Philosophy 22: Truth Even Unto Its Innermost Parts?  
The Ethics of Belief

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Course Description
The Brandeis University motto is: “Truth Even Unto Its Innermost Parts.” But is it true? Is it right to always believe the truth and to always seek the truth? Is it rational? And what makes belief rational and right? —The course will address these central questions in the ethics of belief by considering historical and contemporary texts in analytic philosophy that address them. We will study the following topics: Pascal’s Wager, evidentialism and pragmatism, the relationship between belief and the will, the nature of reasons for belief, the relationship between beliefs and promises, what it is to believe another person, how belief can contribute to injustice, the nature of bias, and how beliefs can wrong.

Requirements
- First Paper (approx. 4 pages) 25%
- Second Paper (approx. 4 pages) 25%
- Final Exam 25%
- Participation 25%

Readings: All readings will be available on LATTE. Please bring printouts to class.

Laptop Policy: Please do not use laptops or other devices with screens in class.

Learning Goals
General goals are to learn how to carefully read important contemporary texts, to extract and evaluate philosophical arguments from them, to critically engage with and build upon these arguments, and to write clearly about them. The particular goals are to understand how ethical issues come to bear on belief, to reflect on the ethical significance of belief, and to get an overview of the central debates in contemporary ethics of belief.  
For more information, see the Philosophy Department’s learning goals at:  
http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/philosophy/undergrad/learninggoals.html

Academic Dishonesty
Academic Dishonesty will be reported to the Department of Student Development and Conduct. Students are responsible to inform themselves about what constitutes dishonesty. If in doubt, please ask me! See also: http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srsc/index.html

Disability
If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis and need to have special accommodations for this class, please see me immediately.

Four-Credit Course (with three hours of class-time per week)
Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).
Schedule of Readings and Assignments

8/30 – Introduction

9/6 – *Pascal’s Wager*
   Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*.

9/11, 9/13 – *Evidentialism*
   William Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief”
   Jonathan Adler, *Belief’s Own Ethics*, ch.1

9/18, 9/20 – *Pragmatism*
   William James, “The Will to Believe”
   Susanna Rinard, “No Exception for Belief”

9/25, 9/27 – *Evidentialism vs. Pragmatism*
   Nishi Shah, “A New Argument for Evidentialism”
   Susanna Rinard, “Against the New Evidentialists”
   Recommended: Berislav Marušić, “The Ethics of Belief”

10/2, 10/4 – *Belief and the Will*
   Bernard Williams, “Deciding to Believe”
   David Owens, *Reason without Freedom*, ch.2

10/9, (10/11 is a Brandeis Thursday!) – *Pragmatic Encroachment*
   Jeremy Fantl and Matthew McGrath, “Practical Matters Affect whether You Know”

10/16, 10/18 – *The Wrong Kind of Reason*
   Pamela Hieronymi, “The Wrong kind of Reason”
   Mark Schroeder, “The Ubiquity of State-Given Reasons”
   Pamela Hieronymi, “The Use of Reasons in Thought”

10/20 First Paper Due

10/23, 10/25 – *The Nature of Belief*
   Richard Moran, *Authority and Estrangement*, selections
   Matthew Boyle, “The Activity of Reason”

10/30, 11/1 – *Promising and Resolving against the Evidence*
   Berislav Marušić, *Evidence and Agency*, selections

11/6, 11/8 – *Believing Someone*
   Elizabeth Anscombe, “What Is It to Believe Someone?”
   Richard Moran, “Getting Told and Being Believed”

11/13, 11/15 – *Epistemic Injustice and Feminist Epistemology*
   Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, ch.1-2

11/20 – continued.
11/27, 11/29 – Bias and Self-Knowledge
  Daniel Kelly and Erica Roedder, “Racial Cognition and the Ethics of Implicit Bias”
  Daniel Kahneman, Thinking, Fast and Slow, selections

12/4, 12/6 – How Can Beliefs Morally Wrong Someone?
  Rima Basu and Mark Schroeder, “Doxastic Wrongings”
  Berislav Marušić and Aarthy Vaidyanathan, TBD

12/8 Second Paper Due

TBD, Final Exam