The Legal Studies & Business Ethics Department
Speaker Series Presents

Nelson Tebbe
Professor of Law
Brooklyn Law School

Speaking on

“Religious Freedom in an Egalitarian Age”

Thursday, October 13, 2016 – 12:00 P.M. to 1:30 P.M., 641 Jon M. Huntsman Hall

Tensions between religious freedom and equality law are newly strained in America. As lawmakers work to protect LGBT citizens and women seeking reproductive freedom, religious traditionalists assert their right to dissent from what they see as a new liberal orthodoxy. Some religious advocates are going further and expressing skepticism that egalitarianism can be defended with reasons at all. Legal experts have not offered a satisfying response.

Nelson Tebbe argues that these disputes, which are admittedly complex, nevertheless can be resolved without irrationality or arbitrariness. In Religious Freedom in an Egalitarian Age, he advances a method called social coherence, based on the way that people reason through moral problems in everyday life. Social coherence provides a way to reach justified conclusions in constitutional law, even in situations that pit multiple values against each other.

Applying this method to a range of real-world cases, Tebbe first offers a set of powerful principles for mediating between religion and equality law, and then he shows how they can lead to workable solutions in areas ranging from employment discrimination and public accommodations to government officials and public funding. That the analysis sometimes generates outcomes that will surprise progressives is some evidence of integrity in the method itself.

If you plan to attend and would like a lunch please email Tamara English, englisht@wharton.upenn.edu, by Tuesday, October 11.