

WELCOME

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



GRADUATING CLASS OF 2013

Stuart Ahlum
David Andresen
Bodo Buetzler
Victoria Cadiz
Gabrielle Cole
Jacob Coleman
Andres Delgado
Thomas Donahue
Gregory Field
Evan Frost
Olivia Garard
Robin Glover
Lisa Goldman
Danny Guo
Evan Larson
Luke Massa
Samuel McConnell
Giri Nathan
Jacob Nebel
Dimitris Papaconstantinou
Connor Pate
William Colby Pines
Audrey Pollnow
Andreas Rotenberg
Keshav Singh
Juanhe Tan
Daniel Toker
Gates Torrey
Eileen Torrez
Sabastien Wadier



FACULTY

Chair

Michael A. Smith

Departmental Representative

John P. Burgess

Director of Graduate Studies

Gilbert H. Harman

Professor

Kwame Anthony Appiah,
also University Center for Human Values

John P. Burgess

John M. Cooper

Adam Newman Elga

Delia Graff Fara

Daniel Garber

Hans Halvorson

Gilbert H. Harman

Mark Johnston

Thomas P. Kelly

Hendrik Lorenz

Benjamin C. A. Morison

Alexander Nehamas, also Council of the Humanities,

Comparative Literature

Gideon A. Rosen

Michael A. Smith

Visiting Professor

John Hawthorne

Associate Professor

Elizabeth Harman, also University Center for Human Values

Desmond Hogan

Assistant Professor

Shamik Dasgupta

Boris C. Kment

Sarah-Jane Leslie

Sarah E. McGrath

Lecturer with Rank of Professor

Frank C. Jackson

Lecturer

Daniel Cloud

Victoria McGeer



SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

Stuart Ahlum

My thesis is centered around Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and his discussion on the happy life. I recapitulate Aristotle's argument of the human *ergon* and his breakdown of virtue. In doing so, I argue that Aristotle is consistent with his definition of the happy life throughout the entirety of his work.

David Andresen

Norman Daniels provides a theory of just health care based on the direct effect of health on normal species functioning and thus the normal opportunity range. Daniels' opportunity account is sufficient for justifying our obligation to provide health care, but cannot tell us how we ought to allocate health care.

Bodo Buetzler

The Devlin-Hart-Dworkin correspondence on 'the enforcement of morals by the law' circles around declaring either popular opinion or elite morality as law. But this perpetual circularity can be entirely avoided when focusing on three key principles: the empathy principle, the principle of rationality and sanity, and the principle of co-reactivity.



SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

Victoria Cadiz

Since Aquinas' writings in the 13th century, natural law theorists have attributed natural law theory to Aristotle to varying degrees, citing specific passages in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. This thesis highlights the flaws and misinterpretations present in the natural law theorists' reading of Aristotle and concludes by rejecting the claim that Aristotle's ethical system - known as virtue ethics - supports natural law theory, though the two are not necessarily incompatible.

Gabrielle Cole

This work examines the metaphysical implications of both Einstein's Theory of Special Relativity and the concept of energy, as physicists understand it. It is concerned with the impact that Einstein's Theory and the concept of energy have on our characterizations of space, time and our capacity for free will.

Jacob Coleman

Taking lessons from aspects of the republican revival, modern democratic societies may be able to better motivate civic participation while respecting individual freedom by changing the system of selecting some public officials from election to a voluntary sortition system coupled with shorter terms of office and better mechanisms of accountability.



SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

Andrés López-Delgado

In the Driver's Seat explores the problem of moral luck as it is presented in the work of Thomas Nagel and Bernard Williams. This thesis defends moral luck as a plausible objection to Kantian systems of moral evaluation, and recommends a system of moral evaluation that takes moral luck into account.

Thomas Donahue

The use of physical enhancements in sports has become increasingly common over the last few decades. I examined the ethical problems of this use and the practical considerations of enhancement bans, ultimately arguing that in the future there will be little reason to prohibit the use of physical enhancements in sports.

Gregory Field

Is real artificial intelligence possible? If so, what would this say about our seemingly unique consciousness and our identity as persons? I argue that it is possible for all of human mentality to be described computationally, and this conclusion shows persons to be “ontological trash,” who possess no persistent self.

Evan Frost

James Lenman objects to consequentialism's usefulness as a decision procedure, claiming that knowable consequences make up too small a portion of total consequences to provide meaningfully large reasons for action. I respond that when we properly think about the consequentialist decision procedure, the reasons knowable consequences provide are decisive.



SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

Olivia Garard

I claim that the ‘drone problem’ is located within just war theory rather than within the act of targeted killing. I evaluate the extent to which Jeff McMahan’s and Michael Walzer’s just war theories justify targeted killings and conclude by evaluating the possibility of justified targeted killings, specifically by drones.

Robin Glover

The *1844 Manuscripts* are not explicitly amoral and contain vivid accounts of grotesque effects of inequality. The *Manuscripts* are a popular origin for a Marxian account of justice. I motivate the conclusion that Marx’s theory of alienation is a theory of how and why cognitive dissonance occurs in capitalist societies.

Lisa Goldman

This thesis aims to explain questions about meaningfulness in life in terms of questions about value. By understanding the way by which meaning relates to value, people can both more clearly evaluate anxieties that life is meaningless and better understand intuitive, normative accounts of how a person can live meaningfully.

Danny Guo

Some people believe that morality is a product of logical reasoning. The concept of evolution, however, presents an alternative explanation for the existence and content of our moral intuitions. I argue that this explanation should lead us to be more cautious when evaluating moral situations.



SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

Evan Larson

My thesis rejects utilitarian rationing, as well as deontological approaches to rationing. Instead, my thesis endorses a new normative principle for allocating scarce resources: meaningful consequentialism with fairness. Meaningful consequentialism with fairness maximizes meaningful lives and takes into account concerns about fairness. I consider rationing cases to defend my view.

Luke Massa

My thesis expands on the work of Charles Taylor and K. Anthony Appiah on the role that social identities (e.g. identities based on gender or race) play in making an authentic life, by arguing for the existence of a “language identity,” as something that could itself mediate social interactions.

Samuel McConnell

This paper explores the metaphysics of *omnipotence*. The first part establishes definitions of the term omnipotent. The second part uses the denotations of *omnipotent* provided to investigate the possibility that an extant being be *omnipotent*. The third part examines how the second part affects the nature of an *omnipotent* being and the possibility of the existence of multiple such beings.

Giri Nathan

Choosing between two philosophical theories, choosing between two paintings— these practices may have more in common than most philosophers would care to admit. This thesis explores that intuition by taking William James’s vague concept of “temperament,” defining it analytically, and applying it to issues of epistemic relativism.



SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

Jacob Nebel

My thesis is about status quo bias, which is our tendency to prefer the current state of affairs just because it's the status quo. I argue that status quo bias may, in some cases, be fully rational, and this claim has implications for the nature of value.

Dimitris Papaconstantinou

This thesis examines the importance and role of fallibilist questioning in democracy. The aim of this paper is two-sided. First, it attempts to re-establish the importance of fact-based, fallibilist questioning to a healthy, democratic society and, then, it works towards designing an institution that would foster this fallibilist questioning.

Connor Pate

This thesis gives a biological/cultural account of the origins of moral discourse and behavior, showing how we can explain these concepts empirically without supposing the existence of objective moral values. It claims, in light of this account of morality, that moral statements are false insofar as they intend to reference objective moral facts.

Colby Pines

This paper argues that appeals to rights should not be part of moral discourse, and suggests that rights talk is actually counter-productive to debate. It is argued that there are better ways to communicate substantively normative ideas without relying on the vague and/or question-begging language of rights.



SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

Audrey Pollnow

This paper considers Aristotle's account of *technē* (craft-knowledge) and the relationship it bears to *phronesis* (the capacity for excellent ethical deliberation). Neither *technē* nor *phronesis* are exclusively intellectual: both require practice and an evaluative capacity. *Phronesis*, however, structures a person's desires more than a *technē* can.

Andreas Rotenberg

This thesis seeks to explore the plausibility of a theory of intergenerational resource equality. For the purposes of this inquiry, I began by considering the application of Ronald Dworkin's theory of synchronic equality to intergenerational relations. Problems of uncertainty, preference dependence, and non-contemporaneity suggest that intergenerational resource equalities are generally unattainable and therefore normatively unattractive.

Keshav Singh

This paper critiques some aspects of T.M. Scanlon's meta-normative theory. The first chapter examines Scanlon's metaphysically deflated account of existence and argues that it fails to sufficiently ground normativity. The second chapter examines Scanlon's analogy between mathematics and normativity and argues that it does not support non-naturalism about normativity.



SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

Juanhe Tan

What justifies us in using deductive arguments? Not just the fact that they're truthpreserving: some deep mathematical theorems preserve truth, but we can't justifiably use them without first proving them. What else is needed? By focusing on the basic inference Modus Ponens, this thesis explores and rejects several accounts advanced by various philosophers. It concludes with an original proposal.

Daniel Toker

My thesis consists of two parts: a philosophical study of consciousness and a neuroscientific study of time perception. For the philosophy portion, I examine the idea that information can serve as a metaphysically fundamental category to which consciousness can be reduced. I ultimately recommend a view that I call "informational idealism," which is that information is ontologically primitive, that the mental reduces to the informational, and that the material is ontologically secondary to both the informational and the mental. For the neuroscience portion, I tested the hypothesis that drift in mental context, which I measured as the change in neural activity in brain regions that encode mental context, is predictive of people's estimates of elapsed time. I found that although neural drift in brain regions identified as encoding mental context does not correlate with time perception, neural drift in caudate nucleus does predict estimates of elapsed time. Finally, the conclusions of both the philosophy and neuroscience portions were considered as potential tools with which to solve various puzzles that arise out of the philosophy of time.



SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

Gates Torrey

Rousseau poses a problem: how can a nation join together in cooperative action while preserving the freedom of each citizen? His answer is the general will, which promotes the common good while providing “moral liberty” to the citizens. My thesis evaluates three possible interpretations of the general will.

Eileen Torrez

This thesis considers the unique metaphysical view advanced by Nagarjuna, an Indian philosopher of the 2nd century whose ideas provide the philosophical foundation for modern Mahayana Buddhism. In this paper I outline and evaluate his theory of ‘emptiness’ through the lens of Western metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of language.

Sebastien Wadier

Disputes about moral responsibility often center on disagreements about when blame is appropriate, but without an understanding of blame itself, there is little hope of resolving them. I argue that blaming someone for something means holding it against them—seeing it as a reason to avoid or punish them.

