

Philosophy Colloquium

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Informal Norms and Legitimate Policing

ABSTRACT:

On July 26th 2017, nurse Alex Wubbels was assaulted by Detective Jeff Payne when Wubbels refused to let Payne draw blood from an unconscious patient without the patient's consent or a warrant. This case is noteworthy for various reasons; for my purposes, it throws into sharp relief the divergent informal norms of two service professions: medicine and law enforcement. The informal, professional norms in policing cause problems for police legitimacy. Public discourse around policing is often critical and calls for institutional change; but our formal institutions are only as effective as the informal norms they operate on top of. In light of that, this talk presents a framework for thinking about legitimate policing, and examines some of the informal norms that govern policing with the aim of identifying possibilities for improvement. It focuses on epistemic norms and "improvement" norms. Diagnosing norm deficiencies in policing and their connection to our formal institutions generates possible insights into reforms that are more specific and effective than vague calls for better training.

Monday, January 28th 2019

**Student Success
Center Room 30**

