

Uğur Aytac

Utrecht University | Newtonlaan 201, 3584 BH Utrecht, Netherlands
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AOS: Political philosophy, democracy, power & legitimacy, Big Tech,
ideology critique, worker resistance, political experimentation

AOC: Normative ethics, philosophy of social science,
political economy, philosophy of technology

EMPLOYMENT

Utrecht University

Assistant Professor (Tenured), Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, 2023-present
Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, 2022-2023

University of Amsterdam

Lecturer & Research Fellow, Department of Political Science, 2021-2022

VISITING APPOINTMENTS

University of Barcelona

Visiting Researcher, Department of Philosophy, 2025
Hosted by: Iñigo González Ricoy

University of York

Visiting PhD student, Department of Philosophy, 2019
Hosted by: Alan Thomas

EDUCATION

University of Amsterdam

PhD, Political Theory, 2017-2021
Thesis title: 'Alternatives to Moralism: Political Realist Essays on Power and Legitimation'
Supervisors: Enzo Rossi, Paul Raekstad
Committee: Alan Thomas, Robin Celikates, Daniel Loick, Johan Olsthoorn, Annette Freyberg-Inan

University of Bayreuth

MA, Philosophy & Economics, 2015-2017

Bogazici University

BA, Philosophy, 2011-2015
BA, Economics, 2010-2015

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-Reviewed Articles

- Effective Worker Resistance and Realist Ideology Critique (with Ozan N. Alakavuklar). *Journal of Business Ethics*, forthcoming.
- What is the Point of Social Media? Corporate Purpose and Digital Democratization. *Philosophy & Technology*, 38(26), 2025, 1-26. (winner of a Sabanci International Research Award in 2025)
- Big Tech, Algorithmic Power, and Democratic Control. *The Journal of Politics*, 86(4), 2024, 1431-1445.
- In Defense of Shirking in Capitalist Firms: Worker Resistance vs. Managerial Power. *Political Theory*, 52(4), 2024, 519-547.
- Digital Domination: Social Media and Contestatory Democracy. *Political Studies*, 72(1), 2024, 6-25.
- Ideology Critique without Morality: A Radical Realist Approach (with Enzo Rossi). *American Political Science Review*, 117(4), 2023, 1215-1227.
- Global Political Legitimacy and the Structural Power of Capital. *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 54(4), 2023, 490-509.
- Political Realism and Epistemic Constraints. *Social Theory and Practice*, 48(1), 2022, pp. 1-27.
- On the Limits of the Political: The Problem of Overly Permissive Pluralism in Mouffe's Agonism. *Constellations*, 28(3), 2021, pp. 417-431.

Policy Articles:

- Worker Agency in the Digital Age (with Carina Prunkl, Joel Anderson, Jeroen Hopster, and Juri Viehoff). United Nations Development Programme, Spotlight Article in *Human Development Report 2025*.

Work in Progress:

- Justifying A Labor Right to Counterpublics (under review)
- Legitimacy and Experimentation: What If There Are Alternatives? (under review)
- What Difference Does Radical Realism Make? Political Corruption as a Test Case (with Ben Cross, Enzo Rossi, Manon Westphal, Carlo Burelli, Koshka Duff, Janosch Prinz, and Paul Raekstad) (under review)
- Political Experimentation Between Knowledge and Contestation
- AI, Human Cognition, and Ideology Critique
- Self-Justifying Power and the Problem of Social Reproduction

Book Reviews

- *A Philosopher Looks at Digital Communication*, Onora O'Neill. Cambridge University Press, 2021. *Metascience*, 32, 2023, pp. 219-222.
- *10% Less Democracy: Why You Should Trust Elites A Little More and the Masses A Little Less*, Garrett Jones. Stanford University Press, 2020. *Democratic Theory*, 8(1), 2021, pp. 128-132.

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

- October 2026, Workshop on “Free speech & democracy”, University of Geneva **(Invited)**
Paper title: *Justifying A Labor Right to Counterpublics*
- July 2026, 16th Braga Meetings on Ethics and Political Philosophy, University of Minho.
Paper title: *Legitimacy and Experimentation: What If There Are Alternatives?*
- February 2026, Philosophy Colloquium, Koc University **(Invited)**
Paper title: *Legitimacy and Experimentation: What If There Are Alternatives?*
- February 2026, Philosophy and Public Affairs Colloquium, University of Amsterdam **(Invited)**
Paper title: *Legitimacy and Experimentation: What If There Are Alternatives?*
- February 2026, Political Science Colloquium, Sabanci University **(Invited)**
Paper title: *Legitimacy and Experimentation: What If There Are Alternatives?*
- August 2025, ECPR General Conference, Thessaloniki.
Paper title: *Worker Resistance and Ideology Critique*
- March 2025, Law & Philosophy Colloquium, Pompeu Fabra University **(Invited)**
Paper title: *Justifying A Labor Right to Counterpublics*
- October 2024, Workshop “The New Structural Transformation of the Digital Public Sphere”, University of Groningen **(Invited)**
Paper title: *What is the Point of Social Media? Corporate Purpose and Digital Democratization*
- March 2023, Workshop on “Ethics and Politics of Technology”, TU Delft **(Invited)**
Paper title: *Big Tech, Algorithmic Power, and Democratic Control*
- September 2021, MANCEPT Workshops, University of Manchester.
Paper Title: *Digital Domination: Social Media and Contestatory Democracy*
- December 2020, Workshop on “Political Normativity”, Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest **(Invited)**
Paper Title: *Ideology Critique without Moralism*
- June 2020, RANT Workshop, VU Amsterdam **(Invited)**
Paper Title: *Global Political Legitimacy and Structural Power*

TEACHING AND SUPERVISION EXPERIENCE

Utrecht University

As Lead Instructor

Political Philosophy, BSc in PPE (Spring 2025, 2026)

Lectures (70-80 students), course coordination, and seminars

Democracy & Digitalization, MA in Philosophy (Autumn 2025)

Seminars and course coordination (15 students)

Tech & Power, MA in Philosophy (Autumn 2026)

Seminars and course coordination (20 students)

As Co-Instructor

Institutions and the Rise of Capitalism, BSc in PPE (Autumn 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026)

As Supervisor (2024-present)

1 current PhD student; 1 visiting PhD student; numerous BSc theses in PPE and MA theses in Philosophy

University of Amsterdam

As Lead Instructor

The Ethics and Politics of Markets, MSc (Spring 2022)

Democracy & Digitalization, MSc (Autumn 2021)

Political Economy, BSc (Autumn 2021)

Political Theory & Economic Institutions, BSc (Spring 2020, Spring 2021, Spring 2022)

As Co-Instructor

Introduction to Political Theory: Utopia & Dystopia, BSc (Autumn 2021)

As Thesis Supervisor

Two BSc theses in Political Science (Spring 2021), five MSc theses in Political Science (Spring 2022)

External Dissertation Committee Member

Jonne Maas, TU Delft (2025)

TRAINING IN TEACHING

- PhD supervision training in humanities, Utrecht University (to be completed in November 2026)
- University Teaching Qualification (BKO), Utrecht University (January 2025)
- Two-day course on active teaching methods at the University of Amsterdam (Spring 2020)
- Two-day course on feedback methods at the University of Amsterdam (Spring 2020)
- Three-day course on teaching skills for PhD candidates and junior lecturers at the University of Amsterdam (Autumn 2018)

AWARDS, GRANTS & FELLOWSHIPS

- Sabanci International Research Award in Social Sciences (\$10,000) (2025)
- Postdoctoral grant by the Foundation of Science and Technology in Portugal (Declined, approximate value: €150,000) (2022)
- University of Amsterdam travel grant (€550) (2019)
- Fully funded PhD position within the NWO Project “Legitimacy Beyond Consent” (2017)
- DAAD doctoral scholarship (Declined) (2017)
- DAAD scholarship for graduate students (€10,500) (2015)
- High Honours Degree, Bogazici University (2015)
- Turkish Education Foundation merit scholarship for high-achieving students (Approximate value with exchange rates at that time: €19,000) (2010)

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Refereeing Experience

American Political Science Review (x4); *European Journal of Political Theory* (x4); *Constellations* (x2); *American Journal of Political Science*; *The Journal of Politics*; *Perspectives on Politics*; *Political Studies*; *Politics, Philosophy & Economics*; *Journal of Social Philosophy*; *Journal of Business Ethics*; *Social Theory and Practice*; *Journal of Ethics*; *Social Philosophy and Policy*; *Philosophy & Technology*; *Inquiry*; *Ethics & Global Politics*; *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*; *Moral Philosophy & Politics*; *Philosophia*; *Res Publica*; *Democratic Theory*; *Philosophy and Public Issues*; *Organization*

Organizational Experience (Selection)

- Member of Scientific Committee, 4TU-ESDiT Conference: *Technology Ethics in Turbulent Times* (2026)
- Co-convenor, Conference Panel at the ECPR General Conference: *Digitalization of Work and the Prospects of Democratizing the Economy* (2025)
- Co-convenor, Conference at Utrecht University: *Reconceiving Business Corporations in Times of Political Contestation* (2025)
- Co-convenor, Conference Section at the ECPR General Conference: *The Political Theory of the Digital Public Sphere* (2023)
- Co-convenor, OZSW Workshop at Utrecht University: *New Directions in Democratic Theory* (2023)
- Co-convenor, Workshop at Utrecht University: *Order, Legitimacy, and Domination: Realist and Republican Perspectives* (2022)
- Co-convenor, Conference at the University of Amsterdam: *Global Capital as the Leviathan of the 21st Century?* (2022)
- Convenor, Short Intensive Course at the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research on *Experts, Science, and Politics* with Zeynep Pamuk (2020)
- Co-convenor & Co-initiator, *Amsterdam Graduate Conference in Political Theory* (2019)

Administrative Roles

- Managing Director, The Ethics Institute, Utrecht University, 2026-present.
- Co-coordinator, *Democracy, Justice, & Solidarity* research line in the ESDiT consortium, 2026-present
- Member, Board of Examiners, PPE BSc program, Utrecht University, 2023-present.
- Member, Curriculum Taskforce, PPE BSc program, Utrecht University, 2025.
- Member, Two Search Committees for 3 Postdoctoral and 1 PhD positions, 2024-2025.
- Co-coordinator, Study Group in Political Philosophy at the Dutch Research School of Philosophy (OZSW), 2023-2025.

DEI Activities

- Member, Minorities and Philosophy working group at Utrecht University, 2022-2023.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public Lecture

Should citizens govern Big Tech algorithms? *Utrecht Day of Philosophy*, 2023.

Podcast (in Turkish)

Organizer & Host, 'Political Philosophy Interviews' in collaboration with *Öncül Analytic Philosophy Magazine* (5 episodes, 2020-2021)

AFFILIATIONS

- ECPR Standing Group on Political Theory (2022-present)
- ECPR Standing Group on Methods of Normative Political Theory (2022-present)

LANGUAGES

Turkish (native), English (fluent), Dutch (A2)

REFERENCES

Enzo Rossi, Associate Professor of Political Theory, Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam. PO Box 15578, 1001 NB Amsterdam, Netherlands

E-mail: e.rossi@uva.nl

Rutger Claassen, Professor of Political Philosophy and Economic Ethics, Department of Philosophy & Religious Studies, Utrecht University. Janskerkhof 13, 3512 BL Utrecht, Netherlands.

E-mail: r.j.g.claassen@uu.nl

Alan Thomas, Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of York. Heslington, York, YO10 5DD, UK

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