Keynote Addresses

1. “Valuing Climate Loss and Damage,” Andrew Light, George Mason University and World Resources Institute
   a. One of the most difficult problems to resolve in the creation of the 2015 UN Paris Agreement on Climate Change was how to attend to the emerging problem of “Loss and Damage” – a formal designation in the climate negotiations – an issue that had never been addressed in previous climate agreements. I witnessed this firsthand as one of the senior climate change officials for the U.S. Department of State at the time. The idea of Loss and Damage was introduced into the negotiations primarily by small island states and low-lying least developed countries. It refers both to slow onset events – such as sea level rise and glacial retreat – and extreme events – such as the possibility of permanent foreseeable droughts and relentless tropical storms – which countries may not feasibly adapt to. In the run up to Paris, the debate over Loss and Damage threatened to break apart the negotiations with calls from some countries that only a system of compensation and liability from larger high-emitting countries to poorer low-emitting counties could justly resolve it. It also created a moral platform that launched both a new international mechanism on Loss and Damage, and leveraged an array of side agreements to provide more resources to climate vulnerable countries to predict and prepare for extreme climate impacts. In this talk I will review the relatively recent history of Loss and Damage, focusing on what its recognition by the global climate community implies for our understanding of a world potentially marked by extreme climate vulnerability. More specifically, I will both defend the claim that Loss and Damage should not devolve into an attempt at creating a system of compensation and liability, as well as look at how this issue has forced these negotiations to grapple with an equally difficult problem of how to fairly value non-economic losses, including human mobility, cultural heritage, territory, and indigenous knowledge in a world of constant disruption.

2. “Ethics and Intergenerational Climate Extortion,” Stephen M. Gardiner, University of Washington
   a. This paper argues (1) that extortion is a clear threat in intergenerational relations, (2) that the threat is manifest in some existing proposals in climate policy, and (3) that it is latent in some background tendencies in mainstream moral and political philosophy. It focuses on some troubling undercurrents to recent arguments in climate policy and climate ethics for “making the grandchildren pay” for climate action. It also makes the case that intergenerational extortion raises issues about the appropriate limits to the sway of central values such as welfare and distributive justice.

Local Society Sessions

   a. Philosophy for children aims to help children develop the skills to grapple with their own philosophical questions. Philosophers and teachers bring in thought-provoking philosophical stimuli (e.g., picture books, games, thought experiments) to kick-start discussions, and then serve as facilitators to help kids consider and evaluate potential answers to their own questions about the world and their place in it. In this session, we will offer two short demonstration classes, with participants from the NW Philosophy conference as students. Join us for fun philosophical discussions once you have registered!

2. PLATO-WA (link): “Workshop: Sharing and Brainstorming Innovative Assignments,” Organized by Rebeka Ferreira, Green River College
   a. The Philosophy and Logic Associated Teachers of Washington invite faculty to come with any assignment(s) that they are either proud of and would like to share, or would like to discuss and brainstorm ideas for improvement

3. LOCAL PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY (links 1, 2): “Philosophy beyond the academy: Local philosophy groups,” Organized by Gene Lin, unaffiliated, and Sergia Hay, Pacific Lutheran University
   a. There is a lot of philosophy going on in the Seattle-Tacoma area outside the academy. Although Seattle is only the 18th largest city in the US, it probably has more philosophy Meetup groups
than any other city on a per capita basis, and also has 2 of the largest philosophy Meetup groups in the country. This session will feature 6-7 current and former organizers of local philosophy Meetup groups discussing their groups and their experiences with philosophy outside the academy, followed by Q and A.

Conference Papers
1. “What We Should Talk About When We Talk About Gene Editing,” Bryan Cwik, Portland State University
   a. Since the advent of recombinant DNA technology, expectations (and trepidations) about the potential for gene editing have been sky high. The view that gene editing could be used to enhance human characteristics and take control of our biology has generated a large bioethics literature. These uses of gene editing are still very far off, but research on potential clinical uses for gene editing has made large strides in recent years. In this paper, I lay out and argue for the importance of a set of ethical issues about future clinical uses of gene editing.

   a. An undertheorized aspect of White domination and anti-Black racism is a category of wrongs I call “recognition-wrongs.” One suffers a recognition-wrong when he is wronged by an act that functions primarily as a mode of dehumanizing the individual, signifying that he does not deserve the status or respect typically afforded members of other social groups. In this work, I establish these as genuine wrongs and show how classifying recognition-wrongs as epistemic injustices and what I call “kinship-wrongs”—where kinship wrongs unjustifiably limit one’s opportunities to form meaningful relationships—can illustrate how common social and institutional norms systematically wrong Blacks.

   a. Several authors have recently argued that there is testimonial injustice against children. I agree, but I think that the case of child speakers has some complexity that is not present in the more familiar cases of black speakers and female speakers. The complexity centers around the fact that it is difficult to identify a norm of credibility for children--that is, a level of credibility that ought to be assigned to a child.

4. “Persuasive Ethical Appeals for Mitigation Message Framing: A Survey of Americans’ Ethical Framing Preferences Regarding Climate Change,” Victoria DePalma, University of Idaho
   a. Utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics represent various frameworks by which we can assess our moral obligations. Here, I study which approach most persuasively communicates our moral obligation to mitigate carbon emissions, using a nationally representative survey. Most respondents find a utilitarian appeal most persuasive. The younger a respondent, the more likely s/he is to find virtue ethics most persuasive. With increasing religiosity, a respondent is more likely to find deontology more persuasive than utilitarianism, and those who do not think climate change is a serious problem are more likely to think virtue ethics is most persuasive.

5. “Human Enhancement and Radical Virtue,” Benjamin Hole, Pacific University
   a. The human condition is changing. We do not know the long-term effects of climate change, whether we are headed towards environmental catastrophe. Technology could even enhance the human condition into a posthuman state. Human enhancement technologies –e.g., life extension, physical and cognitive enhancement, genetic engineering, and consciousness uploading—challenge our concept of human nature. Eudaimonist moral virtue is an excellence of human nature, which is vulnerable to change. This paper argues for a strategy of radical virtue (Lear, 2006) in the ethics of human enhancement. The strategy is to add new content to old virtues through a commitment to an unknown but worthwhile conception of human flourishing. For one, technological changes in human nature change the naturalistic bases for moral virtue and flourishing. For another, virtue ethics is uniquely equipped to deal with complexity, enormity, and epistemic uncertainty of such radical change.

   a. In this paper I, first, present the basic idea behind virtue ethics, and consider some of the challenges that are often raised against it. Second, I discuss another ethical theory called character consequentialism, which incorporates many of the strengths of virtue theory. Finally, I respond to Damien Keown’s concerns that character consequentialism is not really consequentialist, and then briefly consider how character consequentialism can address some of the challenges that a standard virtue ethic faces.
7. “Schopenhauer's Critique of Kant's Ethical Theory,” Wayne Pomerleau, Gonzaga University  
   a. This paper critically considers objections Arthur Schopenhauer raised against Immanuel Kant's  
      moral philosophy, grouped into four main clusters: (1) the alleged tension between an  
      opposition to eudaimonism and the sneaking in of eternal happiness as a needed incentive to  
      moral action; (2) the charge that the rationalistic a priori approach dooms ethics to an  
      impractical abstract formality; (3) human freedom as a necessary condition of morality; and (4)  
      the need for and legitimacy of a categorical imperative. The goal throughout is to try to  
      determine the credibility and fairness of Schopenhauer’s critique of Kant’s ethical theory.

8. “Animal Suffering and Moral Salience: A Defense of Kant's Indirect View,” Matthew C. Altman, Central  
    Washington University  
   a. Kant claims that animal suffering only matters if it affects us indirectly, such as making us more  
      callous toward other persons. This seems to entail that we are morally better off if we remain  
      willfully ignorant of animal suffering. I give three responses to this objection, in defense of Kant’s  
      indirect view. First, supporting practices of animal exploitation facilitates a system that harms  
      workers. Second, moral ignorance as a habit of mind makes us more likely to ignore morally  
      relevant harm to other persons. Third, remaining intentionally ignorant is not in keeping with our  
      capacity for intellectual self-determination.

   a. This paper begins by tracing how Kant’s notion of moral belief, or faith, arises directly from his  
      commitment to the fundamental principles of the enlightenment, in particular, to the maxim to  
      think for oneself. It then proceeds to argue that just as the ‘I think’ is a constitutive principle of  
      Kant’s epistemology, and the ‘I take’ is a constitutive principle of his morality, so also can the ‘I  
      believe’ be understood as a constitutive principle of his Enlightenment view of religion. The  
      paper concludes with brief discussions of possible criticisms of Kant’s view based, in part, on  
      Kierkegaard.

10. “Clark’s Predictive Processing, Emotions, and Stereotypes,” Adrienne Cochran, Highline College  
    a. Andy Clark in Surfing Uncertainty sets forth a predictive processing model of the mind in which  
       perception, reason, and action are co-emergent. For Clark, a potential pitfall of the model is that  
       if its hypotheses have been consistently skewed by tainted evidence, then unjust reactions  
       arise. First, I unpack the basic predictive processing model with special attention given to  
       emotion. Then, with the aid of Sally Haslanger’s work, “Social Meaning and Philosophical  
       Method,” I explore some implications of Clark’s claim. Finally, I propose a method for  
       recalibrating skewed inferences.

    Matthew Owen, Gonzaga University  
   a. Today most philosophers and neuroscientists think about the mind according to Cartesian  
      categories in a Cartesian framework (Patterson, 2003). However, in 1998 John Haldane  
      accurately heralded a return to Aristotelian hylomorphism in the philosophy of mind.  
      Surprisingly, this ideological turn (or return) is not relegated to philosophy. A leading  
      neuroscientific theory of consciousness – the Integrated Information Theory of Consciousness  
      (for brevity IIT) – is significantly similar to hylomorphism. According to IIT the physical substrate  
      of consciousness is an integrated structure in the central nervous system that exhibits maximal  
      intrinsic cause-effect power (see Tononi et al., 2016, p. 450). The aim of this paper is to  
      introduce and explore common ground between IIT and hylomorphism, and to suggest a way  
      that both are compatible with measuring consciousness. The first similarity concerns IIT and  
      hylomorphism’s fundamental notions: information and form. Koch and Tononi (2017) have  
      clarified that what they mean by information is not the idea of passing content. “Instead, IIT  
      refers to ‘information’ in its original sense, with its root inform, meaning ‘to give form to’” (Koch  
      and Tononi, 2017). They speak here of information in a way the hylomorphist can speak of the  
      form of the body, which determines the body’s organizational structure. The second similarity is  
      the priority IIT assigns to unified consciousness and hylomorphism assigns to the unified  
      conscious form that unifies the body. The third apparent similarity pertains to mental causation.  
      Lastly, IIT offers hope of measuring consciousness and the Mind-Body Powers model of NCC  
      (see Owen, forthcoming) suggests a way hylomorphism can incorporate principles from IIT to  
      provide a way to measure consciousness irrespective of whether consciousness is physical.
12. “Keith Lehrer on Compatibilism,” Joe Campbell, Washington State University, Keith Lehrer, University of Arizona
   a. Keith Lehrer has been publishing on free will and compatibilism since 1960. Our concern here is to present an account of the development on his work on the subject.

   a. Many philosophers think that punishment is intentionally harmful. Many also have the intuition that this makes punishment especially hard to justify morally. Attempts to explain this intuition often say questionable things about the significance of intending to harm. I'll show that there's a better way to explain this intuition. My aim is to show that this intuition is credible and that justifying punishment is more complex than many philosophers of punishment realize.

14. “Against the Ubiquity of Trying,” Kevin Falvey, University of California, Santa Barbara
   a. I critique the case for the ubiquity of trying in action, i.e., the thesis that whenever an agent acts, she tried to do something. I criticize the linguistic pragmatic arguments that ubiquitists deploy to dismiss the commonsense association of trying with difficulty. I discuss also arguments based on analogies between the structure of agency and that of perception, where tryings are held to be analogous to perceptual seemings. But I argue that while the ubiquity of looks in perception has largely won the day, the corresponding role in action is played by intentions, not tryings.

15. “Acceptance Cognitivism,” Avery Archer, George Washington University
   a. According to cognitivism about practical rationality, the means-end coherence norm governing intention may be explained in terms of the closure norm governing belief. One longstanding objection to cognitivism, due to Michael Bratman, is that there are cases in which an agent satisfies the closure norm governing the belief that they will perform a certain action and yet fail to satisfy the means-end coherence norm governing their intention to perform said action. This paper advances a novel version of cognitivism—called acceptance cognitivism—that avoids Bratman's objection.

16. “Spinoza: From Art to Philosophy,” Joshua Kerr, University of Oregon
   a. Spinoza says little concerning the creative arts. Careful consideration of the few passages in which he does, however, reveals an importance for art that far outstrips what his relative silence suggests. I argue that Spinoza situates art at the genesis of philosophical knowledge. The importance of abstract reason, has been well appreciated by scholars. In the Ethics, Spinoza offers a developmental account of this kind of knowledge: reason develops out of the knowledge of sense experience. Tracing his account of this development, I argue that art has an important role to play in the transition from sensation to philosophical knowledge.

17. “Nietzsche’s Übermensche: The Ontological, Psychological & Axiological Ground,” Dave Heise, Humboldt State University
   a. The Übermensche would supposedly be a being that could force those competing wills which make it up into an amplified coherence on a scale far beyond anything previously accomplished. I explain how Nietzsche's ontology of force seriously undermines his value system based on a distinction between active and reactive forces, seemingly rendering the Übermensche impossible. I then offer a Nietzschean solution to this dilemma, by recasting it as an eternal reaffirmation of facing one's greatest enemy (one's own ontology working against one's values) as an eternal stimulus to life.

   a. While Kant's Critique of Pure Reason preserves the difference between logic and philosophy, Hegel's Science of Logic contests the difference in concert with a critique of the correspondence theory of truth. The first part of the paper provides a summary account of Kant's definition of formal logic as presented in the Critique of Pure Reason. The second part focuses on Hegel's Science of Logic and his critique of the correspondence theory of truth. The conclusion shows that for Hegel if we question the epistemological assumptions that frame traditional accounts of formal logic, we can see how logic is not something anterior to truth.

   a. The argument of this paper involves two contentions: 1) Self-ownership is important for libertarians and ought to be important for non-libertarians as well, and 2) a great deal of important property rights flow necessarily from an enlightened understanding of self-ownership. Following Nozick, this means that some of these property rights can be thought of as side-
constraints, which prevent use of one's mind, body, and property as means to an end. After
establishing the first contention, the strongest argument against the second one - Sobel's
Conflation Problem - will be considered along with a number of objections.

Stanford University, and Marcus Hedahl, US Naval Academy

a. Individual moral duties associated with large-scale moral problems often risk being excessively
demanding. A promising development posits that duties to respond to moral issues like global
poverty are fundamentally collective rather than individual, and so collective duties mediate the
problematic relation between moral disasters and individuals. We argue that the interplay
between collective obligations and demandingness is more complex than has typically been
appreciated. In some cases, moving to collective duties exacerbates rather than alleviates
demandingness concerns; we argue for this conclusion by developing a view of how
demandingness complaints arise at the collective level.


a. Theories of self-defense tell us whether and when justice permits taking lives, whereas theories
of healthcare justice tell us whether and when justice permits saving lives. On a plausible view
of moral liability to defensive harm, failing to save someone’s life can render someone liable to
defensive harm. I consider four theories of healthcare justice—Libertarianism, Luck-
Egalitarianism, Luck-Prioritarianism, and Egalitarianism—and identify their implications for
defensive permissions. Each view has surprising implications: Libertarianism implies no right to
self-defense; Luck-Egalitarianism violates the instrumentality condition on permissible defense;
Luck-Prioritarianism appears to entail the commonsense view of self-defense; and
Egalitarianism implies a pacifist view of moral liability.

22. “The Paradoxes of Questions,” Davis Smith, Pierce College

a. As your primary school teacher may have claimed, there are no bad questions. But, does that
mean that there are any good ones? Are some questions better than others? In this paper, I
explain and expand upon the paradoxes which arise from the idea that there is some best
question or that some questions are better than others. Ending with a surprising result.

23. “Naturalness and Inductive Inference,” Sven Neth, University of California, Berkeley

a. Suppose, broadly following Lewis (1983), that there is a distinction between ‘natural’ and
‘unnatural’ properties. Natural properties ground objective similarities and differences between
things – they explain why two electrons are more similar to each other than an electron and a
cow – and play various other roles in metaphysics. My question here is not about the
metaphysical role of natural properties. Rather, my question is about the normative significance
of naturalness. What, if anything, does the distinction between natural and unnatural properties
imply about how we ought to theorize? In particular, my question is: How can naturalness
constrain which ampliative inferences are good? A good test case to think about this question is:
How exactly does naturalness help us to solve Goodman’s New Riddle of Induction? I argue
that answering this question is more difficult than it might first seem.

24. “Two Millennia-Old Scientific Predictions: The Beginning of the Universe,” Jim Slagle, University of
Portland

a. For all of recorded history, people have claimed either that the universe began to exist or that it
did not. These claims were derived from their metaphysical views. In this essay I argue that
these claims amount to scientific predictions, and so the empirical evidence in favor of the
universe’s beginning amounts to scientific evidence for and against the metaphysical positions
that led people to affirm or deny that the universe bega

of Sisyphus and The Rebel,” David F. Hoinski, West Virginia University

a. Contrary to the common belief that Camus’ later philosophy constitutes a significant break with
the philosophy of the absurd elaborated in The Myth of Sisyphus, this paper contends that the
absurd is also central to the argument of The Rebel. In this later work Camus himself raises
doubts about whether an absurdist philosophy possesses the resources to make a case against
murder, yet he also claims that “absurd analysis, in its most important deduction, finally
condemns murder.” The present paper explores this “most important deduction” in terms of
some deeper analogies between Camus’ two main philosophical essays.

a. Moses, Pollock, and others have noted the highly systematic character of Rosenzweig’s The Star of Redemption. This paper shows that the philosophical theology of The Star embodies ideas central to systems theory. The Star is based on a discussion of three elements – God, World, and Man – and three relations that they enter into – Creation, Revelation, and Redemption. For Rosenzweig, these elements and relations constitute the “All.” This hexad illustrates the definition of “system,” and in The Star, other systems ideas, including the ontological vs epistemological perspectives, structure and function, synchronics and diachronics, and the metaphysics of number are also salient.


a. The ‘self’ plays an integral role in both Buddhist and Stoic philosophies. While these two schools initially seem in conflict with regard to their understanding of the self, I argue in this paper that both philosophies utilize an operative notion of the ‘self’ that do not conflict with one another. I argue that this notion of the self – the moral self – is articulated by both schools in largely the same way and plays a similar role in the liberatory philosophies advanced by the schools. My argument relies on both theoretical texts as well as meditative practices described by these schools.