THE 72ND ANNUAL NORTHWEST PHILOSOPHY CONFERENCE

Portland State University

Portland, OR

November 12 & 13, 2021

The Northwest Philosophy Conference is held each fall, attracting philosophers from across the United States and abroad. The primary purpose of this conference is to provide a forum for philosophical work as a service to the profession. This has been the major professional philosophy conference in the region for the past 73 years.

This year we are planning a hybrid format for the conference. We expect that it will be possible for some of us to meet in person, but we will continue monitoring the COVID-19 situation, state and city recommendations, as well as guidance from our university. If it becomes impossible to hold the conference partly in person, we will move fully online.

Author Meets Critics Session for the book by Richard Shusterman, *Ars Erotica: Sex and Somaesthetics in the Classical Arts of Love* (Cambridge University Press, 2021)

Abstract: The term *ars erotica*refers to the styles and techniques of lovemaking with the honorific title of art. But in what sense are these practices artistic and how do they contribute to the aesthetics and ethics of self-cultivation in the art of living? In this book, Richard Shusterman offers a critical, comparative analysis of the erotic theories proposed by the most influential premodern cultural traditions that shaped our contemporary world. Beginning with ancient Greece, whose god of desiring love gave eroticism its name, this book examines the Judeo-Christian biblical tradition and the classical erotic theories of Chinese, Indian, Islamic, and Japanese cultures, before concluding with medieval and Renaissance Europe. His exploration of their errors and insights shows how we could improve the quality of life and love today. By using the engine of eros to cultivate qualities of sensitivity, grace, skill, and self-mastery, we can reimagine a richer, more positive vision of sex education. The book utilizes theoretical insights from Shusterman’s earlier work in aesthetics and somaesthetics to show the role of eros in an ethical-aesthetic art of living. It also provides an extension and critique of the limits of Foucault’s influential work in his multivolume *History of Sexuality*, while offering a genealogical hypothesis regarding the origins of modern aesthetics and its disregard of the arts of love.

The panel will examine the book both in terms of its analysis of the history of erotic thought and in terms of what it can offer for rethinking eroticism in today’s changing landscape of gender and sexual relations that remains troubled by miscommunication and predatory practices rooted in the dominant cultures of the past.  For endorsements of the book from the Cambridge website:  <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/arserotica/B201B916BEF4DA599A68E54F001B368B#fndtn-information>

The panel of critics reflects the multicultural breadth of the book and the proposed panel discussion.

Ellen Zhang – *"The Somaesthetic Dimension of the Chinese Qi Erotics."*

Professor Ellen Zhang, Head of Philosophy and Religion, Hong Kong Baptist University, is an expert on Chinese philosophy and issues of embodiment. For publication details, see <https://artsbu.hkbu.edu.hk/about-us/our-community-of-teachers-and-researchers/dr-ellen-y-zhang>

James Garrison – *Cosmopolitanism, Colonialism, and Counterreactions: Extending Ars Erotica*

Professor James Garrison, Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Baldwin Wallace University, is an African-American philosopher who works on critical race theory and intercultural philosophy. He is author of *Reconsidering the Life of Power: Ritual, Body, and Art in Critical Theory and Chinese Philosophy* (SUNY Press, 2021). <https://www.bw.edu/academics/bios/garrison-james>

Sefano Marino – *Lovemaking as 'return of the repressed' and utopia.*

Stefano Marino, Associate Professor of Aesthetics, University of Bologna (Italy). An expert in aesthetics and critical theory, he is the author of monographs on Adorno, Gadamer, and aesthetics, as well as co-editor of some collections in aesthetics (in both English and Italian). For publication details, see <https://www.unibo.it/sitoweb/stefano.marino4/cv-en>

Richard Shusterman – Response to Speakers

The author, Richard Shusterman, is Dorothy F. Schmidt Eminent Scholar in the Humanities and Professor of Philosophy at Florida Atlantic University. He has published widely on pragmatism, aesthetics, and somaesthetics. His other books with Cambridge University Press are *Body Consciousness* and *Thinking through the Body*. For more details, see <https://www.fau.edu/artsandletters/humanitieschair/books/>