Commonly, theorists think of stereotyping and discrimination as standing in a relationship of cause and effect. Stereotyping causes discrimination, and discrimination causes stereotyping. In this salon, Dr. Erin Beeghly will argue that stereotyping is not just a cause or effect of discrimination; it can also constitute discriminatory treatment in its own right. Drawing from her forthcoming book, Dr. Beeghly will argue that thinking of stereotyping as a form of discriminatory treatment has big philosophical payoffs. For example, it sheds new light on why stereotyping is wrong and why it's difficult to be a fully ethical person.

Featured Speaker
Dr. Erin Beeghly
Assistant Professor of Philosophy
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Saturday
February 17th
10:30am - 1pm

An engaging conversation amongst members of the Sedona community followed by a light luncheon.
Introduction: Paradigmatic Examples of Stereotyping

A. Gender stereotyping: an employer expects that a young female job candidate is likely to have a baby in the next ten years.

B. Age stereotyping: a tech support employee expects that an elderly customer is technologically inept.

C. Racial stereotyping: mid-20th century France. A black train passenger approaches a white train passenger and asks for directions in fluent French. Failing to pay attention, the white passenger believes that he has been asked a question in pidgin and that the black passenger is not a fluent French speaker. (Franz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks)

The puzzle of my book: when and why is stereotyping ethically wrong?

Thesis of this talk: we can make progress on the above puzzle by conceptualizing stereotyping as a form of discriminatory treatment because one of the following two claims is true:

- The constitutive claim (stronger): stereotyping constitutes a form discriminatory treatment.
- The constitutive claim (weaker): stereotyping sometimes constitutes a form of discriminatory treatment.

The Causal Claim:

Stereotyping is a cause of discrimination (and vice versa).

- Stereotyping and discrimination are understood as empirically and conceptually distinct. Stereotyping is a psychological activity; discrimination is behavioral activity. The phenomena stand in the relationship of cause & effect.
- Typically presupposed by theorists of discrimination. E.g., Debbie Hellman, Ben Eidelson. It is also found in discrimination law itself.
The Constitutive Claim:

*Stereotyping is not just a cause (or effect) of discriminatory treatment; it can also constitute discriminatory treatment in and of itself.*

- Sometimes presupposed (but not defended) by theorists of discrimination, e.g., Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen (cognitive & non-cognitive discrimination), Kathy Puddifoot (epistemic discrimination).

- **Contention #1:** it is better to argue for the constitutive claim than to presuppose it.

- **Contention #2:** most, if not all, definitions of discrimination available in philosophical literature suggest that stereotyping can be discriminatory.

**Examples:**

**Debbie Hellman (2008, When is Discrimination Wrong?):** to discriminate is to “draw a distinction between people on the basis of a certain trait: race, the letter of a person’s last name, sex, appearance, ability, age, or another attribute” (2).

**TRAIN CASE:** $X =$ white train passenger, $Y =$ black train passenger, $W =$ his expectations of linguistic competence, $Z =$ a random white train passenger, $P =$ race, $P$-wise= with respect to race

**Benjamin Eidelson (2015, Discrimination & Disrespect):** “$X$ (directly) discriminates against $Y$ in dimension $W$ on the basis of $P$ if and only if:

**(Differential Treatment Condition)** $X$ treats $Y$ less favorably in respect of $W$ than $X$ treats some actual or counterfactual other, $Z$, in respect of $W$; and

**(Explanatory Condition)** a difference in how $X$ regards $Y$ $P$-wise and how $X$ regards or would regard $Z$ $P$-wise figures in the explanation of this differential treatment” (17).

*Both differential and explanatory conditions are fulfilled.

Upshot: two prominent definitions of discrimination count acts of stereotyping—either sometimes or always—as discriminatory. These definitions are not idiosyncratic; we can reasonably expect other definitions available in the literature will have the similar results.
Objections to the Constitutive Claim:

**Objection 1:** You shouldn’t apply definitions of discrimination to stereotyping because treatment of other people cannot happen merely “in the head.” “Treatment” is an inherently behavioral notion.

*Reply: agentive mind argument.* (E.g., Murdoch, virtue epistemologists including Code & Medina, Aristotle, Kant?) Cognition and perception happen “in the head” but they still involve agency and treating people in certain ways epistemically.

*Reply: embodied mind argument.* (E.g., Alcoff, Sullivan, Yancy; E.g., Noë, Varela & Thompson, Merleau Ponty, Heidegger, Fanon). Cognition & perception are embodied and interactive, and they often involve treating people in certain ways in the traditional behavioral sense.

**Objection 2:** Stereotyping cannot be a form of discriminatory treatment because you are not responsible for what you think but you are responsible for how you act. Also, if we hold people responsible for their thoughts, we will end up in a totalitarian dystopia.

**Objection 3:** Conceptual Asymmetry—the concepts of stereotyping and discrimination are too different & this makes it impossible for stereotyping to be a form of discrimination.

Why—and How—the Constitutive Claim Matters

A. The constitutive claim has implications for how we conceptualize discrimination.

B. The constitutive claim suggests a novel methodology for pursuing a theory of wrongful stereotyping and is normatively revealing.

C. The constitutive claim highlights the difficulty of being a fully ethical person: living an ethical life is not just about outward behavior but also concerns our emotional and cognitive lives.

Notes:
A. TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR MY BOOK—WHAT’S WRONG WITH STEREOTYPING?

1. What is a Stereotype? What is Stereotyping?
2. Stereotyping and Discrimination: Their Relationship and Why It Matters
3. Desiderata for a Theory of Wrongful Stereotyping
4. Failing to Treat Persons as Individuals
5. Prejudice
6. Harm
7. Oppression
8. Disrespect
9. A New Disjunctive Theory of Wrongful Stereotyping

B. THEORIES OF WRONGFUL DISCRIMINATION

• **Hellman:** discrimination is wrong iff it is demeaning (2008).
• **Lippert-Rasmussen:** discrimination is wrong iff it is sufficiently harmful (2014).
• **Arneson:** discrimination is wrong iff it is motivated by prejudice (2006).
• **Khaitan:** discrimination is wrong iff it frustrates people’s ability to lead flourishing lives (2015).
• **Moreau:** discrimination is wrong iff it interferes with deliberative freedoms (2010).
• **Eidelson:** discrimination is wrong iff it manifests deliberative disrespect or is harmful (2015).

C. DEFINITIONS OF STEREOTYPES & STEREOTYPING

• **My definition (2015):**
  o To stereotype someone is to judge that person by real or apparent group membership.
  o Stereotypes are either concepts about groups or are informational structures (e.g., schemas) associated with the formation and use of such concepts.

• **Blum’s definition (2004):**
  o To stereotype someone is to judge that person by false or misleading, evidence-resistant group generalizations.
  o Stereotypes are “false or misleading generalizations about groups held in a manner that renders them largely though not entirely immune to counter-evidence.”

According to Blum, stereotyping is always wrong because if fails to treat persons as individuals, encourages moral distancing, masks the internal diversity of groups, and harms individuals who are judged by group membership.