

**The Department of Philosophy and  
the Applied Ethics Forum present:**

**Christa M. Johnson**

## **The Intrapersonal Paradox of Deontology**

Deontologists famously hold that there are constraints on the actions that agents are morally permitted to perform. Numerous challenges have been raised concerning how these constraints work in practice. One such challenge is the Paradox of Deontology (POD). Consider one motivation a deontologist has for defending constraints, for instance, respecting human dignity. If every killing disrespects human dignity, more human dignity would be respected if agents were permitted to kill one person when it would stop five others from killing. Yet, deontologists reject this proposal. To make sense of this, many deontologists have argued that constraints are agent-relative. Granting this way of thinking about constraints, my talk will investigate what comes next. Imagine that an agent could minimize her own killings by killing a single person. Should she do so? If the reason that agents shouldn't kill to prevent other people from killing is that only an agent's own killings matter, in this case it seems that the agent should indeed kill one to minimize her own overall killings. Call this the intrapersonal paradox of deontology (IPOD). After setting up IPOD, I consider whether agents should be permitted to violate a constraint in order to minimize their own overall violations, and then argue that such a view faces numerous challenges, including a seeming rejection of important deontological principles. To solve IPOD, then, I develop a view of constraints that is both agent- and time-relative. That is, agents are not permitted to kill, lie, cheat, or steal at each particular moment. This view exemplifies the underlying motivations for constraints and solves both the inter- and intrapersonal paradoxes of deontology.

**Monday Feb. 11<sup>th</sup> 4:00–5:30pm**

**Student Success Center Rm. 0030**