Phil 271 – Topics in Metaphysics and Epistemology
Naked Statistical Evidence and Individuals

Syllabus – Fall 2019 - UCLA

Instructor: Professor S. Roush – roush@ucla.edu
Office: Dodd Hall 394
Office Hours: F 12 – 1:30 and by appt.
Seminar time and venue: W 2 – 4:50, Dodd 399

Course Description

In many contexts in practical life, it is perceived intuitively as unjustified to base judgment of individuals on population-based empirical generalizations alone. This is so for properties of (some) inanimate objects – such as whether a lottery ticket is a winner – as well as for (some) properties of people – such as whether Mr. Smith committed murder. We ask what the epistemic bases of this intuition might be by considering the differences between knowledge and justified belief, belief and credence, safety and sensitivity properties of belief, the conditions of legitimacy for the statistical syllogism, and what it means for evidence to be individualized. We consider the relationship between moral and epistemic values in using statistics to judge people. This seminar continues some of the themes of my Spring 2019 seminar – Evidence and Individuals – but neither presupposes nor is redundant with it. This class may be taken for credit whether you took that class or not.

Course website: on www.ccle.ucla.edu Readings and other useful materials will be posted there. Students registered in this course have access.

Course Requirements: Those taking the seminar for credit will do a term paper of 12-15 pages, turned in by December 9th 5pm. A topic description is due November 9th 5pm, and a paper outline is due November 25th 5pm. At some seminar meeting you’ll do a short presentation of a reading, or of your work in progress for the paper. Sign up early to get your preferred topic.

In addition, those taking the course for credit will turn in two questions about the reading each week, by midnight the night before the seminar.
Disabilities:
Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) at (310) 825 1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255. In order to ensure accommodations, students need to contact the CAE within the first two weeks of the term.

If you wish me to know about any accommodations you need for any physical, psychological, or learning disability, or if you want me to have emergency medical information, please speak to me as soon as possible, either after class, or during office hours, or by email.

Schedule

Week 1 – October 2

Week 2 – October 9

Week 3 – October 16

Week 4 – October 23
Week 5 – October 30


Georgi Gardiner (ms.), “Profiling and Proof: Are Statistics Safe?”

Week 6


Week 7


Week 8


No Class November 27th

Week 10

S. Roush (ms.), “Epistemic Justice and the Requirement of Total Evidence”