



The Penn Positive Psychology Center Lunch Colloquium Series presents:

Symposium on the Philosophy of Well-Being

When: Monday, December 5th, 12:00-3:00pm

Where:

Penn Positive Psychology Center
3701 Market Street, 2nd Floor, Room 201
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Schedule:

11:45 am: Light lunch served

12:00-12:50pm: “Achievement: What is it, and why is it valuable?”

Gwen Bradford, Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Rice University

1:00-1:50pm: “Virtue and Eudaimonism in Aristotle’s Ethics”

Sukaina Hirji, Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Virginia Tech

2:00-2:50pm: “From the Science of Happiness to Advice for the Public”

Susanna Rinard, Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Harvard University

*Refreshments will be available throughout the event.

Talk information:

I. Title: Achievement: What is it, and why is it valuable?

Time: 12:00-12:50pm

Speaker: Gwen Bradford

Overview: In this talk, I present an overview of the analysis of achievement and its value that I develop in my book, *Achievement* (OUP 2015). I argue that two principle features essentially characterize achievement: difficulty and competence. I draw from a theory of value that has its roots in Aristotle and

Nietzsche called perfectionism to explain the value of achievement. There are noteworthy points of contact between this theory of value and Martin Seligman's PERMA. I explore their significance.

Bio: Gwen Bradford is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Rice University, where she works on value theory and normative ethics. Achievement is a central focus of her work and she is the author *Achievement* (Oxford University Press, 2015), as well as other work on wellbeing and value on topics such as perfectionism, achievement, pain, and uniqueness. Bradford earned her doctoral degree from Yale University in 2010, and has been a Faculty Fellow at the Murphy Institute at Tulane University.

II. Title: Virtue and Eudaimonism in Aristotle's Ethics

Time: 1:00-1:50pm

Speaker: Sukaina Hirji

Overview: Aristotle is often thought to be committed to two ideas: first, that we define what it is for a character trait to count as a virtue in terms of the role it plays in promoting human flourishing and second, that we define what it is for an action to be virtuous in terms of the character that tends to produce it. These two ideas, taken together, establish a tight connection between being virtuous and being happy. On this sort of view, having a good character and performing good actions is the most reliable bet for living a happy life. However, the two ideas also generate a number of philosophical difficulties. In this paper, I argue that Aristotle was not committed to either of these ideas. Aristotle's theory, as I reconstruct it, gives us a way of understanding the necessary connection between being virtuous and being happy without being vulnerable to the same objections.

Bio: Sukaina Hirji is an Assistant Professor in the Philosophy Department at Virginia Tech. She works primarily in ancient philosophy. Her current research is at the intersection of Aristotle's metaphysics, natural science, and ethical theory; Hirji explores the role of Aristotle's natural teleology in explaining the relationship between ethical virtue and human happiness. Hirji also has interests in contemporary ethics, including virtue ethics and perfectionist theories of well-being.

III. Title: From the Science of Happiness to Advice for the Public

Time: 2:00-2:50pm

Speaker: Susanna Rinard

Overview: I consider various pitfalls that arise in trying to derive advice for the public from scientific results on happiness. First, the validity of the advice may rely on undefended philosophical assumptions about the nature of well-being. Second, in some cases an individual may be better off using information they have specific to themselves, rather than relying on statistical results about large populations.

Bio: Susanna Rinard is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Harvard University. Her research covers a wide variety of issues, including Bayesian accounts of rationality and decision-making, philosophical skepticism, the ethics of belief, imprecise probability, and happiness and well-being.