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**UCT professor to talk about the epistemic significance of disagreement
Inaugural lecture by Professor Bernhard Weiss of the Department of Philosophy,
Faculty of Humanities: 16 May 2012, 17h30, LT 1, Kramer Law Building, Middle
Campus**

In his inaugural lecture titled: "Disagreement: its Epistemic Significance", the University of Cape Town's Professor Bernhard Weiss will tackle the question of how people should modify their views when they discover that other enquirers have arrived at different opinions.

Professor Weiss said: "On the one hand it seems irrational simply to stick with your own view, regardless. But should every person easily give up on their view, this would quickly degenerate into an intolerable situation in which no enquirer holds any view about matters of controversy. I suggest one way of threading a path between these extremes and end by trying to use the account to understand aspects of academic life and, in particular, of disciplinary authority."

Professor Weiss' research is concerned with the nature of disagreement – what disagreement *is*. Therefore in this lecture, Weiss will offer an account of the epistemic significance of disagreement – that is, its importance for claims to have knowledge.

Weiss added: "This is because many people think it is possible to have faultless disagreements; disagreement where neither party is at fault." He continued: "Examples are judgments about taste. One person may judge a joke to be funny; another may judge it not to be so. Each seems to disagree with the other, yet it seems neither need be at fault. One way of explaining the phenomenon is to think of truth as relative. While it is true from the point of view of the one sense of humour that the joke is funny, it is not true from the point of view of the other sense of humour. My research argues that the relative notion of truth fails to explain the phenomenon because it can't support an adequate notion of disagreement; instead we need to think of these cases as cases where truth gives out."

Weiss has published a number of papers in this and other areas; co-edited two books (*Wittgenstein's Lasting Significance*, with Max Kölbel, 2004; and *Reading Brandom*, with Jeremy Wanderer, 2010); and authored another two books (*Michael Dummett*, 2002, and *How to Understand Language*, 2010).

Before joining the University of Cape Town in 2003, he held a lectureship in philosophy at the University of Wales, Lampeter.

ENDS

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