

CFP, AAA' 18.

ORGANIZERS: Prash Naidu & Warren Thompson, University of Michigan

### **AAA' 18, Session Title:**

Virtue's Values: Ethical Evaluation in Everyday Life

### **Session Abstract/CFP:**

The anthropological interest in virtue ethics is a kind of protest against critical theory's crude reduction of virtue to meta-critical concepts like "symbolic capital." [1] Virtue ethics provides a way to examine the evaluative practices of social actors without treating them merely as more-or-less informed versions of the theorist's existing convictions (Laidlaw 2012; Mattingly 2012; Lambek 2013; Keane 2016). It is perhaps ironic then that attempts to treat ethics and virtues on their own terms have largely overlooked one of the defining properties of virtue ethics itself—that *virtue is by nature inegalitarian*. "Living well" entails "living better" than others in a substantive way.

This panel seeks to rejoin what was impulsively torn asunder by resituating ethics in questions of value—not with a return to "conspiracy theorizing" (see Latour 2004)—but by exploring the shifts between registers of ethical, aesthetic, and material value and the semiotic practices through which actions, persons, and objects are judged to be of different worth, etc. With this in mind, our panel attends to the following questions: Through what registers are value, virtue, and ethics conceptualized, and what are its consequences? How might first-person humanist approaches to virtue ethics shed light on individual and collective moral agency and experience? How do individuals negotiate the challenges in the "doing of everyday life" (Mattingly 2014)? And what resources do individuals draw from to "make the most" of what life presents them with?

[1] For Bourdieu, virtue ethics "is the self-interested ethic of social formations, groups, or social classes in whose patrimony symbolic capital features most prominently" (1977: 48).

**We seek 3-4 additional papers that respond to such questions, and more, through ethnographic work centering on:**

- Value, materiality, and exchange practices
- Moral judgment and action in everyday life
- Embodiment, senses, aesthetics, and being
- Moral pedagogy and knowledge practices
- Relationality

Kindly indicate interest or send abstracts (250 words plus title) to Prash Naidu ([pnaidu@umich.edu](mailto:pnaidu@umich.edu)) and Warren Thompson ([wmthom@umich.edu](mailto:wmthom@umich.edu)) by April 14.

We look forward to your participation!  
~ Prash and Warren