Philosophy Department Colloquia

presents a lecture by

Margaret Pabst Battin

Distinguished Professor of Philosophy
University of Utah

What Were You Thinking When You Were Thinking About Sex (and Reproduction)? A New Look at Contraception

Wednesday ~ April 4 ~ 7:30 pm
Thomas Hall 224
Bryn Mawr College

Abstract: As political furor over contraception rages, this talk approaches issues of contraception in an entirely new way. It poses a thought-experiment, dubbed M's Conjecture: What if everybody routinely used long-acting, user-independent, reversible "automatic" contraception all the time, except when they wanted to have a child? This talk first explores the impact of M's Conjecture on the large-scale reproductive problems of the globe: global population growth (and decline); teen and adolescent pregnancy; pregnancy following rape, mass rape, incest, tactical rape in guerilla warfare, and other forms of coerced sex; high-risk pregnancy in maternal chronic illness or toxic environmental exposure; and abortion. It shows under what conditions this conjecture enhances, not limits, reproductive rights—for both women and men. This presentation shows not only how large-scale problems of reproduction can be better addressed, but that the central assumptions we make in our current thinking about sex and reproduction, and especially about contraception, are largely wrong.

Margaret Pabst Battin (nicknamed Peggy) is Distinguished Professor of Philosophy and Adjunct Professor of Internal Medicine, Division of Medical Ethics, at the University of Utah. She is a graduate of Bryn Mawr College, and holds an M.F.A. in fiction-writing and a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of California at Irvine. The author of prize-winning short stories and recipient of the University of Utah's Distinguished Research Award, she has authored, co-authored, edited, or co-edited some twenty books, among them *Puzzles About Art*, a volume of case-puzzles in aesthetics; *Ethics in the Sanctuary*, a study of ethical issues in organized religion; and a collection of her essays on end-of-life issues, *The Least Worst Death*. She has also been engaged in research on active euthanasia and assisted suicide in the Netherlands. She has also published several co-edited or co-authored collections, including *Drug Use in Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide; Physician-Assisted Suicide: Expanding the Debate; and Praying for a Cure*, a jointly authored volume on the ethics of religious refusal of medical treatment. A second collection of her essays (and fiction) on end-of-life issues, entitled *Ending Life*, was published in spring 2005 by Oxford University Press. She is currently at work on an historical sourcebook on ethical issues in suicide, a book on world population growth and reproductive rights, and several projects on spinal cord injury. She has been named one of the "Mothers of Bioethics."

--Free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served --