Friday, February 9th

11:00 - 12:00 (Longmire 204)
"The Ethical-Political Dimensions of Knowledge: Reconsidering Epistemic Virtue"
Kristen Oganowski, Syracuse University
Abstract: In this paper, I explore the political and ethical dimensions of knowledge in light of virtue epistemology. What I hope to reveal is that if philosophers ignore the ethical-political dimensions of knowledge—in part, if they ignore the ways that some knowers can unjustly delimit the boundaries between knowing and not knowing—then they also ignore a more robust conception of epistemic good or epistemic virtue. In addition, I hope to reveal that by ignoring the ethical-political dimensions of knowledge, philosophers also ignore many interesting epistemological puzzles that seemingly cannot be solved by many of the traditional (analytic) epistemological positions. I explore two such puzzles in my paper: 1) the problem of poetic propositions and metaphorical knowledge and 2) the problem of testimonial knowledge. My own “solutions” to these puzzles are informed by recent work in feminist epistemology.

12:05 - 1:05 (Longmire 204)
"Towards a New Social Critique of Racism: Engaging Enrique Dussel and Michel Foucault"
L. Sebastian Purcell, Boston College
Abstract: Since the late 1960’s research in race theory has focused principally on the problem of institutional racism, and the case is no different for Latin America studies. Recently, Enrique Dussel has headed the emergence of a new world-historical school of research, which aims to understand how the global processes of modernity and decolonization have contributed to the unequal status of Latin American peoples. While there are clear areas of resonance with this world-historical method and Foucault’s work, covering the construction of normative ideas and statistical governance, the key area of difference concerns the status of power. This essay argues that we can only adequately understand the subjugation of Latin
American peoples by situating it within the biopolitical context Foucault developed. In the process, however, a complimentary case is made for enriching Foucault’s notion of biopower through an engagement with colonialism, which figures marginally in his work.

1:05 - 2:15 - Lunch for presenters (Suwanne Dining Hall)

2:15 - 3:15 (Longmire 204)
“De-metaphysicalizing the Argument Against Genetic Enhancement”
Mark Formichelli, Florida State University

Abstract: In this essay, I will assess Habermas’ specific arguments for the permissibility of what he calls “negative eugenics” (therapeutic genetic interventions) and impermissibility of “positive eugenics” (genetic interventions for enhancement). In light of Habermas’ commitment to political liberalism, I will argue that his approach to the problem will necessitate making a number of controversial ontological and thus metaphysical claims, which will be difficult to justify within a framework of political liberalism and deliberative democracy. Furthermore, I will offer several possible alternative arguments for Habermas’ position, which I believe to be more appropriate within such a framework.

3:30 - 5:00 - Keynote Presentation (Dodd Hall Auditorium)
“Resisting Organizational Power”
Dr. Peggy DesAutels, University of Dayton

Biography: Dr. DesAutels specializes in ethical theory and moral psychology. She began teaching at the University of Dayton in 2001. Prior to coming to the University of Dayton, she served as assistant director to the Ethics Center and assistant professor of philosophy at the University of South Florida. Her research interests include ethical theory, moral psychology, and feminist ethics. Her recent publications include Moral Psychology: Feminist Ethics and Social Theory, editor with Margaret Urban Walker (Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), Feminists Doing Ethics, editor with Joanne Waugh (Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), and Praying for a Cure: When Medical and Religious Practices Conflict with Larry May and Margaret P. Battin. (Rowman & Littlefield, 1999)

Abstract: Bosses are the real and immediate power most of us face every workday of our lives. They are the ones who can fire us, promote us, or make our lives miserable. So even when we are well-aware that we work for organizations that engage in harmful practices, we are especially vulnerable to retaliation if we attempt to resist. Do we have any realistic moral options? What should we do when faced with our own organization’s malfeasance? In attempting to answer these questions, I draw on related feminist discussions of how best to resist oppression more generally, on recent work on whistleblowing, and on recent findings in social psychology.

5:00 - 6:30 - Reception (Dodd Hall, Philosophy Common Room)

Saturday, February 10th
11:00 - 12:00 (Dodd Hall Auditorium)
“Race as Class: A Reductionist Account of Race in North America”
Aaron Mobley, University of Colorado at Boulder

Abstract: The purpose of this essay is to analyze the concept of race as it is used in North America today. My analysis will focus on explicitly evaluative uses of race terms – a decision which I will justify in the essay. The essay will consist in three parts. In part one, I will explain my thesis and justify my choice to focus on explicitly evaluative uses of race terms in my analysis. In part two, I will explain what sort of concept race is and explore several methods of analyzing such concepts. I will say which methods are best suited to an analysis of race. Part three of the essay will contain my final analysis of race as class, followed by some ameliorative suggestions; I will use my analysis of race to provide an analysis of racism, which will suggest some plausible solutions to the problem.
12:15 - 1:45 - Keynote Presentation (Dodd Hall Auditorium)
“Dangerous Professors and Academic Freedom”
Dr. Alison Jaggar, University of Colorado at Boulder

Biography: Alison M. Jaggar is Professor of Philosophy and Women’s and Gender Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Her books include: Feminist Frameworks, co-edited with Paula Rothenberg, (McGraw Hill, 3/e 1993); Feminist Politics and Human Nature (Rowman & Allanheld and Harvester, 1983); Living with Contradictions: Controversies in Feminist Ethics (Westview, 1994); The Blackwell Companion to Feminist Philosophy, co-edited with Iris M. Young, (Blackwell, 1998). She has just completed a textbook for courses in feminist and related studies, Just Methodology, and currently is co-authoring a book on Abortion. She is also interested in moral reasoning, especially in contexts of inequality and cultural difference. In recent years, Jaggar has published several articles in the area of global gender justice, as well as on terrorism. Jaggar was a founder member of the Society for Women in Philosophy and is past chair of the American Philosophical Association Committee on the Status of Women.

Abstract: The main purpose of this talk is to offer an account of academic freedom. By way of context, it begins with a brief history of challenges to academic freedom at the University of Colorado. It then turns to the following questions. Who enjoys academic freedom and which of their activities does it protect? What is the relationship of academic freedom to constitutionally and internationally protected civil liberties? From whom or what does academic freedom provide protection? Is academic freedom compatible with public accountability? Why is academic freedom valuable?

1:45 - 3:00 - Lunch (Dodd Hall, Werkmeister Conference Room)

3:00 - 4:00 (Dodd Hall Auditorium)
“Feminism and Liberalism: A Not-So-Unhappy Marriage”
Carla Saenz, University of Texas at Austin

Abstract: It seems that political liberalism and feminism constitute an “unhappy marriage.” I shall argue that it should be a happy one. Liberalism does more feminist work than feminist theorists acknowledge. Feminist theorists raise both internal and external critiques. Some of the internal critiques are ungrounded and based on misinterpretation of key liberal concepts, while others can be accommodated by revising the liberal framework. In contrast, the external criticisms, which are presented as a definitive challenge to liberalism, are unsuccessful. They themselves implicitly rely on some key liberal assumptions, which shows that they are ultimately internal critiques. My primary aim in this paper is to show that the feminist critiques remain within a liberal framework. Feminists also claim that liberal theory is incompatible with current facts about gender. I shall call these “inefficacy critiques.” As my secondary aim I shall show that this critique of liberalism relies on a misunderstanding of the distinction between normative and descriptive claims.

4:05 - 5:05 (Dodd Hall Auditorium)
“Towards a Biological Feminist Theory of Human Nature”
Sabrina Jamil

Abstract: Feminist theorists have long criticized the traditional, misogynist notion of ‘sex’. Most of these criticisms, rather exploring the potential value of biological science for feminism, repudiate the notion of a biological theory of human nature due to the seemingly inevitable ‘reduction of cruel and oppressive socialized gender practices to the mere logical result of biological processes. I propose a different methodology for considering the sex/gender problem from a scientific standpoint.
“Liminality and the Social Matrix: Race as Betwixt and Between”
Philip Griffith, Florida State University

Abstract: Most scholars interested in the study of race now understand it to be constructed along historical, cultural and social lines, having no ontological reality outside of some social framework. In the effort to determine what the concept consists of, why it exists, whether it is harmful, and if so, how it can be changed, students from academic disciplines as broad as psychology, sociology, critical theory, history, and, of course, philosophy, have brought their expertise to bear on the issue. In this paper, I would like to utilize theoretical resources from the field of cultural anthropology in an effort to shed new light on the phenomenon of race. In doing so, I shall first sketch a general picture of the social matrix that we as humans use to structure our social world, as well as draw an important distinction between the individual and the group. In the field of cultural anthropology, I will rely heavily on the talented labors of Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner: I believe that van Gennep’s work regarding rites of passage and Turner’s development of the concept of liminality (in relation to those rites) play a large role in understanding the concept of race. After providing a synopsis of their theories, I shall argue that race as we know it takes the form of a liminal phase in a deviant rite of passage. So formulated, its elimination requires deliberate manipulation of symbolic value within the social matrix.

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