

Frances Heather Fairbairn

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Areas of Specialization

Social Epistemology
Philosophy of Science
Metaphysics

Areas of Competence

Philosophy of Education
Feminist Philosophy
Environmental Ethics

Academic Employment

Visiting Assistant Professor, The Philosophy Department,
Colgate University 2020-21
Philosophical Review Lecturer, The Sage School of Philosophy,
Cornell University 2019-20

Education

PhD, Cornell University, Philosophy 2012-19
Dissertation: *Concepts in a Web: How do our concepts code for one another?*
Committee: Karen Bennett (chair), Dick Boyd, Will Starr,
Ted Sider (external), Elizabeth Barnes (external)

MA, Cornell University, Philosophy 2012-15
Committee: Ted Sider (chair), Karen Bennett, Will Starr

MA, The University of Leeds, Philosophy 2011-12
Dissertation: *Counterfactual Epistemology without Conceivability*
Advisor: Scott Shalkowski

BA (Hons, 1st class), The University of Leeds, Philosophy 2008-11
Dissertation: *Does Modal Realism Reduce Modality?*
Advisor: John Divers

Blind-Reviewed Publications

Epistemic Injustice in the Spaces Between Concepts, (2020), *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 58(1).

Trust, Power, and Transformation in the Prison Classroom, (forthcoming), *Prison and Education: Critical Perspectives* (formerly *The Journal of Prison Education and Reentry*).

Works in Progress

Advanced Modals, Advanced Quantifiers, and Reduction
Mental Illness and Naturalism Under a Pathological Inference Web
On the Ethical Collection of Bird Research Samples (*co-authored with Vanya Robwer*)
In Defence of Lewis on Counterfactuals
Prison Teaching and the Aims of Education

Presentations

* = *peer refereed*

In Philosophy

The Ethical Dimension of Lethal Specimen Collection in Ornithology

- *Philosophy of Biology at the Mountains (POBAMz). Zoom. Summer 2020
- *World Biodiversity Forum. Davos, Switzerland. Spring 2020

Coding Groups and Naturalism Regarding Mental Illness

- *International Society for the History, Philosophy and Social Studies of Biology, 2019 Meeting. Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Oslo, Norway Summer 2019
- *British Society for the Philosophy of Science Annual Conference. Durham University. Durham, England Summer 2019

Epistemic Injustice in the Spaces Between Concepts

- *The Epistemology of Justice. Southern Journal of Philosophy Workshop. University of Memphis. Memphis, Tennessee Spring 2019
- *Epistemic Injustice, Reasons, and Agency, two-day workshop at the University of Johannesburg. Johannesburg, South Africa Spring 2019
- *Society for Women in Philosophy. Switzerland Chapter Networking Conference. Bern, Switzerland Fall 2018

Uptake, Looping, and the Concept of Stereotype Magnetism

- *The Royal Institute of Philosophy Annual Conference Harms and Wrongs in Epistemic Practice. Sheffield, UK Summer 2017

Advanced Modalizing

- *The Society for the Metaphysics of Science, Annual Conference. Geneva, Switzerland Fall 2016
- *Modal Metaphysics: Issues on the (Im)Possible IV. Bratislava, Slovakia Fall 2016
- *Athena in Action, A Networking and Mentoring Workshop for Women in Philosophy. Princeton, NJ Summer 2016
- *Metaphysical Mayhem. Rutgers, NJ Summer 2016
- *Fifth Italian Conference in Analytic Ontology. Padua, Italy Summer 2016
- Graduate Women in Metaphysics Workshop. Northampton, MA Spring 2016

On the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)

Power and Inclusivity in the Prison Classroom

*American Association of Philosophy Teachers ('AAPT'),
Twenty-First Biennial Workshop-Conference on Teaching
Philosophy. Saginaw Valley, Michigan Summer 2016

Trust, Power, and Transformation in the Prison Classroom

*American Association of Philosophy Teachers ('AAPT'),
American Philosophical Association, Online Winter 2021

*The First Annual, National Teaching as Research Conference.
Ithaca, NY Summer 2017

Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning
(‘CIRTL,’ www.cirtl.cornell.edu) Teaching-As-Research
Series. Online Spring 2017

Classroom Research and Teaching Symposium for Current and
Future Faculty. Ithaca, NY Spring 2016

*Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning
(CIRTL) All-Network Teaching-As-Research Series. Online Spring 2016

On Pedagogy

Think-Alouds: Eavesdropping on your Students' Thinking

Cornell's Center for Teaching Innovation ('CTI,' formerly the
'Center for Teaching Excellence,' www.teaching.cornell.edu).
Cornell University, NY Fall 2017

Engaging lectures and Effective Presentations

Cornell's Center for Teaching Innovation. Cornell University, NY Fall 2016

Leading a Discussion in an Online Classroom

Cornell's Center for Teaching Innovation. Cornell University, NY Fall 2016

Enhancing your Teaching with Research-Based Principles

Cornell's Center for Teaching Innovation. Cornell University, NY Spring 2016

Developing Rubrics for Efficient and Consistent Grading

Cornell's Center for Teaching Innovation. Cornell University, NY Spring 2016

Designing Student Assessment to Evaluate yourself as a Teacher

Cornell's Center for Teaching Innovation. Cornell University, NY Fall 2015

As a Commentator

At the American Philosophical Association's Central Meeting

On Daniel Z. Korman's 'A Puzzle about Places' Spring 2018

At the American Philosophical Association's Pacific Meeting

On Jonah Nagashima's 'Control and Contrastive Explanations' Spring 2018

At the American Philosophical Association's Pacific Meeting

On Daniel Padgett's 'Scientific Depravity and Ontological
Commitment' Spring 2017

- At the Society for the Metaphysics of Science, Annual Conference*
 On Nick Byrd's 'A Causal Network Account of Ill-Being' Geneva,
 Switzerland Fall 2016
- At Modal Metaphysics: Issues on the (Im)Possible IV*
 On Joachim Horvath's 'Philosophical Analysis: The Concept-
 Grounding View' Bratislava, Slovakia Summer 2016

Teaching Experience

As an Instructor

- Introduction to Philosophical Problems*
 Colgate University Fall 2020
- Introduction to Philosophy*
 Cornell University Spring 2019
 Colgate University Fall 2020
- Realism and Anti-Realism*
 Colgate University Fall 2020
- Teaching Writing*
 Cornell University (co-instructor) Fall 2018
- Non-Credit Writing Workshop: Science Fiction and Philosophy*
 Cornell Prison Education Program ('CPEP,' www.cpep.cornell.edu)
 Cayuga Correctional Facility (CPEP) Summer 2018
- Introduction to Logic*
 Auburn Correctional Facility (CPEP) Spring 2018
 Five Points Correctional Facility (CPEP) Fall 2017
- Conservation Ethics*
 Cornell University Spring 2018
- Between Theory and Reality: Issues in the Philosophy of Science*
 Cornell University Spring 2019
 Cornell University Fall 2019
 Cornell University Fall 2018
 Cornell University Fall 2017
- Introduction to Philosophy*
 Auburn Correctional Facility (CPEP, co-instructor) Spring 2016
- Is Everything Real Made of Atoms?*
 Cornell University Fall 2016
- Introduction to Ethics*
 Five Points Correctional Facility (CPEP) Fall 2016
- Discussions of Justice*
 Cornell University Spring 2016
- Special Topics in Philosophy: Philosophy of Mind*
 Auburn Correctional Facility (CPEP, co-instructor) Spring 2016
- Special Topics in Philosophy: Space and Time*
 Auburn Correctional Facility (CPEP) Fall 2015

Cayuga Correctional Facility (CPEP)	Summer 2015
<i>Introduction to Philosophy</i>	
Auburn Correctional Facility (CPEP)	Spring 2015

As a Teaching Assistant

<i>Ethics of Eating (Will Starr and Andrew Chignell)</i>	
Cornell University	Spring 2015
<i>Introduction to Metaphysics (Karen Bennett)</i>	
Cornell University	Fall 2014
<i>Introduction to Philosophy (Zach Abrahams)</i>	
Cornell University	Spring 2014
<i>Philosophy of Science (Dick Boyd)</i>	
Cornell University	Fall 2013
<i>Introduction to Ethics (Nick Jones)</i>	
University of Leeds	Spring 2012
<i>Introduction to Philosophy (Robin LePoidevin)</i>	
University of Leeds	Fall 2011

Undergraduate Advisees

Billy Garfinkel (primary advisor)
Karen Zhang
Bella DeLeon
Daniel Dougherty

Professional Development

<i>Graduate Institute Summer School in Philosophy of Education. Center for Ethics and Education (www.ethicsandeducation.wceruw.org).</i>	
Chicago, IL	2016-17
<i>Athena in Action: A Networking and Mentoring Workshop for Graduate Women in Philosophy.</i>	
Princeton, NJ	Summer 2016
<i>Metaphysical Mayhem.</i>	
Metaphysics Summer School. Rutgers, NY	Summer 2016

Awards and Fellowships

<i>Dissertation Completion Fellowship</i>	
Cornell University, Sage School of Philosophy	2018-19
<i>Graduate Teaching Assistant Fellowship</i>	
Cornell's Center for Teaching Innovation	
<i>Awarded annually to a cohort of 7-10 graduate students to work closely with the Center for Teaching Innovation providing general mentoring in teaching. Includes \$1000 stipend</i>	2016-17

<i>Cornell Knight Institute Fellowship to teach First-Year Writing Seminar</i> Knight Institute for Writing, Cornell University	2016-17
<i>Graduate Research in Teaching Fellowship</i> Cornell's Center for Teaching Innovation <i>Awarded annually to a cohort of 7-10 graduate students to develop a 'Teaching-as-Research' project. Includes \$1000 stipend</i>	2015-16
<i>Sage School of Philosophy Fellowship</i> Cornell University, Sage School of Philosophy	2011-12
<i>Research Preparation Award for study towards a Masters</i> Arts and Humanities Research Council ('AHRC,' www.ahrc.ukri.org) <i>Awarded to two students for the academic year 2011-12. Provides full tuition support plus maintenance grant</i> <i>(http://www.postgraduatefunding.com/award-2566)</i>	2011-12
<i>Students as Scholars Award</i> Leeds University, Philosophy Department (Mentor: Heather Logue) <i>Awarded annually to especially promising freshmen. Recipients are paired with a mentor and invited to attend research events:</i> <i>(www.arts.leeds.ac.uk/ugresearch/students-as-scholars/)</i>	2008

Professional Service

Conference Organizing

<i>University-Wide Teaching Conference</i> Cornell University, Ithaca, NY	Fall 2017
<i>University-Wide Teaching Conference</i> Cornell University, Ithaca, NY	Spring 2016
<i>The British Undergraduate Philosophy Society Spring Conference</i> Leeds University, Leeds, UK	Spring 2011

Mentoring in Teaching

<i>The Center for Teaching Innovation Teaching Excellence Program</i> Facilitator	2015-16
<i>Cornell Teaching Discussion Group in Philosophy</i> Founder and Organizer	2015-16
<i>Center for Teaching Innovation, Pizza and Discussion Series</i> Discussion Leader & Facilitator	Fall 2015

Refereeing

For the journal <i>Philosophical Studies</i>	Winter 2021
For the journal <i>Organon F</i>	Spring 2018
For the journal <i>Mind</i>	Fall 2017

Leadership Positions

<i>Cornell Sage School of Philosophy</i>	
Graduate Student Representative & Faculty Liaison	2014-16
<i>Cornell's Graduate Field Organization</i>	
Cohort Representative for Philosophy	2014-15
<i>Leeds University Philosophy Department</i>	
Graduate Student Representative & Faculty Liaison	2011-12
<i>The Leeds Philosophy Subject Centre Advisory Board</i>	
Graduate Student Representative	2010-11
<i>The British Undergraduate Philosophy Society</i>	
President, Chair, Delegate	2009-12

Chairing

<i>The Society for the Metaphysics of Science, Second Annual Conference</i>	
Session on 'Causation, Biomedical Issues.' Geneva, Switzerland	Fall 2016
<i>The Society for the Metaphysics of Science, Second Annual Conference</i>	
Session on 'Realism, Determinism, Kinds.' Geneva, Switzerland	Fall 2016
<i>The Society for the Metaphysics of Science, Second Annual Conference</i>	
Session on 'Modality.' Geneva, Switzerland	Fall 2016
<i>2016 Henle Conference on The Nature of Necessity</i>	
Meghan Sullivan's session on 'Anti-Essentialism.' Saint Louis University. Saint Louis, MO	Spring 2016

Graduate-Level Coursework

(* indicates audit)

Philosophy of Science

Naturalism* (Dick Boyd)
Philosophy of Medicine* (Ann Johnson)
Philosophy of Science* (Dick Boyd)
Philosophy of Physics: Philosophy of Space and Time* (Jill North)
Philosophy of Science: Philosophical Naturalism* (Dick Boyd)
Topics in Philosophy of Physics* (Jill North)
Philosophy of Science: Philosophical Naturalism* (Richard Boyd)

Feminist Philosophy

Feminism and Philosophy* (Kate Manne)
Feminism and Philosophy* (Michelle Kosch and Kate Manne)

Metaphysics

Metaphysics: Fundamentality* (Karen Bennett)
Metaphysics: Free Will (Derk Pereboom)

Metaphysics* (Ted Sider)
Metaphysics* (Karen Bennett)
Advanced Topics in Modality* (John Divers)

Pedagogy

Writing 7100: Teaching Writing* (Jessica Sands)
Teaching as Research in Higher Education (Kimberly Williams)
Teaching in Higher Education (David Way)

Other

Aristotle (Rachana Kamtekar)
Topics in German Philosophy (Andrew Chignell)
Topics on the Philosophy of Language (Will Starr)
Ethics and Value Theory (Nicholas Sturgeon)
Seminar in 20th C. Philosophy (Matti Eklund)
Pro-Seminar in Philosophy (Will Starr)
Logic for Philosophy (Ted Sider)
Plato (Gail Fine)
Advanced Topics in the Philosophy of Mind (Andrew McGonigal)
Analytic Philosophy (John Divers and Andrew McGonigal)

Other Interests

I maintain a close connection with the ornithology community by taking classes and contributing to various ornithological programs.

Spring Field Ornithology

Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Students attend weekly talks on bird identification and conservation and engage in weekly bird walks throughout upstate New York. For this course I won a working scholarship where my tuition fees were partly covered in exchange for some work during the course.

Comprehensive Bird Biology

Cornell Lab of Ornithology

An online course run through the Cornell Lab fo Ornithology. Students learn about the anatomy, behaviour, ecology, and conservation of birds. I am in the process of completing this course. More information can be found [here](#).

Techniques of Avian Specimen Preparation

Cornell's Ecology and Evolutionary Biology department

Course members learn to prepare bird skins for research purposes. I also participated in a reading group made up of select members of the class which investigated the ethics of bird collection.

Maine Seabird Biology and Conservation

Audubon

Participants engaged in conservation volunteer work on Hog Island off the coast of Maine. The course was and involved activities such as cleaning up beaches to maintain bird habitat, and creating decoys for repopulation efforts. More information is available [here](#).

Arts and Birding

Audubon

Participants attended classes focused on the artistic recording and documenting of birds while in the field. Takes place on Hog Island off the coast of Maine. I was awarded a \$500 scholarship from Audubon for this class. More information is available [here](#).

I also have a keen interest in the arts. I hold an art foundation qualification from the Manchester Metropolitan University and during my time at Cornell I have completed several courses in fine art (for example portraiture and watercolour techniques). I also apply my artistic interest to my love of birding and have produced scientific illustrations for Audubon (used in online courses ‘Raptor Rapture’, ‘Project Puffin Online’, ‘Puffin Island,’ and ‘Spring Ornithology’). I have a small quilting company by the name of ‘Beneath the Brambles’ through which I create and sell quilting patterns which aim to bring awareness to the world of birds and wildlife that can be found in the simple back yard. In this vein I have also taught quilting and needlework classes at my local quilt store.

References

Research

Karen Bennett:

kbennett@philosophy.rutgers.edu

Will Starr: will.starr@cornell.edu

Elizabeth Barnes: e.j.barnes@virginia.edu

Richard Boyd: rnb1@cornell.edu

Ted Sider: sider@rutgers.edu

Teaching

Jason Kawall:

jkawall@colgate.edu

Karen Bennett:

kbennett@philosophy.rutgers.edu

Will Starr: will.starr@cornell.edu

Derina Samuel:

dss279@cornell.edu

Dissertation Abstract

In my dissertation, I develop and apply the notion of *inference webs*. Inference webs are structured entities which form part of the collective epistemic resources of an epistemic community. They underwrite tacit inferential moves (including association and common use) which allow us to move from one concept to another fluidly and without stating or considering that move explicitly. Inference webs are indispensable to our epistemic practices – they allow us to talk about issues on which we have agreed-upon assumptions and standards, without having to state those all those assumptions explicitly (which would take a huge amount of time and effort) – but they can go wrong, and when they do they hide important, problematic, tacit assumptions which (i) lead our theorising astray, and (ii) often mask ethically suspect or outright wrongful assumptions. Indeed, the tacit nature of pathological inference webs often leads us to make inferential moves that we would reject if confronted with explicitly.

My dissertation is divided into three papers, one on Feminist Epistemology, one on Philosophy of Science, and one on Analytic Metaphysics. Details of each follow below.

Feminist Epistemology

I argue that epistemic injustice can arise as a result of prejudiced and harmful defects in the inferential webs of both scientific practice and everyday thinking. Drawing on lessons from the Philosophy of Science, I posit that the inferential webs underlying our epistemic practices can be prejudiced and wrongful, leading to a variety of epistemic injustice that I call *inferential injustice*. This type of injustice is fully structural; it inheres in our epistemic practices themselves rather than as a direct result of an individual's actions or explicit beliefs. For this reason, cases of inferential injustice are importantly different from previously described cases of epistemic injustice and are especially hard to track. We need a better understanding of inferential injustice so that we can avoid and ameliorate cases such as the ones I presented in the dissertation. I begin this work (the work of exposing and interrogating pathological inference webs within a certain discipline) in my research on the literature on mental illness (see below).

Philosophy of Science and Social Metaphysics

I argue that the mental illness literature operates under a problematic inference web whereby legitimate principles are imbued with empiricist assumptions that cause them to go awry. For example, the pathological inference web underlying the mental illness literature cause philosophers within that literature to assume (or at least make inferences which assume) that the social and the scientific are fundamentally distinct. Most philosophers of science will deny this principle if asked directly, and yet that same principle is operative behind many of the inferences that are routinely made in the literature. I think that similar kinds of moves are made tacitly in the literature on kinds, and I hope to develop this thought further as part of my ongoing research (see below for more on this).

Analytic Metaphysics

My interest in the metaphysics of kinds is part of a broader interest in analytic metaphysics generally. I develop a view that fits more squarely in the realm of formal metaphysics of modality. There, I offer a Lewis-friendly solution to the ‘problem of advanced modalizing.’ You get an advanced modal if you take the sentence ‘there are many possible worlds’ and add ‘possibly’ to the beginning of it. Since the Lewisian thinks that ‘there are many possible worlds’ is true, she should also think that ‘possibly, there are many possible worlds’ is true; after all, anything that is true must be possibly true. But ‘possibly there are many possible worlds’ translates (via Lewis’ translation schema) into ‘there is a possible world in which there are many possible worlds.’ This last sentence must be false for the modal realist, since according to her worlds are spatiotemporally isolated from one another. I argue that the problem of advanced modalizing arises because of a misunderstanding about the reductive component of Lewis’ account. I argue that we ought not require, as a necessary condition of successful reduction, that we can locate the reduced property (i.e. modality) in the reductive base (possible worlds).

As noted above, I think that the notion of an inference web has applications that go far beyond what I do in my dissertation. For example, I think that inference webs also play a role in the literature on the metaphysics of kinds. In many literatures, it is common to move (implicitly) from the concept ‘natural’ to the concept ‘not social’, from the concept ‘socially constructed’ to the concept ‘unreal’/‘unscientific,’ and from the concept ‘value-laden’ to the concept ‘not objective.’ These moves are illegitimate, and clearly so (whether a river has flooded in a certain area is a socially constructed matter, and yet it is clearly an appropriate matter for scientific study), and yet they are made routinely in many literatures. I think that this is due to the residue of tacit empiricist assumptions which are a hangover from the historical literature in the philosophy of science. Importantly, the inferential moves that are made here would be rejected outright by the people who make them, and hence cannot be explained by reference to faulty beliefs (these people do not *believe* that something’s being socially constructed implies that it is unscientific). We need the notion of inference webs to thoroughly explain and identify this phenomenon. I did not develop this argument in my dissertation. Rather, it is part of an ongoing project which I plan to develop in the coming years.