

Strategic Academic Focusing Initiative Applied Philosophy

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Executive Summary

At UC Merced each of our current ladder-rank philosophy faculty teach courses and perform research spanning two or more disciplines. We view ourselves as the founding core faculty of an *Applied Philosophy* program that is unique among American philosophy programs.

Mathematical modeling, laboratory experiments and computer simulations are as important to our work as conceptual analysis and reasoning, and we aim to share this vision of philosophy with our students. Both in terms of our continuing research and teaching and in terms of our vision for our program, we see ourselves as contributing to and drawing strength from academic programs across campus, including Cognitive Science, Economics, Management, Political Science, and Sociology. Some philosophy departments in American universities offer specialty degree programs in philosophy and the social sciences,¹ or in cognitive science and philosophy², in addition to their more traditional degree programs in philosophy. Yet unlike these or any other American departments, we at UC Merced are building our entire program around interdisciplinary linkages. Our Applied Philosophy program is both exceptional in the UC system and consistent with UC Merced's commitment to applied and interdisciplinary research. This program overlaps with several current or planned initiatives at the undergraduate and graduate levels: an established philosophy minor, with plans for an undergraduate major in philosophy; a separate undergraduate minor and major in PPE; and a graduate track in philosophy of cognitive science. As we continue to grow our program and contribute towards fulfilling UC Merced's 2020 vision, we plan to develop specifically in the following areas:

- (1) Politics, Philosophy, and Economics (PPE)
- (2) Philosophy and Cognitive Science
- (3) Gender and Race Studies
- (4) Applied Ethics

Area Initiatives

(1) *Politics, Philosophy, and Economics (PPE).*

PPE combines insights from moral and political philosophy with the mathematically theoretical and empirical results of political science and economics. PPE programs have been established for decades in the United Kingdom in prestigious institutions such as Oxford University and the London School of Economics (currently 35 members of the British parliament have PPE degrees)³. In the United States, PPE programs have begun to emerge in recent years and there is

¹ Some of these include the philosophy, politics and economics programs at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Notre Dame and the program in Philosophy, Politics, Economics and Law at the University of Arizona.

² Notably, UC San Diego's joint degree in cognitive science and philosophy, Oxford University's Psychology, Philosophy, and Physiology program, and Washington University in St. Louis' Philosophy Psychology, and Neuroscience Ph.D. program.

³ <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/indialenon/100039937/judging-by-the-new-parliament-ppe-is-the-path-to-power/>

evidence that they attract high enrollments.⁴ Still, PPE remains underrepresented in American universities. A PPE program is yet to be established in the UC system, although UC Irvine is in the late stages of approval for PPE undergraduate major and masters programs. We believe that a PPE program at the UC Merced campus would serve the university mission well for several reasons, especially given that such a program would be the first of its kind in the San Joaquin Valley and the first or second of its kind in the entire UC system. Further, a PPE program would complement existing undergraduate major programs in economics, management and political science, as these programs have a strong empirical orientation and their majors who are interested in gaining additional background in political theory, economic theory, or moral and political philosophy could be served by the PPE program. The PPE research theme complements several proposed initiatives, including Management of Innovation, Sustainability, and Technology (MIST), which emphasizes quantitative research at the organizational levels, and the Center for Human Adaptive Systems and Environments (CHASE), which studies human activity at multiple scales, but has focused primarily on the level of individual behavior. Faculty in PPE study the dynamics of groups of agents, from small groups interacting in model games to societies as a whole. A PPE program at UC Merced would also complement UC Irvine's proposed PPE program, since students who complete our undergraduate program could advance smoothly into UC Irvine's PPE master's program. We are situated to establish a PPE minor very quickly⁵ and an undergraduate major in the near future, given the proposed hire in political philosophy.

(2) Philosophy of Cognitive Science / Experimental Philosophy

Philosophy is one of several disciplines in the interdisciplinary field of cognitive science and philosophy and cognitive science are currently well integrated at UC Merced. Philosophy is part of the Cognitive and Information Sciences Academic Unit, and two of the three philosophy faculty are core members of the Cognitive Science graduate group and are involved in advising students. The Philosophy and Cognitive Science curricula are highly integrated both at the undergraduate and graduate levels (cf. the discussion of teaching below). Plans are in place to launch a graduate track with the Cognitive Science graduate group in philosophy of cognitive science. In this track, computational, experimental, and mathematical methods will be used in the research and analysis of traditional philosophical questions. Philosophers in cognitive science at UC Merced currently focus on neural networks, computational modeling, dynamical systems theory and the analysis of experimental data concerning attention, perception, action, and consciousness. All of these areas correspond to active research projects among other Cognitive Science faculty as well as faculty in other programs. They also resonate with emerging campus wide themes and proposed hires, in particular the emphases on computation and network science in the proposed *Cognition, Computation, and Human Data Science* initiative. To complement these lines of work and prepare for a graduate track, we aim to attract a researcher at open rank in experimental philosophy or philosophy of cognitive science in the next several years.

⁴ Examples: (1) The University of Pennsylvania's PPE program graduates over 100 undergraduate majors a year. (2) The University of Arizona's recently established PPEL (philosophy, politics, economics and law) program has a selective process where 30 students per year are admitted to advanced standing as prerequisite to completing the major and currently over 200 students are declared PPEL majors aspiring to achieve advanced standing.

⁵ To create the PPE minor, we propose creating a second PPE course led by current faculty and linking the two PPE courses with currently established courses in economic theory, formal political theory and moral and political philosophy. With an additional hire in political philosophy we would be well situated to create the additional courses needed for a PPE undergraduate major.

(3) *Race and Gender Studies*

Gender and race studies are emerging research topics in philosophy that intersect with research in cognitive science, psychology, anthropology, sociology, and political science. Some central questions include whether gender and race are natural kinds (i.e. according to Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, “One is not born a woman, one becomes one”); the interrelations of gender, race, and objectivity (i.e. according to Helen de Longino in *Philosophy of Science*, “Gender, race, and class structure are features of a scientific community that must be taken into account when assessing its epistemic reliability”); and the intersection of gender, race, and justice (i.e. according to Tommie Shelby in *Fordham Law Review*, “In most modern democratic societies...the socioeconomic disadvantages that racial minorities currently suffer are caused by racial injustice perpetrated in the past”). These questions have enormous social, cultural, and political import, and are thus both research-rich and highly attractive to students. We aim to contribute to this research topic by supporting the proposed *Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies* program, described in a separate strategic vision document. As that document notes, other UC campuses offers study in areas related to Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. In that vein, we hope to add a tenure-track line in feminist philosophy and critical race theory in the next few years to support the development of an undergraduate program in *Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies*.

(4) *Applied Ethics*

Ethics is a central area of philosophical research that is vital to the practice of other disciplines. For example, the National Institutes of Health (NOT-OD-10-019) and the National Science Foundation (FR Doc No: E9-19930) require institutions to provide training and mentoring in the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) to students and post-doctoral researchers. We aim to support UC Merced’s RCR program in years to come by hiring a tenure-stream specialist in applied ethics. With this additional faculty member, we hope to teach students to apply ethical theories and conceptual analyses to real world cases in a manner that is also informed by research in disciplines outside of philosophy. In concert with this new faculty member, we hope to secure an Ethics Education in Science and Engineering grant from the National Science Foundation to help establish specialized training in applied ethics, which will support the strategic initiatives of the Center for Climate Communication as well as the Environment Systems group. Since three major subfields of applied ethics include biomedical ethics, environmental ethics, and business ethics, UC Merced’s early investment in the fields of biomedical science (especially stem-cell research), environmental engineering, earth systems science, and management should make this campus an especially attractive location for an applied ethicist.

Hiring Plan

In 2014 -2015 we propose to search for an assistant professor of political philosophy to support the emerging PPE program. Between 2015 and 2020 we propose to search for four additional lines: (1) an assistant professor in PPE, focusing on philosophy of social science or philosophy of economics, (2) an assistant professor specializing in philosophy of race and gender, (3) an assistant professor specializing in an area of applied ethics, and (4) a professor at open rank specializing in philosophy of cognitive science or experimental philosophy.

Space Needs

The space needs associated with these areas of applied philosophy are minimal. Each faculty line will require office space only, with the possible exception of an experimental philosopher, who might require minimal or shared lab space. Though no dedicated high performance computing resources would be needed, the resources described in the initiative for a Center for Theory and Computation will be useful to those faculty members who otherwise use high-performance computing resources off-site (Yoshimi).

Contribution to Campus-Wide Teaching Needs

Applied Philosophy is well suited to help serve the 2020 vision of 10,000 students and 1,000 graduate students, since all four areas of Applied Philosophy involve overlapping clusters that will contribute to the undergraduate and graduate teaching needs of our institution. Currently all three philosophy faculty teach in at least two of the following three areas: PHIL, COGS, and ECON. For example, Philosophy of Cognitive Science (PHIL / COGS 110), Free Will in Philosophy and Cognitive Science (PHIL 171/COGS 160), Philosophy of Neuroscience (PHIL 111), and a planned Experimental Philosophy course (PHIL 172/COGS 161) are all either cross-listed or are slated to be cross-listed with Cognitive Science. Moreover, Vanderschraaf teaches Game Theory (ECON 170) and Yoshimi teaches Neural Networks (COGS 103). We plan to continue to teach in multiple areas, and in this way contribute to multiple undergraduate and graduate programs. Further, courses from across campus satisfy the philosophy minor requirement, which has been developed with these ideas of application and interdisciplinarity in mind. Our proposed additions in PPE and applied ethics would be able to contribute to programs campus-wide. The anticipated areas of curricular overlap for applied ethics include Biological Sciences, Bioengineering, Environmental Engineering, Earth Systems Science, and Management, all of which include applied ethics as a standard part of the undergraduate curriculum (bioethics, environmental ethics, and business ethics, respectively). A new faculty member specializing in race and gender studies could teach courses cross-listed in SOC, ANTH, and COGS, while also contributing to the new Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies program.

Diversity

Each of the four areas we emphasize in this initiative has a clear history of attracting diverse student populations, including individuals from underrepresented minority backgrounds. The evidence is perhaps strongest for Race and Gender studies, which tends to attract highly diverse students and faculty. In the NCES Digest of Education Statistics of 2011, Table 290 shows the proportion of female undergraduate students in Women's Studies to be 95% (compared to 57% across all fields), whereas the 2003 report shows the proportion of faculty of color for Women's Studies to be 30% (compared to 19% across all fields). Cognitive science and disciplines relating to PPE and applied ethics achieve at least gender parity (the proportion of female to male students is 48% in cognitive science, 45% in political science, 50% in ethics, and 40% in applied and professional ethics). These numbers are better than the numbers for philosophy as a whole, which is, according to those data, 37% female. There is less data directly about PPE. However, according to Oxford's 2012 undergraduate admissions statistics⁶, PPE is the most popular major at Oxford in terms of applicants, and the third-most popular major for female applicants.

⁶ http://www.ox.ac.uk/about_the_university/facts_and_figures/undergraduate_admissions_statistics/gender.html