

Seminar:10/23/2023

Jeff Kasser
Colorado State University
Department of Philosophy

Title: Should Statisticians Care about Philosophical Work on Probability and Statistics? Yes and No (of course)

Abstract: Scientists (and fellow travelers like statisticians) often reject philosophy as pointless, irrelevant, or useless. But these are quite different charges. This talk will offer a qualified defense of philosophy against the charges of pointlessness and irrelevance, but it will also suggest that philosophy can be worse than useless in some statistical contexts. Examples of metaphysical issues (e.g. physical vs. epistemic interpretations of probability statements), epistemological issues (under what conditions, if any, can results of statistical tests tell us what to believe?), and issues in the philosophy of language (the difference between construing probability statements as sentences or as propositions) will illustrate the (alleged) contributions of a humanistic discipline to your mathematical one. Modest attempts to showcase philosophy of probability as legitimate and even as intriguing will be undertaken.