



Università
degli Studi
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Sifa

SOCIETÀ
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CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

CONFERENCE ON

NATURALIZING NORMATIVITY

Interdisciplinary Perspectives
on Rules, Reasons, and Values

4-5 February 2027

**Università degli Studi di Palermo (Italy),
Department of Law**

Confirmed keynote speakers to date

Richard Holton University of Cambridge

Joshua Shepherd Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Elisabeth Pacherie Institut Jean Nicod

In recent years, philosophers have shown a steadily growing interest in perspectives on normativity emerging from the cognitive, social, and biological sciences. This interdisciplinary turn reflects a broader recognition that traditional philosophical analyses of norms, rules, and values can be enriched—and perhaps challenged—by empirical insights into the psychological and biological underpinnings of normative behavior. Parallel to this development, there has been an increasing willingness to compare, and in some cases even hybridize, different approaches, vocabularies, and theoretical models across disciplinary boundaries. It is against this backdrop that the conference “Naturalizing Normativity” is situated. Its primary goal is to bring together philosophers, psychologists, neuroscientists, social scientists, and biologists who are actively engaged in research on normativity and normative phenomena, and who are equally committed to fostering genuine dialogue across diverse disciplinary perspectives.

We invite the submission of abstracts addressing the following themes, among others.

1. Normative psychology, folk psychology and the sciences of the mind-brain

What neuropsychological processes underlie normative thought and decision-making? To what extent can neuropsychological research on these phenomena be reconciled with folk psychology, and to what extent does it instead require a significant revision of it? Is the taxonomy of mental states employed by folk psychology and its philosophical refinements to explain normative thinking – discriminating something as correct or incorrect, right or wrong; recognizing, weighing, and comparing reasons; accepting, applying, and following rules; and so forth – broadly compatible with the mechanistic explanations developed by the mind-brain sciences, or do the latter require a significant revision of that taxonomy?

2. Normativity and biological regulation

Recent work in the philosophy of biology has insisted on the genuinely normative character of the basic regulatory dynamics of living organisms. How should the relationship between this ‘minimal’ notion of normativity and the ‘higher-level’ normativity that has traditionally been the focus of metanormative and metaethical inquiry be understood? Is there continuity or a break between biological regulation and high-level normative guidance?

3. Explicit vs. implicit normativity

In the literature, a distinction is sometimes drawn between ‘explicit’ forms of normative guidance and evaluation – conscious, accessible to complex forms of metacognition, linguistically reportable, requiring effortful reflection and control, etc. – and ‘implicit’ ones – unconscious, automatic, intuitive, and so forth. How should this distinction be articulated, and how should the relationship between these two levels or modalities of normative dynamics be conceived?

4. Naturalism and the ontology of rules

How should the notion of ‘rules’ as abstract models of conduct, capable of guiding actual behavior toward conformity with the model, be articulated within a naturalistic ontology? We are particularly interested in the contrast between intentional realism about rules – according to which there exist genuine ‘rules in the mind’, that is, neuropsychological structures that have the functional role of rules – and antirealist approaches, such as interpretivism, instrumentalism, and fictionalism. On these views, rules are understood as useful interpretive schemas for the prediction and explanation of behavior, or as fictitious entities used, in a metaphorical way, to account for complex neuropsychological dynamics.

5. Psychology of authority

What are the psychological mechanisms that underpin authoritative dynamics? How does the interaction between more controlled and more automatic aspects of our mental processes, between more emotional and cognitive components, and between biological and cultural factors shape the dynamics of authority recognition and obedience?

6. Psychology of ‘formalism’

A relatively underexplored aspect of normative psychology concerns adherence to formal requirements: procedural rules, rituals, formalisms of various kinds, etc. What are, if any, the specific mechanisms underlying this type of normative behavior? What are its biological bases, its phylogenetic precursors, and its counterparts in other primates?

7. Debunking arguments and the genealogy of normativity

To what extent can genealogical, evolutionary, psychological, or cultural explanations of normative judgments undermine their epistemic authority or justificatory force? Under what conditions does explaining the origin of a normative belief amount to debunking it, and under what conditions does it not? More generally, how should the relationship between the causal genesis of normative attitudes and their validity, correctness, or authority be understood?

Abstracts of no more than 500 words (excluding bibliography) are invited and should be submitted as a PDF attachment by 30 September 2026 to giuseppe.rocche@unipa.it.

Submissions should include the title of the paper and 3–5 keywords. To allow anonymous review, the abstract itself should contain no identifying information.

The author's name, institutional affiliation and current position (including whether the PhD has been obtained) should instead be provided in the body of the email.

Notification of acceptance will be sent by 31 October 2026.

We particularly encourage submissions from early career scholars (PhD students or scholars within five years of obtaining the PhD) and from members of groups underrepresented in philosophy and related disciplines.