THE SOCIAL EPISTEMOLOGY OF INQUIRY
PHILOS-903 – Peter van Elswyk

Most inquiry is social. One person does the asking, another person does the answering. This course is about such inquiry and its epistemic significance. The readings will focus on three primary topics.

1. INQUIRY. Is inquiry a question-answer process? What does it take to resolve or terminate inquiry? What cognitive attitudes do we (and ought we) adopt in the process of inquiry?

2. KNOWLEDGE. How is knowledge related to inquiry if at all? What is the relationship between “knows” and other epistemic terms and inquiry?

3. TESTIMONY. How are testimony-based beliefs justified? When does testimony resolve or terminate inquiry? What is the relationship between testimony and knowledge?

Towards the end of the semester, we will focus on two auxiliary topics.

4. HEDGING. What is the impact of hedging on the justificatory status of testimony-based beliefs? Can hedged statements resolve inquiry? Is “reputation management” the point of hedging?

5. EPISTEMIC JUSTICE. What do we owe to each other as epistemic agents? How does testimonial injustice impact inquiry? What is the relationship between epistemic justice and hedging?

Readings for this course will be span (to greater or lesser degrees) epistemology, philosophy of language, philosophy of science, and feminist philosophy. Students will give a presentation, write response essays, and also write a substantial term paper.