

# Michael J. Olson

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## Education

Villanova University	Ph.D., Philosophy, 2013
Villanova University	M.A., Philosophy, 2006
Grinnell College	B.A., Philosophy and Mathematics, 2003

## Academic Appointments

Marquette University, <i>Visiting Assistant Professor</i>	2018 -
Macquarie University, <i>Lecturer</i>	2014 - 2018
Loyola University Chicago, <i>Lecturer</i>	2013 - 2014

## Research & Teaching

### AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Kant • Early Modern Philosophy • History of Philosophy of Science

### AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Aesthetics • Political Philosophy • Ethics

## Publications

### ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS

- forthcoming Michael J. Olson, “Kant, Materialism, and the Unity of the Activity of Thinking.” *Akten des 12. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses: Natur und Freiheit*. Eds. Violetta L. Waibel und Margit Ruffing (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter).
- forthcoming Michael J. Olson, “Kant on the Feeling of Health.” Jennifer Mensch (ed.), *Kant and the Feeling of Life: From the Beautiful to the Good in Kant’s Critique of Judgment* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press).

- 2018 Michael J. Olson, "On the Significance of the Copernican Revolution: Transcendental Philosophy and the Object of Metaphysics." *Con-Textos Kantianos*, no. 7 (2018), 89-127.
- 2018 Michael J. Olson, "Literature in the German Science of the Soul: Johann Gottlob Krüger's *Dreams*." *History of European Ideas*, vol. 44, no. 5 (2018), 528-542.
- 2017 Michael J. Olson, "The Metaphysics of the Epigenesis of Reason: On Jennifer Mensch's *Kant's Organicism*." *Philosophy Today*, vol. 61, no. 3 (2017), 793-799.
- 2016 Michael J. Olson, "Kant on Anatomy and the Status of the Life Sciences." *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, vol. 58 (2016), 77-84.
- 2015 Michael J. Olson, "The Camera Obscura and the Soul: On a Tension between the Mechanics of Sensation and the Metaphysics of the Soul." *Intellectual History Review*, vol. 25, no. 3 (2015), 279-291.
- Reprinted in Anik Waldow (ed.), *Sensibility in the Early Modern Era: From Living Machines to Affective Morality* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 25-37.
- 2013 Michael J. Olson, "A Materialist Transcendental: On the Ontology of *Logics of Worlds*." *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, vol. 18, no. 2 (2013), 143-159.
- 2012 Michael J. Olson, "Transcendental Arguments, Axiomatic Truth, and the Difficulty of Overcoming Idealism." *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy*. Eds. John Mullarkey and Anthony Paul Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 169-190.
- 2011 Michael J. Olson, "Critical Idealism and Transcendental Materialism: A Speculative Analysis of the Second Paralogism." *Cosmos and History*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2011), 49-61.
- 2010 Michael J. Olson, "The Intuition of Simultaneity: *Zugleichsein* and the Constitution of Extensive Magnitudes." *Kant-Studien*, vol. 101, no. 4 (December 2010), 429-444.
- 2009 Michael J. Olson, "Philosophy, Non-Philosophy, and the Axiomatization of Matter." *Philosophy Today*, vol. 53, SPEP Supplement (2009), 257-262.
- 2009 Michael J. Olson, "Kant, Deleuze and Guattari, and the Metaphysics of Objects." *Thinking Between Deleuze and Kant*. Eds. Edward Willatt and Matt Lee (London: Continuum, 2009), 151-170.

#### REVIEWS

- 2016 Colin McQuillan, *Immanuel Kant: On the Very Idea of a Critique of Pure Reason* (Northwestern University Press, 2016). *Critique* (2016) [goo.gl/1QS9kp](http://goo.gl/1QS9kp).
- 2016

Nicholas Jolley, *Locke's Touchy Subjects: Materialism and Immortality* (Oxford University Press, 2015). *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 94, no. 4 (2016), 838-839.

#### WORK IN PROGRESS

*Kant and the Unity of Life* (manuscript in preparation).

*Generating Race: From Generation Theory to Racial Difference in German Life Science Debates, 1750-1820* (with Jennifer Mensch, edited anthology with historical introduction in preparation for Bloomsbury).

"The Work of Art in the Age of Its Digital Distribution" (with Jean-Philippe Deranty; under review).

"The Miracle of Freedom: The Causal Closure of Nature in German Philosophy from Wolff to Kant" (with Raoni Padui).

#### Selected Presentations

"THE MIRACLE OF FREEDOM: THE CAUSAL CLOSURE OF NATURE IN GERMAN PHILOSOPHY FROM WOLFF TO KANT"

- Australasian Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy (Sydney, NSW: November, 2017).
- 'Nature' and 'World' in German Philosophy (Macquarie University: August, 2017).

"KANT, DOG WHISTLE POLITICS, AND THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY"

- *Natural Histories of Language: Philology, Philosophy, and Evolution* (The University of Sydney: November, 2017).
- Macalester College (St Paul, MN: February, 2017).
- *History and Authority: Political Vocabularies of the Modern Age* (The Australian National University: July, 2016).

"MATERIAL CONDITIONS OF EXPERIENCE: AETHER AND APPERCEPTION IN KANT'S *OPUS POSTUMUM*."

- The University of Bristol (Bristol, UK: June, 2017).
- *Nature and Science in the Long Eighteenth Century* (The University of Sydney: August, 2016).
- International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science (University of Minnesota: June, 2016).

"LITERATURE IN THE GERMAN SCIENCE OF THE SOUL: JOHANN GOTTLOB KRÜGER'S *TRÄUME*"

- *Life before Darwin: Nature and Evolution, 1750-1859* (University of Sydney: May, 2017).
- *Natural History and the Life Sciences in the Long Eighteenth Century* (The University of Sydney: August, 2015).

"EARLY MODERN ANTI-MATERIALISM: ON THE VIRTUES OF THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY"

- University of Melbourne (Melbourne, VIC: December, 2015).
- Australasian Association of Philosophy (Sydney, NSW: May, 2015).

“THE METAPHYSICS OF THE EPIGENESIS OF REASON”

- Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy (University of New South Wales: December, 2015).

“KANT, MATERIALISM, AND THE UNITY OF THE ACTIVITY OF THINKING”

- International Kant Congress (Vienna, Austria: September, 2015).
- The University of Sydney (Sydney, NSW: March, 2015).

“PHYSIOLOGIST OF REASON, PHILOSOPHICAL ANATOMIST, PHILOSOPHER: ON SOME KANTIAN DISTINCTIONS”

- *The Philosophy of Nature in the Era of German Idealism* (The University of Sydney: June, 2015).

“THE CAMERA OBSCURA AND THE NATURE OF THE SOUL: AN EXAMINATION OF EARLY 18TH CENTURY GERMAN METAPHYSICS AND NATURAL SCIENCE”

- Hiram College (May, 2013).
- Scottish Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy (University of Aberdeen, Scotland: April, 2012).

“METAPHYSICS AND SCIENCE IN KANT’S COPERNICAN REVOLUTION”

- International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science (Halifax, NS: June, 2012).
- Young Researchers Conference on Classical German Philosophy, Centrum voor Duits Idealisme (Tilburg University, Netherlands: June, 2011).
- *Repetition and Revolt* (Cornell University: April, 2011).

“A MATERIALIST TRANSCENDENTAL: ON THE ONTOLOGY OF LOGICS OF WORLDS”

- Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (Montreal, QC: November, 2010).
- Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association (Albuquerque, NM: October, 2010).

“CRITICAL IDEALISM AND TRANSCENDENTAL MATERIALISM: A SPECULATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND PARALOGISM”

- *Form and Genesis* (Cornell University: April, 2010).
- *Real Objects or Material Subjects* (University of Dundee, UK: March, 2010).

“PHILOSOPHY, NON-PHILOSOPHY, AND THE AXIOMATIZATION OF MATTER”

- Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (Pittsburgh, PA: October, 2008).
- *Time and Materiality* (Cornell University: April, 2007).

## Grants & Awards

Australian Award for University Teaching for

2017

Programs that Enhance Student Learning	
<i>Macquarie University Professional and Community Engagement (PACE)</i>	
Macquarie Faculty of Arts Visiting Fellowship Grant "Nature" and "World" in Classical German Metaphysics and Natural Philosophy (\$6000)	2017
Macquarie University CAVE Research Grant <i>Aesthetics and Politics: Research in Progress Workshop</i> (\$2500)	2017
Macquarie University Research Projects Grant <i>Kant and the Metaphysics of Thinking</i> (\$13,000)	2016
Macquarie Faculty of Arts Emerging Scholar	2016
Macquarie University Research Travel Grant <i>Kant, Materialism, and the Unity of Thinking</i> (\$4500)	2015
Runner-up, ISIH Charles Schmitt Prize for "The Camera Obscura and the Soul"	2013

## Dissertation

*Title:* Kant's Transcendental and Metaphysical Idealism

*Committee:* Julie Klein (director), Dalia Nassar (University of Sydney), Paul Livingston (University of New Mexico)

*Abstract:* In this dissertation, I argue that the now-common understanding of Kant's transcendental idealism, which holds that Kant displaces metaphysics with the more sober work of epistemology, overlooks the implicit metaphysical underpinnings of Kant's supposedly metaphysically neutral epistemology. By reading Kant in the context of the Wolfian school in which he was trained, the continuity between transcendental idealism and rationalist metaphysics emerges. The proximity of Kant's position to those of his rationalist predecessors, I argue, undermines interpretations of the former that take transcendental idealism to be merely a propaedeutic to metaphysical investigations. More specifically, I show that Kant's transcendental idealism depends upon two principles central to the rationalist metaphysical tradition: (1) a metaphysical exceptionalism that identifies subjectivity as the ground of a distinct form of activity found nowhere outside of the thinking subject, and (2) an opposition between the ahistorical nature of logical form and the pure concepts of the understanding and the historical objects of whose intelligibility they condition.

## Teaching

### COURSES TAUGHT

Marquette University	
PHIL 1001 <i>Foundations in Philosophy</i>	2018
PHIL 2310 <i>Theory of Ethics</i>	2018

## Macquarie University

### Undergraduate

PHL 131 <i>Mind and World</i>	2017-2018
PHL 132 <i>Happiness, Goodness, Justice</i>	2015
PHL 238 <i>Existentialism</i>	2016
PHL 250 <i>Philosophy of Art and Literature</i>	2015, 2017
PHL 351 <i>Social Philosophy</i>	2015, 2017
PHL 365 <i>Film and Philosophy</i>	2018
PHL 383 <i>Philosophy Capstone</i>	2016-2017

### Postgraduate

PHIL 703 <i>Kant's Critique of Pure Reason</i>	2016
PHIL 703 <i>Aesthetics and Politics</i> (with Jean-Philippe Deranty)	2017
PHIL 703 <i>Descartes</i>	2018
PHIL 704 <i>Early Modern Materialism</i>	2015
FOAR 702 <i>Posthumanism</i> (with colleagues from English)	2016-2017

## Loyola University Chicago

PHIL 130 <i>Philosophy and Persons</i>	2013
PHIL 181 <i>Ethics</i>	2014
PHIL 182 <i>Social and Political Philosophy</i>	2013-2014

## University of Pennsylvania

PHIL 055 <i>Existentialism</i>	2013
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## Villanova University

PHI 1050 <i>Introduction to Philosophy</i>	2006-2010
PHI 2190 <i>Freedom</i>	2010
PHI 2710 <i>Theories of Knowledge</i>	2012
PHI 3040 <i>History of Early Modern Philosophy</i>	2010
PHI 4150 <i>Philosophy and Film: Documentaries</i>	2010
ETH 2050 <i>Ethical Traditions and Contemporary Life</i>	2011-2013

## POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION

Brendan Burnett	MRes, 2017
<i>Teleology and Critical Philosophy in Kant's 'Universal History' Essay (1784)</i>	
Thomas Corbin	MRes, 2016
<i>The Role of Counsel in Thomas Hobbes' Political Thought</i>	

## Service & Professional Memberships

ORGANIZER, Macquarie University Philosophy Seminar Series	2015-2018
MENTOR, Early Career Researcher Mentorship Program, <i>Australasian Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy</i> (November, 2017)	2017

ORGANIZER, *Aesthetics and Politics: Research in Progress Workshop* 2017

ORGANIZER, 'Nature' and 'World' in German Philosophy Workshop 2017

MEMBER, AAP Postgraduate Essay Prize Jury 2015

REFEREE: Bloomsbury • *Critical Horizons* • *Epoché: a Journal for the History of Philosophy* • *Hypatia: a journal of feminist philosophy* • North American Kant Society • *Res Philosophica* • Taylor and Francis.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS: Australasian Association of Philosophy (AAP) • Australian and New Zealand Society for Eighteenth Century Studies (ANZSECS) • International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science (HOPOS) • Macquarie University Centre for Agency, Values, and Ethics (CAVE) • North American Kant Society (NAKS)

## References

Dr Jean-Philippe Deranty *jp.deranty@mq.edu.au*  
Associate Professor  
Department of Philosophy  
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Dr Stephen Gaukroger *stephen.gaukroger@sydney.edu.au*  
Professor Emeritus  
Department of History and Philosophy of Science  
University of Sydney

Dr Julie Klein *julie.klein@villanova.edu*  
Associate Professor  
Department of Philosophy  
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Dr Jennifer Mensch *j.mensch@westernsydney.edu.au*  
Senior Lecturer  
Department of Philosophy  
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Dr Dalia Nassar *dalia.nassar@sydney.edu.au*  
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