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Ethics and Philosophy of Religion research cluster

The Philosophy department at Birmingham has a large number of talented researchers and PG students working on ethics and philosophy of religion. This research community forms a research cluster which is especially strong in three areas of research.

Firstly, we are very strong in applied ethics and especially in bioethics, global ethics, philosophy of health and happiness, and related areas in political philosophy. In this area, our department hosts **the Centre for the Study of Global Ethics (/research/activity/globalethics/index.aspx)**, which is lead by **Professor Heather Widdows (/staff/profiles/philosophy/widdows-heather.aspx)**. Other researchers who work in this area include **Professor Lisa Bortolotti (/staff/profiles/philosophy/bortolotti-lisa.aspx)**, **Dr Iain Law (/staff/profiles/philosophy/law-ian.aspx)**, **Professor Yujin Nagasawa (/staff/profiles/philosophy/nagasawa-yujin.aspx)** and **Dr Jeremy Williams (/staff/profiles/philosophy/williams-jeremy.aspx)**. Secondly, in philosophy of religion we host **the John Hick Centre (/research/activity/philosophyofreligion/index.aspx)**, which is one of the top research centres in the field in Europe. It is directed by **Dr David Cheetham (/staff/profiles/tr/cheetham-david.aspx)** and **Professor Yujin Nagasawa (/staff/profiles/philosophy/nagasawa-yujin.aspx)**. Finally, we have also recently become strong in the area of metaethics through **Dr Jussi Suikkanen (/staff/profiles/philosophy/suikkanen-jussi.aspx)**, **Dr Alex Silk (/staff/profiles/philosophy/silk-alex.aspx)** and Distinguished Research Professors **Paul Boghossian (/staff/profiles/philosophy/boghossian-paul.aspx)** and **Ralph Wedgwood (/staff/profiles/philosophy/wedgwood-ralph.aspx)**.

Some research topics that are of particular interest to the cluster include:

In bioethics, global ethics and philosophy of health and happiness:

- Moral Neocolonialism and global ethics
- Competing accounts of health and disease/illness
- Ethics of embryo donation
- Phenomenological and congnitive-neuropsychological accounts of mental illness
- Healthcare ethics
- The relationship between the pathological and the irrational
- Philosophical theories of well-being and happiness

In Philosophy of Religion:

- Divine attributes
- Science and religion
- The existence of God

In Metaethics:

- Moral epistemology and especially debunking arguments
- Forms of moral realism: naturalism vs. non-naturalism
- Semantics of normative language and deontic modals
- Moral psychology and motivation
- Moral truth and objectivity

People

Professor Paul Boghossian (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/philosophy/boghossian-paul.aspx) is one of the Distinguished Research Professors at Birmingham. One of his research interests is different forms of subjectivism, relativism and anti-realism in metaethics.

Professor Lisa Bortolotti (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/philosophy/bortolotti-lisa.aspx)'s primary research interests are in the philosophy of cognitive sciences (with a special focus on psychology and psychiatry) and in the biomedical ethics. She has written extensively on topics such as mental health, the meaning of life, reproductive autonomy, research ethics and moral responsibility.

Dr Justin Clarke-Doane (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/philosophy/clarke-doane-justin.aspx) is a Birmingham Fellow. In ethics he is especially interested in moral epistemology and debunking arguments, on which he has published widely.

Dr Iain Law (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/philosophy/law-ian.aspx) is a Senior Lecturer in philosophy currently working on papers in moral theory, moral psychology, the philosophy of medicine and applied ethics.

Professor Yujin Nagasawa (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/philosophy/nagasawa-yujin.aspx) specialises in the philosophy of religion, the philosophy of mind and applied philosophy. In philosophy of religion, he is interested in the existence of God, traditional conceptions of God and its alternatives, divine attributes, the problem of evil and science and religion. He also has an interest in medical ethics, the meaning of life and death.

Dr Alex Silk (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/philosophy/silk-alex.aspx) is a lecturer in Philosophy. One of his areas of specialization is metaethics and especially the meaning of normative language. He has published on truth-conditions for ethical terms, the semantics of deontic modals and other areas related to metaethics.

Dr Jussi Suikkanen (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/philosophy/suikkanen-jussi.aspx)'s (lecturer in Philosophy) main research interests are in metaethics and normative ethics. In these areas, he has published articles on the nature of moral properties and judgments, and also on ethical theories such as contractualism and

consequentialism.

Dr Mark Walker (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/philosophy/walker-mark.aspx) is a lecturer in Philosophy whose principle research interests are the philosophy of mind, Kant's moral philosophy and metaphysics. He also has an interest in philosophy of religion and especially the divine command theories of morality.

Professor Ralph Wedgwood (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/philosophy/wedgwood-ralph.aspx) is one the Distinguished Research Professors at Birmingham. His main research interests in ethics are in the fundamental questions of metaethics and in topics related to practical reason and rationality. He also has an interested in many topics in applied ethics including the doctrine of double effect and marriage.

Professor Heather Widdows (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/philosophy/widdows-heather.aspx) works on global ethics, virtue ethics and feminist theory as well as biomedical issues, particularly those of reproductive, research and genetic ethics.

Dr Jeremy Williams (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/philosophy/williams-jeremy.aspx) is a Birmingham Fellow. He works in moral and political philosophy. Currently he is working on a book on public justification and ethics. He has published various articles on the ethical questions related to abortion.

Postgraduate study

For postgraduates interested in studying programmes or modules in this area we offer the following taught MAs:

- **Philosophy MA (/postgraduate/courses/taught/phil/philosophy.aspx)**
- **Philosophy of Religion and Ethics MA/Diploma/Certificate (/postgraduate/courses/taught/phil/phil-religion-ethics.aspx)** (with a distance learning option)
- **Global Ethics MSc/Diploma/Certificate (/postgraduate/courses/taught/phil/global-ethics.aspx)**
- **Philosophy of Health and Happiness MA (/postgraduate/courses/taught/phil/phil-health-happiness.aspx)** (with a distance learning option)
- **Human Values and Human Rights and Human Values MSc (/postgraduate/courses/taught/phil/human-rights-human-values.aspx)**
- **Health, Bioethics and Law MA (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/courses/taught/phil/health-bioethics-law.aspx)**
- **International Law, Ethics and Politics MA (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/courses/taught/phil/international-law-ethics-politics.aspx)**

Our combined research and taught **Philosophy MRes (/postgraduate/courses/combined/phil/philosophy.aspx)** programme also includes modules in ethics and philosophy of religion, and those wishing to conduct pure research in the field may register for either of the following programmes:

- **Philosophy PhD/MA by Research (/postgraduate/courses/research/phil/philosophy.aspx)**
- **Global Ethics PhD/MA by Research (/postgraduate/courses/research/phil/global-ethics.aspx)**

We have a number of postgraduate researchers interested in ethics and philosophy of religion at Birmingham. For more information about their research projects, see our **Postgraduate Research (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/ptr/departments/philosophy/research/postgraduate/index.aspx)** page. All of our postgraduate students benefit from the academic strengths of our research clusters and are often co-supervised by our Distinguished Research Professors and members of staff from associated clusters across the College of Arts and Law, so that they have access to a wide range of perspectives on their research topic. If you are interested in doing postgraduate research in ethics and philosophy of religion at Birmingham, please feel free to contact our Director of Research Admissions, **Professor Scott Sturgeon (/staff/profiles/philosophy/sturgeon-scott.aspx)** (**s.sturgeon@bham.ac.uk (mailto:s.sturgeon@bham.ac.uk)**).

Current and Recent Staff Research Projects

Professor Lisa Bortolotti (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/philosophy/bortolotti-lisa.aspx):

- The Epistemic Benefits of Imperfect Cognitions (funded by AHRC, 2013-14)
- Moral Responsibility and Psychopathology (funded by Wellcome Trust, 2012-13)
- Rationality and Sanity (funded by Wellcome Trust, 2011)
- Nature of clinical delusions (funded by AHRC and the Department of Education, Employment and the Workplace Relations of the Australian Government, 2009)

Professor Yujin Nagasawa (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/philosophy/nagasawa-yujin.aspx)

- Death, Immortality and the Afterlife (with David Cheetham at the University of Birmingham; funded by the Analytic Theology Project at the University of Innsbruck, 2012-14)
- Alternative Concepts of God (with Andrei Buckareff at Marist College; funded by the John Templeton Foundation; 2011-13)
- Toward and Nonphysicalist Monist Solution to the Mystery of Consciousness (with Max Velamns at Goldsmiths, University of London; funded by the John Templeton Foundation; 2009-11)

Professor Heather Widdows (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/philosophy/widdows-heather.aspx)

- TISS.EU (Evaluation of Legislation and Related Guidelines on the Procurement, Storage and Transfer of Human Tissues and Cells in the European Union - an Evidence-Based Impact Analysis) (co-applicant, funded by EC, 2008-11)
- Faiths and Development (co-applicant, funded by DIFD, 2005-11)
- Ethics and War on Terror (co-applicant, funded by ESRC, 2006-08)

Dr Jeremy Williams (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/philosophy/williams-jeremy.aspx)

- Public Justification and Ethics (Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship Project)

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