



EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

PHILOSOPHY

2023 Newsletter

2022-23 Highlights

We are delighted to welcome Dr. Kristopher Phillips as Assistant Professor starting in Fall 2023! Dr. Phillips specializes in Early Modern philosophy, but also has established research and teaching interests in public philosophy, metaphilosophy, philosophy of education, and in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Continuing a track record of success for the EMU Philosophy program, a number of recently-graduated EMU students will start or continue their graduate and professional studies this fall in a range of programs—including Ph.D. programs in Philosophy, law school, and a Nurse Practitioner program.

Keep reading for more details and other exciting news from EMU Philosophy students and faculty!

Undergraduate Conference in Philosophy

EMU's 13th Undergraduate Conference in Philosophy (UCiP) welcomed students from across North America to EMU for a lively weekend of philosophical discussion and conviviality. Paper presentations ranged across numerous subfields of philosophy, with topics spanning hope and agency, resentment and moral identity, the conditions of meaning, and philosophical issues relating to algorithms and gender theory. New riffs on ancient thinkers and still-debated topics—such as Aristotle, Confucius, Nietzsche, and consciousness—were part of the mix as well. It is a joy to hear interesting philosophical arguments and ideas combined in novel and exciting ways. The conference continues to be an important event each year for EMU's philosophical community, and we're very pleased to contribute to philosophy in this way.



UCiP's keynote speaker this year was **Dr. Brynn Welch** (University of Alabama at Birmingham). Dr. Welch's talk, "Is There Such a Thing as a Good Parent?," provoked a lively and substantive discussion. We thank Dr. Welch for her time and philosophical insights. She joins a long line of terrific speakers who have shared their work at UCiP over the years.

EMU students organized almost every dimension of this event. Special thanks to **Natalie Anderson, Kennedy DeFrancesco, Linda Amarachukwu Ezikeoha, Josh Hunt, John Milkovich, and Edgar Vasquez** for their hard work organizing the conference and ensuring that everything ran smoothly. Presenters and panelists from EMU included **Justine Johansen, Justin Luttermoser, John Milkovich, Niamh Quinnan, Nicole Reid, Edgar Vasquez, and James Young**. Commenters from EMU included **Wes Bostwick, Jack Campbell, Anna Horning, Justin Luttermoser, Niamh Quinnan, Nicole Reid, Edgar Vasquez, and Rafael Velazquez**.

Professor **John Koolage**, the faculty mentor of the UCiP team, could not be prouder of this event and of our students. We look forward to this year's event, which will take place in November 2023!

Acta Cogitata

ACTA COGITATA



Our undergraduate journal, *Acta Cogitata*, features creative work from undergraduate students from across the globe. The lead student editor for the 2022 edition was **John Milkovich**, with editorial assistance from **Edgar Vasquez**, both of whom continued the tradition of exemplary student service set by their predecessors. The work of EMU student **Zachary Tobias** is included in this issue.

Read more at:

<https://commons.emich.edu/ac/>

Philosophy Club

Over the last year, the Philosophy Club provided a forum for philosophical inquiry across a wide range of contemporary topics with discussions led by students.

We are grateful for the service and dedication of those who held leadership positions in Philosophy Club this past year:

President: **John Milkovich**

Vice President: **Natalie Anderson**

Secretary: **Edgar Vasquez**

Faculty Advisor: **Dr. Jeremy Proulx**

Philosophy Speaker Series

The Speaker Series Committee (**Dr. J. Michael Scoville [chair]**, **Dr. Brian Bruya**, and **Dr. John Koolage**) organized three philosophy events for our 2022-2023 Speaker Series. Zoom talks were given by **Dr. Katie Stockdale** (University of Victoria) and **Dr. Amy Olberding** (University of Oklahoma), and an in-person talk was delivered by EMU's Outstanding Graduate Student Essay Award winner, **Joah DeCasas**.

2022-2023 Eastern Michigan University Philosophy Speaker Series

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On Being Entitled

Sponsored by the Department of History & Philosophy



Dr. Katie Stockdale
University of Victoria

Abstract:

Entitlement is ubiquitous in social life. We see people behaving in entitled ways all the time, from strangers in airports to anti-maskers in pandemics. But there is a question about what it is that makes people disposed to behave this way. The task of this talk is to offer an account of entitlement as a moral vice to better understand entitled people. Drawing upon a range of paradigm cases of entitlement, I argue that entitled people have a vice of deficiency marked by a failure of moral appreciation for the significance of other people's rights, needs, and interests to what they themselves are owed. And I explore the connection between entitlement and social privilege.



Thursday, November 10, 2022
5-6:30pm ET

ZOOM LINK:

<https://emich.zoom.us/j/84103784130>

Philosophers Fighting about Funerals

Sponsored by the Department of History & Philosophy



Dr. Amy Olberding
University of Oklahoma

Abstract:

Early Chinese philosophy contains several philosophical disputes quite distant from our own. Among the most heated and, in a contemporary philosophical idiom, strange is surely the struggle among these philosophers to sort out just how funerals should go – what taking leave of the dead should entail, how long it should last, and what it should look like. In this talk I discuss some of the underlying assumptions that made funerals a disputed philosophical issue. And I argue that where philosophical debates about funerals are concerned, it would be good if we had some.



Thursday, February 2, 2023
5-6:30 p.m. ET

ZOOM LINK:

<https://emich.zoom.us/j/85170347029?pwd=M1h2YW9YLTlicVZkZkdkaVR0bnBjZz09>

2022-2023 Eastern Michigan University Philosophy Speaker Series

Epistemic Virtues and Professionalized Science's Vulnerability to the Problem of Unconceived Alternatives

Sponsored by the Department of History & Philosophy



Joah DeCasas
M.A. candidate in
Philosophy
Eastern Michigan
University

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to push back against a general claim made by Kyle Stanford (2019), namely, that modern professionalized science is more vulnerable to the problem of unconceived alternatives (PUA) than its historical predecessors. I trace out what aspects of professionalized science Stanford believes encourage conservatism and, thus, vulnerability to the PUA. Contrary to Stanford's conclusion, however, I argue that there are certain benefits of professionalized science, such as Helen Longino's social procedural objectivity (which Stanford does not directly address), as well as professional expertise, which can meaningfully decrease a field's vulnerability to the PUA. Considering Stanford's specific concerns about modern peer-review based sources of funding, I argue that while he may be correct that these structures can increase professionalized science's vulnerability to the PUA, the extent to which they do so is local and comes in degrees. That degree is contingent on a particular field's specific epistemic landscape determined by its degree of social procedural objectivity, animating questions, and the prevailing structures and sources of funding. It follows that modern professionalized science's vulnerability to the PUA is not simply a result of a universal conservatism.



Monday, April 10, 2023
3:30-5 p.m.
Strong Hall 103

For information on upcoming talks, all of which are free and open to the public, be sure to check out the Philosophy Speaker Series page, accessible at:

<https://www.emich.edu/history-philosophy/philosophy/beyond-classroom/speaker-series.php>

We hope to see you at the 2023-2024 talks!

Endowed Scholarship Recipients

The **Esther Walker Barnard Endowed Scholarship** was established by a supporter of the Department of History and Philosophy and is awarded annually to an outstanding philosophy major.

- 2023 Recipient: **Justine Johansen**

The **Friends of History and Philosophy Endowed Scholarship** was established by Professor Gersham Nelson during his tenure as department head of History and Philosophy and is awarded in alternating years to a major in Philosophy and in History.

- 2023 Recipient: **Austin Meek**

The **George Rhodes Endowed Scholarship** was created in memory of a philosophy major who passed away while he was an EMU student and is awarded annually to an outstanding philosophy major.

- 2023 Recipient: **Nicole Reid**

The **Sophia Endowed Scholarship** was established by Professors Kate Mehuron, Jill Dieterle, and Margaret Crouch and is awarded annually to an outstanding philosophy major or minor.

- 2023 Recipient: **Amara Kwesiaku**

The **Stephen G. Cassar Memorial Endowed Scholarship** was created by Professor George Cassar in honor of his brother and is awarded annually to an outstanding philosophy M.A. student.

- 2023 Recipient: **John Milkovich**

Prize and Award Recipients

The **Philosophy Prize** is given annually to our most outstanding graduating students.

- 2023 undergraduate recipient: **Niamh Quinnan**
- 2023 graduate student recipient: **Natalie Anderson**

The **Outstanding Essay Award** is given in recognition of excellence in philosophical writing.

- 2023 undergraduate recipient: **Edgar Vasquez** (for his essay “Guidelines for Public Intellectuals: Lessons from Philosophy of Science”)
- 2023 graduate student recipient: **Joah DeCasas** (for his essay “Epistemic Virtues and Professionalized Science’s Vulnerability to the Problem of Unconceived Alternatives”)

Undergraduate Symposium Presentations

Niamh Quinnan

Paper title: "Hope, Contentment & Shame: The Formulation of Agency in Children"

Faculty mentor: Dr. J. Michael Scoville

Edgar Vasquez

Paper title: "Guidelines for Public Intellectuals: Lessons from Philosophy of Science"

Faculty mentor: Dr. John Koolage

Other Student Accomplishments

Natalie Anderson, a 2023 graduate of our M.A. program, co-authored a paper (with W. John Koolage) in *Teaching Philosophy*, "Addressing the Deep Roots of Epistemological Extremism" (vol. 46, no. 3 [2023]: 313-339). Natalie will continue her studies this fall in the Ph.D. program in Philosophy at the University of Minnesota.

Eric Fairchild, an EMU alumnus, became Head of the LA department at a university-affiliated experimental school in Taichung, Taiwan, where Taiwanese students take English-language classes in science, social studies, performing arts, and literature. Students at the school read primary-language English novels as they prepare for study abroad or to attend university in Taiwan.

Josh Hunt, a continuing M.A. student at EMU, presented a paper, "Improving Hands-on Museums: Utilizing Philosophy of Games to Create Locations of Scientific Transformative Critique" at the Michigan State Graduate Conference in Philosophy in Spring 2023.

John Milkovich, a continuing M.A. student at EMU, presented a paper, "Loving Those That Hate You," at the University of Illinois Graduate Conference in Philosophy in Spring 2023.

Edgar Vasquez, who completed his undergraduate degree at EMU in 2023 and is now beginning our M.A. program, presented a paper, "Becoming Harmonious: Confucius and Human Rights," at the Pacific University Undergraduate Conference in Philosophy in Spring 2023.

Master of Arts Graduates

Natalie Anderson

Capstone paper: “In-grouping Students to Improve Pedagogy”

Committee: Dr. John Koolage (Advisor), Dr. Peter Higgins (Reader), Dr. Kate Mehuron (Reader)

Joah DeCasas

Capstone paper: “Epistemic Virtues and Professionalized Science’s Vulnerability to the Problem of Unconceived Alternatives”

Committee: Dr. John Koolage (Advisor), Dr. Jill Dieterle (Reader), Dr. J. Michael Scoville (Reader)

Kennedy DeFrancesco

Capstone paper: “An Examination of the Relative Epistemic Superiority of Global Feminisms”

Committee: Dr. John Koolage (Advisor), Dr. Jill Dieterle (Reader), Dr. Peter Higgins (Reader)

Áine Keefer

Capstone paper: “Citizenship and the Political Animal: The Implications of Social Membership for the Rights of Nonhuman Animals”

Committee: Dr. Peter Higgins (Advisor), Dr. Jill Dieterle (Reader), Dr. John Koolage (Reader)

Faculty News

Professor Brian Bruya published *Ziran: The Philosophy of Spontaneous Self-Causation* (SUNY Press) and its Chinese companion version 《自然与智慧----中国古代思想对现代科学与教育的启示》 (Translated by Ma Aiju and Ye Da; People's Press), a collection of lectures delivered at Shandong University in China and National Cheng-Chi University in Taiwan. The book summarizes Dr. Bruya's work on the early Chinese notion of *ziran* 自然 (spontaneity/self-causation/autopoiesis...) and its usefulness in thinking through long-standing issues related to action theory and aesthetics in Western philosophy. Dr. Bruya is looking forward to teaching the M.A. pro-seminar this fall and plans to teach a free, non-credit-earning course on beginner's level Classical Chinese language (no prior exposure expected or required) and to start a personal self-improvement club called Go Cultivate Yourself. All levels of students are welcome in the Classical Chinese course. Go Cultivate Yourself is open to students, staff, and faculty, while being aimed primarily at students. He hopes to see you at one or both of them!



Professor Jill Dieterle published two articles in the last academic year. The first, "Identity and Food Choice: You are What You Eat?" (*Food Ethics* 8 (2023): 1-17), was co-authored with former Philosophy major Zachary Tobias. The second, entitled "Other-Oriented Hermeneutical Injustice, Affected Ignorance, or Human Ignorance?" is forthcoming in *Social Epistemology*. (Jill seems to like titles with question marks!) She is currently working on a project on epistemic injustice, disability, and objectivity with Professor John Koolage and Joah DeCasas, a graduate of the EMU Master's program in Philosophy. Jill is looking forward to the Fall 2023 semester, during which she will be teaching two of her favorite

classes: PHIL 224 Ethics and Food and PHIL 427W/527 Social Epistemology.

Professor Peter Higgins continued in his role as Department Head of History & Philosophy in the 2023 academic year. It was a busy year due to the (very successfully concluded) faculty search in Modern philosophy and a major gift to the department to support the creation of an Institute for Civic Education. Professor Higgins also learned that he is a skilled department secretary, but was pleased to relinquish that role in late February. In scholarly news, Professor Higgins completed revisions on an article, "Gender and Migration," co-authored with Amy Reed-Sandoval for the *Handbook of Migration Ethics*, forthcoming from Springer.





Professor John Koolage's research agenda for last year included a fair amount on work regarding leadership in Higher Ed, including co-written publications on building community in leadership positions in *The Department Chair* and shared governance in *Liberal Education*. His paper (co-written with EMU M.A. graduate Natalie Anderson), "Addressing the Deep Roots of Epistemological Extremism," appeared in *Teaching Philosophy* (vol. 46, no. 3). He was also fortunate to have his work, "Flatten that hierarchy: everyone wins when we teach (and learn) together," included as a chapter in Dr. Brynn Welch's forthcoming book, *The Art of Teaching Philosophy*. Two *Liberal Education* web exclusive articles (where Professor Koolage is one of several authors) are available online: one is on reimagining the leadership pipeline and the other is on professional service. As for presentations this year, Dr. Koolage presented as a member of a book panel, which included EMU philosophy's newest addition, Dr. Kris Phillips, at Cogteacho. He also shared his thoughts on 'should we trust the science' in Gabe Kasper's Pubology series. He enjoyed teaching and learning with students in Philosophy of Mind and Philosophy of Science last year. He was especially taken by philosophy of archeology, and looks forward to sharing this area of philosophy of science with anyone who will listen. Also, revisiting 4E Cognition was a true joy! He is excited to teach and learn with students this coming year, and hopes many will join the group for Philosophy of the Life Sciences in the Winter.

This past year **Professor Laura McMahon** was on sabbatical. In addition to carrying on her research project on phenomenology and political transformation, she enjoyed trips to Toronto, Arizona, Mexico, and Italy, all with a one-year-old in tow. Professor McMahon has two new book chapters forthcoming in edited volumes: "The Virtue of Vulnerability: Merleau-Ponty and Minuchin on the Boundaries of Personal Identity" (forthcoming with Bloomsbury in *Philosophical Health: Thinking As a Way of Healing*) and "Existentialism and Political Transformation: Sartre on the Ambiguities of Freedom and Praxis" (forthcoming in *The Routledge Companion to Contemporary Existentialism*). She also gave invited talks at the University of Cincinnati and the University of Guelph, and continued her tenure as President of the Canadian Society for Continental Philosophy and as Secretary-Treasurer for the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy. Professor McMahon is excited to be back on campus and in the classroom this coming year!



Professor Kate Mehuron completed two papers this past year on the concept of moral injury, examining the connections between philosophical and clinical perspectives. She presented "Self-Betrayal and Moral Repair" to the IAFOR International Conference on Arts & Humanities in January 2023, subsequently publishing this paper in the IAFOR proceedings. She presented a companion piece, "A Case of Moral Injury in Global Context: How a Remorseful Address to Migrant Communities Fails in Moral Repair," to the Twenty-first International Conference on New Directions in the Humanities in May 2023.

Professor Mehuron is also an Academic Associate Faculty in the Michigan Psychoanalytic Institute (MPI), an honorary position that invites her to ongoing *pro bono* educational activities at the Institute. In Fall 2022, she designed and instructed the four-week seminar, “Moral Injury: Philosophical and Psychoanalytic Perspectives,” for clinical candidates in the Adult and Child/Adolescent Advanced Psychodynamic Psychotherapy Program, a subsidiary training program of MPI. All of these educational and research activities are part of Professor Mehuron’s ongoing practice, as a certified philosophical counselor (American Philosophical Practitioner Association) and certified academic psychoanalyst (Michigan Psychoanalytic Institute). To deepen her practice, Dr. Mehuron participated in a five-month practicum in Fall 2022, “Philosophical Counselors Connect,” under the sponsorship of the APPA.

Professor John Ouko presented a paper titled “Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement: A Reassessment of Ecofeminism, Development and Environmental Crisis” at the 10th Asixoxe–Let’s Talk! Conference on African Philosophy held at the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences (Prague) and Centre of African Philosophy, University of Bayreuth (Germany), in June 2023. He also presented a paper titled “The Relevance of African Communal Values to Environmental Sustainability” at the Great Lakes Bioneers Detroit 17th Annual Conference held at the University of Detroit Mercy in October 2022. Additionally, Professor Ouko presented a paper titled “From Negative Peace to Positive Peace: Insights from Martin Luther King Jr” at the Martin Luther King Jr. Academic Programs Conference held at Eastern Michigan University in January 2023. Professor Ouko also served as a judge for the 2023 Michigan High School Ethics Bowl that took place in February. In addition to the above, Professor Ouko peer reviewed articles for the following journals: *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (February 2023), and *Religions* (October 2022 and June 2023).



Professor Michael Scoville continued work this past year on two main research projects, each of which connects to his teaching in environmental philosophy and ethical theory. One project is focused on identifying and analyzing different concepts of nature at play in environmental theory and policy discussions. An essay related to that project, “On the Concept of Independent Nature,” is forthcoming in *Environmental Philosophy*. The second project explores pluralistic accounts of value and practical reason, and considers the resources those accounts offer, in particular, for illuminating and adjudicating cases of conflict and disagreement about environmental values.

Apart from his research and teaching, Dr. Scoville will continue to serve as Chair of the Philosophy Section, in addition to serving on several committees connected to the Philosophy program. He will also maintain his extensive involvement with the Environmental Science and Society (ENVI) program, serving as Co-coordinator for ENVI, as a member of the ENVI Steering Committee, and as the advisor for the Environment and Society Concentration within the ENVI major. He is looking

forward to another year of working with students, of serving the EMU academic community, and of making progress on his research projects.

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You can also visit us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/emuphilosophy/>

Or you can give us a call: (734) 487-1018

Supporting EMU Philosophy

To donate to our student scholarship and prize funds,
please visit the EMU Foundation page at:

<https://www.emich.edu/foundation/give/index.php>

The specific funds that support students in Philosophy include:

Esther Walker Barnard Endowed History and Philosophy Scholarship
Stephen G. Cassar Memorial Endowed Scholarship in Philosophy
Friends of History and Philosophy Endowed Scholarship
George Rhodes Endowed Scholarship
Sophia Philosophy Endowed Scholarship
Philosophy Prize

You can find more information about the scholarships and prize at:

<https://www.emich.edu/history-philosophy/philosophy/scholarships/index.php>