THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY PRESENTS:

Philosopher Nick Stang

University of Toronto

3:30pm-5pm
4/14/23

Close-Hipp 202

Reception will follow from 5pm-6pm in the Philosophy Department Common Area

KANTIAN SHIFTS

So-called 'Leibniz shifts' (in which the position of the universe, or its velocity, is 'shifted' by some constant amount) have been at the center of the debate between proponents of the relationist and absolutist conceptions of space since Samuel Clarke introduced them in his correspondence with Leibniz in 1715–1716. Fast forward three hundred years, and Leibniz shifts are still prominent in debates about the ontology of spacetime, despite the vast difference in background physical theory between the 1700s and today. In this paper we use Leibniz shifts (and a close cousin introduced by Kant himself, orientation shifts) to explore the structure of Kantian space. The paper has three main tasks, along with a subsidiary one. First, we will show that Kant's commitments entail that Leibniz shifts do not represent genuinely distinct possibilities. Second, we will elucidate what it is about the structure of Kantian space that explains this. Third, we will explain why shifts in orientation represent genuinely distinct possibilities, although Leibnizian static and dynamic shifts (of position and velocity, respectively) do not. Finally, we will explore the consequences of our argument for the mereological and modal structure of Kantian space.