

The GW Philosophy Department proudly presents the First Annual  
Griffith Lecture, formerly known as the Goutman Lecture,  
in honor of Professor William B. Griffith

Friday, March 21, 2014 - 4:00 pm - Duques Hall Room 151 - Refreshments to Follow

Dr. Mark Wrathall, Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Riverside  
will present:

# Heidegger on Authenticity as an Extra-Moral Ideal

**Abstract:** In *Being and Time*, Heidegger argues that authenticity is an ideal of agency – that is, that someone is a good agent to the degree that her bodily movements express who she is as an individual, rather than merely expressing the shared conventional values to which she is expected to conform. This view presents certain complications. For instance, how should we understand authenticity, or being true to oneself, given that Heidegger denies that there is an inherent, substantive self? For another, authenticity's hostility toward conformity naturally raises concerns about the moral and ethical status of an authentic life. It suggests that being true to oneself requires a willingness to place in question or suspend the hold that conventional morality and ethical norms have over us. So if we accept authenticity as an ideal of agency, are we committed to a profoundly immoral stance on the world? I shall argue that a proper understanding of authenticity will allow us to see that authenticity need not be incompatible with morality. Indeed, I shall follow Heidegger in arguing that authenticity is a component of a moral existence, in that it is directly relevant to determining the degree to which an agent is morally good or morally evil.

**Dr. Mark A. Wrathall** is the author of *Heidegger and Unconcealment: Truth, Language and History* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) and *How to Read Heidegger* (W.W. Norton, 2006), and the editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger's Being and Time* (Cambridge University Press, 2013). He is currently working on topics at the intersection of the philosophy of agency and existential phenomenology, and writing a book on the phenomenology of religious life.

