

Curriculum Vitae

James Turner

Umeå University, Department of Historical, Philosophical and Religious studies

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Areas of specialization

Philosophy of Cognitive Science, Philosophy of Psychology, Philosophy of Mind,
Philosophy of Psychiatry

Areas of competence

Philosophy of Biology, Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Medicine, Philosophy of Film,
Moral Psychology, Philosophy of AI

Current Position:

- Kempe Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Historical, Philosophical and Religious studies, Umeå University, September 2025-present

Upcoming Positions:

- Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship, School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham, beginning May 2027
- Humboldt Research Fellowship for Postdoctoral Researchers, Department of Philosophy at University of Duisburg-Essen and Institut für Philosophie II at Ruhr-University Bochum, beginning October 2026

Previous Position:

- Associate Researcher, Hang Seng Centre for Cognitive Studies, The University of Sheffield, January 2025-September 2025

Education

- PhD Philosophy, The University of Sheffield, UK, October 2019-January 2024
(passed with no corrections)
Dissertation: *Low Mood: Evolution, Cognition, and Disorder*
Supervisors: Dr Luca Barlassina (primary); Dr Max Khan Hayward (secondary)
Examiners: Prof Justin Garson (CUNY); Prof Stephen Laurence
- MA Philosophy (distinction), The University of Sheffield, UK, September 2018-August 2019
- BA Philosophy (1st class honors), The University of Sheffield, UK, September 2014-July 2017
Awards: Peter H Nidditch Award for best undergraduate performance in philosophy

Publications

1. Hundertmark, F., **Turner, J.** (2026) “Moving past ahistorical theories of function and malfunctioning”, *Biology & Philosophy* 41(5). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10539-026-10010-2>
2. Turner, J. (2025) “What’s low mood all about? An indicative-imperative account of low mood’s content”, *Philosophy of Science*, 92(4), 807–826. <https://doi.org/10.1017/psa.2025.10>
3. **Turner, J.**, Hundertmark, F. (2025) “Swampman goes to the doctor”, *Mefisto. A Journal of Medicine, Philosophy, and History*, 9(2). <https://doi.org/10.4454/mefisto.9-2.1501>
4. Turner, J. (2024) “Bad feelings, best explanations: In defence of the propitiousness theory of the low mood system”, *Erkenntnis*, 90, 1695–1720. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10670-023-00773-5>
5. Huang, P. C., Chen, I. H., Barlassina, L., **Turner, J. R.**, Carvalho, F., Martinez-Perez, A., Gibson-Miller, J., Kürthy, M., Lee, K. H., Griffiths, M. D., & Lin, C. Y. (2023). “Expanding Protection Motivation Theory to explain vaccine uptake among United Kingdom and Taiwan populations”, *Human vaccines & immunotherapeutics*, 19(1), 2211319. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21645515.2023.2211319>

Works Under Review

- Turner, J. (Under Review) “Low mood, proper function, and dysfunction: The case against depression as a natural kind”
- Turner, J. (Under Review) “Selected-effects functions for AI frogs”

Grants and Awards

- Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship for the project “Rethinking the philosophy and cognitive science of moods: a functional approach”. Total value: £113,463.13.
- Humboldt Research Fellowship for Postdoctoral Researchers (€3000 per month + additional research expenses). Originally funded for 2 years (October 2026-October 2028), then reduced to 7 months (October 2026-May 2027) in order to undertake Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship.
- White Rose College of Arts and Humanities (WRoCAH) Full-Time PhD Scholarship (£15,009 per annum + fees paid for), October 2019-August 2023
- WRoCAH Large Award + University of Sheffield Research Stimulation Fund to cover attendance and travel to the *Phil in Biomed Summer School* at the University of Bordeaux, France, June 2022
- WRoCAH Student Led Forum award + Mind Association award for the running of the conference *Understanding Value X*, June 2021

- University of Sheffield Faculty of Arts and Humanities Doctoral Academy Research Preparation Scholarship, September 2018-August 2019 (£10,000)
- Peter H Nidditch Award for best undergraduate performance in philosophy, July 2017

Teaching Experience

Guest Lecturer:

- PHI372/PHI6372, *Pain, Pleasure, and Emotions*, 3rd year UG and MA, University of Sheffield, Spring Semester 2023
Details: I designed, delivered, and assessed all the content for the three weeks of the module dedicated to the function, dysfunction, and representational content of moods. I also held office hours and supervised a Master's student through their dissertation on evolutionary theories of low mood.
- PHI381, *Moral Theory and Moral Psychology*, University of Sheffield, November 2022
Details: I designed and delivered two lectures and one seminar on how to write 3rd year UG and Master's philosophy essays. I also marked all 3rd year UG students' final assessments.
- PHI372/PHI6372, *Pain, Pleasure, and Emotions*, 3rd year UG and MA, May 2022
Details: I designed and delivered all the content for the two weeks of the module dedicated to the evolution and representational content of moods.

TA:

- PHI381, *Moral Theory and Moral Psychology*, 3rd year UG and MA, University of Sheffield, Autumn Semester 2022
- PHI132, *Death*, 1st year UG, University of Sheffield, Autumn Semester 2022
- PHI123, *Philosophy of Science*, 1st year UG, University of Sheffield, Autumn Semester 2021
- PHI158, *Philosophy of Sex*, 1st year UG, University of Sheffield, Autumn Semester 2021

For all of the above, duties included: running module seminars, holding office hours, marking student essays, and providing pastoral care.

Academic Talks (Selection)

- "Depression is not a natural kind," XIV Philosophy of Biology and Cognitive Sciences Workshop, Universidad Nacional De Educación A Distancia – UNED, Spain, June 2026, (competitive CFA)

- “Proper Functions for AI Frogs”, *Representation and Affect in Cognitive Science*, University of Barcelona, Spain, May 2026, (invited)
- “Do AI Frogs Have Mental Representations?”, *Cross-disciplinary conversations about AI: Theoretical and ethical issues*, Umeå University, Sweden, November 2025, (invited).
- The Evolutionary Psychiatry Debate and Dinner 2025, The University of Cambridge, UK, August 2025 (invited)
- “Rethinking depression: What philosophy teaches us about depression’s status as a dysfunction”, *World Psychiatric Association Evolutionary Psychiatry Section Webinar*, Online, November 2024 (invited)
- “The dysfunction is in the details: a case study of depression”, *Fifth Phil In Biomed Meeting*, Universität Bielefeld, Germany, September 2024 (competitive CFA)
- “Proper functions for large language models”, with Dr Fabian Hundertmark, *German Congress of Philosophy XXVI*, Universität Münster, Germany, September 2024 (competitive CFA)
- “Depression is not a dysfunction”, *Bielefeld Workshop on Philosophy of Psychiatry*, Universität Bielefeld, Germany, May 2024 (invited)
- “Rethinking depression: Or why most cases of depression are not dysfunctional”, *Templeton-Sowerby Workshop on Function and Dysfunction*, King’s College London, UK, February 2024 (competitive CFA)
- “Bad feelings, best explanations: In defence of the propitiousness theory of the low mood system”, *Fourth Phil In Biomed Meeting*, The University of Cambridge, UK, May 2023 (competitive CFA)
- “What’s low mood all about: An indicative-imperative account of low mood’s content”, *Colloquium in Philosophy of Psychiatry*, Bielefeld University, Germany, January 2023 (invited)
- “The loss of depression: How the harmful dysfunction theory transforms disorder into normality,” *WRoCAH Conference*, The University of York, UK, October 2019 (competitive CFA)
- “Can philosophy be done through cinematic means in and of themselves?”, *Philosophy of Film Without Theory Conference*, The University of York, UK, January 2019 (competitive CFA)

Public engagement

- “Evolution, human minds, and game design”, *(In)human centered game design conference*, Sheffield, July 2026

- “Most depression is not a disorder”, *Evolving Psychiatry Podcast #49*, September 2025 (invited)
- “Low mood, evolution, and dysfunction: A philosopher’s perspective”, *Sheffield Health and Social Local Grand Round Teaching Programme*, Tapton Hall, Sheffield, UK, October 2024 (invited)
- “Low mood, depression, and dysfunction”, *Philosophy Meetup Group*, Exeter, UK, April 2023
- “What’s low mood all about?”, *PubHD*, Sheffield, UK, May 2022
- “Mental health and evolutionary psychology”, *Philosophy Meetup Group*, Exeter, UK, November 2020

Administrative roles/Service to the profession

- Conference organizer for *Functions and Dysfunctions in Medicine and Psychiatry 2026 (Valencia)*, October 2025-Present
- Member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists’ Evolutionary Psychiatry Special Interest Group, August 2024-Present
- International Liaison Officer for the WUN-funded project “Emotional pathways to a post-pandemic world”, April 2022-January 2024
- Conference organizer for the conference *Understanding Value X*, January 2021-July 2022
- Graduate Intern: Marketing and Recruitment for the Faculty of Science at the University of Sheffield, January 2018-July 2018
- Reviewer for *Cambridge University Press, Philosophy of Science, Synthese, Erkenntnis, Philosophy of Medicine, Discover Mental Health, Philosophia*

References

Dr Luca Barlassina (Supervisor)
 School of History, Philosophy and Digital Humanities
 University of Sheffield
l.barlassina@sheffield.ac.uk

Professor Justin Garson
 Department of Philosophy
 Hunter College and The Graduate Center, City University of New York
jgarson@hunter.cuny.edu

Professor Dominic Gregory (Teaching)
School of History, Philosophy and Digital Humanities
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Dr Max Khan Hayward (Second Supervisor)
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