“Emotions, Wrongness and Sociolinguistic Register: The Case of Slurs"

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Slurring words such as ‘chink’ and ‘spic’ have garnered a great deal of attention in recent literature. They pose problems for nearly every view about linguistic meaning. What’s more, they tie philosophy of language immediately to ethics/social philosophy.

This talk is about a fascinating way in which such words get used. To explain, though it is paradigmatically the case that the act of slurring involves the speaker expressing strong negative emotions towards a target group, there are cases where these feelings are either lacking or are even replaced with an outright positive attitude.

We present a range of examples of what we call “detached uses of slurring words”. Some are familiar; some are not. We then identify what unites them. We end by describing all-too-briefly a radically different way of thinking about the meaning of slurring words – i.e., in terms of discourse register – which fits naturally with both paradigm and “detached” uses.

Friday, March 8, 2019
Room: 1200 Richcraft
Time: 2:30 p.m.

All are welcome!