The GW Department of Philosophy is proud to present the Second Annual Sophia Lecture Given by:

Dr. Şerife Tekin of Daemen College

“IDENTIFYING PSYCHIATRY’S SCIENTIFIC TARGETS: MENTAL DISORDERS AND NATURAL KINDS”

Abstract: Scientifically relevant properties of mental disorders are thought to facilitate successful explanations and interventions in psychiatry. Philosophers have traditionally inquired into what these properties are by debating whether mental disorders are natural kinds. In these debates, both the proponents and the opponents of the claim that mental disorders are natural kinds compare mental disorders to the paradigmatic examples of natural kinds in order to identify their scientifically relevant properties. In this talk, I will argue that such comparative strategy inhibits the progress in the project. Scientifically relevant properties of mental disorders cannot be identified unless the comparative strategy is replaced with a strategy of examining the first person testimonies of and the clinical work on individuals with mental disorders. Discussing how the subject matter of psychiatry is similar or dissimilar to the target of inquiry in natural sciences neither advances the scientific research on mental disorders, nor does it further the development of effective clinical interventions.

Bio: Serife Tekin, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Daemen College, Buffalo, NY and an Associate Fellow at the Center for Philosophy of Science at University of Pittsburgh. Her research in philosophy of psychiatry is situated at the cusp of feminist approaches to philosophy of science, philosophy of mind, and ethics.