

Committee on Public Philosophy

2014-2015 Membership

Lynne Tirrell, chair (2017)

Samantha Brennan (2017)

Erin McKenna (2016)

Darrel Moellendorf (2015)

Lucius Outlaw (2017)

Shane Ralston (2015)

Tom Rockmore (2016)

Dorothy Rogers (2017)

David Schwartz (2016)

James South (2015)

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY

Report: APA Committee on Public Philosophy

From: Lynne Tirrell, chair

Re: CPP 2015 Report

Membership and gratitude: The Committee on Public Philosophy owes great thanks to three members who have finished their terms with us: Darrel Moellendorf, James South, and Shane Ralston. We are grateful for their efforts over the last three years. We are especially grateful to Darrel Moellendorf for chairing the Op-Ed contest for two years, and to both Darrel and James for continuing on through the summer to finish the 2014 Op-Ed Contest evaluations, after their terms expired.

We are excited to welcome our new members:

- Sarah-Jane Leslie (Princeton)
- Jason Stanley (Yale)
- Justin Weinberg (U. South Carolina)

We are working, in a variety of ways, to raise the profile of publicly engaged philosophy. From APA sessions to our Op-Ed Contest to supporting campus in-reach and outreach, we are happy with what we have accomplished but also have a number of initiatives on the horizon that we think will make a great difference. Last year, our Op-Ed contest had about 75 nominations, making selection of winners a challenge. This is a good problem to have. We are working with journalists now to help build skills for writing for the public (see our 2016 Central APA Roundtable). We are working with the NEH, and last year I went to the National Humanities Alliance meeting and lobbied Congress for support for the NEH. Next March, I expect that several members of our committee will join me in this effort, which will expand our reach to other districts.

What we do:

1. APA SESSIONS.

We get to sponsor two sessions at each APA divisional meeting, so six a year. When we came together last year, we needed to set up sessions for all three APAs, and since then we have come up with sessions for the upcoming three divisional meetings. Last year we had some amazing sessions, and they were all well attended, and we are excited about the sessions coming up for the 2016 meetings (see list at the end of this report). We are especially excited about our increasing collaboration with the NEH, which will be showcased at the 2016 Eastern meeting in January.

Usually we do one topical and one sort of method-oriented session, a little bit meta. A clearly topical session was our “Ferguson and Social Justice” session at the Central APA. A more meta-session would be exemplified by our Pacific session on the usefulness (or lack) of philosophical “expertise.” The speakers each addressed different sorts of philosophical expertise in the public sphere, e.g. science, ethics, education, economics, climate change. So there was content, but also meta-questions about how expertise in these areas is welcomed, expressed, useful, depending on the arena. We also do author meets critics for books that are on publicly relevant topics, like our session at the 2015 Pacific on Darrel Moellendorf’s, *Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change: Values, Poverty, and Policy* (Cambridge, 2014). We got to highlight an important new book on climate change, and bring some great philosophers together who are doing work in this area. So it was a climate change session, but focused on Darrel’s book.

For the new cycle of meetings, we have some exciting workshop sessions planned, one in collaboration with the public programs division of the NEH, one with journalists who have background in philosophy, and more. We tried to get a major public speaker for the central division, Angela Davis, to talk about

mass incarceration, but the dates were impossible. We are not giving up and will try to get her to one of the 2017 meetings.

2. OP-ED CONTEST: The 2015 winners, for an essay published in 2014, were announced in September, and prizes will be awarded at the Eastern Division meetings. There are 5 winners, and each gets \$100 and bragging rights. We send a nice letter that they should be able to use at their home institutions, as an award from the APA. The 2015 call will be announced at the next Eastern, in January, and we will form a new subcommittee and new chair.

This year, Linda Nuoffer at the APA office got the whole intake process automated for us and set up a dropbox folder, saving me about a week's worth of time. We are grateful to Linda for this extremely helpful processing! Now the chair and committee only need to read and rate and negotiate the winners.

The 2015 Winners:

Mariana Alessandri, "[Companions in Misery](#)", *The Stone (The New York Times)*

Adam Hosein, "[Prosecuting on Torture Isn't Politics, It's Human Rights](#)", *Boston Review*

Patrick Lin, "[The Robot Car of Tomorrow May Just Be Programmed to Hit You](#)", *Wired*

Kate Manne, "[In Ferguson and Beyond, Punishing Humanity](#)", *The Stone (The New York Times)*

Gordon Marino "[A Life Beyond 'Do What You Love'](#)", *The Stone (The New York Times)*

3. WORLD PHILOSOPHY DAY: *Chair: David Schwartz.* We want a subcommittee of 3 or 4 to work with David on coming up with ideas for events on or around November 19th. World Philosophy Day is a UNESCO sponsored day to bring awareness to the power of philosophy to promote justice, and it is supposed to involve undergrad philosophy clubs, grad students, faculty, and folks in the community. There's usually a justice theme, not always announced with much lead-time. The events should be like teach-ins, public debates, etc. and held on campus or at coffee houses or other public venues. Local culture would settle which events would work best. We plan to brainstorm by email and make a list of ideas, and then put it on a flyer and saturate social media with it in early November, especially to our philosophy friends. Perhaps get it on the philosophy blogs too. Here's a link to the UNESCO page, which is pretty minimal: <http://en.unesco.org/events/world-philosophy-day-2015>

4. LETTER TO DEPARTMENTS/SCHOOLS: The Committee is in the process of drafting a letter urging departments, colleges, universities, to give positive weight to publicly engaged philosophical work when they are doing personnel evaluations. There is a wide range of work philosophers are doing that would count as publicly engaged, some of it via writing, some speaking, some organizing, some teaching in non-traditional venues, blogging, and more. Once we have a draft that satisfies us, it will go to the APA Board for approval. Then we hope it will go out as a statement from the APA. We will keep in touch with Amy Ferrer as we move forward.

5. CHANGING OUR MISSION. We are reviewing our mission. The committee has already investigated getting rid of the charge that we are the public relations arm of the APA, which was never a great idea. (We are amateurs in the PR world, and the APA should handle its own PR.) We will draft a letter asking the APA Board to remove that from our mission.

6. NATIONAL HUMANITIES ALLIANCE/N.E.H: As Chair of the Committee on Public Philosophy, I attended the NHA training day, and then lobbied the Massachusetts delegation for their support of the NEH. This was a pretty easy sell to the Massachusetts representatives and Senator Elizabeth Warren, so it

will be good to get participation from some committee members from states whose representatives might be less aware of the importance of the humanities.

7. MEDIA PRESENCE: We are planning to do more to increase our media presence, through participation in the APA blog, blogging on the Committees page, supporting guest blogs, etc.

8. GETTING TOGETHER: We do most of our work from a distance, so I like to host a breakfast or lunch for the committee members who are attending the divisional meetings. Usually there are only about 4 of us at each one, but it has been really good to have a chance to meet in person, talk about the issues, make some plans.

Our APA sessions are listed on the following pages.

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY
APA Sessions, 2015

CENTRAL DIVISION MEETING, ST. LOUIS MO. FEB 2015

**GII-12 Thursday, February 19, 9:00 AM-12:00 PM Committee on Public Philosophy
Ferguson, Missouri and Social Justice**

Chair: Luvell Anderson (University of Memphis)
Speaker: Bernard Boxill (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)
Speaker: Kit Wellman (Washington University in St. Louis)
Speaker: Shay Welch (Spelman College)

PACIFIC DIVISION MEETING, VANCOUVER, APRIL 2015

Session #1: APA Committee on Public Philosophy:

Public Philosophy: Publicly engaged uses of philosophical “expertise”

Chair: Samantha Brennan, Western University sbrennan@uwo.ca (Last minute withdrawal, so Lynne Tirrell filled in)
Speaker: Anthony Skelton, Department of Philosophy, Rotman Institute of Philosophy. Western University “Deciding Controversial Moral Problems in Public: The Philosopher's Role.” anthonyjskelton@gmail.com
Speaker: Ásta Kristjana Sveinsdóttir, Department of Philosophy, San Francisco State University, “Philosophers out in the Field: shaping policy on regulations of financial markets and the environment” asta@sfsu.edu
Speaker: Allen Thompson, Department of Philosophy, Oregon State University, “Environmental Philosophy, Pragmatism, and Practical Ethics” allen.thompson@oregonstate.edu
Speaker: Melissa Jacquart, Department of Philosophy, Rotman Institute of Philosophy. Western University. “Critical Thinking and Public Understanding of Science” mjacquar@uwo.ca

Session #2: APA Committee on Public Philosophy: Climate Change.

Author-Meets-Critics: Darrel Moellendorf: *Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change: Values, Poverty, and Policy* (Cambridge, 2014).

<http://www.cambridge.org/de/academic/subjects/law/environmental-law/moral-challenge-dangerous-climate-change-values-poverty-and-policy>

Author: Darrel Moellendorf (Goethe University, Frankfurt) darrelmoellendorf@gmail.com
Chair: Lisa Rivera (U Mass Boston) lisa.rivera@umb.edu
Critic: Aaron James (UC Irvine) ajamesajames@gmail.com
Critic: Nicole Hassoun (SUNY Binghamton) nhassoun@binghamton.edu

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY
APA Sessions, 2016

EASTERN DIVISION MEETING, Washington DC. Jan 2016

(1) We're sponsoring a plenary session arranged by Amy Ferrer, featuring just "Bro" Adams, head of the NEH. This is the first time the head of the NEH has been a philosopher, and will be the first time the head of the NEH has come to the APA. (Other committees may co-sponsor.)

(2) **Navigating the Perils of Public Cyberspace: Toward New Norms of Public Engagement**

Speakers:

~~Cheryl Abbate (Marquette, U. Colorado, Boulder)~~ just withdrew
Karen Frost-Arnold (Hobart & William Smith)
Margaret Crouch (Eastern Michigan)
Jason Stanley (Yale)

Chair: Justin Weinberg

(3) **Philosophy for the Public: Reports from the Field and National Endowment for the Humanities Grants**

Peter Fristedt: "NEH Public Program Grants for Philosophers"

Peter is from the Public Programs division of the NEH, distinct from the Public Scholar division. Will talk about the many kinds of things the NEH is supporting now, including grants to create films, radio programs, public discussion programs, and museum exhibitions.

Michael Lynch: U Conn: "Writing Philosophy for the Public"

Michael has received NEH grants for writing for public audiences, so will speak to the value and challenges of that

Lynne Tirrell: "Philosophy in Public: Modes of Engagement and Topics of Choice"

Chair, APA Committee on Public Philosophy. An introductory overview of what's going on in public philosophy.

Gaurev Vazirani: "WiPhi: Developing an online public philosophy"

Will talk about starting his website: check it out: <http://www.wi-phi.com/>

Central APA, Chicago, IL Feb 2-5, 2016

Roundtable: Philosophy meets Journalism

Participants:

David Johnson, Al Jazeera America, (Ph.D. in Philosophy, Stanford)
Ron Feemster, Journalist, professor of journalism, Emporia, KS
(Ph.D. in History and Philosophy of Science, Pittsburgh; MA Columbia School of Journalism, widely published reporter)
Myisha Cherry, Public Philosopher, Graduate Student University of Illinois, Chicago
Jason Stanley, Yale

Pacific APA, San Francisco March 30- April 3, 2016

Title: Public Speech / Hate Speech

Speakers:

Alex Brown (Easy Anglia, UK)

Robin Jeshion (USC)

Rachel Ann McKinney (CUNY, MIT)

Chair: Lynne Tirrell (U Mass Boston)

Title: Justice in the City

Speakers:

Amy Hondo (Princeton, Program in Political Philosophy, Politics)

Ronald R. Sundstrom (USF, Philosophy)

Andrew Valls (Oregon State, Political Science Department)

Chair: Marjolein Oele (USF, Philosophy)

Session Abstract: Following the publication of Elizabeth Anderson's *Imperative of Integration*, recent work in social and political philosophy and in political theory, has taken up and returned to questions about justice in the urban contexts. This work represents the political side of what is sometimes called "Philosophy of the City." These works, in addition to contributing to general discussion of theories of justice and equality, take up concerns such as integration and segregation in housing and education, gentrification, homelessness, and policing and incarceration in the context of cities. What characterizes this work, in addition to their urban focus is that they interact with theory, policy, and public affairs in ways that exemplify public philosophy and bring to bear alternative (for academic philosophy) methods that engage the public; this can range from activism to interviews and other types of qualitative research. This panel collects together a set of political philosophers working in both philosophy and political science to share their work about justice in the urban contexts, especially in regard to the public problems of ethnic and racial segregation in housing and communities. Questions about the very value of integration as a policy and normative end, and the normative and political harms of segregation will be debated.