

24.150 Liberalism, Toleration, and Freedom of Speech, Fall 2023

This image is in the public domain. Source: [Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CC0). +C0

wrap-up



Joshi, Hrishikesh. *Why It's OK to Speak Your Mind*. Routledge, 2021. © Routledge. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.



© Hrishikesh Joshi. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

2

The book's main theses

'there is a duty to reveal our evidence against social pressure, so long as the costs are not too high...you have a duty to speak your mind'

Joshi, Hrishikesh. From *Why It's OK to Speak Your Mind*. Routledge, 2021. © Routledge. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

3

This is a duty to your community: '...this constitutes doing your part to protect a common resource—namely, the epistemic commons.'

There is also a duty to yourself: 'you should speak your mind your your own sake. Speaking your mind is an essential component of the good life.'

Joshi, Hrishikesh. From *Why It's OK to Speak Your Mind*. Routledge, 2021. © Routledge. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

4

Q1a. What is the 'epistemic commons'?

'the stock of facts, ideas, and perspectives that are alive in society's discourse.'

Joshi, Hrishikesh. From *Why It's OK to Speak Your Mind*. Routledge, 2021. © Routledge. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

5

Q1b. Can the epistemic commons of some society contain both a statement S and its negation, the statement not-S?

6

The dam example



Image courtesy of [Western Area Power](#) on Flickr. License CC BY.

Abe, Beth, and Candice all know:

(R1) The dam is built with good materials.

(R2) The structural engineering is sound.

7



Screenshot for "The most devastating and deadly dam failures" on YouTube. © Interesting Engineering. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

In addition:

Abe knows (R3) that rainfall has been unusually high.

Beth knows (R4) the spillway design is defective.

Candice knows (R5) output pipe maintenance is bad.

Each believes that the dam will not break.

8

Knowing R1, R2, and only one of the rest *justifies believing* that the dam will not break.

Knowing all of R1-R5 justifies believing that the dam will break.

Joshi: A, B, and C's beliefs are 'rational,' 'But the group as a whole is irrational.'

9

An interpretation of the argument

P1. Sharing one's evidence makes it more likely that the beliefs of members of one's community constitute knowledge.

P2. If doing X makes it more likely that the beliefs of the members of one's community constitute knowledge, then one has a *prima facie* duty to do X.

C. One has a *prima facie* duty to share one's evidence.

11

Q2. What does Joshi mean by saying that we have 'a duty to speak our minds' (60)? Why does he think we have such a duty?

10

The inefficacy objection

Speaking your mind presents a collective action problem. Each individual maximizes his narrow self-interest by not rocking the boat—that is, only sharing evidence where there is no social cost to doing so. But if everybody (or enough) people act in this way, then dangerous blind spots emerge. Everyone in the group would be better off if they all spoke their minds.

Joshi, Hrishikesh. From *Why It's OK to Speak Your Mind*. Routledge, 2021. © Routledge. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

12

Asch's conformity experiments

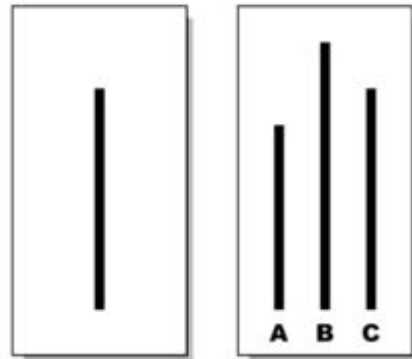


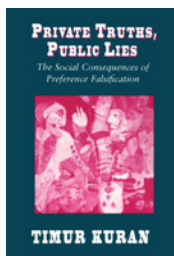
Image courtesy of [Helen](#) on Wikimedia Commons. This image is in the public domain.

13

Q3. What is 'pluralistic ignorance'? What's an example of pluralistic ignorance? What mechanisms might cause pluralistic ignorance to persist?

a related idea: *preference falsification*

14



'*preference falsification*, the act of misrepresenting one's genuine wants under perceived social pressures'

Kuran, Timur. From *Private Truths, Public Lies: The Social Consequences of Preference Falsification*. Harvard University Press, 1997. © Harvard University Press. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

Kuran, Timur. *Private Truths, Public Lies: The Social Consequences of Preference Falsification*. Harvard University Press, 1997. © Harvard University Press. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

15

Cristina Bicchieri lays out five conditions which facilitate pluralistic ignorance: (i) people engage in social comparison with others in their reference network, taking cues about what is to be done and said; (ii) other people's behavior is observable...and so are punishments for errant behavior; (iii) people do not express their true views out of fear of social sanction; (iv) while we think our outward behavior doesn't reflect our preferences, we assume that others' outward behavior does reveal their true preferences; and (v) we come to think that all others (or amajority) accept the norm in question.

16

an **argument** is a list of sentences (statements):

P_1, \dots, P_n, C

the P_i are the **premises**, and C is the **conclusion**

two concepts to master: **validity** and **soundness**

see

Getting Started xxxiii

A Brief Guide to Logic and Argumentation

When a philosopher tackles a question, her aim is not just to answer it. Her aim is to provide an argument for her answer and so to present her audience with reasons for believing what she believes. When you read a philosophical text, your main job is to identify and assess the author's arguments. When you write a philosophy paper,

Rosen, Gideon, Alex Byrne, et al. From *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy*. 2nd ed. W. W. Norton & Company, 2018. ISBN: 9780393624427. © W. W. Norton & Company. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

are (non-question begging) valid arguments from true premises. (Indeed, they have often insisted on valid arguments from *indisputably* true premises.) This remains the gold standard for argument in philosophy. Interesting arguments of this sort are often possible, and when they are possible, they are desirable. When you reconstruct the arguments of the philosophers for the purposes of evaluating them or when you give arguments of your own, it often makes sense to try for arguments of this sort.

And yet it is a mistake to suppose that philosophical arguments are only good when they are valid. As we have noted, the arguments that serve us well in science and in ordinary life—the arguments that persuade us that atoms and molecules exist or that it would be wrong to kill the bartender—are often non-demonstrative in character. There is no good reason to hold philosophy to a higher standard. But, of course, this leaves us in a difficult position, since as we have stressed, there is no accepted account of when a non-demonstrative argument is a good one.

Some Guidelines for Writing Philosophy Papers

Writing a good philosophy paper is a lot like writing a good paper in history, political science, literature, or biology. Yes, philosophy papers are a little different in that they require a particularly careful use of language and a particularly close examination of ideas and arguments. Still, a good philosophy paper is basically a good paper that happens to be about philosophy. So the guidelines we sketch here apply with equal force in other courses as well.

Generally speaking, a philosophy paper presents an argument in support of a thesis. Here are some examples of philosophical theses (as you will see, some are very broad and some are much narrower):

P_1, P_2, \dots, P_n, C

P_1, P_2, \dots, P_n, C

a **valid** argument is one in which:

it is *impossible* that P_1, P_2, \dots, P_n are true and C is false

equivalently:

necessarily, if P_1, P_2, \dots, P_n are true, C is true

an argument that is not valid is **invalid**

a **sound** argument is a valid argument with *true* premises

by the definition of validity, a sound argument has a *true conclusion*

an argument that is not sound is **unsound**

invalid, valid, sound?

P1: Socrates is a Martian

P2: if Socrates is a Martian, Plato is from Venus

C: Plato is from Venus

valid
unsound

P1: Aristotle is not a Martian

C: Aristotle is not a Martian

valid
sound

P1: Democritus is from Venus

P2: Democritus is not from Venus

C: Aristotle is a Martian

valid
unsound

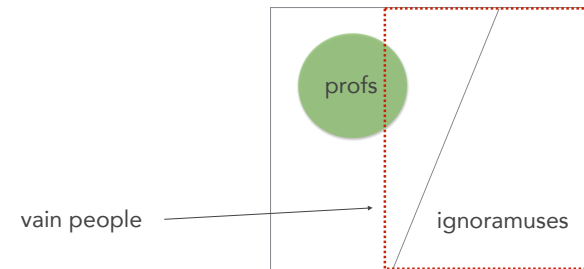
21

invalid, valid, sound?

P1: no professors are ignorant

P2: all ignorant people are vain

C: no professors are vain



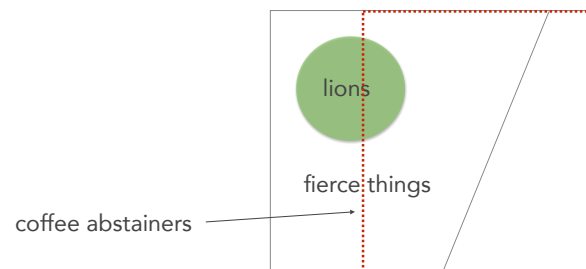
22

invalid, valid, sound?

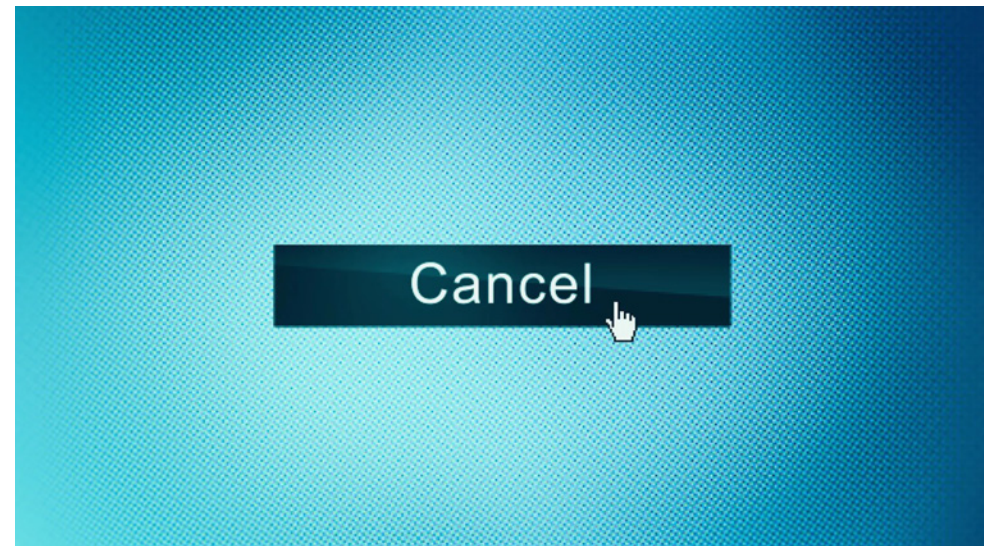
P1: all lions are fierce

P2: some lions do not drink coffee

C: some creatures that drink coffee are not fierce



23



© Getty Images. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

24



© X Corp. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

25



© TED Conferences, LLC. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

<https://youtu.be/QxB3b7fxMEA>

26



© X Corp. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

27

What about the low views of the talk? Well, that's a question we ourselves are trying to answer. It's true that the other talks Coleman referred to were shared on the TED Talks Daily podcast which gives a significant audience boost. His so far has not been posted there. It may yet be. Many of our talks never make it onto that podcast which has its own curation team. The bigger riddle is why views on YouTube have been on the low side. Those views are largely driven by YouTube's algorithms which are as much a mystery to us as to others. What we do know is this: the more people who view it and comment on it, the more likely it is that the talk will be recommended to others and take off.

But in any case, already more than 200,000 people have seen the talk or the debate. If that's attempted suppression, we haven't done very well.

© X Corp. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

28

Coleman, thanks again for coming to TED. The hyper-divided world we're in right now is so hard to navigate. It's hard to say anything that matters without sparking anger. I see you as a fellow traveler on that journey, and truly wish you well. And to your critics, I wish them well too. Many people have been genuinely hurt and offended by what they heard you say. This is not what we dream of when we post our talks.

I believe real progress can be made on this issue by each side getting greater clarity and insight from the other. We share more in common than we know. We all ultimately want a just world in which all can thrive. If I could wave a wand and replace some of the anger that's been stirred up here (on all sides) with curiosity and a desire to listen, engage and understand, that would make me really happy. TED remains committed to its nonpartisan nonprofit status and a willingness to embrace the discomfort that comes when you try to navigate the toughest issues.

© X Corp. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

29



AAA/CASCA Annual Meeting Search...

General Information Program Accessibility Exhibits & Sponsorship Registration Travel Planning & Housing English



© The American Anthropological Association. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

30

Let's Talk About Sex, Baby: Why biological sex remains a necessary analytic category in anthropology

Reviewed by: Society for Anthropological Sciences

Session Time: 12:15 PM to 1:45 PM

Session Type: Oral Presentation Session

Organizer: Kathleen Lowrey

Participants: Kathleen Lowrey, Carole Hooven, Elizabeth Weiss, Silvia Carrasco, Kathleen Richardson, Michèle Sirois, Kathleen Lowrey

Session Description: While it has become increasingly common in anthropology and public life to substitute 'sex' with 'gender', there are multiple domains of research in which biological sex remains irreplaceably relevant to anthropological analysis. Contesting the transition from sex to gender in anthropological scholarship deserves much more critical consideration than it has hitherto received in major disciplinary fora like AAA / CASCA. This diverse international panel brings together scholars from socio-cultural anthropology, archaeology, and biological anthropology who describe why in their work gender is not helpful and only sex will do. This is particularly the case when the work is concerned with equity and the deep analysis of power, and which has as an aim the achievement of genuine inclusivity. With research foci from hominin evolution to contemporary artificial intelligence, from the anthropology of education to the debates within contemporary feminism about surrogacy, panelists make the case that while not all anthropologists need to talk about sex, baby, some absolutely do.



September 25, 2023

Dear panelists,

We write to inform you that at the request of numerous members the respective executive boards of AAA and CASCA reviewed the panel submission "Let's Talk about Sex Baby: Why biological sex remains a necessary analytic category in anthropology" and reached a decision to remove the session from the AAA/CASCA 2023 conference program(me). This decision was based on extensive consultation and was reached in the spirit of respect for our values, the safety and dignity of our members, and the scientific integrity of the program(me). The reason the session deserved further scrutiny was that the ideas were advanced in such a way as to cause harm to members represented by the Trans and LGBTQI of the anthropological community as well as the community at large.

While there were those who disagree with this decision, we would hope they know their voice was heard and was very much a part of the conversation. It is our hope that we continue to work together so that we become stronger and more unified within each of our associations. Going forward, we will undertake a major review of the processes associated with vetting sessions at our annual meetings and will include our leadership in that discussion.

© The American Anthropological Association. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

31

© The American Anthropological Association. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

32

Discussing sex is no longer allowed at Anthropology conferences

September 25, 2023, my fellow panelists and I received a letter from the American Anthropological Association (AAA) and the Canadian Anthropology Society (CASCA) informing us that our conference panel, "Let's Talk About Sex, Baby: Why biological sex remains a necessary analytic category in anthropology", which had been accepted, is being removed from the program due to the "harm" it will cause the "Trans and LGBTQI community". We've responded to their accusation. Below is our response, the AAA/CASCA letter, and our panel submission. Feel free to quote any of these materials in whole or in part.

Weiss, Elizabeth. From "Discussing sex is no longer allowed at Anthropology conferences." WordPress. © Elizabeth Weiss . All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

<https://elizabethweiss74.wordpress.com/discussing-sex-is-no-longer-allowed-at-anthropology-conferences/>

33

Dr. Katja Thieme @Katja_Thieme

No, it's not that people fear they will be harmed by possible ideas they might perhaps encounter.

It's that the claims that will be made are already well known *and* there are a history and campaigns that use these claims to undermine the dignitary safety of trans interlocutors.

dr caitlin green (offense archaeologist) @caitlinmoriah

it is not "ideas" that are harmful, it is the well-documented pattern of falsehoods being legitimized by an academic organization platforming faulty and unethical research methods, which is then cited in legislation that harms, disenfranchises, and discriminates in tangible ways

Moti Gorin @GorinMoti · 8h

People who genuinely believe they will be harmed by ideas presented at an academic conference may have chosen the wrong profession. You cannot be a responsible researcher or teacher if you cannot tolerate ideas with which you expect you might disagree. twitter.com/Docstockk/stat...

8:02 PM · 9/26/23

1 Retweet 5 Likes

© X Corp. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

34



US comedian Dave Chappelle, whose latest Netflix special sparked a transgender backlash, has hit back at those he says want to "cancel" him.

Chappelle slams cancel culture amid Netflix transgender furore

© 26 October 2021

From "Chappelle slams cancel culture amid Netflix transgender furore." BBC. October 26, 2021. © BBC. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

35

The New York Times

10 Theses About Cancel Culture

What we talk about when we talk about "cancellation."

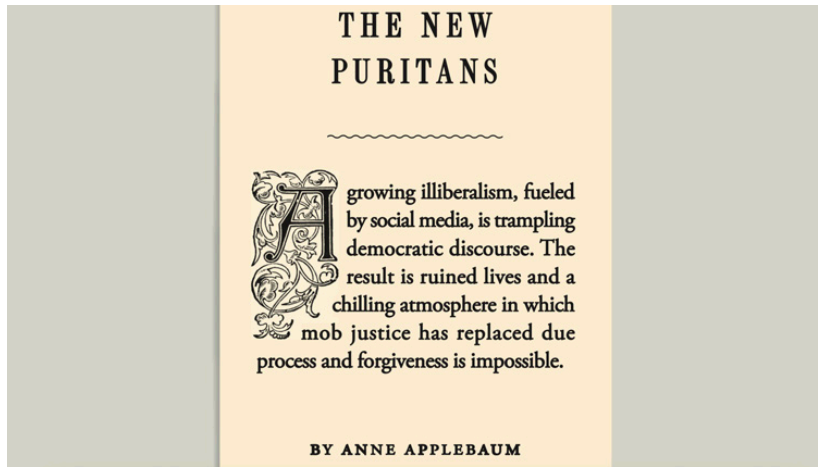
July 14, 2020



By **Ross Douthat**
 Opinion Columnist

Douthat, Ross. From "10 Theses About Cancel Culture," *New York Times*, July 14, 2020. © The New York Times Company. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

36



Applebaum, Anne. From "The New Puritans." *The Atlantic*, October 2021. © The Atlantic Monthly Group. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

Q1. Applebaum thinks cancellation (as she describes it) is bad, but what is the problem? Am I not free to avoid talking to you or associating with you, even if you've done nothing wrong? Isn't a company free to fire its 'difficult' employees who make others feel uncomfortable, if it chooses? (Note that in the US much employment is 'at will,' meaning the employer need not have a 'just cause' to fire you.) How would Douthat answer these questions?

10 Theses About Cancel Culture

What we talk about when we talk about "cancellation."

July 14, 2020

liberalism is supposed to clear a wider space for debate than other political systems and allow a wider range of personal expression. So you would expect a liberal society to be slower to cancel, more inclined to separate the personal and the professional.

The goal [of attempted cancellations] isn't to punish everyone, or even very many someones; it's to shame or scare just enough people to make the rest conform.

Douthat, Ross. From "10 Theses About Cancel Culture," *New York Times*, July 14, 2020. © The New York Times Company. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

10 Theses About Cancel Culture

What we talk about when we talk about "cancellation."

July 14, 2020

Attempted cancellations on the right are mostly battles for control over diminishing terrain, with occasional forays against red-state academics and anti-Trump celebrities. Meanwhile, the left's cancel warriors imagine themselves conquering the entire non-Fox News map.

Douthat, Ross. From "10 Theses About Cancel Culture," *New York Times*, July 14, 2020. © The New York Times Company. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

(Is there any moral to be drawn from this, if it is true?)

10 Theses About Cancel Culture

What we talk about when we talk about "cancellation."

JULY 14, 2020

10. If you oppose left-wing cancel culture, appeals to liberalism and free speech aren't enough.

to defend a liberal position ... you need more than just a defense of free speech in the abstract; you need to defend free speech for the sake of some important, true idea...no merely procedural argument for granting [such ideas] a platform will sustain itself against a passionate, morally confident attack.

liberals...who fear the left-wing zeal for cancellation need a counterargument that doesn't rest on right-to-be-wrong principles alone. They need to identify the places where they think the new left-wing norms aren't merely too censorious but simply wrong, and fight the battle there, on substance as well as liberal principle.

Douthat, Ross. From "10 Theses About Cancel Culture," *New York Times*, July 14, 2020. © The New York Times Company. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

Next time: continuing with Appelbaum, wrap-up discussion of this section of the course, discussion of paper questions (if desired)

MIT OpenCourseWare
<https://ocw.mit.edu>

24.150J / 17.043J / CMS.125J Liberalism, Toleration, and Freedom of Speech
Fall 2023

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <https://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.