The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement” Sarah McGrath, “Moral Disagreement and Moral Expertise”
1/30, Mon: Knowledge and Closed-Mindedness	Nathan Ballantyne, “The Significance of Unpossessed Evidence” Jeremy Fantl, LOM, Chapter 2
2/6, Mon: The Epistemic Efficacy of Amateurism	Catherine Elgin, “The Epistemic Efficacy of Stupidity” John Hardwig, “Epistemic Dependence,” selection (part II, pp. 339-343) Jeremy Fantl, LOM, Chapter 3

## II: Open-Minded Engagement

2/13, Mon: The Obligation of Public Engagement	Trudy Govier, "Arguing Forever? Or: Two Tiers of Argument Appraisal" Jeremy Fantl, LOM, Chapter 5
2/27, Mon: On Open-Minded Engagement	Charity Anderson, "On the Intimate Relationship of Knowledge and Action" Jeremy Fantl, LOM, Chapter 6
3/6, Mon: On Closed-Minded Engagement	Justin Tosi and Brandon Warmke, "Moral Grandstanding" Jeremy Fantl, LOM, Chapter 7
3/13, Mon: Inviting Problematic Speakers to Campus	Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, "The Coddling of the American Mind" Jeremy Fantl, LOM, Chapter 8
3/17, Fri:	Drafts Due
3/20, Mon:	Draft Workshops
3/27, Mon:	Draft Workshops
4/3, Mon:	Draft Workshops
4/10, Mon:	Draft Workshops
4/17, Mon:	Term Paper Due

### IMPORTANT DEPARTMENTAL, FACULTY AND UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

#### Academic Honesty

Cheating or plagiarism on any assignment or examination is regarded as an extremely serious academic offense, the penalty for which may be an F on the assignment, an F in the course, academic probation, or requirement to withdraw from the University. See the relevant sections on 'Academic Misconduct' in the current University Calendar. Intellectual honesty requires that your work include adequate referencing to sources. Plagiarism occurs when you do not acknowledge or correctly reference your sources. If you have questions about correct referencing, consult your instructor.

#### Academic Accommodation

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services. SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For more information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>. Students who require accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their instructor. The full policy on student accommodations is available at [http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy\\_0.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf)

#### D2L Help

Desire2Learn is UCalgary's online learning management system. Important information and communications about this course may be posted on D2L. Go to <http://www.ucalgary.ca/it/services/d2l> for help.

#### Protection of Privacy

The University of Calgary is under the jurisdiction of the provincial Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act. The Department of Philosophy ensures the student's right to privacy by requiring all graded assignments be returned to the student directly from the instructor or teaching assistant.

#### Internet and Electronic Communication Devices

The instructor reserves the right to establish course policies regarding the use of devices such as laptops, tablets, and smartbooks. If allowed, these devices must be used exclusively for instructional purposes and must not cause disruption to the instructor or to fellow students. Cell phones and paging devices should be set to silent mode during lectures. Audio or video recording of lectures is not permitted without the written permission of the instructor. Students violating this policy are subject to discipline under the University of Calgary's Non-Academic Misconduct policy.