Staff Council Meeting
University of Alberta
Department of Philosophy
December 7, 2017

Proposal for E-Colloquia

E-Colloquia: Colloquia at which the speaker does not have to fly to join the host department, but communicates via video conferencing. Can work much like regular colloquia:

- The University possesses a very stable platform, Lifesize Cloud, which we can operate on our computers with the use of a link (used e.g. for an chair applicant's vision talk)
- This can thus easily be used in our seminar room, and the presenting speaker need only click on a link to access it
- This platform allows easy split-screen viewing of the speaker and her slides
- For ideal results with Q&A, on our end a bluetooth microphone and high-grade camera can be used (borrowed for free from the University, or purchased; Geoff Rockwell has told me that "if there are small budgetary needs KIAS would also be willing to help")

Advantages:

1. Helps us put on colloquia featuring high-caliber speakers for little or no money
    a. This would be especially attractive given our limited funds for inviting speakers
    b. The opportunity (and in many cases outright) costs to speakers are radically less; only e.g. 2 hours of time vs. 2-3 days with tons of dead time due to travel
    c. In my experience: can attract very high caliber speakers with high opportunity costs; e.g. VVUA speaker series did an e-colloquium with famous plant-based doctor Michael Klaper, most of which was Q&A, and which was very successful
    d. Oliver Rossier: experience offering honoraria (often easy to send gift-certificates, carbon offsets purchased in name; cf. green spaces credit, etc.) – can also hybridize with audiences on speaker's end if desired
2. Helps reduce extremely profligate GHG emissions from air travel, which is morally imperative
    a. Approximately 1/3 the carbon footprint of an institution like UAlberta / UCSB comes from air travel
    b. A single roundtrip transcontinental flight releases one metric ton of CO_2 per coach passenger; about the TOTAL per capita annual emissions allowance to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees C
    c. Even among North Americans, ½ don't fly annually and just ¼ do so 3 or more times a year. Unfortunately, academics are typically in this last category – which makes their transport emissions among the worst (cf. solitary SUV drivers)
3. Taking leadership on this important issue could really raise the profile of our department
    a. At the university and throughout the philosophical (and even broader academic) community
    b. Peter Kalmus (climate scientist who doesn't fly): "In the post-carbon future, it's unlikely that there will be commercial plane travel on today's scale…we won't be expected to travel so far for work."
    c. Oliver Rossier was very excited; asked if we'd like to host philosophy of science talks with Killam Prize winners (e.g. hybrid with audiences here & there)