

Manager, Student Inform

From: Inform
Subject: EM: Scripps College Humanities Institute Invites You to Attend: April 21 & 22 Conference: You Just Believe That Because

On Behalf Of Humanities Institute



CONFERENCE: You Just Believe That Because ...

April 21–22, 2022

Attend in-person at Scripps College, Outdoor Classroom #1,
or virtually via Zoom

SCHEDULE

Thursday, April 21 [ZOOM LINK](#)

1:00–2:30 p.m. **Roger White, MIT**

On Etiology and Disagreement: Disagreement-defeat occurs when I lose my justification for a belief by learning of the contrary opinions of others. Etiology-defeat occurs when I lose my justification for a belief by learning of the influence of “irrelevant factors” on my belief. Roger White once floated the suggestion roughly that Etiology Defeat is parasitic upon Disagreement Defeat—there is no distinctive problem raised by the dubious causal background of my opinions that doesn’t already arise from the fact that they are not universally shared. The suggestion is a surprising one. Isn’t it obvious that we can have Etiological worries without Disagreement, and vice versa? And while similar issues arise, isn’t it clear that the epistemological problems posed are distinct? This paper tries to sort out what was right and what was wrong with White’s suggestion, hopefully shedding some light on

both issues.

2:45–4:15 p.m. **Catarina Dutilh Novaes, VU Amsterdam**

Genealogical anxiety, and attention and trust as higher-order evidence: What is the epistemic relevance of the genealogy of beliefs? A popular view is that causal origins and epistemic justifications come apart. In fact, many seem to think that, in some cases at least, the contingent origins of our beliefs, once revealed, will somehow undermine or cast doubt on those beliefs; this is what A. Srinivasan describes as 'genealogical anxiety'. In this talk, I propose an account of belief-forming processes that does justice to the role of cultural and social factors in these processes, and yet may mitigate genealogical anxiety to some extent. The account highlights the impact of attention/exposure to ideas and beliefs, and of relations of trust in specific sources. I argue that attention and trust can be aptly viewed as higher-order evidence, thus being legitimate participants in these (perfectly rational) belief-forming processes. Time permitting, I'll sketch some connections between my proposal and Foucault's thoughts on genealogy, power, and (intellectual) freedom.

Friday, April 22 [ZOOM LINK](#)

9:00–10:30 a.m. **Alexander Prescott-Couch, Oxford**

Nietzschean Genealogy Beyond Debunking Arguments: Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morality* (GM) is often interpreted as providing a debunking argument of some kind. I consider different versions of such arguments and suggest that they face important challenges. Moving beyond debunking interpretations of GM, I consider Nietzsche's claim that his genealogy should be used to assess the "value" of moral values. After explaining how to understand this claim, I consider different ways that history might be used to assess the value of beliefs, practices, and institutions. The upshot is a general account of genealogy beyond debunking.

10:45 a.m.–12:15 p.m. **David Sosa, UT Austin**

Title/Abstract TBA

Lunch

1:45–3:15 p.m. **Alex Worsnip, UNC Chapel Hill**

Against Ideal Theory in Epistemology: The Case of Suspiciously Convenient Beliefs: Public life abounds with example of people whose beliefs - especially

political beliefs - seem suspiciously convenient: consider, for example, the billionaire who believes that all taxation is unjust, or the Supreme Court Justice whose interpretation of what the laws says reliably line up with her personal political convictions. After presenting what I take to be the best argument for the epistemological relevance of suspicious convenience, I'll diagnose how attempts to resist this argument rest on a kind of epistemological ideal theory. I'll then argue that the ways in which this ideal theory can be deployed in defense of suspiciously convenient beliefs brings out the pathologies of such ideal theory in epistemology.

3:15–4:00 p.m. Break/Coffee

4:00–5:30 p.m. **Annalisa Coliva, UC Irvine**

You just believe that because ... it's a hinge: In the growing literature on the contingent origins of belief there is no convergence on the assessment of the epistemic significance of the so-called “etiological challenge”, often expressed by saying “You just believe that because you were brought up to believe it”. In this paper, I look at this challenge through the lens of hinge epistemology. It is claimed that hinges are typically believed just because one has been brought up to believe them (sect. 1), while lacking non question-begging reasons in their support, or having reasons which would not be stronger than the ones in favor of incompatible ones (sect. 2). Yet, due to their extreme variability, it is not always the case that hinges are not rationally held, while fitting into the YJBTB schema. In particular, they are rationally held when either different hinges are taken for granted merely because of one's position in history, or else when they are constitutive of epistemic rationality. By contrast, they are not rationally held when different hinges, which are not themselves constitutive of epistemic rationality, are taken for granted while aware of the fact that one's reasons for them are either question-begging or no stronger than the ones in favor of incompatible ones (sect. 3-4). Hence, looking at the etiological challenge through the lens of hinge epistemology helps elucidate its nature and epistemic significance.

Your most cherished beliefs did not emerge in a vacuum. You believe what you do because of who and where you are, your personal trajectory, and, ultimately, the long history of events and ideas leading up to your life. This is sometimes emphasized by others as a way to debunk or undermine one's views. These kinds of objections are familiar: “You just believe that because you're a woman!” “You just believe that because you're friends with the defendant!” or “You just believe that because you're Jewish!” These kinds of objections can sometimes succeed in bringing to light one's biases; other times they seem to miss the mark and point out the biases of the objector instead. If we are going to learn from one another, and discuss topics of interest within our community and think together, we should get clear on the significance of the genealogy of beliefs, so we can better understand, and more accurately gauge, our own and each other's credibility. This semester the Humanities Institute will focus on whether, and why, it

matters what are the causes and origins of our beliefs, including those about justice, morality, religion, beauty, and the world.

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