

College of Charleston Philosophy Visiting Speaker Series

"The Ethics of Arguing: The Value of Sincerity in Legal and Political Argument"



Arguing is something all of us do. We argue with our friends, parents, teachers, neighbors, political representatives, & sometimes with total strangers. Are there any ethical principles that apply to how we argue with other people? Are there limits or restrictions on what we can or should say? In particular, when we argue with others, do we have to be sincere? Do we have to mean what we say? If so, can we make arguments based on what other people believe? Is there anything wrong with doing that? To answer some of these questions, I will compare the ethics of arguing as it applies to lawyers, judges, and to the rest of us as citizens in a democratic society. Lawyers are trained to make arguments, and many of them make a living by arguing. Judges also spend their professional lives hearing and making arguments. What about those of us who aren't lawyers or judges? In our ordinary lives, should we argue more like lawyers or more like judges? My argument will be that we should argue more like judges. When we make decisions that have a significant affect on other peoples' lives, and especially when we act in our political capacity as citizens, we ought to be able to give others sincere justifications for our actions.



Micah Schwartzman
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Tuesday Nov. 3 in Arnold Hall, Jewish
Studies Center at 3:15pm

A reception will follow at 14 Glebe Street