

Abstract Writing 101



North American Society for Social Philosophy
Committee on Accessibility and Inclusion

Responding to Calls for Abstracts

Read the Call for Abstracts (CFA) Carefully

Does your topic / method fit
with the CFA?

- Your work doesn't always have to be a perfect fit
 - BUT it should be relevant to the call
 - The less obvious the fit the more you need to show the connection
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Read the Call for Abstracts (CFA) Carefully

What is the CFA asking you to produce?

- Formal guidelines: word count, anonymizing of work, but also any requirements to include a bibliography, or other details
 - Does it ask for a description only of the work? Or does it also ask for a description of the presentation itself (methods, style of presentation)? Or both?
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Read the Call for Abstracts (CFA) Carefully

Does the CFA say explicitly, or give clues, for how the abstracts will be evaluated?



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General Tips

Can you do what you set out to do?

Remember, this is a conference
presentation, not a journal
article, book/chapter, or
dissertation

- NASSP presentations are typically **20 minutes long** followed by 20 minutes Q&A.
 - Presenters can use their 40 minutes differently if preferred, but make sure your presentation is achievable in the time allocated for it.
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Who Is Your Audience?

Writing for your reviewers

- Is this a specialist conference on a niche topic or a specific area or thinker?
 - Consider whether you are using technical language, specialized terms, or anything that would be “insider” concepts and whether this helps or hinders the clarity of your proposal.
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Who Is Your Audience?

Writing for your reviewers

- If submitting to a more generalist conference (not as broad as an APA meeting, but something like a society of social philosophy!)
 - Refrain from using technical language or jargon
 - Don't assume your reviewer knows the literature or concepts you are engaging
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Who Is Your Audience?

Writing for your reviewers
and the conference audience

- It is ALWAYS safe to write for a thoughtful, but non-expert audience
 - And if your work is accepted, it is also advisable to *present* with a smart and curious, but non-expert audience in mind
 - Consider a title that is informative and engaging – so people have an idea what your presentation is about and get interested in attending it.
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Let's Apply

Read the Call for Abstracts (CFA) Carefully

Does your topic / method fit
with the CFA?

Proposals for presentation **in all areas of social philosophy** (broadly construed) are welcome.

This year's conference theme is **Community, Identity, and Belonging**.

Abstracts in any area of social philosophy are welcome, whether the content is contemporary or historical, Western or non-Western, analytic or Continental.

Read the Call for Abstracts (CFA) Carefully

What is the CFA asking you
to produce?

- Abstracts of 250-500 words, prepared for anonymous review, should be submitted to the 2024 NASSP Abstract Submission Form form on or before **February 15, 2024.**
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Read the Call for Abstracts (CFA) Carefully

Does the CFA say explicitly, or give clues, for how the abstracts will be evaluated?

Abstracts should:

- Convey an identifiable and engaging thesis, argument, or overall perspective.
- Motivate the author's approach to the issue, by conveying the outlines of the argument or explaining why a particular theoretical frame is helpful for understanding the topic.

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Read the Call for Abstracts (CFA) Carefully

Does the CFA say explicitly, or give clues, for how the abstracts will be evaluated?

Abstracts should (continued):

- Be clear and well-written, avoiding jargon when possible and explaining it when necessary.
- Demonstrate some engagement with the relevant literature, either through brief citations or an awareness of existing contributions.

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Examples

(these were all accepted in the past & included with permission – they have different styles and topics but take a look at what has worked in each of them)

Weapon and Shield: Apologies and the Duty to be Vulnerable

In response to CFA for NASSP
meeting on *Polarization,
Reconciliation, and
Community*

Apologies are a common part of everyday life; when you wrong someone else you should apologize. They are also increasingly common in public life; you only have to check the news to find an example of a politician, business executive, or actor apologizing for something they said or did, either recently or in their past. And yet, from a moral point of view, it's often not clear how to apologize well, either interpersonally or publicly.

In this talk I'll argue that one of the things that makes for a good apology is the willingness to be vulnerable and to give up any expectations of forgiveness, reconciliation, or even that one's apology will be accepted. To fail to do so transforms apologies into the kinds of things that can be used either as a shield to protect the wrongdoer from moral criticism or as a weapon to further harm the person whom they wronged.

Contempt and Moral Community

In response to CFA for NASSP
meeting on *Polarization,
Reconciliation, and
Community*

By definition, contempt judges another to be inferior, so it aims to introduce (or, to continue) a certain sort of power dynamic between individuals and/or groups. And, given other sorts of existing social differences, some will be able to wield contemptuous attitudes more powerfully than others. Some defend contempt as at least sometimes an appropriate moral response to persons with particularly rotten characters; but, as Karen Stohr suggests in “Our New Age of Contempt”, “[w]idespread public contempt has the potential to undermine the moral basis of all human relationships and, indeed, human community itself” (2017).

I argue that appropriate moral attitudes must at least allow for the moral relationship to remain minimally intact – that is, that all persons (including the targets of reactive attitudes) be understood as capable of understanding and of engaging in moral discourse with one another. Certain objectionable attitudes of contempt play significant roles in creating, supporting and/or reinforcing social inequities, which in turn can cause significant rifts in the moral community. Following insights from Margaret Urban Walker (2006), I argue that responding to those inequities with counter-contempt prevents moral repair, thus contempt might never be an appropriate moral response.

Anger and Moral Burden in Light of Systemic Injustice

In response to CFA for NASSP meeting on *Polarization, Reconciliation, and Community*

Though controversial, I take it as a given that anger is often morally appropriate and that sometimes the failure to feel anger indicates a moral failure. Chronically sustained anger in the face of systemic injustice, even if appropriate, looks to be bad for us insofar as it doesn't contribute to and plausibly detracts from our well-being. This might lead us to wonder how we are to be properly angry in the face of systemic injustice, motivated by that anger to work toward the good of a fractured community without that anger undermining our well-being and getting in the way of our own flourishing. Macalester Bell asks "how [can] one could defend a virtue of appropriate anger in the grossly non-ideal conditions that characterize life under oppression"? I argue that under non-ideal circumstances, the demands of virtue can require that we get angry even if that anger detracts from our well-being. I explore how virtuous anger can be, in Lisa Tessman's terminology, a 'burdened virtue'. But personal cost of that virtue doesn't mean we escape the obligation to orient our community toward justice.

Bad Examples

These are not real examples,
but they are inspired by real
submissions – can you see
why they don't work?

1. Some US politicians are proud to call themselves socialists. To them socialism is a good thing. Most Republicans and even many Democrats try to defeat legislative proposals by calling them socialism. To them socialism is a bad thing. Why this difference of opinion? Because the Stalinist autocratic socialism was and is bad, but democratic socialism was and is good. What justification have I to make these judgments of good and bad? My justification is the standard of what is good and bad in governance provided by the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
2. This paper analyzes a chapter from Nel Nodding's "Caring" through the lens of non-familial-centric care theory, building on the work of Virginia Held, Joan Tronto, Cheryl Brandsen. On a revised reading of Noddings, following Held's distinction between normative and prescriptive care, and influenced by the work of Sally Hasslanger on conceptual engineering of gender, this paper ultimately suggests that a political approach to care via Tronto and Branden is the rights step forward to address conflicts internal to both care and gender theory.

Good Luck!