

Meanings, Minds, and Models

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**Thursday, November 20, 2014
10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Room 6495, CUNY Grad Center**

A recurring but minority view in the philosophy of cognitive science (e.g. Churchland 1979; Matthews 2007) holds that the propositional specification of mental content is akin to assignment of numbers to measurable phenomena such as temperature where the relationships among values are significant but not the actual numbers assigned.

I will articulate and attempt to defend a version of this view that locates mental content within a general framework of modeling approaches to empirical phenomena, and I will illustrate the approach using experiments with computational analysis of text carried out within my InPhO group. I will consider the ways in which this approach challenges standard views of meaning that put semantics before pragmatics, and I will describe how a pragmatics-first approach may be rooted in the ethology of animal communication.