Fran Fairbairn

franfairbairn.com

California State University Bakersfield
Philosophy & Religious Studies Department
228 Humanities Complex
Bakersfield, CA
93311

Areas of Specialization

Social Epistemology
Philosophy of Science
Philosophy of Education
Metaphysics

Areas of Competence

Logic
Feminist Philosophy

Work Experience

Aug 2022 – Present
Assistant Professor
California State University Bakersfield
Philosophy and Religious Studies Department

Aug 2020 – Aug 2022
Visiting Assistant Professor
Colgate University
Philosophy Department

Aug 2019 – Aug 2020
Philosophical Review Lecturer
Cornell University
Sage School of Philosophy

Education

Aug 2012 – June 2019
Cornell University
Ph.D., Philosophy
Committee: Karen Bennett, Dick Boyd, Ted Sider, Will Starr, Elizabeth Barnes
Dissertation: *Concepts in a Web: How do our concepts code for one another?*

Aug 2011 – Sep 2012
University of Leeds
MA, Philosophy
Advisor: Scott Shalkowski
Thesis: *Counterfactual Epistemology without Conceivability*

Aug 2008 – Aug 2012
University of Leeds
BA (Hons, 1st Class), Philosophy
Advisor: John Divers
Thesis: *Does Modal Realism Reduce Modality?*

Publications

Epistemic Injustice Through Transformative Learning, (2023), *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 55(3): 964-982

Teachers' Existential Self-Doubt as a Form of Epistemic Self-Doubt, (2022), *Philosophy of Education Quarterly*, 78(1): 34-37.

Trust, Power, and Transformation in the Prison Classroom, (2021), *The Journal of Prison Education and Re-entry*, 7(2): 160-181.

Epistemic Injustice in the Spaces Between Concepts, (2020), *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 58(1): 102-136.

Works in Progress

Searching for Uptake after Anorexia Nervosa

Advanced Modals, Advanced Quantifiers, and Reduction (out for review)

Mental Illness and Naturalism Under a Pathological Inference Web

Prison Teaching and the Aims of Higher Education

Presentations

Epistemic Injustice and Generative AI: How Gen-AI Can Cause Unjust Epistemic Harm Through Concept Association

Fall 2026 — Sages and Scholars Conference 2026, Hermetic Foundation, South Pasadena CA

Prison Teaching and the Aims of Higher Education

Spring 2026 — California State University Philosophy & Religious Studies Department Colloquium, Bakersfield CA

Stacking the Deck? How we assess and understand smartness and grit in our students

Spring 2024 — California State University Symposium on Teaching and Learning, Modesto CA

Equity concerns, attitudes, and the policies they inform

Spring 2024 — California State University Bakersfield PIE Symposium

Searching for Uptake after Anorexia Nervosa

Spring 2023 — Philosophy Department Colloquium, Cal Poly San Obispo

Prison Teaching and the Aims of Higher Education

Spring 2022 — The Philosophy of Education Society Annual Conference. San José, California

Spring 2022 — The American Education Research Association Annual Conference. San Diego, California

The Ethical Dimension of Lethal Specimen Collection in Ornithology

Spring 2020 — World Biodiversity Forum. Davos, Switzerland

Summer 2020 — Philosophy of Biology at the Mountains. Zoom

Coding Groups and Naturalism Regarding Mental illness

Summer 2019	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

Epistemic Injustice in the Spaces Between Concepts

Spring 2019	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
Fall 2018	Society for Women in Philosophy. Switzerland Chapter Networking Conference. Bern, Switzerland

Uptake, Looping, and the Concept of Stereotype Magnetism

Summer 2017	The Royal Institute of Philosophy Annual Conference, Harms and Wrongs in Epistemic Practice. Sheffield, UK
Fall 2016	The Society for the Metaphysics of Science, Annual Conference. Geneva, Switzerland
Fall 2016	Modal Metaphysics: Issues on the (Im)Possible IV. Bratislava, Slovakia
Summer 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
Spring 2016	Graduate Women in Metaphysics Workshop. Northampton, MA

Power and Inclusivity in the Prison Classroom

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

Trust, Power, and Transformation in the Prison Classroom

Winter 2021	American Association of Philosophy Teachers ('AAPT'), American Philosophical Association. Online.
Summer 2017	The First Annual, National Teaching as Research Conference. Ithaca, NY
Spring 2017	Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning. Teaching-As-Research Series. Online
Spring 2016	Classroom Research and Teaching Symposium for Current and Future Faculty. Cornell University. Ithaca, NY
Spring 2016	Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning All-Network Teaching-As-Research Series. Cornell University. Online

Pedagogical Workshops (Leader)

Fall 2017	*Think-Alouds: Eavesdropping on your Students' Thinking*. Center for Teaching Innovation. Cornell University
Fall 2016	*Engaging lectures and Effective Presentations*. Center for Teaching Innovation. Cornell University
Fall 2016	*Leading a Discussion in an Online Classroom*. Center for Teaching Innovation. Cornell University
Spring 2016	*Enhancing your Teaching with Research-Based Principles*. Center for Teaching Innovation. Cornell University
Spring 2016	*Developing Rubrics for Efficient and Consistent Grading*. Center for Teaching Innovation. Cornell University
Fall 2015	*Designing Student Assessment to Evaluate yourself as a Teacher*. Center for Teaching Innovation. Cornell University

Teaching Experience

Critical Thinking

Fall 2026	California State University Bakersfield
Fall 2025	California State University Bakersfield
Spring 2025	California State University Bakersfield
Fall 2024	California State University Bakersfield
Spring 2024	California State University Bakersfield
Fall 2023	California State University Bakersfield
Spring 2023	California State University Bakersfield
Fall 2022	California State University Bakersfield

Philosophy, Technology, and our Future

Fall 2026	California State University Bakersfield
Spring 2026	California State University Bakersfield
Fall 2025	California State University Bakersfield
Summer 2025	California State University Bakersfield
Spring 2025	California State University Bakersfield
Fall 2024	California State University Bakersfield
Winter 2023	California State University Bakersfield
Fall 2023	California State University Bakersfield
Summer 2023	California State University Bakersfield

Personhood

Fall 2026	California State University Bakersfield
Fall 2025	California State University Bakersfield

Senior Seminar

Spring 2026	California State University Bakersfield

Metaphysics

Fall 2024	California State University Bakersfield
Fall 2022	California State University Bakersfield
Fall 2022	Colgate University
Spring 2020	Colgate University
Fall 2020	Colgate University

Formal Logic

Spring 2026	California State University Bakersfield
Spring 2025	California State University Bakersfield
Spring 2024	California State University Bakersfield
Spring 2023	California State University Bakersfield
Spring 2022	Colgate University
Spring 2018	Auburn Correctional Facility
Fall 2017	Five Points Correctional Facility

Theories of Knowledge

Spring 2025	California State University Bakersfield
Spring 2023	California State University Bakersfield

Introduction to Philosophy

Fall 2021	Colgate University
Spring 2021	Colgate University
Fall 2020	Colgate University
Spring 2020	
Spring 2016	Auburn Correctional Facility
Spring 2015	

Feminist Philosophy

Spring 2022	Colgate University

Teaching Writing

Fall 2018	Cornell University (co-instructor)

Conservation Ethics

Spring 2018	Cornell University

Philosophy of Science

Spring 2026	California State University Bakersfield
Spring 2023	California State University Bakersfield
Fall 2019	Cornell University
Fall 2018	Cornell University
Fall 2017	Cornell University
Fall 2016	Auburn Correctional Facility

Introduction to Ethics

Fall 2016 Five Points Correctional Facility

Discussions of Justice

Spring 2016 Cornell University

Philosophy of Mind

Spring 2016 Auburn Correctional Facility (co-instructor)

Philosophy of Space and Time

Fall 2015 Auburn Correctional Facility

Summer 2015

Science Fiction and Philosophy

Summer 2018 Auburn Correctional Facility

Undergraduate Advisees

Philosophy Major Advisees at California State University Bakersfield

Nestle Black
Zae'breanna Chappel
Jacob Denogean
Hayden Gamino
Annette Gomez
Ace Moody
Aylin Morales
Breanna Hayes
Andrew Chavez
Lyndsey Hicks

Alex Munoz
Brett Julius
Lizeth Caballero
Jacan Stone

Philosophy Major Honors Thesis Advisees

Matt Marcus	Committee Chair, Colgate University *Identity across time*
Jack Underhill	Committee Chair, Colgate University *Free Will, Eternalism, and Karma*
Billy Garfinkel	Committee Chair, Colgate University *Platonism in the Philosophy of Mathematics: Benefits at a Cost*
Karen Zhang	Committee Member, Colgate University

	An Analysis of Ian Hacking's Theory of the Looping Effects of Human Kinds and its Implication for Scientific Progress
Bella DeLeon	Committee Member, Colgate University *Does harm to me harm you? Epistemic Injustice and its Interrelated Harms*
Daniel Dougherty	Committee Member, Colgate University *Velocity and Causality*

Professional Service

Conferences

2022-2027	Co-Organizer CSUB Annual Philosophy and Religious Studies Undergraduate Conference California State University Bakersfield
Fall 2021	Referee for Conference Submissions American Education Research Association Annual Conference Online
Fall 2017	Organizer University-Wide Teaching Conference Cornell University
Spring 2016	Organizer University-Wide Teaching Conference Cornell University
Spring 2011	Organizer The British Undergraduate Philosophy Society Spring Conference University of Leeds

Mentoring

2022-25	Student Mentor Runner Scholars Program, California State University Bakersfield
2015-16	Practicum Facilitator Teaching Excellence Program, Center for Teaching Innovation, Cornell University
2015-16	Founder & Leader Philosophy Teaching Discussion Group, Cornell University
2015	Discussion Leader & Facilitator Pizza and Discussion Series, Center for Teaching Innovation, Cornell University

Committees

2026-2028	General Education Committee California State University Bakersfield
2022-2024	Sustainability Committee California State University Bakersfield
2022-2024	Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Build Team California State University Bakersfield

Leadership Positions

2024-Present	Critical Thinking Learning Community Lead California State University Bakerfield
2025-Present	Alpha Chi National Honor Society
2022-2026	Philosophy Club Advisor California State University, Bakersfield
2023-2026	Phi Sigma Tau CSUB Chapter Honors Society Advisor California State University, Bakersfield

Journal Refereeing

Alethia
Journal of Education Sciences

Journal of Philosophy of Education

Frontiers in Psychology

Acta Analytica

Philosophical Inquiry in Education

Philosophical Studies

Organon F

Mind

Professional Development

Spring 2026	Oral Communication Learning Community California State University Bakersfield
Spring 2026	GAME Plan: Designing Critical Thinking Assignments for the AI Era California State University Bakerfield
Fall 2025	Information Literacy Learning Community California State University Bakersfield
Fall 2025	GAME Plan: Designing Critical Thinking Assignments for the AI Era California State University Bakersfield
Fall 2023-24	Critical Thinking Learning Community California State University, Bakersfield
Fall 2023	Written Communication Learning Community California State University, Bakersfield
Spring 2023	Student Success Network Grant California State University Bakersfield
Spring 2023	Equity-Minded Pedagogy Workshop California State University, Bakersfield
Fall 2022	Reading and Writing Across the Disciplines Workshop California State University Bakersfield, CA
Fall 2022	Ethics Across the Curriculum Workshop Kegley Institute of Ethics, California State University Bakersfield, CA
2016-17	Graduate Institute Summer School in Philosophy of Education Center for Ethics and Education, Chicago, IL
Summer 2016	Athena in Action: Networking & Mentoring Workshop for Graduate Women in Philosophy

Grants&Awards

Adobe for All 2022-27 annually	CSU+ Adobe for All ($30,000) IRA Grant ($2,00-$2,500) California State University Bakersfield
2018-19	Dissertation Completion Fellowship (Tuition plus $20,000 stipend) Sage School of Philosophy, Cornell University
2016-17	Graduate Teaching Assistant Fellowship (Tuition plus $20,000 stipend) Center for Teaching Innovation, Cornell University
2016-17	Cornell Knight Institute Fellowship ($1,000) Knight Institute for Writing, Cornell University
2015-16	Graduate Research in Teaching Fellowship ($1,000) Center for Teaching Innovation, Cornell University
2011-12	Research Preparation Award for study towards a Masters' Degree (Tuition + $20,000) Arts and Humanities Research Council

Other Interests

Engagement In the Ornithology Community

I maintain a close connection with the ornithology community by taking classes and contributing to various ornithological programs, such as:

Spring Field Ornithology *(scholarship awarded)*
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. More information here

Techniques of Avian Specimen Preparation
Cornell University 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. More information here

Birds of Maine Islands: A Service Learning Week *(formerly 'Maine Seabird Biology and Conservation')*
The Audubon Society

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 here

Arts and Birding Summer School *(scholarship awarded)*
The Audubon Society

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 here

Scientific Illustrations

I also have a keen interest in the arts. I hold an art foundation degree from Manchester Metropolitan University and I have produced scientific illustrations for the following bird-related courses. You can see some of these illustrations on my website.

Ornithology Online
Project Puffin

Project Puffin Online
Project Puffin

Seabirds of the World
Cayuga Bird Club

Puffin Island
Project Puffin

Spring Ornithology
Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Raptor Rapture
The Audubon Society

I am also a member of the International Puffin Congress, a collection of scientists, conservationists, and others involved in puffin conservation. The congress was created with the aim of creating dialogue across disciplines and raising public awareness about puffin conservation efforts and needs.

Fiber Arts

I love to sew and quilt. I have sold some of my quilting patterns under the name 'Beneath the Brambles.' I have also taught quilting and needlework classes

References

Jason Kawall	jkawall@colgate.edu	Will Starr	will.starr@cornell.edu
Nate Olson	nolson@csub.edu	Elizabeth Barnes	e.j.barnes@virginia.edu
Karen Bennett	Kbennett.bennett1@rutgers.edu	Ted Sider	sider@rutgers.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 be 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 to notion of inference webs to thoroughly explain and identify this phenomenon. I did not develop this argument in my dissertation.