



**PRINCETON UNIVERSITY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**  
**VIRTUAL CLASS DAY EVENT**  
**CLASS OF 2020**



**MONDAY, JUNE 1, 2020**

**2:30PM**

# WELCOME

## **Opening Statement**

John P. Burgess  
John N. Woodhull Professor of Philosophy  
Princeton University  
Director of Undergraduate Studies

## **Announcement of Honors**

### **Presentation of Prizes**

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



## GRADUATING CLASS OF 2020

Daniel Ayodele Afolabi  
Sarel Ben-Or Anbar  
Vidur Yishwa Beharry  
Roxana Sahar Biglari  
Jacob Emerson Caddeau  
Harrison Joel Ceruto  
Jan Domingo Alsina  
Avital Yehudit Fried  
Jonathan Frederick Garaffa  
Emily Claire Hilliard-Arce  
Sarah Warman Hirschfield  
Danielle Paige Hoffman  
Thomas Ray Hoopes  
Rachel Marie Inman  
Hadley Elizabeth Irwin  
William Gregory Johnson  
Jaspreet Singh Kalsi  
Arielle Michelle Lawson  
Miriam Chavkin Li  
Harry Jonathan Lord  
Alexia Cristina Lisa Martinez  
Isaac Carlos Martinez  
Bilal Anand Mubarack  
Bayode Olatunji Okusanya  
Kevin Thomas Parker  
Frederik Arnholdt Hald Pedersen  
Apria Cheree Pinkett  
Ashwin Prasanna  
Caroline Grace Pritt  
Grace Coberly Rogers Searle  
Jacob Joseph Shteingart  
Hayley Siegel  
Joseph Tavoso  
Alvin Huao Zhang  
Kevin Jun Zou



# FACULTY

## **Chair**

Gideon A. Rosen

## **Director of Undergraduate Studies**

John P. Burgess

## **Director of Graduate Studies**

Hendrik Lorenz

Daniel Garber (Spring 2020)

## **Professor**

John P. Burgess

Adam Newman Elga

Daniel Garber

Hans Halvorson

Elizabeth Harman, *also University Center for Human Values*

Mark Johnston

Thomas P. Kelly

Sarah-Jane Leslie

Hendrik Lorenz

Benjamin C. A. Morison

Alexander Nehamas, *also Comparative Literature*

Gideon A. Rosen

Michael A. Smith

## **Associate Professor**

Desmond Hogan

Boris C. Kment

Sarah McGrath

## **Assistant Professor**

Johann D. Frick, *also University Center for Human Values*

Grace E. Helton

Harvey Lederman

Una Stojnic



## FACULTY

### Lecturer

Daniel Berntson

Ian Campbell

Marcus Gibson

Reza Hadisi

Victoria McGeer

Cosim Sayid

Johanna Schmitt

### Associated Faculty

Charles R. Beitz, *Politics*

Andrew Chignell, *Religion, University Center for Human Values*

Robert P. George, *Politics*

Jonathan Gold, *Religion*

Sanjeev R. Kulkarni, *Electrical Engineering*

Melissa S. Lane, *Politics*

Tania Lombrozo, *Psychology*

Alan W. Patten, *Politics*

Philip N. Pettit, *University Center for Human Values*

Peter Singer, *University Center for Human Values*



## SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

### **Daniel Ayodele Afolabi**

This thesis expands upon Fricker's account, arguing that a theory of hermeneutical injustice should consider whether the self is atomistic or relational in order to determine whose experiences are not understood. I then motivate a particular relational view, one inspired from Ubuntu philosophy, on which the self is at least partly composed of significant others. Ultimately, I argue that someone can suffer from hermeneutical injustice in virtue of failing to understand some significant others' experience.

### **Sarel Ben-Or Anbar**

This thesis seeks to extend the new natural law theory's account of morality beyond rational creatures to all sentient beings, grounded in the principle that all creatures who have an interest in and conscious experience of their own well-being are owed equal moral consideration. Furthermore, it offers a critique of Korsgaard's approach to the good in *Fellow Creatures*, arguing that the new natural law theory offers a more consistent account.

### **Roxana Sahar Biglari**

My thesis gathers insight on the mystery of genuine faith through Pascal's Christian apologetics. I offer a reading of his *Pensées* that positions unlikely believers for a spiritual transformation. It first awakens them to their misery, then uplifts them with hope for redemption. Next, it advances the Wager as a means to actualize this hope. Though these alone won't trigger the transformation, they are remarkably influential for the individual who does not take religion seriously.



## SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

### **Jacob Emerson Caddeau**

This thesis is an investigation of moral and spiritual epistemology in the Information Age. I analyze two case studies, one involving social/political speech and one involving information about climate science. I investigate these two cases in order to develop a theory of *sight* on Facebook—how users of these networks are emotionally and spiritually oriented to *see* information presented on social media in a specific way. In developing this notion of sight, I ground my theory in a relativist picture of knowledge, drawing on philosophers Bruno Latour and Michel Foucault. I argue that a theory of *good sight* which we should strive for involves honoring nuance, complexity and depth and trying to see with openness and empathy so that knowledge about subjects can resonate as complete wholes.

### **Harrison Joel Ceruto**

This thesis will explore how the current and general understanding of the American Dream contributes to a specific type of harm called Hermeneutical Injustice. Hermeneutical Injustice denotes a form of injustice which occurs when an individual is blocked from understanding a significant portion of their experience or reality. The paper will focus on how African Americans experience this type of structural injustice due to the meritocracy ethos present in the American Dream.

### **Jan Domingo Alsina**

Philosophy has formal standards that vary across time and place; e.g., in the analytic paradigm there is a formal emphasis—for good reason—on logical clarity and cohesion. But can an emphasis on form come at the cost of profound philosophical



## SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

communication? By contrast, how can intentional formal violations lead to philosophical truths? I examine arguments in the discipline's history that address the limits and possibilities of form.

### **Avital Yehudit Fried**

This thesis examines whether it would be justified to execute the 9/11 defendants who are standing trial at the Guantanamo Bay Military Commissions. I evaluate the justification of the death penalty according to the two primary theories of punishment: retributivism and utilitarianism. I argue that, according to both theories, the death penalty would not be a justified punishment for the defendants.

### **Jonathan Frederick Garaffa**

Social media is strange. Applying Aristotelian friendship theory and Gricean norms of communication to social media, I demonstrate ways in which the norms of social media are quite different from the norms we experience offline. While we may be tempted to view our online interactions as analogous to our offline interactions, I argue that we should be hesitant to classify them as such.

### **Emily Claire Hilliard-Arce**

*Loving Others in the Age of Self-Care* comes at a time when self-care and self-love tell us to remove people from our lives who are not directly benefiting our own well-being. This movement has caused friction in many people's core beliefs to put others before themselves and to work hard to improve the lives of others. The thesis specifically focuses on friendships - the relationship that C.S. Lewis calls "the most unnecessary and unnatural."





## SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

### **Sarah Warman Hirschfield**

This thesis sharpens two blurred lines concerning sexual relations. First, what is the line between rape and ordinary sexual intercourse? Second, when can people be punished for crossing it? On a standard theory of criminal responsibility, some people who commit rape negligently cannot be held responsible for their actions. I argue that this leads to a puzzle about punishment and moral repair.

### **Daniella Paige Hoffman**

In this thesis I focus on the overlooked nuance available in Aristotle's understanding of voluntariness in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Once we recognize how Aristotle allows for different levels of voluntariness, we can interpret Aristotle as building an attractive relationship of correspondence between a hierarchy of voluntariness and a hierarchy of blameworthiness. This interpretation reconciles the challenges scholars often face when using Aristotle's account of the voluntary to understand Aristotle's conception of blame.

### **Thomas Ray Hoopes**

In this thesis, I investigate the potential for aesthetic experience in virtual reality. Using John Dewey's *Art as Experience* and Theodore Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, I explore ways in which their criteria are compatible with various VR programs and how developers might employ their ideologies in environment design and hypertext.



## SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

### **Rachel Marie Inman**

Climate change is a pressing ethical problem. Are individuals who participate in greenhouse gas-intensive systems morally responsible for their participation? This thesis assesses three main arguments that have been made in favor of individual responsibility for climate change: causality arguments, group arguments, and the collective responsibility argument. Ultimately, I argue for the affirmative: individuals are responsible when we view climate change in a collective context.

### **Hadley Elizabeth Irwin**

At the center of John Broome's *Climate Matters* lies a striking claim that, although the twofold distinction between duties of justice and of beneficence and between duties of the collective and of the individual seems orthogonal, in the context of climate change, duties of justice only have significant application at the individual level. In this thesis, I employ a unique rights-based proposal to analyze how the Non-Identity Problem informs Broome's assignment of moral labor.

### **William Gregory Johnson**

Through critical analysis of Lawrence Blum's theory of racism, I supplement Tommie Shelby's "social criticism" model for the philosophical study of racism and construct my own argument for self-racialization redefinition of races. This self-racialization redefinition of race calls to promote racial pride and power by rejecting the white



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supremacist inferiorizing definitions that have been bestowed upon minority racial groups throughout western society. I work to further the philosophical discussions of race and racism in hopes of fighting for racial understanding and racial egalitarianism.

### **Jaspreet Singh Kalsi**

The tetra lemma is a logical tool used by Buddhist philosophers. It contains four elusive alternatives, the natures of which have been debated for 2000+ years. I describe many proposed forms of the tetralemma and point out flaws in them. I then present my own form that utilizes the conventional and ultimate distinction to solve the aforementioned problems. Finally, I connect my form to the novel reading I propose of Nagarjuna called “Ontological Expressivism.”

### **Arielle Michelle Lawson**

This thesis examines why inequalities in health outcomes are a moral problem. I conclude that these inequalities within countries are unjust because they evidence a further injustice, namely unequal concern to compatriots. Internationally, these inequalities are evidence that the requirements for global justice have not been satisfied insofar as global justice requires that individuals have the opportunity to be above a certain threshold of sufficiency with regard to health and the rectification of historic injustices.

### **Miriam Chavkin Li**

In this thesis, I distill a concept of East Asian femininity that I refer to as “Yellow womanhood.” I examine the theoretical roots of Yellow womanhood, which include the concepts Orientalism and ornamentation in Western



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philosophy. I argue that East Asian women are subjected to epistemic injustice in the United States and posit that the concept of Yellow womanhood is fundamentally important to identifying and understanding this type of injustice.

### **Harry Jonathan Lord**

Given the overwhelming scale and complexity of climate change, it is unclear whether individuals can make a difference, and if they can be considered morally responsible. This paper raises skepticism about arguments that relegate the importance of individuals' roles *qua* individuals in climate mitigation. It highlights reasons to reconsider the importance of reducing personal emissions by exploring the mistakenly narrow framing of such reductions in 'anti-individual' arguments about moral responsibility.

### **Alexia Christina Lisa Martinez**

Professionals' responsibilities allow and restrict behavior in ways that are unwarranted for persons outside of their role; how and when do roles morally justify professionals' special duties? I argue that prominent consequentialist and nonconsequentialist theories' shared "middle-level" principles provide sufficient common ground to ethically define and evaluate professional role responsibilities. Ultimately, I develop the concept of moral role responsibility in order to provide ethical responses to conflicts in which professionals occupy multiple roles.



## SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

### **Isaac Carlos Martinez**

In this thesis, I analyze the ethics of racial profiling. While many people correctly say that racial profiling is often morally problematic, I explore whether racial profiling is unequivocally immoral. Before I answer this, I give a general metaethical framework that tells us what constitutes justified belief and justified action. Once we have the metaethical framework that establishes justified belief and action, we can look at racial profiling, a specific application of the metaethical framework.

### **Bilal Anand Mubarack**

Both Descartes and Spinoza give robust theories of emotions that factor heavily into their metaphysical models of the human. I explain their theories of emotion and how Descartes attempted to fit his conception into his larger metaphysical picture, while Spinoza's metaphysics grew out of his theory of emotion. In particular, I will focus on the representational content of these emotions in the mind and their emotion's connection to the will.

### **Bayode Olatunji Okusanya**

Based on the tradition of American Pragmatism, the pragmatic framework calls for a scientific attitude towards evaluating ourselves and our interactions with reality. By focusing on the practical effects of our decisions in the world, I apply pragmatic thinking to achieving goals and argue for a more pragmatic view on ethics. Accordingly, careful consideration about the effects of our ethical beliefs



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and overall behavior will help us become better decision-makers and deal with reality effectively.

### **Kevin Thomas Parker**

Existing frameworks give pessimistic views of consumer responsibility. This new framework shows how agents are responsible for the effects of a purchase of theirs in a sense that justifies the adverse treatment of agents who do wrong. If agents have the capacity to know what they can effect by purchasing and they have the capacity to desire desirable outcomes, responses are justified. This motivates further discussions about how consumers can empower themselves to know more.

### **Frederik Arnholdt Hald Pedersen**

This thesis investigates the notion of a completely objective complete description of reality called the Absolute Conception. I construct and assess the most plausible framework for attaining such a description of reality. While the framework substantiates how we can produce objective descriptions of parts of reality, I find that the Absolute Conception is ultimately impossible to achieve. We should therefore think of objectivity as a useful, but limited, tool.

### **Apria Cheree Pinkett**

This thesis investigates the ways in which we use race in our everyday language. When we refer to someone as Black or White or Asian, are we referring to a real distinction that exists in the



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world or is race just an illusion? By examining the positions of the social constructionist, the biological realist and the race anti-realist, I hope to provide metaphysical grounding for our everyday language practices involving race.

### **Ashwin Prasanna**

Colors and sounds are fundamental to our perceptions of the world. In this thesis, I analyze two kinds of philosophical theories which account for these phenomena in different ways, and both present and evaluate the results of these theories. Primarily, I present and evaluate physicalist-reductionist accounts of colors and sounds, and, after providing different kinds of counterexamples to them, I argue in favor of an alternative account which is based on a kind of theory characterized by its usage of qualitative particulars as its central explanatory feature. In the case of visual perception, I focus on reductive representationalism and then present Mark Johnston's expanse theory as a favorable alternative account. In the virtually parallel case of auditory perception and sounds, I focus on two physicalist event theories, as well as reductive representationalism, and then present Roger Scruton's theory of sounds as secondary objects and pure events as a favorable alternative account.

### **Grace Coberly Rogers Searle**

This thesis examines epistemologies of generic statements, how to evaluate their truth/falsity, and what implications varied (mis)understandings



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of them have within human networks. Generics (e.g. “Sharks attack swimmers”) attribute a way of being (a *property*) to a category of thing (a *kind*). Grave societal harms result when stereotypic generics made about human subgroups are echoed spuriously, as though true, when they are simply pernicious misgeneralizations (e.g. “Men are murderers”). I suggest generics are revisable.

### **Jacob Joseph Shteingart**

I evaluate a case of an individual with diminished cognitive capacities. I make the specific claim that proxies are permissible for the creation and updating of wills. I also establish a general framework for the evaluation of desires and interests. Then, I use a framework of ideal agency to argue that, if they adequately fulfill the individual’s agential capacities, proxies are permissible and should be used. This has widespread implications, especially with the rise of AI.

### **Hayley Siegel**

I propose a new fictionalist account of mathematics. I first introduce my view as a defense of nominalism against Platonism. Given my nominalist ontological thesis, I develop a linguistic thesis by designing a translation schema to account for what it is that we are saying when we discuss mathematics as a fictional region of discourse. Finally, I address what it would mean to believe in the truth of our mathematical claims according to my view.





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### **Joseph Tavano**

My thesis evaluates the work of Derk Pereboom in his book, *Living Without Free Will*, in which he presents a hard incompatibilist thesis that rejects free will and moral responsibility as possibilities. I explore and ultimately reject philosophical theories of libertarians and compatibilists through Pereboom's Causal History Principle. In addition to ruling out free will and moral responsibility, I diverge from Pereboom by arguing that morality cannot exist within the hard incompatibilist framework as well.

### **Alvin Huao Zhang**

In my thesis, I ask how people came to use inductive reasoning given that there is no proof for its justification. While not trying to justify induction itself, in exploring the question of its origin I take an introspective route into examining our life experience and behaviors. I conclude that the belief in induction arises not from the observation of repetition in nature, but out of necessity for our own human functioning.

### **Kevin Jun Zou**

This thesis examines the relationship between Schopenhauer's view of necessity and Tolstoy's practical implementation of it in *War and Peace*.

