FALL 2018

1. Friday, September 14, 2018 - 3:00pm, BEH 215
"Defending Deflationism from a Forceful Objection."
James Woodbridge, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

This talk presents work done in collaboration with Brad Armour-Garb. We offer a unified picture of deflationism about truth, by explaining the proper way to understand the interrelations between (what Bar-On and Simmons (2007) call) conceptual, linguistic and metaphysical deflationism. I will then present our defense of deflationism against Bar-On and Simmons (2007)'s objection that conceptual deflationism is incompatible with the explanatory role the concept of truth plays in an account of assertion or assertoric illocutionary force. We defend deflationism, rather than just conceptual deflationism, because we take Bar-On and Simmons's stance on their target to involve a mistake. They purport to raise an objection merely to conceptual deflationism, putting the issues involved in metaphysical deflationism and linguistic deflationism to one side. I will explain how that cannot really be done because it mistakenly treats the three categories of deflationary views as running independently and as being at the same theoretical level. As we argue, given the relationships between them, a challenge to conceptual deflationism would flow upward and would amount to a challenge to linguistic deflationism, too, and, thus, to deflationism as a whole. Having defended conceptual deflationism against Bar-On and Simmon's objection, we conclude that deflationism about truth, understood primarily as a view about truth-talk, but with the other theses that brings with it, remains a viable position to endorse.

2. Friday, October 5, 2018 - 3:00pm, BEH 215
"Theorizing Testimony in Argumentative Contexts: Problems for Assurance."
David Godden, Department of Philosophy, Michigan State University

Standardly the testimonial acceptance of some claim, p, is analyzed as some subject, S, accepting that p on the basis of another's say-so. Emerging work in social epistemology offers competing theories of the epistemic operation of testimony and testimonial acceptance. Perhaps in an effort to specify the operation of testimony in the "base case," this work has largely concentrated on discursive contexts of information-seeking or information-transfer, characterized by widespread agreement together with occasional but salient differences in agents' information-states. Largely neglected is any consideration of the underlying epistemic operation of testimony in argumentative contexts characterized by dissent,

disagreement, reasonable doubt, or mistrust. Yet, characteristic differences between argumentative and non-argumentative conversational and inferential contexts--specifically disagreement--would seem to indicate that the probative demands on testimony should vary dramatically depending on its context of use. Furthermore, given our practices of testimonial acceptance, these contextual differences favor some theoretical accounts of the epistemic operation of testimony over others.

3. Friday, October 19, 2018 - 3:00pm, BEH 215
"Delusions as Imaginings."
Jasmin Özel, Department of Philosophy, University of Leipzig

Delusions are commonly described in terms of irrational or otherwise deficient beliefs. Yet, there are several problems with such a doxastic account of delusions: delusional patients commonly lack evidence for their delusions, but we usually assume a constitutive relationship between belief and evidence; delusional patients don't act on their delusions in ways we expect them to, if they did in fact believe them; delusions are commonly inferentially isolated from beliefs in ways they shouldn't be if they were in fact beliefs; delusions fail to provoke appropriate affective responses, the way they should if the subject genuinely believed them, just to name a few. I will argue that given the nature of delusions, we should rather describe them in terms of imaginings; and I will then propose an account that understands delusions as imaginings, and hence as lying on a continuum with other states of the imagination, such as pretend-play, dreams, daydreams, and the like.

4. Friday, November 2, 2018 - 3:00pm, BEH 215
"Do Good Stories Really Determine How People Vote?"
Todd Jones, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

A popular explanation of why people vote as they do (or do anything that they do) is that they had a certain narrative in mind that pushed them to act in a certain way. On the one had, this seems very implausible, as stories are complex data structures, and it's unlikely that similar ones are really there and similarly efficacious in different people. On the other hand, some cognitive science research seems to support claims about the ubiquity of stories in explaining behavior. In his talk, I examine the likelihood that story-based explanations are right.

5. Friday, November 16, 2018 - 2:30pm, RLL 101 (Rogers Lit and Law Building)
"Stopping Sexual Harassment: What Philosophy Should Learn from Science." (APA Board of Governors' Lecture)
Janet Stemwedel, Department of Philosophy, San José State University

In recent years, it has become more widely recognized that sexual harassment is a problem, including in academia and in the community of academic philosophy. The problem for philosophy, I argue, is exacerbated by a collection of stances and strategies for analysis and engagement which philosophers seem to regard as virtues but which, in the context of understanding and addressing sexual harassment, are unhelpful at best. Moreover, academic philosophy shares with science and engineering fields a number of salient features that create prime conditions for sexual harassment to flourish. As such, I argue that academic philosophers, including but not limited to those in leadership positions, ought to attend to the specific measures to reduce sexual harassment recommended in the NASEM Consensus Study Report (Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine). Implementing such changes--and seriously reflecting upon our disciplinary habits in order to cultivate better ones--offers our best hope of solving our sexual harassment problem.

6. Friday, November 30, 2018 - 3:00pm, BEH 215
"Natural and Non-Natural Thinking."
Ram Neta, Department of Philosophy, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Do you believe that Trump will be re-elected in 2020? You might respond to that question by considering various features of American political life: voter suppression, the likelihood of a recession, the possibility of unifying Trump opponents behind a single candidate, etc. But how are all of these considerations relevant to the question of what you believe? Maybe the original question is commonly misunderstood -- it's understood not as a question about whether you believe some proposition to be true, but rather a question about whether that proposition is true, or whether you will believe that proposition to be true, or whether you are disposed to believe that proposition to be true, or whether you ought to believe some proposition to be true. After arguing that none of these alternative construals of the question can be correct, I confront the resulting puzzle: why do we bother to consider features of American political life when trying to answer a question about what we believe? Why not just introspect?
To answer this question, I develop a distinction between two kinds of belief analogous to Grice's distinction between natural and non-natural meaning. One kind of belief -- we can call it "natural" belief -- is simply a perceptually-responsive, action-guiding representation, whereas the other kind -- call it "non-natural" -- involves a commitment to that representation's being rationally appropriate. When, in the course of ordinary conversation, we are asked whether we believe some proposition, it is typically belief of the non-natural variety that is at issue. Belief of the natural variety is typically discussed only in the psychology lab.
The same distinction between the natural and non-natural applies to all rationally assessable mental states and acts, including intention, inference, preference, and emotion. Finally, I argue that it is only mental states or acts of the non-natural kind -- those that involve commitment to their own rationally appropriateness -- that are assessable as more or less rational.

7. Friday, December 7, 2018 - 3:00pm, BEH 215
"Kant's Account of Happiness as Conditionally Good: Abstracting from Happiness When Happiness and Morality Conflict."
Anne Margaret Baxley, Department of Philosophy, Washington University in St. Louis

Kant maintains that happiness is merely conditionally good in relation to a good will or virtue. In discussing Kant's thesis that happiness is merely conditionally good, Kantians have argued that happiness for Kant is an extrinsic good. In this paper, by contrast, my concern lies with a very different interpretive question Kant's account of happiness raises, namely: What goes on psychologically for the morally good Kantian agent in circumstances where the condition of happiness being good is not satisfied and happiness is not permissible to pursue? I consider three possible models for understanding the way in which moral requirements are supposed to resonate for the virtuous Kantian agent: (1) the renunciation model; (2) the silencing model; and (3) the abstraction model. I try to show that the abstraction model best captures a distinctly Kantian account of the way in which the virtuous person feels and reasons about her options in circumstances where duty and inclination conflict.

SPRING 2018

1. Friday, January 26, 2018 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"What To Do About Confederate Monuments in Places Like Gettysburg and Beyond."
Todd Jones, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

In the past year, there have been numerous calls for the removal of monuments to confederate soldiers. Proponents of such a move contend that these statues perversely honor people who led an armed rebellion against the United States in order to preserve a cruel and racist system of slavery. Others counter that these monuments are important works of art and a reminder of our history.

Dr. Todd Jones is a native of Gettysburg, PA (home to over 1300 civil war monuments). He will be holding a discussion of the various issues involved in deciding whether to remove, maintain, or modify such monuments. This will be an open discussion and not a lecture.

2. Friday, February 16, 2018 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"A Miscellany of Contents."
Alex Grzankowski, Department of Philosophy, Birkbeck, University of London

Mental contents seem to come in a variety of forms:

Propositions - I hope that I see Copperfield fly.
Questions - I wonder whether Kenny G is in town.
Objects - I fear the circling Ferruginous hawk.

In this talk I will argue that although we need a variety of content types in a theory of mind, there is an important underlying unity. By considering carefully the attitude relations we bear to contents, I argue that contents are simply that which is in common to mental states that represent the same as each other and that this gives way to a pleasingly minimal view that can capture all of the content types.

3. Friday, February 23, 2018 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"Time Travel and What We Can Do."
Geoff Goddu, Department of Philosophy, University of Richmond

Most defenders of the possibility of time travel claim that time travel places no (or few) restrictions on what time travelers can do, though in many cases we know in advance what they will not do or what they will fail to do should they try. I used to think so as well, but in trying to resolve whether we should accept no restrictions or few restrictions I reached a contrary conclusion--time travelers to the past cannot do other than they in fact do and so cannot do many of the ordinary things we thought they could do, let alone the more challenging things, such as retrosuicide, we were not sure they could do. In this paper I shall support and defend this contrary conclusion.

4. Friday, March 2, 2018 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"An Aristotelian Approach to Skepticism."
Keith McPartland, Department of Philosophy, Williams College

Aristotle seems remarkably unconcerned with what we now recognize as skeptical problems. In fact, Aristotle never directly confronts skeptical challenges to his philosophical views. However, in his discussion of the principle of

noncontradiction, Aristotle examines some scenarios that will come to have a prominent role in skeptical arguments, and his response to these scenarios tells us a good deal about his epistemology. I argue that Aristotle subscribes to a fairly sophisticated externalist epistemology and give an outline of his views. I then claim that attending to certain differences between Aristotelian and contemporary views about nature and causation reveals that Aristotle has anti-skeptical resources that aren't available to contemporary epistemologists. I end by wondering whether we can hold on to some of the more attractive components of Aristotle's epistemology once we reject his views about nature and causation.

5. Monday, March 5, 2018 - 3:00pm, BEH 127
"Participatory Budgeting and Vertical Agriculture: A Thought Experiment in Food System Reform."
Shane Epting, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

While researchers have identified numerous problems with food systems, sustainable, just, and workable solutions remain scarce. Recent developments in the food justice literature, however, show which local food movements favor urban sustainability and justice as problem-solving measures. Yet, some of the ways that these approaches could work in concert are overlooked. Through focusing on how they are compatible, we can understand how such endeavors can improve the conditions for community control and reduce the detrimental effects of agribusiness. In this presentation, I propose a participatory budgeting project that involves a relatively new process called "vertical agriculture" to alleviate some of the harm that current agricultural practices cause. In turn, we see how such a measure can improve the integrity of municipal governance and reshape the power structures that control food systems.

6. Friday, March 9, 2018 - 2:00pm, BEH 223
"Genetic Technology and Compassion in Conservation Biology."
Yasha Rohwer, Humanities and Social Sciences Department, Oregon Institute of Technology

In this talk I will describe an emerging subfield of conservation, compassionate conservation, and argue that its members have a moral obligation to support the investigation and development of genetic technologies because of their potential to minimize suffering and eliminate killing in conservation practice. I will begin by examining two current conservation programs, one at the Arid Recovery Reserve in Southern Australia and the other on Gough Island in the South Atlantic. Both of these projects involve or will involve much killing and suffering of sentient mammals. I will examine the traditional justification given by conservation biologists for killing individuals--including in the cases that are the focus of this talk. I will then attempt to explicate the main claim of the compassionate conservationists and how they might view these projects. I will then introduce a particular emerging genetic technology, CRISPR gene drives, and argue that this technology can, in some cases, help reduce the conflict between competing moral obligations and thereby help conservationists avoid epistemically difficult moral situations. I will then respond to some objections to using gene drives in conservation practice.

7. Wednesday, March 21, 2018 - 3:00pm, BEH 127
"Socially, Not Legally, Undocumented."
Amy Sandoval-Reed, Department of Philosophy, University of Texas at El Paso

In the recent flourish of philosophical argument on immigration there has been surprisingly little exploration of undocumented migration. The few philosophers who have taken up this issue have understood the term "undocumented migrant" to denote a legal status: that of lacking legal authorization to be in the state where one currently lives. Such a "legalistic understanding" of what it means to be an undocumented migrant appears ubiquitous in the relevant philosophical literature. This is certainly understandable given the way that this phenomenon tends to be depicted in U.S. political culture. Undocumented migrants are generally understood to be "illegals," which people regard as either just or unjust, and the most pressing policy concern is understood to be that of whether long-term legally undocumented persons

should be given a legal right to stay. In this paper I challenge the "legalistic understanding" of what it means to be an undocumented migrant (or an "illegal immigrant") on the grounds that it problematically fails to distinguish undocumented/"illegal" status from illegal identity (or, as I call it, "socially undocumented" identity). We therefore require a theory of justice in undocumented migration that describes and responds to socially undocumented identity in particular. I argue that we should understand "undocumented migrant/illegal immigrant" in terms of a social group status and identity--that of being "socially undocumented"--not legal status. Then, I show how getting clear on the particular nature of socially undocumented oppression gives us a new framework for achieving justice in undocumented migration.

8. Thursday, March 22, 2018 - 4:00pm, BEH 124
"In Praise of... Engineering?? Part 1: The Metal Microelectrode."
John Bickle, Dept. of Philosophy & Religion and Dept. of Neurobiology & Anatomical Sciences, Mississippi State University

Metascientific investigations of the development of popular experiment tools in contemporary neurobiology usefully combats the theory-centrism still prevalent in philosophy of science. In two recent publications I've explored the development of two tools, gene targeting and optogenetics/DREADDs (Designer Receptors Exclusively Activated by Designer Drugs), to derive a model of tool development experiments, develop an alternative to Kuhn's well-known "paradigm-change" model of scientific revolutions, and illustrate the key premises of Ian Hacking's "microscope" argument for "the life of experiment" independent of theory for a tool quite distinct from Hacking's example. In this talk I'll show how the development of another tool, the metal microelectrode, whose use virtually defined "the reductionist program" in neurobiology for a quarter-century, likewise illuminates all the experiment-first points about science I've stressed previously, but also even better brings forth an "engineering-first" perspective that I've only dimly appreciated before. All of this strengthens my challenge to theory-centrism in the philosophy of science from a metascientific perspective on tool development in neurobiology, with numerous surprising consequences.

9. Friday, April 6, 2018 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"'Post Truth', the Politics of Truth, and Propoganda."
John Min, Department of Social Sciences, College of Southern Nevada

The Oxford Dictionary named "post-truth" as the International Word of the Year in 2016. "Post-truth" "relat[es] to or denot[es] circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief." This raises a question: is "post-truth" bad for democratic politics? This paper argues that the "post-truth" era is a symptom of both philosophical skepticism about democracy and truth, and political skepticism about reason and rationality in politics. Section 1 discusses the relationship between truth and politics. Section 2 critically examines four skeptical arguments against the thesis that truth matters in democratic politics. Section 3 argues that although truth never had a secure foundation in democratic politics, it should nonetheless be considered as an important political good. Section 4 concludes that the widespread disdain for truth in democracies is indicative of propaganda at work.

10. Friday, April 27, 2018 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"Mendelssohn's Enlightenment and Rationalist Psychology."
Edward Glowienka, Department of Philosophy, Carroll College

Moses Mendelssohn's response to the question, "What is enlightenment?", was published in 1784, before Kant's famous essay on the same question. Typically, Mendelssohn's conception of enlightenment is read in relation to Kant's essay or in relation to Mendelssohn's role in the Jewish enlightenment (Haskalah). In this paper, I propose that we read Mendelssohn's theory of enlightenment as an outgrowth of his innovations within rationalist psychology. I show that Mendelssohn's introduction of the theory of "mixed sentiments" into his aesthetics challenges a form of optimism

embedded in the German rationalist tradition and that the ethical and political implications of this theory frame Mendelssohn's account of the relationship between enlightenment and culture. By tracing Mendelssohn's theory of enlightenment back to its underlying psychological presumptions, I hope to broaden our understanding of Mendelssohn's project and of the issues at stake in the German enlightenment.

FALL 2017

1. Friday, September 8, 2017 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"Addiction: A Wicked Problem?"
Candice Shelby, Department of Philosophy, University of Colorado, Denver

This paper argues for the inadequacy of all characterizations of addiction offered to date; not only those included in the false dichotomy of choice vs. disease, but also those that frame the syndrome as a learning disorder, a trauma response, or as a perfectly normal response to insufferable social circumstances. While there is some truth to most of these characterizations, and while it is normal to want to point to the cause of some troublesome thing, with the idea of finding a fix for it, causation rarely works that way, and in socially-ensconced problems, it almost never does. As an alternative to this demonstrably ineffective manner of approaching addictive suffering, I will argue that addiction is a "wicked" problem. That is, it a problem characterized by the difficulty of even formulating it; by its embeddedness in a milieu of other problems, including the difficulty of distinguishing physical from non-physical aspects; and by the non-linearity of the causal relations involved.

2. Friday, September 22, 2017 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"In Defense of Picturing: Sellars's Philosophy of Mind as the Metascience of Cognitive Science."
Carl Sachs, Department of Philosophy, Marymount University

One of the most opaque topics in Sellars's philosophy of mind is what he called 'picturing,' and rather few Sellarsians have tried to take it seriously. I shall argue that, on a correct understanding of picturing, it turns out to be a central notion for the kind of explanatory project that cognitive science undertakes. Once we understand the significance of both (i) Sellars's contrast between picturing with what Sellars calls 'signifying' (or 'semantic assertability') and (ii) Sellars's equivalence between picturing and mapping, we will understand that picturing is a placeholder concept for a theory of non-linguistic or non-linguaformal mental representations. In Sellars's own day, the cognitive sciences had no such theory. We can understand Sellars's philosophy of mind as an example of what Michael Friedman calls 'philosophy as metascience', where philosophical speculation can offer new possibilities when a paradigm has been exhausted and a new one has not yet emerged.

3. Friday, September 29, 2017 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"How (Not) to Think About "Mental Ability" in Running and Other Sports."
Todd Jones, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Coaches, athletes and fans often talk about the importance of "the mental" in sports victories. "Mental" ability is meant to contrast with physical ability. But if dualism is false, all sporting activity is physical. And if dualism true, and most activities are controlled by our minds, what are purely physical abilities? There are numerous prima facie problems with the way the mental is discussed in sports culture. In this talk, I discuss the biggest of these problems and ways we might more productively talk about the role of the mental in sports.

4. Friday, October 20, 2017 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"Essential Adversariality."
John Casey, Department of Philosophy, Northeastern Illinois University

Critics of adversarial conceptions of arguments make two objections. First, adversariality tends to produce bad results (such as the erosion of trust and the silencing of less aggressive arguers). Second, and more fundamentally, adversarial notions are extraneous to the core concept of argument. This paper challenges the second of these objections. I do so on two main grounds. First, it's not always clear what is meant by "adversariality" in the context of argumentation, as it comes in many forms and has many aspects. Second, if we take argument to be about beliefs, then there's no other way to conceive of argument except as adversarial. Argument, in other words, is about making people believe.

5. Friday, November 3, 2017 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"Freedom as Dependence."
Matthew Smith, Department of Philosophy and Religion, Northeastern University

Both negative and republican conceptions of liberty make absences central to freedom. We are free when external impediments to action are absent, or we are free when unjust domination is absent, respectively. But, this misses the central reason we care about freedom. Freedom matters only with respect to our capacity to act. And, while the presence of some impediment or source of domination can prevent us from acting, the absence of the impediment or domination does not meaningfully expand our agency. A meaningful form of freedom that is explicitly connected to agency involves the realization of a capacity to act. So far, this is a somewhat familiar line of argument. But, once we appreciate that in order to act we must rely upon an alien world, we realize that in order to be free, we must be able to rely on forces beyond our control. In other words, the more we reliant we are on alien forces, the freer we are. Full (human) freedom just is radical dependence.

6. Friday, November 17, 2017 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"Intuitions as Evidence: Round 2."
William Ramsey, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Are philosophical intuitions intended to serve as evidence for the theories and claims philosophers promote? In an earlier talk, I offered an answer that I have come to see as mistaken; in this talk I will offer what I believe is the correct view. Some have endorsed a position that has come to be called "Centrality", which is the view that "Contemporary analytic philosophers rely on intuitions as evidence (or as a source of evidence) for philosophical theories" (Cappelen, 2012, p. 3). Others have criticized Centrality and denied any such role for philosophical intuitions. My primary aim in this talk is to offer what I hope is an improved perspective, at least with regard to a particular class of philosophical intuitions; namely, those that are invoked through hypothetical scenarios. The view I will defend suggests that both sides of this debate are partially right. Intuitive judgments do not, as psychological states, function as evidence in most well-known philosophical thought experiments, as the critics of Centrality claim. However, proponents of Centrality are right to insist that philosophical arguments heavily depend upon these intuitive judgments. Where both sides of the debate go awry is assuming that the importance of intuitive judgments rests solely upon their role as evidence. We need to distinguish between evidence, as such, from various non-evidential psychological states and processes that are needed for something else to serve as evidence. I call these latter conditions "evidence facilitators" and I'll argue that intuitive judgments belong in this category. Appreciating how intuitive judgments function as evidence facilitators should enhance our understanding of the actual role they play in philosophy.

7. Friday, December 8, 2017 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"Logic, Language, and the Pragmatic Maxim"
David Beisecker, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Formulations of the Pragmatic Maxim, even among the classical founders of pragmatism, hardly remained stable. In this paper, I point out how in the early 1900s C.S. Peirce shifted from a largely verificationist understanding of the pragmatic maxim to a much more inferentialist understanding. Rather than thinking of the meaning of a claim in terms of the consequences of its being true, Peirce comes to think about meaning in terms of the consequences of a claim's being affirmed and denied. As I show, this shift has important implications for contemporary "neo-pragmatist" philosophy of language, which have yet to be fully appreciated. Peirce's later formulations also mesh well with Tableau systems of logic (the method of trees), so much so that, had Peirce only been aware of such systems, I argue that he likely would have adopted them over his own graphical methods in his efforts to develop a fully logical proof of pragmatism.

SPRING 2017

1. Friday, January 27, 2017 - 3:00pm, BEH 217
"Can Culture Really be the Root Cause of Violence?"
Todd Jones, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Many commentators claim that one of the main sources of violent behavior is exposure to a surrounding "culture of violence." But what is really meant by a "culture of violence"? "Culture" is a notoriously difficult and problematic concept. In this talk I will argue that when people talk about cultural influences on violence, they tend to be talking about several different subfamilies of social and psychological processes. I argue that, because these subfamilies talk about such different processes, accounts of violence which focus on "cultural" roots tend to be obscuring more than they are illuminating. I then argue for an improved way of thinking about the sources of violent behavior.

2. Friday, February 10, 2017 - 3:00pm, BEH 217
"Distal Olfactory Perception."
Benjamin Young, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Reno

Odor Theories claim that the olfactory object is not perceived nor experiences as having a distal location. The purpose of this paper is to clarify this claim, show empirically that it is highly dubious, use two thought experiments to further show that the claim is either banal or false, and suggest how a new conception of the olfactory object using the Molecular Structure Theory (MST) of smells provides an explanation of the many properties problem. The first part of the paper clarifies the theoretical landscape regarding distal perception in olfaction. I argue that to fully appreciate the nature of olfactory object perception we need to distinguish between locatedness and locatable perceptual properties. While olfactory experiences do not present the former they certainly have the later. With more nuanced theoretical tools the paper then provides empirical support for the theoretical distinction between locatedness and locatable perceptual properties in olfaction. Not only can we track smells through an environment across time, we also experience the olfactory object as having a dispersed location in an environment relative to its odor plume. The cumulative evidence from the chemosciences suggests that we need to rethink our intuitive philosophical starting points when theorizing about distal perception. The third part of the paper develops two Through The Looking Glass thoughts experiments concerning the perspectival relation of the size of the perceiver relative to the object of perception. Using the MST's claim that what we smell are the molecular structure of chemical compounds within odor plumes, it is argued that not only does this capture the aforementioned nuanced theoretical distinction and empirical evidence regarding olfactory distal perception, but also explains the intuitive results of each thought experiment. Furthermore, using MST's conception of the olfactory object, it is shown that our olfactory perception can solve the many properties problem in a manner that allows us to explain how our experience of smells is of mereologically complex perduring objects with interchangeable parts.

3. Thursday, February 23, 2017 - 7:30pm, Barrick Museum Auditorium
"Rethinking Eudaimonism in Ethics."
Iakovos Vasiliou, Department of Philosophy, The CUNY Graduate Center

Professor Vasiliou aims to raise puzzles about eudaimonism, or well-being, as it is attributed to the classical Greek philosophers and as it has been taken up in contemporary philosophical discussions. The concept of Eudaimonia for the ancient Greeks is asked to play two roles: as an account of well-being and as a practical principle. He will argue that these two roles are in greater tension with one another than scholars and philosophers have appreciated.

4. Friday, February 24, 2017 - 3:00pm, BEH 217
"Socrates and Eudaimonism."
Iakovos Vasiliou, Department of Philosophy, The CUNY Graduate Center

It is a nearly universal assumption that Socrates--the character presented in the so-called "early" dialogues of Plato--is a eudaimonist. I shall examine critically just what the attribution of eudaimonism to Socrates involves and how well grounded it is in the texts of Plato. I shall argue that certain aspects of eudaimonism, which focus on the role of happiness as a practical principle, are highly questionable and poorly supported by the texts. In particular, I shall look at the Euthydemus, Meno, and Protagoras.

5. Monday, February 27, 2017 - 3:00pm, CEB 208
"Plato's Return: New Epistemic Trouble for Democracy."
Robert Talisse, Department of Philosophy, Vanderbilt University

In his Republic and elsewhere, Plato presents powerful epistemological arguments against democracy. According to these arguments, citizens are too unwise and ignorant for self-government. Contemporary trends in democratic theory have sought, more or less explicitly, to answer Plato's challenges. The democrats' claim has been that, when properly structured, public deliberation among ordinary citizens can render democracy wise. Still, the idea of public deliberation invites several obvious epistemological troubles, many of which have been addressed, with some success, in the current literature. In this talk, I review the dialectic between deliberative democrats and those who press these epistemological troubles. Then I raise a new epistemological concern that has not been discussed, and argue that there may be no adequate response.

6. Friday, March 3, 2017 - 3:00pm, BEH 217
"Credence in Psychological Explanation."
Neil Sinhababu, Department of Philosophy, National University of Singapore

Many philosophers understand belief in terms of the subjective probability that a proposition is true, ranging between 0 (certainty in the negation of the proposition) and 1 (certainty of the proposition). Subjective probability, or credence, is frequently used in explaining belief-formation and action. I discuss advantages of using credences in explaining additional psychological phenomena such as ambivalence and the intensity of emotion upon receiving news. I also investigate when we have the experience of calculation, and argue that a credence-based framework helps us explain this.

7. Friday, March 24, 2017 - 3:00pm, BEH 217
"There's Glory for You! Redefining Revolutions."
Andrew Aberdein, School of Arts and Communication, Florida Institute of Technology

In their account of theory change in logic, Aberdein and Read distinguish 'glorious' from 'inglorious' revolutions--only the former preserves all 'the key components of a theory'. A widespread view, expressed in these terms, is that empirical science characteristically exhibits inglorious revolutions but that revolutions in mathematics are at most glorious. Here are three possible responses: 0. Accept that empirical science and mathematics are methodologically discontinuous; 1. Argue that mathematics can exhibit inglorious revolutions; 2. Deny that inglorious revolutions are characteristic of science. Where Aberdein and Read take option 1, option 2 is preferred by Mizrahi. This paper seeks to resolve this disagreement through consideration of some putative mathematical revolutions.

8. Friday, March 31, 2017 - 3:00pm, BEH 217
"On Tycho's Shoulders, with Vesalius' Eyes: The Engraved Frontispiece of Kepler's Rudolfine Tables."
Stefano Gattei, Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences, CalTech

Johannes Kepler completed the Tabulae Rudolphinae in their logarithmic form in 1624. It then took three years to gather the financial support, find a suitable publisher and, particularly, overcome the difficulties posed by Tycho's heirs, who claimed both a share in the profits and censorship rights. The tables represented the crowning achievement of Kepler's career as an astronomer. Because of their novelty and importance, he proposed that the tall folio volume should have an appropriate frontispiece.
The paper describes the meaning of the very many components of the engraving and relates them to Kepler's published works. It traces the origin of Kepler's frontispiece to Tycho's observatory on the Isle of Hven, and suggests the possible iconographic sources of its chief elements. Finally, it highlights how Kepler, by way of this frontispiece, found the way both to assert his own position in and contribution to the history of astronomy, as well as to place himself in the dispute over the Copernican hypothesis.

9. Friday, April 28, 2017 - 3:00pm, BEH 217
"Situations and Warrant Transmission."
Krista Lawlor, Department of Philosophy, Stanford University

When does justification in a set of premises transmit to a conclusion, and when does it not? Specifically, is it unproblematic, as the Moorean dogmatist suggests, for one to gain justification for conclusions about the existence of external world by inference from one's perceptual experiences? Following a lead from Fred Dretske, I develop a story about how perceptual justification transmits from the premises to the conclusion of an inference. The result is a view with some helpful descriptive power that allows us to defend commonsense commitments about warrant transmission.

10. Friday, May 5, 2017 - 3:00pm, BEH 217
"Partiality as Illusion."
Allan Hazlett, Department of Philosophy, University of New Mexico

Like most people, I am partial towards myself and towards those to whom I am related by the bonds of friendship (on a broad sense of "friendship" where this includes family, colleagues, and compatriots): I prefer things going well for us to things going well for others. However, things going well for us is no better than things going well for others--we, for example, are no more deserving of things going well for us than anyone else is. But if that is right, then my partiality seems misplaced, for it is wrong to prefer one thing to another, if the one thing is not better than the other. So I shall argue

here. I shall argue, by appeal to a version of what is known as the "guise of the good thesis," that partial pro-attitudes--i.e. pro-attitudes that manifest partiality--are incorrect, constituting a species of illusion, akin to the illusion involved in color perception.

FALL 2016

1. Friday, September 9, 2016 - 3:00pm, BEH 221
"What Fiction Can and Can't Teach us about Facts."
Todd Jones, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

As part of an ongoing project looking at the possible contributions that literature can make to understanding human nature, I'll discuss the issues of how it is possible at all for a fictional world to give us knowledge about the real world. If fiction can only produce knowledge under limited conditions, what does that mean for the study of fiction in school?

2. Friday, September 16, 2016 - 3:00pm, BEH 221
"DIY Research Ethics: Protecting Human Subjects in the New Research Regime."
Lisa Rasmussen, Department of Philosophy, University of North Carolina at Charlotte

A litany of abuses of and harms to research participants has created our current system of protections. This traditional approach is tightly wedded, for reasons specific to a different time and place, to research institutions and federal funding. New research approaches, from crowdfunding and -sourcing, to DIY/hacker initiatives, to community-based participatory research, pose a series of challenges to the traditional mechanisms of human subject protection and invite us to consider again the reasons for and mechanisms best suited to protecting human subjects of research.

3. Friday, September 30, 2016 - 3:00pm, BEH 221
"Identity and Quantification."
Otávio Bueno, Department of Philosophy, University of Miami

Does quantification presuppose the identity of the objects that are quantified over? Is quantification intelligible without such identity? In this paper, I examine a number of arguments in favor of identity's fundamentality in the context of quantification, and I argue that classical quantification (that is, quantification in classical logic and set theories) requires identity. In particular, I consider the argument from the domain of quantification, the argument from the range of quantifiers, the argument from the collapse of the existential and the universal quantifiers, and the argument from the intelligibility of quantification. In each case, I identify the crucial role that the identity of the objects that are quantified over plays in quantification. I then consider quantification in non-classical contexts, and argue that even in logics and set theories that allegedly do not require identity for quantification, identity is still presupposed.

4. Friday, October 7, 2016 - 3:00pm, BEH 221
"Corroboration: Sensitivity, Safety, and Explanation."
David Godden, Department of Philosophy, Michigan State University

Corroborative evidence has two probative effects: a primary effect by which it offers direct evidence for some claim, and a secondary effect by which it bolsters the probative value of some other piece of evidence. This paper argues that the bolstering effect of corroborative evidence is epistemically legitimate because corroboration provides a reason to count the belief based on the initial evidence as sensitive to, and safe from, defeat in a way that it was not previously recognized to be. Discovering that our belief is impervious to defeat in ways we previously did not recognize provides a reason to

positively reappraise the probative strength of the evidence on which it is based. The final section of the paper relates the proposed sensitivity- and safety-based account of corroboration to an explanation-based account.

5. Friday, October 21, 2016 - 3:00pm, BEH 221
"A Lost Dialogue of Aristotle Reconstructed: The Protrepticus (Exhortation to Philosophy)."
Monte Johnson, Department of Philosophy, University of California, San Diego

Like his teacher Plato, Aristotle wrote philosophical dialogues in which named characters were depicted exchanging adversarial speeches on philosophical topics in a dramatic setting. Unlike Plato, none of Aristotle's dialogues have survived in manuscript form. The most popular one of them, however, the Protrepticus (Exhortation to Philosophy) can be reconstructed out of extensive quotations made by a later author, the 3rd-4th century AD Neo-Pythagorean philosopher Iamblichus of Chalcis. I will discuss the methods and techniques employed for reconstructing the work employed by my collaborator, D. S. Hutchinson and myself. The reconstructed work gives us insight into some of Aristotle's literary techniques that are either not evident or difficult to appreciate in the acroamatic works of the Aristotle Corpus. The Protrepticus also gives us novel versions of famous arguments discussed elsewhere in the Aristotle Corpus (such as the function argument in ethics, the account of pleasure, or the argument for natural teleology). The Protrepticus also shows us early versions of ideas that were later developed and adapted to different purposes in the Aristotle Corpus. Members of the audience will be given a handout containing a complete Greek text and English translation of the reconstructed work. Students who are new to philosophy are warmly invited to attend: the purpose of Aristotle's Protrepticus was to encourage the young to devote their time, and even their lives, to doing philosophy.

6. Friday, November 4, 2016 - 3:00pm, BEH 221
"The Peñalosa Principle of Transportation Democracy: Lessons from Bogotá on the Morality of Urban Mobility."
Shane Epting, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

The mayor of Bogotá, Enrique Peñalosa strives to deliver transit services that promote social equity through bicycle lanes, improved sidewalks, and a world-famous Bus Rapid Transit System, "TransMilenio." Through examining the principles that guide his planning, we can flesh out a starting point for socially just transit systems. While such measures can alleviate several harms that transit systems cause, they rest on an incomplete foundation due to their top-down nature. To amend this situation, I will argue for a restorative justice approach to transportation democracy, using examples from Peñalosa's mayoral tenure. In turn, lessons from Bogotá's transportation history reveal how to develop transit systems that strongly favor justice.

7. Friday, November 18, 2016 - 3:00pm, BEH 221
"Against Mythical Creationism."
Jeff Goodman, Department of Philosophy and Religion, James Madison University

Many who think that there exist contingent abstracta are fictional creationists, asserting that Sherlock Holmes, e.g., is an abstractum dependent on Doyle's authorial activities. Some prominent fictional creationists, notably Braun (2005), Kripke (1973), and Salmon (1998, 2002), don't stop at fictional creationism, but further embrace mythical creationism. They hold that some objects ("mythical objects") that figure in false theories (or "myths") are likewise abstracta of our production. Paradigm examples here would be phlogiston, the substance once alleged to account for rusting or burning, and Vulcan, the planet proposed by Le Verrier to be the cause of perturbations in the orbit of Mercury. I here present and defend an argument for thinking that mythical creationism is false. I then consider an intriguing sort of objection to my argument that has been recently put forth by Zvolenszky (2016); she has claimed that a crucial premise is seen to be unjustified once one considers the phenomena of inadvertently created abstracta, specifically, inadvertently created fictional characters. However, I show that even if we admit inadvertently created abstracta into our ontology, my argument survives. I

ultimately defend a view on which fictional characters (if real) may be countenanced as created abstracta, whether purposefully created or not, yet mythical objects are best taken to be discoverable, Platonic abstracta (if real). Such a hybrid ontology is justified once we take proper note of the nature of the sorts of authorial activities involved in fictional storytelling versus those involved in scientific hypothesizing.

8. Friday, December 2, 2016 - 3:00pm, BEH 221
"Dialectical Regresses and Skepticism."
Scott Aikin, Department of Philosophy, Vanderbilt University

The dialogical model for epistemic justification is that the norms of reason-exchange are isomorphic with the norms of justification. Given the dialectical model, the regress problem for epistemic justification can be posed as a dialectical problem of defending one's assertions. Dialectical forms of anti-skepticism in the face of the regress problem run afoul of the anti-dogmatic impetus behind the dialectical model.

SPRING 2016

1. Friday, January 29, 2016 - 3:00pm, BEH 217
"Pseudoscience, Fiction, and the Demarcation Problem."
Mary-Beth Willard, Department of Political Science and Philosophy, Weber State University

Anti-vaccinationism, climate change denialism, astrology, and creation science, among others, are instances of pseudoscience. The problem of distinguishing science from pseudoscience is known as the demarcation problem. Most attempts to solve the demarcation problem focus on identifying methodological characteristics of good science that are not shared by pseudoscience. I will approach the demarcation problem from a different perspective; why are pseudoscientific beliefs peculiarly resistant to revision? We have two data that need to be explained. First, we need to explain why pseudoscientific beliefs resist revision with truthful sources. Second, we need to explain how, if pseudoscience is disconnected from beliefs about the truth, it nevertheless authorizes attitudes and actions. I suggest here that pseudoscience is not a system of beliefs, but a fiction. Pseudoscience creates a narrative into which elements of the real world may be imported and out of which new belief and attitudes may be exported. The hallmark of a pseudoscience, I suggest, is when the preservation of the pseudoscientific narrative and in particular its affective components become more important than the pursuit of truth. If we understand pseudoscience as a fiction, we can understand why truth-seeking is orthogonal to its purpose, as well as why attempting to debunk a pseudoscience with facts won't work.

2. Friday, February 12, 2016 - 3:00pm, BEH 217
"What's Non-inevitable about the Socially Constructed?"
Abigail Klassen, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Typically, social constructions are taken to be non-inevitable. I analyze to what extent the theoretical cogency and practical efficacy of social constructionist programs are affected by vagueness surrounding the meaning of "non-inevitability". I provide an account of what social constructionist projects purport to provide and what they do and might provide. My main goal is to propose that the claim of the non-inevitability of some X (a purported social category, phenomenon) on the part of social constructionists has not been adequately justified: its meaning has not been made precise or relies too heavily on intuitions about what is social/natural, unnecessary/necessary, and alterable/inalterable. To defend and bolster social constructionist programs, I proffer two understandings of non-inevitability, which, though somewhat course-grained are not, I think, thereby merely half-baked. I take the understandings that I recommend to be both more substantive and precise than what has so far been offered in existing literature.
Making clearer what non-inevitability amounts to in the context of constructionist debates is important: what makes X

non-inevitable or not, and indeed, what makes X a social rather than a "natural" category or phenomenon is precisely what is in question between social constructionists and their opponents (and between rival social constructionists as well). Stating that X need not have been as it is (or need not have been at all) offers no criteria to delimit the inevitable from the non-inevitable and the natural or non-social from the social. I attempt to make clearer the various ways in which the claim of X's non-inevitability might be understood and present what I take to be the most promising interpretations of non-inevitability, at least in the context of social constructionist programs. I name these interpretations the "Dependence Reading" and the "Alterability Reading". While not entirely fine-grained, I see the two interpretations I advocate, whether taken individually or together, as offering a substantive account of non-inevitability that, as a matter of course in social constructionist projects, is politically and practically useful.

3. Friday, February 26, 2016 - 3:00pm, BEH 217
"What Are We Doing When We Do Semantics?"
Andy Egan, Department of Philosophy, Rutgers University

A bunch of people in Philosophy and Linguistics departments spend a lot of their time associating various kinds of set-theoretic objects with various linguistic expressions and actions, and a lot of time arguing with each other about just which set-theoretic objects to associate with which linguistic expressions and actions. As a witness to, or participant in, this activity, it's reasonable to ask some questions about it. For example: "What are all these people doing, exactly?" "What does it mean to associate one set-theoretic object rather than another with a particular linguistic expression or action?" "What features of the world would make one, rather than another, association of set-theoretic objects with linguistic expressions or actions correct?" These questions actually turn out to be surprisingly hard. There are a lot of different ways of thinking about the project of semantics, and the different conceptions of the project that different theorists are working with aren't always explicitly laid out. In this paper I'll try to make a start on a taxonomy of options. I'll do this by starting with the one David Lewis offers in "Languages and Language", and looking at some choice points along the way to Lewis's picture, and the competing pictures that result from making different choices at those points.

4. Friday, March 11, 2016 - 3:00pm, BEH 217
"Science without Kinds."
Dan Weiskopf, Department of Philosophy, Georgia State University

The claim that science discovers kinds is often treated as definitive of both the notion of a kind and of the scientific enterprise itself. This presumes, however, that kindhood is a theoretically cogent property. I survey some reasons for doubting whether there is any sufficiently rich, unified, and non-trivial notion of kindhood to be found. Using case studies drawn from the psychological and neural sciences, I first consider three leading accounts of kindhood (Boyd's homeostatic property clusters, Slater's stable property clusters, and Khalidi's simple causal view) and show that they are subject to robust counterexamples. I generalize this critique by arguing that the notion of a kind leans on the defective assumption of an artificially high degree of convergence among the goals, purposes, and practices of science. But these activities are multifaceted, and the explanations for their successes will be correspondingly various. Real metascience is a messy patchwork, and if kinds are invoked to explain the "success" of science, kinds themselves will be equally disordered. We would make better sense of science if we severed its links with kinds.

5. March 14, 2016 - 3:00pm, BEH 109
"The Philosophical Foundations of Propaganda."
Jason Stanley, Department of Philosophy, Yale University

Professor Jason Stanley of Yale University will explain his theory on the philosophical foundations of propaganda, as developed in his recent book, How Propaganda Works.

6. Monday, March 14, 2016 - 7:30pm, Barrick Museum Auditorium
"Ideology, Propaganda, and the 2016 Elections."
Jason Stanley, Department of Philosophy, Yale University

In Federalist 10, James Madison draws our attention to the problem that inequalities raise for democratic governance. The point of Federalist No. 10 is to argue that, given the existence and inevitability of the kind of self-interest that is engendered by large differences in material wealth, what Madison calls "pure democracy" is impossible. Madison believes a representative democracy will provide the requisite safeguards against the blinding effects of self-interest. Representatives are supposed to solve the problem, because they are supposed to be impartial. However, it is safe to say that representative democracies have not invariably been composed of impartial representatives. Representatives are not immune from self-interest. More generally, in the United States, the undermining of campaign finance reform laws has led to clear partiality on the side of representatives. Given the need to raise immense funds for reelection in campaigns that now feature open avenues to corporate donations, representatives are beholden to the clearly partial motives of big business and high-wealth individuals. The 2016 elections has already set a new standard for the influence of money; just 158 American families have provided almost half the funds for the presidential candidates. Representatives must argue that what is the best interest of their campaign donors is in the best interests of all Americans. Philosophy has long had at is center the problem of ideology. In this talk, I will explore the role propaganda and ideology play in campaign strategies dedicated to leading people to vote against their own self-interests.

7. Friday, April 8, 2016 - 3:00pm, BEH 217
"Doing Philosophy through Painting? On Danto and Taylor on Tansey on Art."
Ian Dove, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Can a painting do philosophy? And by "do philosophy" I mean something more than "merely illustrate a philosophical theme." The answer is--on separate readings of Arthur Danto's "Mark Tansey: The Picture within the Picture" (1992) and Mark C. Taylor's The Picture In Question: Mark Tansey and the End of Representation (1999)--a qualified, or maybe even an unqualified, yes for at least a subset of Mark Tansey's paintings. To dissect this claim, I consider what it would mean to "do philosophy" this way. I'll contrast these results with claims made by Leo Groarke in "Logic, Art and Argument" (1996) as regards the argumentative value of Jacques-Louis David's The Death of Marat (1793), for example. Groarke's example is well-criticized by Ralph Johnson (2003). It is less clear that Johnson's criticism of Groarke's account of visual argumentation will undermine the philosophical work done by Tansey's paintings. I end up, therefore, somewhat closer to a qualified yes as the answer to the opening question.

FALL 2015

1. Friday, September 4, 2015 - 3:00pm, BEH 217
"Accounting for Sociolinguistic Factors That Create Apparently Competing Accounts."
Todd Jones, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

It's not uncommon for scientists to give different explanations of the same phenomenon. But it's not obvious when such accounts are competing and when they are complementary. When people don't see that two accounts compete, they can easily accept false explanations. If two accounts don't compete, people can waste time and energy needlessly trying to figure out which one is right. Either way, not knowing if the accounts compete leaves us in a bad epistemic state. In this paper, I will specify how one family of discourse rules enables there to be accounts that appear to compete, but don't. I hope that being more aware of the linguistic mechanisms making compatible accounts appear to compete will prevent people from wasting resources trying to show which account is right.

2. Friday, October 2, 2015 - 3:00pm, BEH 217
"Luck Egalitarianism and Deweyan Pragmatism."
David Rondel, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Reno

In this paper I describe how Kant's idea about the impossibility of moral luck has come to influence, via Rawls, recent writings in egalitarian theory. I argue that this has been an unfortunate development. Further, I claim that the major deficiencies of this post-Rawlsian egalitarianism (dubbed by Elizabeth Anderson as "luck egalitarianism") are both effectively critiqued and corrected by the understanding of equality and its value located in John Dewey's political writings.

3. Friday, October 23, 2015 - 3:00pm, BEH 217
"Identity Claims are Not about Identity."
James Woodbridge, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Identity claims that employ two different names or other designation expressions--sentences of the form n is identical to m, where different expressions go in for 'n' and 'm'--present an usual semantic phenomenology. As Russell notes regarding such claims, "you are half tempted tho think there are two people [or things]. . .and they happen to be the same." Mark Crimmins has echoed this sentiment, pointing out that "we standardly talk as if we think that things can be identical to other things." But of course, given that we take many such claims to be true while understanding that two things cannot be one thing, this is absurd. This tension has motivated a few philosophers (including Crimmins and Fred Kroon) to posit an element of pretense at work in what we can call plural identity-talk. Brad Armour-Garb and I have pursued this line of thought in developing our own pretense-based account of plural identity-talk. We reject Kroon's thesis that pretense is at work in the pragmatics of the discourse, siding with Crimmins in locating the pretense in the talk's semantics. However, we disagree with Crimmins (and Kroon) by rejecting the assumption that plural identity-talk is really about identity (the relation). On our view, the serious assertion made indirectly, via the invocation of pretense that occurs in such claims, ends up being a meta-linguistic claim about the designation expressions employed in the plural-identity sentence. This has a superficial similarity to the view that Frege initially took of identity claims, but the appeal to pretense deflects the considerations that led him to reject this view and provides a tidy resolution of Frege's Puzzle. Our account initially looks as if it might conflict with the Kripke-Marcus view of (true) identity claims as being necessarily true, but attention to the details reveals that our account leaves room for the necessity of identity claims, and for Kripkean a posteriori necessity.

4. Friday, November 6, 2015 - 3:00pm, BEH 217
"Epistemic Humility in Ethics and the Humanity of Others."
David Forman, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

In trying to articulate principles that place restrictions on purely consequentialist moral deliberation, philosophers typically stress what we might call the metaphysical intricacies of our actions: it becomes essential to determine whether the harms resulting from our actions are something we do or something we merely allow, whether they are directly or merely indirectly caused, whether they are intended or merely foreseen, etc. In this talk, I try to make the case for the importance of a principle that rests on an epistemic rather than a metaphysical distinction: it is wrong to bring about a manifest harm (or prevent a manifest good) for the sake of preventing a harm (or bringing about a good) that is inappropriately uncertain. This principle seems to be compatible with consequentialist moral theory. But it also restricts moral deliberation in a way mirrors non-consequentialism in important respects--especially when we turn our attention to realistic cases and away from thought experiments that have the air of science fiction.

5. Friday, November 13, 2015 - 3:00pm, BEH 217
"Problems with Proper-Name Predicativism."
David Braun, Department of Philosophy, University at Buffalo/SUNY

Speakers mostly use proper names to refer to objects. For example, a professor who utters "Jennifer is a student" uses 'Jennifer' to refer to a particular person. But sometimes speakers use proper names as predicates. For example, a professor who utters "There are three Jennifers in my class" uses the proper name 'Jennifer' as a predicate that applies to a person if and only if that person bears the name 'Jennifer'. Some philosophers and linguists have argued that proper names really are just predicates. Many of them says that occurrences of proper names that appear to be referential are, in fact, occurrences of predicates that are preceded by silent occurrences of the word 'the'. For example, the sentence "Jennifer is a student" has an underlying structure just like that of "The Jennifer is a student," but with 'the' unpronounced. I will begin my talk with some reasons to accept Millianism, which says that seemingly referential occurrences of proper names really are referential. I will then present objections to several predicativist views of proper names. Some of my objections will resemble Kripke's modal objections to traditional descriptivist theories of proper names. If time permits, I will respond to some objections to Millianism.

6. Friday, December 4, 2015 - 3:00pm, BEH 217
"'Forward-Looking' Mental Content and the Debate over Animal Theory of Mind."
Cameron Buckner, Department of Philosophy, University of Houston

Research on animal Theory of Mind--the ability to attribute mental states to others--has been stuck over last fifteen years in an interpretive stalemate dubbed the 'logical problem': experimental evidence that animals represent mental states (e.g. seeing) seems to be necessarily conflated with evidence that they represent merely the behavioral cues (e.g. line-of-gaze) for those mental states. I here argue that the problem is primarily semantic rather than methodological: different researchers implicitly presume different theories of representation, and so disagree about what data would count as evidence for Theory of Mind. This impasse cannot be overcome merely by running more or better experiments; we must either abandon the representational idiom or directly confront underlying disagreements about the nature of representation. In this talk, I propose a new, ecumenical "forward-looking" theory of representation, illustrating its empirical utility by reviewing a range of new experimental designs it suggests--including an ongoing empirical project on ravens that promises to finally overcome the skeptical "line-of-gaze" interpretation.

SPRING 2015

1. Friday, January 30, 2015 - 3:00pm, CBC C211
"What Does 'Competitive' Mean?"
Todd Jones, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Many athletes are often described as being "competitive." In this talk, I do a conceptual analysis of what this term might entail. It is easy to doubt that any unifying definition can be found, given the variety of different psychological make-ups that can all be labeled "competitive." I argue that a unifying definition can, nevertheless, be found. Ultimately, however, the term of is too vague and ambiguous to be useful for understanding what athletes think and do.

2. Friday, February 13, 2015 - 3:00pm, BEH 216
"The Ethics of Taking Offense."
Abigail Aguilar, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Increasingly, contemporary public discourse is marked by claims of being offended by the words or actions of others, often followed by explicit or implicit demands on the person who is blamed for having caused the offense. While this is a different concern from determining what makes a statement or action offensive, it nonetheless prompts an examination of the moral status of the claim of "being offended."
To carry this out, I first explore what I take people to mean by the claim "I'm offended by that." A clue to their intended meaning may be found in their expectations of others, both the person whose words or actions caused the purported offense, and any third party witnesses to the ostensibly offensive words or actions. Then I will show that the statement "I'm offended by that" often means neither what the speaker (or others) think it means nor what the speaker intends. After giving an alternate account of its meaning, I will offer an argument for what one should do when confronted with the claim of being offended, either as the person who is accused of having caused the offense or as another person who witnessed the words or actions, and why this is important for society as a whole.

3. Friday, February 27, 2015 - 3:00pm, BEH 216
"Are Zombies Contingently Non-Concrete?"
Keota Fields, Department of Philosophy, University of Massachusetts, Darthmouth

David Chalmers uses a conceivability argument for the metaphysical possibility of zombies against physicalism. Using an account of modality proposed by Linsky and Zalta, according to which some objects are concrete at some possible world and non-concrete at others, I attempt to determine whether the conceivability of zombies is a reliable guide to their possible concreteness. Since my concrete zombie twin is physically identical to me, we have exactly the same causal origin on Kripke's account of essences. But in order to show that my concrete zombie twin has my exact same causal origin it seems we must assume that there is a possible world where the same natural laws and concrete antecedent conditions present in the actual world produce a being identical to me that lacks consciousness. But that amounts to assuming that physicalism is false by assuming that consciousness is independent of those laws and antecedent conditions, which is exactly what conceivability arguments must prove. We can nevertheless conceive of zombies, which may be explicable if they are non-concrete in every possible world in a manner similar to fictional objects.

4. Tuesday, March 10, 2015 - 7:30pm, Barrick Museum Auditorium
"Engineering Humans to Survive Climate Change."
Matthew Liao, Center for Bioethics and Department of Philosophy, New York University

Anthropogenic climate change is arguably one of the biggest problems that confront us today. There is ample evidence that climate change is likely to affect adversely many aspects of life for all people around the world. Existing solutions such as geoengineering might be too risky and ordinary behavioural and market solutions might not be sufficient to mitigate climate change. In this talk, I consider a new kind of solution to climate change, what I call "human engineering". This approach involves biomedical modifications of humans so that they can mitigate and/or adapt to climate change. I argue that human engineering is potentially less risky than geoengineering and that it could help behavioural and market solutions succeed in mitigating climate change. I also consider some possible ethical concerns regarding human engineering, such as its safety, the implications of human engineering for our children and for society, and I argue that these concerns can be addressed. The moral of the talk is that human engineering deserves further consideration in the debate about climate change.

5. Wednesday, March 11, 2015 - 3:00pm, BEH 124
"Threshold Deontology and Moral Vagueness."
Matthew Liao, Center for Bioethics and Department of Philosophy, New York University

Threshold Deontology holds that there is a threshold above which a moral constraint against killing an innocent person can become overridden. For instance, while it may be impermissible to kill one innocent person to save five other innocent people from being killed, Threshold Deontology holds that it can be permissible to kill one innocent person to save, e.g., one million innocent people. While Threshold Deontology seems like a promising moral theory, there is however very little discussion at present of the nature and the structure of this threshold as well as what happens after one has crossed this threshold. In this talk, I propose that we can shed light on these issues by looking to the literature on vagueness. In particular, focusing on epistemic and supervaluationist approaches to vagueness, I first argue that even if non-moral epistemicism is inadequate for explaining non-moral kinds of vagueness such as heap, tall and bald, moral epistemicism may actually be more plausible than supervaluationism in explaining the nature and the structure of deontological thresholds. I then present a number of cases to show that one need not become a consequentialist once one crosses certain deontological thresholds. Finally, I address some specific criticisms leveled at Threshold Deontology and I argue that they do not succeed.

6. Friday, March 20, 2015 - 3:00pm, BEH 216
"Visual Scheming: Steps Towards a Theory of Visual Argument."
Ian Dove, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

The analysis and evaluation of visual argumentation has, from the perspective of logic, unduly focused on the ontological question: Are there visual arguments? The reason for this undue focus is that images, at least in the form of photographs or photograph-like displays, are not amenable to analysis in the usual formal logical manner: paraphrase in a formal language, the resulting formal sentence or sequent of which is then evaluated using some formal logical apparatus (either through proofs/derivations or semantics). Hence, if progress will be made from a logical perspective, it will come from a different basis. To this end, I propose using argumentation schemes in the mode of Walton, Reed, and Macagno (2008). From this perspective, there are at least two kinds of potential visual argumentation schemes: (a) those that are modeled upon verbal schemes, and (b) those that aren't. The former are more familiar and less controversial. Argument from Visual Analogy, for example, is an argument from analogy some piece of which is carried by a visual. The latter kinds are, to my mind, more interesting (they would seem to require a kind of visual logic), and thereby more controversial. I demonstrate both the existence and analysis of this kind of argument by example. First, I show that an argument type I've dubbed "Argument from Fit" is a common form of scientific reasoning. Moreover, the scheme I've developed for the type gives both analytic and evaluative guidance concerning such arguments on the hoof. Lastly, I show that an argument type I've dubbed, "Visual Plausibility Argument," is likewise common (and not just in science). The developed scheme for this type also gives guidance for the analysis and evaluation of such arguments.

7. Friday, April 10, 2015 - 3:00pm, BEH 216
"Idealism Operationalized: Charles Peirce's Theory of Perception."
Catherine Legg, Philosophy & Religious Studies Programme, University of Waikato (New Zealand)

This paper begins by outlining Hume's understanding of perception according to which ideas are copies of impressions, which are thought to constitute a foundational confrontation with reality. This understanding is contrasted with Peirce's theory of perception according to which percepts give rise to perceptual judgements, but perceptual judgements do not copy the percept but index it (serving as its "true symptom"--just as a weather-cock indicates the direction of the wind). Percept and perceptal judgement are thereby able to mutually inform and correct one another in rich ways, as the perceiver develops mental habits of interpreting their surroundings.

8. Friday, April 17, 2015 - 3:00pm, BEH 216
"Was Rorty Ever an Eliminative Materialist?"
Bill Ramsey, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Richard Rorty is widely regarded as an early developer and proponent of the radical theory called "Eliminative Materialism"--the view that certain types of mental states, like beliefs, do not actually exist. This assessment is largely due to an important paper published in the mid-60s in which he spells out what he calls the "Disappearance View" of mental states. In this talk, I will argue that although initially it does seem that Rorty is denying the reality of mental states, a closer reading of this paper severely undermines the idea that he endorsed anything close to eliminative materialism, at least as we now regard it. I'll argue that while Rorty is difficult to pin down, the most charitable reading of his position suggests that he was much more of a straightforward reductive materialist. After explaining the differences between eliminativism and reductionism, I will show why Rorty's views belong more in the latter camp.

FALL 2014

1. Friday, September 5, 2014 - 3:00pm, BEH 105
"'Microsoft is Considering...': Mental States and Mental Agency in Groups."
Todd Jones, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

In the popular media and in everyday conversations, we continually come across examples of groups of people that are said not only to act, but to perform mental actions. Microsoft not only unveils new products, but it is said to be considering releasing a product with new features, to decide whether or not to produce it, and to strategize about how to gain more market share with it. In this talk, I will argue that it is metaphysically (not just metaphorically) possible for groups of people to actually be doing these things.

2. Friday, October 3, 2014 - 3:00pm, BEH 105
"Pessimism about Russellian Monism."
Amy Kind, Department of Philosophy, Claremont McKenna College

From the perspective of many philosophers of mind in these early years of the 21st Century, the debate between dualism and physicalism has seemed to have stalled, if not to have come to a complete standstill. There seems to be no way to settle the basic clash of intuitions that underlies it. Recently however, a growing number of proponents of Russellian monism have suggested that their view promises to show us a new way forward. Insofar as Russellian monism might allow us to break out of the current gridlock, it's no wonder that it's become "hot stuff." To my mind, however, the excitement about Russellian monism is misplaced. Though some version of Russellian monism might well be true, I do not believe that it enables us to break free of the dualism/physicalism divide. As I will argue, once we properly understand what's required to flesh out an adequate monistic story, we will see that we are in an important way right back where we started.

3. Friday, October 24, 2014 - 3:00pm, BEH 105
"Defeating Manipulation Arguments: Interventionist Causation and Compatibilist Sourcehood."
Oisin Deery, Department of Philosophy, University of Arizona

Free will is often, and usefully, defined in terms of the causal efficacy of agents and their deliberations, and traditional debates about free will typically focus on its relation to causal determinism. Accordingly, it would seem that it should not take much to push philosophers debating free will into the "morass" of causation. Yet most philosophers debating free will

follow van Inwagen's lead by setting aside questions about causation, or by aiming to remain neutral on these questions. Given the complexity of debates about causation, this strategy is understandable. However, given the centrality of the notion of causation to free will, the strategy is ill-advised. In collaborative work with Eddy Nahmias (Georgia State), I argue that recent interventionist theories of causation help to illuminate debates about free will. Specifically, they license a response to the Manipulation Argument for the incompatibility of free will and determinism, by providing a compatibilist account of causal sourcehood. This account offers a principled explanation of the difference between manipulation and determinism, against the claim of the Manipulation Argument that there is no relevant difference. Even if causal determinism is true, complex deliberators can be the causal sources of their decisions, whereas the sources of manipulated agents' decisions lie outside of themselves. As a result, determined agents can be free and responsible, contrary to what the Manipulation Argument concludes, whereas manipulated agents have, at best, reduced responsibility. In this way, I show not only how the Manipulation Argument fails, but also how compatibilism can be strengthened by providing a plausible account of causal sourcehood.

4. Friday, November 7, 2014 - 3:00pm, BEH 105
"Intuitions as Evidence."
Bill Ramsey, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

What are philosophical intuitions, and do they serve as a form of evidence, in support of philosophical views, and, if so, how do they do this? Recently, there has been growing interest in these sorts of metaphilosophical questions, driven in part by some who openly deny that intuitions serve as any sort of evidence and, indeed, deny that they even exist in the way that philosophers think. One of the most recent and prominent examples of this outlook is presented in Herman Cappelen's recent book, Philosophy Without Intuitions (Cappelen, 2012). Cappelen argues that there are no compelling reasons for thinking that intuitive reactions to thought experiments in philosophical arguments are supposed to serve as evidence for anything. I regard Cappelen's skeptical project to be provocative, intriguing, but deeply mistaken. In my talk I will defend the idea that a) there is indeed something distinctive and real that philosophers refer to when they talk about intuitions and b) these are indeed intended to serve as a type of evidence in a great number of philosophical arguments. To show this I am going to look closely at a well-known philosophical argument that involves a hypothetical scenario; namely, Peter Singer's argument regarding our obligations to help the needy and his use of the hypothetical case of the drowning child. I will explain the sort of thing I think the relevant intuition here is, and how I believe it is meant to serve as a type of evidence. I then consider how Cappelen argues against the intuition-as-evidence view, and explain why I find his case unconvincing. Finally, I will offer some very brief speculative remarks on a traditional problem associated with the evidential role of philosophical intuitions.

5. Friday, November 14, 2014 - 3:00pm, BEH 105
"Conceptual and Empirical Perspectives on Intellectual Humility."
Mark Alfano, Department of Philosophy, University of Oregon

I'll present ongoing conceptual and empirical research on intellectual humility. Humility and intellectual humility are odd virtues that seem to involve a paradox of self-attribution. Someone who is (intellectually) humble is unlikely to say so, or even think so. Someone who says (or even thinks) that she's intellectually humble probably isn't. This makes empirical and philosophical work on intellectual humility especially difficult but also especially interesting. I'll focus on theory of the speech act of bragging, a Sellarsian dot-quotation approach to intellectual humility, a self-report scale of intellectual humility, and (if I have time) an implicit association test for intellectual humility that I and my collaborators have developed.

7. Friday, December 5, 2014 - 3:00pm, BEH 105
"Normative Analyses of Fundamentality."
Kris McDaniel, Department of Philosophy, Syracuse University

I will propose a reorientation of the meta-ethical landscape by offering for consideration analyses of fundamentality in normative terms. A first-pass analysis is the following: to be a fundamental property is to be a property that we prima facie ought to theorize in terms of. On the proposed analysis, normativity is in a sense carves closer to the joints than joint carving itself. On the proposed analysis, not only are some normative properties among the ground floor, but these very properties are what are needed to even characterize what it is to be among the ground floor. In a sense, there is no need to 'fit' normativity into the natural world since normativity is already needed to even characterize the very joints of the natural world. The problem of how to fit moral properties into the non-moral world is generated only given an antecedent inegalitarianism about properties that initially seems to favor the physical as fundamental. But, if some normative notion is necessary to even characterize inegalitarianism, it seems that the appearance of a problem fades.

SPRING 2014

1. Friday, February 7, 2014 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"An Argument for the Eternal Return of the Same."
David Forman, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

For Emperor Marcus Aurelius, the philosophic attitude requires viewing human affairs from the greatest heights: the soul that is rational "carries itself across the whole cosmos and the surrounding void and it surveys its shape, and reaches out into the endlessness of infinite time, and comprehends and reflects upon the periodical rebirth of the whole, and perceives that those who will come after us will see nothing new." Marcus is invoking the Stoic doctrine of the eternal return of the same. It is difficult to find an argument for this doctrine, but I will consider one, due to Leibniz, that is based on these two subsidiary arguments. (1) Statistical argument: eventually some segment of history will have to repeat itself down to the minutest conceivable details; and indeed in the infinity of time some such history segment will have to repeat itself an infinite number of times. (2) Metaphysical argument: insofar as all things in the world are part of a web of interconnected causes and effects under causal laws, the exact return of even one small segment of history would be possible only if the rest of history were to repeat itself as well. I argue that the argument can be made valid and also that it is sound under certain physical assumptions. I argue further that under the correct physical assumptions the argument is not sound, but that there is a valid argument with a similar form and conclusion.

2. Friday, February 21, 2014 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"Actualism and Possibilism."
Peter A. Graham, Department of Philosophy, University of Massachusetts, and Laurance S. Rockefeller Visiting Fellow, Princeton Center for Human Values

Is how we will voluntarily act relevant to what we're now morally obliged to do? Actualists claim that it is. Possibilists deny this. Consider:

HEADACHE: On Monday, Patient has an excruciating headache.Though it will go away on its own in five hours, drug D will cure it immediately. However, as D is a very potent drug, if it is administered on Monday, drug E must be administered on Tuesday in order to counter its side effects, otherwise Patient will die. Doctor knows that if he administers D on Monday, even though he will be able to administer E on Tuesday, because of his own laziness then, he won't.

Possibilists contend that Doctor is morally obliged to administer D to Patient on Monday. Actualists maintain not only that Doctor is not morally obliged to administer D to Patient on Monday, but also that he's in fact morally obliged not to do so. The actualist points out that Doctor's administering D to Patient on Monday would have disastrous consequences: Patient will die on Tuesday if Doctor administers D on Monday. The possibilist counters that Doctor is morally obliged to do the best he can for Patient, and there is a course of action completely open to him--administering D on Monday and then administering E on Tuesday--in which he administers D and quite easily cures Patient without killing her. In this paper I champion possibilism and argue against actualism.

3. Friday, March 7, 2014 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"Epistemic Modals and Orientation"
Jesse Fitts, Departments of Philosophy, University of Massachusetts and UNLV

I argue that our orientation on epistemic modals (which I clarify), in addition to being interesting in its own right, helps to explain epistemic modal disagreement. In particular, I claim that there are two different ways that one can view the connection between the information and the prejacent in an epistemically modalized proposition. One can view the information as part of one's beliefs, from a first-person orientation, or one can view the the relationship from a third-person orientation, as between a static piece of information and a proposition. This distinction helps make sense of felicitous and infelicitous responses in epistemic modal disagreement cases.

4. Friday, March 28, 2014 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"The Presentational Character of Sensory Affect."
Matt Fulkerson, Department of Philosophy, University of California, San Diego

Nina comes home from vacation to find the milk left out, its rotten stench filling her small apartment. Before she realizes not to, she breathes in and comes to have a deeply unpleasant olfactory experience. What an awful smell!, she thinks. There is a discriminatory dimension to her experience; she immediately recognizes the sour smell as that of rotten milk (and not that of sulfur or dirty diapers). It's natural to attribute the sourness to the odor in this case: the fumes wafting off the milk bottle are chemically different from those found in sulfur and diapers, in a way that makes a difference to how she experiences them. What about the awfulness? Where is that? Is that also a sensible chemical property of the odor? If so, which one? Or is it instead something in Nina, a kind of subjective reaction to the odors in the room? In this talk I will defend a hybrid account of sensory affect, in which both answers turn out to be true.

5. Friday, April 4, 2014 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"Meillassoux's Circle: Correlationism, Contingency, and Possible Worlds"
Joshua Heller and Jon Cogburn, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Louisiana State University

We begin with a sympathetic presentation of Quentin Meillassoux's critique of so-called "correlationism," the view that one cannot understand being without also articulating conditions for the thinkability of being. In doing so, we show that Meillassoux's attempt to get beyond human finitude relies upon an insight Graham Priest develops, following Hegel and Derrida: one cannot posit a limit without simultaneously transcending that very limit. Yet in the development of his own speculative metaphysics, Meillassoux tries (and fails) to circumvent the very logic of the limit upon which he himself relies. In particular, Meillassoux's argument to absolute contingency presupposes that we cannot talk meaningfully about the set of all possible worlds. However, such responses to paradoxes should be considered paradigm cases of correlationist thinking.

6. Friday, April 11, 2014 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"Counting on Composition as Identity to Answer the Special Composition Question"
Joshua Spencer, Department of Philosophy, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Strong Composition as Identity is the strange thesis that, necessarily, for any xs and any y, those xs compose y if, and only if, those xs are identical to y. In Parts of Classes, David Lewis argued against composition as identity on the grounds that a composite object is one in number whereas its parts are many in number. In this essay, I motivate and present a response to Lewis's argument according to which being one in number and being many in number are compatible properties. One virtue of this response is that it provides the Composition as Identity theorist with resources sufficient for answering the Special Composition Question.

7. Friday, April 25, 2014 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"The Challenge to Philosophy in Plato's Euthyphro"
Mark Lutz, Department of Political Science, University of Nevada Las Vegas

In *Apology*, Socrates claims that none of those who are most respected in the city know anything about "the greatest things," which would include the gods. In Euthyphro, Socrates examines what the "diviner" or prophet Euthyphro knows about piety and leads him to admit that he cannot provide a stable definition of piety. But instead of granting that he is ignorant about piety, Euthyphro says that he cannot express what he knows about the gods in rational speech. If true, this means that Socrates can neither confirm nor refute what Euthyphro claims to know about divine matters. Following suggestions in the dialogue, I argue that Euthyphro's confusion about justice distorts his understanding of the gods. The dialogue further indicates how Socrates could test what a prophet like Euthyphro knows by showing him his confusion about justice and observing whether he changes his beliefs about the gods. Insofar as Socrates can show that those who profess to know divine matters need philosophic support and guidance, he would take important steps toward verifying what he asserts about his fellow citizens' ignorance about the greatest things and toward justifying his own way of life.

8. Friday, May 9, 2014 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"Evolving Perceptual Categories"
Cailin O'Connor, Department of Logic and Philosophy of Science, University of California, Irvine

Do perceptual categories--green, cool, sweet--accurately track features of the real world? If not, are there systematic ways in which perceptual categories fail to latch onto real world structure? Attempts to answer these questions have persistently led to a further question. Given that human beings can only observe the world through the lens of our perceptual systems, how is it possible to know whether and in what ways perceptual categories are veridical? In this talk, I use tools from evolutionary game theory to attempt to gain traction on this problem. In particular, I employ signaling games to build simple models of the evolution of perceptual signaling. As I argue, these models do not lend support to either a strong realist or a strong anti-realist stance with regards to perceptual categories. Instead, they suggest a more nuanced relationship between real world structure and the structure of perceptual space. In particular, I will argue, this game theoretic framework suggests that perceptual categories should evolve to group real world items that can be responded to with the same actions and to differentiate real world items that cannot.

FALL 2013

1. Friday, September 6, 2013 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"Must Cognition Be Representational?"
Bill Ramsey, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

In various contexts and for various reasons, writers often define cognitive processes and architectures as those involving representational states and structures. Similarly, cognitive theories are often delineated as those that invoke representations to explain various cognitive processes. In this talk, I will present some reasons for rejecting this way of distinguishing the cognitive from the non-cognitive. Defining cognition in representational terms needlessly restricts our theorizing, it undermines the empirical status of the representational theory of mind, and it encourages wildly deflationary and explanatorily vacuous conceptions of representation. After criticizing this outlook, I'll consider alternative ways we might try to capture what is distinctive about cognition and cognitive theorizing, though I will also suggest the demarcation problem is far less important than many have thought.

2. Friday, September 20, 2013 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"Can Fiction Tell Us about Human Nature?"
Todd Jones, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Many thinkers (George Eliot, Thomas Jefferson, Philip Kitcher) have claimed that there is more to be learned about human nature from literary fiction than from studies of actual humans. In this informal talk, I'll discuss some of my ongoing research on the arguments for and against this sort of claim.

3. Friday, October 11, 2013 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"Where's the Fiction in Fictionalism?"
James Woodbridge, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Fictionalism has become a popular approach in philosophical theorizing in the past twenty years, but it remains unclear precisely how the approach should be understood, what exactly it applies to, and even what the role of fiction is in a fictionalist account. In presenting such accounts, theorists often enjoin us to "treat something like a fiction", or provide some equally vague instruction that is supposed to make their accounts count as cases of fictionalism. This often leads to mischaracterizations both of what fictionalist views maintain and of certain substantive, realist views as neverthless "fictionalist". In this talk, based on my research with Brad Armour-Garb, I will consider two different ways of understanding the relationship of fiction to fictionalism--what we call Comparative Fictionalism and Philosophical Fictionalism--and provide arguments for the greater utility of latter over the former, despite the dominance of the former in the philosophical literature. I then explain how within our preferred category of Philosophical Fictionalism, there are further reasons for preferring one of the two standard ways of implementing this approach over the other.

4. Friday, November 1, 2013 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"Peirce, Weight of Evidence, and the Doubt-Belief Theory of Inquiry."
Jeff Kasser, Department of Philosophy, Colorado State University

This talk shows that Peirce anticipated something worth calling Keynes' distinction between the valence or balance of evidence, on the one hand, and its weight on the other. It explains the connection between weight of evidence and stability of belief and argues that Peirce plausibly had such a notion of stability in mind in "The Fixation of Belief." It then argues that, once we see that stability of belief is to be evaluated along two distinct dimensions, we can start to make detailed

sense of how Peirce can avoid the extremes of excessive doubt and excessive tenacity. The paper also floats the idea that Peirce could, rather surprisingly, allow full belief to be compatible with genuine doubt.

5. Friday, November 15, 2013 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"Thought Experiments in Ethics."
Peter Kung, Department of Philosophy, Pomona College

Thought experiments--concrete cases, examples, scenarios, hypothetical situations--abound in ethics. Even a cursory look at the ethics literature reveals that ethicists take thought experiments to be a principal source of data for theorizing. Many of the best-known ethics articles become famous for the distinctive thought experiments they feature. This talk examines this familiar methodology in ethics: the methodology of thought experiments. I will argue that our theorizing about a certain class of ethical theories needs to consider moral risk much more seriously than it has. Two observations point to this conclusion. The first is that a wide range of thought experiments in ethics have a distinctive feature: they feature forced choices with fixed outcomes. Suggesting an alternative choice or outcome is not to "play the game". The second observation is that it is generally accepted that good thought experiments must be metaphysically possible. Combining these two observations, a question naturally arises: are thought experiments in ethics that feature forced choices with fixed outcomes metaphysically possible? When we analyze these thought experiments, we will see that we have no reason to think that cases with forced choices with fixed outcomes are metaphysically possible. This shows, I argue, that any ethical view that counts outcomes as ethically relevant will have to take moral risk seriously. This result accords well with common sense. In everyday ethical reasoning, choices are not forced and outcomes are not fixed. Once we see that our methodology itself requires we consider moral risk, we can appreciate that some putatively devastating counterexamples in ethics prove to be less devastating than widely thought.

6. Friday, November 22, 2013 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"Leibniz on Divine Retribution, Cosmic Conflagration, and Providence: The Stoic Connection."
David Forman, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Leibniz frequently presents his own views as a rehabilitation of certain aspects of ancient and medieval philosophy in face of the excesses of a modern philosophy dominated by a mechanistic and fatalistic conception of creation. In this regard, he notes an affinity for Aristotle and especially Plato. And he casts some of his principal philosophical adversaries is a similarly historical light: Descartes and Spinoza represent "a sect of the new Stoics" that depicts the world as governed by a blind necessity that excludes the possibility of human freedom. Despite this, Leibniz's own strategy for preserving freedom and the proper rewards for virtue appeals (sometimes explicitly) in important respects to Stoic views. Getting clear on the extent of this influence will help us better understand exactly what kind of view Leibniz aims to offer and better appreciate the Stoic legacy within modern philosophy.

7. Friday, December 6, 2013 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"Time-Expenditure and Meaningful Living."
Cheshire Calhoun, Department of Philosophy, Arizona State University

Concerns about living meaningfully are centrally concerns about time expenditure in a finite life. Because the problem of living meaningfully is a problem of time-expenditure, I suggest that we understand meaningfulness in relation to the agent's end setting activities within a finite life rather than in relation to some objective measure of value, or the agent's subjective attitudes, or some combination of the two. I distinguish meaningful primary time expenditures from entailed, norm-required, and filler expenditures of time. I argue that attending to the different kinds of reasons we have for selecting ends gives us a better account of meaningfulness than appealing either to the objective value of activities or the individual's subjective attitudes.

SPRING 2013

1. Friday, February 1, 2013 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"Emotional Perception of Morality"
Neil Sinhababu, Department of Philosophy, National University of Singapore

I propose an "emotional perception model" on which moral judgments are beliefs whose typical causes are emotional responses to the object of belief. I compare this model of moral judgment to the intuitive view of color judgments -- they are beliefs typically caused by visual experiences of the object of belief. Then I defend this model with evidence from some interesting recent psychological experiments on moral judgment.

2. Friday, February 15, 2013 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"Robin Hood Citizenship: The Morality of Granting Citizen Status to the Children of Illegal Immigrants"
Abigail Pfister Aguilar, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

The current public debate surrounding U.S. immigration policy includes virtually no debate about the moral component of the law. An important aspect of this topic is the morality of birthright citizenship for the offspring of those who are in the country illegally. While I assume that the offspring of undocumented aliens are morally blameless, I also argue that a nation has the right to sovereignty (which includes the right to control its own borders) and that citizenship is a property right of citizens of a nation. I address a number of moral issues raised by both the law and the public debate, arguing that what is crucial is our response to three questions: 1) Is a person justified in performing an illegal/immoral act in order to benefit another? 2) Is a person morally entitled to benefits that come from the illegal/immoral acts of others? 3) Is it compassionate to overlook an act of wrongdoing because a benefit derived from that wrongdoing is received by an innocent person? I conclude that extending birthright citizenship to the offspring of those in a country illegally is immoral, and that far from being an act of compassion, extending citizenship in these circumstances fails to take into account the impact on actual citizens of both the country the parents left and the new homeland.

3. Thursday, March 7, 2013 - 7:30pm, Barrick Museum Auditorium
"Sex for Sale"
Graham Priest, Departments of Philosophy, Universities of Melbourne, St. Andrews, and The CUNY Graduate Center

In Western cultures it is widely held that prostitution is intrinsically immoral, and that it ought to be illegal. Are such views justified? There are a number of different arguments for these views about prostitution that come from a variety of perspectives on the issue: religious, historical, sociological, psychological, jurisprudential, and ethical. In this talk I will examine some of the more prominent of these attempts to justify the negative assessments of prostitution, bringing to bear different kinds of considerations, for instance, from ethics and anthropology. I will conclude that the arguments fail to vindicate belief in the immorality of prostitution and fail to show that it ought to be illegal.
Co-sponsored by the Forum Lecture Series, the UNLV Dept. of Philosophy, and the William S. Boyd School of Law

4. Friday, March 8, 2013 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"Can Logic be Revised?"
Graham Priest, Departments of Philosophy, Universities of Melbourne, St. Andrews, and The CUNY Graduate Center

The paper asks (i) whether logic can be revised; (ii) whether this can be done rationally; and (iii) if so, how. The answers to the questions depend on what exactly one means by 'logic'. One must distinguish between (a) logica docens (our theory of logic), (b) logica utens (the logic we use), and (c) logica ens (validity itself).
With regard to (a), the answer to questions (1) and (ii) are clearly 'yes', because this has happened in the history of Western philosophy. The paper sketches a model for an answer to (iii).
With regard to (b), the paper argues that the answers to (i) and (ii) are also 'yes', and answers (iii) by arguing that the rational practice is the one determined by the most rational theory, as discussed in connection with (a).
The answers with regard to (c), are the hardest, and depend on how one understands what validity itself is. Whilst the paper does not try to answer this question, it discusses how various answers to that question will affect questions (i), (ii), and (iii).

5. Friday, March 15, 2013 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"The Case for Justice Pluralism: Victim Impact Statements and Restorative Justice in a Retributivist World"
Amitabha Palmer, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

It is tempting to see victim impact statements (VIS) as an incremental step in the direction of restorative justice. Victims not only have the opportunity to express to the offender and to the court the psychological impact of the crime, but in many cases may include their sentencing preferences and their feelings toward the offender. Consistent with restorative justice, the victim is partially empowered and participates in the outcome of the case. No one is claiming that this is full restorative justice, but it is interesting to consider whether VIS are a step towards restorative justice, neutral, or a detrimental to it.
I will argue that despite the initial appearance of VIS being consistent with restorative justice, they are in fact an impediment to it; however, proponents of restorative justice ought not to reject VIS categorically. Instead, they should adopt a pluralist stance toward systems of justice and seek to develop and promote complimentary restorative practices that effectively counter-balance the disadvantages of VIS while preserving their system-relative benefits. To support my thesis I first discuss, in the context of restorative justice, the purported benefits of VIS; second, I examine some of the ways in which VIS are antithetical to restorative justice; third, I evaluate restorative alternatives to VIS; fourth, I discuss why restorative justice proponents should not outright oppose VIS; and finally, I propose a pluralist approach to systems of justice that seeks to offset the disadvantages of VIS while preserving their advantages.

6. Friday, April 5, 2013 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"We Children of a New Era: Eduard von Hartmann and the Early Philosophical Reception of Darwinism in Germany"
Greg Moore, Departments of History and Philosophy, Georgia State University

Now long forgotten, Eduard von Hartmann was, during his lifetime (1842-1906), if not the best-known then certainly the best-selling philosopher in the German-speaking world. He was also the first thinker to build his metaphysical system on a post-Darwinian foundation (and engaged with evolutionary biology throughout his career). This talk will explore how Hartmann attempted to reconcile Darwinism with the German philosophical tradition and the extent to which he is an exemplary (though neglected) figure in the reception of Darwinism in Germany.

7. Friday, April 26, 2013 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"The Ontology of Functional Mechanisms"
Gualtiero Piccinini, Department of Philosophy and Center for Neurodynamics, University of Missouri - St. Louis

This talk was co-authored with Corey Maley. We provide the foundations for an integrated science of cognition and behavior by offering an account of the teleological functions of multi-level functional mechanisms. The account applies to both biological traits and artifacts. Teleological functions are stable causal contributions towards the objective goals of organisms belonging to a biological population. The paradigmatic objective goals of organisms are survival and inclusive fitness, although organisms may have additional goals. Truthmakers for claims about teleological functions are non-teleological features of the world.

8. Friday, May 10, 2013 - 3:00pm, BEH 223
"New Problems for Modal Fictionalism"
Brad Armour-Garb, Department of Philosophy, University at Albany--SUNY

Many philosophers are uncomfortable with the very notion, let alone the existence, of possible worlds. But, at the same time, they are reluctant to "go eliminitivist" with respect to modal talk--or even with respect to the possible-worlds analysis of modal discourse, since the latter has proven so useful for making the former rigorous and clear. Thus, while many philosophers do not want to take on the apparent ontological commitments of modal talk (so analyzed), they also do not think that modal discourse can, or should, be eliminated. Modal fictionalists attempt to resolve this apparent tension, by providing a means for engaging in modal talk without an ontological commitment to possible worlds. In this talk, I pose two problems for modal fictionalism. If these problems compel, then we will have to look elsewhere if we wish to engage in modal discourse without taking on a commitment to possible worlds.

FALL 2012

1. Friday, September 7, 2012 - 3:00pm, BEH 216
"Kant on the Virtuous Life as the Happy Life"
David Forman, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

One of the pillars of Kant's moral philosophy is his view that morality is something completely distinct from happiness. Kant even seems to imply that our actions have moral worth only to the extent that they make us unhappy. This has led many commentators to view Kant's moral philosophy as implausible. Kantian moral philosophy would be implausible if it required us to abandon our pursuit of happiness at every turn. That is a requirement incompatible with our human nature. But I show here Kant makes the case that moral demands make no such requirement of us. Kant follows ancient philosophers (sometimes explicitly) in holding that immorality is imprudent and that virtue is consistent with the kind of happiness we can achieve here on earth.

2. Wednesday, September 12, 2012 - 7:30pm, Las Vegas (Hilton) Hotel
Philosophy Talk (Live Broadcast) "The Sex Trade"
(Free registration at http://philosophytalk.org/knpr)
John Perry and Ken Taylor, Department of Philosophy, Stanford University

Despite being considered the "world's oldest profession," prostitution is often critiqued on both moral and political grounds. There are those who consider the commodification of sexual services inherently wrong, something that ought to be abolished outright. Some argue that prostitution necessarily involves the oppression of women, most of whom are

forced into it out of economic necessity or lack of appropriate alternatives. However, others claim that prostitution is a legitimate form of commerce and that changing its legal status would reduce or eliminate most harms to sex workers. So, in a just society, are there any conditions under which buying and selling sex are morally acceptable? Does the sex trade inevitably involve coercion of some kind, or can becoming a sex worker ever be a free, fully autonomous choice? John and Ken explore the complexities of the world's oldest profession with Tracy Quan, author of best-seller Diary of a Manhattan Call Girl.

3. Friday, October 5, 2012 - 3:00pm, BEH 216
"Affirming Denial: Peirce and Dewey, on an Alleged Blindspot of Classical Pragmatism"
Dave Beisecker, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Brandom contends that the classical American pragmatists subscribe to a semantic program that is insufficiently one-sided in that it focuses exclusively on the downstream consequences of concept application, while neglecting its upstream conditions. Focusing on passages from Peirce's later work, I show that while Peirce does unpack meaning in terms of the consequences of concept application, his inclusion of the consequences of denying claims involving a concept allow him to capture the inferential space that Brandom contends the classical pragmatists miss. Thus, at least Peirce (and Dewey following him) would not seem to suffer from that particular semantic blindspot.

4. Thursday, November 1, 2012 - 7:30pm, Barrick Museum Auditorium
"Life Experiences and Experiences of Art: Which Come First?"
Kendall Walton, Department of Philosophy, University of Michigan

Works of art expand our conceptual horizons, helping us understand situations and experiences different from any we have encountered in real life. On the other hand, our ability to appreciate art is limited by our actual past experiences: You can't appreciate a love poem if you have never been in love. I will explore when and how each of these observations applies to our experiences of various kinds of art.
Co-sponsored by the Forum Lecture Series and the UNLV Dept. of Philosophy

5. Friday, November 2, 2012 - 3:00pm, BEH 216
"Understatement, Overstatement and Irony"
Kendall Walton, Department of Philosophy, University of Michigan

It is tempting to suppose that overstatement and understatement, hyperbole and meiosis, are analogous figures of speech, differing only in whether the speaker represents a quantity as larger, or as smaller, than she means to claim that it is. Things get messy, however, when we notice that to overstate how large or expensive or distant something is, is to understate how small or inexpensive or close it is, and vice versa. Nevertheless, traditionally recognized, paradigmatic examples of over- and understatement function very differently in everyday conversation.
I propose an account of the two figures that counts some utterances, in their conversational contexts, as overstatements of a quantity but not understatements of the opposite quantity, and other utterances as understatements only. This account shows why understatement is closely related to irony (as many have noticed), and explains why ironical understatement is so common. It also helps to explain what irony in general is and how it works. Overstatement, however, turns out to be an entirely different kettle of fish.

6. Friday, November 9, 2012 - 3:00pm, BEH 216
"Why Bad Company is Hard"
Roy Cook, Department of Philosophy, University of Minnesota

Contemporary neo-logicism (or neo-fregeanism) is the view that our grasp of mathematical concepts, and our reference to and knowledge of mathematical objects, is based on a certain sort of implicit definition known as an abstraction principle. Frege's original logicist project depended on the inconsistent abstraction principle known as Basic Law V.

BLV: For any concepts A and B, the extension (or set) of A is identical to the extension (or set) of B if and only if A and B are co-extensive (i.e. hold of exactly the same objects).

The paradigm example of a good abstraction principle for the neo-fregean is the (consistent) Hume's Principle.

HP: For any concepts A and B, the number of A is identical to the number of B if and only if A and B are equinumerous (i.e. hold of exactly the same number of objects).

Clearly, if the latter view is to be coherent, some account of the distinction between good abstraction principles (e.g. HP) and bad abstraction principles (e.g. BLV) is needed. This is the Bad Company Problem.
After reviewing recent work on this topic (including my own), I will consider a recent argument, due to Richard Heck, that acceptable abstraction principles must be "conservatively stable". I will suggest that Heck's argument shows (i) that extant attempts to solve this problem are at best incomplete and (ii) that the philosophical framework within which such attempts have been made is misguided. I will then sketch directions that a more satisfactory account might take.

7. Friday, November 16, 2012 - 3:00pm, BEH 216
"Considering Skill"
Ellen Fridland, Berlin School of Mind and Brain, Humboldt UniversitÃƒÂ¤t zu Berlin, and Center for Cognitive Studies, Tufts University

In this talk, I will promote the idea that the learning and refining of embodied skills plays a key role in the development of human cognition. My main claim is that human skill occupies an intermediate territory between rote, procedural behaviors and full-fledged, conceptual thought. Further, I claim that it is through skill learning that actions and objects first break apart, recombine, and show up, not independent of context, but in multiple contexts. In this talk, I will consider three important characteristics of human skill, differentiate skill from both ability and conceptual thought, and review the hard-earned cognitive gains that follow from skill learning.

8. Friday, November 30, 2012 - 3:00pm, BEH 216
"Rereading Adorno: The Culture Industry, Kitsch, and Contemporary Cinema"
Ian Dove, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Although Adorno devoted little space to the aesthetics of cinema -- and when he did, his conclusions were mostly derogatory -- his distinction between the culture industry and autonomous art may help in settling a developing dispute regarding the place of films like those of Wes Anderson. A humorous recent account places Anderson's films in the "upper middle brow," thus putting them above the cultural detritus of the average Hollywood blockbuster but below the films of Fellini, Bergman or even Woody Allen, say. Unfortunately, and though I find this placement both correct and funny, there isn't an aesthetic justification on offer. Adorno's aesthetics -- well, at least an Adornoesque set of aesthetic concepts -- fills in the blanks.

SPRING 2012

1. Friday, January 27, 2012 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"Good to Know"
Earl Conee, Department of Philosophy, University of Rochester

When we wonder, we want to know. Knowledge is a satisfactory conclusion to inquiries born of amazement, curiosity, and the like. Accepting a correct reasonable conjecture, or otherwise having a true belief that falls short of knowledge, appears to be a less satisfactory outcome. Why? Similarly, why does knowledge appear to be a more attractive intellectual relation to a true proposition than belief that is not knowledge? A traditional conception of factual knowledge yields answers to these questions that support the genuineness of these apparent assets of knowledge. The traditional view is that knowledge is justified true belief with a fourth condition to block Gettier cases. From this conception we can develop better accounts of our interest in knowledge and its value than we can derive from alternative views, such as those focused on safety or virtue. The traditional conception best explains why knowledge is worth having.

2. Friday, February 3, 2012 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"Properties and Powers, Subsets and Similarities"
Paul Audi, Department of Philosophy, University of Nebraska-Omaha

According to the causal theory of properties (CTP), properties are individuated by the causal powers that they, as a matter of necessity, confer on the things that have them. CTP is a very powerful theory of properties, and appears to provide tidy accounts of property realization and associated phenomena such as multiple realizability and the causal efficacy of multiply realizable properties. But is CTP ultimately the correct view of properties? After distinguishing various versions of CTP and distilling the core principles to which all versions are committed, I will argue that CTP is substantially less plausible than it initially appears, as is its treatment of multiply realized properties. My objections concern the nature of causal powers and of the relation between powers and properties.

3. Friday, February 10, 2012 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"Ironic Wrongdoing and the Arc of the Universe"
Randall Auxier, Department of Philosophy, Southern Illinois University

Is there a pragmatic middle ground between the Rortyan retreat into private final vocabularies on one side, and the absolutist claims of religious and moral dogmatists on the other? Is there an objective moral order to the universe that is at least pragmatically knowable? I will defend a version of moral objectivity, some would call it "moral realism", that reconstructs the crucial concept of irony, along historical and moral lines, using Peirce's pragmatic maxim.

4. Friday, February 17, 2012 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"System Dynamics of Scientific Controversy"
Albert DiCanzio, School of Business and Technology, Webster University

Models of scientific revolution have entailed controversy about how a new scientific paradigm gains acceptance. A perspective on controversy seemingly under-represented by the quantity of literature about it is that of system dynamics, modeling the flow of feedback from events of a controversy to decision-making agents. Do the data of the Galileo controversy exhibit looping behavior that can be studied to gain insight into the 17th century shift in terrestrial dynamics and a consequent shift, from that time ongoing to the present time, in the view of the scholarly community as to how innovation is best managed? Data from the original Galileo affair and from a four-century long controversy, in which that

affair has been subjected to repeated scrutiny, are available to address such an issue. The aim of this colloquium is to review a sample of earlier work on the modeling of a scientific revolution using system-dynamics methodology, and to identify dynamic attractors influencing feedback loops in scientific controversy.

5. Friday, March 2, 2012 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"Religious Credence =/= Factual Belief"
Neil Van Leeuwen, Department of Philosophy, Georgia State University

I argue that psychology and epistemology should classify religious credence and factual belief as distinct cognitive attitudes, despite the fact that common parlance uses the same word ("belief") for both of them. This is a thesis about attitudes, not contents. Just as fictional imagining and assumption for the sake of argument are different cognitive attitudes from factual belief, so too is religious credence. I argue for this thesis by identifying properties of factual belief that are needed to characterize factual belief and distinguish it from other attitudes. Then I note that religious credence generally lacks these properties. Furthermore, religious credence has characteristic properties of its own that factual belief generally lacks. To summarize: factual belief (1) is practical setting independent, (2) has cognitive governance over other attitudes, and (3) is evidentially vulnerable; by way of contrast, religious credence (a) has perceived moral orientation, (b) is susceptible to free elaboration, and (c) is vulnerable to moral authority. Toward the end of the paper, I propose the normative epistemic principles of Balance and Immunity to enable us better to judge which cognitive attitudes are or are not characteristic of well-functioning cognitive systems.

6. Wednesday, March 14, 2012 - 7:30pm, Barrick Museum Auditorium
"Are All Rights Human Rights?"
Susan Meld Shell, Department of Political Science, Boston College

If we grant the same rights to animals (on the political left) or corporations (on the right) as are recognized in individual humans, are we benignly extending the idea of universal rights to non-humans? Or are we making it more difficult for the concept of "rights" to bear the moral weight that we have come to place on it? This talk will consider changes in the meaning of human rights.
Sponsored by the University Forum Lecture Series and the UNLV Political Science Dept.

7. Friday, March 16, 2012 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"Mereology and Modality"
Gabriel Uzquiano, Department of Philosophy, University of Southern California

Can mereological wholes change their parts? While classical mereology does not directly speak to this question, its proponents often answer the question negatively. This paper offers a reason why they should, and, more generally, sets out to clarify what is at stake in the debate over the modal profile of wholes.

8. Friday, March 23, 2012 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"Metaphysical Safety: From Platonism to Noneism via Hume's Principle"
Sebastian Sequoiah-Grayson, Department of Philosophy, University of Groningen

If Hume's Principle (that the number of Fs is equal to the number of Gs if and only if there is a one-to-one correspondence (a bijection) between the Fs and the Gs) is analytic, then so too are the truths of arithmetic, and a type of logicism is correct. A major obstacle for a proponent of the analyticity of Hume's Principle to overcome is that Hume's Principle arguably fails to satisfy a condition that any statement must satisfy if it is to be analytic -- that it be ontologically neutral.

Along with Boolos, but contrary to the neo-Fregeans, I claim that there is a type of ontological neutrality that any statement must observe if it is to be taken as analytic. Contrary to both Boolos and the neo-Fregeans, I argue that Hume's Principle does not violate ontological neutrality.

9. Friday, April 13, 2012 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"We Have Met The State and She are Us: Understanding, Power, and Anarchist Transformation"
Mark Lance, Department of Philosophy and Program on Justice and Peace, Georgetown University

Anarchism is a theory both of social transformation and of social organization that rejects institutions based on domination, coercion, and hierarchy, while embracing cooperative modes of interaction: mutual aid, solidarity, horizontalism, and free association. "No Gods, No masters, only comrades!" is a familiar rallying cry, but for all the consistency of emphasis, it remains far from clear just what any of this--starting with the very distinction between hierarchy and free association--amounts to. In this paper, I pull together themes from philosophers such as Hegel, Marx, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, Bob Brandom, and John Haugeland, anarchist theorists Gustav Landauer, Murray Bookchin, and Colin Ward, and the theorist of nonviolent action Gene Sharp to sketch an understanding of the nature of social hierarchy that highlights a crucial and under-appreciated challenge to liberatory revolution. My goal is not so much to solve theoretical puzzles, or to respond to other political philosophers, as it is to shed light on the strategic path we should take in building a movement. In the end, I argue, radical change requires a systematic constructive project that recognizes at the outset that we ourselves--whatever our political positions or allegiances--are deeply implicated in structures of hierarchy.

10. Friday, April 20, 2012 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"What is Philosophy?--A Discussion with the Philosophy Faculty"
Todd Jones, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Many other disciplines study many of the same things that philosophy studies. So what is it that philosophy specifically focuses on? Philosophy Dept. Chair, Todd Jones will lead a discussion with the other members of the Philosophy Department, about what they see philosophy as being.

11. Friday, April 27, 2012 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"Reading Fear and Trembling"
Erik Lindland, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

In this talk I will present what I take to be the correct way to read Johannes de Silentio's (Kierkegaard's) enigmatic text Fear and Trembling. I will contend that one can crack the text by understanding Silentio's use of Hegelian "code words" and recognizing that Silento's discussion frequently switches between two antithetical views of religion--sometimes in mid-sentence--without alerting the reader to this fact. In particular, I will argue against the rather widespread interpretation of the text as advocating Divine Command Theory.
Once this is completed I will leverage my interpretation to develop a sub-theme of Fear and Trembling, namely, Silentio's contention that people tend to allow cognitive dissonance to distort the "hard teachings" of the Bible. We will look specifically at the case of the Abraham Story and Luke 14:26. Of course, the Abraham Story is ethically problematic, as it contains the command from God for Abraham to sacrifice his perfectly innocent son.
Finally, I will conclude by asking and answering a question that, it seems to me, Fear and Trembling demands that we ask: Are there any other cases in the Bible that are as or more ethically problematic than the Abraham Story?

12. Friday, May 4, 2012 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"Revisiting Truth as a Pretense"
James Woodbridge, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

The central thesis of the pretense account of truth (or rather, truth-talk) is that the notion of truth is a pretense--really there is no such property, we just talk "as if" there were. We make as if to describe things as having or lacking properties called "truth" and "falsity" in order to make claims of other (more complicated) sorts indirectly. The semantic mechanism at work in the operation of truth-talk is a kind of pretense akin to games of make-believe. Because of how it functions, truth-talk serves to extend the expressive capacity of a language; centrally, it allows us to make general claims of a special and complicated sort. This has important connections to deflationary accounts of truth. The pretense account of truth-talk also has interesting consequences for other issues, in particular, for dealing with the liar paradox and semantic pathology generally. The account provides an illuminating diagnosis of semantic pathology (including the indeterminacy manifested by the truthteller) and makes possible a variety of strategies for its treatment. This talk is a re-examination of the pretense account, in light of the extensions, re-situating, and defenses of the view that have developed over the 7 years since it first appeared in print, through my collaboration with Bradley Armour-Garb.

FALL 2011

1. Friday, September 9, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 213
"Information Manipulation and Moral Responsibility"
Todd Long, Department of Philosophy, California Polytechnic State University

I am concerned with the following question: Can we be morally responsible for our actions when they are the result of deliberation based on manipulated information? Using examples and some more-or-less theory neutral ideas, I argue that the answer is 'yes': information manipulation does not preclude morally responsible action, even when the manipulation is so radical that the agent would not have performed that action if the manipulation had not occurred. This result has important consequences for the debate over whether compatibilist theories of moral responsibility (i.e., those which entail that moral responsibility is compatible with causal determinism) can provide a plausible, principled distinction between compatibilist-friendly processes that result in morally responsible action and externally manipulated action for which the agent is clearly not morally responsible. Critics (such as Derk Pereboom) say that no such principled distinction can be provided. But, I argue that the most highly regarded compatibilist theory--Fischer and Ravizza's mechanism-based 'guidance control' theory--has the resources to provide such a distinction. This is because their theory distinguishes between the psychological mechanism that produces responsible actions and the inputs to that mechanism. My argument depends on my claim that Fischer and Ravizza's theory allows for morally responsible actions to flow from psychological mechanisms whose inputs have been so radically manipulated that the agent would not have performed those actions had the manipulation not occurred. I respond to some recent objections from Fischer himself, and I finish by showing how this result provides the basis for a principled response to Derk Pereboom's four-case argument objection to compatibilism.

2. Friday, September 23, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 213
"Destroying Artworks"
Marcus Rossberg, Department of Philosophy, University of Connecticut

This paper investigates feasible ways of destroying artworks, assuming they are abstract objects, or works of a particular artform, where the works of at least this artform are assumed to be abstracta. To this end, three "case studies" are investigated: conceptual art, music, and computer art, to try and determine whether for any of these an abstract ontology is plausible. If artworks are eternal, mind-independent abstracta and hence discovered, rather than created, then they cannot be destroyed, but merely forgotten or become inaccessible. Alternative conceptions of artworks as abstract objects,

however, hold that there might be logical space for artwork destruction. Artworks as abstracta have been likened to impure sets (i.e., sets of concrete things, as opposed to pure sets, i.e., sets of nothing but other sets) that have a beginning in time, namely when their members come into being, and an end in time, namely when their members cease to exist. Alternatively, artworks as abstracta have been thought of as Aristotelian universals which have no being over and above their instances, or types that are created with their first token. Artwork destruction is harder on the latter account: merely destroying every token might not yet destroy the type. To what extent such similes can be spelled out and made plausible as an ontology of artworks, and what options there are on the different accounts for artwork destruction, is explored in this paper.

3. Thursday, September 29, 2011 - 7:30pm, Barrick Museum Auditorium
"It Shouldn't Happen to a Dog, or a Chicken: Why You Shouldn't Eat Meat"
Alastair Norcross, Department of Philosophy, University of Colorado

If someone were to torture dogs just for human pleasure, we would be outraged (remember Michael Vick?), and rightly so. But every year in the US alone, billions of animals suffer horribly while being intensively reared for human consumption. Given the easy availability of cheap vegetarian foods, eating meat is no more essential to human well-being than is attendance at dog-fighting events. Why think it's acceptable to do to chickens, pigs, and veal calves what would be unconscionable to do to dogs? This talk will present arguments against eating meat from a utilitarian position, through consideration of the net pain involved beyond whatever pleasure or contribution to human well-being an action, practice or institution might produce.
Co-sponsored by The University Forum Lecture Series.

4. Friday, September 30, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 213
"Deontology, Using, and Causal Fetishism"
Alastair Norcross, Department of Philosophy, University of Colorado

This is part of an attempt to distinguish between consequentialism and deontology, and to understand the nonconsequentialist mindset. First, identify three theses accepted by all versions of consequentialism, two of which are also widely accepted by nonconsequentialists. I then focus on the third thesis, the rejection of which is characteristic of many nonconsequentialist appproaches. I then identify two contrasting methodologies of constructing ethical theories, one (roughly) characteristic of most consequentialist approaches, and the other of most deontological approaches. I identify a shared characteristic of many deontological approaches, that reject the third thesis. Such approaches, in constructing nonconsequentialist constraints against producing harm, fetishize the causal routes from actions to effects. I consider an alternative justification for rejecting the third thesis, involving attaching deontic moral significance to certain subjective attitudes, and argue that this justification is also unsatisfactory.

5. Friday, October 7, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 213
"Metalinguistic Descriptivism for Millians"
Alexis Burgess, Department of Philosophy, Stanford University

Metalinguistic descriptivism (MLD) is the view that proper names are semantically equivalent to definite descriptions featuring metalinguistic expressions. According to Kent Bach's version of MLD, when 'Virginia Woolf' crops up in a sentence like 'Nobody's afraid of my neighbor Virginia Woolf', the name expresses the property of bearing 'Virginia Woolf'. For present purposes, I take it as read that MLD fares better than other forms of descriptivism when it comes to Kripke's epistemic and semantic arguments, and that his circularity objection rests on the dispensable assumption that MLD purports to provide a theory of reference for proper names. There is much less consensus, however, about how the proponent of MLD might best reply to (i) Kripke's modal argument against descriptivism in general, and (ii) various

charges to the effect that the view is simply ad hoc. Drawing on resources from conceptual-role semantics, the present paper develops and defends a novel yet natural version of the claim that proper names are semantically equivalent to "nominal descriptions" against these two recalcitrant lines of objection. But metalinguistic descriptivists beware: the result is actually compatible with Millianism.

6. Friday, October 14, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 213
"Repeatable Artworks and Genericity"
Shieva Kleinschmidt and Jacob Ross, Department of Philosophy, University of Southern California, Los Angeles

We seem to talk about repeatable artworks, like symphonies, plays, films, and novels, all the time. We say things like, "The Moonlight Sonata has three movements" and "The Wind in The Willows makes me laugh". But how are these sentences to be understood? We argue against the simple subject/predicate view of these sentences on which the subjects of the sentences refer to individuals, and the sentences are true iff the referents of the subjects have the properties picked out by the predicates. We then consider two alternative responses that involve reading these sentences as generics, the first of which takes the sentences to be about kinds, and the second which takes the relevant noun-phrases to act as predicates. We reject these alternative accounts, but offer a third alternative that is informed by both.

7. Friday, October 21, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 213
"Non-Rational Action in the Face of Disagreement"
Nikolaj Pedersen, Underwood International College, Yonsei University

Recently there has been a surge of interest in the intersection between epistemology and action theory, especially in principles linking justification (or rationality) in thought and justification (or rationality) in action. Recently there has also been a surge of interest in the epistemic significance of perceived peer disagreement: what, epistemically speaking, is the rational response in light of disagreement with someone whom one regards as an epistemic peer? First, I will turn to the idea that the normative standing of our actions depends on the normative standing of our beliefs. This is an idea that I endorse. More precisely, I will endorse a principle according to which adequate epistemic justification for beliefs pertaining to success conditions for a given goal-directed action is a necessary condition on rational execution of that action. Second, against the background of this principle, I offer a criticism of non-conformism, one of the main views on disagreement's epistemic significance.

8. Friday, November 4, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 213
"Relativism Without Relative Truth"
Lionel Shapiro, Department of Philosophy, University of Connecticut

In much-discussed recent work, John MacFarlane defends a "relativist" account of the contents expressed using, e.g., predicates of personal taste and epistemic modals. My aim in this talk is to show how the central thrust of MacFarlane's account can be appreciated independently of his own framework of relative truth. My starting point will be Robert Brandom's analysis of the normative structure of assertoric practice. By generalizing that structure, I will make room for propositions whose use in assertion resembles the use of those propositions MacFarlane describes as having different truth-values relative to different contexts of assessment. (In place of MacFarlane's truth relativism, we obtain an assertoric force relativism.) I will argue that my proposal has the advantage of supplying a clearer underlying rationale for an essential feature of MacFarlane's account of assertion--the form taken by a norm governing retraction of assertions. Viewed from the perspective I will present, the space of theoretical options takes on a new shape. The sort of theory typically classified as "moderate" relativism, in contrast to MacFarlane's own "radical" relativism, turns out to require the more radical modification to Brandom's pragmatics.

9. Friday, November 11, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 213
"Speaking and Thinking"
Rebecca Kukla, Department of Philosophy, Georgetown University

This paper is based on collaborative work with Mark Lance. It is common for philosophers to understand thinking and speaking as fundamentally analogous activities, where the primary difference between them is that thought episodes are 'inner' whereas utterances are 'outer'. We argue that the inner/outer distinction is an unhelpful one for understanding the thought/language distinction. While there is an important sense in which thought is essentially 'private' and language is essentially 'public', we should not understand the relevant senses of privacy and publicity as tracking a distinction between 'inner' and 'outer'. In particular, pragmatists such as Sellars should be especially loath to understand thoughts as cases of 'inner speech'. We offer an account within which thought is importantly dependent upon language but not analogous to it, from a pragmatic point of view.

10. Tuesday, November 15, 2011 - 5:30pm, Greenspun Hall Auditorium
"Happiness around the World: The Paradox of Happy Peasants and Miserable Millionaires"
Carol Graham, Senior Fellow and Charles Robinson Chair in Foreign Policy Studies, Foreign Policy, Global Economy and Development Unit, The Brookings Institute

For centuries the pursuit of happiness was the preserve of philosophers. More recently there is a burgeoning interest in the study of happiness in the social sciences. Can we really answer the question what makes people happy? Is it grounded in credible methods and data? Is there consistency in the determinants of happiness across countries and cultures? Are happiness levels innate to individuals or can policy and the environment make a difference? How is happiness affected by poverty and by progress? This presentation introduces a line of research which is both an attempt to understand the determinants of happiness and a tool for understanding the effects of a host of phenomena on human well being, ranging from macroeconomic and political trends to inequality, disease, and crime. The author will discuss the potential of happiness surveys to contribute to better public policy, as well as the potential pitfalls.
Presented by The Brookings Institute

11. Friday, November 18, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 213
"Immorality, Self-Respect, and Happiness"
Paul Bloomfield, Department of Philosophy, University of Connecticut

Since "the dawn of moral philosophy", we have been vexed by the question of whether or not morality is capable of justifying itself when compared with immorality which may be practiced with impunity. Why be moral, which may require sacrifices to self-interest, if one can immorally pursue self-interest and "get away with it"? Two arguments for the harm of immorality will be given, both based on the assumption that self-respect is necessary for happiness. One argument is based on ontological considerations, the other is epistemic. Both conclude that immorality interferes with its perpetrators' self-respect and thereby with their happiness, turning the dialectical table on the defenders of immorality.

12. Friday, December 2, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 213
"Existence Monism Trumps Priority Monism"
Terry Horgan, Department of Philosophy, University of Arizona

Jonathan Schaffer has recently been defending a version of ontological monism concerning concrete objects that he calls "priority monism"--the view that the whole cosmos is the only ontologically fundamental concrete object, and that although there are numerous concrete objects in the correct ontology that are proper parts of the whole, nevertheless the whole is ontologically prior to all these part-objects. He contrasts this view with what he calls "pluralism"--the view that

the right ontology contains numerous concrete objects that are proper parts of the whole cosmos, and that these parts are ontologically prior to the whole. He also contrasts priority monism with what he calls "existence monism"--the view that the whole cosmos is itself the only concrete object, and that the right ontology does not contain any concrete objects that are proper parts of the whole. Matjaz Potrc and I have recently been defending a form of existence monism. In the present paper our principal goal is to argue that existence monism is theoretically preferable to priority monism. For present purposes, we will assume for argument's sake that Schaffer's arguments in favor of priority monism over pluralism are sound. We will harness those arguments, together with an argument of our own to the effect that ontological vagueness is impossible, to mount a case in favor of existence monism over priority monism.

SPRING 2011

1. Friday, January 21, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"Saying More with Less"
Stephen Yablo, Department of Philosophy, MIT

Sentences don't always say what their standing meanings would seem to suggest, or even allow. Kendall Walton offers one strategy for explaining this: "piggybacking on a pretense." Robert Stalnaker hints at another strategy: "pivoting on a presupposition." I develop the second strategy and argue that a lot of what has been done with pretense can be replayed in the key of presupposition.

2. Friday, January 28, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"Reading Kierkegaard"
Erik Lindland, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Were Kierkegaard's most famous texts: Fear and Trembling, Either-Or, The Concept of Anxiety, Philosophical Fragments or Sickness Unto Death written by Soren Kierkegaard? Not according to Kierkegaard. Instead they were penned by pseudonyms.
This talk will attempt to make sense of Kierkegaard's assertion without consigning him to the mundane, insane or post-modern.

3. Friday, February 11, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"On the Ethics and Varieties of Deception"
Bryan Benham, Department of Philosophy, University of Utah

Deception is a perplexing moral concept. On the one hand, it is nearly universally condemned by moral philosophers because either it undermines the autonomy of the individual deceived or it threatens social stability in some way. After all, if everyone were dishonest we would not be able to trust others, and trust is the basis of social cooperation. Therefore, deception is a categorical wrong. On the other hand, in everyday life, deception is commonplace and Ãƒ€Ã‚ except in few cases - is done with untormented conscience: to protect ones' privacy, maintain a sense of control over uncertainty, enhance our own well-being, protect the feelings of others, and as a "social lubricant". Indeed, imagine a society in which deception was not ubiquitous. In the current paper, I will attempt to explore why there appears to be such a dichotomy with regard to the moral assessment of deception. Briefly, the paradigm case of deception used by moral philosophers is the lie. Lying, however, does not capture the full range of types of deception. Thus, I suggest that if we were to consider more broadly the variety of deception in human interaction, the moral assessment of deception should be appropriately altered. For instance, instead of focusing only on how deception may violate principles of respect, autonomy, or leads to certain undesirable consequences, a look at the variety of deception will reveal that an important element is missing in these traditional accounts. Namely, the nature of the relationship between the deceiver and the deceived. I argue this

provides a more complete account of the moral dimensions of deception and eliminates the need to think of deception as a categorical wrong.

4. Friday, February 18, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"Incompatibility and the Logic of Proscribed Contents"
Dave Beisecker, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

In this paper I introduce a new kind of propositional content, symbolized by striking through a candidate atomic formula, which is meant to capture, at least in part, the rejection of the actual application of some portion of the subsentential conceptual content of that formula. After showing how such contents can easily be domesticated in terms of Brandom's incompatibility semantics and a Tableau system of logic, I sketch how such contents might be put to good philosophical use in providing a novel kind of response to the conceivability argument against materialism.

5. Friday, February 25, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"Thoughts after Anscombe: Intention, Confidence, Likelihood and Intentional Action"
Neil Delaney, Jr., Department of Philosophy, University of Notre Dame

There has been a marked resurgence of interest in logical and practical relations between intention, belief and intentional action both as history of recent analytic philosophy and as a topic of contemporary concern. This talk will examine the viability of a thesis ascribed to Anscombe in the light of a serious objection emerging from Michael Bratman's longstanding work on the Planning Theory of Intention.

6. Friday, March 4, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"Logical Theory, Argumentation Theory, and Meta-Argumentation"
Maurice Finocchiaro, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

This is an examination of various conceptions of, and approaches to, the study of argumentation, especially three that may be labeled logical theory, argumentation theory, and meta-argumentation. I plan to examine their similarities and differences, their relative merits, and their comparative prospects. In line with a current book in progress, I would like to be able to show that the meta-argumentation approach is a highly promising approach.

7. Friday, March 25, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"The Relation Between Logic and Ontology in (and After) Kant"
Clinton Tolley, Department of Philosophy, UC San Diego

For a long while, logic was taken to have thought as its subject-matter, while ontology was understood to be the science of being (the science of objects or things 'in general'). One of Kant's central theses in his Critique of Pure Reason is that the basic elements of ontology -- what Kant, following Aristotle, calls 'categories' of things -- can, in fact, be shown to coincide, in some deep sense, with the basic elements of logic -- what Kant calls the 'forms' of thought. Many after Kant have been dissatisfied with this analysis of the relation between logic and ontology, often largely because of the decidedly subjective and idealist tenor that this seems to give to the foundations of what is supposed to be the science of objects. In my presentation, I will try to put a new, softer, less 'subjectivist' light on Kant's views of ontology, first, by taking a closer look at Kant's texts themselves, and in particular at what Kant describes as the 'Metaphysical Deduction' of the categories of ontology from the forms of logic. Secondly, I will try to draw out important, though under-appreciated, parallels between what Kant seems to have in mind and what is claimed by two of his most decidedly anti-subjectivist successors -- Gottlob Frege and the young Edmund Husserl.

8. Friday, April 1, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"Is Belief a Propositional Attitude?"
Ray Buchanan, Department of Philosophy, University of Texas, Austin

According to proponents of the face-value account, a belief report of the form 'S believes that p' is true if, and only if, the agent believes a proposition referred to by the that-clause in the context of utterance. As against this familiar view, I argue that there are perfectly pedestrian cases of true belief reports of the form 'S believes that p' in which there is no particular proposition that the that-clause, or the speaker using the that-clause, can (in the context of utterance) plausibly be taken as referring to. I show that once appreciate the distinctive way in which the face-value account fails, there is pressure to give up the thesis that belief is a propositional attitude. I suggest that we allow non-propositional entities to be amongst the relata of the belief-relation, and make some brief remarks concerning what such entities might be like. (Access a previously published related paper here.)

9. Friday, April 8, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"Religious Belief and Bigotry"
Bill Ramsey, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

It is becoming increasingly common to hear attacks on various religious belief systems characterized as a form of bigotry. The main question I want to address in this talk is this: does it actually make sense to characterize strong criticism and even ridicule of a given belief system as a form of bigotry? Contrary to popular views, I'm going to argue that it does not. I will suggest that while criticism of various religions may be factually mistaken, or intellectually unfair, they are not unethical in the way we normally think that bigotry is unethical. Thus, the growing charge of bigotry in connection to criticisms of religious doctrines and creeds is deeply confused, and detrimental to legitimate public debate. However, despite all this, I will suggest that it is nevertheless possible to be bigoted against people because of their religious beliefs. To show this, I will first spend some time trying to get a little clearer on just what bigotry is. I'll argue that conventional definitions of bigotry are unacceptable, and I'll try to provide a sketch of what a better conception of bigotry might look like. Then I'll show why I think it is wrong to characterize attacks on religious systems as a form of bigotry. Even though it is possible to display bigotry against individuals who are stereotyped on the basis of their religious beliefs, it is not possible to do so by attacking the nature of what they believe.

10. Thursday, April 14, 2011 - 7:30pm, Barrick Museum Auditorium
"Representation and Perspective in Science"
Bas van Fraassen, Department of Philosophy, San Francisco State University

Science represents the phenomena through theories and models. A particular science, like physics, represents the phenomena in its domain, and, in its own specific way, implicitly represents nature as a whole. Criteria of scientific success pertain first to accuracy and truth, but that is not the whole story. Representation is always selective and may require distortion even in the selected aspects. Observation and measurement are perspectival, and the appearances to be saved are precisely their perspectival outcomes. Thus, the question of what is required for science to "save the phenomena" can provide a new focus for the debate over scientific realism.
Co-sponsored by the Forum Lecture Series and the Dept. of Philosophy

11. Friday, April 15, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"The Self, From a Logical Point of View"
Bas van Fraassen, Department of Philosophy, San Francisco State University

Our sense of self is readily extrapolated to engender illusions of reason, as Kant pointed out. But that sense is not easily dismissed even when the logical aporiai are exposed. In this connection, self-reference has been explored a good deal, but that has arguably made the subject only more mysterious. Can we avoid the logical difficulties by trying instead to "naturalize", and understand ourselves in the same way as we understand natural systems or artifacts? There too, logical paradoxes may return.

12. Monday, April 25, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 103
"Demystifying Dilation"
Gregory Wheeler, CENTRIA (Center for Artificial Intelligence), Universidade Nova de Lisboa

Dilation occurs when upper and lower probability estimates of some event E are properly included in the upper and lower probability estimates of the probability of E conditional on another event F, resulting in a change from a more precise estimate of E to a less precise estimate of E upon learning F. Strict dilation occurs when E is dilated by every event in a partition, which means that sometimes E becomes less precise no matter how an experiment turns out. Many think that strict dilation is a pathological feature of imprecise probability models, while others have thought the problem is with Bayesian updating. However, a point often overlooked in critical discussions of dilation is that knowing that E is stochastically independent of F (for all F in a partition) is sufficient to avoid strict dilation. Since the most sensational alleged dilation examples are those which play up independence between dilator and dilatee, the sensationalism traces to mishandling imprecise probabilities rather than revealing a genuine puzzle about imprecise probabilities.

13. Friday, April 29, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"Visual Arguments and Analogies"
Ian Dove, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

In visual argumentation, an image, picture, graph or other visual medium conveys an argument. In this talk, I contrast the use of analogies in non-visual arguments with the apparent use of visual analogies in some visual arguments. In standard analogical argumentation, one draws a conclusion about some target by comparing it to some base. The strength of the inference depends upon elements of the comparison. As is often the case with purported visual argumentation, the visual is more subtle than its non-visual counterpart. The difficulty occurs at the level of analysis. One needs to identify, for example, the visual target and the visual base, which can be exceedingly difficult. Moreover, the comparison need not be visual, even when the analogy is. For example, a print advertisement may suggest a comparison between two brands of motorcycle by visually placing the two brands on separate sides of a balancing scale; yet, the comparison may operate on non-visual elements, such as price. Still, the standard approaches to non-visual analogies can be applied to visual cases. To demonstrate this claim, I analyze a visual analogical argument from a print advertisement and a series of possible visual analogies from scientific and mathematical sources. Insofar as the analyses are successful, the results suggest a close connection between the analysis of visual and standard, non-visual arguments.

14. Friday, May 6, 2011 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"The Wisest of Men but the Worst of Friends: The Problem of Philia for the Stoic Sage"
Julie Piering, Department of Philosophy, Northern Arizona University

Friendship is a part of the Stoic Sage's typical, and even preferable, relationships; it is a rational affiliation which supports philosophical activity as well as a natural relationship stemming from feelings of warmth and sociability. In one sense, a Stoic's philosophical friendship is akin to Aristotle's friendship of the good. However, whereas Aristotle sees the friend as contributing to one's happiness, the Stoics do not. The friend or beloved cannot render the world more beautiful or enjoyable, because it already is perfectly ordered. Similarly his or her absence is merely a part of the best possible universe; to feel more than the initial prick of loss is irrational, futile, and borderline blasphemous. Both the friend and the friendship are properly understood as wholly superfluous. I suggest that this view on friendship is evidence of a failure within the Stoic system in two ways: it fails to adequately make sense of the phenomenon of friendship and therefore suffers a failure of description, but it also is an ethical failure. Friendship matters ethically, and an individual who participates in a relationship that only weakly resembles friendship is, in fact, a bad friend.

FALL 2010

1. Friday, September 3, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"Resituating Description and Direct Reference Theories for Singular Terms"
Darin Dockstader, Department of Philosophy, College of Southern Nevada

I examine the relationship between Description theories of singular reference and Direct Reference theories of singular reference. According to the Description picture, meaning is something that resides in-the-heads of language users. In the Direct Reference picture, meaning is something that resides in-the-marketplace of linguistic social practice. Direct Reference is currently the dominant view. In my view, the received debate between Descriptive and Direct Reference theories is marked by a mistaken tendency to see the choice between these as a dilemma to be resolved by choosing one theory over the other. I begin by identifying the source of the tendency to see the Description / Direct Reference debate as a dilemma and show why the dilemma is unnecessary and unwanted. I then examine aspects of Howard Wettstein's arguments for Direct Reference as a product of the false dilemma. In response to Wettstein, I offer several arguments against reducing reference to social practice. I argue that an account of linguistic competence conditions for singular terms given in a Description framework is complementary to the Direct Reference insight about linguistic social practice. We should separate the issues of what a competent speaker does in an instance of name use and what a competent hearer does in an instance of name use. This demystifies the relationship between Description and Direct Reference theories. The core insights of each strategy are complementary - not incommensurate.

2. Friday, September 10, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"Sound and Valid, Signifying Nothing?"
Robert Barnard, Department of Philosophy, University Of Mississippi

I will argue that the apparent ontological commitments of discourse about logic make it very similar to discourse in metaethics and philosophy of mathematics. This is a prima facie challenge to metaphysical naturalism. However, I will note a simple argument for the view that there is reason to think that logical discourse cannot appeal to various eliminative strategies that are used to backstop naturalism in those other areas. Thus, logic is a bigger metaphysical problem for naturalists than might be supposed.

3. Friday, September 17, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"Social Construction, Self-Knowledge, and Agency: A Naturalist Model"
Ron Mallon, Department of Philosophy, University of Utah

Social constructionist accounts of human categories (race, gender, emotions, mental illness) are widespread in the humanities and social sciences thought they get little play in philosophy and cognitive science. At the same time, these issues are often connected with important ethical issues. In this talk, I offer a causal model of one of the most radical sorts of claims: the claim that our behavior is a sort of intentional performance, focusing especially upon the failures of self-knowledge such a model would require. Once we understand such failures, however, we see that the constructionists are right: the way we represent ourselves as natural objects can undermine our self-knowledge, and thereby, our individual agency.

4. Friday, October 1, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"Demonstrative Thoughts"
David Pitt, Department of Philosophy, California State University, Los Angeles

Theories on which the intentional contents of conscious thoughts are constituted by a distinctive sort of cognitive phenomenology (by what it's like to have them) are prima facie committed to intrinsicalism about intentional content, according to which the content of a thought is determined by it's intrinsic properties. Such theories are in conflict with an account of the content of demonstrative thoughts (thoughts whose expression involves the use of demonstratives or indexicals) that is a natural extension of the standard account of the semantics of sentences containing demonstratives or indexicals.
If Sam and Dave both say "I'm hungry," the contents of their utterances what they have said are different. And they are different because the referents of their uses of 'I' are different. Hence, the contents of token demonstratives (and of the expressions they appear in) appear to be referent-involving. Likewise if Sam and Dave both think "I'm hungry." The contents of their thoughts will be different, because the referents of their I-concepts are different.
However, since the referents of demonstratives concepts are (typically) not intrinsic features of thoughts, on this construal the content of a thought will be determined by factors extrinsic to it. Hence, on the supposition that phenomenal character is intrinsically determined, demonstrative thought constitutes a counterexample to the thesis that intentional content is phenomenally constituted.
In this paper I argue that the intuitions supporting the standard semantics of demonstratives, and their extension to the contents of demonstrative concepts, are not inevitable, and that there is a workable and intuitively satisfying alternative consistent with intrinsicalism about phenomenally constituted intentional content. On this alternative, Sam and Dave think the same thought albeit about different individuals when each thinks "I'm hungry."

5. Friday, October 8, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"Against Explanatory Fundamentalism"
Brad Weslake, Department of Philosophy, University of Rochester

According to explanatory fundamentalism, non-fundamental scientific explanations are never superior to corresponding fundamental physical explanations. In this paper I evaluate the prospects for developing a principled rejection of fundamentalism. First, I argue that our theories of explanation should be non-fundamentalist. Second, I argue for an account of explanatory depth that I claim best explains why non-fundamentalism is true. Finally, I consider a difficult problem for the account, reject some recent solutions that have been offered, and defend the solution I prefer.

6. Friday, October 15, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"Functionalism about Truth and the Modified Ramsey-Lewis Sentence"
Cory Wright, Department of Philosophy, California State University, Long Beach

Dialectically, functionalists about truth make space for their view by muscling out that of a close cousin: pluralism about truth. The rejection is based, inter alia, on arguments for the claim that pluralism is incoherent or otherwise unstable. Functionalists have usually employed Ramsification to produce an implicit definition of the theoretical term true in order to show that their view is appropriately monistic and unequivocal, but can nevertheless accommodate the pluralists' intuitions. In this talk, I show why the instability arguments fail, and then show that employment of Ramsification itself instigates a kind of epistemic circularity; for using it requires determining that the theory which introduces that term is itself true. Without a dissolution, this problem is sufficient to render functionalism about truth inadequate. Lastly, I consider a variety of putative dissolutions to the problem of epistemic circularity---each of which is shown to be unsatisfactory---and then offer a solution on functionalists' behalf. The upshot, however, is that they must tread on their anti-pluralist commitments.

7. Thursday, November 4, 2010 - 7:30pm, Barrick Museum Auditorium
"Portraits and the Fear of Death" (University Forum Lecture)
Cynthia Freeland, Department of Philosophy, University of Houston

Human cultures create and value portraiture in part because it preserves the memory of the deceased. Tonight our speaker explains how portraits sustain emotional links to the beloved or respected person, and how even photographs may sometimes be treated as religious icons in order to provide continued contact with the dead. She argues against focusing on the causal aspects of photography to explain the phenomenon, in favor of looking at broader cultural practices of commemoration. Co-sponsored by the UNLV Department of Art.

8. Friday, November 5, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"Icon and Index Revisited: Photographic Realism and Medical Imaging Technologies"
Cynthia Freeland, Department of Philosophy, University of Houston

This paper explores a range of medical imaging technologies that challenge the icon/index distinction articulated by C.S. Peirce, ranging from electrocardiograms to X-rays, ultrasounds, and fMRI images of the brain. I question the nature of realism in such images, challenging some commonly held views about the "transparency" of photographic images. To highlight the role of interpretation and aesthetic choice in the new imaging technologies, I discuss work by various artists who have used "automatic" imaging technologies for creative purposes, including Robert Rauschenberg, Gary Schneider, Gabriele Leidloff, Gabriel de la Mora, and Wim Delvoye.

9. Friday, November 12, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"Ontological Reduction and the Wave Function Ontology"
Alyssa Ney, Department of Philosophy, University of Rochester

The central point of this paper is to state clearly the challenges one faces if one tries to produce a reduction of the objects of our ordinary experience to a wave function ontology. This case puts serious strain on standard theories of reduction one finds in the philosophy of mind and philosophy of science literature. I spell out the complications and make a tentative proposal towards a new conception of reduction that will better serve this case.

10. Friday, November 19, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"Regress, Unity, Facts, and Propositions"
Matti Eklund, Department of Philosophy, Cornell University

I distinguish between different regress arguments used against the idea of facts and relations - arguments in the vicinity of what's often called "Bradley's regress". (But I'll stay away from questions about what Bradley's regress really was.) Then I defend a solution to the regress problem that seems the most interesting. In slogan form: we must distinguish between "whatness" and "howness". Bradley's regress is often brought up in connection with the problem of the unity of the proposition; later in the talk I turn to that issue. I distinguish between different problems brought up under the heading of unity, and urge their independence, primarily by arguing that prominent purported solutions to the problem of the unity of the proposition help with some but not all of them. Along the way I discuss Frege's concept/object distinction, Russell's multiple relation theory of judgment, the idea that instantiation isn't a genuine relation, and King's recent work on the unity of the proposition.

11. Friday, December 3, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 224
"Three Questions for Truth Pluralism"
Michael Lynch, Department of Philosophy, University of Connecticut

Metaphysical theories of truth are concerned with that in virtue of which propositions are true, when they are lucky enough to be true. Broadly and very roughly speaking, they can be divided into three kinds. Monists hold that there is only one property of propositions in virtue of which they are true. Deflationists can be understood as denying that there is any such property, or at least any metaphysically interesting property. And pluralists hold there is more than one. Despite their obvious differences, any kind of theory must answer some of the same questions. Three of the most important and obvious are these:
How do we identify the property or properties in virtue of which propositions are true?
How is this property (or properties) related to truth itself?
What determines whether a given proposition has the property (or one of the properties) that it must have in order to be true?
So listed, the questions appear, to put it mildly, rather abstract. But as I will try to make clear, they arise naturally in any context where the metaphysics of truth are being taken seriously. In this paper, I want to take on all three, addressing them from the perspective, naturally, of the kind of view I find most promising: pluralism.

SPRING 2010

1. Friday, January 15, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"Social Analysis and the Capabilities Approach: a Limit to Martha Nussbaum's Universalist Ethics"
S. Charusheela, Women's Studies Department, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Postcolonial theorists critique modernist universalisms for legitimating structural power. Responding to those critiques, Martha Nussbaum argues that abandoning universalism leads to ethical relativism. Adapting Amartya Sen's capabilities approach, she has proposed a modified universalism that draws on cross-cultural conversations as a non-ethnocentric basis for universal judgment and intervention. This paper takes as its point of departure Nussbaum's (mis)reading of a critique by Nkiru Nzegwu. Working from that conversational failure the paper identifies the social anaysis Nussbaum deploys as a point of ethnocentric breakdown in universalist approach.

Dr. Charusheela is an economist in the Department of Women's Studies. This talk will be an excellent preparation for Martha Nussbaum's talk, during her visit to UNLV two weeks later.

2. Friday, January 22, 2010 - 3:00pm, GUA 2202
"Persisting Acts and the Moral Valence of Consequences"
Joseph Ulatowski, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

When does an action occur? Suppose that Audrey pulls the gun's trigger and shoots Cooper at noon on Tuesday. As a result, Cooper dies on Friday. Did Audrey's killing Cooper take place on Tuesday or Friday? At least three different views exist, and each view has its problems. On the minimizing view of act individuation, "Audrey's killing Cooper" and "Audrey's pulling the gun's trigger" refer to the same act. But, if we take up the minimizing view, then we have to accept that Audrey kills Cooper before he is dead. On the maximizing view, "Audrey's killing Cooper" and "Audrey's pulling the gun's trigger" refer to distinct acts. Of course that means Audrey acts even when she is not moving. The problem becomes more complicated if Audrey dies before Cooper does. The third view - call it the componential account - has attacked both the minimizing and the maximizing view by claiming that no one would agree with either side of the debate. Both the minimizing and maximizing view are counterintuitive. In this paper, I test the componentialists' empirical claim. I will show that the data indicate that even if people are prompted in the right way, people tend to individuate action based upon the moral valence of the consequences.

3. Friday, February 5, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"The Monotonicity of 'No' and the 'No-Proposition' View"
Brad Armour-Garb, Department of Philosophy, University at Albany/SUNY

This paper reveals a tension between a fairly standard (possibly pre-theoretic) response to 'liar sentences', of which

(L) Sentence (L) is not true

is an instance, and some features of our natural language determiners (e.g., 'every', 'some', 'no', etc.), the latter having been established by formal linguists. The fairly standard response, which has been voiced by a number of philosophers who work directly on the Liar Paradox, but can also be heard by philosophers who do not work directly on that paradox, is that liar sentences do not express propositions. Call this the "No-Proposition View". Evidently, that liar sentences do not express propositions is a deeply held intuition. As the previously mentioned tension will reveal, there is reason to worry about whether this deeply held intuition can be sustained.

4. Friday, February 12, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"Disentangling Two Questions About Mental Representation"
William Ramsey, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Philosophical theories about mental representation are often unclear on exactly what they are theories of. Sometimes they are presented as naturalistic theories of representation, sometimes they are presented as naturalistic theories of content, and oftentimes they read as a lot of both. In this talk, I'll argue that it pays to pull apart these matters and to keep distinct the following two questions: 1) how does some brain state function as a representation, and 2) how does a brain state that functions as a representation acquire the specific content it has? I'll argue that one advantage of distinguishing these questions is that it allows us to see how theories traditionally viewed as competitors are perhaps better viewed as complementary theories of different dimensions of representational phenomena.

5. Wednesday, February 17, 2010 - 3:00pm, The Whiskey Attic (upstairs at The Freakin' Frog)
"Is X-Phi Philosophy?"
T. Jones and J. Ulatowski, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

This week's event is a joint colloquium/Philosophy Club meeting on the topic of the emerging field of "Experimental Philosophy" or "X-Phi". Profs. Jones and Ultatowski will introduce us to the controversy surrounding this field. The meeting will serve as a useful introduction and background discussion to ready us for Stephen Stich's talk on March 5th.

6. Friday, March 5, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"Experimental Philosophy and the Bankruptcy of the Great Tradition"
Stephen Stich, Department of Philosophy and the Center for Cognitive Science, Rutgers University

The "Great Tradition" in Philosophy, stretching from Plato to Kant and continuing to the present, portrays Philosophy as an autonomous discipline that can be pursued from the armchair. I will argue that recent work in experimental philosophy shows that, in many areas of philosophy, including ethics, epistemology and the philosophy of language, this view of philosophy is untenable. Philosophers who ignore these findings and continue to pursue philosophy as an armchair discipline are, I maintain, deeply intellectually irresponsible.

7. Friday, March 12, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"The Ethical Implications of Skepticism"
Dustin Locke, Department of Philosophy, Claremont McKenna College

Skepticism comes in many varieties: 'We do not know there is an external world', 'We are not justified in believing that the future will resemble the past', 'We do not know what it is like to be a bat'. With respect to each of these skepticisms, we may ask is it true? But we may also ask does it matter? Recent work on skepticism tends to focus on the former question; this paper is squarely concerned with the latter. I begin by making two cross-cutting distinctions between types of skepticism. The first distinction is between those skepticisms that deny knowledge of a certain domain and those that deny justified belief about that domain. The second distinction is between those skepticisms that concern a domain of graspable facts and those that concern a domain of ungraspable facts. I then argue that skepticisms of exactly one of the four resulting types have drastic ethical implications--that is, drastic implications for how we ought to live our lives.

8. Friday, March 19, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"Induction and Modal Commitment"
Franz-Peter Greismaier, Department of Philosophy, University of Wyoming

In one formulation, Hume's problem of induction is the problem of how one can justify choosing to accept the inductive conclusion of an inductive argument over its anti-inductive counterpart: Even if I have seen only eucalyptophile koalas, Hume argues, I am no more justified in believing that all koalas are eucalyptophile than I am in believing that some are eucalyptophobic. One reason Hume provides for this verdict is the modal claim that the anti-inductive conclusion is possibly true: eucalypto-phobic koalas are (logically) possible. Of course, we also strongly believe that eucalyptophile koalas are possible; after all, we have already observed a bunch of them. Their possibility is implied by their actuality. In my talk, I will argue that (i) we are better justified in believing that eucalyptophile koalas are possible than we are in believing that eucalyptophobic ones are and that consequently (ii) we are better justified in believing the inductive conclusion, which implies the possibility of eucalyptophile koalas, than we are in believing the anti-inductive conclusion, which implies the possibility of eucalypto-phobic koalas. The latter claim turns on the general principle that if
p --> r, and p* --> r*, and we are better justified in believing r than we are in believing r*, we are thereby better justified in believing p than we are in believing p*. I will defend this principle in detail.

My main thesis, viz., that belief in inductive conclusions is better justified than belief in anti-inductive conclusions, rests on a number of further assumptions, which I will explore in the rest of my talk. Prominent among them is the claim that sense perception is generally more reliable than modal intuition, a claim that has recently come under heavy attack. From the perspective of my approach, the problem of induction was generated by affording both sense perception and modal intuition the same evidential weight. If indeed sense perception (of an actual eucalyptophile koala) were to provide no more justification for the modal belief that eucalyptophile koalas are possible than is provided by modal intuition for the belief that eucalyptophobic koalas are possible, there would be no difference in an agent's justification for believing the inductive and the anti-inductive conclusion. However, if sense perception carries more weight than modal intuition, then there is an epistemic difference between the two conclusions. It is somewhat ironic that an empiricist of Hume's stature should have treated sense perception and modal intuition as evidentially equal.

9. Friday, March 26, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"Two Conceptions of Aristotelian Matter"
Keith McPartland, Department of Philosophy, Williams College

Contemporary commentators on Aristotle have rightly emphasized the ways in which Aristotle's conception of matter differs from that dominant in modern science. Contemporary scientists often aim for bottom-up explanations of various phenomena. Psychological processes, for example, are implemented by neurophysiological, chemical, and ultimately, physical processes. According to this view of the unity of science, all processes will be grounded in the basic interactions between the entities of our most basic and comprehensive science of matter. In contrast, Aristotle seems to have a top down conception of matter, according to which both the identity of nature of a thing's matter are relative to its form. Matter, in itself, is thought to be pure potentiality, devoid of the sort of determinate nature capable of grounding any sort of explanation. However, proponents of the top-down view have often overlooked a side of Aristotle's thought friendlier to the bottom-up conception of matter. In discussing hypothetical necessitation, for example, Aristotle tells us that the function of a thing dictates its matter. At first glance, this appears to be an example, par excellance of the top-down conception of matter. However, attention to the details of Aristotle's examples suggests that matters are not so simple. When Aristotle says that a saw needs to be made of iron (or of some similar stuff) in order to do its job, he seems to be involved in bottom-up reasoning. The argument that a saw needs to be made of iron (or something similar) relies on facts about how the characteristic function of a saw must be implemented in lower-level causal processes. We can extend this sort of reasoning to biological and physiological cases. A bottom-up conception of matter seems to play a role in Aristotle's biological thought. Aristotle's conception of matter thus seems more nuanced and complex than the traditional interpretations would lead us to believe.

10. Friday, April 9, 2010 - 2:00pm, TBE A-107
"Contradictory Information: Too Much of a Good Thing"
J. Michael Dunn, School of Informatics and Computing, Department of Philosophy, Indiana University - Bloomington

In the middle 1970's both Belnap and I motivated the "Belnap-Dunn 4-valued Logic" by talk of being simply "told true" (T), and simply "told false" (F), which leaves the options of being neither "told true" nor "told false" (N), and being both "told true" and "told false" (B). Belnap motivated these epistemic notions by thinking of unstructured databases that allow for negative information as well as positive information (even when they conflict). We now experience this on a daily basis with the Web. But the 4-valued logic is deductive in nature, and its matrix is discrete: there are just four values. In this paper I investigate embedding the 4-valued logic into a context of probability. A. Josang's (1997) Subjective Logic introduced uncertainty to allow for degrees of belief, disbelief, and uncertainty. We extend this so as to allow for two kinds of uncertainty -- that in which the reasoner has too little information (ignorance) and that in which the reasoner has too much information (inconsistency). Josang's "Opinion Triangle" becomes an "Opinion Tetrahedron" and the 4-values can be seen as its apexes. We make various observations concerning this.

11. Friday, April 16, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"Kant on Divine and Human Freedom as Intelligent Spontaneity"
David Forman, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Kant rejects the kind of compatibilist view of freedom according to which an agent counts as free just because she does what she prefers to do or what she takes to be good. Kant even mocks Leibniz's version of such a view as offering only the freedom of a rotisserie spit that runs on its own once it is wound up. But Kant refuses to define freedom in terms of an ability to act contrary to one's preferences. Nor does he define freedom in terms of contingency or in terms of an ability to do have done otherwise. This is most clear in his account of the freedom of the divine will. God could not have done otherwise since He cannot possibly act contrary to His rational preference (representation of the good). God is free instead because He is absolutely causally independent (absolutely spontaneous) and acts on reasons rather than blindly or on sensible desires. This definition of freedom is consistent with Leibniz's view. And Kant defines human freedom along the same general lines. However, Kant's account of human action introduces some complications that require important deviations from the Leibnizian account of freedom.

12. Wednesday, April 21, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 107
"Constitution and the Subset Account of Realization"
Greg Janssen, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

13. Friday, April 23, 2010 - 3:00pm, BEH 222
"Perception and the Language of Nature: Berkeley and Reid on Acquired Perception"
Rebecca Copenhaver, Department of Philosophy, Lewis & Clark College

A common view in psychology and philosophy holds that strictly speaking we see very little - strictly speaking, we see only facing surface features like color, boundaries and illumination. Everything else is filled in by the mind. For example, we don't have visual experiences of three-dimensional tomatoes. Rather we have visual experiences of a two-dimensional field colored and illuminated a certain way. I think that this view is wrong, but surprisingly persistent. I will dragoon two historical figures, George Berkeley and Thomas Reid, to do my arguing for me, and to illustrate how this putatively common sense view is a piece of theory and a product of history.
On the familiar picture, features presented in individual sense modalities (vision, touch, etc.) are the only features, strictly speaking, given in perception. On this view, features not presented in original perception, features such as "being a tomato," or "being a Pinot Noir," are not, strictly speaking, the products of experience and should not be included in the given. By contrast, George Berkeley and Thomas Reid present a picture of perception on which original perception is a productive precondition for acquired perception. It provides traction for acquiring perceptual experiences that are ever more sensitive to a variety of features in our environment. Such sensitivity comes with the normal development of the human cognitive system: early associations between properties provided in original perception and properties made available by an expanded conceptual repertoire develop into abilities for the perceptual recognition of features as common as the smell of an apple and as uncommon as the tonnage of a ship. On this view acquired perception is genuine perception. Normal adults do not have two kinds of perceptual experience: acquired perception, and another original, given perception - as it were behind it. Perception is a unified phenomenon, grounded in a productive and developing relationship between the mind and world.

FALL 2009

1. Friday, September 4, 2009 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"The Fiction of What's Known in Understanding"
James Woodbridge, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Linguistic understanding is naturally expressed as a kind of knowledge. For example, an understanding of the expression 'blau' might be explained as knowing that it applies to all and only the blue things. Similarly, understanding 'Rauchen ist verboten' can be said to be a matter of knowing that it means that smoking is forbidden. Generalizing on these claims, we get such platitudes as that understanding an expression is knowing what it means, and to understand a language is to know the meanings of its expressions (or: what its expressions mean). Talk of linguistic understanding seems, therefore, to traffic in an ontology of things to which we bear some kind of knowledge relation. These putative entities appear to be the referents of 'that'-clauses and either to capture semantic rules for particular expressions, or to be explicit specifications of the meanings of the expressions. Either way, on its surface, this talk suggests that linguistic understanding is a kind of propositional knowledge, some sort of intellectual/theoretical "knowing-that", relating us to things. I maintain that the putative entities to which understanding supposedly relates us are fictions, and the way we talk about understanding is a pretense-involving discourse. Understanding is not a kind of knowledge relation we bear to meaning entities or rules. Our "knowing-that" talk of understanding is an as if discourse that provides a means for talking indirectly about particular complex use-features, the employment or recognition of which constitutes a speaker's understanding of an expression. The standard "propositional" talk of understanding accomplishes this by yielding something like a collapse of the use/mention distinction, allowing speakers to pick out complex use-features of expressions by displaying them at work in uses of (other) expressions. The result allows for the attribution of these use-features via a kind of deferred ostension. This account forges a link between the "propositional knowledge" surface appearances of our talk of linguistic understanding and the view of understanding as a kind of "knowing-how" regarding the uses of expressions.

2. Friday, Sept. 18, 2009 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"Cheap Contextualism, Meaning Underdetermination, and Truth"
Peter Ludlow, Department of Philosophy, Northwestern University

To hear philosophers tell it, we hardly ever say anything true. Someone says that Michael Jordan is 6 feet 6 inches tall. Philosophers point out that he isn't really that height. In fact, no one is exactly 6 foot 6. Philosophers tell us we have the same problem when we say that something is flat. I might say that Kansas is flat, or that a pool table is flat, but of course they aren't completely flat - nothing in the real world is really flat. Here three ways out of this problem that are in the literature: i) we might say that all of these claims about flatness, etc. are literally false, but that they are assertable because they do some work for us even if literally false; ii) we might say that for cases like 'flat' there are varying standards of flatness, and that context tells us whether we are talking about flat by the standards of pool tables or flat by the standards of North American Geography, iii) we might say that when we say that Kansas is flat, we are usually appending a "roughly-speaking" operator, as in 'Roughly-speaking[Kansas is flat]'. I'm going to advocate a fourth option, which I call the "Truth on the Cheap" option. The basic idea is this. Word meanings are vastly underdetermined. When we do the semantics of natural language, we want to lift that meaning underdetermination into the metalanguage. If we do that, then the truth predicate as used by the semanticist is tolerant of a broad range of claims to the effect that Kansas is flat. Why? Because "absolutely flat" is just one precisification of 'flat', and it is not a privileged precisification. This kind of underdetermination holds for every predicate that we use (even mathematical ones). Nothing is ever completely precise. Word meanings can be made more or less precise, but we don't measure this precision against the degree to which they approximate some Platonic ideal of the exact meaning. Rather they are more or less precise depending on the way we make the meanings more or less restrictive. Finally, I'm going to argue that it is a mistake to think that the semantics of natural language requires a precise metalanguage. Thus, as tensers might lift tense into the metalanguage, we will want to lift this imprecision into the metalanguage. If we do that, then we can dispense with roughly-speaking operators, etc.

3. Friday, September 25, 2009 - 3:00pm, Dept. Conference Room
"Are Customs and Conditioning Competitors?"
Todd Jones, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

The situations that social scientists explain using concepts like custom and norm often tend to be situations where many other kinds of explanations seem plausible as well (e.g. biological, psychological, economic, historical). Do these other explanations compete with the custom/norm explanations or do they complement them? We need to carefully consider this question, and not just assume that various accounts are all permissible at "different levels of analysis." In this paper I describe two families of non-competing accounts: 1) explanations of different (but similarly described) facts, and 2) accounts which seem to differ but are really different parts or versions of the same underlying explanation. I argue that, while many types of apparent competitor don't really compete with customs, there will usually be some that do.

4. Friday, October 2, 2009 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"Natural Beauty and Eco-Phenomenology"
Ron Wilburn, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

It is natural to suppose that Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative implies that his moral theory is irremediably hostile to the ends of current environmentalism. For certainly, with his speciesist injunction against the treatment of ourselves and other people merely as means to ends, Kant appears to insist that human welfare, and human welfare alone, should delimit the range of permissible action. Now, even though it is clear that the above-described tension exists, it is worth asking whether or not it is a genuinely irremediable tension? Herein, I consider four possible strategies for defending a negative answer to this question (at least one of which is suggested by Kant himself). I then go on to consider a forth, more promising, argument. On this account, our obligations to nature emerge from an indirect obligation to humanity itself, and stem from the value that the aesthetic appreciation of nature offers as a proving ground, of sorts, for moral judgment. Treating this thesis as a broadly empirical claim about human phenomenology, I then seek out (in typical phenomenological style) literary confirmation of it in the essays of 20th century naturalist, Loren Eiseley. I also aim, in brief conclusion, to sketch an effective response to a line of criticism of scientific culture that perennially echoes through the fundamentalist churches and school boards of these United States.

5. Friday, October 9, 2009 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"Truth, Paradox and Vicious Reference"
Phil Kremer, Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto

Kripke's "fixed-point semantics" is by now the standard approach to the liar's and related paradoxes. But as this semantics is commonly understood, truth behaves nonclassically even in the absence of vicious reference. Gupta and Belnap argue that a distinct advantage of their own "revision theory" of truth is that truth behaves classically in the absence of vicious reference. In my presentation, I will outline the fixed-point and revision-theoretic semantics, and cite some original technical results to argue that Gupta and Belnap's anti-fixed-point argument just doesn't work, at least not as well as they want it to. One thing I hope to do in this presentation is show how technical results can have a bearing on philosophical/methodological issues. That said, I will try to make the presentation as accessible as possible to those not versed in logic's technicalities. (I certainly won't prove any theorems!)

6. Friday, October 16, 2009 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"Medieval Logicians' use of Natural Language as Logical Notation"
Terence Parsons, Department of Philosophy, UCLA

Today, Aristotelian logic is well-known, as the theory of conversions (immediate inferences) and syllogisms. Less well-know are the techniques that Aristotle himself used to establish the conversion principles and (some of) the syllogisms. These techniques involve a logically sophisticated set of principles. These principles persisted through the Medieval era, when logicians vastly expanded the scope of logic. The result is a system of notation and techniques that are essentially equivalent to modern symbolic logic. My goal is to explain some of that development, and to justify the positive assessment.

7. Friday, October 23, 2009 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"On 'Following the Argument Where it Leads'"
Thomas Kelly, Department of Philosophy, Princeton University

Throughout the history of western philosophy, the Socratic injunction to "follow the argument where it leads" has exerted a powerful attraction. But what is it, exactly, to follow the argument where it leads? I explore this intellectual ideal and offer some reflections. Among the topics taken up is the relationship between the ideal and 'common sense' or 'Moorean' responses to revisionary philosophical theorizing.
[Disclaimer: for better or for worse, this talk will not include any Plato-exegesis]

8. Thursday, November 5, 2009 - 7:30pm, Barrick Museum Auditorium
"Science and Religion: Where the Conflict Really Lies"
Alvin Plantinga, Department of Philosophy, University of Notre Dame

Contrary to the claims of Richard Dawkins, there is no conflict between theistic belief (belief in God) and the current scientific theory of evolution. Indeed, Dawkins' argument for the conflict is deeply flawed. There is, however, a conflict between naturalism, a view adopted by many proponents of evolution, and evolutionary theory.
(Sponsored by the Departments of Philosophy and Geoscience and by the Thomas Aquinas Catholic Newman Center)

9. Friday, November 6, 2009 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"Content and Natural Selection"
Alvin Plantinga, Department of Philosophy, University of Notre Dame

This talk looks into the question of what, in addition to naturalism and evolutionary theory, a naturalist can sensibly conditionalize on when considering the reliability of her cognitive mechanisms. The candidates considered are all from current philosophy of mind.

10. Thursday, November 12, 2009 - 7:30pm, Barrick Museum Auditorium
"Galileo's Telescopic Discoveries, 1609-2009: Repercussions and Lessons"
Maurice Finocchiaro, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

(University Forum Lecture Series)

11. Friday, November 13, 2009 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"Biology and the Unconscious"
Stephen Downes, Department of Philosophy, University of Utah

There is a widespread tendency to assume that a biological mechanism invoked in explaining human behavior is an unconscious mechanism. Sometimes the view is pushed further by the assumption that calling a process "unconscious" contributes to the relevant explanation. I examine the connection between the biological and the unconscious. Along the way, I introduce folk-psychological explanations and some contrasting styles of biological explanation of our behavior. I argue that characterizing biological explanations as appeals to the unconscious does no useful explanatory work. Also, I propose and briefly defend an alternate way of construing the relation between some folk-psychological explanations and biological explanations of human behavior that requires no reference to the unconscious.

12. Friday, November 20, 2009 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"Organizational Dynamics of Controversy: Science and Business"
Albert DiCanzio, Webster University School of Business and Technology

In a single-case study of interorganizational controversy, the researcher investigated ways to strengthen scientific business management by applying concepts from physical dynamics to organizational behavior exhibited in a time series. Data of the controversy included critical events identified in the 400 year old Galileo controversy 1610-2009 from various sources -- notably including UNLV Distinguished Professor of Philosophy Emeritus Finocchiaro's Retrying Galileo (2005), the Notre Dame conference on Galileo and the Church (2002), and DiCanzio's Galileo: His Science and His Significance for the Future of Man (1996). The goals of the research have been to offer empirically supported guidance for the management of an organization that is in a relationship of negotiation, disharmony, dysfunction, or dynamic tension with its environment, that is, with its suppliers, distributors, customers or stakeholders; to explore long term consequences, in terms of the dynamic state of closure of a controversy, for an organization in which systems of reward for its innovators are crippled or disabled; to derive results from data mining and analysis useful in future studies to formulate normative criteria for the constitutional ruleset insuring rational and moral behavior of cybernetic systems (robots of the future); and to offer guidance for future studies that would place organizational dynamics on a firmer footing of physical dynamics. Theoretical foundations of the study resided in organizational and information theories, combining time series evaluation and data mining. To this end, an event matrix was built from the source data and subjected to clustering analysis using a Hamming distance function. Dynamic attractors, unresolved enigmas, myths, resolving observations and other explanatory hypotheses were extracted from the event matrix. Its four dimensional array structure facilitated correlation of causal influences (attractors) with consequences longitudinally over a domain of events. A principal immediate outcome of the study was an empirical base of guidelines for practitioners of organizational dynamics and the identification of organizational-dynamic attractors that correlate well with successful outcome of a controversy. Organizational-dynamic interpretations were analyzed for potential of experimental confirmation in future multiple case studies outlined by this researcher, and guidance for future studies targeted requirements for a rewarding treatment of a particular class of organizational contributors -- constructively creative thinkers and achievers. More generally, the study identified factors that correlate well with the improvement of any state of dynamic tension between a business or scientific organization and its environment.

13. Friday, December 4, 2009 - 3:00pm, BEH 212
"The Moral Behavior of Ethics Professors"
Eric Schwitzgebel, Department of Philosophy, UC Riverside

Aristotle, Kant, and Mill suggest that careful theoretical reflection about morality can be morally improving. If so, one might wonder if ethics professors, on average, behave morally better than non-ethicists of similar social background. I will explore a variety of empirical evidence about the moral behavior of ethicists including: (1.) philosophers' general opinions about the moral behavior of ethicists and their opinions about the moral behavior of individual, arbitrarily selected ethicists, (2.) the rates at which ethics books are missing from academic libraries compared to other philosophy books, (3.) the voting rates of ethics professors (including professors of political philosophy) compared to other philosophers, to political scientists, and to professors in other departments, (4.) the rates at which ethicists, non-ethicist philosophers, and other professors respond to undergraduate emails, and (5.) self-reported vegetarianism and donation to charity. (Much of this work is collaborative with Joshua Rust of Stetson University.)

SPRING 2009

1. Friday, January 16, 2009 - 3:00pm, SU Room 205
"Trust, Power and Betrayal"
Karen Frost-Arnold, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

2. Friday, January 23, 2009 - 3:00pm, SRWC 1010
"Kierkegaard and Experimental Psychology: The Relation Between Self-Deception and Cognitive Dissonance"
Erik Lindland, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

3. Friday, February 6, 2009 - 3:00pm, SU Room 205
"Logical Pluralism for the Rest of Us"
Gregory Frost-Arnold, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

This presentation will not be a 'normal' paper; rather, it's an information session on the topic of logical pluralism, which has received a lot of attention in logic & language circles since about 2000.

There will be about 30 minutes' worth of motivation for and exposition of logical pluralism, which can/should be interspersed with your questions and comments as it proceeds. At this point, some tentative remarks will be made concerning the view, on which feedback would be deeply appreciated.

If you want to be especially well-prepared for this information session, click here to see the handout that will be used on Friday. And if you want to be really prepared, you can take a look at the article that started the recent resurgence of interest in logical pluralism: J.C. Beall and Greg Restall, "Logical Pluralism," Australasian Journal of Philosophy, 2000, which you can find at https://eprints.kfupm.edu.sa/49246/.

4. Friday, February 13, 2009 - 3:00pm, SU Room 205
"Theory Concept Pluralism: What SPECIES can teach us about THEORY"
P. D. Magnus, Department of Philosophy, University at Albany/SUNY

Philosophers of science typically presume that theories are some specific kind of thing. I argue against this presumption, and for theory concept pluralism: There are multiple distinct theory concepts which we legitimately use in different domains and for different purposes, and we should not expect this to change. Many wholesale arguments about science rely on one theory concept or another and so are threatened by pluralism.

5. Wednesday, February 25, 2009 - 3:00pm, SU Room 205
"Abstract Valuation and Our Thinking about Death"
Stephen Rosenbaum, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Since Nagel's article, "Death," in 1970, numerous philosophers have argued powerfully for and against the Epicurean idea death is not bad for people. They have considered this idea partly in light of various attitudes and beliefs we commonly have about death. Many reject the Epicurean view on the grounds that it does not accord with the "intuition" that death is bad for us and that it is incompatible with many of our other, more settled, views about death and the value of life. In this paper, I continue to explore ways in which different concepts of value affect the implicit dialogue about whether death is bad for those who die. More specifically, I review the different notions of value involved, and show that the "intuition" that death is bad for people is unreliable and also that the Epicurean view is compatible with received, important ideas about death and the value of life. The argument should serve to place the question of death's value and also moral debates about death in a fresh context, and promises greater understanding of human views and attitudes toward death.

6. Friday, February 27, 2009 - 3:00pm, SU Room 205
"Galileo's Archimedean Approximation and Friedman's Dynamics of Reason"
David Miller, Department of Philosophy, Duke University

7. Friday, March 6, 2009 - 3:00pm, SU Room 205
"How Not to Build a Hybrid"
William Ramsey, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

In accounting for the way we explain and predict the behavior of others, two major positions are the theory-theory and the simulation theory. Recently, some authors have advocated a hybrid position, where elements of both theory and simulation are claimed to be at work. In most of these, cognitive sub-systems are described as "simulation-like" if they are used to replicate some cognitive operation assumed to take place in the target of explanation and prediction. For example, if I use my own inference mechanism to assign an inferential belief to the target, then (on these accounts) my inference system would be employed in simulating the reasoning of that other person. In this paper, I argue that this strategy for developing a hybrid theory is seriously confused. The confusion stems from a failure to appreciate how the application of any internal theory will require the employment of various other cognitive sub-systems and mechanisms while applying theoretical principles. The employment of our folk psychological theory is no different. When using our folk psychology to assign perceptual beliefs, we often need to use our visual system to see what another person. Similarly, we sometimes need to use our own inference system to know what content to assign to another person's inferential beliefs. In these sorts of cases, our cognitive mechanisms are used as "fact-finders", not as simulators. After arguing that these alleged hybrid theories actually aren't, I offer two ways to demarcate cognitive processes that are truly a form of simulation from those that are simply used in the application of a theory.

8. Friday, March 13, 2009 - 3:00pm, SU Room 205
"Image, Evidence, Argument"
Ian Dove, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

The bourgeoning study of visual rhetoric and visual literacy has raised questions in the field(s) of argumentation studies and informal logic: Are there visual arguments? And, if so, what is the logic of visual arguments? Proponents of visual arguments such as Leo Groarke and David Birdsong have proposed a new category of propositions--visual propositions-- to account for both visual arguments and their logic. Opponents of this view either have refused to accept the possibility of visual propositions, e.g., David Fleming, or have written off the apparently visual arguments as something altogether different, e.g., separately Ralph Johnson and Tony Blair. There are unresolved difficulties on both sides of this debate. The proponents need to explain the necessity for new entities. Opponents need to account for the actual use of visual elements in what appears to be reasoning. In this talk, I'm an opponent of visual argument if that means that there are arguments such that the constituent parts are irreducible to propositional content of the usual kind. Hence, I don't appeal to visual propositions. Moreover, I argue that the apparent use of visual elements in argumentation is best explained in terms of evidence and encoded reasoning. The visual elements should be treated as evidence for claims in associated, though perhaps tacit, arguments. In support of this view, I cite examples from such diverse sources as instant replay in the NFL and cloud chamber studies in particle physics. As a test case, then, I apply the hypothesis that visual arguments are really just encoded regular arguments to an ongoing debate in philosophy of mathematics--the use of diagrams for justification. The result furnishes an insight into the use of diagrams that makes no appeal to occult faculties and platonic realms (cf. James Brown) or visually enhanced logics (cf. Nathaniel Miller).

9. Friday, March 20, 2009 - 3:00pm, SU Room 205
"Philosophy in America in the 20th Century"
Neil Delaney, Sr., Department of Philosophy, University of Notre Dame

10. Friday, March 27, 2009 - 3:00pm, SRWC Meeting Rm 1010
"Demarcating Presentism"
Christian Wüthrich, Dept. of Philosophy, University of California at San Diego

Recent essays, such as those presented in Callender (2000) and Savitt (2006), contend that the debate between presentism, the view in philosophy of time that only present entities exist, and eternalism , the view that past, present, and future entities are ontologically on a par, lacks any metaphysical substance. This paper argues that they ultimately fail, although important lessons can be gleaned from them in how to formulate a non-vacuous version of presentism. It suggests that presentism can best be characterized in the context of spacetime theories. The resulting position is an ersatzist version of presentism that admits merely non-present entities as fictional characters deprived of physical existence. Ersatzist presentism both escapes the charges of triviality and promises to offer a route to solving the grounding problem, which befalls its more traditional cousins. Furthermore, Savitt's ecumenical position of offering both presentism and eternalism their rightful place as equal partners is rejected. It is argued that in ontological matters, the eternalist view takes precedence, while the presentist view may well be valuable for the purpose of explaining the phenomenology of temporality.

11. Friday, April 17, 2009 - 3:00pm, SU Room 205
"Untying the Knot from the Inside Out: Reflections on the Paradox of Supererogation"
Mark Timmons, Department of Philosophy, University of Arizona

In his 1958 seminal paper, "Saints and Heroes", J. O. Urmson argued that the then dominant tri-partite deontic scheme of classifying actions as being exclusively either obligatory, or optional, or wrong, ought to be expanded to include the category of the supererogatory. Colloquially, this category includes actions that are "beyond the call of duty" (beyond what is obligatory) and hence actions that one has no duty or obligation to perform. The title of Urmson's paper indicates some of the main types of action that are supposed to belong in this category. But it is a controversial category. Anti-supererogationists either deny the coherence of the concept, or, granting its coherence, argue that the corresponding category is empty. Pro-supererogationists argue that the category is not empty, and that therefore the corresponding concept is coherent, though the Pros often disagree about the conceptual contours of the category. The apparent conceptual tension regarding supererogation, sometimes referred to as the "paradox of supererogation", has been a main focus of philosophical discussions of the topic. The source of the paradox has been dubbed the "good-ought tie-up". In what follows, we plan to address this alleged paradox by first making a phenomenological case for the reality of instances of genuine supererogatory actions, and then, by reflecting on the relevant phenomenology, we explain why there is no genuine paradox. We set for ourselves three tasks. Because the issues regarding supererogation are complicated, our first task is to set up the rest of the paper by: (i) clarifying various elements that figure in the concept of supererogation, clarifying the paradox just mentioned, and (ii) motivating our phenomenological approach to the putative paradox—approaching it 'from the inside' as it were. Our second task is to examine some of the details of moral experience—its phenomenology—contrasting experiences of moral obligation with experiences of supererogation. Our third task is to address the paradox of supererogation. We argue that one can make sense of supererogation by recognizing what we call a 'merit-conferring' role that moral reasons can play. We describe this sort of role partly by contrasting it with two other roles practical reasons can play: what Joshua Gert calls a 'requiring' role and a 'justifying' role. By recognizing multiple roles a moral reason can play (inspired by reflection on the phenomenology of supererogation), one has the conceptual recourses to untie the good-ought knot and thereby make sense of supererogation—to untie a philosophical knot 'from the inside'.

12. Friday, May 1, 2009 - 3:00pm, SU Room 205
"Experimental Semantics, or What Would Kripke Have Said If He Were Asian"
Edouard Machery, Department of History and Philosophy of Science, University of Pittsburgh

Theories of reference have been central to analytic philosophy, and two views, the descriptivist view of reference and the causal-historical view of reference, have dominated the field. In this research tradition, theories of reference are assessed by consulting one's intuitions about the reference of terms in hypothetical situations. Early worked explored intuitions about reference in Westerners and East Asians. After a brief review of, this early work, I will examine the recent objections to this work and describe some additional work done in response to these objections.

FALL 2008

1. Friday, September 5, 2008 - 3:00pm, Location, SU 213.
"Slamming Wamming: DeRose's Dismissal of Warranted Assertibility Maneuvers" (Download here.)
Ron Wilburn, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

In a number of papers, Keith DeRose articulates his reasons for thinking that we cannot plausibly explain the mechanics of knowledge attribution in terms of varying conditions of warranted assertibility. His reasoning is largely comparative: "know," he argues, proves a poor candidate for such a diagnosis when compared to other terms to which such warranted assertibility maneuvers (i.e., WAMs) clearly apply. More specifically, DeRose aims, by way of such comparative case studies, to identify several general principles through which we might determine when WAMs are called for. In what follows, I take issue with one of these principles and argue that DeRose's efforts to deploy the others to pro-contextualist (i.e., anti-invariantist) ends are misguided. I conclude by examining DeRose's specific objection to Unger's skeptical invariantism, and identify a problematic feature of his recurrent appeals to linguistic intuition. The payoff of this is an enhanced appreciation of the factors on which the contextualist/invariantist dispute should be seen to turn.

2. Friday, September 12, 2008 - 3:00pm, CBC C110.
"Emotions, Norms and the Moralization of Fairness"
Shaun Nichols, Department of Philosophy, University of Arizona

Recent work in moral psychology has emphasized the importance of emotions for moral judgment. I'll argue that the available research provides no reason to think that emotional activation alone can account for moral judgment. Nonetheless, the fact that we are naturally repelled by suffering still provides a fairly direct explanation for the cultural success of norms prohibiting harming innocent people. Norms of fairness pose a more complicated problem, since it's harder to connect such norms directly to our emotional repertoire. In contrast to recent work in rational-choice theory, I argue that norms of fairness get their cultural heft because they are moralized, which provides an indirect connection to the emotions.

3. Friday, September 19, 2008 - 3:00pm, CBC C110.
"Interventions, Mechanisms, and the Modularity of Mind" (Download here.)
Matthew Haug, Department of Philosophy, College of William and Mary

This paper takes as its starting point John Campbell's recent attempt to extend the interventionist approach to cover causation in psychology. I point out that Campbell's radical suggestion that causation between psychological variables may not be grounded in biochemical mechanisms conflicts with the completeness of physics. I then use a case study involving the effects of a nurturing environment on memory ability to argue that accepting the existence of underlying biochemical mechanisms does not commit one to the equally radical reductive view according to which mental causation is reduced to, or eliminated in favor of, biochemical causation. I show how the biochemical variables in any mechanism underlying nurturance's effect on memory are likely not as accurate or precise as psychological variables, nor are they as effective as a means of intervening on memory ability. I then explore the relationships between modular systems, robust variables, and reduction, arguing inter alia, that even non-robust cognitive variables in modular systems cannot be replaced by biochemical variables. These results support a straightforward general argument that psychological variables will play an ineliminable role in the etiology and treatment of many mental phenomena.

4. Friday, October 10, 2008 - 3:00pm, CBC C110.
"Linguistic Puzzles and Semantic Pretense"
James Woodbridge, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Philosophical/linguistic dilemmas were the launching pad of modern philosophy of language and remain the life-blood of its aims and methods. From Frege and Russell to the present day, philosophers of language have, for the most part, attempted to resolve such dilemmas by appeal to logical or semantic innovation. While we have learned much from these ingenious advances, it is fair to say that few of the original dilemmas have been resolved in a satisfactory way. We think, for example, of a range of familiar problems, e.g., the informativeness of identity claims, the semantic paradoxes, the sorites, negative existential claims, etc. In this paper, I will set out what I see as a novel, and very promising, approach to resolving a number of the familiar dilemmas that provide philosophy of language with much of its subject matter. This approach postulates semantic pretense at work where these puzzles arise. I will begin by briefly cataloging the relevant dilemmas. Then, after introducing the pretense approach, I will indicate how it promises to handle these putatively intractable problems. I will then consider a number of objections to pretense views, taking this as an opportunity to provide more detailed explanation of what a pretense account amounts to, what the pretense approach commits us to, and why it is a promising approach in philosophy of language.

5. Thursday, October 16, 2008 - 7:30pm, Barrick Museum Auditorium
"Reason, Relativism, and the Human Normative Predicament"
Kenneth Taylor, Department of Philosophy, Stanford University

Many people would say that if we would just heed the voice of reason, all moral, ethical, and political disputes would eventually end in what Nietzsche calls "the hallowed place of peace." Our speaker argues tonight that, sadly enough, there is no such place. We should regard our predicament not as a counsel of despair, however, but rather as an urgent call to arms. The work of overcoming the human normative condition, and of building life-affirming moral and political orders is invigorating, even heroic labor that calls upon the best in us all.
Co-sponsored by the UNLV Department of Philosophy.

SPRING 2008

1. Thursday, January 31, 2008 - 3:00pm, SU Meeting Room 211
"Bolzano on Logical Consequence and Mathematical Proof"
Sandra Lapointe, Department of Philosophy, Kansas State University

It is relatively well known that Bolzano contributed to the birth of modern mathematics and, in particular, that he had interesting views on mathematical proofs. Few, however, are familiar with the details of these views, and fewer still acknowledge Bolzano's distinction between what are in fact three different notions: grounding (Abfolge), objective justification (objective Erkenntnisgrund) and what we may call objective demonstrations or proofs (Begrundungen). This tripartite distinction in itself testifies to Bolzano's acute sense of the differences between logical, epistemological and pragmatic concerns: grounding is a relation between propositions (not propositions and facts or states of affairs), objective justification is a relation between beliefs (i.e. certain types of mental states) and Begrundungen are linguistic objects that generate objectively justified knowledge of the type we find in mathematics. In this paper, I present these three notions, and explain how they are related in order to stress the specificity of Bolzano's views on demonstrations in mathematics.

2. Friday, February 1, 2008 - 3:00pm, SU Meeting Room 211
"Truth-Definitions and Definitional Truth" (Download here.)
Douglas Patterson, Department of Philosophy, Kansas State University

Putnam, Etchemendy, Heck and others have criticized Tarski's definitions of truth on the grounds that they turn what ought to be contingent truths about the truth conditions of sentences into logical, mathematical or necessary truths. I argue that this criticism rests on the misguided assumption that substitution in accord with a good definition preserves logical, mathematical or necessary truth. I give a number of examples intended to show that substitution in accord with good definitions need preserve none of these. The paper should be of interest not only to students of Tarski, but to anyone interested in definition and analyticity, and it includes some discussion of the contingent a priori, logicism, the nature of applied mathematics, and early Wittgensteinian doctrines about showing and saying.

3. Friday, February 8, 2008 - 3:00pm, CBC C117
"From a Genetic Predisposition to an Interactive Predisposition: Rethinking the Ethical Implications of Screening for Gene-Environment Interactions"
Jim Tabery, Department of Philosophy, University of Utah

The concept of gene-environment interaction, or GxE, refers to cases where different genetic groups respond differently to the same array of environments. In a widely acclaimed study from 2002, researchers found a case of GxE for a gene controlling neuroenzymatic activity (low vs. high), exposure to childhood maltreatment, and antisocial personality disorder (ASPD). Cases of GxE are generally characterized as evincing a genetic predisposition; for example, individuals with low neuroenzymatic activity are generally characterized as having a genetic predisposition to ASPD. I first argue that the concept of a genetic predisposition fundamentally misconstrues these cases of GxE. This misconstrual will be diagnosed, and then a new concept—interactive predisposition—will be introduced. I then show how this conceptual shift reconfigures old questions and raises new questions for genetic screening. Attempts to screen embryos or fetuses for the gene associated with low neuroenzymatic activity with an eye towards selecting against the low-activity variant fall prey to the myth of pre-environmental prediction; attempts to screen newborns for the gene associated with low neuroenzymatic activity with an eye towards early intervention will have to face the interventionist's dilemma.

4. Friday, February 15, 2008 - 3:00pm, SU Meeting Room 211
"The First-Person Concept and a Puzzle about Intersubjectivity"
Gurpreet Rattan, Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto

This talk aims to answer two questions at once: (1) the question of how to incorporate the first-person concept in a general theory of concepts; and (2) the question of how to understand the rational force of the sheer fact of disagreement with one's epistemic peers. The first part of the paper explains exactly what problem the first-person concept poses for a theory of concepts. It is argued that the problem is that first-person thoughts resist incorporation into a view of thoughts organized around an idea of objective knowledge. The second part of the paper argues that the first-person concept plays a role in understanding the rational force of disagreement with peers, explaining how it can be rational to persist in one's attitudes in the face of disagreement with one's peers. This gives the first-person concept a role in objective knowledge that allows its incorporation into a general theory of concepts in a natural way.

5. Friday, February 22, 2008 - 3:00pm, SU Meeting Room 205
"Mathematical Fallacies and Informal Logic"
Andrew Aberdein, Department of Philosophy, Florida Institute of Technology

It might be supposed that mathematical fallacies could be defined very simply. If all mathematical reasoning is formal and deductive, then surely mathematical fallacies are merely invalid arguments? This definition has several shortcomings. Firstly, there are many invalid mathematical arguments that would not normally be described as mathematical fallacies. Secondly, much reasoning in mathematics is conducted informally. So a satisfactory account of mathematical fallacies must explain what is distinctive about formal fallacies, beyond their invalidity, and also address informal fallacies. This paper considers the application to mathematical fallacies of techniques drawn from informal logic, specifically the use of 'argument schemes'. (You can download related background papers here and here.)

6. Friday, February 29, 2008 - 3:00pm, CBC C117
"Defending Copernicus and Galileo: Critical Reasoning in the Two Galileo Affairs"
Maurice A. Finocchiaro, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Although recent works on Galileo's trial (1613-1633) have reached new heights of erudition, documentation, and sophistication, they typically exhibit over-inflated complexities; neglect 400 years of historiography; and make little effort to learn from Galileo. I am working on a book aiming to avoid these lacunae. I argue that the Copernican Revolution required that the earth's motion be supported not only with new arguments but also with new evidence, and that it be not only supported constructively but also critically defended from numerous objections. This defense in turn required not only the destructive refutation but also the appreciative understanding of those objections in all their strength. A major Galilean accomplishment was to elaborate such a "reasoned" and "critical" defense of Copernicanism. Galileo's trial can be interpreted as a series of ecclesiastic attempts to stop him from defending Copernicus. And an essential thread of the controversy (1633-1992) about Galileo's trial is the emergence of numerous arguments for and against the claim that his condemnation was right. My thesis is that the defense of Galileo can and should have the reasoned and critical character which his own defense of Copernicus had.

7. Friday, March 7, 2008 - 3:00pm, SU Meeting Room 211
"Constitution, Inescapability, and Necessity"
Nadeem Hussain, Department of Philosophy, Stanford University

Prof. Hussain will take up the claim that we can avoid mainstream metaethical theories once we see that certain mental states and mental processes, or human activities and practices, are constituted by principles or norms. He will look at various versions of such claims, including claims that certain practices presuppose normative commitments, and argue that they do not succeed.

8. Tuesday, March 11, 2008 - 7:30pm, Barrick Museum Auditorium
"Is Compassion Good for Us? Nietzsche's Politically Incorrect Thoughts"
Clifford Orwin, Professor of Political Science, University of Toronto

Few people today doubt that it is good to be compassionate. But reading the nineteenth century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche makes us doubt it. Pity or compassion was a major theme of Nietzsche's, and his treatment of it was not just idiosyncratic but sometimes frightful: it lent itself to horrific misinterpretation, and it received it. It also furnished a major ground of his rejection of democracy, science, and modern "progress" generally. But we cannot then simply ignore Nietzsche's treatment of compassion, because the problems with compassion are too obvious to ignore. Nietzsche's

treatment proves more subtle and ambivalent than it at first appears, but precisely for this reason poses a formidable challenge to the current reverence for compassion. Indeed he makes us suspect that the most pitiable thing about us is our infatuation with pity.

(Sponsored and hosted by the Great Works Academic Certificate Program, University of Nevada, Las Vegas)

9. Wednesday, March 12, 2008 - 4:00pm, Dept. Conference Room
"Do Customs Compete with Conditioning? Turf Battles and Division of Labor in Social Explanation"
Todd Jones, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Situations that social scientists and others explain using concepts like custom and norm often tend to be situations where many other explanations seem plausible as well. Do these other explanations compete with the custom/norm explanations or do they compliment them? In this talk Prof. Jones will sort out what makes high and low level accounts competitors.

10. Friday, March 28, 2008 - 3:00pm, SU Meeting Room 211
"Possible Worlds of Doubt"
Ron Wilburn, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

A prominent contemporary anti-skeptical strategy, most famously articulated by Keith DeRose, aims to cage the skeptic's doubts by contextualizing subjunctive conditional accounts of knowledge through a conversational Rule of Sensitivity. This paper argues that this strategy courts charges of circularity by virtue of its selective invocation of heavy counterfactual machinery. Because of the danger that this invocation essentially employs a metric for modal comparison that is implicitly informed by judgments of epistemic sameness, this metric proves objectively indefensible. We have reason to fear that this metric is selectively cherry-picked in advance to support the very anti-skeptical conclusion for which the contextualist longs. (You can download the full paper here. On Friday, I will quickly summarize he first eleven pages and read the subsequent ten. So, if you have an opportunity to read any of it, your time would be best spent on "Section IV. The Argument from Modal Circularity," pp. 11-21.)

11. Thursday, April 3, 2008, 7:30pm - Barrick Museum Auditorium
"Seeing Movies and Watching the Stars"
Gregory Currie, Professor of Philosophy and Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Nottingham

If the movie star sometimes inhibits our ability to see through the celebrity into the character, cinema is usually more successful at overcoming the 'tyranny of reality' than still photography. Our speaker argues that the reason for this lies in the dynamic narrative structure of film. He explores a tension between the make-believe that promotes narrative, and the make-believe that suppresses the realism of its images. Illustrations include still photographs and scenes from Blackhawk Down and The Thin Red Line. (Co-sponsored by the UNLV Department of Philosophy and UNLV Department of Film)

12. Friday, April 4, 2008 - 3:00pm, SU Meeting Room 211
"Narrative and Scepticism about Character"
Gregory Currie, Professor of Philosophy and Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Nottingham

We say that people have distinctive Characters, and much literature reinforces this idea, developing narratives wherein people's Character is subject to development and test. But social psychological investigation has failed to find evidence for the existence of Character, from which some conclude that the notion of Character is a cognitive illusion. I ask whether narratives which depend on the notion of Character are significantly compromised by these findings. I offer a (limited) defence of the narrative of Character.

13. Friday, April 11, 2008 - 3:00pm, CBC C113
"What is a Truth Value and How Many Are There?"
Roy T. Cook, Department of Philosophy, University of Minnesota

Typically within formal semantics the semantic status of a sentence is represented by a truth value. Thus, these semantics represent the situation as one where there is a special relationship between statements and a special class of objects - the truth values (typically, but not always, true and false). In actuality, however, truth values, as objects, are mere surrogates for the different sorts of relations that can hold between a statement and the world. Thus, a statement receives the truth value 'true' if and only if it is true - i.e. if and only if what it says is the case. If truth values are really objectual surrogates for the various semantic relations that can hold between a statement and the world, however, then the critical question "how many truth values are there?" becomes transformed into a question about the number of possible semantic relations that can hold between a statement and the world. If we take the Liar paradox, and the Revenge phenomenon arising from strengthened versions of the Liar statement, seriously, then it turns out that the answer to this question is "more than can be contained in any set". In other words, the class of relevant semantic relations is indefinitely extensible, and as a result there is a proper class of truth values.

14. Tuesday, April 15, 4:00pm, Sociology Dept. Conference Room, CDC-B-225B
"Pragmatist Theory of Action"
Dr. Erkii Kilpinnen, Department of Philosophy, University of Helsinki

15. Friday, April 18, 2008 - 3:00pm, SU Meeting Room 205
"Counterexamples to Modus Ponens and Theories of Conditionals"
Ian Dove, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Since 1985, when Vann McGee published a set of putative counterexamples to modus ponens, (at least) two other possible counterexamples have convinced some theorists that modus ponens isn't generally valid. McGee's and William Lycan's (1993 and 2001) separate counterexamples come with two fully developed theories of conditionals. Douglas Walton (2002) offers a series of putative counterexamples along with a suggestion of yet another theory of conditionals. If the counterexamples are anything more than mere theoretical possibilities, this suggests that natural language conditionals are ambiguous – there are conditionals that support modus ponens and (at least) three others that don't. This is not a happy situation. Of the possible responses, biting the bullet and accepting the ambiguity is the least welcome. Still, that may be our only solution, in the end. Before accepting this unhappy state of affairs, I suggest ways to avoid each of the counterexamples and hence salvage modus ponens.
That's the official abstract. Unofficially: Counterexamples to Modus Ponens are like Bigfoot sightings: they come with a presumption of falsity. Hence, any (adequate) mundane explanation will trump the extraordinary one. In this talk, I give competing commonplace explanations for the extraordinary phenomena.

16. Friday, April 25, 2008 - 3:00pm, SU Meeting Room 205
"Two Emotional Issues in Descartes: Intentionality and Animals"
Abel Franco, Department of Philosophy, California State University, Northridge

The intentionality of emotions and emotions in animals are two of the issues related to Descartes' Theory of Passions still insufficiently treated in the secondary literature. Whereas the former (intentionality) is crucial to properly understand Descartes' theory of passions, the latter has the potential to help revise not only some of the common assumptions held on Descartes' view of animals--in particular that they are machines--but also his view of the mind. I will try to show that our "passions" are for Descartes our only natural guides to our natural perfection (or natural happiness). For Descartes, the

"importance" of the objects which our emotions represent--the specific representational content which distinguishes passions from sensations--is their worthiness to be joined in order to constitute unities of greater perfection with them. In this sense, we can talk about, at least, three different levels of aboutness. If we take into account the so-called "emotions"--caused only by the soul, not the body--of which Descartes mentions "intellectual" and "internal" ones, we can add a fourth level: the state of the soul. That "internal emotions," the ones on which "our well-being depends principally" (Passions II, art, 147, AT XI 440 : CSM I 381) are about the third level, as I would suggest, is particularly significant to understand Descartes' ethical goals in his treatment of the passions.

As to animals, I will try to show that they are clocks, yes, but clocks with passions. Descartes' theory of (human) passions, and, specially, the view of the human mind which emerges from it, allows, first, to avoid the apparent conflict that many scholars have seen in Descartes' attribution to animals of sensations and passions at the same time that he denies them a rational soul; and, secondly, to show that Descartes' theory of (human) passions can account, with small adjustments, for passions in animals. None of this requires denying animals a mind, but rather providing them with a non-human one.

17. Friday, May 2 - 3:00 pm, CBC C113
"From the Pessimistic Induction to Semantic Anti-Realism"
Gregory Frost-Arnold, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

The Pessimistic Induction (PI), roughly put, is the following inductive generalization: since most of our past scientific theories have been radically mistaken in their accounts of what the world is like, our current theories are likely similarly mistaken. But what kind of 'mistake' is at issue here? Most commentators on the PI suggest that we should take our past theories as false--and thus, if the PI is a good argument, our present ones as probably also false. I here argue instead that, given certain widespread (though not universal) views about the relation between language and the world, many of the theoretical claims of previous scientific theories are neither true nor false. This lack of truth-value can arise in at least two related ways: referential failure or semantic presupposition failure. If substantial chunks of our past theories are truth-valueless, then the upshot of the PI is semantic anti-realism, the view that much of our theoretical scientific discourse is neither true nor false. However, semantic anti-realism is anathema to most philosophers of science today, so I conclude by considering various routes to escape this conclusion.

18. Tuesday, May 6, 2008 12:00 - 1:30 pm (Brown Bag Lunch), BSL 112
"Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labor Markets and the Rescue Industry"
Laura Agustin, Visiting Scholar Department of Sociology, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Laura Agusti-n explodes several myths: that selling sex is completely different from any other kind of work; that migrants who sell sex are passive victims; and that the multitude of people out to save them are without self-interest. Agustin argues that the label "trafficked" does not accurately describe migrants' lives and that the "rescue industry" disempowers them. Based on extensive research among migrants who sell sex and social helpers, Sex at the Margins provides a radically different analysis.

FALL 2007

1. Friday, September 21, 2007 - 3:00pm, SU Meeting Room 222
Discussion of Social Construction and Social Kinds
Sally Haslanger, Department of Linguistics and Philosophy, and Acting Director of Women's Studies, MIT

Prof. Haslanger will explain how she understands the notions of "social construction" and "social kind". Some relevant background readings (esp. #2, 3, and 5 under "Articles") are available on her Webpage.

2. Friday, September 21, 2007 - 7:30pm, Barrick Museum Auditorium
"The Social Critique of Social Knowledge (or, 'But Mom, Crop-Tops are Cute')"
Sally Haslanger, Department of Linguistics and Philosophy, and Acting Director of Women's Studies, MIT

What seems cute to a seventh-grade girl is unlikely to seem cute to her parents, whose standards of dress and deportment may differ widely from her own. Parents and children each possess social knowledge that the other lacks, knowledge based upon facts constituted within specific social milieus. Does the situation lead inevitably to relativism about social knowledge, or rather to the possibility of genuine social critique?
(Co-sponsored by the UNLV Departments of Philosophy and Women's Studies)

3. Friday, September 28, 2007 - 3:00pm, SU Meeting Room 222
Discussion of Jones-style Social Epistemology
Todd Jones, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Prof. Jones will discuss his recent work. Some relevant background readings include "Swarm Scholarship and the Fundamental Epistemology of the Collective Method" and "Numerous Ways to be an Open-Minded Organization: A Reply to Lahrroodi." Read the papers and show up ready to abuse one of our own.

4. Friday, October 12, 2007 - 3:00pm, Dept. Conference Room
Discussion of the philosophy of Wilfrid Sellars
David Beisecker, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Prof. Beisecker will shed some light on the subtle and complex views of one of the 20th Century's most important philosophers, focusing on Sellars's papers "Meaning as Functional Classification" and "Being and Being Known". A background reading is available here.

5. Friday, October 19, 2007 - 3:00pm, SU Meeting Room 222
"Probabilistic Proofs and Transferability" (Download here.)
Kenny Easwaran, Department of Philosophy, UC Berkeley

Don Fallis, in "The Epistemic Status of Probabilistic Proof", points out that although mathematicians don't require proofs to be complete formal deductions of their results, there are a certain class of "probabilistic" proofs that they don't accept. He argues that there is no epistemic purpose that can be served by accepting proofs with omitted steps and computer-aided proofs, but rejecting probabilistic proofs. I argue that there is in fact such a purpose, namely that of achieving "transferability" of proofs. This notion of transferability relates to an old counterexample to Grice's 1957 account of speaker-meaning, and helps illuminate a certain distinction between the practice of mathematics and the natural sciences. In the end, I suggest that though transferability is a real epistemic phenomenon, it may not be the best criterion, in mathematics or philosophy.

6. Friday, November 2, 2007 - 3:00pm, SU Meeting Room 222
Get-together to discuss Michael Tye's work prior to his visit on Nov. 30.

Background Readings: Drestke, F. (2004). "Change Blindness." Philosophical Studies, 120, 1-18. (Download here.) Also, Cavanagh, P. & Intriligator, J. (1999). "Attentional resolution: The grain and locus of visual awareness." In C. Taddei-Ferretti and C. Musio (Eds.), Neuronal basis and psychological aspects of consciousness, pp. 41-52. (Click here and run a search on this paper title.)

7. Wednesday, Nov. 7, 2007 - 3:00pm, CBC C133
"Comparative Choice without Comprehensive Factors"
Jim Okapal, Department of Philosophy, Missouri Western State University

A comparativist says that if a comparison is possible, then the comparison must take place in terms of properties borne by the items in question. I will call these properties "factors". According to Ruth Chang, rational choice and conflict resolution in each situation is determined by a single, comprehensive factor. She defends this view by arguing that rival approaches fail to meet certain meta-level criteria. I offer a distinct version of a sophisticated orthodox approach that eschews comprehensive factors and meets her criteria, thus showing that her argument by elimination is unconvincing. The heart of this alternative view utilizes factors, normative-level criteria, and interaction principles. Together, these elements supply content beyond the factors, provide determinate weightings of factors, and leave room for reasonable disagreement. Finally, I address criticisms that my account will end up offering a fractured account of conflict resolution and choice, and that Chang and I are essentially offering the same view.

8. Thursday, November 8, 2007 - 7:30pm, Barrick Museum Auditorium
"Time-Loops, Superstrings, and Other Weird Stuff: Are Physicists for Real (or Is This Just a Lot of Mathematics)?"
Jody Azzouni, Department of Philosophy, Tufts University

The so-called hard sciences, such as physics, characterize their more theoretical objects in entirely mathematical ways (for example, as 'electron-fields'). Usually no non-mathematical characterization is possible. Our presenter will discuss ways of distinguishing the real objects recognized by science from what is only the language of mathematics used in hard sciences.
(Co-sponsored by the UNLV Departments of Philosophy and Physics)

9. Friday, November 9, 2007 - 3:00pm, SU Meeting Room 222
"Being Wrong about our Talk"
Jody Azzouni, Department of Philosophy, Tufts University

One thing that all the recent insights coming out of contemporary linguistics seem to have revealed is how little ordinary speaker-hearers know about their own language(s). I discuss some rather dramatic examples of properties of natural languages that I claim speaker-hearers are unaware of (e.g., their inconsistency, the non-existence of sentence and word types, etc.), offer some speculations about the nature of the subpersonal processing of language that causes these "confusions" about natural languages, and conclude with some discussion of burden-shifting arguments by philosophers with respect to the methodological requirement that "error-theories" should be avoided.

10. Friday, November 16, 2007 - 3:00pm, CBC C112
"Nietzsche's Naturalism, Nietzsche's Skepticism"
Jessica Berry, Department of Philosophy, Georgia State University

Some of the most successful recent commentaries on Nietzsche are those that read him as a naturalist. Proponents of these readings have devoted no small effort to the task of explaining away Nietzsche's skeptical-sounding remarks about the value of truth, and the status of knowledge and scientific "objectivity", as they have worked to develop readings that are philosophically coherent, internally consistent, and (importantly) anti-skeptical. This, I shall argue, is the wrong approach to take, for two reasons: First, because Nietzsche's skeptical moments are more than "occasional prevarications". They appear in Nietzsche's earliest writings and then steadily throughout his career. To neglect these passages or to make them

consistent with a rigorous anti-skepticism simply strains interpretive credibility too much. Secondly, this strategy also rests on a largely unfounded and, I shall argue, false presupposition that skepticism and naturalism are necessarily incompatible outlooks (since the naturalist must have commitments about the natural world and the methods of scientific investigation that the skeptic is not entitled to hold), so that we must choose between these two competing interpretive templates for Nietzsche's thought. We need not abandon the naturalist readings of Nietzsche in order to accommodate his skepticism, nor need we downplay his skepticism in order to do justice to the centrality of naturalism in his thought. It will be my task to explain how Nietzsche's skepticism in fact leads him to the position we recognize as "naturalistic".

11. Wednesday, November 21, 2007 - 3:00pm, SU Meeting Room 207
"Holistic Choice and Complex Intentions: A Sellarsian Approach to Double Effect."
Neil Delaney, Department of Philosophy, Georgetown University

12. Friday, November 30, 2007 - 3:00pm, SU Meeting Room 222
"Lost Innocence: Change Blindness and Visual Consciousness"
Michael Tye, Department of Philosophy, The University of Texas at Austin

Prof. Tye will talk about his recent work in the philosophy of perception.
Background Readings: Drestke, F. (2004). "Change Blindness." Philosophical Studies, 120, 1-18. (Download here.) Also, Cavanagh, P. & Intriligator, J. (1999). "Attentional resolution: The grain and locus of visual awareness." In C. Taddei-Ferretti and C. Musio (Eds.), Neuronal basis and psychological aspects of consciousness, pp. 41-52. (Click here and run a search on this paper title.)
(Co-sponsored by the UNLV Department of Psychology)

13. Friday, December 7, 2007 - 3:00pm, SU Meeting Room 222
"Are Philosophers Experts?"
Jonathan Weinberg, Department of Philosophy and the Center for Cognitive Science, Indiana University at Bloomington

14. Friday, December 14, 2007 - 3:00pm, CBC C133
"Ought: Between Objective and Subjective"
John MacFarlane, Department of Philosophy, University of California, Berkeley

Reflecting on the use of "ought" in deliberation has led many philosophers to assign it a "subjective" sense (ought, given the deliberator's evidence). Reflecting on its use in advice has led others to assign it an "objective" sense (ought, given the facts). We argue that both sides have part of the truth. Attempts to resolve the conflict by "taking sides" one way or the other, or by taking "ought" to be ambiguous or indexical, cannot succeed. Only by recognizing that "ought" is assessment-sensitive, we argue, can we account for its dual role in deliberation and advice. We apply our theory to some paradoxes involving oughts and conditionals, and to a puzzle Allan Gibbard raised about truth and correct belief.
A good background paper I would recommend, for those who have the time, is my paper in the Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, "Making Sense of Relative Truth."

SPRING 2007

1. Saturday, Jan. 27, 2007 - 9am, Imperial Palace Hotel, Jade Room
Part of The 19th Annual Meeting of the Far West Popular Culture & Far West American Culture Associations
"Rational Emotional Responses to Art"
Marion Ledwig, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

In order to evaluate whether it is rational to respond emotionally to art, it is first necessary to agree upon what art is. Originality is the central feature of art, with the different subject matters or materials used to determine which form in particular that work of art takes. The paradox of fiction is solved by claiming that people have beliefs in the existence and features of objects, even if known to be completely fictional, for seeing means believing. An emotional response to art is rational, if the agent has good reasons for his emotional response with regard to the particular piece of art. Hence, many different emotional responses to art become rational.

2. Saturday, Jan. 27, 2007 - 10:15am, Imperial Palace Hotel, Room TBA.
Part of The 19th Annual Meeting of the Far West Popular Culture & Far West American Culture Associations
"What Makes Some Political Issues 'Cultural'?"
Todd Jones, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Many pundits, including Bill O'Reilly in his recent book, Culture Warrior, have discussed how voters make their political decisions based on "cultural issues". By 'cultural issues' they mean abortion, gay marriage, and gun control. What's unclear is why these issues count as "cultural" but issues like minimum wage, the Iraq war, and warrantless wiretapping do not. In this talk I examine what makes something a prototypical "cultural issue".

3. Friday, Feb. 2, 2007 - 5:30pm, CDC 425, Dept. Conference Room
"Analytic Truth: Then and Now"
Gregory Frost-Arnold, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

This talk deals with analytic truth, both historically and logically. First, I present a historical conjecture to explain how Quine's critique of analyticity was radicalized in the period between 1934's "Lectures on Carnap" and 1950's "Two Dogmas." Second, I contest certain of Paul Boghossian's recent claims concerning the notion of analyticity. In particular, I argue (contra Boghossian) that one can accept Quine's critique of analyticity without also accepting his indeterminacy of meaning thesis.

4. Friday, Feb. 9, 2007 - 5:30pm, MSU 222
"McDowell and Aristotle on 'Second Nature' "
David Forman, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

5. Friday, Feb. 9, 2007 - 7pm, CBC A106
"Compassion in Daily Living"
Lama Tenzin Dhonden, Personal Emissary of Peace to Gyalwa Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama

Sponsored by Interfaith Council of Southern Nevada, Stillpoint Center for Spiritual Development, and the UNLV Department of Philosophy. Visit http://www.interfaithsn.org/calendar.html for more information.

6. Monday, Feb 12, 2007 - 7:30pm, MSU Theater (Room 111)
"The Origin of Species: Then and Now"
Michael Ruse, Department of Philosophy, Florida State University

2009 is the 200th anniversary of the great English naturalist Charles Darwin and the 150th anniversary of the publication of his great work The Origin of Species, in which he argued that all organisms (including humans) are the end results of a long, slow process of development - evolution - by a mechanism known as natural selection. Today, in America especially, Darwin and his ideas are under attack from scientists (like Stephen Jay Gould) and Christians, especially the Intelligent Design supporters. Is Darwinism truly an exhausted paradigm, or is there life yet in the old dog? I argue strongly that the theory of Origin is a great theory, that it works today as never before, and that the critics are hopelessly gloriously mistaken
Sponsored by the Great Works Academic Certificate Program Committee, CSUN, and the Honors College.

7. Friday, Feb. 23, 2007 - 5:30pm, CBC C122
"Actually"
Scott Soames, Department of Philosophy, USC, Los Angeles

My topic is the metaphysics and epistemology of actuality and possibility, plus the semantics and pragmatics of the language we use to talk about it. By 'actuality' I mean the actual world-state. By 'possibility' I mean all possible world-states, both the metaphysically and the epistemically possible. The actual world-state is the way the world is. Metaphysically possible states are ways the world could have been. Epistemically possible states are ways the world can coherently be conceived to be. In this talk I will sketch a conception of what these world-states are, and explore how we know about them.

8. Friday, Mar. 2, 2007 - 5:30pm, MSU 207
"Free Will: New Directions for an Ancient Problem"
Robert Kane, University of Texas, Austin

In a number of writings over the past two decades, I have sought to answer four questions about free will: (1) Is it compatible (or incompatible) with determinism? (2) Why do we want it? (3) Can we make sense of a free will that is incompatible with determinism? (4) Can such a free will be reconciled with modern images of human beings in the natural and social sciences? On all four questions, I have tried to point current debates about free will in new directions. Is this essay, I discuss some of these new directions.

9. Friday, Mar. 2, 2007 - 7:30 pm, Barrick Museum Auditorium
"Are All Values Relative? Seeking Common Ethical Ground in a Pluralist World"
Robert Kane, Department of Philosophy, University of Texas, Austin

Are there objective values, and can we find common ethical ground in the welter of conflicting contemporary voices and beliefs? In this lecture it will be argued that pluralism need not lead to relativism, but that it may instead lead to a number of universal ethical principles.

10. Friday, Mar. 9, 2007 - 5:30pm, MSU 222
"Justificatory Independence and Revolutionary Maximalism"
Matthew Noah Smith, Department of Philosophy, Yale University

Normally, we think that the moral status of an institution determines the moral status of those rules and relationships that are dependent upon the institution for their existence. In this paper, I challenge this view. In particular, I argue for the justificatory independence thesis: the rules and relationships that are dependent upon certain political and social institutions are authoritative even when those institutions are corrupt or illegitimate. I defend this thesis by appeal to three related arguments, an argument appealing to the value of the integrity of one's political commitments, a free-rider argument and an argument from respect for other's practical agency. I conclude the paper by arguing that what I call the revolutionary maximalism thesis follows from the justificatory independence thesis. The revolutionary maximalism thesis is the claim that the only morally appropriate response to an illegitimate or unjust institution whose rules display justificatory independence is either complete conformity or sincere revolutionary activity.

11. Friday, Mar. 23, 2007 - 5:30pm, CBC C114
"Denial through Assertion: The Role of 'False'"
Brad Armour-Garb, Department of Philosophy, University at Albany/SUNY

Suppose someone were to ask you (editing Groucho Marx), "Have you stopped beating your dog?" This seems like an ordinary "yes-no" question, but neither answer seems to get things right for someone who has never beaten her dog. Any such dog owner would (or: should) deny that she has stopped beating her dog--in fact, she would reject the thought that she has ever done such a thing. But saying, for example, that it is false that she has stopped beating her dog, or (what sounds even worse) that no, she has not stopped beating her dog don't seem to work as denials. Neither says what she means to convey, for if she says either, it seems right to conclude that she is still beating the poor animal! How, then, can she deny that she has stopped beating her dog, when the only obvious means for doing so wind up committing her to something that she also rejects? A number of philosophers (who I will call 'Cancellers') have postulated a separate 'speech act' of denial and have argued that we can (and do) sometimes deny a proposition whose negation we do not--because we cannot--assert. In this talk, I introduce and motivate the canceller view, after which I will provide reasons for rejecting it. My goal is not to provide an answer to the question raised above (although I will provide something of an answer). Rather, I aim to explain how the problem arises, to draw some conclusions about what it shows, and to shed light on certain (heretofore neglected) features of 'truth talk'.

12. Friday, Mar. 30, 2007 - 5:30pm, MSU 222
"Conceptions of Self-Deception"
Erik Lindland, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Self-deception seems oxymoronic on its face. How can one deceive oneself? After all, in normal cases of deception one person knows the truth (the deceiver) while the other does not (the deceived). Does this imply that when we deceive ourselves we both know and don't know the truth? Furthermore, self-deception seems to pose paradoxical questions about intention. Can we intend to employ a strategy to hide some fact from ourselves? If the strategy works then this process is not present to consciousness. So, in what sense have we then intended anything? On the other hand, the results of self-deception are so precise it is hard to understand them as anything but intentional. In this paper I will explore various ways people have attempted to deal with these apparent paradoxes in recent analytic literature, noting their respective strengths and weaknesses. Finally, I will conclude with a proposal based on the work of SÃƒÂƒÃ,Â¸ren Kierkegaard.

13. Friday, Apr. 13, 2007 - 5:30pm, CBC C122
"Virtue Ethics"
Paul Schollmeier, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

14. Friday, Apr. 20, 2007 - 5:30pm, CBC C122
"Indeterminism and Branching Time without Truth-Value Gaps"
Alan Rhoda, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

A natural way to model indeterministic causation is by means of a branching future depicting all of the causal possibilities as of a given point in time. Most authors who have taken this approach (e.g., Thomason, McCall, Belnap, etc.) have assumed that branching time requires denying bivalence, such that propositions about future contingents are neither true nor false. A few authors (e.g., Prior, Hartshorne), however, have thought that branching time and bivalence could be reconciled. In this talk I defend the second position. The denial of bivalence for future contingents is motivated by the assumption that corresponding pairs of "will" and "will not" propositions are contradictories. I will present three arguments that they are not contradictories, but contraries, and therefore are jointly false in the case of future contingents.

15. Friday, Apr. 27, 2007 - 5:30pm, MSU 207
"The Story about Propositions"
James Woodbridge, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

The notion of a proposition plays a central role in philosophical theorizing about language and the mind. Propositions--abstract entities supposedly denoted by expressions of the form that p--are held to be the things we believe and know, what your beliefs can share with mine or with other thought-states, what thought-states can share with assertions and other speech acts, and what utterances from different languages can all mean in common. With such a variety of functions associated with propositions, this notion simplifies, unifies, and systematizes theorizing about our thought and talk. Nevertheless, there are strong reasons for denying that propositions really exist, mainly due to their supposed abstract nature--considerations similar to those that generate doubts about the existence of numbers. In this talk I will explain these reasons for resisting ontological commitment to propositions, but I will then explain how we can retain our talk seemingly about propositions and the theoretical and expressive advantages it offers. The account of proposition-talk I propose explains the discourse as an "as if" talk grounded in a special kind of pretense.

16. Friday, April 27, 2007 - 7:30pm, Barrick Museum Auditorium
"Are Emotions Rational?"
Marion Ledwig, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

On the one hand we consider emotions as senseless, passive eruptions that interfere with reasoning. On the other hand we say that the heart has its reasons. I will discuss the ways in which emotions can be considered rational.

17. Friday, May 4, 2007 - 5:30pm, MSU 222
"'Refer' Madness"
Michael O'Rourke, Department of Philosophy, University of Idaho

In this talk, I consider the concepts of reference and referring with a view to determining whether it makes sense to account for them together. After reviewing the literature a bit, I describe a model based on the notion of aiming that

purports to explain both concepts in a systematic and unified fashion. While this appeals to me (at least), I'm not convinced it is adequate for reasons that I will adduce. I close by sketching an alternative approach that is in some ways akin to the recent work of Howard Wettstein.

FALL 2006

1. Monday, Sept. 11, 2006 - 4:00pm, CBC C237
"Toward A More Restrictive Approach to Using the Principle of Double Effect in the Context of Military Targeting"
M. J. Carl Ficarrotta, Professor of Philosophy, U.S. Air Force Academy

In this informal talk, I'll review my understanding of the principle of double effect (PDE), give a few examples of its application which I take to be morally plausible, and then introduce the classic use of the PDE as a defense of military "collateral damage" (which I think is often morally problematic). I believe the third part of the PDE, i.e., the restriction that the evil effect may not be used as a means to produce the good effect, relies for its force on a certain conception of the person. Importantly, this same conception of the person should put serious restrictions on calculating the proportionality of the good and evil found in the fourth part of the PDE.

2. Friday, Oct. 20, 2006 - 3:00pm, CBC C114
"Skepticism, Contextualism, Externalism and Modality"
Ron Wilburn, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Herein, I argue for the following two claims. Contextualist strategies to tame or localize epistemic skepticism are hopeless if contextualist factors are construed internalistically. But, it is only on an internalistic interpretation that such contextualist strategies, as such, can even be motivated. While these two claims do not give us an argument for skepticism, they do give us an argument that contextualism, as such, is not likely to provide an argument against skepticism.

3. Friday, Nov. 3, 2006 - 3:00pm, CBC C114
"Peirce and Lonergan on Questions, Inference, and the Process of Inquiry"
Alan Rhoda, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

The topic concerns Peirce's tri-fold division of inferences into deductive, inductive, and abductive. I try to clarify and defend this classification by showing how each type of inference plays a distinct role in a larger process of inquiry and that, in so doing, answers a distinct type of question. In short, questions drive inquiry, and different types of questions evoke different types of inferences in answer to those questions.

4. Friday, November 17, 2006 - 7:30pm, Barrick Museum Auditorium
"Patients and Prisoners – The Ethics of Lethal Injection"
Gerald Dworkin, Department of Philosophy, University of California, Davis

In the U.S., prison doctors supervise the administration of lethal injections. We will explore the ethics of physician participation in the administration of capital punishment. Does it violate medical ethics for a doctor to participate in lethal injection? Does it ultimately matter what the nature of that participation is? (Co-sponsored by the Department of Philosophy and the Boyd School of Law)

5. Friday, December 1, 2006 - 3:00pm, CBC C122
"Bugbear and Open Door Policy: Epictetus on Death"
W. O. Stephens, Department of Philosophy, Creighton University

I argue that Epictetus' subtle position on euthanasia is easy to conflate with his apparent endorsement of an 'open door' policy that permits, and in some texts seems callously to invite, suicide. While Epictetus endorses someone living true to his prosōpon (the kind of person he is) by refusing to undergo life-saving surgery, in the terminology of contemporary bioethics, this could— anachronism aside—be described more accurately as sanctioning passive, voluntary euthanasia than as justifying actively taking one's own life. Epictetus holds that neither death nor pain is to be feared, but rather the fear of pain or death must be overcome. I explain why Epictetus believes that the fear of death is the epitome of human evils. Socrates debunked this fear by calling death a mormolukeion, a 'bugbear.' Epictetus embraces this Socratic understanding of death, refines it to express his distinctive Stoic perspective, and vigorously tries to persuade his students of the truth of this perspective.

6. Friday, Dec. 8, 2006 - 3:00pm, CBC C122
"In the Mood"
Marion Ledwig, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas