Foundations: Social Categorization and Social Inference

Renee Jorgensen Bolinger
Justin D'Ambrosio
Australian National University

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Course Description

This is a course on social categorization and the inferences that we can and do draw on the basis of these categorizations. Questions concerning social categorization and inference fall at the intersection of a huge number of areas within philosophy and the social and cognitive sciences. These questions can be approached from within metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, cognitive science, philosophy of language, semantics, ethics, political philosophy, and legal theory, among others. Suffice it to say, we won't be able to cover all of these approaches in a *Foundations* course. Our plan is to introduce you to these problems first through a discussion of *generics*, and then by presenting a related collection of epistemological and ethical issues concerning inferences made on the basis of membership within certain kinds of categories. However, the entire course is oriented around an epistemic goal: when are inferences made on the basis of social categorization rational? But even proposing solutions to our epistemic question will require taking many semantic, cognitive, ethical, and metaphysical detours.

Course Requirements

The only course requirements are that you come to class having read the required readings, and ready to engage in discussion with us and your fellow post-graduate students.

A note about the syllabus: • denotes required reading, while ◦ denotes suggested reading. In one case, we've used both to indicate that we strongly suggest reading part of a paper. Whether required or suggested, the most important readings are listed first. At the end of the syllabus is a list of related readings organized by topic.

Schedule and Readings - SUBJECT TO CHANGE!

1. 17/5 - Generics: Semantics

- • Sarah-Jane Leslie and Adam Lerner: Generic Generalizations, in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
- • Sarah-Jane Leslie - "Generics: Cognition and Acquisition", *The Philosophical Review*, 117(1):1-47, (2008)
- •◦ Ariel Cohen - "Generics, Frequency Adverbs, and Probability", *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 22(3):221-253, (1999) - we strongly suggest reading sections 1 and 2.
- ◦ Ariel Cohen - "Generics and Mental Representations", *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 27(5):529-556, (2004)
- ◦ David Liebesman - "Simple Generics", *Nôus*, 45(3):409-442, (2011)
- ◦ Rachel Sterken - "Generics in Context", *Philosopher's Imprint*, 15(21), (2015)

2. 24/5 - Generics Continued: Prejudice

- Sally Haslanger - Ideology, Generics, and Common Ground, in Charlotte Witt, *ed.*, *Feminist Metaphysics*, 179-207, (2011)
- Endre Begby - "The Epistemology of Prejudice", *Thought*, 2(1):90-99, (2013)
- Sally Haslanger - "The Normal, the Natural, and the Good", *Political & Societá*, 365-392, (2014)

3. 31/5 - Generics Continued: Essentialism

- Sarah-Jane Leslie - "The Original Sin of Cognition: Fear, Prejudice, and Generalization", in *The Journal of Philosophy*, 114(8):393-421 (2017)
- Jenny Saul - "Are generics especially pernicious?", *Inquiry*, (2017)
- Paul Silva - "A Bayesian Explanation of the Irrationality of Sexist and Racist Beliefs Involving Generic Content", *Synthese*, forthcoming.

4. 14/6 - Epistemic Problems with Statistical Inference

- Jessie Munton (ms) - "The Epistemic Flaw with Accurate Statistical Generalizations"
- Colyvan, Regan, and Ferson - "Is it a Crime to belong to a Reference Class?", *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 9(2):168-181, (2001)
- Laurence Thomas - "Statistical Badness", *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 32(1):30-41
- Alan Hajek - "The Reference Class Problem is Your Problem, Too", *Synthese*, 156(2):536-585, (2007)
- Oscar H. Gandy, "Engaging Rational Discrimination", *Ethics and Information Technology*, 12(1):29-42, (2209)

5. 31/5 - Moral Problems with Statistical Inference

- Lara Buchak - *Belief, Credence, and Norms*, *Philosophical Studies*, 169(2):1-27
- Sarah Moss - "Moral Encroachment", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, forthcoming
- Georgi Gardiner, "Evidentialism and Moral Encroachment", in Kevin McCain (*ed.*), *Believing in Accordance with the Evidence: New Essays on Evidentialism*], forthcoming

6. 7/6 - The Importance of Statistical Inference

- Risse & Zeckhauser - "Racial Profiling", *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 32(2):131-170, (2004)
- Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen - "We are all different: statistical discrimination and the right to be treated as an individual", *The Journal of Ethics*, 15(1/2):47-59, (2011)
- Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen - "Nothing Personal: On Statistical Discrimination", *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 15(4):385-403, (2007)
- Georgi Gardiner - "Legal Burdens of Proof and Statistical Evidence", in James Chase and David Coady (*ed.s*), *Routledge Handbook of Applied Epistemology*, Routledge, forthcoming
- Barbara D. Underwood - "Law and the Crystal Ball: Predicting Behavior with Statistical Inference and Individualized Judgment", 88 *Yale Law Journal* 1408, (1979)