

The Center for Applied Ethics presents:

“The Definition of Marriage”

Prof. John Corvino

3:30pm - 5:30pm • Thursday, Feb. 6, 2014 • The Anatol Center



ABSTRACT:

Many marriage traditionalists believe that same-sex “marriage” is not merely bad policy, but also a kind of category mistake, because marriage is by definition male-female. In this talk I explain and critically assess this “Definitional Objection” to same-sex marriage. In the first part, I distinguish the argument from some related concerns, ultimately identifying it as a non-consequentialist argument for giving special attention and a privileged status to a certain kind of (heterosexual) relationship. In the second part, I evaluate the “new natural law” version of the objection put forth by Robert George and others. Although their view constitutes the strongest and most developed argument for maintaining marriage as an exclusively heterosexual institution, I argue that it fails, and moreover that it fails in different ways than previously thought. I conclude by making some general observations about the meaning of marriage.

Prof. John Corvino (Ph.D., Texas - Austin) is Chair of the Philosophy Department at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. He is the author of *Same Sex: the Ethics, Science, and Culture of Homosexuality* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), *Debating Same-Sex Marriage* (co-authored with Maggie Gallagher, Oxford University Press, 2012) and *What's Wrong with Homosexuality?* (Oxford University Press, 2013). Until 2011, his column “The Gay Moralists” appeared weekly at 365gay.com. His essays have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The New Republic*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Advocate*, *Salon*, and *The Huffington Post*.

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