

# 2nd Annual UConn Graduate Conference

## The A Priori

February 20, 2016  
Oak Hall 112

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**10:00-11:05**

**Speaker** [Douglas Blue \(Harvard\)](#)

“The Interdependence of *a priority* and *a posteriority* in the Search for New Axioms”

**Commentator** Andrew Tedder

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**11:20-12:25**

**Speaker** [James Kinkaid \(Boston University\)](#)

“Phenomenology, Meno’s Paradox, and the *A Priori*”

**Commentator** Tom Meagher

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**Lunch Break! 12:25-1:30**

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**1:30-2:35**

**Speaker** [Ross Colebrook \(The Graduate Center, CUNY\)](#)

“On the Subject of Changing the Subject”

**Commentator** Drew Johnson

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**2:50-3:55**

**Speaker** [Antonella Mallozzi \(The Graduate Center, CUNY\)](#)

“Perceptual Intuition and *A Priori* Justification:  
A Note on Chudnoff’s *Presentational Phenomenalism*”

**Commentator** Jared Henderson

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**Keynote Speaker**  
**4:30-6:00**

[Elijah Chudnoff \(Miami\)](#)

“Mature Intuition”

## Abstracts

**Douglas Blue (Harvard)**

*The Interdependence of a priority and a posteriority in the Search for New Axioms*

Mathematics is taken to be the paragon of a priori knowledge. The independence results challenge this status by opening bifurcating paths in the logical space of possible foundational theories none of which we know to be correct by reflecting on the relevant concepts. The aim of this paper, which elaborates aspects of forthcoming work of Koellner, is to reconcile the *a priori* nature of mathematics, on the one hand, with the role *a posteriori* evidence plays in the process of finding new true axioms of set theory. We first clarify the notion of *a priority* used, privileging a “from grounds” sense found in Aristotle and Ockham over the modern “independent from experience” sense originating with Leibniz. In 2, we use the intrinsic plausibility of mathematical statements to develop an alternative to the Aristotelian notion of explanatory order. This sets the stage for the account of mathematical evidence given in 3, where we look at the case for the axiom ADL(R) and generalize two specific features of the case to obtain a notion of mathematical evidence. Among its benefits, the notion of evidence arrived at unifies the methodologies of reverse mathematics and inner model theory and allows a posteriori evidence to contribute to a priori mathematical principles in the way required. In 4 we extend the notion to axiom candidates for the level  $L(P(!))$  and isolate natural constraints. 5 briefly addresses worries arising from the inductive nature of the proposed methodology.

**Ross Colebrook (The Graduate Center, CUNY)**

*On the Subject of Changing the Subject*

Could moral facts be identical to natural facts? Many philosophers think this is impossible, because any reduction of moral facts to natural facts inevitably changes the subject. In this paper I argue that the standard debate over the reduction of ethics is premised on a faulty conception of the epistemology of semantics. Both non-naturalists and anti-realists rely on the assumption that we can have privileged a priori knowledge of the meaning of our moral concepts and language. This assumption is not only false, but pernicious. It leads many philosophers to think that any account of moral facts which runs afoul of their preferred account of moral meaning cannot possibly be right. I argue that this objection is an unjustified Moorean hangover, and propose a much more epistemically modest account of the phenomenon of subject-changing.

## **James Kinkaid (Boston University)**

### *Phenomenology, Meno's Paradox, and the A Priori*

Martin Heidegger's early Freiburg period (1919-1923) contains his most sustained discussions of the matter and method of phenomenology. Like Husserl in his 1911 essay "Philosophy as Rigorous Science," Heidegger draws a distinction between scientific (a priori) philosophy and worldview/historicist philosophy. Unlike Husserl, Heidegger seeks to steer a path between scientific (a priori) philosophy and worldview/historicist philosophy through his method of hermeneutic phenomenology. In this paper, I explain how Heidegger's hermeneutic method arises out of a concern with a kind of circularity that is intrinsic to philosophical investigation. I then show how Heidegger seeks the existential source of a priori knowledge of essences (of the kind Husserl thinks we enjoy) in the historical constitution of Dasein. Finally, I address a debate in the Heidegger literature on the so-called ontic ideal that seems to threaten the a priori character of Heidegger's method.

## **Antonella Mallozzi (The Graduate Center, CUNY)**

### *Perceptual Intuition and A Priori Justification: A Note on Chudnoff's Presentational Phenomenalism*

I introduce two familiar empiricist challenges to the idea that intuitions are a source of a priori knowledge. First, it is not clear what intuitions are; the idea of a faculty of intuition seems especially mysterious. Second, intuitions seem to often express just one's mere subjective convictions. I then present Chudnoff's recent account of intuitive justification in terms of what he calls presentational phenomenalism, and show how this account can meet these empiricist challenges. According to presentational phenomenalism, both intuitions and perceptions are kinds of experiences, which provide epistemic justification by virtue of a similar, typical phenomenology. The claimed similarity between perceptions and intuitions is the main strength of Chudnoff's proposal: intuitions are not mysterious and merely subjective. Instead, they provide us with epistemic justification in a familiar and robust way, just like perceptions do, and are made true in a similar way to perceptions. However, Chudnoff's proposal has also some problematic consequences. First, the thesis that epistemic justification is grounded in the phenomenology of experience is implausible. Many epistemologists are skeptical that our seemings per se are a source of knowledge and they require further reliabilist constraints on justification or truthconductivity. Most importantly, I argue that the purported analogy between intuitive and perceptual justification compromises Chudnoff's further project of defending an intuition-based approach to the a priori. If perceptual and intuitive processes are so similar, and both ultimately experiential in nature, it is not clear that we can still pick out a substantive notion of a priori justification. In this light, I show some interesting parallels between the consequences of Chudnoff's proposal and Timothy Williamson's recent attack to the a priori-a posteriori distinction.

## Elijah Chudnoff (Miami)

### *Mature Intuition*

Intuition matures—propositions initially found counterintuitive, or neither intuitive nor counterintuitive, can become intuitive after practice with and exposure to their subject matter. In this paper I develop a puzzle about mature intuition: (1) Mature intuitions depend on learning; (2) If one's mature intuition depends on learning, then it does not immediately justify believing its content; (3) But in many cases mature intuitions do immediately justify believing their contents. I argue that maturation in intuition is analogous to perceptual learning and that this provides grounds for rejecting step (2) in the puzzle. I consider and reject alternatives that reject steps (1) or (3). And I explore the significance the view of mature intuition defended here has for controversies about the role of intuition in mathematical and philosophical inquiry.