New Currents in Teaching Philosophy

AN INSTITUTE FOR CIC FACULTY MEMBERS

July 26–30, 2020
Baltimore, Maryland

Directed by
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www.cic.edu/Philosophy
New Currents in Teaching Philosophy

The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) is pleased to announce New Currents in Teaching Philosophy, an Institute for full-time faculty members in philosophy. The Institute will explore a variety of topics and pedagogies that successfully attract students to the study of philosophy, presented by some of the leading philosophy instructors in the nation. The Institute should be of particular interest to faculty members in small departments that seek to increase enrollments and recruit more majors while demonstrating the relevance of philosophy for the study of other disciplines.

The 2020 Institute will be held at the Royal Sonesta Harbor Court Hotel in Baltimore, Maryland. There is no fee to participate. Room, board, and materials will be covered, along with a portion of travel expenses, thanks to a generous grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

OVERVIEW

At a time when so many voices clamor that a college education must be “practical”—and allege that philosophy is anything but practical—persuading students to take philosophy courses at most colleges and universities can be a daunting task.

New Currents in Teaching Philosophy is designed to help philosophy instructors at smaller liberal arts colleges address this high-stakes challenge. Philosophers know that a successful immersion in philosophy offers undergraduate students a distinctive experience. Philosophy trains them to be exceptionally clear, precise, and rigorous thinkers and writers. It instills the skills and habits of mind that students need to identify and navigate the deep sources of uncertainty and ambiguity that pervade modern life. It also provides a model for successful argument and communication across profound differences of opinion. Unfortunately, fewer and fewer students at smaller institutions are reaping the intellectual and personal benefits of philosophy.
New Currents in Teaching Philosophy will help meet this challenge by bringing together the most dedicated philosophy instructors from CIC member institutions and introducing them to a group of highly innovative, field-tested philosophy courses, through intensive, collaborative sessions led by the original course designers. The broad topics include: teaching current moral and social issues; philosophy as a guide to “the good life”; the intersection of mind and machine (where epistemology, neuroscience, and artificial intelligence collide); and theories of justice in a world of inequalities. Additional sessions will be devoted to specific pedagogical approaches that faculty members can apply to many philosophy courses.

Participants will leave the Institute with new knowledge from burgeoning fields of philosophical inquiry, novel strategies for teaching philosophy, and concrete plans for new innovative courses. The ultimate goal is to attract more students to philosophy courses, recruit more minors and majors, sustain and strengthen the philosophy programs at independent colleges and universities—and push back against a blinkered view of philosophy’s value.

**INSTITUTE DIRECTOR**

**Ned Hall** is Norman E. Vuilleumier Professor of Philosophy and chair of the philosophy department at Harvard University. He is a leading scholar of metaphysics, epistemology, and the philosophy of science. Hall was educated at Reed College and Princeton University, where he received his PhD in philosophy. His books include *Causation: A User’s Guide*, co-authored with L. A. Paul (2013). Hall served for five years as the faculty chair of Harvard’s Standing Committee on General Education and in 2019 was named a Harvard College Professor in recognition of his commitment to research and transformative teaching.

**PRESENTERS**

Mara Harrell  
Carnegie Mellon University  

Christopher Lebron  
Johns Hopkins University  

Mark Schroeder  
University of Southern California  

Meghan Sullivan  
University of Notre Dame  

Eric Swanson  
University of Michigan
INSTITUTE THEMES AND PRESENTERS

• **Current Moral and Social Issues**
  Mark Schroeder is professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California, where he teaches the general education course “Current Moral and Social Issues” and graduate courses in philosophy pedagogy. He is the author of *Noncognitivism in Ethics* (2010) and *Slaves of the Passions* (2007).

• **Philosophy as a Guide to the (Good) Life**
  Meghan Sullivan, Rev. John A. O’Brien Collegiate Chair and professor of philosophy at the University of Notre Dame, is director of Notre Dame’s God and the Good Life Program. She is author of *Time Biases: A Theory of Rational Planning and Personal Persistence* (2018) and *God and the Good Life* with Paul Blaschko (forthcoming).

• **Minds and Machines**
  Eric Swanson is associate professor of philosophy and linguistics at the University of Michigan, where he teaches the popular “Minds and Machines” course, and faculty affiliate at the university’s Weinberg Institute for Cognitive Science. He has written widely on the interfaces between language and epistemology, language and metaphysics, and language and ethics.

• **Theories of Justice**
  Christopher Lebron, associate professor of philosophy at Johns Hopkins University, specializes in political philosophy, social theory, democratic ethics, and the philosophy of race. He is the author of *The Making of Black Lives Matter: A Brief History of an Idea* (2017) and *The Color of Our Shame: Race and Justice in Our Time* (2013) and received the 2018 Hiett Prize in the Humanities from the Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture.

• **Argument Mapping in the Philosophy Classroom**
  Mara Harrell, teaching professor of philosophy and director of undergraduate studies at Carnegie Mellon University, specializes in philosophy of science, philosophy of physics, epistemology, and the use of technology to teach philosophy. She is the author of *What Is the Argument?: An Introduction to Philosophical Argument and Analysis* (2016) and received the 2018 Prize for Excellence in Philosophy Teaching, presented jointly by the three leading national philosophy associations.

• **Best Practices in Teaching Philosophy at Small Colleges**
  Representatives from the philosophy departments of two CIC member institutions will explore this topic: Connecticut College’s Simon Feldman, department chair, and Derek Turner, professor of philosophy and associate director of the Goodwin-Niering Center for the Environment; and The College of Wooster’s John Rudisill, department chair, and Elizabeth Schiltz, Raju Chair of East-West Philosophy.
LOCATION AND EXPENSES
The Institute will be held at the Royal Sonesta Harbor Court Hotel in the Inner Harbor of Baltimore, Maryland. Lodging, most meals, and other expenses will be covered by CIC and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Participants or their institutions will be expected to provide transportation to and from Baltimore, although CIC will provide participants with a stipend of up to $250 to be used toward travel-related expenses.

PARTICIPANTS AND NOMINATION PROCESS
Up to 30 participants will be selected by competitive nomination. Participants must be full-time, ongoing faculty members in philosophy and related programs—so that what is learned during the Institute will benefit the institution for many years to come. CIC member institutions that nominate individuals must be in good standing and committed to renewing CIC membership for the 2020–2021 membership year.

The chief academic officer of the nominee’s institution must nominate the faculty member who wishes to participate. Each institution may nominate one faculty member. Faculty members of all academic ranks are eligible to participate.

The nomination instructions and submission form are available at www.cic.edu/Philosophy. Please read all of the guidelines before preparing nomination materials. Complete nomination packages should be submitted online and will consist of the following:

1. **Nomination letter** from the chief academic officer explaining how the institution’s teaching of philosophy will benefit from the nominee’s participation in the institute;
2. Completed **nomination form**;
3. Nominee’s **curriculum vitae**; and
4. Nominee’s **statement** of reasons for wishing to participate in the Institute, which should address the current challenges facing the institution’s philosophy program and anticipated outcomes for the nominee and the program (two pages).

NOMINATION DEADLINE
Please submit nomination materials online by **January 24, 2020**. The selected participants will be notified by March 1, 2020. New Currents in Teaching Philosophy will be offered again in 2021 and 2022.

*For questions about the Institute or nomination process, contact Philip M. Katz, director of projects, Council of Independent Colleges, at (202) 466-7230 or pkatz@cic.nche.edu.*