
PHIL 2901 A
Truth and Propaganda



Winter 2025
Course Outline

I. Admin

Instructor: Gabriele Contessa (he/him)

Instructor's Office Hours: Wednesday, 1:35pm–2:25pm or by appointment (see Admin section in Brightspace for Zoom link; please note that, if there are other students ahead of you, you might have to wait in the waiting room until it's your turn)

Virtual Classroom: See Admin section in Brightspace

Instructor's E-mail: gabriele_contessa@carleton.ca

Wooclap: app.wooclap.com/BZDOPE

II. Description

Calendar Description: Ancient and modern techniques of persuasion from analytical, ethical and jurisprudential perspectives. Objectivity and bias, advertising and public relations ethics, the viability of democracy in the light of pressures on and within the modern mass media.

Precludes additional credit for PHIL 2900 (no longer offered).

Prerequisite(s): 0.5 credit in PHIL or second-year standing.

IV. Texts

Students are not required to purchase any textbooks or materials for this course. All readings for this course will be accessible through Brightspace.

V. Evaluation

- Attendance & Participation (30%)
- Two Response Papers (the best of which worth 30%; the other one worth 10%)
- Two Quizzes (15% each)

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

VI. Course Policies

Attendance and Participation (A&P). Attendance and participation are crucial to your success in this course. Attendance and participation to in-class polls are required and participation to in-class discussion strongly encouraged to contribute to the discussions. The A&P component of the overall grade will be determined as follows. 50% of the A&P grade is based on attendance and participation to the in-class polls, 50% of the A&P grade (and 10% of the overall grade) is based on correct answers to polls that are graded. Students who have consistently made valuable contributions to the class discussion throughout the term can receive up to 33% extra credit towards their A&P grade at the end of the term. Please note that, when it comes to contributions to the class discussion, quality is much more important than quantity and that contributions that display familiarity with the readings are particularly welcome.

If circumstances beyond your control (e.g., illness or family emergency) prevent you from attending a meeting, please notify the instructor by email as soon as possible.

If you have registered late for this course, please contact the instructor as soon as possible by email to avoid losing A&P points.

Polls. This course uses Wooclap to poll students and ask questions about the course content. Please make sure to log into Wooclap using the SSO/Institutional log-in option before the beginning of each session. All Wooclap polls will be timed. Failing to answer a poll within the allotted time will result in a zero on that poll. It is your responsibility to ensure that you're logged into Wooclap before each class. No exceptions will be made for missed polls unless this is due to an excused absence. However, your lowest 5 grades on each poll will be automatically dropped.

Response Papers (RPs). RPs are supposed to engage critically with one of the required readings for the course. You can respond to any of the required readings that have been covered so far in the course (insofar as you haven't discussed it already in a previous RP). RPs are not supposed to summarize the reading to which they are responding. They are supposed to display critical engagement with it. As such, RPs are expected to have (i) a clearly stated thesis and (ii) a clearly stated argument to support that thesis. The simplest format for a RP is to argue that one of the main arguments offered in one of the readings relies on a false premise and gives an argument for thinking that that premise is false. In either case, you are expected to describe clearly and accurately the thesis/argument you are arguing against and to state clearly your thesis and your argument in support of it. Your RP is supposed to engage with the arguments provided by the author of the reading. The word limit for RPs is 250 words (including any direct quotations, but excluding any references). Please include an accurate word count with your RP. RPs should be submitted through Brightspace in .pdf, .doc, or .docx format (see the Assignment section in Brightspace for deadlines). RPs are graded anonymously, so no identifying information should be included in your submission (including in the name of the file). Please note that RPs that fail to engage with the reading critically and merely summarize it will receive the minimum passing grade (50%) irrespectively of how good the summary is.

Since different students require different levels of feedback and since the most efficient way of providing feedback that is tailored to the needs of each student is by discussing your RP together, by default, students shall receive only a minimal level of feedback on their RPs. If you would like to be given more extensive feedback, please visit the instructor during office hours. Students who receive a grade below 70% on their first RPs are strongly encouraged to attend one of the instructor's office hours and to book an appointment for an individual session from Teaching and Learning Services. If you receive a temporary 50% grade accompanied by the feedback "This is a temporary grade," you must see the instructor within two weeks. If you fail to make arrangements with the instructor, your grade on that RP will automatically turn into a permanent 50%.

If circumstances beyond your control (e.g., illness or family emergency) prevent you from submitting a RP on time, please notify the instructor by email as soon as possible.

Please note that *failing to submit a RP without a valid excuse will result in 0% on that RP.*

Late RPs will be subject to a 2.5-point penalty for every day they are late up to a maximum penalty of 25 points. Please note that late RPs won't receive any written comments. If you would like to receive feedback on a late RP, please use the office hours to talk to the instructor.

RPs that exceed the word limit (250 words) will be subject to a 0.1-point penalty for every word over the word limit and that RPs that do not include an accurate word count will incur a 2.5-point penalty.

Academic Integrity. You are responsible for ensuring that you understand the nature of academic offenses (such as plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration), as defined in the [Undergraduate Calendar](#), and to avoid both committing them and aiding or abetting academic offenses perpetrated by other students. Please be aware that the instructor is required to report all suspected academic offenses directly to the Office of the Dean.

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include: reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source; submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else; using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment; using another’s data or research findings; failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks; handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs." Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

Copyright. Carleton University is committed to compliance in all copyright matters. Noncompliance is a violation of the Canadian Copyright Act. In addition to any actions that might be taken by any copyright owner or its licensing agent, the University will take steps against any breach of this policy. In Canada, copyright for a work is given automatically to the creator of the work. The work does not need to be marked or declared as copyrighted in order to be copyrighted. The majority of works in Canada are copyrighted. It is important for students to understand and respect copyright. Copyright determines your usage rights for a particular work, which includes textbooks, web pages, videos and images, both electronic and hard copy. Students may not photocopy entire or major portions of books or other works, even if it is only for their personal use. Fair dealing makes some allowances for copying small portions of works. See Carleton's Fair Dealing Policy for more information. If journal articles or portions of works are available through the library, either as hard copies or electronically, students may make a single copy for their personal use. Students may not distribute copies of works that are under copyright. For more information, please see the Carleton's Fair Dealing Policy and the library's copyright website: www.library.carleton.ca/copyright.

VII. Course Calendar

<i>Date</i>	<i>Readings</i>
Jan 8	Somin ‘Do Citizens Know Enough?’
Jan 10	Fricker ‘Testimonial Injustice’
Jan 15	Toole ‘Demarginalizing Standpoint Epistemology’
Jan 17	Anderson ‘Democracy, Public Policy, and the Lay Assessment of Scientific Testimony’
Jan 22	Bennett ‘Should I Do As I’m Told? Trust, Experts, and COVID-19’
Jan 24	Nguyen ‘Hostile Epistemology’
Jan 29	TBA

Jan 31	Quiz 1
Feb 5	Mukerji 'Fake News: A Definition'
Feb 7	Habgood-Coote 'Stop Talking About Fake News!'
Feb 12	Napolitano 'Conspiracy Theories and Evidential Self-Isolation'
Feb 14	Dentith 'Spurious Conspiracy Theories'
Feb 26	Talisse 'The Problem of Polarization'
Feb 28	Nguyen 'Was it Polarization or Propaganda?'
Mar 1	Stanley 'Propaganda in a Liberal Democracy'
Mar 5	Táiwò 'The Empire Has No Clothes'
Mar 7	Nguyen 'Epistemic Bubbles and Echo Chambers'
Mar 12	Coady 'Stop Talking About Echo Chambers and Filter Bubbles'
Mar 14	Quiz 2
Mar 19	Amico-Korby, Harrell, and Danks 'Environmental Epistemology'
Mar 21	Williams 'The Case for Partisan Motivated Reasoning'
Mar 26	Joshi 'What Are The Chances That You're Right About Everything?'
Mar 28	Hannon 'The Politics of Post-Truth'
Apr 2	Mouffe 'Politics and the Political'
Apr 4	Aytac 'On the Limits of the Political'

*Please note that the course calendar is provisional and subject to change.
Please check this Course Outline regularly for updates.*

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2024-25)

Assignments:

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. There will be NO hard copies placed in the essay box this coming year.

Evaluation:

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Deferrals for Term Work:

If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than *three working days* of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

Deferrals for Final Exams:

Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in [Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar](#)). Visit the [Registrar's Office](#) for further information.

Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. ([Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations](#))

Academic Accommodation:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term:

- *Pregnancy or religious obligation:* write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the [EDC](#) website.
- *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The [Paul Menton Centre](#) for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are

already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.

- *Survivors of Sexual Violence:* As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per [Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy](#).
- *Accommodation for [Student Activities](#):* Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Important Dates:

- Sept. 4 Classes start.
- Sept. 17 Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses.
- Sept. 30 Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
- Oct. 14 Statutory holiday. University closed.
- Oct. 21-25 Fall Break – no classes.
- Nov. 22 Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.
- Dec. 6 Last day of fall term classes. ***Classes follow a Monday schedule.*** Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for a fall term course.
- Dec. 9-21 Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
- Dec. 21 All take-home examinations are due.
- Jan. 6 Classes begin.
- Jan. 17 Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.
- Jan. 31 Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
- Feb. 17 Statutory holiday. University closed.
- Feb. 17-21 Winter Break – no classes.
- Mar. 15 Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses.
- Mar. 25 Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.
- Apr. 8 Last day of two-term and winter term classes. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses.
- Apr. 9-10 No classes or examinations take place.
- Apr. 11-26 Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
- Apr. 18 Statutory holiday. University closed.

Apr. 26 All take-home examinations are due.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:
www.carleton.ca/philosophy
520-2110

Registrar's Office:
www.carleton.ca/registrar
520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:
www.carleton.ca/academicadvising
520-7850

Writing Services:
<http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>
520-3822

MacOdrum Library
<http://www.library.carleton.ca/>
520-2735