

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 2014

Nicolas Apter-Vidler
Matthew Alexander Brailas
Claire Covell Branch
Katrina Marie Bushko
Ahsen Nimet Cebeci
Joseph Patrick Cloud
Sophia Yi Deng
Joseph Dean DeQuinzio
Amy Tirrell Ellington
Shiyao Gu
David Matthew Hammer
Laura Ann Hildebrand
Benjamin Charles Jubas
Jun James Morley Kuromiya
Suchita S. Mandavilli
Horace Phillips McNeal III
Connor Philip Mui
Ryan Christian Poladian
Daisy Hannah Radevsky
Jonathan Joseph Schwartz
Thomas Joseph Sedeski
Max Harris Siegel
Benjamin Robert Taub
Jacob Daniel Tempchin
Evan Browning Thompson
Mark Hamilton Watter
David J. Zheng



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

Sarah-Jane Leslie

Hendrick Lorenz

Benjamin Morison

Alexander Nehamas,

also Council of the Humanities, Comparative Literature

Gideon A. Rosen

Michael A. Smith



FACULTY

Associate Professor

Elizabeth Harman,
also University Center for Human Values
Desmond Hogan

Assistant Professor

Shamik Dasgupta
Johann D. Frick,
also University Center for Human Values
Boris C. Kment
Sarah E. McGrath

Visiting Professor

Cheshire Calhoun

Visiting Assistant Professor

Sari Kisilevsky

Lecturer with Rank of Professor

Frank C. Jackson

Lecturer

Victoria McGeer



SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

Nicolas Apter-Vidler

In my thesis I treat the notion of immersion as a problem for the aesthetics of art: that is, as a new kind of perspectivism, a medium-specific mode of perceptual, kinetic experience and form of subjectivity.

Matthew Brailas

In my thesis I define punishment as primarily a communicative and expressive act, by which society communicates its condemnation to the criminal, and expresses its value system in law. I also defend the usefulness of punishment as a communicative vehicle for those messages.

Claire Branch

Moral supervenience states that no two entities can share all their natural properties without possessing the same moral properties. I argue that non-reductive naturalists cannot explain the truth of moral supervenience. Given the importance of moral supervenience for any functioning ethical system, this is a reason to reject non-reductive naturalism.

Katrina Bushko

In addition to a three-chapter translation from Arabic to English, this thesis shows how *al-Madīna al-Faḍīla*—a major work of political philosophy by Arab philosopher al-Fārābī—is influenced by Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *De Anima* and *Nicomachean Ethics* in terms of the excellent city, its ruler, and his education.



SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

A. Nimet Cebeci

This paper examines the nature of the discourse on the soul in Islamic philosophy. Using the scholarship of Imam abu Hamid al-Ghazālī as a case study, it argues that the discourse is primarily ethical, not metaphysical. Thus, it is fundamentally different from an analogous discourse within modern Materialist theory.

Joe Cloud

'Utopia' was coined after Sir Thomas More's 1516 *Utopia* and has become a household term in contemporary culture, but what do we make of this work? Was it intended to be a socio-political treatise depicting the best state of the commonwealth or a literary satire of the Lucian tradition?

Joseph DeQuinzio

This thesis traces the development of the concept of political liberty from ancient republicanism to modern liberalism. I confine my investigation mainly to the Anglophone tradition and focus on major theorists and critical moments of transformation. I conclude, on the basis of historical analysis, that the liberal conception is somewhat impoverished.

Sophia Deng

With the lack of incentives to act well on the Internet, how is it possible to maintain conversational civility and productivity in this new social landscape? Internet architects, who are in the best position to produce order, must learn how sacrifice and trust function in conversations to address this question.



SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

Amy Ellington

In my thesis I compare Plato's criticisms of poetry in Book X of the *Republic* to twentieth century criticisms of mass media and film, and argue that such different media have attracted similar objections because of their perceived inability to convey anything more substantial than surface appearances.

Shiyao Gu

The philosophy of knowledge is not only a subject studied extensively by modern philosophers, but also the focus of work by philosophers in Ancient Greece, such as Plato. In my thesis, I use Plato's works, such as *Republic* and *Meno*, to present how Plato understands knowledge in his middle-period philosophy.

David Hammer

My thesis is about metaphysical realism regarding "structure." I examine the reasons one might posit "structure," and I argue that there is a severe obstacle for the project of reading "structure" off of a successful theory. In so doing, I sketch an account of theoretical equivalence.

Laura Hildebrand

Caspar Hare's concept of *de dicto* future people, in combination with a principle of wrongness based on expected harm, explains the wrongness of knowingly producing a child with a moderate quality of life over a child with a high quality of life, thus solving the non-identity problem in same-number cases.



SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

Ben Jubas

In his book *Being Realistic About Reasons*, T.M. Scanlon argues for a form of normative realism known as “reasons fundamentalism.” I attack the integrity of the domain-dependent metaphysics he adopts to support this view, and argue that a sufficiently sophisticated form of expressivism might be preferable to reasons fundamentalism.

Jun Kuromiya

This thesis examines Kant’s theory of infinity in the context of his epistemological doctrines in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Drawing from both his early and mature work, it demonstrates how his concern for infinity is a motivating force behind the highly intricate transcendental deduction of the mind. In so doing, it reveals some of the theological and cosmological implications of the Deduction, of which Kant was highly cognizant. This thesis also challenges major readings of Kant’s epistemology that seek in some way to combine the understanding and sensibility, Kant’s two faculties of the mind. Kant elucidates certain qualities of sensibility in order for it to contain progressively infinite intuitions. Using Kant’s discussion of the intuition of inner sense, this thesis argues that these qualities of sensibility necessitate a complete separation from the understanding. The examination of Kant’s theory of infinity will therefore attempt to resituate his critical epistemology in his theological and cosmological concerns, with important consequences for how various sections of the *Critique* should be read.



SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

Mandavilli Suchita

In Aristotelian ethics and politics, justice and friendship are not only necessary for the good life, but are also instrumental to the stability of a state. Friendship can serve a valuable function, even in the modern state; it can provide a stronger sense of solidarity and a better life for citizens.

Horace Phillips McNeal III

My senior thesis offers a new interpretation of the epistemology developed by Plato in his *Meno* and *Phaedo*. In the essay, I argue that Plato's use of the Greek word *epistêmê*—a term which has long been interpreted as 'knowledge'—in fact refers to a cognitive state far more powerful than that of knowledge.

Connor Mui

Philosophers in the republican tradition hold that freedom is boundedly probabilistic. This thesis explores alternate conceptions of freedom's relationship to probability and counterfactual worlds and each one's normative value. Ultimately a purely probabilistic account of freedom is more universally valuable – and the republican account more limited – than republicans suggest.



SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

Ryan Poladian

The intersection of intangible human ingenuity and the material world complicates owning and interpreting intellectual property. By exploring Lockean, Utilitarian, Kantian, and Hegelian theory, I argue Hegel's view of property supplements Western ideas of ownership and navigates 'information-age' shifts from tangible to intangible objects.

Daisy Radevsky

My thesis is in two-parts. The first part is *Ethan and Arthur*, a short story about a father and a son grappling with the psychological consequences of their nihilism. The second part is an analysis of the implications of accepting nihilism on the value of a human life.

Jonathan Schwartz

Could software ever be considered alive? This is a question that has received far too little philosophical or scientific scrutiny. The claim that appropriately designed machine code is living—and not in a metaphorical sense but in the literal sense used in biology—is known as the thesis of strong artificial life. In contrast, the thesis of weak artificial life takes the stance that such software can amount to nothing more than simulations of life itself. This paper aims to develop an acceptable theory and ontology of living things and, against these, tests the viability of strong artificial life.



SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

Thomas J Sedeski

This thesis serves as a counterargument to Derek Parfit's seminal work in the study of Personal Identity. Parfit claims that if reductionism is the correct ontological view of persons then we cannot give a philosophical defense of our commonsense concern for personal identity over time. He concludes, identity does not matter.

Max Harris Siegel

In this thesis, I undertake a linguistic analysis of the truth conditions for 'ought'-claims and present a challenge to the objectivity of ethics that follows from this analysis. Specifically, I argue that one who holds ethics to be objective cannot account for the determinate truth or falsity of 'ought'-claims.

Ben Taub

The thesis is a journalistic and philosophical account of strange events in a dusty, cinderblock town on the Turkish-Syrian border during the summer of 2013. Philosophical analysis focuses on rescue in high-risk scenarios and value in human interactions outside of friendship.



SENIOR THESIS ABSTRACTS

Jacob Tempchin

In my thesis, I investigate how we are able to do what we think we ought to do. I use results from neuroscience to support the view that an agent will most likely perform whichever prospective action is most salient in her mind's eye. Ultimately, I weigh the merits of two distinct techniques for bringing one's actions in line with her beliefs about what would be best for her to do.

Evan Thompson

I argue that playing games can help us lead fulfilling lives. The paper investigates the connection between emotion and reason, and how playing games gives us a unique opportunity to improve our rational capacity.

Mark Watter

Wittgenstein's *Culture and Value* contains a number of puzzling comments on Shakespeare. Using these comments as a jumping-off point, I explore the later Wittgenstein's theory of language-games and its relation to theatre and the creation of art. I suggest that each individual play can be viewed as a unique language-game.

David Zheng

I provide a critique of Discourse Representation Theory, a formalism that works at the intersection of model theoretic semantics and generative syntactic theory. In doing so, I aim to provide a more general critique of formal semantics and provide some alternative approaches towards a psychologically robust account of language.

