

# STEVEN J. FIRTH

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*An analytic philosopher working across bioethics, healthcare ethics, and emerging technological contexts. Using experience-sensitive inquiry to examine how normative theories come under strain in complex cases and to develop more reliable frameworks for guiding decision-making in practice.*

## EDUCATION

### DOCTOR OF SOCIAL SCIENCE IN PHILOSOPHY\*

UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI | Finland | 2025

DISSERTATION: *Whither a Better Place: Philosophical Reflections on Disability and Inclusion*

THEMES: Critical social and political philosophy of disability; social exclusion; healthcare ethics; welfare and institutional decision-making; context-sensitive lived experience of disability and its relevance to governance, citizenship, and inclusion.

### MASTER OF ARTS IN PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE | Canada | 2016

DISSERTATION: *The Picture Theory of Disability*

THEMES: Development of a relational, experience-sensitive theory of disability; Humean sentimentalism; Wittgensteinian picture theory; disability as an irremediable impediment between agent, environment, and goal.

### BACHELOR OF ARTS (HONS.) IN PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE | Canada | 2014

DISSERTATION: *Agents and Responsibility under the Many Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics*

THEMES: Analysis of personal identity and moral agency in Everettian quantum mechanics; examines branching identity, normative authorship, and ethical integrity in multiverse frameworks.

### NVQ 6 IN DIESEL ENGINEERING & MECHANICAL CONSTRUCTION

EMTA; MIRRLEES BLACKSTONE CENTRE | UK | 1996

### BTEC 4 (Pro. Award) IN ELECTRIC & ELECTRONIC PRINCIPLES

HARPER HILL COLLEGE | UK | 1993

## AOS:

ETHICS (Normative & Applied) | PHILOSOPHY OF DISABILITY

## AOC:

BIOETHICS / HEALTHCARE ETHICS | SOCIAL & POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY | SPACE ETHICS

\* Following Nordic structure, Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Helsinki falls under the Humanities while Practical Philosophy is housed within the Faculty of Social Sciences. The *terminal degree* awarded by the University of Helsinki in *Practical Philosophy* is, therefore, 'Doctor of Social Sciences'.

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## PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS (N=13)

- FIRTH, S.J.** | In Space, No-one Can Here the Screams of Paternalism | *Bioethics* | **Forthcoming**
- FIRTH, S.J.** | Betwixt Ends and Means; Toward a Procedural Sortal for Häyry's Liberal Utilitarianism | *Acta Philosophica Fennica* (Festschrift) | **Forthcoming**
- FIRTH, S.J.** | Whither a Better Place: Philosophical Reflections on Disability and Inclusion | *Helsingin Yliopisto* - ISBN [978-952-84-0483-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-952-84-0483-5) | **2024**
- FIRTH, S.J.** | The Picture Theory of Disability | *The Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* - [DOI:10.1017/S0963180123000154](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963180123000154) | **2024**
- FIRTH, S.J.** | An Essay on The Hobbesian Trap and Axioms of First Contact | *Space Policy* - [DOI:10.1016/j.spacepol.2023.101581](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.spacepol.2023.101581) | **2023** | SSRN preprints available
- FIRTH, S.J.** & I NEIDERS | Sexual Citizenship: Defending Society's Most Disadvantaged | *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics* - [DOI:10.1007/s11017-023-09654-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11017-023-09654-y) | **2023**
- FIRTH, S.J.** & I NEIDERS | The Place of Sexuality in the Modern World: Misplaced Grand Theorising will Sideline Disabled People's Sexual Rights | *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics* - [DOI:10.1007/s11017-023-09638-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11017-023-09638-y) | **2023**
- FIRTH, S.J.** & I NEIDERS | Anent The Theoretical Justification of a Sex Doula Programme | *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics* - [DOI:10.1007/s11017-023-09612-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11017-023-09612-8) | **2023**
- FIRTH, S.J.** | Whither a Welfare Funded Sex Doula Programme | *The Journal of Medical Ethics* - [DOI:10.1136/medethics-2018-105330](https://doi.org/10.1136/medethics-2018-105330) | **2019**
- FIRTH, S.J.** | The Quality Adjusted Life Year — A Total Utility Perspective | *The Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* - [DOI:10.1017/S0963180117000615](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963180117000615) | **2018**
- ESAU, P., VIEJOU, C., CHOW, S., DOHMS, K., **FIRTH, S.J.**, MORRISON, D., ET AL. | 'Let's Start a Journal!': The Multidisciplinary Graduate Student Journal as Educational Opportunity | *The Journal of Electronic Publishing* - [DOI:10.3998/3336451.0021.109](https://doi.org/10.3998/3336451.0021.109) | **2018**
- O'DONNELL, D., VIEJOU, C., CHOW, S., DOHMS, K., ESAU, P., **FIRTH, S.J.**, ET AL. | Zombie Journals: Designing a Technological Infrastructure for a Precarious Graduate Student Journal | *Scholarly & Research Communication* - [DOI:10.22230/src.2018v9n2a296](https://doi.org/10.22230/src.2018v9n2a296) | **2018**
- FIRTH, S.J.** | Research Ethics Insurrection: Challenges to REB Criteria from the Social Sciences | *The Meeting of the Minds Journal* - [DOI: 10.5281/ZENODO.437193](https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.437193) | **2017**

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## WEB-BASED JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS (N=2)

- FIRTH, S.J.** & I NEIDERS | [Baselining Sexual Rights as Health Care Rights](#) | *The Journal of Medical Ethics Forum* | **2020**
- FIRTH, S.J.** & I NEIDERS | [A Sexual Rights Puzzle, Un-Puzzled!](#) | *The Journal of Medical Ethics Forum* | **2020**

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## BOOK CHAPTERS (N=3)

- FIRTH, S.J.** | “An Essay on The Hobbesian Trap and Axioms of First Contact” | Extended reprint in Anderson W. H. U. (ed) | *Space, Philosophy, and Ethics* - [ISBN 979-8-8819-0083-0](#) | 2025
- FIRTH, S.J.** | “The Picture Theory of Disability” | In: Bennett, G., Goodall, E. (eds) | *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Disability* - [DOI:10.1007/978-3-031-40858-8\\_2-1](#) | 2024
- FIRTH, S.J.** & I. NEIDERS | “The Sex Doula Programme” | In: Bennett, G., Goodall, E. (eds) | *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Disability* - [DOI:10.1007/978-3-031-40858-8\\_3-1](#) | 2024

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## BOOK REVIEWS (N=3)

- FIRTH, S.J.** | Antinatalism, Extinction, and the End of Procreative Self-Corruption by Matti Häyry and Amanda Sukenick — A Review | In *Teaching Philosophy* - [DOI:10.5840/teachphil2024474228](#) | 2024
- FIRTH, S.J.** | The Bioethics of Space Exploration by Konrad Szocik — A Review | In *Teaching Philosophy* - [DOI:10.5840/teachphil2024472204](#) | 2024
- FIRTH, S.J.** | Disability, Avoidance and the Academy: Challenging Resistance, Disability, Avoidance and the Academy, edited by David Bolt and Claire Penketh — A Review | *The Journal of Moral Philosophy* - [DOI:10.1163/17455243-01601002](#) | 2019

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## WORKS IN PROGRESS

### IN PROGRESS

- FIRTH, S.J.** | The Imposition of Häyry and Sukenick’s ‘Imposition Argument’ for Antinatalism
- FIRTH, S.J.** | A paper on antinatalism as a sufficient solution to the Fermi-paradox
- FIRTH, S.J.** & DRANSEIKA | An X-Phi Paper on human obligations to extra-terrestrial entities

### IN REVIEW

- FIRTH, S.J.** | A Humean Approach to Disability

### IN PREPARATION

- FIRTH, S.J.** (ed) | *To Affinity and Beyond: A Transdisciplinary Social and Political Philosophy of Space* | Edited Volume | Springer; Space and Society

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## TEACHING EXPERIENCE & EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

### SESSIONAL LECTURER | UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY | MAY 2023 — AUG 2023

Designed and delivered a fully led, 3-credit (48 contact hours) undergraduate course in applied ethics, examining contemporary moral, philosophical, and social challenges.

**COURSE TAUGHT:** *Contemporary Moral Problems* | 2nd Year | 180-min class | 27 students

- Developed curriculum materials including asynchronous content.
- Designed and delivered an original course examining contemporary moral, philosophical, and social challenges.
- Integrated disability studies, healthcare ethics, and social theory using lived-experience-informed casework.
- Facilitated student-led, dialogical learning through structured discussion and multimodal delivery.
- Supported neurodivergent and accommodated students through tailored assessment pathways and coordinated access plans.
- Aligned learning outcomes, assessment, and delivery, resulting in strong student engagement and feedback.

### **SESSIONAL LECTURER | SAIT | DEC 2019 — JUN 2020**

Independently designed and delivered three fully led, 3-credit (45 contact hours) academic stream undergraduate courses made accessible for students in academic, engineering, and vocational streams.

**COURSES TAUGHT:** *Intro. to Philosophy* | 3rd Year | 50-min class | 18 students

*Research Methodologies* | 4th Year 90-min class | 48 students

*Critical Thinking* | 2nd Year 50-min class | 32 students

- Delivered full curriculum, assessment, and instruction across all courses.
- Adapted all modules to fully online delivery during COVID-19 without disruption to learning outcomes.
- Provided direct academic mentorship to students and peer support to colleagues navigating pandemic-era transition to online learning.
- Designed accessible asynchronous content for Deaf and EAL learners, working with translators.
- Integrated logic, philosophical method, and research literacy for non-specialist cohorts.
- Developed and marked all assessments, including shared final examinations across sections.
- Ensured alignment with programme-level outcomes and institutional benchmarks.

### **SESSIONAL ASSISTANT | UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE | 2014-2016**

Contributed to undergraduate instruction across five 3-credit undergraduate modules (45 contact hours each), delivering lectures, tutorials, and assessments with substantial autonomy (up to ~50% course delivery).

**COURSES TAUGHT:** *Ancient Philosophy* | 2nd Year | 90-minute class | 22 students | F2F

*Social and Political Philosophy* | 3rd Year | 90-min class | 25 students | F2F

*Intro to Philosophy (4 secs.)* | 1st Year | 50-min class | 25–45 students | F2F

*Advanced Ethics* | 3rd Year | 90-min class | 21 students | F2F

*Biomedical Ethics* | 3rd Year | 50-min class | 18 students | F2F

- Developed original teaching materials, interactive activities, and lesson plans.

- Delivered lectures, seminars, and tutorials across five modules, teaching up to 50% of course content per module.
- Designed and administered LMS-based assessments (Moodle).
- Contributed to course design including marking rubrics, learning progression scaffolds, and assessment feedback structures.
- Provided detailed, criterion-based feedback and academic support.
- Supported student learning through dedicated office hours, flexible assessment arrangements, and accessibility accommodation implementation.
- Supported accessibility accommodations and diverse learning needs.

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## INVITED PRESENTATIONS (N=14)

Between Ends and Means; Toward a Procedural Sortal for Häyry's Liberal Utilitarianism | The Philosophies of Matti Häyry: Consequential Controversies | European Society for Philosophy of Medicine and Healthcare (ESPMH) | Amsterdam | The Netherlands | **2026**

Why we should be looking for a nomadic post-biological ETI | Institute for Space Science Exploration and Technology (ISSET) Space Exploration Symposium | THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA | Edmonton | Canada | **2024**

The Hobbesian Trap and what the Philosophy of Language has to say about Communication with ETI | Social and Ethical Frontiers in Space — THE EUROPEAN ASTROBIOLOGY INSTITUTE and the Society for Social and Conceptual Issues in Astrobiology | Kiruna | Sweden | **2024**

An Essay on the Hobbesian Trap and Axioms of First Contact | Philosophy Department Colloquium Series | UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE | Canada | **2024**

Axioms of First Contact and the Moral Status of Extra Terrestrial Life | The American Society for Bioethics and Humanities Astro Affinity Group (ASBH) | Zoom Seminar | **2024**

The Moral Status of Extra Terrestrial Life | ISSET Space Exploration Symposium | THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA | Edmonton | Canada | **2023**

Virtual Companions & the Curious Case of Sexual Lethargy | Philosophy Department Colloquium Series | UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE | Canada | **2023**

It's Life Jim... Then Again, Maybe Not: Detection, Definition, and Doubt Beyond Earth | Philosophy Department Colloquium Series | UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE | Canada | **2020** (*cancelled due to COVID-19*)

From Zero to Hero: Logic 101 — How to Argue Effectively (Three sessions) | Alberta Student Leader Conference | Lethbridge | Canada | **2019**

A Humean Approach to Disability | Moral & Political Research Seminar | UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI | Finland | **2018**

The Picture Theory of Disability & the Prescription of Prosthetics | Moral & Political Research Seminar | UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI | Finland | **2018**

The Picture Theory of Disability and the Prescription of Prosthetics | UNIVERSITY OF TURKU | Finland | **2018**

The Picture Theory of Disability and Sexual Citizenship | UNIVERSITY OF TARTU | Estonia | **2018**  
Applying the Picture Theory of Disability | Philosophy Department Colloquium Series |  
UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE | Canada | **2017**

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## PEER-REVIEWED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS (N=14)

Mission Qua Sovereign: Hobbesian Drift in Space Ethics and Bioethics | European Society for  
Philosophy of Medicine and Healthcare (ESPMH) | Amsterdam | The Netherlands | **2026**

An Essay on The Hobbesian Trap and Axioms of First Contact | Space, Philosophy, and Ethics  
Conference | Edmonton | Canada | **2023**

The Primacy of Phenomenological Perspectives in Medicine | (ESPMH) | Riga | Latvia | **2023**

Augmenting and Accommodating Accessibility: Policy Generation through the Picture  
Theory of Disability at Post-Secondary Institutions | With Nicole Andres | ESPMH | Riga |  
Latvia | **2023**

The Suffering of the Many Outweighs the Suffering of the Few or the One | ESPMH | Warsaw |  
Poland | **2022**

And on a Positive Note, Welfare Funded Sex Doulas? | World Congress of Bioethics (WCB) |  
Pennsylvania | USA | **2020**

Virtual Companions and the Curious Case of Sexual Lethargy | ESPMH | Oslo | Norway | **2019**

Disability and Sex; Let's Talk About Sex... Doulas | ESPMH | Lisbon | Portugal | **2018**

Novel Therapeutics: Advanced Prosthetics | ESPMH | Belgrade | Serbia | **2017**

The Picture Theory of Disability | Minorities & Philosophy Conference (MAP) | Leeds | UK | **2017**

Applying the Picture Theory of Disability | The Nordic Network of Disability Research | Örebro |  
Sweden | **2017**

A Revisionary Theoretical Approach to Disability: The Picture Theory of Disability | ESPMH |  
Zagreb | Croatia | **2016**

The Picture Theory of Disability | Meeting of the Minds Conference | Lethbridge | Canada |  
**2016**

On Hume and The Models of Disability | Ryerson University | Toronto | Canada | **2014**

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## GUEST LECTURES (N=5)

**Advanced Ethics** | UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE | Canada | **2021**

**Social Justice & Diversities in Education** | UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI | Finland | **2018**

**Medical Sociology** | RIGA STRADIŅŠ UNIVERSITY | Latvia **2018**

**Bioethics** | RIGA STRADIŅŠ UNIVERSITY | Latvia | **2018**

**Kinesiology; Disability & Physical Activity** | UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE | Canada | **2018**

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## GRANTS & AWARDS

Helsingin Yliopiston Humanistis-Yhteiskuntatieteellinen Tutkijakoulu (HYMY) | **2024 / 2023 / 2022 / 2021 / 2019** | €1300  
The Faculty Association of the University of Calgary's Travel Fund Grant | **2024** | CAD5,000  
Nova Scotia Graduate Student Scholarship | **2016** | CAD60,000 | (declined)  
The Three Minute Thesis | **2016** | Finalist  
The Lethbridge University Dissemination Award | **2015** | CAD1000  
Graduate Presentation Award for "On Hume and the Models of Disability" | **2015** | CAD500  
The Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarship | **2014** | CAD15,000  
Jason Lang Scholarship | **2011 / 2012 / 2013** | CAD3000.

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## PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY (N=6)

**Di Nucci's Sexual Rights Puzzle, Un-Puzzled** | Lethbridge Philosophy Club | Canada | **2023**  
[On the Posthumous Bodily Integrity of ETI 'Biologics'](#) | The Tim Ventura Interviews | YouTube | **2023**  
[Axioms of First Contact with Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence](#) | The Tim Ventura Interviews | YouTube | **2023**  
[The Hobbesian Trap and First Contact with Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence](#) | The Tim Ventura Interviews | YouTube | **2023**  
**The Picture Theory of Disability** | Lethbridge Philosophy Club | Canada | **2017**  
**Time Travel Under The Many Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics** | Lethbridge Philosophy Club | Canada | **2016**

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## ADMINISTRATIVE & LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

### JOURNAL REFEREE

Bioethics | x2 | **2025/26**  
Philosophia (Springer Nature) | x2 | **2025**  
Cambridge University Press (Elements) | x1 | **2024**  
Springer (Book); Floor Oosting | x1 | **2024**  
Moral Philosophy and Politics | x2 | **2018 / 2024**  
Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics | x1 | **2023**  
The American Journal of Bioethics | x1 | **2020**  
Journal of Medical Ethics | x3 | **2020/21**

**EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBER** | Meeting of the Minds Graduate Journal | **2018 — 2022**

**CREATOR** | University of Lethbridge Official Tartan | **2017**

**CAMPUS RADIO HOST** | Steve's Saturday Show | University of Lethbridge CKXU 88.3FM | **2016**  
— **2022**

**GRADUATE TUTORING** | **2016** — **2022**

**PRESIDENT; VICE PRESIDENT:** University of Lethbridge Philosophy Club | **2012** ; **2011**

**PRESIDENT (AND FOUNDER):** University of Lethbridge Latin Club | **2009** ; **2015**

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## CONFERENCE SERVICE

**CHAIR** | ESPMH Conference | Riga | Latvia | **2023**

**CHAIR** | ESPMH Conference | Oslo | Norway | **2019**

**CHAIR** | SAP Conference | Edinburgh | Scotland | **2015**

**CHAIR & COMMENTER** | WCPA Conference | Lethbridge | Canada | **2011**

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## PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

The Society for Social and Conceptual Issues in Astrobiology | **2023** — **CURRENT**

American Society for Bioethics + Humanities | **2023** — **CURRENT**

International Association of Bioethics | **2020** — **CURRENT**

The Nordic-Baltic Network for Philosophy of Medicine | **2018** — **CURRENT**

The European Society for Philosophy of Medicine and Healthcare | **2016** — **CURRENT**

The Nordic Network on Disability Research | **2017** — **2022**

Society for Applied Philosophy | **2015** — **2022**