Monday, May 30, 2016
2:30PM
Class of 1879 Hall Courtyard
Opening Statement

John Burgess
John N. Woodhull Professor of Philosophy
Princeton, University
Departmental Representative

Announcement of Honors

Presentation of Prizes

Tomb Prize

Dickinson Prize

John Martyn Warbeke 1903
Prize in Metaphysics and Epistemology

John Martyn Warbeke 1903
Prize in Esthetics

Class of 1869 Prize in Ethics

Alexander Guthrie McCosh Prize

Presentation of Books

Refreshments
Pranav Neel Bethala
Jordan Kathryn Carter
Philip Eisenbrey Cooke
Godfrey Eugene Furchtgott
Johannes Magnus Hallermeier
Natalie Dyson Hejduk
Catherine Pettibone Hochman
Xiaoyi George Jian
Michael Wieslaw Kosk
Michael Christopher Lindburg
Brian Alexander Litchfield
Austen Drew McDougal
Sean Oh
Michael Jess Patton
Joshua Isaac Pitkoff
Justin Theo Poser
Zachary Michael Shaw
Lauren Jessica Sims
Alvaro Sottil
Cynthia Ann Tremonte
Jiemin Tina Wei
Christina Marie Welsh
Takim Williams
Chair
Michael Smith

Departmental Representative
Desmond Hogan (Fall)
John P. Burgess (Spring)

Director of Graduate Students
Hendrik Lorenz

Professor
John P. Burgess
John M. Cooper
Adam Newman Elga
Delia Graff Fara
Daniel Garber
Hans Halvorson
Gilbert H. Harman
Mark Johnston
Thomas P. Kelly
Sarah-Jane Leslie
Hendrik Lorenz
Benjamin C. A. Morison
Alexander Nehamas
Gideon A. Rosen
Michael A. Smith
FACULTY

Associate Professor
Shamik Dasgupta
Elizabeth Harman
Desmond Hogan
Boris C. Kment

Assistant Professor
Johann D. Frick
Sarah E. McGrath

Lecturer
Simon Cullen
Victoria McGeer
Jonathan Thakkar
Pranav Neel Bethala
This thesis explores the value of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups that exists beyond just the values of their individual members. It argues that this value emerges from both the aesthetic value of the existence of these groups and the instrumental value that they provide to their members. It concludes with the potential implications of these findings for public policy.

Jordan Kathryn Carter
This thesis examines various ethical implications of neurological enhancement—the use of biotechnical means to make the brain “better than well.” I argue that cognitive and mood enhancement can threaten important things of value. Specifically, cognitive enhancement erodes the need for perseverance as resilience, and mood enhancement exposes individuals with certain character traits to harmful pressures.

Philip Eisenbrey Cooke
Nietzsche thought a great deal about our relationship to truth. Some interpreters have argued that Nietzsche maintained the 'falsification thesis,' which claims that all of our beliefs are (in some sense or another) false. This thesis attempts to exonerate him from that radical view and provide an alternative picture of his ideas about truth and falsification.

Godfrey Eugene Furchtgott
In this paper, I explicate Fred Sommers’ natural-language based Term Functor Logic and compare it with the canonical Modern Predicate Logic. I suggest that the processes of regimentation as well as the formal underpinnings of the logic systems are important to consider in comparing the systems. I argue that in the absence of absolute inferential differences between the systems, we ought to adopt a logically pluralist position.
Johannes Magnus Hallermeier

In politics, economic migrants are considered fundamentally different from refugees: while the latter deserve admission to foreign countries, the former can be turned away. I argue that this is mistaken: the same arguments why somebody deserves admission apply to both. In particular, I investigate arguments from mutual aid and from causal responsibility.

Natalie Dyson Hejduk

My thesis explores how Plato treats ideas related to belief and knowledge first in the Republic and then in the Theaetetus. I find that Plato changes his views from a strict separation of the realms of belief and knowledge to a more integrated view, a result of a change in his picture of reality.

Catherine Pettibone Hochman

This thesis compares the logical systems of Aristotle and Frege in light of Bertrand Russell’s criticism that Aristotelian subject-predicate logic does not accord relations their due weight. Although the criticism is unsupported as Russell offers it, after outlining the two systems, I conclude that his claim is true, and that by analyzing inferences with relations in Aristotelian and Fregean logic, we can see how subject-predicate logic is limited in being unable to capture relations fully.

Xiaoyi George Jian

If external physical causes determine our actions, it seems we cannot be free and morally responsible. I argue we can be free and responsible because we have perceived freedom, barring the presence of certain conditions that excuse from legal responsibility. In addition, I argue that neuroscience cannot be the primary way to determine if one has these excusing conditions, because excusing conditions are behaviorally defined.
Michael Wieslaw Kosk

This thesis is concerned with the possibility and process of extracting knowledge from the social world, amidst uncertainty about the epistemology of individuals living in an ideology-laden world. The concern is how one is to evaluate beliefs about socially determined matters, such as the food-ness property of cows or the cuteness of crop-tops.

Michael Christopher Lindburg

This thesis explored the issues surrounding Personal Identity as argued in Parfit’s Reasons and Persons. Beginning with Parfit’s Reductionism and his arguments on the unimportance of Identity, I sought to determine the importance of identity in survival and whether Parfit’s Relation R accurately reflected the important things in survival. I argued that Parfit’s rejection of the self failed to reflect what we hold to be intuitively important, and that an intermediate Reductionist View that still valued identity was more attractive.

Brian Alexander Litchfield

In my thesis, I investigate Infinitism, a theory of epistemic justification that claims that such justification depends on an infinite chain of reasons. Specifically, I motivate the look to Infinitism by noting problems with the more traditional theories of epistemic justification, substantiate a presently thin part of the doctrine (its account of how the individual must relate to the chain), and then work with that substantiation to refute the most potentially threatening objection to the position.
Austen Drew McDougal

My thesis considers whether someone should be punished less (or not at all) when she has complete memory loss of the relevant crime. Utilitarianism, rather than supporting our intuition that full punishment is somehow problematic in the case of the amnesiac, furnishes a solid defense of full punishment. Retributivism, on the other hand, does provide some reasons for mitigating punishment—namely, that the ideal goods of punishment can’t be fully achieved and that some potential evils of punishment arise in the case of the amnesiac.

Sean Oh

The central question addressed in the thesis is whether Eccles’ narrative of dualist interactionism is convincingly better than any other dominant consciousness theory that preserves the causal closure of the physical realm. The answer defended is that, for the most part, it is not.

Michael Jess Patton

Searle believes that the Chinese room argument has shown that the instantiation of a program is never sufficient for understanding in any machine. Searle is wrong and it is logically possible that understanding can be reached through the instantiation of a program on certain machines that have minimal causal power.
Joshua Isaac Pitkoff
This paper addresses the question of moral luck, or whether moral responsibility can outrun control. I outline Michael Zimmerman’s attempt to deny moral luck in the realm of hypological judgments (about praise and blame), and argue that his notion of ‘responsibility tout court’ simply registers aretaic judgments (of moral character) instead. This problematizes both his denial of hypological moral luck and his secondary thesis affirming responsibility without freedom.

Justin Theo Poser
My thesis was a study of the core concepts of John Rawls’ *Theory of Justice* through the lens of moral relativism. The main idea was to replace Rawls’ equality-based justifications with a different justification: protection of people’s ability to live their lives in accordance with their own morals.

Zachary Michael Shaw
I first orient the reader to social network sites’ (SNSs) role as a re-ontologizing technology. After an analysis of the various theories of personal identity, I conclude that the informational meta-patterns theory can best explain SNSs’ effects on our personal identities. From an understanding of this theory, I conclude that we, ourselves, are only patterns of information that we use to comprehend our worlds.
Lauren Jessica Sims
What does empirical, psychological research on situated rationality mean for contemporary theories of self-knowledge and moral responsibility in philosophy? In this paper, I consider four cases of non-deliberative thought and action — stereotype threat, implicit bias, unreflective voting decisions, and manipulative advertising practices that lead to harm. Extending Victoria McGeer’s points in *The Moral Development of First-Person Authority*, I clarify how supporting democratic policies that mitigate unwanted effects of these judgments can develop our own self-knowledge and capacity for individual responsibility.

Alvaro Sottil
This thesis is an exploration of Carnap’s central notion of definition in his book, *The Logical Construction of the World*. I look at Carnap’s notion of definition and then I evaluate criticisms that have been raised against Carnap’s project in the *Aufbau*, concluding that most of them are not decisive.

Cynthia Ann Tremonte
This paper analyzes the debate between Bertrand Russell and P. F. Strawson regarding the truth-values of definite descriptions, particularly those of non-referring descriptions. I examine philosophical trends that have influenced the debate. I argue that context and truth-value intuitions play a large role in determining truth-values.
Jiemin Tina Wei

Francis Bacon is known as the ‘father of modern science’ for his writings on the scientific method. Travel and gender tropes are widespread but misunderstood throughout his works. I argue that these tropes reveal Bacon’s epistemology of science—one that is quasi-moral, characterized by discipline, and communicated in relational terms.

Christina Marie Welsh

This thesis explores Aristotle’s theory on friendship and his larger ethical system in general from *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle helps show that our society has largely failed to account for: 1) the well-lived life being that of the moral life, where the focus is on your internal state, being a person of good character; 2) the integral role others play in our morality; 3) the role of friends in morality and the well-lived life in general. Ultimately, we have failed to give friendship its proper due and Aristotle helps fill this void and provide deep thought and discussion about what friendship is and why we need friends.

Takim Williams

While proponents of the permissibility of abortion have focused primarily on the mother’s right to choose, I argue that the father must have a parallel right in certain circumstances. Pregnant women may wrong the biological fathers of their children by aborting against their will.