

H. BRIGITTE GILL

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University of Texas at Austin, Department of Philosophy

AOS: epistemology, ethics, philosophy of mind

AOC: social philosophy, applied ethics, philosophy of religion

EDUCATION

The University of Texas at Austin
PhD in Philosophy

expected May 2025

University of Colorado Boulder
BA in Philosophy and minor in English

May 2018

DISSERTATION: AGAINST BELIEF-EXCEPTIONALISM

Abstract: This dissertation challenges the view that only evidential considerations can be normative reasons for belief. The first chapter highlights a neglected distinction between types of motivating reasons. Attending to this distinction reveals that doxastic transparency is false; deliberation about what to believe engages various deliberative questions that do not all neatly collapse into that of whether p is true. This creates space for non-evidential considerations to be among the reasons for which we believe. The second chapter draws on an analogy between belief formation and language acquisition to argue that these processes are often relevantly similar in terms of control, agency, and the reasons for which agents may decide to undertake them. Since language acquisition can be an extended action, given the features they have in common, we ought to think the same of coming to believe. The final chapter presents a case study in which a mother must decide whether to believe that her daughter has been sexually assaulted, despite lacking sufficient evidence. Here, I argue based on principles of beneficence and non-maleficence that she has a moral obligation to believe her daughter in spite of the evidence, and would be blameworthy for failing to do so.

Committee Members: Daniel Drucker (chair), Karl Schafer, Miriam Schoenfield, Julia Driver, and Jonathan Way

PROJECTS

Paper 1 (under review): There are different functional roles reasons can play in doxastic deliberation. Neglecting one has created the illusion that only evidential considerations can be reasons for which we believe.

Paper 2 (under review): The phenomenology of losing control while eating characterizes certain eating disorders. This poses difficulties for reductive accounts of agential phenomenology based on the Comparator Model of motor control.

Learning How to Think: Reclaiming Control of Our Beliefs (in progress): There are striking similarities between the long-range control we have over belief (or coming to believe) and the long-range control we have over other extended activities, particularly in the digital age. Close inspection of these similarities reveals that direct doxastic involuntarism is either false or less interesting than we thought.

How Non-Belief Can Wrong (in progress): Principles of nonmaleficence and beneficence toward loved ones suggest that we can sometimes wrong others through non-belief, including by suspending judgment in the face of insufficient evidence. Key upshots are that 'epistemic' and moral duties can conflict, and that suspension of judgment is not the safe option it's often made out to be.

CONFERENCES

Understanding the #MeToo Slogan, ‘Believe Women’

- Old Dilemmas, New Voices: Feminist Ethics and #MeToo; organized by the research project *Ethics in Motion: Feminist Ethics and #MeToo (EMFEM)*, hosted by the Centre for Ethics at the University of Iceland, *Refereed May 2025*

GRADUATE COURSEWORK

Philosophy of Mind

Perception/Evolution in Consciousness (Tye and Sainsbury); Classics in Philosophy of Mind (Tye and Sainsbury); Mind (Montague); Substance, Structure, and Mind (Strawson)

Ethics and Value Theory

Moral Concepts and Disagreement (Dogramaci); Applied Normative Theories (Dogramaci); Recent Work in Ethics (Dancy); Recent Work in Ethics (Dancy and Schafer); Metaethics and Aesthetics (Kubala and Schafer); Metaethics (Driver and Rosati); Moral Responsibility (Driver); Hume’s Moral Psychology (Schafer and Driver)

Epistemology

Problems of Induction (Schoenfield and Dogramaci); Questions and Belief (Drucker); Social Epistemology (Sorensen)

Metaphysics and Logic

Ground, Grain, and Generality (Litland); Expression (Sosa), Core Logic (Litland), Contemporary Arguments for God’s Existence (Koons); Science and Metaphysics (Juhl)

AWARDS & FUNDING

Recruitment Fellowship (2018-2019): \$20,000

Provost Supplement (2018-2019): \$10,000

Provost Supplement (2019-2020): \$5,000

Recruitment Fellowship (2022-2023): \$20,000

TEACHING

Instructor of Record (my course design)

Contemporary Moral Problems *Spring 2025*

Introduction to Philosophy of Religion *Fall 2024*

Introduction to Philosophy of Religion *Spring 2024*

Introduction to Logic *Fall 2023*

Teaching Assistant

Problems of Knowledge and Valuation *Spring 2022*

Mind and Body *Fall 2021*

Contemporary Moral Problems *Spring 2021*

Mind and Body *Fall 2020*

Health and Justice *Spring 2020*

REFERENCES

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