



Department of Religious Studies

Research on Religion Colloquium

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Finding an Ethics of Care in Early Confucian Tradition

Dr. Paul Crowe (Simon Fraser University)

Day/Date: Thursday, February 9, 2023

Location: AH176 (Anderson Hall)

Time: 4:00 - 5:30 p.m.



The way we understand ethical decision making has profound ramifications for how we understand and relate to other people, the world around us, and even to ourselves. An ethics of care sees the individual, not as an isolated actor, but as deeply enmeshed in, and constituted by, a web of social relationships sustained through empathy, attentiveness, and a sense of responsibility to care. People act from within contexts shaped by their social connections, shifting circumstances, and changing priorities, and so must rely on experientially accrued knowledge, insights, and sensitivity in navigating toward the most felicitous outcomes for all concerned.

Drawing specifically on a definition of care ethics proposed by Joan Tronto and Berenice Fischer, this talk will suggest that, through precise references to ancient sources, we can locate a strikingly similar approach in the classical works of Confucian scholars. Their texts had a deep and lasting influence in the domains of language, politics, and culture in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Given that today's most pressing challenges are global, it behooves us to find ways of expanding this conversation about an ethics of care across cultural horizons, in the interest of building momentum toward a more hopeful relationship with our fellow creatures, and the Earth on which we all depend.