Instructors: Christine Bratu (LMU München) and Anca Gheaus (Umea University/University of Sheffield)
Participants: 12-15 students. 3rd year B.A. students, M.A. students and students who have just started their Ph.D. will be given preference. 7 places are reserved for participants from LMU München.
Applications: Send us a short statement (400-500 words) explaining why you are interested in this course and whether you are familiar with any of these debates. Basic knowledge of ethics and political philosophy is required. Please mention whether you have completed and courses in Ethics and Political Philosophy. Please specify if, in case you are accepted, you would like accommodation on the university campus on the island of San Severino. Send your letter to christine.bratu@lrz.uni-muenchen.de and agheaus@gmail.com by Wednesday the 15th of July.
Financial conditions: There is no registration fee, but you are responsible for the costs of travel, accommodation and subsistence in Venice. We will apply for funding, hoping to cover the costs for students from LMU.

Course description
It is generally acknowledged that ethical theories have to be impartial; yet, partiality towards some individual such as friends, family and sometimes co-nationals is present in virtually everybody's life. Without such close bonds to which partiality is constitutive most of us would probably be unable to sustain our zest for life and hence may lack motivation to carry on with any other projects. Moreover, it is likely that an ethical life devoid of partiality lacks depth and is thereby open to criticism; as Bernard Williams famously argued, someone forced to choose between saving his wife and saving a stranger has 'one thought too many' if he as much as considers what are the reasons in favour of saving the first.
Partiality then raises a general normative challenge: One the one hand we assume the moral equality of all human beings, which warrants equal respect and concern for all individuals. On the other hand, it is hard to make sense of what it is to be a human being in the absence of close relationships that warrant partiality. These challenges take different forms depending on the particular relationships one considers: Friends' partiality towards each other can and often does result – even if as an unintended consequence – in the accumulation of advantages to members of some groups of friends and in the exclusion of other individuals. Yet, we think that without friendship it would be much harder – if at all possible – to lead flourishing lives. Some philosophers argued that friends and friendships are constitutive to our very psychological and moral identity.
Parents' partiality towards their children has often been discussed in relation to distributive justice: Because parents are partial towards their children, and because different parents are unequally able to give their children good childhoods and opportunities for flourishing as adults, the very existence of the family is bound to upset just distributions. Some children will start their lives in the care of excellent parents and enjoy material wealth, good early education and help to establish much needed human and cultural capital. Others will do worse on some or all of these dimensions. But the abolition of the family would involve a loss of value so great that no contemporary philosopher endorses such a solution.
Finally, civic and political relationships within contemporary nation-states typically generate phenomena such as patriotism and nationalism. Their pitfalls are well-known; yet, as some have argued, partiality towards one's co-nationals also provides distinctive and important goods. For instance, it is difficult to see how large states and their institutions – most prominently the institutions of the welfare state – could function properly without the special interest that many of us take in the welfare of our co-nationals and the sense of trust which this form of partiality can create.
This course will address the most prominent philosophical issues raised by partiality in the contexts of friendship, family, and the state. It will be structured as follows:
1. Monday: Introduction (1.5h); The problem of partiality in practical philosophy (1.5h)
2. Tuesday: Friendship (3h)
3. Wednesday: Civic friendship and patriotism (3h)
4. Thursday: Family 1 (3h)
5. Friday: Family 2 (1.5 h) General discussion (1.5h)

**Background bibliography** (a selection of these readings will be discussed in the course)
Friedman, Marylin. What Are Friends For? Feminist Perspectives on Personal Relationships and Moral Theory (Cornell University Press, 1993.)
Gheaus, Anca. 'Is the family uniquely valuable?' *Ethics and Social Welfare* (2012)
Jollimore, Troy. 'Impartiality', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,
http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/impartiality/
Williams, Bernard.. 'A Critique of Utilitarianism,' in Smart and Williams, pp. 75–150 (1973).