Abstract List for EMU Undergraduate Conference in Philosophy 2016
Saturday, March 5th (in order of presentation)

Eri Svenson
"The Purpose, Praxis, and Future of Academia: An Exploration of Fichtean Approaches to Education"

Following the publication of Schulze's "Aenesidemus", which detailed a skeptical critique of transcendental idealism, philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte found himself undergoing an "intellectual revolution". Having agreed with many of Schulze's arguments, he concluded that to preserve the spirit of Kantianism he would have to establish a foundationally reworked conceptualization of it. Fichte emerged from this process with a framework grounded upon the innovative claim that we should regard that there is nothing for us beyond our own consciousness, which creates both ourselves and the world that we experience. Furthermore, because we create our own experiences, it is possible for us to access direct knowledge about it through our "productive imagination", gaining knowledge through experience. This approach piqued my interest because current academic approaches to knowledge production are based upon materialist assumptions, Baconian procedure, and production-based outcomes, often at the expense of qualitative and experiential procedures. Wondering if Fichte's philosophies might be able to offer alternative, more balanced approaches for academia, in this paper I participate in an exploratory process examining Fichte's perspectives on pedagogy, scholarship, and education. Beginning with the question "If he wrote on the matter, what were Fichte's perspectives on pedagogy?" I discuss his relational pedagogy and the challenges he experienced balancing his students' autonomy with his position as an instructor. Next, I ask "did Fichte address the purpose of scholarship and education in the broader, social sense?", and suggest that his writings conceptualize scholarship as a public good necessary for the progressive development of humankind. Finally, I reconsider Fichte's place in contemporary academia, wondering "Where do we go from here and can Fichte help us get there?" Ultimately, I argue for the relevancy of Fichtean approaches in addressing the problems facing academia today.

Charles C.J. Oswald
"Moral Vegetarianism and the Philosophy of Mind"

The argument for moral vegetarianism relies on the premise that non-human animals can suffer. Typically, moral vegetarians only address the issue of animal suffering sparingly, whilst failing to account for developments in the Philosophy of Mind regarding the nature of subjective experiences. In this paper, I evaluate problems that arise from Peter Carruthers' Higher-Order Thought theory of consciousness, the problem of other minds, and panpsychism. I argue that even if we assume that these theories and problems are correct, it still does not follow that we should not be moral vegetarians. From this, I conclude that despite not knowing *de facto* that non-human animals have subjective experiences, we should nevertheless assume that they do for moral reasons.

Read Mills
"A Look into Saul Kropke's Argument Regarding the Impossibility of Unicorns"

In 1972, Saul Kripke's Naming and Necessity took the world of analytic philosophy by storm. While many of the ideas contained in Naming and Necessity have garnered serious attention from scholars, this paper examines an idea given a bit less attention: that the existence of unicorns is actually

impossible. Kripke's argument for the impossibility of unicorns challenges traditional ideas of 'non-actualized possible objects' on both metaphysical and epistemological grounds. This paper examines Kripke's surprisingly short argument to reveal its strength and its effect on the relationship between metaphysics and epistemology when it comes to de re modal claims. First, this paper outlines the two prima facie independent theses of Kripke's argument: the metaphysical thesis and the epistemological thesis. Second, each thesis is explained in detail by Kripke's theory on natural kind terms. Finally, the relationship between the two prima facie independent theses is examined to reveal how acceptance of the metaphysical thesis deductively entails acceptance of the epistemological thesis, thus breaking the prima facie independence of the two.

Michael Thousand
"A Rejection of Skeptical Theism"

The evidential problem of evil has become one of the important topics in the entire field of philosophy of religion. This formulation of the problem of evil states that it is unlikely that God exists given the existence of cases of pointless suffering. In response, many theists have taken on a position known as skeptical theism which argues that we cannot make any reasonable judgments about such cases of suffering as we are not omniscient and cannot know whether or not there might be goods attached that could justify the inherent evil of the suffering. In this paper, I will argue that the response of skeptical theism given to the evidential problem of evil undermines the rest of theism in general as it forces us to be skeptical about all other tenets of religious faith. In addition, I will argue that skeptical theism makes any relationship with the divine, a core tenant of most theistic religions, impossible. Given these reasons, I will argue that skeptical theism is not a logical standpoint for the theist to take as it cannot pose a compelling response to the problem of evil without quickly leading to a level of skepticism that undercuts theism.

Jesse Kato
"The False Autonomy of a U.S. Food Consumer"

In this paper, I argue that we, the consumers, are not truly autonomous in choosing the foods we want to eat because we do not have free and informed consent. I argue that a food consumer's autonomy has been coerced by the influence of larger food corporations, the environment, and social factors. Using a medical ethics analogy to describe autonomy, I examine how the food consumer's autonomy is not valued by corporate giants because of the lack of education they provide for consumers and the manipulative nature of their influence in the food industry. I argue that a person's true desires have been influenced by external factors beginning from their conception through adolescence, where they are subconsciously coerced into believing their preferences for food is their own.

Clare Áine Keefer
"Minds and Bodies: Early Modern Social Justice"

In *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* parts I and II, Mary Astell argues that social conditioning impacts women's self-image in such a way as to prevent them from striving for scholarly achievement. Astell's solution is to allow women to withdraw from society into dedicated schools for women and by women, as an alternative to marriage and family life. In this paper, I will explore some of the implications of the argument, how it might be expanded to other marginalized populations, and argue that despite Astell's proposed solution being proven to create at least as many problems as it solves, the groundwork laid in her arguments can form a basis for a functional model of educational justice today.

We have learned that "separate, but equal" education is not a solution to the problem of "achievement gaps" between privileged and marginalized populations. If social conditioning impacts educational drive and achievement for women, then it also impacts other oppressed populations. I maintain that subverting this structural oppression is a key to dismantling it and achieving educational justice. The typical foundations for educational justice come from the imperative that education makes better citizens or that education allows further education on a topic. I maintain that if the goal is educational justice, it is necessary to overcome the determinants of social conditioning.

Tara Malay

"Saint Augustine of Hippo's Refutation of Skepticism in *Contra Academicos* and Stoic and Manichaean Philosophies and Doctrines in his *Confessions*."

In my essay titled "Saint Augustine of Hippo's Refutation of Skepticism in *Contra Academicos* and Stoic and Manichaean Philosophies and Doctrines in his *Confessions*," I discuss how Augustine tackles the four basic claims of the academics at the time. The claims he attacks are appealing to truth-likeness is coherent, skeptics have wisdom, nothing can be known, and skepticism leads to serenity. I lay out the arguments that Augustine presents against each of these four claims and explain how the arguments he gives disproves the claim. I especially elaborate the points that he makes against the third claim, nothing can be known, using the example of time and how time is infinite. I also use mathematics to further help disprove this claim. In the second portion of the essay I discuss Augustine's relationship with the Stoics and how he embraced some of their ideas and how those ideas that he embraced parallel with basic Christian belief. I then elaborate on how the Stoic and Christian ways of acquiring knowledge are not similar and diverge in two very different directions. Finally I discuss Augustine's interactions with Faustus of Mileve, Manichaeism and its approach to understanding the nature of God and the universe. The overall emphasis in my closing remarks is how these works of Augustine became highly influential for later thinkers in both religion and philosophy.

Mayelin De La Cruz

"Non-Emergency Medical Transport Ethics"

This research argues that the current vacancy of ethics that exists within Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) creates a gateway for malpractice and a lack of respect towards patient safety and autonomy. I also argued that the lack of knowledge and training about proper protocols pertaining to NEMT affects the well-being of the patient. In this research I will demonstrate how the fundamental ethical principles of bioethics can guide Emergency Medical Technicians when faced with a critical ethical decision and how they can empower and promote the autonomy and safety of all patients. The four principles are autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice.

Matthew Oudbier

"Strong and Weak Covenants: Counter to Contradictions and Circularity in Hobbes"

With the security of a common-wealth holding individuals to their covenants made, citizens are able to pursue the laws of nature as intended by reason. This seems to be the intent of Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan*, and in particular the covenant argument. Unfortunately Hobbes also included what seem to be clear contradictions to his covenant argument, that imply covenants are not restricted to the common-wealth, but can also occur in the state of nature. In addition, a problem of circularity has been noticed in the covenant argument that begs the question; which came first, the covenant or the common-wealth? In this paper I intend to rectify these discrepancies by introducing two distinct forms

of covenant that I believe conform to the intent of Hobbes. Taking this two-form view of the covenant in Hobbes' *Leviathan* also warrants another look at the work and how it applies not only to relationships within states, but also relationships between states. The old standby passage where "at all times, Kings, and Persons of Soveraigne authority" are in a posture of war, may not be the last word on the subject of international relationships in a Hobbesian world. By clearing up the discrepancy of how the common-wealth is formed, it also gives us insight into how global justice can possibly be achieved. With the two distinct forms of covenant that I argue were intended by Hobbes, one can view individual states acting among other states similar to how individuals act among other individuals as presented in *Leviathan*; where covenants exist justice exists.

Xinyue Claudia Tong
"Beyond Kindness and Malice"

This paper analyzes and expands on Nietzsche's aphorism §184 in *Beyond Good and Evil*. By examining the relationship between "an excessive amount of goodness" and "evilness" from theory to practice, I argue that these two opposing concepts interrelate closely, support and complement each other in light of relativism and ethics. Their coexistence in a fictional context often acts as a strong literary device of dramatic tension for the narrative. However, within constraints of reality, the bond is more visible between good and bad than between good and evil.

Margaret Macknick-Champion
"Emilie du Chatelet and the Optimism of Knowledge"

The study of the contributions of female scholars to the philosophy of the Early Modern Period is a growing field. One such scholar is Emilie du Chatelet, an 18th century author. In this paper, I argue that du Chatelet's writings present an early approach to the philosophy of science that integrates Leibnizian metaphysics and experimental science. Utilizing Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason and principle of indiscernibles, du Chatelet first takes a metaphysical approach to show that the universe is fundamentally knowable, thenapplies the principles of experimental science to discover true foundations of knowledge. In the process, du Chatelet investigates the epistemological foundations of science, specifically the role of experiment and hypothesis testing in the advancement of knowledge and the contrast between probabilistic and final determinations of truth. du Chatelet's work describes a knowledge-seeking process indebted both to scientific and metaphysical methodology, an approach that merits further study both as an example of Enlightenment philosophy and as an argument about the epistemological basis of science itself.

Yossra Mohammed Hamouda
"Towards a Non-Objective Solution to the Problem of Other Minds"

The problem of other minds is the idea that no one can ever access another person's (or animal's or thing's) consciousness and, therefore, it is hard (may be impossible) to prove the existence or non-existence of other minds. Different philosophers and psychologists have tried to offer a solution to the problem of other minds or even to answer the question of whether it is solvable in the first place or not. In Part (1) of this paper, the perspectives of Thomas Nagel, Owen Flanagan, Jean-Paul Sartre and two behaviourists (Anil Gomes and Bruce Aune) on the problem of other minds are presented and critiqued. While In Part (2) a non-objective solution to the problem of other minds is proposed. According to the proposed non-objective solution, establishing a certain close relationship with the other is the only way to know whether he/she possesses consciousness or not and to understand or *feel* —to a certain extent—

the other's experience. This solution bears ontological and ethical consequences; yet, those consequences are also first-person (non-objective).

K. Raleigh Hansen

"Predicting the Truth: Overcoming Problems with Popper's Verisimilitude Through Model Selection Criteria"

The purpose of this research is to investigate the possibility of using aspects of model selection theory to overcome both a logical problem and an epistemic problem that prevents progress towards the truth to be measured while maintaining a realist approach to science. Karl Popper began such an investigation into the problem of progress in 1963 with an idea of verisimilitude, but his attempts failed to meet his own criteria, the logical and epistemic problems, for a metric of progress. Although philosophers have attempted to fix Popper's verisimilitude, none have seemed to overcome both criteria yet. My research analyzes the similarities between Predictive Accuracy (PA) and Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC), parts of model selection theory, and Popper's criteria for progress. I find that, in ideal data situations, it seems that PA and AIC satisfy both criteria; however, in non-ideal data situations, there are issues that appear. These issues present an interesting dilemma for scientific progress if it turns out our theories are in non-ideal data situations, yet PA and AIC seem to be better overall indicators of scientific progress towards the truth than other attempts at overcoming the problems of Popper's verisimilitude.

Ryan Dau

"On the Moral Permissibility of Suicide"

The paper argues from an intuitionist meta-ethical position, coupled with a thought experiment based on John Rawls's "original position" argument, that suicide is morally permissible. The paper then considers five objections to this view of suicide: the Kantian objection, the utilitarian objection, the theistic objection, the psychological objection, and the determinist objection. The paper rebuts each of these criticisms in turn, arguing that the moral permissibility of suicide is a defensible and cogent ethical position.

Abstract List for EMU Undergraduate Conference in Philosophy 2016
Sunday, March 6th (in order of presentation)

Zakary Drabczyk

"Moral Realism, Religion, and the Abolitionist Solution"

Critics of robust moral realism (hereafter simply "moral realism") have noted the uncanny resemblance the theory shares with conventional religious traditions. Accepting this religious comparison, David Killoren describes moral realism in his essay "Robust moral realism: an excellent religion" as offering several advantages over conventional religious traditions which might invite both the religious and nonreligious to moral realism. In this essay, I assess the possibility of moral realism as a religious tradition along the reasoning offered by Killoren. I conclude that moral realism, as articulated by Killoren, fails to answer important criticisms made of religious traditions. To answer these criticisms of a religious moral realism, I explore the work of Stephen Ingram, specifically his essay "After Moral Error Theory, After Moral Realism". In his work, Ingram explores the possible compatibility of moral realism and moral abolitionism, concluding that the two are more complimentary than previously imagined. While Killoren's religious moral realism falls prey to the Conflict Problem, I argue that a moral realism which is also morally abolitionist might serve as an altogether better religion. In doing so, I defend the compatibility of moral abolitionism with a religious moral realism and explore the possible advantages of an abolitionist realism. Furthermore, I contend that without the addition of moral abolitionism, Killoren's religious moral realism is philosophically uninteresting as it seemingly reiterates "common sense" religious and moral commitments of the ordinary person.

Katie Coulter

"Searching for Ethics' Grounding: A Case for Moral Feeling and the Human Relationship to Nature"

In the following essay, I will consider the question of how ethics and morality are possible in the face of the death of God as conceptualized by Nietzsche and other continental thinkers. I will argue that ethical and moral action become possible through, and require, a deep affective experience of something as having absolute value, and that this kind of experience of absolute value can be found in human beings' relationship with nature. Using the work of Bernard Williams and John Russon, I will argue that the climate crisis facing the planet makes apparent this relationship, and makes possible a particular kind of affective response to nature which makes ethical action possible.

Brandon Wright

"No Soft Doctrine: Royce on the Problem of Evil"

The problem of evil presents one of the most serious challenges to the Abrahamic conception of God. The problem arises when two statements are conjoined: (1) if God exists, God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent, and (2) evil exists. If God is omniscient, then God must know if evil exists. If God is omnipotent, then God could eliminate that evil, given the desire to do so. And finally, if God is omnibenevolent, then God must desire to eliminate evil, or, at the very least, all unnecessary evils. Yet, evil exists. This seems to imply that God either does not have the three traditional attributes as defined or does not exist. Call this the *narrow problem of evil*. However, evil—henceforth denoting *undesirable states of affairs*—affects everyone, no matter their religious beliefs. Since evil is a major aspect of the human experience, religious systems must shoulder the theoretical burden of explaining it. Three major questions stand out: what is evil, why does evil exist, and how we can eliminate (or at

least manage) evil? All religious systems should provide answers to these questions, which may collectively be termed the *broad problem of evil*, whether or not they presuppose the Abrahamic conception of God. One system which answers these questions persuasively and does not presuppose the Abrahamic conception of God is the philosophy of religion proposed by Josiah Royce (1855-1916). I outline two traditional theodicies and argue that they are deficient responses to the narrow problem of evil, drawing inspiration from Royce's mid-career essay, "The Problem of Job". I argue that philosophers in the Abrahamic traditions should address Royce's answer to the broad problem of evil because it seriously challenges the status quo in Western philosophy of religion. In the first place, it does not presuppose the traditional conception of God, while remaining theistic. Second, while it does not suffer from the deficiencies of some traditional theodicies, which try to justify God's decision to create a world with evil, it still provides a teleological account of the existence and resolution of evil.

Alexandra Gustafson
"The Language of Poetry"

When it comes to the language of poetry, there are three fundamental questions that we may be tempted to ask; namely, whether or not the sentences in poetry are statements, whether or not they can be bearers of truth-value, and whether or not they are meaningful. To ask these three questions, however, is to misunderstand the nature of poetry. Indeed, to ask anything about the language of poetry is to commit a grave error. Instead of asking these questions, therefore, we might instead ask ourselves if perhaps we aren't mistaken about what these sorts of questions may accomplish.

Danielle Clevenger
"The Science of Communication"

This paper will detail how Bayesian epistemology, traditionally a tool of philosophers of science, can be used to select a method of communication that is most likely to produce a desired communication goal from a targeted subject. Using the frame of Bayes' Theorem in the form of Posterior Probability Ratios, it will show how a communicator, focusing on agency and awareness, can use said frame to deliberately and purposefully select an evidentially favored communication strategy, intended to elicit a certain response from the respondent. By translating the epistemic version of Bayes' Theorem into a communication setting, this strategy presents an alternative method to use when navigating typical social interactions that would be useful for those who have trouble grasping traditional communication dynamics. Furthermore, it paper explains how this strategy is easy and natural to use because the human brain has evolved in such a way that it remembers and weights relevant occurrences for any given situation, which can then act as data for the comparative ratios.

Mohammed Elshafie
"Maimon's Philosophical Project"

In this paper, I aim to present the reader with an account of Maimon's critique of Kantian Idealism, especially his answers to the questions Quid Facti? (How can we ascertain the factuality of the idea of necessary connection of ideas) and the question Quid Juris? (How can we account for experience?), and Maimon's attempt to solve the problems to which his critique gave rise, as presented in his "Essay on Transcendental Philosophy". To begin with, therefore, I consider the origin of the question Quid Facti? in Hume's claims that all Ideas owe their origins to impressions, and that, therefore, any idea of Necessary Connection is a result of custom rather than any absolute certainty. Then, I look at Kant's answer to the Humean challenge, through introducing A priori synthetic judgements, whose possibility

is accounted for by designating Space and Time as pure forms of intuitions, making thus a priori intuiting possible, but denying any possibility of intuiting things-in-themselves rather than mere appearances thereof, as well as his definition of experience as perceptions subsumed under the pure categories of the understanding, and his solution to the resulting question Quid Juris? I then consider Maimon's rejection of the Kantian answers, by broadening the question Quid Facti? to include all intuitions, thus bringing into doubt the factuality of the Kantian experience and its conditions. Finally, I treat of Maimon's answers to the two questions, through re-introducing the possibility of perceiving things-in-themselves via the differentials, defining space and time as relational concepts, and, consequently, providing an answer to the Quid Juris? question in the manner of pre-Kantian Philosophers, while giving only a negative answer to the question Quid Facti? thus reviving the Humean doubt.

Jacob Deutsch

"No Subject Left Behind: An Audit of Philosophy in a STEM Society"

Our society has constructed a false dichotomy forcing a choice axiological choice between the humanities or STEM. Ignoring the integral nature of the humanities and STEM has lead to an abundance of anti-humanities rhetoric. As a result humanities programs at academic institutions across the country to lose both soft and hard support, some programs have been cut altogether. Despite being one of the oldest humanities, philosophy still finds itself embroiled in this discourse. As such, this paper asks if and why philosophy is worth studying in a STEM focused society. This paper also examines how philosophy can account for two paramount challenges that make it hard to truly embrace philosophy: it requires sacrifice and it questions social norms. Looking beyond the ivory tower of academia, I assert that philosophy has value in our everyday lives from utility in the workplace to state and nation wide social policy. In order to come to this conclusion, I comprehensively utilize works and examples from contemporary and classical academics, professionals, and philosophers. My endevour does not attempt sway the false dichotomy in favor of philosophy, but rather, attempt to imply the integral nature of philosophy and STEM in the everyday workings of our lives.