



University of
Zurich^{UZH}

Department of Philosophy

Master Class

**Ideology, Social Critique,
and Conceptual Engineering**

Sally Haslanger
MIT, Cambridge

15th & 16th December 2023

Synopsis

The world offers us many good things. Coordination allows us to enhance and share them. Divisions of labor produce expertise that improves and expands the goods available. And coordination itself can be enjoyable and fulfilling. Key to all of this, however, is a shared framework for interpreting the world and shared norms to guide action.

Language and concepts play a central role in such cultural frameworks. Kind term and concepts enable us to focus on divisions in the world that matter. Some kind terms matter because they pick out groups of things that are physically or chemically important, e.g., 'water'. But others because pick out groups that are socially important, e.g., doctors, legislators, mothers, men. Note, however, that what it 'means' to be a doctor, a legislator, or a mother, is not fixed in stone and varies in different societies. And sometimes these categories and frameworks are not fully apt. For example, the concepts and language provided for interpreting the world might prevent us from recognizing what is valuable or morally relevant; or the norms and affordances embedded in the framework may result in unjust distributions of labor or prevent us from establishing morally acceptable relationships.

On some accounts, ideology is the framework of language and thought that serves to sustain the status quo. Critical approaches to ideology, such as my own, reserve the term 'ideology' for frameworks that sustain an oppressive status quo. Ideology critique aims to reveal this and, in some cases, offer alternative frameworks.

Conceptual engineering can provide tools for ideology critique. Ideology critique recognizes the practical and moral implications of cultural frameworks and aims to shift our perspective so we might begin to think and act differently. Cultural change based on such critique can happen surprisingly quickly, but typically it is painfully slow. This is to be expected because a change of culture is not just a change in how we talk or think, but in how we coordinate with each other around what we take to be valuable.

Drawing on work in critical theory and conceptual engineering, we will explore some of the ways in which philosophical interventions can be useful in promoting social justice.

Programme and Readings

Friday, 15 December 2023

9:00 – 12:30: Practice first social ontology

Main texts:

Sally Haslanger: What is a Social Practice?

Sally Haslanger: Failures of Methodological Individualism: The Materiality of Social Systems

Background (optional – in order of priority):

William H. Sewell: A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation

Andreas Reckwitz: Toward a Theory of Social Practices

14:00 – 17:00: Ideology Critique: Gender and Race

Main texts:

Sally Haslanger: Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do we Want them to Be?

Sally Haslanger: Disciplined Bodies and Social Critique

Background (optional – in order of priority):

Sally Haslanger: Ideology, Culture, and Social Meaning

J. M. Balkin: *Cultural Software*, Ch. 2.

Saturday, 16 December 2023

9:00 – 12:30: Epistemic and Semantic Amelioration

Main texts:

Sally Haslanger: Going On, Not in the Same Way

Sally Haslanger: How Not to Change the Subject

Background (optional):

Sally Haslanger and Stephen Yablo: Amelioration as Course Correction

14:00 – 17:00: Value-laden Inquiry and Social Change

Main texts:

Sally Haslanger: Political Epistemology and Social Critique

Sally Haslanger: Taking a Stand: Second Order Pathologies or First Order Critique

Background (optional – in order of priority):

Elizabeth Anderson: Knowledge, Human Interests, and Objectivity in Feminist Epistemology

Sally Haslanger: Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements

Registration: phd@philos.uzh.ch

Readings: <https://www.philosophie.uzh.ch/mc>

Venue:

University of Zurich

Building RAA

Rämistrasse 59

8001 Zürich

Room:

15th December: RAA-E-30EV Seminarraum

16th December: RAA-E-29 Seminarraum

No fees apply. Participants are expected to have read the texts.

PhD students at the UZH are required to book the module in order to get credit points.