Colloquium Speaker | Lisa Cassell: "Normativity and Arbitrariness"

Abstract:

It's a widely held idea that logic is normative. But defending this idea is complicated. On a particularly strong view, to say that logic is normative is to claim that it can be analyzed in normative terms. Towards this end, some have suggested that we can gain insight into the nature of logical consequence by exploring its relation to certain coherence constraints. However, skepticism about the normativity of coherence in general makes this strategy seem less promising than it might first have appeared. In this talk, I appeal to the recently popular idea that we can understand formal systems as modeling epistemic situations—by analogy with the sorts of models that are used in the sciences—to provide the sort of strong account of the normativity of logic described above. On the view that I propose, the normativity of logic is grounded, not in the aims of modeling, nor in the target of a model, but in a choice we are compelled to make at the beginning of the modeling process. An essential property of our logics, on this story, is a form of arbitrariness they exhibit. Logic contributes this feature to the models of our norms.