LIES AND DECEPTION

EPE S270 / PLSC S336 / PHIL S337

Summer Session B, June 29 - July 31, 2020

Monday-Wednesday-Friday
1:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

CONTACT INFORMATION
COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar will introduce students to the contemporary debate about lies and deception. We will consider the questions of what is a lie, what is deception, and whether all lies aim to deceive. We will also consider the many different forms of deception that fall short of lying. We will consider the moral questions of whether lying and deceiving are always, or almost always, or usually, morally wrong; what, exactly, the moral wrongness of lying and deceiving is supposed to consist in; and when, if ever, lying and deception are morally justified. Here we will look at what the philosophers Plato, Augustine, Aquinas, and Kant had to say about lying. We will examine the claims of sociologists and psychologists that lying and deceiving are widespread in society, and discover what kinds of lies and deceptions are most common. We will look at lies and deception in sport, war, business, advertising, and politics, and in everyday electronic communication. Finally, we will examine self-deception, and consider the questions of whether self-deception is a particular case of deception, and whether the moral arguments against other-deception apply to self-deception.

REQUIRED TEXTS

  (Available as ebook)


Other selected readings will be made available electronically.
PARTICIPATION

This course consists of a series of online (video and audio) synchronous class meetings with assigned readings. Since the course is online, you will need to have a working computer (as opposed to a smartphone) with both video and audio capability in order to participate. You are required to join all synchronous classes on time. If, for any reason, you believe that you will be unable to attend to join a class, or if for any reason you miss a class, notify me and arrange to conference with me to determine what work needs to be done to make up for missing the class.

You are required to complete all of the assigned readings prior to class. The assigned readings are given in the Class Schedule (see below). A prepared student will not only have read the material assigned but will have reflected on the claims and arguments of the authors. You should plan on making notes while reading the material. It may be difficult, and it may require more than one reading. You will be asked questions on the readings, and you will be expected to spontaneously contribute to the class discussions. If you do not do so, you will be called upon.

As far as possible, you should be clear, concise, relevant, and incisive in your contribution to class discussions, and you should respect classmates and the professor by listening to the contributions of classmates and by ‘raising your hand’—using a notification or chat function on the online platform—if you wish to ask a question or answer to a question thrown out to the class. When not speaking, you should mute your microphone to better enable others to be heard.

You may also discuss the readings, assignments, and paper topics with me outside of class by e-mailing with me or by arranging video conference calls with me outside of the class meetings. All participation in synchronous class meetings and e-mailing and video conferencing counts towards the overall grade for participation.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

In order to help you to develop your critical reading skills, and as a way of focusing class discussion, you will normally be asked to write a short (one page) response to at least one of the readings each week. The assignment will take the form of an answer to a question about the readings. These assignments will be awarded an individual grade.

PAPERS

You will have to write two 8-page papers for this course. The due dates for the papers are provided in the Class Schedule below. You will decide on your topics in consultation with me. Papers should be typed (double-spaced). More details (about margins, the correct use of secondary sources, citations, and so forth) will be given closer to when the first paper is due.

Papers will be awarded individual grades. Students who hand in their papers after the due date without receiving permission from me will be penalized by half a letter grade per day.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All work submitted for credit for this course should be your own work and should be new. If you use other sources (books, journal articles, newspaper articles, websites, etc.), then you must give them full and accurate credit. You are not permitted to use other students’ work, or your own past or current work. Concealment of sources, intentionally or unintentionally, may constitute plagiarism (including self-plagiarism), and may result in a failing grade for the assignment or paper, as well as referral to the university for disciplinary action. Please familiarize yourself with university’s policy on plagiarism: http://catalog.yale.edu/undergraduate-regulations/policies/definitions-plagiarism-cheating/

BREAKDOWN OF COURSE GRADE

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CLASS SCHEDULE

**Wk. 1**

**June 29:** Lying - Definitions


**July 1:** Lies and assertions


**July 3:** Lying without deceiving?


**Wk. 2**

**July 6:** Deception

- Andreas Stokke, Chapter 1, “Lying, Deception, and Deceit”, in *Lying and Insincerity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 17-36

**July 8:** Linguistic deception

- Jonathan Webber, “Liar!” *Analysis* 73 (2013), 651-659
- Clea Rees, “Better lie!” *Analysis* 74 (2014), 59-64

**July 10:** Non-linguistic deception and Frankfurtian bullshitting

- Mark G. Frank, “Thoughts, Feelings, and Deception,” in *Deception: From Ancient Empires to Internet Dating*, 55-73
**Wk. 3**

**July 13: Plato and Augustine on lying**

- Augustine, *Lying (De mendacio)*

**July 15: Kant on lying**

- On a supposed right to lie because of philanthropic concerns [translated by Jens Timmermann, unpublished manuscript]

**July 17: Contemporary Moral Philosophers on Lying**


**July 21: First paper due at 11:55 p.m.**

**Wk. 4**

**July 20: Lies and deception in relationships**

- Maureen O’Sullivan, “Why Most People Parse Palters, Fibs, Lies, Whoppers, and Other Deceptions Poorly,” in *Deception: From Ancient Empires to Internet Dating*, 74-95

**July 22: Lies and deception in the media and on the Internet**

- Hany Farid, “Digital Doctoring: Can We Trust Photographs?,” in *Deception: From Ancient Empires to Internet Dating*, 95-108
- Jeffrey Hancock, “Digital Deception: The Practice of Lying in the Digital Age,” in *Deception: From Ancient Empires to Internet Dating*, 109-120
- Paul Thompson, “Cognitive Hacking: Detecting Deception on the Web,” in *Deception: From Ancient Empires to Internet Dating*, 121-134

**July 24: Lies and deception in business and politics**

- Brooke Harrington, “Responding to Deception: The Case of Fraud in Financial Markets,” in *Deception: From Ancient Empires to Internet Dating*, 236-274
Wk. 5
July 27: Lies and deception in war and statecraft

- Sun Tzu, *Art of War* [https://suntzusaid.com](https://suntzusaid.com)

July 29: Lies and deception in sport


July 31: Self-deception


August 5: Second paper due