



Centre for Workforce Futures

SEMINAR SERIES

Two philosophical perspectives on the 4-day week

Professor Nicholas Smith

5 September 2019

2:00–4:00 PM

LOCATION: Finance Decision Lab (4EaR 110), 4 Eastern Road, Macquarie University NSW 2109

ABSTRACT

The push for a shorter working week has been gathering momentum recently. Several progressive think tanks have thrown their weight behind the idea and a number of employers have been experimenting with it. The UK Labour Party has commissioned an inquiry into the potential advantages of a 4-day week with a view to making it a key policy platform in the next UK general election campaign. The report is due out soon and is bound to trigger further debate.

The benefits of a 4-day week are said to include improvements in worker wellbeing and work-life balance, the promotion of gender equality and environmental sustainability. Most agree, however, that shorter working hours will only have these effects if they are also more 'productive'. The issue of productivity is thus central to the debate around the 4-day week. But what exactly is 'productive' action and what value should we place on it? In this presentation, Professor Smith will distinguish two ways of answering these questions and consider how they underpin the contemporary debate around the 4-day week.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Nicholas Smith is a Professor in the Department of Philosophy at Macquarie University and a member of the Centre for Workforce Futures. His books include *Strong Hermeneutics* (Routledge 1997), *Charles Taylor* (Polity 2002), and as co-author *The Return of Work in Critical Theory. Self, Society, Politics* (Columbia University Press, 2018). He is the author of many articles and essays in social philosophy, political philosophy and philosophy of work.

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