Monday, June 5, 2017
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 Aesthetics

John Martyn Warbeke 1903  
Prize in Metaphysics and Epistemology

Class of 1869 Prize in Ethics

Alexander Guthrie McCosh Prize

**Presentation of Books**

Refreshments
Miranda del Rey Heard Alperstein
Julie Fei Chen
Monique Kathryn Claiborne
Joshua Michael Collins
Jim Wynton Cunningham
Isaac Benjamin Fink
Hillel Benjamin Friedman
David Michael Goldstein
Raeva Simone Kumar
George Christopher Kunkel
James William LoPresti
John Clayton Marsh
Daniel Cai Marshall
Erik Mark Massenzio
Samuel Amos Mathews
Samuel Rudolph Matzner
Kathryn Nicole Mirabella
Manuel Montori IV
Laura Elsabeth Ong
Sumer Parikh
Nathan William Raab
Elliot Moshe Salinger
Christian Gerald Say
Andrew Richard Seastream
Steffen Alexander Seitz
Maria Lucia Seykora
Ruby Shao
Vidushi Sharma
Matthew Elijah Silberman
Joseph Jerome Smith
Jenna Elizabeth Spitzer
John Silvanus Wilson III
Kevin Alexander Wong
Jeffrey Wu
Chair
Michael A. Smith

Acting Chair
Sarah-Jane Leslie (Spring)

Departmental Representative
John P. Burgess

Director of Graduate Studies
Hendrik Lorenz (Fall)
Gilbert H. Harman (Spring)

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

Associate Professor
Desmond Hogan
Boris C. Kment
Sarah McGrath
Assistant Professor
Johann D. Frick

Lecturer
Grace Helton,
Lecturer in the Humanities Council and Philosophy; Cotsen Postdoctoral Fellow in the Society of Fellows

Victoria McGeer,
Senior Research Scholar and Lecturer,
also with University Center for Human Values

Dimitrios Tsementzis

Postdoctoral Research Associate
Simon Cullen

Postgraduate Research Associate
Hrishikesh Joshi
Simon Shogry
Miranda del Rey Heard Alperstein
This thesis challenges Thomas Hobbes’ account of natural human individuality, which he uses to justify a state wherein all citizens surrender their rights to a sovereign entity. The argument first demonstrates how Hobbes’ account of human nature requires sociality and then identifies benevolence and benevolent exchange as the basis of unregulated human sociality.

Julie Fei Chen
Normative theories of discrimination tend to be framed around either the value of liberty, or that of equality. While theories based on one value or the other often don’t point in opposing directions, I identify a case in which they might come apart.

Monique Kathryn Claiborne
I offer an account of the aesthetic pleasure that users derive from interactive technology such as the Apple MacBook and iPhone. I argue that human-computer interaction with these products is a mimesis of human-human interaction. Users experience an aesthetic interaction with such products because they lend themselves to what I call the aesthetic stance, which occurs when the user oscillates between awareness and unawareness that the object is a mimesis.

Joshua Michael Collins
This thesis first attempts to construct a practical moral framework for business decision-making. Then, it argues that corporations are moral actors, and that treating them and expecting them to act as such will lead to more ethical business practices, higher profits, and more societal good.

Jim Wynton Cunningham
This thesis is concerned with the rationality of belief. Is it rational, for example, to believe in God even when one does not have sufficient evidence that God exists? Thomas Kelly argues it is never rational to believe when one does not have sufficient evidence. I challenge his argument, concluding that practical considerations can rationalize belief.
Isaac Benjamin Fink
I analyze Derek Parfit’s ‘Man with Future Tuesday Indifference’ and the challenge the example poses for internalist theories of practical rationality. My analysis of the example and responses to it suggests that the second-order debate about reasons may reduce to a first-order disagreement about the (dis)value of pain.

Hillel Benjamin Friedman
In his groundbreaking essay entitled “The Ethics of Belief,” William Clifford writes, “It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything on insufficient evidence.” In what normative ethical sense does Clifford mean “wrong?” After considering three theoretical contenders, I suggest that rule-consequentialism best supports Clifford’s principle.

David Michael Goldstein
My thesis examines Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics using soccer. In both soccer and morality, the right action and the type of thinking that guides one towards that action are situation-specific. The Beautiful Game also offers insight into how moral improvement can be achieved into benefits of group activity.

Raeva Simone Kumar
This thesis discusses the debate on centered possible worlds. The focus is on defending and extending David Lewis’ theory of what constitutes a center. It explores an extended view of Lewis’ theory, and determines that individuals must be conscious in order to be centers of possible worlds. It also argues that considering centered possible worlds over possible worlds in general can affect the beliefs of a rational agent.
George Christopher Kunkel
This thesis explores moral blame at the interpersonal level. I attempt to show how a certain one-sidedness has pervaded many accounts of blame, focusing solely on the perspective of the person doing the blaming at the expense of the perspective of the person being blamed. In doing so, I argue for a more dialogical account.

James William LoPresti
This thesis explores the nature of an agent’s intentional actions. I argue in favor of an account that analyzes intentional action in terms of an agent’s beliefs about her action, with a particular focus on the agent’s practical knowledge and practical way of thinking about her action.

John Clayton Marsh
Approaches to moral theorizing that rely on our particular intuitions are problematic because (i) we lack justification for relying on our particular intuitions and (ii) Joshua Greene’s research provides reason to believe that our particular intuitions are misleading. I conclude with a defense of the Theoretical Approach and rational intuitions.

Daniel Cai Marshall
Should we take our intuitions as evidence in ethics? I defend the practice of “relying on intuition” from objections to do with disagreement and bias. I offer guidelines for distinguishing between veridical and misleading intuitions. Unlike Michael Huemer’s similar guidelines, my guidelines vindicate reliance on intuitions about particular cases.

Erik Mark Massenzio
Using Aristotle’s metaphysics and ethics, my thesis attempts to lay the groundwork for the small but contentious claim that intent alone does not make an act virtuous; instead, we also need to make sure that the acts we choose are intrinsically ordered to the proper goals.
Samuel Amos Mathews
Anti-realists employ evolutionary debunking arguments to undermine realist theories of value. I analyze Sharon Street’s debunking argument, the Darwinian dilemma, and defend it from two realist objections. However, I then argue that Street’s constructivism is susceptible to her own debunking argument and that this tension suggests we need a moral error theory.

Samuel Rudolph Matzner
I expand the embodiment theory of artwork ontology. Embodiment theory has considerable advantages. However, it fails to explain why artworks are more sensitive to certain changes than other objects. I define and explicate cultural inflexibility, a property measuring an artwork’s ontological sensitivity to seemingly minor alterations in its physical characteristics.

Kathryn Nicole Mirabella
My thesis examines enlightenment as the representation of moral perfection in both Immanuel Kant’s philosophy and in Buddhism. Despite their apparent differences, striking parallels emerge between their respective concepts of enlightenment. In examining these parallels, I hope to offer a fresh perspective on Kantian morality and demonstrate why Buddhism should be incorporated into traditional academic philosophy.

Manuel Montori IV
The expected utility hypothesis represents a broadly accepted view of rational individual decision-making. I argue that certain cases of interpersonal resource allocation ought to be governed by this rule, which conflicts with widely accepted egalitarian views that claim that we should favor the interests of the less well-off.
Laura Elsabeth Ong
When we try to formulate a principle for when one person’s right may be infringed in order to promote the welfare of one or more others, we confront two unappealing alternatives: a quantitative view of rights, and a view on which rights trump considerations of welfare in every case.

Sumer Parikh
The development of superintelligent AI could be an existential risk to humanity. Morality-based approaches to control the superintelligent AI must be predicated on a conception of moral status that would grant human beings Full Moral Status and requires the AI to treat us ethically. Such conceptions force us to re-evaluate the way we treat non-human animals.

Nathan William Raab
Distribution-sensitive consequentialists believe that some ways of distributing important social resources are intrinsically better than others. I argue that the distribution-sensitive consequentialist’s metaphysics of value is inconsistent with several popular and otherwise plausible theories in metaethics, and that such inconsistency should trouble distribution-sensitive consequentialists.

Elliot Moshe Salinger
Much meta-ethical inquiry presumes Quinean ontological views. Thomas Scanlon has recently argued for a meta-ethical view, Reasons Fundamentalism, which rejects these assumptions, invoking Carnap for support. My thesis finds Scanlon’s reliance upon Carnap’s philosophy wanting, but defends an alternative Neo-Carnapian account that is, in important ways, realist, cognitivist, and objectivist.
Christian Gerald Say  
This thesis examines the famous debate between Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg about the nature and value of painting. I argue that their dispute, though couched in metaphysical claims about the nature of art, ultimately reduces to a normative disagreement about the purpose of painting.

Andrew Richard Seastream  
This thesis proposes an alternative version of the equal access to information theory that courts should use in addition to current theories. This alternative theory would also impose a duty on individuals who have material information that is not legally accessible by other shareholders.

Steffen Alexander Seitz  
This thesis attempts to formulate a Platonic theory of punishment. I analyze the moral psychologies given in the Protagoras and the Republic and derive theories of punishment from each. I conclude that any Platonic theory of punishment must be (1) offender-centric (2) focused on the disposition of the offender and (3) reformatory.

Maria Lucia Seykora  
I argue for what the “I” in Descartes’ Meditations is, in light of John Locke’s arguments concerning substance and personal identity, and Hume’s bundle theory of the mind. The main result of my argument is that the Cogito argument does not give an absolutely certain proposition.

Ruby Shao  
I propose the Moral Wager: If the evidence will never justify believing or denying a proposition, the agent should believe when believing has a higher expected moral value. Believing has a higher expected moral value by better promoting the agent’s intellectual virtues, morally good actions, and/or morally better states of affairs.
Vidushi Sharma
In this thesis, I argue that we should reject the hypothesis that we are politically rational, i.e., that our mechanisms for political belief formation are truth-conducive. This is because political beliefs distribute bimodally with non-random measurement errors across orthogonal issues. I consider alternate explanations of the distributions of our political beliefs based on psychological, rather than alethic, hypotheses. Finally, I offer recommendations for individuals and organizations seeking to increase public rationality. I advocate for heightened political skepticism, whereby partisans should generally reduce their convictions in their political views, and present empirical work that suggests that structured reasoning techniques like argument mapping can help facilitate open-minded thinking.

Matthew Elijah Silberman
Most agree that racism should be eliminated, but it’s not as obvious who is responsible for this task. I argue that someone incurs the obligation to combat racism by contributing to or benefiting from racism, whether intentionally or not, and I describe the specific actions involved in fulfilling this obligation.

Joseph Jerome Smith
How do some organizations and societal practices interfere with an individual’s formation of beliefs? Through the dictation of certain principles and methods of living, these groups commit epistemic injustices. This thesis explores the impact religious organizations, moral grandstanding, and educational systems have on the fostering of critical and diverse thought.

Jenna Elizabeth Spitzer
My thesis presents and defends a causal theory of identity: the idea that we can understand who or what an entity interdependently and impermanently is, and the way in which that entity can be considered practically the same entity over time, by understanding that entity’s impermanent and interdependent role in causal relationships.
John Silvanus Wilson III
This thesis enters into discourse with Immanuel Kant’s Critique of the Power of Judgment (CPJ). It engages with §9 in the “Analytic of the Beautiful” and some of its commentators. There has been some confusion over an individual line in the text, which has implications for Kant’s aesthetics and his system of philosophy in general.

Kevin Alexander Wong
In recent years, a moral movement known as ‘effective altruism’ has gained increasing popular purchase. According to its proponents, we have an obligation to redress the world’s inequities through philanthropy, using evidence to identify and undertake the projects that are most conducive to the overall good. This thesis examines whether non-human animals can make ethical claims on our giving, and if so, the weight their interests ought to carry.

Jeffrey Wu
I argue that person X at time t₁ is numerically identical to person Y at time t₂ if and only if they are phenomenally continuous, which, is roughly speaking, having experiential overlap over time. I argue that this is superior to psychological continuity and other theories of identity.