

Geordie McComb
Curriculum Vitae
November, 2020

Department of Philosophy
University of Toronto
170 St. George Street, room 503
Toronto, ON, M5R 2M8

(639) 998-9838
geordie.mccomb@utoronto.ca
geordiemccomb.com
Canadian

RESEARCH AREAS

AOS: Epistemology, Thought Experiments, Aesthetics of Literature
AOC: Philosophy of Science, M&E, Early Analytic Philosophy

EDUCATION

- 2020 **Phd** – University of Toronto, Philosophy
Committee: James R. Brown (supervisor), Sonia Sedivy, Yiftach Fehige
External Examiner: Harald Wiltsche
Dissertation: *Thought Experiments & Literary Learning*
- 2009 **MA** – Queen’s University, Philosophy
Advisor: Henry Laycock
Master’s Research Project: *On Definition and Thought Experiment*
- 2008 **BA** (honours with distinction) – University of Victoria, Philosophy

PUBLICATIONS

- 2012 “Thought Experiment, Definition and Literary Fiction” in *Thought Experiments in Philosophy, Science, and the Arts*. Eds. James R. Brown, Mélanie Frappier, Letitia Meynell. New York; London: Routledge.

TALKS - REFEREED

- 2021 “How Imaginings in Thought Experiments and Literary Stories Differ” – Canadian Philosophical Association Annual Congress, TBD

- 2014 “Are Thought Experiments and Arguments Token-Identical?” – Canadian Philosophical Association Annual Congress, Brock University
- 2013 “Thought Experiment, Fiction and Make-Believe” – Canadian Philosophical Association Annual Congress, University of Victoria
- 2013 “Two Pictures of Thought Experiments” – Canadian Society for History and Philosophy of Science Annual Meeting, University of Victoria
- 2013 “When Thought Experiments are not Fictions” – Annual Meeting of the Society for Exact Philosophy, Université de Montréal and Université du Québec à Montréal
- 2011 “Naturalistic Methods, Constitutive Principles and Einstein’s Elevator” – OSSA Annual Conference, University of Windsor
- 2009 “Multiculturalism, Cultural Essentialism and Cultural Distinctness” – Midsouth Philosophy Conference, University of Memphis
- 2009 “Towards a Revised Goodmanian Account of Musical Works” – Canadian Society for Aesthetics Annual Meeting, Carleton University
- 2009 “The Mathematical Aesthetics Thesis in the Philosophy of Science” – Canadian Society for History and Philosophy of Science Annual Meeting, Carleton U.

TALKS - INVITED

- 2014 “*Demons* and Details in the Laboratory of the Mind: Can Complex Literary Fictions be Thought Experiments?” – Philosophy Department Colloquium, University of Saskatchewan
- 2014 Commentary on Andrew Brigham’s “Darwinian Epistemology and the Reliability of Commonsense” – Canadian Philosophical Association Annual Congress, Brock University
- 2014 “When are Fictions Thought Experiments?” – Philosophy Department Colloquium, University of Saskatchewan
- 2013 Commentary on Robert Hudson’s “Versus Robustness Reasoning” – Western Canadian Philosophical Association Annual Meeting, Winnipeg
- 2013 Commentary on Masashi Kasaki’s “Is Epistemological Disjunctivism Viable” – Canadian Philosophical Association Annual Congress, University of Victoria
- 2013 Commentary on Thomas Heyd’s “Re-reading Kant on Free and Adherent Beauty” – Canadian Philosophical Association Annual Congress, University of Victoria
- 2012 Commentary on Catherine Elgin’s “Literary Fictions and Thought Experiments” – Thought Experiments in Science: Four Blind Spots (An International Workshop), University of Toronto
- 2011 Commentary on Joshua Hollowell’s “Incompatibilism and the Exclusion Thesis” – 2011 University of Toronto Graduate Conference in Philosophy
- 2010 “Are Literary Fictions Thought Experiments?” – Halifax Thought Experiment Workshop, Dalhousie University

AWARDS

- 2014-15 University of Toronto Doctoral Completion Award
2009-13 University of Toronto Foundation/Ontario Graduate Scholarship at the Faculty of Arts & Science (Awarded Three Times)
2008-09 Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarships Program, Master's Scholarship

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 2014 Sessional Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, University of Saskatchewan

Theory of Knowledge
- 2009-2020 Teaching Assistant, Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto
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|--------------------------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Knowledge & Reality | – | Tutorial Leader (Online)/Grader |
| Knowledge & Reality | – | Tutorial Leader/Grader |
| Philosophy of Sexuality | – | Grader |
| Persons, Minds & Bodies | – | Tutorial Leader/Grader |
| Introduction to Philosophy | – | Tutorial Leader/Grader |
| 17 th & 18 th Century Philosophy | – | Grader |
- 2008-09 Teaching Assistant, Department of Philosophy, Queen's University
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| Fundamental Questions | – | Tutorial Leader/Grader |
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ACADEMIC & NON-ACADEMIC SERVICE

- 2015 Co-organizer – Walter Murray Lecture , U. of Saskatchewan Philosophy Dept.
2015 Lecturer – 12 Philosophy for Children Outreach Classes, Bedford Road Collegiate & Marion Graham Collegiate, University of Saskatchewan
2013 Public Philosophy Talk – Philosophy in the Community Lecture Series, University of Saskatchewan
2013 Referee & Commentary Organizer – 2013 University of Toronto Graduate Conference in Philosophy
2012 Chair – 2012 University of Toronto Graduate Conference in Philosophy (Keynote: Timothy Williamson, University of Oxford)

- 2011-12 Graduate Student Union Representative – Graduate Philosophy Student Union, University of Toronto
- 2010-11 Referee – 2011 University of Toronto Graduate Conference in Philosophy
- 2010-11 Graduate Student Member of Colloquium Committee – Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto
- 2010-11 Secretary – Graduate Philosophy Student Union, University of Toronto
- 2008-09 Graduate Student Representative to Committee of Graduate Studies – Department of Philosophy, Queen’s University

LANGUAGES

English	native
French	fluent
Spanish	reading, with dictionary

REFERENCES

James R. Brown (Professor, Philosophy, Toronto)	jrbrown@chass.utoronto.ca
Yiftach Fehige (Associate Professor, IHSPT, Toronto)	yiftach.fehige@utoronto.ca
Harald Wiltsche (Professor, IKOS, Linköping)	harald.wiltsche@liu.se

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

I develop an approach to thought experiments and literary learning. It differs from others in the literature primarily because it has us refrain from advancing a theory, from giving logical analyses, and from explicating. Instead, it has us clarify words that give rise to problems and clear those problems away. I draw this approach from Wittgenstein’s writings. Then I bring it to bear on two problems. One concerns the nature of thought experiments. It is *Why do we have trouble explaining what we know them to be?* I find that, despite appearances, we have no such trouble. Rather, normally, we easily explain what they are. A central claim is that our concept of them has a family resemblance character. The other problem concerns stories in works of literary fiction. It is *How could we possibly learn about the world from them?* Some philosophers try to explain how we do so by appeal to thought experiments. I find that they risk explaining the wrong thing. They explain a sort of learning, to be sure, but maybe not learning in everyday literary appreciation. Central to this result are three claims. One is that, in so explaining, they may restrict how we often count imaginings as experiences of literary stories. The second is that they may restrict how free we are ordinarily to interpret the stories. The last is that they may turn complex stories into surveyable somethings.

GRADUATE SEMINARS

- 2013 Professional Development Seminar – Diana Raffman
- 2012 Philosophy of Science: Thought Experiments (audit) – James R. Brown
- 2010/11 Studies in Ancient Philosophy: Plato's Gorgias – Rachel Barney
Epist.: Evidence & Justification – Jennifer Nagel & Jonathan Weisberg
Phil. of Language: Reference & Communication I – Imogen Dickie
Phil. of Language: Reference & Comm. II (audit) – Imogen Dickie
Seminar in Analytic Philosophy: Early Analytic Phil. – Bernard Katz
Wittgenstein: The Later Philosophy – Sonia Sedivy
Seminar in Metaethics: Moral Realism – Andrew Sepielli
- 2009/10 PhD Proseminar: Analytic Philosophy – Philip Kremer & Jessica Wilson
Ethics: Taxonomy & Meta-Taxonomy – Andrew Sepielli
Philosophy of Science: Space & Time – James R. Brown
Reading Course: Thought Experiments & Lit. Fiction – James R. Brown
The Rationalists: Spinoza's Metaphysics – Karolina Hübner
Sem. in Analytic Phil.: Kantian & Post-Kantian Themes – Paul Franks
- 2008/09 Graduate Sem.: Phil. Methods (Free-will & Moral Responsibility) – Rahul Kumar
Social & Polit.: Liberal Democracy & Multiculturalism – Will Kymlicka
Metaphysics: Word and Object – Henry Laycock
Major Figures: Nietzsche – Paul Fairfield
Philosophy of Mind: Self-Knowledge – David Bakhurst
Reading Course: Thought Experiments – Henry Laycock