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# PHILOSOPHY COLLOQUIUM

**Stephen Schiffer**  
New York University

**“The Effect of Vagueness on Meaning”**

Friday, November 20, 2009

Memorial Building, Room 211

3:30 pm - 5:30 pm

Dr. Stephen Schiffer is Silver Professor of Philosophy at New York University and works primarily in philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and metaphysics. He is the author of numerous articles and of three books: *Meaning* (Oxford University Press, 1972), *Remnants of Meaning* (MIT Press, 1987), and *The Things We Mean* (Oxford University Press, 2003). He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

**Abstract**

A widely-recognized feature of vagueness (call it *Penumbra Shift*) calls into question a widely-held assumption about meaning (call it *Meanings*). *Penumbra Shift* is that the penumbras, or borderline regions, of vague terms dilate or constrict from one context of utterance to another. *Meanings* is the claim that an expression type's having meaning consists in there being something that it means. I explore the possibility of resolving the conflict between *Penumbra Shift* and *Meanings* by denying the latter. This requires sketching how it may be possible for expressions to have meaning without having meanings.

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