GWU Department of Philosophy presents the 2010 Elton Lecture

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Friday, October 1st
5:00PM
MPA Building Rm 310
805 21st Street, NW

“On Not Putting Too Fine an Edge on Things”

Abstract: Philosophers, taking their lead from natural and social scientists, pride themselves on achieving clarity and exactitude. This aim has been indisputable to the accomplishment of many of the enduring achievements in philosophy – for instance, Descartes’s Principles of Philosophy, Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason, Peirce’s semiotics, Russell and Whitehead’s Principia Mathematica. At the same time, the virtues of vagueness have been increasingly pursued ever since William James (inspired by certain strains in Peirce himself) proclaimed “the value of the vague” in his Principles of Psychology (1890). In this talk, I consider the merits of the vague in philosophy by a concerted exploration of the edges of things and topics: those extremities where the exact yields place to the less than precisely designatable and discussable.