

Briana Toole

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Curriculum Vitae (Updated March 2018)

🌐 <http://www.brianatoole.com/>

AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Epistemology, Philosophy of Race and Gender

AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Normative and Metaethics

EMPLOYMENT

2018 – 2019 **Post-Doctoral Research Fellow**, *Baruch College-CUNY*
Inaugural Weissman School of Arts and Sciences Fellow

EDUCATION

2013 – 2018 **PhD in Philosophy**, *University of Texas at Austin*
Dissertation: KNOWLEDGE AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

My dissertation defends the view that what an epistemic agent is in a position to know, and what knowledge she is in a position to share with others, is sensitive to non-epistemic features related to the agent's social identity. My principal aim in the dissertation is to show that standpoint epistemology, a theoretical framework that I develop and clarify, is a necessary tool in understanding, and eradicating, epistemic oppression.

Committee: Sinan Dogramaci (Supervisor), Ray Buchanan, David Sosa, Miriam Schoenfield (MIT), and Louise Antony (UM-Amherst)

2017 – 2018 **Visiting Scholar**, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*
Funded by the Diversity Predoctoral Fellowship

2010 – 2011 **Master of Arts in Philosophy**, *University of Sheffield*
(with distinction)

2006 – 2010 **Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy**, *Florida State University*
(Magna Cum Laude)

PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY

2016 “The problem of diversity in philosophy: a US perspective,” Op-Ed in *Times Higher Education*

2015 – Present Founder and Director, “Corrupt the Youth” Philosophy Outreach Program – Eastside Memorial High School, Austin, Texas

2014 – 2015 Writer for the Humanities Minutes Podcast Project, UT Austin College of Liberal Arts
“You Didn’t Start the Fire”, “Corrupt the Youth”, “Thought Experiments”,
“The Battle of the Sexes”, “Color Concepts”, “The Black Man’s Cogito”

PRESENTATIONS

TALKS

April 2018 **“On Social Identity and Epistemic Peerhood: In Defense of Epistemic Privilege”**
University of Miami – Inclusiveness Conference (Invited Talk)
March 2018 Bates College – Colloquium
January 2018 Claremont McKenna College (Invited Talk)

Nov 2017 **“Demarginalizing Standpoint Epistemology”**
Princeton University (Invited Talk)
April 2017 Epistemology Reading Group, University of Texas at Austin

May 2017 **“Standpoint Epistemology and Hidden Ontologies”**
Toronto Philosophy Graduate Conference

Oct 2016 **“Through the Looking Glass: A Deeper Look at Standpoint Epistemology”**
Graduate Colloquium Series, University of Texas at Austin

Feb 2016 **“Perceptual Farce and Epistemic Blame”**
Columbia-NYU Graduate Conference
Feb 2016 USC/UCLA Graduate Conference
March 2015 University of Texas at Austin MLK Conference

April 2015 **“How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Disagreement”**
APA Pacific Division, Symposium, Vancouver
Dec 2014 Western Michigan University Graduate Conference
Nov 2014 Epistemology Reading Group, University of Texas at Austin

Jan 2014 **“The Causal Theory and Fictional Names”**
University of Texas at Austin MLK Conference

April 2011 **“Fictional Entities: A Case for Neo-Meinongism”**
Indiana Philosophical Association

COMMENTS

March 2018 **Jessie Munton’s “What’s Wrong with Accurate Statistical Generalizations?”**
APA, Pacific Division, San Diego

February 2018 **Rima Basu’s “What We Epistemically Owe to Each Other”**
Princeton Workshop in Social Philosophy

Aug 2017 **Kathryn Pogin’s “Confronting the Epistepocalypse with Faith”**
Vancouver Summer Philosophy Conference

Cat Wade’s “‘Expert Sexists’: Unjust Perception and the Prediction Error Minimization Account of Mind”

Aug 2015

Workshop on Bayesian Theories of Perception and Epistemology

AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

2017 – 2018	Diversity Predoctoral Fellowship and Visiting Scholar Appointment. Linguistics and Philosophy Department, School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
2017	Dissertation Boot Camp Fellowship. Awarded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
2014- 2017	Graduate Student Professional Development Award. UT Austin (x3)
2017	Pal-Make a Difference Award for Corrupt the Youth. UT Austin
2015 – 2017	Graduate Student Travel Award. Awarded by the University of Texas Philosophy Department (x4)
2015	Departmental Nominee for the Livingston Award in Graduate Teaching Excellence
2013 – 2016	Royal Fellowship. Awarded by the University of Texas Philosophy Department
2013	Graduate School Recruitment Fellowship. UT Austin

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

PRIMARY INSTRUCTOR

Spring 2017	PHL 310: Knowledge and Reality, UT Austin
2013 – 2016	PHIL 2301: Philosophy and Ethics, Huston-Tillotson University (x7) <i>Huston-Tillotson is an historically black college/university (HBCU) located in east Austin, Texas and serves ~1000 students. I taught as part of the adult-education program, which grants degrees to non-traditional students pursuing their bachelor's degree.</i>
Summer 2015	Philosophy of Time, Duke TIP East Campus <i>The Duke Talent Identification Program (TIP) is a summer residential program for high school students identified as talented or gifted. I taught 20 students and supervised a teaching assistant.</i>

TEACHING ASSISTANT

Fall 2016	PHL 610QA: Problems of Knowledge and Valuation, UT Austin
Spring 2016	PHL 301: Introduction to Philosophy, UT Austin
Spring 2015	PHL 301L: Early Modern Philosophy, UT Austin
2014 – 2015	UGS 303: Medical Ethics UT Austin (x2)
Spring 2014	PHL 304: Contemporary Moral Problems, UT Austin

PEDAGOGY

Fall 2015	Teaching in Philosophy (Michael Tye)
Spring 2014	Teaching Fundamentals (Laura Beerits)
Member	American Association of Philosophy Teachers

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICE

2017 – 2019	Appointed Member, APA Graduate Student Council
Summer 2017	Dissertation Boot Camp
2017 – Present	Society for Analytical Feminism, Member
2016 –2017	President, UT Austin’s Minorities and Philosophy (MAP) Chapter
2015 –2016	Organizer, Graduate Colloquium Series – UT Austin Department of Philosophy
2015 – 2016	Undergraduate Liaison, UT Austin’s MAP Chapter
2015	Founder, MAP – UT Austin Chapter
2013 – Present	American Philosophy Association, Member

WORKSHOPS AND SUMMER INSTITUTES

2018	Princeton Workshop in Social Philosophy (PWISP) Princeton University
2017	Vancouver Summer Philosophy Conference (formerly the Bellingham Summer Philosophy Conference) University of British Columbia
2016	Athena in Action: Networking and Mentoring Workshop for Graduate Student Women in Philosophy Princeton University
2015	Workshop on Bayesian Theories of Perception and Epistemology Cornell University
2011	Workshop on Agency and Responsibility (NOWAR) The Murphy Institute at Tulane University

GRADUATE COURSEWORK

First-Year Seminar – Sinan Dogramaci and Adam Pautz
Nietzsche – Kathleen Higgins
Philosophy of Emotions – John Deigh
Metaethics to Metaepistemology – Sinan Dogramaci and Miriam Schoenfield
Core Logic – Cory Juhl
The Situated Self – Galen Strawson
Independent Study on Moral Epistemology – Miriam Schoenfield
History of Analytic Ethics – John Deigh
Does It Matter What It’s Like? – David Sosa
Practical Reasons and Reasoning – Jonathan Dancy
Independent Study on Race and Ways of Knowing – Ray Buchanan
Applications of Bayesianism to Traditional Epistemology– Sinan Dogramaci and Miriam Schoenfield
Independent Study on Gender and Standpoint Epistemology – Ray Buchanan
Independent Study on Epistemic Norms – Sinan Dogamaci
Epistemology of the A Priori – Sinan Dogramaci
Independent Study on Responsibility for Belief – John Deigh

Independent Study on Socially Constructed Knowledge – Sinan Dogramaci

Independent Study on Unjust Perception – Ray Buchanan

Independent Study on Epistemic Oppression – Sinan Dogramaci

Independent Study on Pragmatic Encroachment and Generic Knowers – David Sosa

Independent Study on Mainstream versus Standpoint Epistemology – Sinan Dogramaci

KNOWLEDGE AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Kathy Griffin's choice to pose with a bloodied, decapitated effigy of President Trump was met with outrage, especially given the worry that Barron Trump, the president's son, was particularly harmed by this representation. As many critics noted, however, Ted Nugent's suggestion that then President Obama be lynched was not met with similar outrage, even though he had two young daughters who might also be harmed. Why, we might ask, did the same people who *knew* that Griffin acted inappropriately, fail to know that Nugent's words were also inappropriate?

Standpoint epistemology, which claims that social identity makes a difference in what a person is in a position to know, can provide an answer. However, standpoint epistemology is met with resistance in academic philosophy, largely because it is taken to be in tension with traditional epistemology. In *Knowledge and Social Identity*, I have two aims: first, to better understand what is at the heart of the apparent tension between these two schools of thought, and second, to show that standpoint epistemology is a necessary tool in understanding, and eradicating, epistemic oppression.

My precise thesis concerns whether race or gender makes a difference to what a person is in a position to know. This is an important, but controversial thesis. It owes its controversial nature to the fact that it is in tension with at least some characterizations of traditional epistemology. And it is an important thesis, I suggest, because it sheds light on a phenomenon that emerges in our epistemic practices - epistemic oppression. Broadly speaking, epistemic oppression is the obstruction or exclusion of epistemic agents from the practices of acquiring or sharing knowledge (Fricker 1999, 2007; Dotson 2012, 2014).

In order to advance my overall aims, I set out to accomplish three tasks. I first attempt to tease out the characterization of traditional epistemology that is at odds with standpoint epistemology. The characterization of traditional epistemology that I put forth is one which endorses the thesis of *intellectualism*, the view that knowledge does not depend on non-epistemic facts. I submit that two further concepts that have been central to the critiques of leading standpoint epistemologists - the *atomistic view of knowers* and *aperspectivalism* - can be usefully interpreted as defining features of intellectualism. I argue that we ought to reject traditional epistemology so characterized. I use pragmatic encroachment as a dialectical tool to motivate the denial of intellectualism, and consequently, the denial of both supporting features.

Second, I aim to give a more concrete specification to the general framework of standpoint epistemology. To that end, I offer three interpretations of the standpoint thesis. I begin by examining the material reading, defended first by Georg Lukács (1971) and later, in its feminist approach, by Nancy Hartstock (1998). I then consider an epistemic reading, offered by Miranda Fricker (1999, 2007), among others. Lastly, I offer a novel interpretation of standpoint epistemology that draws on elements of feminist science and feminist metaphysics. I then use these readings to illuminate some well-known forms of epistemic oppression.

Finally, I argue that marginally situated knowers and dominantly situated knowers are not epistemic peers. I begin by exploring the notion of epistemic peerhood, and then using the characterizations of epistemic peerhood available in the peer disagreement literature to draw out a definition of epistemic privilege. I then draw on the concept of *double consciousness* to defend the claim that marginally situated knowers are *epistemically privileged* in the social domain.

I conclude the dissertation by evaluating how standpoint epistemology enables us to better make sense of the differential treatment afforded to Griffin and Nugent. I suggest that our understanding of incidents like these is impoverished without the theoretical framework standpoint epistemology provides.

CORRUPT THE YOUTH

PHILOSOPHY OUTREACH PROGRAM

In Spring 2016 I founded *Corrupt the Youth*, a philosophy outreach program that brings philosophy to students attending under-resourced high schools. Corrupt the Youth takes its name from the Greek philosopher Socrates, who was sentenced to death for allegedly ‘corrupting’ the youth. Socrates encouraged the Greek youth to question and, if necessary, oppose, the political and moral conventions of their society. The goal of the Corrupt the Youth philosophy outreach program is to continue that project.

We work with high school juniors at Eastside Memorial High School, a Title 1 school in east Austin, Texas.¹ Corrupt the Youth aims to bridge the gap between what students are learning in high school and what they will be expected to do in college. Part of the motivation in exposing students to philosophy at this particular stage in their high school career is to prepare them for the high-level texts with which they will be engaging, and the level of abstraction that many college-level courses require. But students can benefit from philosophy specifically because it can be useful in helping them think through the big problems and questions we all face: Are we morally obligated to help others? What is power, who has it, and why? Are the laws just? Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are rarely asked to share and develop their own views on the answers to these important questions. Corrupt the Youth aims to give the students an opportunity to clarify their own thoughts and to discover the power of their own voices.

While most philosophy outreach programs function as after-school programs, Corrupt the Youth runs like a traditional class. The curriculum is designed so that each lesson builds upon a skill or idea developed in the previous lesson. The course mimics an introductory philosophy class, so students cover topics ranging from epistemology, to ethics, to the philosophy of mind. Typically, two or three mentors from UT’s department of philosophy (undergraduates, graduate students, or professors) lead a class. We open the day’s lesson by introducing a key question. This question introduces the central topic for the day’s class. Students then focus on a short, manageable philosophy text. Students might then participate in a short activity or discussion to further their engagement with and deepen their understanding of the text. Classes conclude by connecting the key question and philosophical text to a broader question or issue.

For instance, a sample class might begin by asking the following key question: Are we good people when no one is watching? This is the question Socrates poses in “The Ring of Gyges.” In this dialogue, which the students read, Socrates suggests that most people would not behave morally without the fear of being caught and punished. We then ask students to apply this lesson to a contemporary issue: police corruption. Using the key question and the text as a guide, we encourage students to respond to the question: should police officers be required to wear body cameras? This gives students the opportunity to apply an abstract moral consideration to a real-life problem we are faced with today.

The goal of Corrupt the Youth is to provide students with a framework through which to understand, critically evaluate, and address some of the unique issues that we face today (like police brutality, dog-whistle politics, and xenophobia, to name a few). But the program primarily aims to empower students to be advocates for themselves. Through this program, students engage with complex moral and logical entanglements that they can begin to unpack and discuss, and in doing so, they not only gain tools for living, but also a sense of empowerment and agency.

¹ Title 1 schools are schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families.