“Implicit Bias and Social Justice”
Saturday, March 18, 2017
10:00am – 6:30pm
Mandel Center for the Humanities G12

10am – 12pm Ben Sherman, Lecturer, Brandeis University.
“Good Intentions, Moral Bugs, and Mind-Hacks”
We cannot overcome bias just through good will and effort; research shows that some strategies for reducing bias are more effective than others, and there does not yet seem to be any proven strategy for eliminating bias in general. This puts us in a strange situation: It looks like, to avoid being unjust and unreasonable, we need some cutting-edge, and even as-yet-undiscovered, psychological info.

2pm – 4pm Natalia Washington, McDonnell Postdoctoral Scholar, Washington University.
“Implicit Cognition and Practical Reason”
Research in the human sciences can reveal ways in which we are likely to reason poorly, or likely to be influenced by factors, which we do not endorse as reasons. The influence of implicit cognition is a good example of this. One might wonder, given this influx of information, what our response as individuals who are motivated to reason well should be. Now that we know, what do we do? In this paper, I confront the problem in two steps: First, I’ll look at the tricky characteristics of implicit cognition as they are illuminated in an example of biased grading, and at strategies for dispelling or mitigating bias which take these characteristics into account. Second, I’ll draw forth a few broader lessons about practical reasoning, and consider the perhaps counterintuitive implication that many of the most effective prescriptions for better practical reasoning emphasize collaborative, institutional, or otherwise anti-individualist methods.

4:30pm – 6:30pm José Medina, Professor of Philosophy, Vanderbilt University.
“Bias and Epistemic Activism”
This talk will discuss gender and racial bias not as an individual problem, but as a collective phenomenon that calls for the diagnosis and treatment of social psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, humanists, and activists. Highlighting the limitations of the implicit bias paradigm, we will consider the hypothesis that biases are social phenomena to be neutralized, mitigated and ultimately eradicated through social and political interventions, rather than purely individualistic and psychological remedies. Introducing my notion of epistemic activism, I will analyze how gender and racial biases are perpetuated in contemporary visual culture and how epistemic activists can fight against them.

After the conference, join us for the banquet in the Faculty Club
RSVP to jseeger@brandeis.edu