

Announcing the Inaugural PSA Women’s Caucus Prize Symposium

The PSA Women’s Caucus is delighted to announce our inaugural Prize Symposium, “Animal Cognition and Animal Welfare,” which will take place at the 2016 PSA Meeting in Atlanta. This symposium will be held directly after the PSA-WC business meeting on Saturday morning, allowing PSA-WC membership to attend en masse. We hope you’ll be able to join us as we celebrate outstanding philosophy of science done with an eye to inclusivity.

The 2016 PSA Women’s Caucus Prize Symposium, organized by Jonathan Birch, was selected from a very competitive pool of applicants for its exceptional quality and relevance to our membership. “Animal Cognition and Animal Welfare” brings together philosophers working in different areas — philosophy of cognitive science, philosophy of biology, and philosophy of animal cognition — with a distinguished neuroscientist and animal rights activist. The symposium includes three women, including one senior philosopher (Kristin Andrews), one junior philosopher (Marta Halina), and one neuroscientist (Lori Marino). The proposed talks respond to work by female philosophers, especially Heather Douglas’s work on inductive risk. The discussion of inductive risk in this context also, we believe, holds special interest to the membership of the Women’s Caucus as this is an area that has recently seen a great deal of productive work by female philosophers of science.

Animal Cognition and Animal Welfare

The interface of animal cognition research and animal welfare policy presents an important context in which to examine the role that ethical value-judgments should (or should not) play in scientific methodology. First, animal cognition researchers face an acute version of the problem of “inductive risk”, since they must choose whether to accept or reject hypotheses knowing that their decisions hold significant consequences for animal welfare. Second, they face the challenge of transforming value-laden concepts, such as welfare, suffering and personhood, into objective, empirically measurable quantities. Third, they face questions of how to revise their own practices in the light of the ethical consequences of the discoveries they make. This symposium, which brings together established figures and early career researchers in philosophy of biology, philosophy of cognitive science, animal cognition research and animal ethics, aims to start new debates on these issues, and aims to connect them to broader debates on the role of ethical values in scientific research.

Participants (in speaking order):

- Jonathan Birch (LSE)
- Marta Halina (University of Cambridge)
- Kristin Andrews (York University, Toronto)
- Colin Allen (Indiana University Bloomington)
- Lori Marino (The Kimmela Center for Animal Advocacy)