

Ege Yumusak

Curriculum Vitae

Department of Philosophy
Harvard University
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AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Philosophy of Mind; Epistemology; Social and Political Philosophy

AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Philosophy of Language; Feminism; Cognitive Science

EDUCATION

Harvard University, Ph.D., Philosophy	2017 – 2022 (expected)
Dissertation: <i>Perspectival Clashes: Saliency as a Site of Contestation</i>	
Committee: Susanna Siegel (chair), Mark Richard, Bernhard Nickel, Tim Crane (external)	

My dissertation examines how ideology is installed in our minds, generating social contestation not only over matters of fact or judgments of value but also over what’s salient to us. I call these contestations ‘perspectival clashes’. From this starting point, I construct a novel theory of perspectives in which their primary function is organizing our inquiries into the world (including the social relations therein) by setting our epistemic agendas. What emerges is the philosophy of the active and social mind in a politically fraught world—putting pressure on our preconceived notions of saliency, open-mindedness, and partisanship.

Newnham College, University of Cambridge, MPhil, Philosophy	2016 – 17
Harvard University, AB, Philosophy, secondary in English, magna cum laude	2012 – 16
Robert College, Istanbul, Turkey	2007 – 12

MANUSCRIPTS

The anti-utopian imagination (under review)
Open-mindedness is not a feature of the mind (draft)
When agendas diverge (draft)
Whence interrogative contents (draft)
The format of gist (draft)

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

2022, Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Merit Fellowship
2021, Richard M. Martin Pre-dissertation Fellowship
2020, 2019, Certification of Distinction and Excellence in Teaching awarded by the Derek Bok Ctr for Teaching & Learning
2018, SWIP-Analytic Essay Prize for “Implicit Bias and the Unconscious”
2018, SPP Graduate Student Travel Award & Diversity Award
2017, 2018, 2019 Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Fellowship
2016, Onora O’Neill Studentship at Newnham College
2012-2016, Herchel Smith Fellowship; Mary Gordon Roberts Mind, Brain & Behavior Fellowship; Shaw Fellowship; Center for Public Interest Careers Fellowship

PUBLIC WRITING & EDITING

Contributing Editor, *The Drift Magazine*

“Where is the University?” for *The Point Magazine*

“An Uprising for a Democratic University in Turkey” for *The Forge Magazine*

“#MeToo’s Strike Test” for *The Drift Magazine*

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

TALKS (* blind review, ** invited)

The epistemic conception of salience

*January 2022, Eastern APA Symposium

The anti-utopian imagination

**June 2021, Philosophy and Activism Seminar

*May 2021, The New School / CUNY Theory Collective

May 2021, Workshop on Gender and Philosophy (WOGAP) at MIT

Whence interrogative contents

*February 2021, Central APA Symposium

The format of gist

*December 2020, Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology

Psychologism as a feminist critique

January 2020, Harvard Talkshop

Informative presupposition

**May 2019, Feminist Philosophy of Language Workshop at Brown

Can credences motivate perceptual confidences?

*April 2019, Notre Dame - Northwestern University Graduate Epistemology Conference

Implicit bias and the unconscious

*April 2018, SWIP Analytic Essay Prize Colloquium at NYU

*September 2017, Minds Online (with comments from Grace Helton & Katherine Puddifoot)

on The Brains Blog

*August 2017, European Congress of Analytic Philosophy

*June 2017, Newnham College Graduate Conference

Collective emotion, narrative & social movements

*July 2017, The Aristotelian Society Open Session

COMMENTS ON

“Moral Intuitions and Action-guidingness” by Marie Le Blevenec (Boston University)

**January 2021, Eastern APA Colloquium

“Gaslighting, Implicit Bias, and Higher-Order Evidence” by Elise Woodard (UMichigan)

**January 2019, Eastern APA

“Slurs as Directives” by Cameron Domenico Kirk-Gianni (Rutgers)

**February 2018, Harvard/MIT Graduate Conference

SUMMER SCHOOL & RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS

2021 Foundations of Solidarity - International Critical Theory Summer School (critical theory)

2020 Philosophy Initiative on Teaching at Harvard (online pedagogy)

2015 Kreiman Laboratory at Boston Children’s Hospital (systems neuroscience)

2012 Gilbert lab at Harvard Psychology Department (social psychology)

TEACHING & ADVISING EXPERIENCE

PRIMARY INSTRUCTOR

PHILOSOPHY-97: Philosophy of Dissent, Harvard College 2022

PHILOSOPHY-11205: Feminist Philosophy in the 21st Century, Harvard Summer School 2019

PSYCHOLOGY-17545: Stereotypes & Attitudes, Harvard Summer School 2019

PSYCHOLOGY-17525: Implicit Bias in Psychology and Philosophy, Harvard Summer School 2018

TEACHING ASSISTANT

GENERAL EDUCATION-1051: Reclaiming Argument 2020

Prof. Ned Hall, Harvard College

GENERAL EDUCATION-1023: Ignorance, Lies, Humbug, and Hogwash 2020

Prof. Chris Robichaud, Harvard College/ Harvard Kennedy School

PHILOSOPHY-3: The True and The Good 2019

Prof. Bernhard Nickel, Harvard College

Formal Logic 2016

Luke Cash, University of Cambridge

GUEST LECTURES

“The Personal is Political: Feminist Thought in the 21st Century”, Harvard Summer School 2021

“Functionalism about the Mind”, Philosophy-3, Harvard College 2019

“How to Tell a Lie in Public”, Harvard Summer School 2018

ADVISING

Nonresident tutor for Dunster House, Harvard College 2017

SERVICE

ACADEMIC

Referee, Noûs

Reviewer for Harvard-MIT Graduate Conference 2017 – present

Participant of Berkeley / Cambridge Imagination Reading Group 2021 – present

Co-convenor of Imagination Reading Group at Harvard 2020 – 2021

Co-convenor of Epist. & Power from Below: New Works in Feminist Phil. at LSE/Harvard 2020

Participant of Mind the Gap: MIT/Harvard Philosophy of Psychology group 2018

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Minorities and Philosophy Committee Member 2017 – present

Co-founder of the Feminist Working Group, Harvard Graduate Students Union 2018 – 2021

Humanities collective bargaining representative, Harvard Graduate Students Union 2018 – 2020

Organizer of Women’s Day Feminist Philosophy Edit-a-thon ([featured](#) on the APA blog) 2017

DEPARTMENTAL SERVICE

Mind, Brain and Behavior representative, Harvard University	2017 – 2018
MPhil representative, University of Cambridge	2016 – 2017

OTHER

Online teaching research assistant for B. Nickel	2020
Chair & Tech support, SSPP	2020
Chair, European Congress of Analytic Philosophy, LMU Munich	2017
Chair, Midsummer Philosophy Conference, University of Leeds	2017

GRADUATE COURSEWORK

^a = audited; ^u = at MIT (all coursework completed at Harvard, unless otherwise noted)

2019-2020

Hegel and Marx, Peter Gordon

^aNormative Categories, Selim Berker

2018-2019

Aristotle on Modality, Jacob Rosen & Russell Jones

Propositions, Mark Richard

Semantics of Questions, Gennaro Chierchia & Diti Bhadra

^aEpistemology, Selim Berker

The Good, Christine Korsgaard

2017-2018

^aPhilosophy of Language, Mark Richard

^uMental Architecture, EJ Green

Indeterminacy in Perception, Susanna Siegel

^uCritical Social Theory, Sally Haslanger

First-year Seminar B (On Nagel and Scanlon), Selim Berker

^aMemory, Susanna Siegel

^uGraduate Introduction to Semantics, Roger Schwarzschild & Martin Hackl

The Norms of Belief, Selim Berker & Susanna Rinard

First-year Seminar A (on Essence and Accident), Edward Hall & Russell Jones

LANGUAGES

Turkish (native)

German (strong reading proficiency, moderate speaking ability)

Ottoman (limited reading proficiency)

REFERENCES

Susanna Siegel

Edgar Pierce Professor of Philosophy

ssiegel@fas.harvard.edu

Mark Richard

Professor of Philosophy

richard4@fas.harvard.edu

Bernhard Nickel

Professor of Philosophy
bnickel@fas.harvard.edu

Sally Haslanger
Ford Professor of Philosophy
shaslang@mit.edu

Tim Crane
Professor of Philosophy
timcrane@ceu.edu

My dissertation examines how ideology is installed in our minds, generating social contestation not only over matters of fact or judgments of value but also over what's salient to us. I call contestations over what's salient *perspectival clashes*. From this starting point, I construct a novel theory of *perspectives* in which their primary function is organizing our inquiries into the world (including social relations therein) by setting our *epistemic agendas*. What emerges is a philosophy of the active and social mind in a politically fraught world—putting pressure on our preconceived notions of salience, open-mindedness, and partisanship.

Consider a classic example of generational difference. My late grandfather wore a suit and a necktie every day. If he had walked into a faculty meeting in 2021, he would be caught by surprise by something that many wouldn't notice: that virtually nobody in the room is wearing a necktie. The salience of the bare necks of professors (to my grandfather) is an example of a difference in perspective between my grandfather and me. My grandfather and I can both see and report what the professors are wearing and yet still manifest a difference of perspective by virtue of an attentional difference—what I characterize as a difference in our *salience maps*. I use the prominence of bare necks as an innocuous example to build towards an exploration of how our beliefs, including our political beliefs, shape the patterns of salience in what we perceive and what we think.

My novel account of perspectives makes two theoretical contributions to the study of perspectives. The first is the identification of a particular form of epistemic contestation: perspectival clashes. Perspectival clashes are a subset of perspectival differences that generate social contestation. My grandfather and I can clash over the elegance of neckties (disagreement over the judgment of an aesthetic value), or debate the continued existence of a social convention to wear neckties in professional settings (disagreement over a social fact). While these disagreements can accompany our dispute, the perspectival clash between us arises out of the disparate availability of thoughts linking neckties and respect to each of us when we walk into the room. We clash over the fact that it simply wouldn't occur to me to accuse someone of being disrespectful because they don't wear a necktie. Nothing in what I see primes that thought. I make no inferences concerning the social meaning of neckties; I do not occupy myself with the question of whether they intend to slight anyone. The second contribution is the affordance-based account I provide for the mental content of perspectives. In my view, the experience of salience is associated with a mental affordance. To say that an object or a thought affords a mental action is to identify where a person's mind is likely to go (like the perception of neckties priming the inference to a lack of respect by the professors). I argue that our salience distributions avail themselves of a set of affordances that foregrounds some alternatives for subsequent mental actions. These alternatives answer questions that implicitly direct the individual and constitute their epistemic agenda. Divergent agendas generate perspectival clashes. Patterns of salience that are shaped by ideological beliefs generate divergences that are ideological in character, deepening the chasm between what we believe and what we will come to believe.

The first chapter, *When Agendas Diverge*, defines the project. Along the way, I challenge views upheld by perception theorists about the contributions of attention to perception (Ch.2: *The Epistemic Conception of Salience*), by philosophers of mind about the prevalence of static conceptions of mental attitudes like beliefs in decision-making (Ch.3: *Thinking about Alternatives*), by epistemologists about what virtues counter social contestation (Ch.4: *Open-mindedness is not a Feature of Mind*), and by critical theorists about the role of psychology in explaining ideological belief (Ch.5: *The Psychological Imaginary is Partisan*). Taken together, these chapters show the need for three new analytic categories: mental affordances, perspectives, and epistemic agendas.