

UNLV

PHILOSOPHY COLLOQUIUM SERIES

SPRING 2022

1. Friday March 4, 2022, 3:00pm in CBC C212 (IN-PERSON)

“Violent Resistance as Radical Choice.”

Tamara Fakhoury, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

What reasons stand in favor of (or against) violent resistance to oppression? I distinguish two kinds of normative reasons that bear relevantly in such a practical deliberation. I argue that in addition to reasons of impartial morality, victims’ personal projects and relationships may also provide reasons for (or against) violent resistance. Moreover, there is no guarantee that conflicts will not occur between such reasons. Thus, some acts of violent resistance may arise from situations of radical choice in which impartial moral reasons and personal reasons pull the agent in opposite directions. Regardless of what we ultimately think agents facing such decisions ought to do all things considered, recognizing such conflicts is crucial for understanding the circumstances that give rise to violence and for better sympathizing with victims who are pushed to such extreme modes of resistance.

2. Friday April 1, 2022, 3:00pm in CBC C212 (IN-PERSON)

“The Hard Problem of Content is Neither.”

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

For the past 40 years, philosophers have assumed that the key to understanding mental representation in cognitive systems is to develop a successful naturalistic theory of representational content – a theory in which content is reduced to some combination of natural relations, entities, properties and/or states of affairs. This has led to an outlook where the importance of content has been heavily inflated, while the significance of the representational vehicle has been largely ignored. However, the success of this enterprise has been thwarted by a number of mysterious and allegedly anti-naturalistic, irreducible dimensions of representational content. The challenge of addressing these difficulties has come to be known as the “hard problem of content”.

In my talk, I'm going to argue that much of this is wrong-headed and grounded in some fundamental confusions. By focusing upon the functionality of representational vehicles (as recommended by teleosemanticists) and comparing them with other natural functional entities, such as those associated with natural camouflage, we can begin to see that most of the allegedly mysterious and intractable aspects of content are really just mundane quirks associated with lots of everyday functional kinds and relations. Moreover, we can see that our explanatory priorities are backwards: instead of expecting a theory of content to serve as the key to understanding representation, we should instead expect a theory of representation function to serve the key to understanding how content occurs naturally. In other words, content is not the thing that makes a neural state into a representation; instead, a neural state's operations are what make one of its relations to the world a content relation.

3. Friday, April 15, 2022, 3:00pm in CBC C212 (IN-PERSON)

“The Use of Intuitions in Ethical Theory: From the Ptolemaic to the Rational.”

Alastair Norcross, Dept. of Philosophy, University Colorado, Boulder

Pretty much all ethical theorizing makes use of intuitions. Intuitive judgments about real or hypothetical cases, and about rules or principles play a central role in both theory construction and criticism. In this paper, I situate the use of various kinds of ethical intuitions in a range of approaches to ethical argument. I describe a rough spectrum of approaches from the ‘Ptolemaic’ at one end to the ‘Rational’ at the other. The Ptolemaic approach takes intuitive judgments about hypothetical (and sometimes actual) cases to be (almost) fixed data points, which the correct theory has to accommodate. The Rational approach treats such intuitions as fairly easily revisable, in light of considerations which may serve to undermine their doxastic significance (such as that the holding of such intuitive judgments may serve the interests of the individual who holds them, or of those who are well placed to influence the intuitive judgments of others). I argue that an approach nearer the Rational end of the spectrum is preferable to one nearer the Ptolemaic end.

4. Friday, April 29, 2022, 3:00pm in CBC C146 (IN-PERSON: [Note the new room!](#))

“The Inherent Problem with Mass Incarceration.”

Raff Donelson, Dickinson School of Law, Penn State University

Commentators have sharply criticized mass incarceration in the United States, but virtually all commentary has focused on contingent features of mass incarceration. For all the critics have said, there does not appear to be any problem with mass incarceration itself. There is only a problem with a racist system of mass incarceration, a classist system of mass incarceration, an expensive system of mass incarceration, and so on. This talk develops a critique of mass incarceration that strikes at its core. On the view propounded in this talk, mass incarceration is inherently wrong because it requires mass unfreedom, a condition that no one should accept.

5. Friday, May 6, 2022, 9:00am (REMOTE, [Note the time](#))

“Must Feminists Be Individualists?”

Serene Khader, Dept. of Philosophy, Brooklyn College and CUNY Graduate Center

Prof. Khader will discuss her book *Decolonizing Universalism: A Transnational Feminist Ethic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

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**For more information contact the
Philosophy Department at: 702-895-3433**