LIES AND DECEPTION

EPE S270 / PLSC S336 / PHIL S337

Summer Session B, July 12 - August 13, 2021

Monday-Wednesday-Friday
6:00 p.m. – 8:15 p.m.

Lies and Deception
Yale Summer Session

James E. Mahon
Program on Ethics, Politics, and Economics

“A prudent ruler must know how to be a great liar and deceive.”
— Niccolò Machiavelli
CONTACT INFORMATION

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Office Hours: Normally MWF, after class, by appointment. Extra meetings can be arranged outside of those times on MWF, and on other days.

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 the media, 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


Other selected readings will be made available electronically.
PARTICIPATION

This course consists of online synchronous class meetings with assigned readings. You will need to have a working computer 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 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 hand-raising 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 and to avoid accidental noise.

You may also discuss the readings, assignments, and paper topics with me outside of class by arranging video conference calls with me outside of the class meetings or by e-mailing with me. 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 6-8-page papers for this course. The due dates for the papers are provided in the Class Schedule below. You will choose from a selection of paper topics. 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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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<td>Class Assignment</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Second Paper Grade</td>
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CLASS SCHEDULE

Wk. 1

July 12: Definitions of Lying


July 14: Lies and Assertions


July 16: Lying without Deceiving?

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

Wk. 2

July 19: Deception


July 21: Linguistic deception

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

July 23: 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 26: Plato and Augustine on Lying

- Augustine, *Lying (De mendacio)*

July 28: Kant on Lying

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

July 30: Contemporary Moral Philosophers on Lying


Aug 3: First paper due at 6:00 p.m.

Wk. 4

Aug 2: Lies and Deception in Relationships

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

Aug 4: 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

Aug 6: Distortion, ‘False News’, and Race

Wk. 5

Aug 9: Lies and Deception in Statecraft and War

- Sun Tzu, Art of War https://suntzusaid.com
- William Glenney IV, “Military Deception in the Information Age: Scale Matters,” in Deception: From Ancient Empires to Internet Dating, 254-274

Aug 11: Lies, Fiction, and the Arts

- Emar Maier, “Making up stuff”, aenton 13 January 2020

Aug 13: Self-Deception


August 18: Second paper due