

Feminism and Philosophical Women in Russell's Circle

Workshop: March 5th-6th, 2021, 10 am – 5 pm EST

This workshop is organized by the McMaster University's Bertrand Russell Research Centre. It is also co-sponsored by the Bertrand Russell Society. The workshop will be held on Zoom. Further, it is open to interested members of the public, who may register at the following link:

<https://bertrandrussellsociety.org/russell-women-workshop/>

WORKSHOP TITLES AND ABSTRACTS

Friday, March 5th

Time EST	Time GMT	Presenter
9:45-10 am	2:45-3 pm	Alexander Klein (<i>opening remarks</i>)
10-10:45 am	3-3:45 pm	Siobhan Chapman
10:50-11:35 am	3:50-4:35 pm	Sophia Connell
11:40 am - 12:25 pm	4:40 pm - 5:25 pm	Allauren Forbes
12:30-1:15 pm	5:30-6:15 pm	Landon D. C. Elkind
<i>1:15-2 pm</i>	<i>6:15-7 pm</i>	<i>Break</i>
2-2:45 pm	7-7:45 pm	Teresa Kouri Kissel
2:50-3:35 pm	7:50-8:35 pm	Scott Metzger
3:40-4:25 pm	8:40-9:25 pm	Bill Bruneau
<i>4:30-5 pm</i>	<i>9:30-10 pm</i>	<i>Open discussion / social time</i>

Saturday, March 6th

Time EST	Time GMT	Presenter
10-10:45 am	3-3:45 pm	Frederique Janssen-Lauret
10:50-11:35 am	3:50-4:35 pm	David Loner
11:40 am - 12:25 pm	4:40 pm - 5:25 pm	Marjorie Senechal
12:30-1:15 pm	5:30-6:15 pm	Michael D. Stevenson
<i>1:15-2 pm</i>	<i>6:15-7 pm</i>	<i>Break</i>
2-2:45 pm	7-7:45 pm	Sarale Ben Asher
2:50-3:35 pm	7:50-8:35 pm	Gülberk Koç Maclean
3:40-4:25 pm	8:40-9:25 pm	Carrie Jenkins
<i>4:30-5pm</i>	<i>9:30-10 pm</i>	<i>Open discussion / social time</i>

WORKSHOP TITLES AND ABSTRACTS

SARALE BEN ASHER (UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO)
JONES AND RUSSELL ON DENOTATION

In his famous “Knowledge by Acquaintance and by Description” (1910), Russell brings epistemological considerations to bear on the question whether denotation is a necessary feature of propositions. We have, Russell believes, knowledge by description of objects with which we are unacquainted, therefore the constituents of propositions about these objects do not make direct reference to them. In this context, Russell takes issue with Constance Jones, who was at the time famous for her view that propositions assert identity (non-identity) of denotation in diversity of intension (1910-11). I examine Russell’s objections to Jones, and argue that they are directed at the wrong concept of denotation: while Frege tends to identify reference with referent, and while Russell explicitly endorses this view, it would not have occurred to Jones to think so. For her, denotation is a feature of verbal expressions, which she correlates, but never identifies, with things. Jones is partly to blame for this misunderstanding, because she associated herself repeatedly with Frege. I argue that the connection between Frege and Jones is less significant than it seems and that Wittgenstein’s picture theory offers us a better paradigm for thinking of Jones’ view of the proposition as the symbolization, true or false, of ontological wholes, i.e., of facts.

WILLIAM BRUNEAU (UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA)
FOUR DECADES, FOUR WOMEN, AND RUSSELL, 1894-1931

Throughout his adult life, Bertrand Russell gladly acknowledged intellectual and political debts to colleagues and competitors. Here we consider four such debts, owed by Russell to four women. Their contributions to his social and educational thought have not attracted the attention they warrant. A “revisionist” history is called for. With Alys Russell, Russell cooperated in writing work between 1895 and 1910 on women’s rights, political economy, family structure, and politics in England, the United States, and Germany. Later, Russell worked with two expert educationists, Lucy Silcox and Helena Normanton, to revise his educational theory and practice for presentation in the *Principles of Social Reconstruction* (1915-1916). Finally, between 1920 and 1930, Bertie worked with Dora Russell, an experienced writer and social activist. Their socialist politics, their views of sex education and sex differences, and their approach to the education of young children showed—at least for a time—the effects of collective effort. Published and unpublished documents make it possible to see how these collaborations occurred and to judge their long-term significance.

SIOBHAN CHAPMAN (UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL)
AMBROSE AND MACDONALD: TWO WOMEN WHO CHALLENGED RUSSELL ON ORDINARY LANGUAGE

In this paper I will consider the work of Alice Ambrose and (1906-2001) and Margaret MacDonald (1907-1956), particularly in relation to their responses to Bertrand Russell’s views on language. Russell’s account of natural language provided a catalyst for much work in analytic philosophy in the early and mid twentieth century. Perhaps most famously, Peter Strawson challenged Russell’s theory of descriptions on the grounds that it was contrary to the ways in which language is used in everyday interactions (Strawson 1950). Russell responded robustly to Strawson’s challenge and, by extension, to the Oxford school of ‘ordinary language

philosophy' to which he belonged (Russell 1957). But Russell also had earlier and less confrontational exchanges with both Ambrose and MacDonald, who were developing their own distinctive and original views on language during the 1930s. Ambrose began her publishing career with two papers in *Mind* (Ambrose 1935a, 1935b) which prompted a direct response from Russell himself (Russell 1936), in which he discussed the relationships between knowledge and linguistic definition. Ambrose's dissatisfaction with Russell's treatment of these themes motivated her to clarify and distinguish the various different ways in which contemporary philosophers wrote about ordinary language. In doing so she drew attention to the practice of 'linguistic innovation' in much philosophical analysis (e.g. Ambrose 1952; 1955). MacDonald also engaged with Russell's views on language at the beginning of her philosophical career (MacDonald 1936). Her subsequent work on the importance of philosophers paying attention to how language is ordinarily used was published before that of many of the more celebrated philosophers of ordinary language (e.g. MacDonald 1938, 1953). In her work on ethics and aesthetics (e.g. MacDonald 1950) she advanced ideas and even terminology which later came to be associated with J. L. Austin's account of speech act theory (Austin 1962). I will argue that it is time to revisit and re-evaluate the work of Ambrose and MacDonald. Their responses to Russell have some important things to say about the relationship between philosophy and ordinary language, which can add to and complement more celebrated contributions to the topic by some of their male contemporaries and successors.

SOPHIA CONNELL (BIRKBECK, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON)

BERTRAND RUSSELL ON SEX, MARRIAGE, AND THE RIGHT OF FATHERS

Bertrand Russell's 1929 book *Marriage and Morals* presents the reader with a series of contradictions or tensions. This paper posits that this is due to a failed attempt to synthesize two moral systems, aristocratic values and a new feminist morality about sexual freedom. The paper begins by setting out the difficulties of making clear Bertrand Russell's views with respect to four areas: (i) instinct or what is natural about sex, (ii) sexual freedom, (iii) marriage and (iv) the role of father in the family. It then introduces two conflicting sets of values which underlie aspects of his account; those of the new morality will be partly illustrated by Dora Russell's 1927 book *The Right to Be Happy* which Bertrand Russell 'thought well of' (D Russell 1975: 190). The final section revisits the four areas of conflict showing how these can be prized apart into separate and competing models of sexual morality. Bertrand Russell can be shown to have more often sided with aristocratic values but also to have attempted to incorporate aspects of the new morality. The fit is awkward at best and when it comes to the role of fathers, unsustainable. While Bertrand Russell was attracted to Dora Russell's vision of a utopian feminist future involving equal sexual freedom, he was ultimately unwilling to go along with the implied redundancy of fathers, particularly as his sense of himself was so strongly tied to patriarchal aristocratic connections.

LONDON D. C. ELKIND (UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA)

DOROTHY WRINCH AND BERTRAND RUSSELL'S PROMOTION OF HIS OTHER STUDENTS

In this paper I consider Bertrand Russell's promotion of his other students like Ludwig Wittgenstein, especially citation and discussion of their work in print, and his decision not to similarly promote Dorothy Wrinch. At first blush it looks as though Russell cited his male students and not his female students without much intellectual cause. If this appearance is accurate, then it is tempting to infer that the explanation for this was simply blatant sexism. However, I argue that the appearance is inaccurate. Wrinch did share many of Russell's 1911-

1919 views about logic, science, and their relationship that are characteristic of logic-centric analytic philosophy. On the other hand, the chronology of Russell's interests and that of Wrinch's intellectual activity do not match up. The story of influence and collaboration between them is in fact more complicated than the simpler blatant sexism explanation would suggest. After unpacking these chronologies and showing how they weigh against the overly simple hypothesis of blatant sexism, I consider other explanations of why Russell cited his male students' work and not Wrinch's work.

ALLAUREN SAMANTHA FORBES (MCMASTER UNIVERSITY)

SEX, SUFFRAGE, AND MARRIAGE: RUSSELL AND FEMINISM

Was Bertrand Russell a feminist? This is a thorny question, and one which is made all the more complicated by the seeming tension between the pro- and anti-women views he expressed in various domains of his life. The question of Russell's status as a feminist thinker is helpfully illuminated, I argue, by comparison to some of his feminist contemporaries – namely, Victoria Woodhull (1838-1927) and Emma Goldman (1869-1940). Like Woodhull and Goldman, Russell argues for women's right to vote, a new sexual ethic, and a significant revision to marriage, understood as an economic, political, and social institution. These are paradigmatic feminist projects, and so would seem to suggest that Russell – particularly within *Marriage and Morals* – has a feminist aim in mind. However, his emphasis on the social dimension – in contrast to Woodhull's emphasis on the political and Goldman's emphasis on the economic – sets him apart. Ultimately, I suggest, it is this significant structural difference that makes Russell, rather paradoxically, both a more radical *and* a less radical feminist thinker than Woodhull or Goldman. It is this fruitful tension, and his similarities with canonical feminists Woodhull and Goldman, which illustrate that Russell's writings have a place in the history of feminism.

FREDERIQUE JANSSEN-LAURET (UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER)

CONSTANCE JONES, BERTRAND RUSSELL, AND SUSAN STEBBING ON INCOMPLETE SYMBOLS

Russell's ingenious use of incomplete symbol theory to evade commitment to undesirable entities like the present King of France, tables, and classes is well known, as is his use of complete symbols, logically proper names, which single out object which we know by acquaintance, which we are committed to, and to whose existence discourse about apparent complexes can be reduced. Susan Stebbing enthusiastically embraced incomplete symbol theory. Although she put incomplete symbols to work in her metaphysics, philosophy of language, and philosophy of physics, Stebbing also raised trenchant objections to Russell's assumption that complete symbols are purely referring expressions, equivalent to mere demonstration or pointing (Stebbing Analysis 1934. In this paper lay out Stebbing's argument and argue that they bear a striking similarity to those made by her former teacher, Constance Jones (Proc. Ar. Soc. 1911), whose influence on Russell is now largely forgotten but worth recovering.

CARRIE JENKINS (UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA)

RUSSELL ON WOMEN, LOVE, AND OTHER NON-PHILOSOPHICAL TOPICS

Bertrand Russell's conception of philosophy was narrowly analytic. It included his work on logic, language, mathematics, and the mind, but his work on such topics as women's rights, happiness, peace, sex, and love was, by his own lights, non-philosophical. In this talk I'll raise

questions about this distinction and its downstream effects on contemporary academic philosophy.

TERESA KOURI KISSEL (OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY)
SUSAN STEBBING ON LOGICAL ATOMISM

In her *A Modern Introduction to Logic* and “Relation and Coherence”, Susan Stebbing considers an objection to Russell’s logical atomism. She claims that atomism makes use of an illegitimate pluralism: the atomist treats relations as external to the terms they relate, thus cleaving relations and terms. This, claims Stebbing, is problematic, since we only have “terms *in* their relations”, and not “terms *and* their relations” (“Relation and Coherence”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1917, p 463). In this paper, I will explain what this criticism amounts to, and how it fits with the notion of directional analysis Stebbing would develop later in life.

DAVID LONER (UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE)
ALICE AMBROSE, BERTRAND RUSSELL AND MERIT AND MISOGYNY IN THE FOUNDATIONS DEBATE AT CAMBRIDGE, 1932-1937

My piece offers a close reading of Bertrand Russell’s 1936 article, “Limits of Empiricism,” and Alice Ambrose’s 1937 reply, “Finitism and ‘The Limits of Empiricism’.” Throughout, I let style, in addition to substance, lead my investigation. Under analysis is Russell’s penchant for disbelief and professed ignorance of women logicians. I juxtapose Russell’s incredulosity with Ambrose’s earnest attempt to marshal the whole of her powers as a woman of talent, in tune with the cutting edge of the field of mathematical logic. In doing this, I hope to make clear the gender expectations of the Cambridge school of philosophical analysis and the patriarchal nature of doing philosophy in the analytic tradition.

GÜLBERK KOÇ MACLEAN (MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY)
A MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL EVALUATION OF RUSSELL’S ROMANTIC/SEXUAL PRACTICES

This paper will argue that some of Russell’s practices in his romantic relationships have been morally objectionable on utilitarian grounds and intellectually unacceptable on expressivist grounds. On utilitarian grounds, Russell’s actions would maximize pleasure and minimize pain for all the parties affected by the relationship if the authenticity of his partners’ consent were maintained either by a more or less equal social and political standing of the partners or, failing that, by the powerful partner’s exercise of the virtue of restraint, neither of these conditions was satisfied in Russell’s relationships with Vivien Eliot or Helen Dudley. On expressivist grounds, the expressions of emotions upon which Russell’s romantic/sexual practices were based, such as the disregard for the humanity of women, are inconsistent with his calls for world peace based on a concern for the well-being of humanity.

SCOTT METZGER (MCMMASTER UNIVERSITY)
WELBY’S INFLUENCE ON RUSSELL’S TURN TO USE

The early Russell had no interest in meaning, despite Victoria Welby’s repeated insistence, in their 1905 correspondence, that the development of a science of meaning was crucially important. The later Russell, however, attributes his considerations about meaning in *The Analysis of Mind*, at least in part, to his earlier encounters with Welby. While a shallow reading of their 1905 correspondence yields the impression that Welby has misunderstood Russell, and

that nothing of importance comes from their discussion of “On Denoting,” I argue that a deeper reading reveals that Welby was trying to convince Russell to turn to a use-based account of meaning as early as 1905. My aim is to show that, in addition to the influence of James and Schiller, Welby plays a significant role in Russell’s turn to “use”.

MARJORIE SENECHAL (SMITH COLLEGE)

DOROTHY WRINCH AND THE MAN OF THE CENTURY

"Dear Sir," the Girton College student wrote to her hero in September, 1914, "would you be so good as to tell me what you refer to in your article on Mysticism and Logic . . . ". And so the long Russell-Wrinch friendship began. "Preparations are being made for Bertie Russell's 90th birthday, she noted in 1962. "AM hoping to go." Russell, she said later, was the greatest beneficial influence on her personal and scientific life. In this talk we count the ways.

MICHAEL D. STEVENSON (LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY)

PATRICIA RUSSELL AND HER INFLUENCE ON BERTRAND RUSSELL, 1930 TO 1944

Bertrand Russell’s relationship with his third wife, Patricia Russell (nee Spence), remains largely unexplored, primarily due to the longstanding embargo on correspondence between Russell and Patricia contained in the Russell Archives that has only recently been lifted. This paper will focus on letters written by Patricia from the time she became involved with Russell after being hired as the governess for Russell’s children in 1930 to the return of Russell and Patricia to England in 1944 following their six-year exile in the United States. This correspondence provides fresh insight into the dynamics of Patricia’s relationship with Russell and her prominent role in impacting his affairs. She clearly played a central role in Russell’s private sphere during this period, contributing, for example, to the dissolution of Russell’s second marriage to Dora Russell and the transfer of his energies away from Beacon Hill School towards Russell’s ‘return to philosophy’ in the mid-1930s. Furthermore, her role as a collaborator with Russell on projects such as *The Amberley Papers* and other political and philosophical research initiatives attests to her own intellectual capabilities—she was an Oxford University undergraduate when she first became involved with Russell—and her determination to establish her own academic bona fides. Finally, Patricia proved to be a stalwart defender of Russell during some of the most turbulent periods of his life, most notably in the whirlwind of controversy that engulfed Russell following the revocation of his appointment to the College of the City of New York in 1940.