WORKSHOP

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?
A Discussion Among Professionals

Thursday, November 14, 4:00-6:30 pm, Raynor Library, Beaumier Suite A

Discussants:

Dr. Margaret Atherton, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
Dr. Owen Goldin, Marquette University
Dr. Sebastian Luft, Marquette University
Dr. Margaret Walker, Marquette University

Free and open to the public.

“What is philosophy?” might be considered a trivial or even a silly question. It is a question that we professional philosophers usually discuss only with non-philosophers, such as undergraduate students in introductory classes or the person next to us on the bus. In such contexts, we inadvertently reduce it to handy definitions, such as “thinking outside the box” or “asking the fundamental questions.”

But do such phrases even remotely capture what we mean when we actually do philosophy? In this light, it is rather astonishing that it is rarely discussed among professional philosophers. Instead, we seem to be happiest when we do not have to take a stand and continue working in our niches. Yet, this implicit understanding of what we mean, individually, by philosophy informs what we do on a daily basis.

Why are these discussions avoided? Are the typical categories into which we group ourselves amongst one another really appropriate to what we do? What kind of a distinction is, e.g., that between “analytic” and “continental” philosophy? Historical and systematic philosophy? Theoretical and applied philosophy? Can and should there be a unified definition of philosophy?

This forum is meant to discuss these questions among professional philosophers. Laying our cards on the table might make for a good amount of disagreement, which is something we supposedly seek.

After short presentations by the invited participants, the discussion will be opened up to include the members of the audience who may but do not have to be professional philosophers!

Organized by Sebastian Luft. Generously funded by the Helen Way Klingler Fellowship Fund.