

FRIENDS OF *philosophy*

FALL 2016 NEWSLETTER

Dear Alumni and Friends of Philosophy,

Once again, it is a great pleasure to greet you, and share with you some news from the Department of Philosophy.

Our colleagues remain extraordinarily productive. Simon Evnine's *Making Objects and Events* (Oxford University Press, 2016) was published, defending a highly original view. The book brings together, in a unified way, apparently very different phenomena, such as artifacts, actions and organisms, and has been received with a lot of praise! For those who have always wondered precisely what quantum mechanics has (or doesn't have) to say about a number of crucial metaphysical issues, I highly recommend Peter Lewis' *Quantum Ontology* (Oxford University Press, 2016). It's extremely well informed and very illuminating. Mark Rowlands' *Memory and the Self* (Oxford University Press, 2016) provides a novel and very personal approach to an old and central issue about the connections between the self and memory—and it's a joy to read! Harvey Siegel's co-authored book, *Teaching Evolution in a Creation Nation* (University of Chicago Press, 2016), examines the challenges and opportunities provided by teaching evolution to students who may want to resist the theory. A really important issue in our current climate. For a fascinating and new account of human development, I recommend Michael Slote's *Human Development and Human Life* (Springer, 2016). You will be in for a treat! All of our colleagues should be congratulated for their terrific work. Additional information about the research and accomplishments of our faculty (including forthcoming publications) can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

Our graduate students have also been doing really well. Five of them successfully defended their dissertations this year. Congratulations to Dr. Bartek Chomanski, Dr. Sarah Beth Lesson, Dr. John Pinkston, Dr. Heleana Theixos, and Dr. Rina Tzinman for their achievement and their promising careers ahead!

We are also very proud of our undergraduate students. In particular, Joshua Myers has presented his work at a number of national conferences, including the Princeton-Rutgers Undergraduate Conference, the Northwest Student Philosophy Conference, and the Florida Philosophical Association conference (among others!). He is an extremely active major, and a wonderful student to have in our program!

As always, the department will host a Friends of Philosophy Dialogue and lecture. Professor Brendan Balcerak Jackson will lead a Dialogue on "Essentially Practical Questions" on March 28th, 2017. Details on this and several other upcoming events can be found elsewhere in this newsletter. Please join us for philosophical conversation as often as you can.

We are always happy to hear from you and to receive your comments and suggestions for future activities. You can contact me at (305) 284-9218, or by email at otaviobueno@me.com; the department office number is (305) 284-4757. And, of course, we hope you will take this opportunity to renew your membership in Friends of Philosophy. The Department of Philosophy greatly appreciates your interest and support. Thank you!

I hope to see you at one of our events soon!

Otávio Bueno
Professor and Chair, Department of Philosophy



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DEPARTMENT NEWS



Through the Wormhole with Morgan Freeman: Can We All Become Geniuses?, with Berit Brogaard, was aired on the Science Channel on September 21, 2016 featuring her research and the University of Miami. Being a genius lies somewhere in the human mind, bringing mathematical insight, sparking artistic inspiration, and enabling some to see what most cannot. Might we augment our biology with technology to unlock the genius inside us all?



Susan Haack (#16) and Amie Thomasson (#45) were included in the article "[The 50 Most Influential Living Philosophers](#)". This article focuses on the profound impact of the 50 most influential living philosophers whose works challenge and change the thinking and behavior of even those who believe they are not interested in philosophy. It is reassuring to see that philosophy, one of the oldest areas of intellectual endeavor, is as significant today as ever, and it is inspiring that two of our colleagues are on this list of the most influential philosophers working, writing, and teaching in the world today.

NOTEWORTHY

Haley Mathis was selected as the Teaching Mentor.

David DiDomenico and Casey Landers were elected as this year's graduate student representatives.

Bartek Chomanski received the Gerrit and Edith Schipper Award for Outstanding Graduate Student in Philosophy.

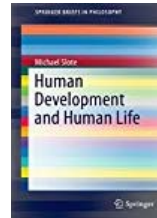
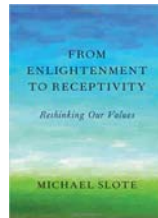
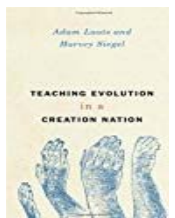
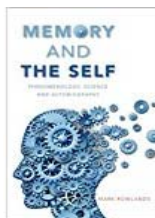
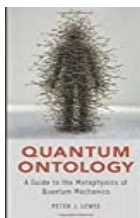
Bartek Chomanski and Rina Tzinman each received the Excellence in Teaching Award.

Kunal Chohan received this year's Gerrit and Edith Schipper Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Student in Philosophy.

Alexandra Reed Lasley received this year's Ramon M. Lemos Excellence in Philosophy Award for Outstanding Graduating Senior in Philosophy.

Kali Ann Kahn is the President of the Philosophy Club at the University of Miami.

RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOKS



Berit Brogaard, *Seeing and Saying*, Oxford University Press (forthcoming).

Simon Evnine, *Making Objects and Events: A Hylomorphic Theory of Artifacts, Actions and Organisms*, Oxford University Press, 2016.

Peter Lewis, *Quantum Ontology: A Guide to the Metaphysics of Quantum Mechanics*, Oxford University Press, 2016.

Mark Rowlands, *Memory and The Self*, Oxford University Press, 2016

Harvey Siegel (co-author), *Teaching Evolution in a Creation Nation*, University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Michael Slote, *From enlightenment to Receptivity: Rethinking Our Values*, Oxford University Press, Reprint, 2016.

Michael Slote, *Human Development and Human Life*, Springer, 2016.

Review of First Inclusiveness Conference: Gender in the Academy

On April 7-8, 2016, the Philosophy Department, in collaboration with the SEEDS program, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Program in Women's and Gender Studies, hosted the first annual inclusiveness conference "Gender in the Academy". The conference brought in three major speakers **Dr. Jennifer Saul** (Professor of Philosophy, Sheffield), **Dr. Shannon Dea** (Associate Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Women's Studies Program, University of Waterloo) and **Dr. Mary Anne Franks** (Professor of Law at the University of Miami). Their presentations addressed issues of cyberbullying and online harassment of women, implicit bias, stereotype threat, structural inequalities, and ways to set up a naturally inclusive learning environment. There was also a panel discussion of issues raised in the conference, with a view to creating suggestions for ways to build a more inclusive department and academy.

Review of Fundamental Truthmakers: A Metaphysics Festival

On April 22-23, 2016, the Philosophy Department hosted a conference in which two central issues in contemporary metaphysics, and the connections between them, were carefully examined: those of fundamentality and truthmakers. The conference featured the work of some of the leading metaphysicians today, such as **Ross Cameron** (University of Virginia), **John Heil** (Washington University, St. Louis), **Thomas Hofweber** (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), and **Kris MacDaniel** (Syracuse University). The department was represented by **Otávio Bueno** and **Javier Cumpa** (presenting a joint paper) and **Amie Thomasson**. It was a stimulating and thought-provoking event.

Review of Society for Exact Philosophy

The Philosophy Department was honoured to host the 44th Annual Meeting of the Society for Exact Philosophy on May 6-8, 2016. The Society for Exact Philosophy is an international scholarly association that promotes rigorous methods in philosophical investigations. It holds a meeting every year, alternating between the US and Canada. The conference attracted philosophers from all over the world, and offered a packed schedule of 75 talks over three days. Keynote addresses were delivered by **Jenann Ismael** (Arizona), **Friederike Moltmann** (CNRS & NYU), and **Gila Sher** (UCSD). The Philosophy Department was well represented on the program, with papers by five faculty members (**Otávio Bueno**, **Simon Evnine**, **Risto Hilpinen**, **Peter Lewis**, and **Amie Thomasson**), one graduate student (**Shea Musgrave**), one postdoc (**Javier Cumpa**), and two graduates of our program (**Nurbay Irmak** and **Michael Schaffer**). The participants enjoyed three days of high-quality philosophy, along with balmy May weather, and excellent company.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
[HTTP://WWW.MIAMI.EDU/PHI](http://www.miami.edu/phi)

Upcoming Conferences

2nd Annual Inclusiveness Conference: Gender, Race & Academic Life

The Philosophy Department, in collaboration with the College of Arts and Sciences, is proud to host the Second Annual Inclusiveness Conference: Gender, Race, and Academic Life. The conference will address such issues as recent research on the effects of implicit bias, stereotype threat, sexual harassment and assault, and structural inequalities on women and minorities. It will also include practical advice and discussions on ways to improve recruitment and retention of members of underrepresented groups, to ensure our classrooms have a supportive climate, and to help make academic life more inclusive. The conference is free and open to the entire university community. It will be held on April 18-19, 2017. This year's external speakers are: **Louise Antony**, Professor of Philosophy, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She has held positions at several other colleges and universities, including the Ohio State University, the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and North Carolina State University. She received her Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1982. She is the author of numerous important articles in the areas of philosophy of mind, epistemology, and feminist philosophy, including recent funded research on implicit bias and philosophy. She has served as President of the Society for Philosophy and Psychology, and as President of the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association. She co-directs the Mentoring Program for Early-Career Women in Philosophy. **Quayshawn Spencer**, Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania, whose work focuses on issues in philosophy of science, philosophy of biology, and philosophy of race. He earned his Ph.D. from Stanford University. His articles on philosophy of race, population genetics, and the state of blacks in philosophy have appeared in such journals as *Philosophy of Science*, *Philosophical Studies*, *The British Journal of the Philosophy of Science*, and *Critical Philosophy of Race*.

UM ETHICS PROGRAMS

The university's 25-year-old "Bioethics Program" has been officially designated the Institute for Bioethics and Health Policy.

Based at the Miller School of Medicine, the new Institute is a longstanding partner of the Philosophy Department. In conjunction with the university-wide Ethics Programs, it is marking the 20th anniversary of the Summer Ethics Internship Program, a collaboration among ethics, philosophy, the Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Office of the Vice Provost for Research (http://www.miami.edu/index.php/ethics/projects/summer_interns/).

The Institute also supports a variety of Gables-based student debate initiatives, including the Bioethics Bowl, in conjunction with the School of Business Administration's Business Ethics Program.

In conjunction with the transition, the Institute has established the North American Center for the Study of Ethics and Health Information Technology, and secured funding for a post-doctoral fellowship in ethics and biomedical informatics. In partnership with Indiana University's Center for Bioethics, the Center was featured at special programs in Washington in September and Chicago in November.

The Institute is a World Health Organization Collaborating Center in Ethics and Global Health Policy, one of nine in the world, and collaborates with entities in South and Central America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

Philosophy students and faculty who want more information about opportunities for collaborating should contact the Institute's director, Ken Goodman, at kgoodman@miami.edu.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[HTTP://WWW.MIAMI.EDU/ETHICS](http://www.miami.edu/ethics)

GRADUATE PROGRAM NEWS

WELCOME TO OUR NEW GRADUATE STUDENTS!

The Department of Philosophy is delighted to announce the arrival of a fantastic new class of entering graduate students. Please join us in welcoming them to the department, and wishing them all the best for successful philosophical careers here and beyond!

Elizabeth Cantalamessa has a BA and an MA in philosophy from the University of Wyoming. Her primary interests are in epistemology, philosophy of science, and applied philosophy.

Brian Wermcrantz has a BA in philosophy from Grinnell College and an MA in philosophy from Brandeis University. His primary interests are in philosophy of mind, cognitive science, and philosophy of action.

Arturo Leyva has a bachelor's degree in sports science from the US Sports Academy and a Ph.D. in exercise physiology from the University of Miami. His primary interests are in philosophy of mind and cognitive science.

At the other end of the program, it has been a bumper year for new Ph.D.s and job placements. See the sidebar on the next page for the impressive details. Well done all, and best wishes in your new jobs!

RECENT PRESENTATIONS/PUBLICATIONS

Lance Aschliman and **Jordan Schummer** published a paper called "A Contextualist Semantics for Aesthetic Judgments", in the journal *Inquiry*, 2016.

David DiDomenico presented the paper "Moral Perception, Inference, and Imagination" at the Florida Philosophical Association Annual Conference in Melbourne, Florida, November, 2016.

Adam Hauptfeld presented the paper "Access Internalism, Attention, and Perceptual Expertise" at the Florida Philosophical Association Conference in Melbourne, Florida, November, 2016.

Nihel Jhou presented a paper titled "What Is It Like to Feel the Present?" at the APA Central Division Meeting, March 2016, and a paper titled, "Global Invariant Presentness without Simultaneity in Special Relativity" at the 3rd Annual Meeting of the International Association for the Philosophy of Time, June 2016.

GRADUATE STUDENT TEACHING MENTORING PROGRAM

The teaching mentorship program is intended to provide the necessary preparation and support for the graduate students getting ready to teach their first philosophy class at UM. Regular meetings were conducted between the teaching mentor and the first-year graduate students to discuss ways to prepare for a successful first semester of teaching. Topics examined included: how to construct a syllabus, how to make use of available teaching resources, how to select appropriate methods for evaluating students, deliver interesting and effective lectures, skillfully conduct classroom discussions, handle student questions and comments, as well as the details of instructor evaluations. As their first semester of teaching is underway, the mentorship program provides the ongoing support and advice for the mentees, to ensure they continue their development as effective teachers.

2016 Ph.D. Graduates

Bartek Chomanski
Sarah Beth Lesson
John Pinkston
Heleana Theixos
Rina Tzinman

2016 Recent Placements

Bartek Chomanski
Montgomery College
Department of Philosophy
Adjunct Professor

Sarah Beth Lesson
University of Miami
Department of Philosophy
Lecturer

Heleana Theixos
Auburn University
Department of Philosophy
Visiting Instructor

Rina Tzinman
Bilkent University
Department of Philosophy
Instructor

ALUMNI UPDATE - MICHAEL VEBER



I earned my Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Miami in 2002. I am now an Associate Professor at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. My current philosophical project is a book of dialogues in epistemology to be published in 2017 by Broadview Press. For that reason I've chosen to write this alumni letter in dialogue form. I'm unsure whether this will help or hinder my effort to bring the ancient form back into respectability.

Below is a fictitious transcript of a podcast interview that I did not conduct with Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL). Although Marco Rubio did claim that we need more welders than philosophers because welders make more money, he was never interviewed by me. What appears below is purely a construct of my imagination on how such an interview might go. Nothing said by the fictional "Marco Rubio" who appears here should be taken as fact. Ditto for the real one.

MV: It's wonderful to have you here in our Greenville, North Carolina studio Senator.

MR: Great to be here, Mike. Sorry I'm late. I had to stop by the bathroom.

MV: Well then I'll need to check your birth certificate. But I suppose that can wait until after the interview. Now let's get started. You've said people shouldn't study philosophy because we need more welders than philosophers. What exactly is it that you need welded?

MR: You can start by getting somebody to weld a bigger soap dispenser to the wall next to your bathroom sink. The one you have now barely holds anything and with my huge hands, I go through gallons of the stuff! Seriously though, a degree in philosophy doesn't give anybody the tools needed to succeed in today's job market. It's like your own Governor says, we shouldn't be subsidizing degree programs that have zero chance of getting anybody a job.

MV: Philosophy majors get jobs.

MR: They get jobs alright. How do you get a philosophy major off your front porch? Pay for the pizza!

MV: Pizza delivery must pay more than it used to. According to the most recent data, philosophy majors have a higher mid-career median salary than people with a whole bunch of other allegedly more practical degrees including: accounting, business management, chemistry and your own undergraduate major, political science. I don't know if it's the kind of jack you get for sticking pieces of metal together, but it's a living.

MR: Well maybe they just end up working for *better* pizza places. The point is—

MV: Before you continue, let me also note that philosophy majors score among the top on entrance exams for advanced graduate and professional degree programs like the LSAT, where they outscore pre-law majors, the GMAT, where they outscore business majors, and the MCAT, where they outscore biology majors.

MR: That's what I want to talk about: these graduate degree programs. I mean, how many Ph.D.'s in philosophy do I need to subsidize?

MV: I don't know. I went to a private university for my Ph.D. in philosophy—same place you got your law degree I hear.

MR: The U!

MV: Yeah. Anyway, when I got there as a graduate student I knew I had, to borrow a phrase from one of your political opponents, surrounded myself with *the very best people*. Take my dissertation advisor, Ed Erwin, for example. You'd give him a term paper and you'd get it back with typed up comments that were usually longer (and better) than the paper you turned in. A three-hour seminar or one-hour office meeting sometimes went for 4 or 5, and it was always the student who pulled a Euthyphro and took off. He is also a top notch kneecapper at the guest lectures. And then there's Harvey Siegel (speaking of kneecaps) who provided invaluable advice and encouragement, ran excellent seminars (despite The Buddha Boy), and taught us to appreciate the deadliest of all philosophical weapons: *The Harvepoon!*

Goldman's ethics courses provided the rational foundation for most of my moral beliefs and all of my immoral behavior. I never took a class with Ramon Lemos but we often had lunch together in the campus food court. We talked philosophy and he told me how to make a proper martini. You see, you add the gin and then you take the bottle of vermouth, leave the cap on it and just "waaayve it ovahhh the glaaaasss like a maaaaagic waaaaaannd." And then there's the other grad students. Oh boy. I could tell you some stories and name some names. But I better not.

MR: That all sounds fun but how's it going to get anybody a job?

MV: Got me a job. And tenure. But I got lucky. Getting a job as a philosophy professor is hard to do. And it's getting harder. But that's not really philosophy's fault. Faculty positions all over the country are drying up because of funding cuts and philosophy departments often bear more of the burden than others. Your own factually incorrect remarks reflect a widespread and factually incorrect attitude about the benefits of a degree in philosophy. That's one part of the problem. Another part is that the loudest people who go around expressing that kind of ignorant attitude are, I am convinced, constitutionally incapable of appreciating the value of real philosophical inquiry and how, practical benefits aside, it is absolutely essential to a real education. These are the same people who killed old Socrates.

MR: Who?

MV: Exactly. The most common complaint about philosophy classes, as a quick peek at ratemyprofessors.com will show, is that they're boring. Is there a God? Does anybody really know anything? What makes the difference between right and wrong? That's not boring. But if you think it is, you are. So, are you?

MR: I'm sorry I wasn't paying attention. Am I what?

MV: Why don't we talk some more about welding? I've got this rusted drippy hose spigot at the house I've been meaning to cut and replace. Will I need to buy a can of MAPP gas or do you think a propane torch can do it?

MR: That's above my paygrade.

MV: Oh yeah I forgot. Political Science majors earn less than philosophy majors who earn less than welders. And since the "earning less" relation is logically transitive—

MR: Logically what? Is this about bathrooms again?

MV: Nevermind. Logic's above your paygrade.

MR: If you think I don't know anything about philosophy, you're wrong. I saw a YouTube video where Bill Nye The Science Guy says it's all baloney.

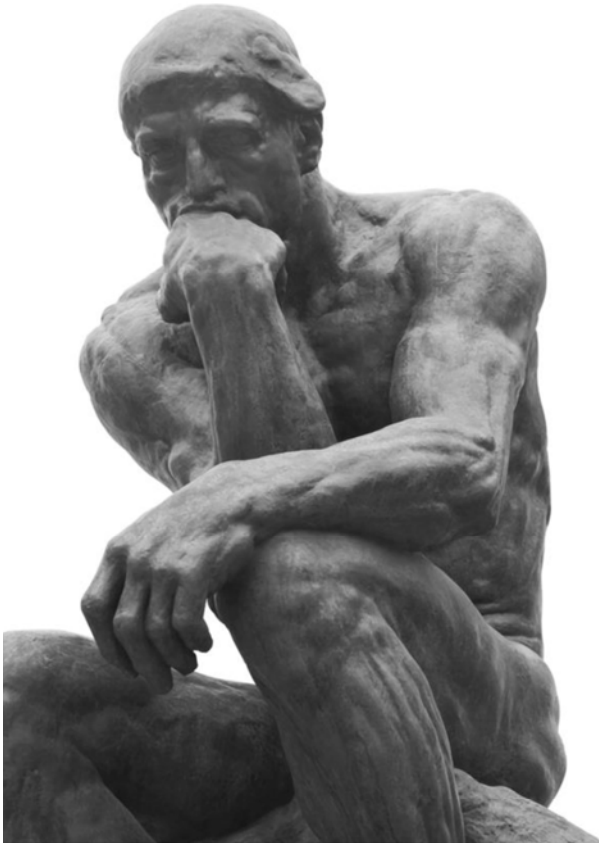
MV: I've seen it. The Science Guy has no idea what he's talking about. I think he might have tried that hammer experiment on his head. Stephen Hawking has no idea what he's talking about either when it comes to philosophy. Hawking declares philosophy dead on the first page of his book then a few pages later endorses an account of laws of nature from a book by John Carroll—a Professor of Philosophy right up the road at NC State. It's one thing for people like you and Nye to trash philosophy out of ignorance but when otherwise intelligent people do it, it makes me think we might not have philosophy departments at universities much longer. But then again, the fact that so many people hate philosophy tells me at least some of us must be doing it right. People thought Socrates was dangerous kook too. Maybe that's just part of the job.

MR: Who?

MV: OK. Thanks for stopping by the studio Senator Rubio and thank you, dear listener, for tuning in. Now let's see that birth certificate Marco.

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SUPPORT PHILOSOPHY



Support from alumni and friends is vital to sustaining the Philosophy Department. Gifts to Philosophy will help support a range of departmental priorities, including enhancing undergraduate learning experiences, providing relevant, outstanding programs and lectures, fostering research, and rewarding excellent teaching.

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- ❖ **Philosophy Department's Greatest Needs**
- ❖ **Graduate Student Support**
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For more information about Planned Giving and other major gift opportunities, or to simply make a gift over the phone, contact: Jeanne Luis, Assistant Dean for Development at 305-284-2988 or jluis@miami.edu.

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2. In the dropdown menu select "Philosophy"

Give by Check:

To make a gift with a check, please make your check payable to "UM Philosophy." Send to: Attn: UM Department of Philosophy, Post Office Box 248054, Coral Gables, Florida 33124 and in the memo line please designate how you would like your gift to be used.

FRIENDS OF PHILOSOPHY DIALOGUE

Brendan Balcerak Jackson

University of Miami

“Essentially Practical Questions”

Tuesday, March 28, 2017

Memorial Building, Room TBA

7:00 pm—9:00pm

Abstract: Disagreements about matters of taste and aesthetics have a peculiar character. For example, suppose you say that Goya’s *Saturn* is a beautiful painting, while I say that it isn’t. Intuitively, we have a genuine disagreement about the Goya painting; we are not merely talking past each other. But it would be odd to say that one or the other of us must be making a mistake; our tastes simply differ. Some philosophers have argued that the peculiar character of disagreements like this must be understood in deeply relativistic terms, according to which there is no objective truth about value and beauty, only truth-for-you and truth-for-me. My aim in this paper is to show that this relativist conclusion is too quick. In my view, a genuine disagreement is always focused on some specific question or questions, and the peculiar character of disagreements about matters of taste and aesthetics is a reflection of special features of the questions on which they are focused. In particular, I argue that we should understand such disagreements as being fundamentally about what I call “essentially practical questions,” questions about what to do. Disagreements about what to do are no less genuine, and no less important, than disagreements about matters of fact. But they can remain unsettled even after we have agreed on all the relevant matters of fact.

Brendan Balcerak Jackson received his Ph.D. from Cornell University in 2006. Prior to joining the philosophy department at the University of Miami in 2015, Brendan held positions at the University of California (Davis), the Australian National University, the University of Cologne, and the University of Konstanz. His main areas of research are the philosophy of language, epistemology and metaphysics, and he also has interests in the philosophy of mind, the history of analytic philosophy, and logic. He has a strong background in linguistics, and much of his work is informed by research in generative syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

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Refreshments will be served following the discussion.

FOR MORE INFO VISIT US ON THE WEB

[HTTP://WWW.MIAMI.EDU/PHI](http://www.miami.edu/phi)

Department of Philosophy CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2017 COLLOQUIA

Guoxiang Peng
Zhejiang University
January 20, 2017

Julia Tanney
Harvard University
January 27, 2017

Neil Sinhababu
National University of Singapore
February 3, 2017

Steve Savitt
University of British Columbia
February 10, 2017

Roman Frigg
London School of Economics
February 17, 2017

Selim Berker
Harvard University
February 24, 2017

Don Fallis
University of Arizona
March 3, 2017

Robin Jeshion
University of Southern California
March 10, 2017

Jessica Wilson
University of Toronto
March 31, 2017

Raffaella de Rosa
Rutgers University
April 7, 2017

FRIENDS OF PHILOSOPHY DIALOGUE

Brendan Balcerak Jackson
University of Miami
"Essentially Practical Questions"
March 28, 2017
Location, TBA

CONFERENCE

**2nd Annual
Inclusiveness Conference**
April 18-19, 2017
Location, TBA

Make sure you receive our announcements!!

Visit: <http://miami.edu/phi/events>

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