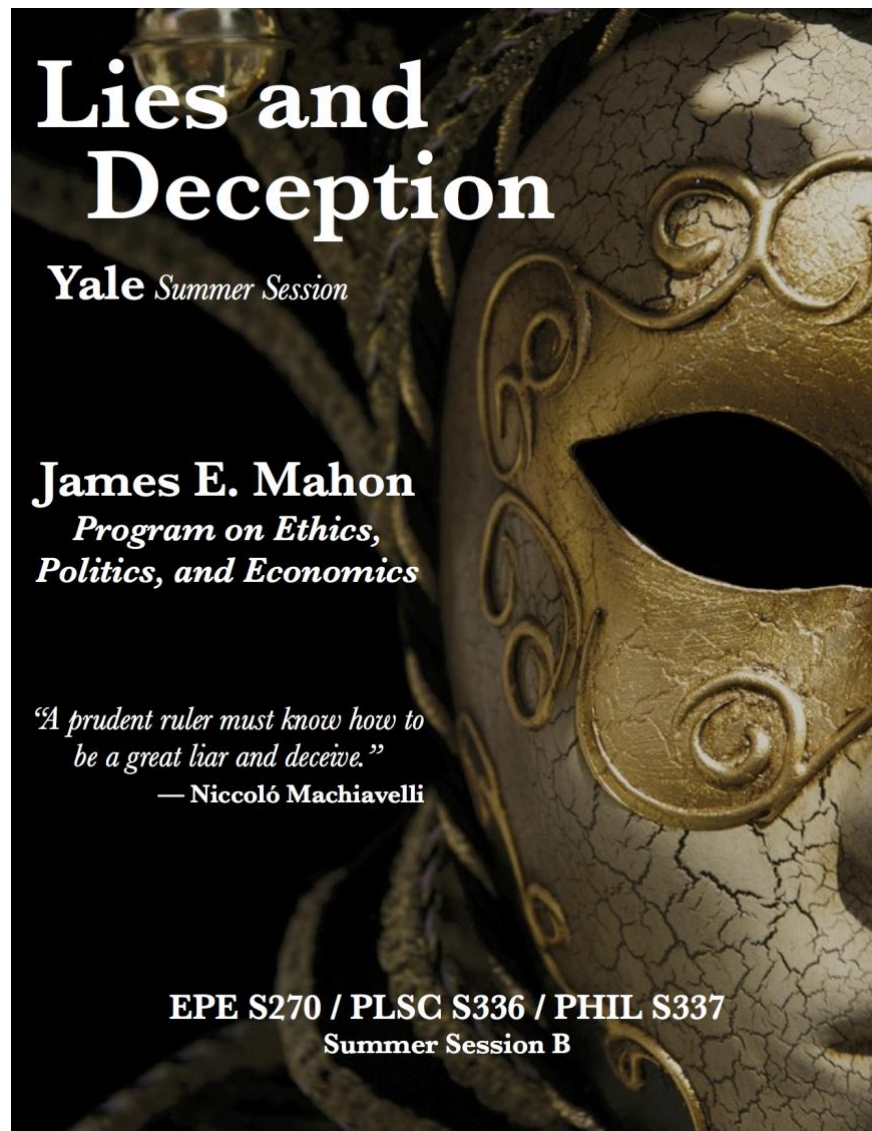


# LIES AND DECEPTION

**EPE S270 / PLSC S336 / PHIL S337**

**Summer Session B, July 1 - August 2, 2024**

**Monday-Wednesday-Friday**  
**WLH 204 (William L. Harkness Hall 011)**  
**1:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.**



## CONTACT INFORMATION

Instructor: James E. Mahon  
Dean of Arts and Humanities, The City University of New York–Lehman College

E-mail: james.mahon@lehman.cuny.edu

Cell phone: (917) 453-1116 (for emergencies)

Office Hours: (Prof. Mahon) MWF after class (in person) or at times virtually (by appointment)  
(TA) By appointment (virtually)

Teaching Assistant: TBD

E-mail: TBD

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar course 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, including **misleading with the truth**, and **(Frankfurtian) bullshitting**, as well as the related concepts of **manipulation** and **gaslighting**. 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 philosophers such as **Immanuel Kant** had to say about lying, as well as what various contemporary moral philosophers have to say about certain kinds of lying. We will examine empirical research on what people consider lying to be, as well as data on how often people lie and what kinds of lies are most common. We will look at lies and deception in media, including **fake news** and **jokes**, and in electronic communication and social media, including **digital deception**. We will also consider whether it is possible to lie with images, such as with photographs and works of art, and whether works of **fiction** can be lies. We will look at ways that falsehoods can be spread in public discourse through **dogwhistles** and **figleaves**. Finally, we will examine **self-deception**, and consider the questions of whether self-deception is truly a case of deception, and whether there are moral arguments against self-deception.

This year's visiting international speakers will be **Emanuel Viebhan**, **Alex Wiegman**, and **Neri Marsili**. They will join the class virtually to talk about their work.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

- *The Oxford Handbook of Lying*, ed. Jörg Meibauer (Oxford University Press, 2018)

Other selected readings will be made available electronically.

## PARTICIPATION

This seminar course consists of in-person class meetings with assigned readings. You are required to attend all classes in person and on time. If, for any reason, you believe that you will be unable to attend to attend a class, or if for any reason you miss a class, notify me and the TA for the class, and arrange to meet with me and/or the TA 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 student who is prepared for class will not only have read the assigned material but will have reflected on the claims and arguments of the authors. You should plan on making notes while reading the material for class. The material 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.

All participation in class discussion counts towards the overall grade for participation. 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 if you wish to ask a question or answer to a question thrown out to the class. Phones and other electronic devices are to be switched off during class. Laptop computers are only to be used in class to take notes if you have been given permission. You may also discuss the readings, assignments, and paper topics with me or the TA outside of class by meeting with me or the TA or by e-mailing with me or the TA.

## 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. There will normally be a choice of questions to answer. These assignments will be awarded an individual grade. These assignments are to be written electronically in Word and e-mailed to me and to the TA.

## 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, which will be structured in such a way as to require posing objections to your own argument and replying to those objections. Papers should be typed (double-spaced). More details (about the correct use of secondary sources, citations, and so forth) will be given closer to when the first paper is due. These papers (and any drafts) are to be written electronically in Word and e-mailed to me and to the TA.

Papers will be awarded individual grades. Students who hand in their papers after the due without receiving permission 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 original. **The use of AI technology to help with researching and writing assignments and papers is prohibited.** If you use written sources outside of the course readings then you must give them full and accurate credit. You are not permitted to use other students' written work, or your own past written 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: <https://catalog.yale.edu/undergraduate-regulations/regulations/academic-dishonesty/>

## BREAKDOWN OF COURSE GRADE

Participation Grade	10 %
Class Assignment Grade	30 %
First Paper Grade	30 %
Second Paper Grade	30 %

## CLASS SCHEDULE

### Wk. 1

July 1: Definitions of Lying

- James Edwin Mahon, "Contemporary Approaches to the Philosophy of Lying," in *The Oxford Handbook of Lying*, 32-55
- Extra, optional reading: James Edwin Mahon, "The Definition of Lying and Deception," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (rev., 2015) <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/lying-definition/>

July 3: Lies and Assertions

- Roderick M. Chisholm and Thomas D. Feehan, "The Intent to Deceive," *Journal of Philosophy* 74 (1977), 143-159
- Paul Grice, "Logic and Conversation," in *Studies in the Ways of Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 22-40
- Jonathan Adler, "Lying, deceiving, or falsely implicating," *Journal of Philosophy* 94 (1997), 435-452
- David Simpson, "Lying, Liars and Language," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 52 (1992), 623-639
- Extra optional reading: Mark Jary, "Lying and Assertion," in *The Oxford Handbook of Lying*, 109-119

July 5: Lying without Deceiving?

- Roy Sorensen, "Bald-Faced Lies! Lying Without The Intent To Deceive," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 88 (2007), 251-264
- Jörg Meibauer, "Bald-faced lies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Lying*, 252-263
- Don Fallis, "What is Lying?," *Journal of Philosophy* 106 (2009), 29-56
- Thomas L. Carson, "Lying," in *Lying and Deception: Theory and Practice* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 15-45

### Wk. 2

July 8: Deception and Manipulation

- James Edwin Mahon, "A Definition of Deceiving," *International Journal of Applied Philosophy* 21 (2007), 181-194
- Shlomo Cohen, "Manipulation and Deception," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 96 (2018), 483-497
- Don Fallis, "Deceiving versus Manipulating: An Evidence-Based Definition of Deception," *Analytic Philosophy* (online) (2022), 1-18

July 10: Misleading

- Jennifer Mather Saul, "Is Lying Worse than Merely Misleading?," in *Lying, Misleading, and What Is Said* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 69-99
- Jonathan Webber, "Liar!" *Analysis* 73 (2013), 651-659
- Clea Rees, "Better lie!" *Analysis* 74 (2014), 59-64

July 12: Bullshitting

- Harry Frankfurt, *On Bullshit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005)
- Andreas Stokke, "Bullshitting," in *The Oxford Handbook of Lying*, 264-276

### Wk. 3

#### Visit of Emanuel Viebahn

July 15: Lying with Images

- Emanuel Viebahn, "Lying with Pictures," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 59 (2019), 243-257
- Daisy Dixon, "Lies in Art," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 100 (2020), 1-15
- Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, "Lying and the Arts," in *The Oxford Handbook of Lying*, 553-564

July 17: Kant on Lying

- James Edwin Mahon, "Kant and the Perfect Duty to Others Not to Lie," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 14 (2006), 653-685
- Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, transl. and ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), sections: 14-15, 32-34, 38-39  
<https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/blog.nus.edu.sg/dist/c/1868/files/2012/12/Kant-Groundwork-ngopby.pdf>
- Extra optional reading: Immanuel Kant, "On Lying", from *The Metaphysical Elements of the Doctrine of Virtue* [trans. Jens Timmermann and Jeanine Grenberg, new translation, unpublished]
- Extra optional reading: *On a Supposed Right to Lie from Love of Humanity* [trans. Jens Timmermann, new translation, unpublished]

July 19: Contemporary Moral Philosophers on Lying and Deception

- Kate Manne, "Moral Gaslighting," *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 97 (2023), 122-145
- Tom Dougherty, "Sex, Lies and Consent," *Ethics* 123 (2013), 717-744

#### July 23: First paper due at 6:00 p.m.

### Wk. 4

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*, ed. Brooke Harrington (Stanford University Press, 2009), 95-108
- Jeffrey Hancock, "Digital Deception: The Practice of Lying in the Digital Age," in *Deception: From Ancient Empires to Internet Dating*, 109-120
- C. Thi Nguyen, "How Twitter Gamifies Communication," in *Applied Epistemology*, ed. Jennifer Lackey (Oxford University Press, 2021) (manuscript)
- Neri Marsili, "Retweeting: its linguistic and epistemic value," *Synthese* 198 (2021), 10457-10483

July 24: Dogwhistles and Figleaves and the sociology of lying

- Jennifer Saul, "Figleaves, Dogwhistles, and Falsehood," in *Dogwhistles and Figleaves: How Manipulative Language Spreads Racism and Falsehood* (Oxford University Press, 2024), 134-161
- Bella DePaulo, "Lying in Social Psychology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Lying*, 436-445

July 26: Fake News and Jokes

- Don Fallis and Kay Mathiesen, "Fake news is counterfeit news," *Inquiry* 2019 (published online)
- Regina Rini, "Fake News and Partisan Epistemology," *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, 2017  
<https://kiej.georgetown.edu/fake-news-partisan-epistemology/>
- Jessica Pepp, Eliot Michaelson, and Rachel Katharine Sterken, "Why we should keep talking about fake news," *Inquiry* 65 (2022), 471-487
- Marta Dynel, "Lying and Humour," in *The Oxford Handbook of Lying*, 326-339

## Wk. 5

### Visit of **Alex Wiegman** and **Neri Marsili**

July 29: Empirical Research on Lying

- Alex Wiegman et al., “Empirically Investigating the Concept of Lying,” in *Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research* 34 (2017), 591-609
- Christian B. Miller, chapter 2, “A Preliminary Account of Honesty”, and chapter 9, “Research on Lying and Cheating”, in *Honesty: The Philosophy and Psychology of a Neglected Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 28-63 and 198-237.

July 31: Can Fiction and Art Tell Lies?

- James Edwin Mahon, “Novels Never Lie,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 59 (2019), 323-338
- Daisy Dixon, “Novel Assertions: A Reply to Mahon,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* (2022), 115-124
- Neri Marsili, “Fictions that Don’t Tell the Truth” (forthcoming)

Aug 2: Lies to Oneself and Self-Deception

- Ian Deweese-Boyd, “Self-Deception,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2012) <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/self-deception/>
- Kathi Beier, “Lying and Self-Deception,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Lying*, 203-213

**August 7: Second paper due at 6:00 p.m.**