PPEL Summer School
June 5-8, 2023
San Diego, CA

Philosophy, Politics, Economics, and Law
Undergraduate Summer School

-created, developed, and organized by Mary Rigdon and Saura Masconale, a

collaboration with the Center for the Philosophy of Freedom and the Department

of Political Economy and Moral Science (PEMS) at the University of Arizona, the

University of San Diego’s Center for Ethics, Economics, & Public Policy, and

Chapman University’s Smith Institute for Political Economy & Philosophy. The PPEL

Undergraduate Summer School features a curriculum that focuses on the practical

problems of organizing and running human society.

Monday, June 5
1:30-2:45  Welcome and Introduction to Big Question (BQ) Project
2:45-3:00  Break
3:00-4:15  John Thrasher
Norms and Conventions
4:30-5:15  Candace Smith
Etiquette
5:30-7:00  Welcome Dinner

Tuesday, June 6
9:00-10:15  Plenary Session
David Schmidtz - Philosophy Lost
Vernon Smith - Adam Smith’s Theory of Society
10:15-10:45  Coffee Break
10:45-12:00  Suzi Dovi
Rethinking the Justice Argument
12:00-1:30  Lunch
1:30-2:45  Justin Bruner
Evolution, Cooperation and In-group Bias
2:45-3:00  Break
3:00-4:15  Mary Rigdon
Personal Exchange
4:30-5:15  Time for BQ Project
Rigdon and Masconale

Wednesday, June 7
9:00-10:15  Saura Masconale
Corporate Activism and Democracy
10:15-10:45  Coffee Break
10:45-12:00  Kingsley Brandle
Q&A about graduate school applications and experience
12:00-1:30  Lunch
1:30-2:45  Vlad Tarko
Capitalism and its Crisis of Legitimacy
2:45-3:00  Break
3:00-4:15  Time for BQ Project
Bruner, Thrasher and Schmidtz

Thursday, June 8
9:00-10:15  Matt Zwolinski
Panel Discussion: Universal Basic Income
10:15-10:45  Coffee Break
10:45-12:00  Simone Sepe
Generalized Freedom of Contract
12:00-1:30  Lunch
1:30-2:45  Students
BQ Project Presentations
2:45-3:00  Break
3:00-4:15  Students
BQ Project Presentations
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Justin Bruner is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Economy and Philosophy at the University of Arizona. Prior to joining the University of Arizona, he was the Department of Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Groningen, and before that was a Lecturer in the School of Political and International Relations at the Australian National University. Bruner writes about social and political philosophy as well as the philosophy of science.

Suzanne Dovi is a Professor of the School of Government and Public Policy at the University of Arizona. Her research interests include democratic theory, representation especially the representation of historically disadvantaged groups, feminist theory, and human rights. She is most interested in exploring how democratic citizens should evaluate those who hold, and exercise power over, voiceless and marginalized groups. Dovi earned her Ph.D. from Princeton University but she also has a MA from the Institute of Social Studies in Amsterdam. She has appeared in American Political Science Review, Journal of Politics, Political Theory, Gender & Politics, Contemporary Political Theory, Constitutionalism, and Polity. Her book, The Good Representative, was published by Blackwell in 2008 and was the subject of a special issue in PS: Political Science & Politics. She is currently working on another book project about how representation can have undemocratic and inegalitarian effects. This book is entitled Toxic Representation.

Saura Masconale is Associate Director at the University of Arizona Center for the Philosophy of Freedom and Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Economy & Moral Science. At the Freedom Center, she is also in charge of the Master of Legal Science. At the University of Arizona, Saura holds a doctoral degree in law and economics from LUISS Guido Carli University in Rome. Her research focuses on the relation of individual practical rationality to social rules as well as the way those rules shape the capacity for collective learning under alternative institutions, and the role of ideas in institutional change.

Mary L. Rigdon is the Director of the University of Arizona Center for the Philosophy of Freedom. She joined the University of Arizona in 2012. Prior to joining the University of Arizona, she was a Ph.D. graduating student at the University of Arizona’s School of Informatics and Computing Sciences. In 2011, she was appointed to the Board of Directors at the Arizona Center for the Philosophy of Freedom. She served on the board of editors of the American Economic Review, The Cato Journal, Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, the Journal of Risk and Uncertainty, Science, Economic Theory, Economic Design, Games and Economic Behavior, and the Journal of Economic Methodology. She is past president of the Public Choice Society, the Economic Science Association, the Western Economic Association, and the Association for Private Enterprise Education. Previous faculty appointments include the University of Arizona, Purdue University, Brown University, the University of Melbourne, where she was a Senior Fellow, and Professor of Economics and Law prior to joining the faculty at Chapman University. Dr. Smith has been a Ford Foundation Fellow, Fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, a Sherman Fairchild Distinguished Scholar at the California Institute of Technology.

David Schmidtz is the President in Moral Science at Western University’s College of Humanities. He joined Western in 2019 after a 22-year career at the University of Arizona. President Schmidtz holds a doctoral degree in law and economics from Harvard University. He is a member of the American Political Science Association and serves on the board of directors of the Public Choice Society. He is the author of Moral Science. At the Freedom Center, he is also in charge of the Master of Legal Science. At the University of Arizona, Saura holds a doctoral degree in law and economics from LUISS Guido Carli University in Rome. His research focuses on the relation of individual practical rationality to social rules as well as the way those rules shape the capacity for collective learning under alternative institutions, and the role of ideas in institutional change.

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Vlad Tanko is Associate Professor & Department Head of the Department of Political Economy & Moral Science at the University of Arizona. Tanko’s main research interests are public choice and economic philosophy. His papers appear in leading books and conference presentations currently fall mainly in two larger research programs: (1) Market-based Constitutionalism and (2) The performance of alternative capitalist systems and the problem of economic disequilibrium. In the first category, he has authored a book on the history and definition of “polycentricity,” and he has several other papers that apply the concept to specific topic-specific democracy as co-production of rules, and “polycentric governance” as a defense of the role of a market system in the functioning of the banking sector; the stability of the financial system, and federalism under high uncertainty. In the second category, he has co-authored and co-published several papers and a book on applying the rent-seeking model to understand different types of capitalism, methodology papers on how to use structural methods to build taxonomies of economic systems and evaluate the consequences of choices of alternative systems. He has written about the capacity for collective learning under alternative institutions, and the role of ideas in institutional change.

John Thrasaris is an Associate Professor in the Philosophy Department as well as the Smith Institute for Political Economy and Philosophy at Chapman University in Orange County, California. He is a Research Fellow at Mont Pelerin Society and the Director of the Law & Liberal Arts Minor at Chapman University. Thrasaris’s research interests include libertarian ethics, and decision/game theory and its applications to ethics and political philosophy. His research focuses on the relation of individual practical rationality to social rules as well as the way those rules shape the capacity for collective learning under alternative institutions, and the role of ideas in institutional change.

Vernon Smith is the George L. Argyros Endowed Chair in Finance and Economics and Professor of Economics at Chapman University. Smith was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2012 for his groundbreaking work in experimental economics. His research is concerned with the role of trust and reputation in capital theory, natural resource economics and experimental economics. He serves on the board of directors of the American Economic Review, The Cato Journal, Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, the Journal of Risk and Uncertainty, Science, Economic Theory, Economic Design, Games and Economic Behavior, and the Journal of Economic Methodology. He is the president of the Public Choice Society, the Economic Science Association, the Western Economic Association, and the Association for Private Enterprise Education. Previous faculty appointments include the University of Arizona, Purdue University, Brown University, the University of Melbourne, where he was a Senior Fellow, and Professor of Economics and Law prior to joining the faculty at Chapman University. Dr. Smith has been a Ford Foundation Fellow, Fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, a Sherman Fairchild Distinguished Scholar at the California Institute of Technology.

Meet the Professors
Justin Bruner is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Economy and Moral Science at the University of Arizona. Bruner is also the Department of Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Groningen, and before that was a Lecturer in the School of Political and International Relations at the Australian National University. Bruner writes about social and political philosophy as well as the philosophy of science.

Suzanne Dovi is a Professor of the School of Government and Public Policy at the University of Arizona. Her research interests include democratic theory, representation (especially the representation of historically disadvantaged groups), feminist theory, and human rights. She is most interested in exploring how democratic citizens should evaluate those who hold, and exercise power over, value-laden and marginalized groups. Dovi earned her Ph.D. from Princeton University but she also has a MA from Columbia University. Dovi has appeared in American Political Science Review, Journal of Politics, Political Theory, Gender & Politics, Contemporary Political Theory, Constellations, and Polity. Her book, The Good Life, was published by Routledge in 2008 and was the subject of a special issue in PS: Political Science & Politics. She is currently working on another book project about how representation can have undemocratic and inegalitarian effects. This book is entitled Taxicab Politics.

Sara Masconaco is an Associate Director at the University of Arizona Center for the Philosophy of Freedom and Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Economy and Moral Science. At the Freedom Center, she is also in charge of the Master of Legal Studies, Law & Economics concentration, which the Center cosponsors with the James Madison Study in the Behavioral Sciences and a Sherman Fairchild Distinguished Scholar at the California Institute of Technology.

Mary L. Rigdon is the Director of the University of Arizona Center for the Philosophy of Freedom. She joined the University of Arizona in 2007. Mary is the George L. Argyros Endowed Chair in Finance and Economics and Professor of Economics and Law at the University of Arizona. Professor of Economics and Law at the University of Arizona. She joined the University of Arizona in 2007, and is also the George L. Argyros Endowed Chair in Finance and Economics and Professor of Economics and Law at the University of Arizona. She is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Economy and Moral Science in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences and co-director of the Decision, Risk, and Management Sciences program. She is currently an affiliate in the Interdisciplinary Center for Economic Science at George Mason University, an affiliate in the Center for Population-Level Bioethics at Rutgers, and a research associate in the Institute for Research on Women and Gender at the University of Michigan. Mary’s research focuses on gender differences in reasoning about preferences and the gender wage gap has been published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences and Evolution and Human Behavior. Her work has appeared in the Economic Journal, Journal of Economic Research on Women and Gender at the University of Michigan. Mary’s research includes projects funded by the National Science Foundation, the International Foundation for Research in Experimental Economics, and the institutionalizing Research on Women and Gender at the University of Michigan. Her recent research on gender differences in reasoning about preferences and the gender wage gap has been published in Evolution and Human Behavior. Her work has appeared in the Economic Journal, Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, and Review of Economic Studies. She is currently working on another book project about the relation of individual practical rationality to social rules as well as the way those rules can be understood to be just or unjust. Her work focuses on theoretical and empirical problems related to corporate governance, although he has recently been interested in the extent to which different types of capital, and the institutions of, institutions, and political philosophy. He holds doctoral degrees in both law and economics. Professor Sepe’s research focuses on the internal and external financial rules, the institutions of the scientific community, ecological resilience, the resilience of the banking sector, the stability of the financial system, and federalism under high uncertainty. His recent research has been cited by others as well as the capacity for collective learning under alternative institutions, and the role of ideas in driving institutional changes.

Vlad Tarko is the Chester H. Smith Professor, and Professor of Law and Finance in the James E. Rogers College of Law at the University of Arizona. Tarko’s areas of expertise include business organizations, corporate finance, contract theory, law and economics, law and philosophy, and empirical methods. His main scholarship focuses on theoretical and empirical problems related to corporate governance, although he has recently been interested in the extent to which different types of capital, and the institutions of, institutions, and political philosophy. He holds doctoral degrees in both law and economics. Professor Sepe is also the Director of the Law & Liberal Arts Minor at Chapman University. Tarko’s research has focused on competitive advantage, behavioral ethics, and decision/game theory and its applications to ethics and political philosophy. His research focuses on the relation of individual practical rationality to social rules as well as the way those rules can be understood to be just or unjust. Her work focuses on theoretical and empirical problems related to corporate governance, although he has recently been interested in the extent to which different types of capital, and the institutions of, institutions, and political philosophy. He holds doctoral degrees in both law and economics. Professor Sepe’s research focuses on the internal and external financial rules, the institutions of the scientific community, ecological resilience, the resilience of the banking sector, the stability of the financial system, and federalism under high uncertainty. His recent research has been cited by others as well as the capacity for collective learning under alternative institutions, and the role of ideas in driving institutional changes.

Matt Zwolinski is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of San Diego. Zwolinski’s research interests are generally in the intersection of ethics, law, and politics. His research focuses on how to improve our institutions of self-governance. In recent work in moral psychology and experimental economics can inform our understanding of how to improve our institutions of self-governance.
Mary L. Rigdon is the Director of the University of Arizona Center for the Philosophy of Freedom. She joined the University of Arizona in 2004. Mary is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Economy and Moral Science in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. She has been competitively selected for the University of Arizona’s Academic Leadership Institute in 2021-22. Mary received her Ph.D. in Economics and Mechanism Design from the University of Arizona in 2004. From 2004-2006, she taught at the National University of Singapore, a faculty research position in the Center for Policy Studies, and an affiliate in the College of Business. While at the National University of Singapore, she was the Undergraduate and Graduate Director, in the Center for Cognitive Science at National University. Bruner writes about social and political philosophy as well as the philosophy of science.

Suzanne Dolin is a Professor of the School of Government and Public Policy at the University of Arizona. Her research interests include democratic theory, representation especially the representation of historically disadvantaged groups, feminist theory and human rights. She is most interested in exploring how democratic citizens should evaluate those who hold, and exercise power, over wealth amass, and marginalized groups. Dave earned his Ph.D. from Princeton University but she also has a MA from the University of Chicago Law School and a J.D. from the University of Bologna. Prior to joining the Freedom Center, she taught at the University of Chicago Law School and the University of Notre Dame Law School. Before entering into academia, she practiced law at Clifford Chance LLC, an international law firm headquartered in London.

Justin Bruner is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Economy and Moral Science in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. He directs the Department of Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Groningen, and before that was a Lecturer in the School of Politics and International Relations at the Australian National University. Bruner writes about social and political philosophy as well as the philosophy of science.

David Schmidtz is the Presidential Chair in Moral Science at West Virginia University’s College of Law, the Director of the Institute of the Philosophy of Freedom in 2010 and served as Director until 2023. He remains Editor-in-Chief of The Journal of Political Philosophy. He is currently a member of the Board of Directors of the University of Arizona. Dave was Kendrick Professor of Philosophy and Eiler Chair of Service-Dominant Logic. He designed, piloted through to approval, then served as the founding Head of the Department of Moral Science and Political Science. He still works on the natural and social sciences, strategies, human rational ends, realist rationality and epistemic and the ontological but robust connections between real rationality and real morality. He still thinks about wrong turns in our history that led to, for example, theorists being unable to see the extraordinary things that ordinary people do to deserve their good fortune. And he still positions the meaning of all. At full count, his work has been reported 151 times in 16 languages.

Simone M. Seppe is the Chad H. Smith Professor, and Professor of Law and Finance in the James E. Rogers College of Law at the University of Arizona. Seppe’s areas of expertise include investments, behavioral disciplines, behavioral economics, law and philosophy, and empirical ethics. His main scholarship focuses on theoretical and empirical problems related to corporate governance, although he has recently expanded to contract law, especially the study of institutions, of political philosophy. He holds doctoral degrees in both law and political science. Professor Seppe is a partner at Jett & Company in Austin, an international law firm based in London, and worked as an investment banker at Fortress Investment Group in London and New York.

Candice Smith is an educator and coach. Smith received a Bachelors of Arts in English from the University of Arizona and an M.S. in Marketing/Behavioral Economics Education. After her husband was awarded the Nobel Prize in 2002 she helped him advise on ways to communicate about the basic elements of market economies and the important role of property and the appropriate social graces that would help at ease in social situations. She attended etiquette and protocol certification classes, and threw kickoff off a deep immersion into the study of the importance of etiquette and protocol to communicate the problems of life. Smith started Etiquette for the Business of Life in 2012 to engage individuals and groups alike to understand etiquette and protocol and communication for all aspects of “the business of life.”

Vernon Smith is the George L. Argyros Endowed Chair in Finance and Economics and Professor of Economics and Finance at Chapman University. Smith was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2002 for his groundbreaking work in experimental economics, behavioral economics, and the experimental enforcement of property rights. His recent research has been published in top peer-reviewed journals and books, and conference presentations. His research examines the social, political, and economic implications of this transformation. His research explores the democratic and political implications of this transformation. His research has appeared in Political Science & Politics, among other outlets. His most recent work examines the intersection of legal entitlements, politics, and economic forces affect society in ways that individuals do not typically recognize. Smith is currently an affiliate in the Interdisciplinary Center for Economic Science at George Mason University, an affiliate in the Center for Population-Level Bioethics at Rutgers, and a research associate in the Center for Cognitive Science at Rutgers University (RuCS). Smith’s research includes projects funded by the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health and the National Institute of Justice. His research has been featured in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences and Evolution and Human Behavior. He has been a Professor of Economics, Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, Review of Economic Studies, Journal of Economics and International Economics. Smith’s work has been featured in theArizona Daily Star, Australian Broadcasting Network, Researcher for the Prison Time, LKLD News 13, KVON News 4, PNKX 12 News, Arizona Public Media, KJZZ, and The Daily Beast.

Meet the Professors

John Thrasivoulou is an Associate Professor in the Philosophy Department as well as the Smith Institute for Political Economy and Philosophy at Chapman University in Orange County, California. Thrasivoulou is also an Adjunct Senior Research Fellow at Monash University. From 2014-2018, Thrasivoulou was a Lecturer (Assistant Professor with tenure) in the Philosophy Department at the University of Michigan. Thrasivoulou has written extensively on political philosophy and has co-authored several books and a paper on applying the rent-seeking model to understand different types of capitalism, methodology papers on how to design and conduct experiments to test theories, and a paper on the capacity for collective learning under alternative institutions, and the role of ideas in driving institutional changes.

Matt Zwolinski is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of San Diego, founder of the Smith Institute for Political Economy and Philosophy, and director of USDA’s undergraduate program in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. He writes about political theory, political philosophy, and cognitive science, as well as about the development of political institutions. Zwolinski’s research interests are generally in the intersection of ethics, law, and public policy. His work has focused on how our current institutions fail to recognize the understanding and normative status of liberty and political libertarianism. Lately, he has been especially interested in libertarian approaches to defending a Basic Income, as well as the role of technology and moral significance of exploitation for individual ethics and political institutions.

John Thrasher specializes in political philosophy, normative ethics, and decision/game theory and its applications to ethics and political philosophy. His research focuses on the reliant of individual practical rationality to social rules as well as the way those rules are justified. He has worked on how our culture changes, how we make predictions about how it will change, and how our behavior and beliefs change in response to these predictions. He has also worked on how in recent work in moral philosophy and experimental economics can inform our understanding of how to improve our institutions of self-governance.

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Vlad Tanko is Associate Professor and Head Department of Political Economy and Moral Science at the University of Arizona. Tanko’s main research interests are political philosophy, moral philosophy, and economics. He publishes books and conference presentations currently fall mainly in two larger research programs (1) The transformation of capitalism: the nature of the coordination problem and the limits of central organization. (2) The performance of alternative capitalist systems and the problem of economic disequilibrium. In the first, he is the author of one of the most extensively cited papers on the history and definition of “polycentricity,” and he has several other papers that apply the concept to specific topics: democracy as co-production of rules, and the limits of public ownership of the banking sector; the stability of the financial system, and federalism under high incentives for speculative behavior. In the second, he has authored several papers and has co-authored several books and a book on applying the rent-seeking model to understand different types of capitalism, methodology papers on how to design and conduct experiments to test theories, and a paper on the capacity for collective learning under alternative institutions, and the role of ideas in driving institutional changes.