

Moral Contests

I.S. Conference | Winter 2023



SCHEDULE (Same for Thursday and Friday unless otherwise noted)

8:30 a.m. **Coffee and tea (Hallway between Atrium and NAB)**

9:00 a.m. **Welcome and focus – Ray Klassen**

9:15 a.m. **Being Serious but Not Solemn – Dr. Michael DeMoor**

(THU)

Humour is a virtue of people who are able to have and maintain difficult moral conversations. What is it? How does it work? How can it both help and hinder us in sustaining community when we don't agree (or when we are too afraid to disagree) about hard topics. This is a serious talk and there will be no jokes, only a painstaking logical analysis of jokes that will render you unable to enjoy comedy ever again.

9:15 a.m. **Being IN the Discourse but Not OF It – Dr. Michael DeMoor**

(FRI)

Being in healthy communities is essential for having and sustaining the moral conversations we need to have. But what about social media? What is social media and what positive possibilities does it offer to build communities and to have tough conversations. This can require "swimming upstream" of the media we interact on, but it's possible. Particularly if you've got a sense of humour (especially about yourself). This lecture will involve no technological interactivity and will end with an altar-call to publicly smash your phone.

10:30 a.m. **Break w/ refreshments (Hallway between Atrium and NAB)**

10:45 a.m. **Breakout Sessions**

The Minefield of International Student Recruitment (N102)

Merna Gurguis and Johoanne Gonzales with student volunteers

Join this panel discussion with international students through the treacherous world of picking schools through agents abroad. Hear how King's does things differently. Presented by King's international team with special appearances from Andre Castro (Brazil) and Amin Khoja (India).

Moral Contests and Covenant Relationships (Knoppers Hall)

Dr. James Bruyn

At University, are we hiding in our shell, or behind a mask? Do we just want a degree, or are we hoping for something more? Could the language of covenant help us express the 'something more' of our university experience? Does the language of 'moral contest' or 'covenant' provide us with a framework for engaging with people who may or may not be hiding in their shell or behind a mask?

Social Tensions in A.I. Technology Domains (N219)

Dr. Michael Janzen with student volunteers

Artificial Intelligence tools offer amplified abilities for individuals, but are their downsides born by the individual or larger society? Let's examine Facial Recognition and Self-Driving Cars. An electronic device is needed to look up related news articles.

12:00 p.m. **Lunch (Cafeteria)**

1:00 p.m. **Breakout Sessions**

Cultural Adaptations and Morality (Knoppers Hall)

Andre Castro

We should not judge someone without understanding their culture, country, or religion. As people of this multicultural society, we need to learn more before assuming what is right or wrong. Is to be more respectful with cultural diversities a kind of cultural relativism? Or can we take a tip from those who have lived in different countries . . . and adapt?

Out of the Shadows of Rwanda (N102)

Divine-Favour Ohanwe, Sonomi Mugabo, Safari Umurerwa, and Nancy Umuganwa

The hosts tell their personal stories and break down some of the false narratives about Rwanda, nearly 30 years after a genocide. Rwandan people now have to break through common misconceptions in order to come out of the shadows including the real heroes of "Hotel Rwanda," the background of European colonization that led to the genocide, and why pity is exactly the wrong emotion.

A big idea from a small country: The Yasuni-ITT Initiative (N219)

Dr. Adrian Beling with Paulina Belbey, David Cebryk, Julia Gesshe, Oscar Izquierdo, Sierra Johansen, Jada Lea, Kristina Thiessen
Ecuador is a poor, oil-producing country, and cannot afford to simply leave the oil in the ground. In 2014, President Rafael Correa proposed to the UN General Assembly, under the YASUNI-ITT initiative, that Ecuador would not extract oil if the international community paid half the value of the lost revenue into a UN trust fund. Preserving rainforests and forgoing the use of oil are important fronts in the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss. The current emissions trading system rewards countries for reforesting a degraded forest—why not also reward a country for leaving its forest alone in the first place?

2:30 p.m. Break w/ refreshments (Hallway between Atrium and NAB)

2:45 p.m. Breakout Sessions

A Language for Moral Contests: Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers (N102)

Dr. Chris Peet and Ray Klassen

We focus on the very tangible need to develop a language to have moral contests. Karl Jaspers proposes an ideal of “boundless communication” which expresses a faith in the comprehensibility of all truths and the good as the condition of all human relationships. Hannah Arendt responds to this need in the realm of politics of plurality, which is the space of freedom. Profs. Peet (Psychology) & Klassen (Interdisciplinary Studies) will represent the perspectives of Jaspers & Arendt in dialogue. If we can no longer trust grand stories about “Reason” or “History,” how can we develop a language for moral contests and moral development?

Complicating the “Tough-on-Crime” Narrative (N219)

Dr. Arlette Zinck, Carol McFetridge, and Rev. Debbie Fawcett

“Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison” is the instruction offered by the author of Hebrews (13:3), yet many Christian voices are often heard among those calling for vengeance when the public conversation turns to crime. In this workshop we will hear from two compelling speakers. Jessica Devries will offer hard facts to complicate the “tough-on-crime” narrative so often heard in the public square. Carol McFetridge will talk about her transition from retired police officer to prison reintegration volunteer at The Edmonton Institution for Women.

Alternate Friday schedule for students in their first semester

10:45 a.m. Interdisciplinary Studies at King’s – Dr. Kris Ooms and Rev. Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning

12:00 p.m. Lunch in the Cafeterias

1:00 p.m. Firepit Connections with Student Life

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Dr. Michael DeMoor is Dean of Social Science and Associate Professor of Social Philosophy in Politics, History, and Economics at King’s. He’s also a board member of a public justice organization and a member of a denomination experiencing a very divisive failure to have a good, hard, moral conversation. His thinking and teaching focuses on themes of pluralism, public rationality, and democracy. He likes to talk but has learned to listen.

Dr. DeMoor is also the speaker for January’s **Everything Series** lecture.

“Wait . . . don’t go . . . let’s talk!”: Difficult Conversations in a Time of Easy Exit (Thu., 7 p.m., N102)

We live in a world that makes it easy and (therefore) common to “walk away” from communities or institutions when things get tough, especially when they get “fraught”. When deep divisions are exposed in our communities, it’s hard to stay and talk things through, but increasingly easy to leave. This talk explores the changes in our world that make exit easy and authentic “voice” difficult. It tries to offer some ways to cultivate public relationships that can bear the weight of having difficult conversations.

ADDITIONAL ONLINE CONTENT AND DISCUSSION FORUMS

Agrochemicals in Latin America: Implications and Complexities

Marie Cristina Alé, Human Rights Consultant

Moral Contests in Dialogues of Body and Soul

Dr. Brett Roscoe