Philosophy 248   Fall, 2021
Economics 2248   CGIS South S050
Truth   Wednesday,12:45-2:45pm

Syllabus

What does it mean for us to believe that something is true? How does our conception of truth vary with the context and also with the particular field of inquiry, such as philosophy, mathematics, economics, and everyday communications?

Students are expected to participate fully in classroom discussions. There are no formal prerequisites except for facility with formal reasoning and high school mathematics.

Enrollment: The number of students will be limited. If you wish to enroll for credit, please email your Harvard (or undergraduate) transcript together with a brief cover note explaining your background and reasons for taking the course to the instructors by August 16, the first day of course registration for the fall. Depending on how full the class is, it may be possible to enroll in the course later on. Auditors are welcome (provided there is room), but priority in discussions will be given to questions and observations from those enrolled for credit.

Instructors:
Eric Maskin: Littauer 312; Email: emaskin@fas.harvard.edu; Tel: 617-495-1746
Assistant- Samantha Webb: Email: swebb@fas.harvard.edu ; Tel: 617-495-4434
Office hours: Tuesdays 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm (via Zoom until further notice) or by appointment.

Barry Mazur: Science Center 512; Email: mazur@math.harvard.edu; Tel: 617-495-3352
Assistant- Pamela Brentana: Email: pbrentan@math.harvard.edu; Tel: 617-495-5334
Office hours: Tuesdays, 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm (via Zoom) or by appointment.

Amartya Sen: Littauer 205; Email: asen@fas.harvard.edu; Tel: 617-495-1871
Assistant- Chie Ri: Email: cri@fas.harvard.edu; Tel: 617-496-0084
Office hours: Wednesdays, 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm (via Zoom). Email Chie Ri for appointments.

Readings: Readings will be announced one week in advance and will normally be posted on the course website.

Course Requirements: Students are expected to attend all classes, to keep up with the (not very onerous) reading, and to participate actively in class discussion. A term paper of about 25 pages is due by *December 8*. The topic must be discussed with one of the instructors and cleared by *November 8*. There will be no exam.

Course Format: Most meetings will be chaired by one of the instructors, who will present material and moderate questions and comments.

Class Schedule:

1.	Introduction	September 8	Maskin, Mazur, and Sen
2.	Ancient and Early Modern Reflections on Truth	September 15	Mazur
3.	Moral Truth	September 22	Sen
4.	Properties of Values	September 29	Sen
5.	Models as Truth	October 6	Maskin
6.	Thought Experiments as Truth	October 13	Maskin
7.	Mathematics and Truth	October 20	Mazur
8.	Facts, Values, and Supervenience	October 27	Sen
9.	Probabilities as Estimates of Truth	November 3	Maskin
10.	Statistics, Data, and Truth	November 10	Mazur
11.	Spill-over Session	November 17	
12.	Wrap-up	December 1	Maskin, Mazur, and Sen