

UNLV

PHILOSOPHY COLLOQUIUM SERIES

FALL 2023

1. Friday, September 8, 2023, 3:00pm in BEH 242

“Rejecting Political Malice.”

Abigail Aguilar, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Since Socrates first raised issues that come with democracy, free speech and debate has been a challenge in democratic societies. In a current climate of divisive political dialogue, those who want to engage in fruitful discussions need to reject the principle of malice that seems to appear inevitably in such societies. But rejecting malice requires being aware of its forms; this colloquium focuses on current forms of it, with the aim of encouraging all of us to reject these – both when we encounter it in the speech of others and more importantly by avoiding it in our own speech.

2. Friday, September 15, 3:00pm in BEH 242

“That’s Just How it Is: A Pretense Account of Property-Talk.”

James Woodbridge, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

A promising newer approach to underwriting property nominalism is *via a deflationary* account of property-talk, i.e., our talk seemingly about properties, attributes, and the like. As with deflationism about *truth*-talk, the central idea is that, despite its surface form, property-talk really just provides a first-order, natural-language means for implementing a “higher-order” logical operation, in this case that of second-order quantification into predicate-position. While this avoids assigning property-talk any descriptive role “about properties”, a common understanding of second-order quantification takes it to range over a domain of properties that serve as the values of the predicate-variables. To avoid thwarting nominalist aspirations in this way, we give a *non-nominal* interpretation of predicate-quantification in terms of the natural-language *adverbial* quantifiers already available in English “how-talk”. We then address two questions that this approach raises: i) If natural language can already express what property-talk implements on this account, why do we have property-talk? ii) If property-talk’s function is to implement non-nominal, adverbial quantification, how does it fulfill that function, since it seems logically (and ontologically) unsuited for this task? After answering the first question without relying on an “expressive indispensability” assumption, we address the second one by explaining why a pretense account of property-talk provides the best answer.

3. Friday, October 6, 2023, 3:00pm in BEH 242

“How Will the New AI Technology Affect our Lives?”

Todd Jones, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Dr. Jones will lead a free-ranging open discussion about the way that the new AI technology, popularized by the emergence of programs like ChatGPT, may change our lives. What are some of the ways they will likely make our lives better? What are some of the ways they will likely make our lives worse?

4. Friday, October 13, 2023, 3:00pm in BEH 242

“Deep Brain Stimulation, Electroconvulsive Therapy, and the Self.”

Robyn Bluhm, Dept. of Philosophy and Lyman Briggs College, Michigan State University

Deep brain stimulation (DBS) therapy uses electrodes implanted in the brain to treat several neurological disorders, and it is also being investigated for a variety of psychiatric conditions. After a small number of case reports suggesting that some people treated with DBS feel like a different person, neuroethicists have debated the nature of these self-related changes. I have argued that these debates are overblown, and now suggest that we can get a better understanding of these changes in two ways. First, we should broaden the discussion to consider patients’ experiences of other kinds of neurostimulation, particularly electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). Second, the philosophical literature on narratives and the self offers resources beyond those that neuroethicists have tended to discuss, which offer a more helpful way of thinking about how neurostimulation therapies affect people using these therapies

5. Thursday, November 2, 2023, 7:30pm in RLL 101 [Note the day, time, and place]

“Climate Hope Through the Land: An Indigenous Framework for Decolonial Hope During Climate Chaos.” [University Forum Lecture]

Brian Burkhardt, Dept. of Philosophy and The Native Nations Center, University of Oklahoma

Indigenous decolonizing through the land, through revealing and revitalizing land as kinship, has a transformative force that provides hope in the context of climate chaos, a decolonial hope. In this talk, Brian Burkhardt will present a summary of the basic framework of Indigenous decolonizing through the land and its decolonial force. Through the frameworks of relationality and accountability that arise in the context of revealing and revitalizing land as kinship, he will argue and provide a transformative framework for decolonial hope during climate chaos.

6. Friday, November 3, 2023, 3:00pm in BEH 242

“Orality and Indigenous Land-based Philosophies: The Importance of Oral Tradition in the Global History of Philosophy.”

Brian Burkhardt, Dept. of Philosophy and The Native Nations Center, University of Oklahoma

I will argue that focus on individual philosophers who produce texts limits access to a significant portion of global philosophy, both in the present and in the history of philosophy. This limitation is created both by an individualistic rather than collective or communal framework as well as a textual rather than oral medium of expression and exchange. Further understanding that orality in philosophy is not a function of primitivism clarifies that textuality is not a necessary feature of philosophical progress. Considering this, the philosophical foundation of orality in land-based philosophies, particularly the grounding of being, knowing, and valuing in *land as kinship* can be explored in philosophical terms.

7. Friday, November 17, 2023, 3:00pm in BEH 242 [POSTPONED UNTIL SPRING 2024]

“What Eliminative Materialism Isn’t.”

Bill Ramsey, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

In this talk my aim is to get clearer on what eliminative materialism actually does and does not entail. I look closely at one cluster of views that is often described as a form of eliminativism in contemporary philosophy and cognitive science and try to show that this characterization is a mistake. More specifically, I look at conceptions of eliminativism recently endorsed by writers such as Edouard Machery (2009), Paul Griffiths (1997), Valerie Hardcastle (1999) and others, and argue that although these views do endorse the elimination of something, they offer only what I will call a sort of category dissolution, and should be treated as something altogether different from traditional eliminativism. Spelling out the main contrast(s) between eliminative materialism proper and this alternative view, and defending the need to keep them distinct, is my primary objective. As I show, a central irony is that proponents of the problematic outlook often insist that divergent things should not be classified together under a single label. By characterizing their own views as a form of eliminativism, they commit a fundamental error that they themselves argue should not be made. While my focus here is on eliminative materialism, the error I intend to highlight appears across various discussions about alleged eliminativism of all sorts of things.

8. Friday, December 1, 2023, 3:00pm in BEH 242

“Sketching an Indigenous Moral Theory: How the Muscogee Concept of Reciprocity Can Serve as a Guide to Making Moral Decisions.”

Joey Miller, Dept. of Philosophy, West Chester University

I would guess that most courses in American universities that cover ethical theories don't include any theories or frameworks based in Indigenous philosophy. While there may be a number of reasons for this absence, it has certainly contributed to the lack of Indigenous representation in philosophy, generally. In an attempt to help rectify this lack of representation, I aim to provide a sketch of how a Native American moral theory functions. I will be focusing on explaining how moral concepts from Mvskoke (Muscogee) philosophy can fit together to provide the framework of an Indigenous moral theory. I'm restricting my example of a Native American moral theory to Mvskoke philosophy as this is my tribe and these concepts are the ones with which I'm most familiar. Overall, my aim in this paper is to take ideas and concepts that are central to one Native American ethical framework (Mvskoke) and try to present them in such a way so they can be seen as constituting a “theory” in the same sense as other prominent ethical theories (e.g., Utilitarianism, Deontology, Virtue Ethics, and Care Ethics). The hope isn't to accurately describe how Native Americans made or make moral decisions (pre-colonially or contemporarily). Instead, I'm trying to write something about Native American philosophy that can be included in courses that cover other, more familiar, western ethical theories.

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**For more information contact the
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