PHIL 9114A: TRUST AND TESTIMONY

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Course Description:

Trust that is warranted is an important social good. Included here is what some call “epistemic trust,” that is, trust in the testimony of others. This course examines various philosophical issues about trust, testimony, or the overlap between the two. For example, we will look at the conceptual nature of trust and testimony, the value they have, and when trust, epistemic or otherwise, is warranted. We will consider both feminist and non-feminist perspectives on these issues. And in particular, we will analyze the injustice that occurs when oppressive social stereotypes influence who people trust or whose testimony they accept. Our discussion will extend to philosophical topics that are distinct from but relevant to trust or testimony, including topics in epistemology (e.g., internalist and externalist theories of justification), in feminist philosophy (e.g., oppression and stereotyping), and in moral theory (e.g., reactive attitudes, betrayal, and rationality).


Required Readings:

A selection of readings available online


Course Requirements:

1) Class presentation (10%)
2) Reflections on readings (20%)
3) Participation, including involvement in a mini-conference focused on course papers (10%)

4) Paper(s) (60%)—either two short papers (roughly 2500 words; worth 30% each) or one long paper (roughly 5000 words)