Curriculum Vitae

Avraham Sommer
Doctoral candidate, Department of Philosophy, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ
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October 21, 2026

Area of Specialization

Early Modern Philosophy

Areas of Competence

Logic, Philosophy of Language, Metaphysics, Medieval Philosophy, Philosophy of Religion, Jewish Philosophy

Education

B.A. 2021, Rutgers University, New Brunswick (magna cum laude, with high departmental honors)

Ph.D., Rutgers University, New Brunswick (in progress)

Certificate in Philosophy of Religion, Rutgers University, New Brunswick (in progress)

Dissertation

Title: *A Study in Leibniz's Alethiology*

Advisor: Martin Lin

Other Committee Members: Paul Pietroski, Michael Glanzberg, Marko Malink (external committee member)

Publications

"Tradition, Rationality, Relativism, and Seeking Converts," *Philosophical Exchange* 1/1 (2026), pp. 61-70

"A Neglected Argument of Hutcheson's on Moral Motivation," *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 24/1 (2026), pp. 21-38

"Mitzvot," co-authored with Israel Cohen, in *The Encyclopedia of Skepticism and the Jewish Tradition* (Brill, 2026)

"Degrees of Divine Revelation," *The Journal of Analytic Theology* 13/1 (2025), pp. 62-79

Contribution to a digital symposium on Jerome Gellman, *The People, the Torah, the God*, November 2024, https://www.theapj.com/event/symposium-on-jerome-gellmans-the-people-the-torah-the-god-a-neo-traditional-jewish-theology/

Manuscripts

“Descartes’s Case that He Has an Idea of God” (revise and resubmit)

“Why Did Leibniz Accept the Predicate-in-Notion Principle?” (revise and resubmit)

“Infinite Analysis and Nominal Definition in Leibniz” (in progress)

“Biblical Hermeneutics and Decision Theory” (in progress)

Presentations

“Tradition, Rationality, Relativism, and Seeking Converts," presented at the 2026 meeting of the Long Island Philosophical Society

“Some Difficulties with Leibniz’s Definition of Substance,” presented at the University of Haifa, January 2026

“Degrees of Divine Revelation,” presented at the meeting of the Association for the Philosophy of Judaism at the summer 2025 World Congress of Jewish Studies and at the 2024 APA Eastern Division meeting.

“Might Persons be Collective Substances for Locke? An Unexplored Possibility in the Debate over Locke's Conception of Persons,” presented at the Rutgers-Tel Aviv conference on persons, summer 2025

“An Interpretation of Leibniz’s Propositional Terms,” presented at the 2025 meeting of the Long Island Philosophical Society

“An Argument of Hutcheson on Moral Motivation,” presented at the 2024 meeting of the Long Island Philosophical Society

“Descartes’ Case that We Have an Idea of God,” presented at the Natural Theology graduate conference at St. Louis University, Fall of 2023

"A Neo-Maimonidean Theory of Prophecy," presented at the 2023 meeting of the Long Island Philosophical Society and at the meeting Association for the Philosophy of Judaism at the 2023 APA Central Division meeting

Teaching (all at Rutgers)

Instructor on record for Introduction to Logic (online, asynchronous), to be taught in the Winter of 2026-2027

Co-instructor for Philosophy in the High Middle Ages, fall 2026

Grader for Introduction to Philosophy, fall 2026

Instructor on record for Introduction to Formal Reasoning and Decision Making, Summer 2026 (online, asynchronous)

Instructor on record for Introduction to Modern Philosophy, Spring 2025

Instructor on record for Introduction to Formal Reasoning and Decision Making, Fall 2024

Instructor on record for Logic, Reasoning, and Persuasion, Summer 2024 (online, asynchronous)

TA for Human Nature and Human Diversity, Spring 2024

TA for Introduction to Philosophy, Writing Intensive, Fall 2023

Grader for Introduction to Metaphysics, Fall 2022

Service

Editorial Assistant, *Noûs*, 2026-2027

Editorial Assistant, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 2026-2027

Editorial Assistant, *Philosophical Issues*, 2026-2027

Peer Reviewer for *Theologica*, 2026

Co-Chair of the Association for the Philosophy of Judaism, summer 2024 to present

Co-chair of the colloquium committee, Rutgers Philosophy Department, 2023-2024, 2024-2025, and 2025-2026

Undergraduate advisor, Rutgers Philosophy Department, 2024-2025

“Should We Continue to Read and Honor Immoral Historical Philosophers?” post at the Blog of the APA, April 29, 2024, https://blog.apaonline.org/2024/04/29/should-we-continue-to-read-and-honor-immoral-historical-philosophers/

Logistical assistant for a summer school on God and Fine Tuning in 2023 funded by the John Templeton Foundation

"Francis Hutcheson's Moral Philosophy," talk presented to the Rutgers undergraduate philosophy club, Spring 2023

Member of the colloquium committee, Rutgers Philosophy Department, 2022-2023

Logistical assistant for a summer school on God and Spacetime in 2022 funded by the John Templeton Foundation

Member of the climate committee, Rutgers Philosophy Department, 2021-2022

Graduate Courses Taken, by Topic

1. General

Proseminar in Philosophy

Third-Year Writing Seminar

Dissertation Seminar

2. History of Philosophy

Seminar in Medieval Philosophy: Greatest Hits of Medieval Philosophical Theology

Seminar in Medieval Philosophy: Medieval Metaphysical Mayhem

Topics in the History of Philosophy: Albert the Great (at Princeton)

Eighteenth-Century Philosophy: Early Modern Philosophy of Mind

Independent Study: Gersonides (in the Department of Religion at Rutgers)

3. Logic

Topics in Logic: Philosophical Logic

4. Philosophy of Language

Advanced Topics: Philosophy of Language: Semantics and Pragmatics

Logic and Natural Language: Semantic and Pragmatic Interfaces

Semantics II (in the Department of Linguistics at Rutgers)

Advanced Topics: Philosophy of Language: Quantifier Domain Restriction and Deferred Reference

5. Metaphysics

Seminar in Metaphysics: Higher-Order Metaphysics

Seminar in Metaphysics: Philosophy of Time

Advanced Topics: Philosophy of Science: The Metaphysics of Laws of Probability

6. Philosophy of Religion

Theory and Method in the Study of Religion (in the Department of Religion at Rutgers)

Advanced Topics: Philosophy of History: Philosophy of Perception and Religious Experience

7. Ethics

Advanced Topics: Ethics: Topics in Moral Theory

8. Philosophy of Mind

Advanced Topics: Philosophy of Mind

9. Teaching

Teaching Seminar in Philosophy

Other Study (Languages, Talmud, and Jewish Law)

Classic Talmud Program at Yashrut (part time, 2024-2026)

Classical Latin Course (Livy), Veterum Sapientia Institute (fall 2023)

French for Reading Knowledge Course, University of Wisconsin, Madison (fall 2023)

Scholastic Latin Course, Veterum Sapientia Institute (spring 2022)

Summer Language Institute, University of Virginia, Latin (summer 2021)

Fellow at the Center for Modern Torah Leadership (summer 2020)

Yeshiva Fellow at The Hadar Institute (summer 2019)

Nishma at The Jewish Theological Seminary of America (summer 2018)

Memberships

American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division

The Leibniz Society of North America

Phi Beta Kappa, NJ Alpha Chapter

Phi Sigma Tau, NJ Theta Chapter

Languages

Aramaic (strong reading knowledge)

English (native)

French (intermediate reading knowledge),

Hebrew (fluent)

Latin (strong reading knowledge)

Dissertation Abstract

In his early mature writings, Leibniz derives his main metaphysical claims from a distinctive

theory of truth, known as the predicate-in-notion principle (the PIN), according to which a proposition is true if and only if its subject contains its predicate. To apply a later term, coined by Kant, to Leibniz's view of truth, Leibniz thought that truth was just analyticity. My dissertation is an exploration of the PIN and its role in Leibniz's metaphysics. I argue that the PIN is better motivated than it might seem, and I reconstruct Leibniz's derivations of some of his trademark metaphysical claims from it, including his account of substance and his claim that substances do not interact.

Many scholars have found the PIN puzzling. They have wondered why Leibniz held it, and they have had their doubts about whether his core metaphysical doctrines really follow from it. In contrast to the logicist view of Bertrand Russell and especially Louis Couturat from the early twentieth century, according to which the PIN is the single most important key to understanding Leibniz's metaphysics, more recent scholarship has deemphasized its role.

This more recent scholarship has made a valuable contribution to the project of understanding Leibniz by pointing out the limitations of the role of the PIN as a unifying factor in his philosophy and drawing attention to Leibniz's other ways of arguing for his metaphysical views in later writings. However, in my dissertation, I argue that the PIN, and Leibniz's derivation of his metaphysics from it in his early mature writings, remain important to understanding his philosophy. I take up the puzzle of the PIN anew and argue that not everything interesting about it has yet been noticed in Leibniz scholarship.

In particular, I reconstruct a serious philosophical argument for the PIN that Leibniz offers in his short work "On Contingency"; I argue that Leibniz has the resources in his philosophy to vindicate his explanation of why the PIN does not imply that all truths are necessary against various objections raised by recent scholars; and I provide new reconstructions of Leibniz's derivations of some of his trademark metaphysical claims from the PIN, reconstructions that avoid difficulties that arise for earlier attempts to understand these derivations. I also relate this to Leibniz's work in formal logic, arguing that one of his formal systems fits well with my understanding of his derivation of his account of substance from his account of truth.