

Call for Papers/Abstracts:

Boston University Graduate Student Conference:
“The Public Impact of Denying Expertise”

Date: April 4th, 2020

Location: Boston University, Boston, MA, USA

Keynote Speaker:

Rachel McKinnon, College of Charleston

Theme:

Challenges to expert opinions proliferate in the current social-political climate. Skeptics about climate change, anti-vaccine advocates, and so-called “flat-earthers” all deny the authority of scientific experts. But the social effects of denying expertise may extend beyond the relation between the public and the natural sciences. For example, persons are taken to have expertise about themselves when it comes to certain aspects of their social identities. Others deny such self-expertise. Given these issues, we may wonder: what does it mean to be an expert, epistemic or otherwise? When and how is it appropriate to understand persons as experts? How do relations of power affect the status and allocation of expertise? Does expertise have a unique epistemic, moral, or social value? Should it have this value?

We are calling for papers and extended abstracts that address skepticism about expertise, especially its impact on social, political, or public life. We encourage submissions that address the possibility and applicability of expertise in particular areas. Papers relating to any aspect of the theme will be considered. Topics may include (but are not limited to):

- The nature of expertise
- The normative (epistemic, social, moral) value of expertise
- The relationship between social ontology and expertise
- Power relations and expertise
- The distribution and allocation of expertise
- Social identity and self-expertise
- The role of values in science
- The epistemology and ethics of trust
- Testimonial knowledge
- Sources of trust (and mistrust) in experts

Information for submissions:

- Submissions will be accepted in either the form of a paper or extended abstract. Papers should be no more than 5,000 words with a 200-250 word abstract. Extended abstract submissions should be from 750-1,000 words.
- Papers and abstracts should be prepared for anonymous review. Please omit any self-identifying marks within the body of the documents.
- Authors must be current graduate students in philosophy.
- Selected presenters will be given 30 minutes to present and will be assigned a commentator.
- Please email submissions to buphilgradconference2020@gmail.com by December 2nd.
- Successful applicants will be contacted by January 5th.
- Authors of accepted extended abstract submissions will be required to submit the complete paper by March 21st (so that commentators have to time to prepare comments).
- Women, minorities, people with disabilities, and members of other underrepresented groups are highly encouraged to apply.
- Send any questions to buphilgradconference2020@gmail.com.

This conference is organized by the graduate students of the Department of Philosophy at Boston University. The conference is supported by the Boston University Department of Philosophy.