

Erik Nelson

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FIELDS OF RESEARCH INTEREST

AOS: Philosophy of Cognitive Science, Philosophy of Mind

AOC: Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Language, Ethics

EDUCATION

- 2017 – 2024 **PhD**, Philosophy, Dalhousie University.
Thesis: *The Nonlinguistic Mind: Nonlinguistic Concepts, Normativity, and Animal Cognition*
Committee: Andrew Fenton (Supervisor), Michael Hymers, Letitia Meynell, Simon Gadbois, Kristin Andrews (External)
- 2014 – 2016 **MA**, Philosophy, Concordia University.
Thesis: *Logic without Regress: Fodor, Heidegger, and Inferences without Rules*
Supervisor: Gregory Lavers
- 2011 – 2014 **BA Honours**, Philosophy, Dalhousie University.
Thesis: *Common Sense Knowledge: A Defence of G.E. Moore*
Supervisor: Duncan MacIntosh
- 2009 – 2011 General Arts, Thompson Rivers University.

APPOINTMENTS

- 2025 – 2027 SSHRC Post-Doctoral Fellow
Department of Philosophy
York University, Ontario
- 2025 Assistant Professor
Department of Philosophy
Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia
- 2024 Assistant Professor
Department of Philosophy
Mount Allison University, New Brunswick
- 2023 – 2024 Instructor (Limited Term Appointment)
Department of Philosophy
University of the Fraser Valley, British Columbia
- 2023 Visiting Lecturer
Program in Cognitive Science
Dartmouth College, New Hampshire

PUBLICATIONS

A. Peer Reviewed Articles

- 2024 A Sellarsian Argument for Nonlinguistic Conceptual Capabilities. *Synthese*, 204, 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-024-04785-8>
- 2024 Kantian Animal Moral Psychology: Empirical Markers for Animal Morality. *Ergo, an Open Access Journal of Philosophy*, 11(27), 716-746. <https://doi.org/10.3998/ergo.6167>
- 2020 What Frege asked Alex the Parrot: Inferentialism, Number Concepts, and Animal Cognition. *Philosophical Psychology*, 33(2), 206-227. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09515089.2019.1688777>

B. Book Reviews

- 2019 Review of *Damn Great Empires! William James and the Politics of Pragmatism*, by Alexander Livingston. *William James Studies*, 15(2), 94-101. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26841861>
- 2017 Human Development and the Extended Mind: Review of *Becoming Human: The Ontogenesis, Metaphysics, and Expression of Human Emotionality* by Jennifer Greenwood. *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice*, 23(5), 1092-1093. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jep.12811>

C. Other Publications

- 2020 Animals that can do math understand more language than we think. *The Conversation*, May 28 (republished in *Global News*, *Gizmodo*, and others). <https://theconversation.com/animals-that-can-do-math-understand-more-language-than-we-think-133736>

D. Peer Reviewed Graduate Publications

- 2016 Skeptical Symmetry: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Scientific Reasoning. *Gnosis*, 14(2), 14-19.

E. In Progress

- (under review) Scaffolding is One of the Things We Need: Scaffolding Explanations, Mechanisms, and XAI
- (under review) Is Language Necessary for Acquiring Conceptual Capabilities?

PRESENTATIONS

A. Invited Talks

- 2021 Concepts as Abilities: The Myth of the Given, Language, and Concept Acquisition. *Seminario Web: Conceptos, Lenguaje y Cognición*, National University of Córdoba, November 12.

2021 The Grammar of Bird Cognition: Nonlinguistic Concepts, Holism, and Internal Relations. *Logic and Philosophy of Science Seminar*, Eotvos University, February 26.

B. Conference Presentations

2025 Science Fiction as Philosophical Therapy: Zhuangzi, Climate Change, and Weird Fiction (with Andrew Lopez). *Canadian Philosophical Association, Congress 2025*, George Brown College, June 2.

2025 Animal Dreamers and the Control Problem. *Canadian Society of the History and Philosophy of Science Annual Conference*, George Brown College, June 1.

2025 Headstands and Alarm Calls: The Pragmatic Function of Animal Communication. *Philosophy of Animal Minds and Behavior Association Biennial Conference*, University of California, Santa Barbara, April 25.

2024 How-Possibly Explanations and AI. *Canadian Society of the History and Philosophy of Science Annual Conference*, Université du Québec à Montréal, June 20.

2024 Inferences in the Wild: An Externalist Account of Inference. *Canadian Philosophical Association, Congress 2024*, McGill University, June 19.

2022 An Externalist Approach to Inference. *The Atlantic Region Philosophers Association Annual Conference*, Dalhousie University, October 15.

2022 A Pragmatic Approach to Nonlinguistic Concepts: Nonlinguistic Animals, the Myth of the Given, and Concept Acquisition. *Animal Minds 2022*, University of California, San Diego, May 19.

2021 Language as the Given: Normative Conceptual Holism, Concept Acquisition, and Nonlinguistic Concepts. *The Atlantic Region Philosophers Association Annual Conference*, Mount Allison University, October 22.

2021 Chimpanzees in the Space of Reasons: A Semantic Analysis of Chimpanzee Behaviour. *Normative Animals*, York University, June 18.

2021 Kantian Morality without Reason: Markers for Moral Endowments in Nonhuman Animals. *Canadian Philosophical Association, Congress 2021*, University of Alberta, June 1.

2021 The Grammar of Bird Cognition: Wittgenstein, Corvids, and Nonlinguistic Concepts. *Canadian Society of the History and Philosophy of Science Annual Conference*, University of Alberta, May 29.

2020 Kantian Morality without Reason: Markers for Moral Endowments in Nonhuman Animals. *Canadian Philosophical Association, Congress 2020*, University of Western Ontario, Canceled.

- 2020 The Grammar of Bird Cognition: Wittgenstein, Corvids, and Nonlinguistic Concepts. *Canadian Society of the History and Philosophy of Science Annual Conference*, University of Western Ontario, Canceled.
- 2019 What Reason Requires for Morality: A Kantian Approach to Proto-Morality in Nonhuman Animals. *19th Annual University of Toronto Graduate Philosophy Conference: "Reconstructing Reason: Developing the Concept of Reason through History,"* University of Toronto, November 15.
- 2019 Explicit Nonlinguistic Mental Content: Inferentialism, Connectionism & Chickens. *The Atlantic Region Philosophers Association Annual Conference*, Cape Breton University, October 19.
- 2019 The More Speech Objection: Mill, Langton, and Antifa. *Canadian Philosophical Association, Congress 2019*, University of British Columbia, June 4.
- 2019 The Return of Mind Design: Cognitive Science and the Turing/Ashby Debate (with Darren Abramson). *Canadian Society of the History and Philosophy of Science Annual Conference*, University of British Columbia, June 1.
- 2018 The Grammar of Bird Cognition: Wittgenstein, Clark's Nutcrackers, and Nonlinguistic Concepts. *The Atlantic Region Philosophers Association Annual Conference*, Saint Francis Xavier University, October 19.
- 2017 The Inferences of Tortoises: The Role (or lack thereof) of Logical Rules in Inferential Capabilities. *The Atlantic Region Philosophers Association Conference*, Saint Mary's University, October 14.
- 2015 Explicating Epistemology: Methodology in Naturalized Epistemology. *The Third Annual Philosopher's Cocoon Philosophy Conference*, University of Tampa, November 7.
- 2015 Explicating Epistemology: Methodology in Naturalized Epistemology. *The Atlantic Region Philosophers Association Annual Conference*, University of New Brunswick, October 31.
- 2015 Skeptical Symmetry: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Scientific Reasoning. *Philosophy and Environment, Science and Policy-Making, Annual GPSA Conference*, Concordia University, April 17.

C. Departmental Talks and Commentaries

- 2025 Scaffolding is One of the Things We Need: Deep Neural Networks, Scaffolding Explanations, and XAI. *Cognitive Science Workshop*, York University, October 1.

- 2025 Scaffolding is One of the Things You Need: Deep Neural Networks, Scaffolding Explanations, and XAI. *Philosophy Department Colloquium*, Dalhousie University, May 9.
- 2025 Commentary on “Doing Without a Definition. Metaphorical and Literal Use of the Term ‘Cognition’” by Antonio Monaco. *American Philosophical Association Central Division*, Online, February 28.
- 2024 Science Fiction as Philosophical Therapy: Zhuangzi, Climate Change, and Weird Fiction. *Mount Allison Philosophy Phoenix Colloquium*, Mount Allison University, October 4.
- 2023 A Sellarsian Argument for Nonlinguistic Concepts. *Philosophy Department Colloquium*, Dalhousie University, June 17.
- 2023 Kantian Animal Moral Psychology: Empirical Markers for Animal Morality. *Dartmouth Philosophy Work in Progress Talk*, Dartmouth College, May 23.
- 2023 A Sellarsian Argument for Nonlinguistic Concepts. *PhilLab*, Dartmouth College, May 10.
- 2021 Concepts as Abilities: The Myth of Given, Language, and Concept Acquisition. *Philosophy Department Colloquium*, Dalhousie University, October 8.
- 2019 A Kantian Argument for Proto-Morality in Nonhuman Animals. *Philosophy Department Colloquium*, Dalhousie University, November 8.
- 2019 The Return of Mind Design: Cognitive Science and the Turing/Ashby Debate. *Philosophy Department Colloquium*, Dalhousie University, May 24.
- 2018 The Grammar of Bird Cognition: Wittgenstein, Corvids, and Nonlinguistic Concepts. *Philosophy Department Colloquium*, Dalhousie University, November 2.
- 2018 Violence Might Be Necessary: Mill, Langton, and Antifa. *Philosophy Department Colloquium*, Dalhousie University, May 4th.
- 2017 What Frege Asked Alex the Parrot. *Philosophy Department Colloquium*, Dalhousie University, May 12.
- 2015 The Ghost of Thrasymachus: Rationality in Ethics and Economics. *Concordia Graduate Philosophy Colloquium*, Concordia University, February 20.

FELLOWSHIPS & AWARDS

- 2025 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Postdoctoral Research Award (140 000 CAD).

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| 2018 | Joseph-Armand Bombardier Doctoral Scholarship, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (105 000 CAD). |
| 2017 | Special Provost Alumni Scholarship, Dalhousie University (80 000 CAD). |
| 2016 | Vladimir Zeman Award, Concordia University (300 CAD). |
| 2015 | Chair Research Fund Grant, Concordia University (6000 CAD). |
| 2015 | Rose and Norman Goldberg Graduate Award, Concordia University (1000 CAD). |
| 2014 | Concordia Merit Fellowship, Concordia University (10 000 CAD). |

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

As Instructor of Record:

Mount Allison University

2nd Year *Philosophy of Science* (Fall 2024)

2nd Year *Introductory Logic* (Fall 2024)

3rd Year *Environmental Ethics* (Fall 2024)

University of the Fraser Valley

1st Year *Reasoning: Intro to Critical Thinking* (Fall 2023, Winter 2024, Summer 2024, Summer 2025)

3rd Year *Symbolic Logic in Context* (Fall 2023)

3rd Year *History of Early Analytic Philosophy* (Winter 2024)

Dartmouth College

2nd Year *Philosophy of Cognitive Science* (Winter 2023)

2nd Year *Philosophy of Artificial Intelligence* (Spring 2023)

Dalhousie University

1st Year *Introduction to Philosophy* (Winter 2021(online), Fall 2021)

2nd Year *Introduction to Cognitive Science* (Winter 2018, Fall 2018)

2nd Year *Ethics and Health Care: Social Policy* (Winter 2025)

2nd Year *The Good Life* (Winter 2025)

As Teaching Assistant:

Dalhousie University

1st Year *Computing and Society in History* (Fall 2022)

1st Year *Introduction to Philosophy* (Fall, 2016, Winter 2017, Winter 2019, Fall 2019, Winter 2020, Fall 2020, Winter 2022)

- 2nd Year *Social/Ethical/Professional Issues in Computer Science* (Fall 2017)
- 2nd Year *Engineering and Society* (Winter 2025)
- 2nd Year *Philosophy of Religion* (Winter 2022)
- 2nd Year *Legal Thinking* (Winter 2022)
- 3rd Year *Philosophy of Biology* (Winter 2022)

Concordia University

- 1st Year *Critical Thinking* (Fall 2016)
- 1st Year *Problems of Philosophy* (Winter 2016)
- 1st Year *Introduction to Metaphysics* (Winter 2015)
- 2nd Year *Deductive Logic*, (Fall 2014, Fall 2015)

Tutoring Experience:

- 2017 – 2022 Writing Assistant at the Dalhousie Writing Centre
- 2016 Writing Assistant at the Concordia Aboriginal Resource Centre
- 2015 – 2016 Writing Assistant at the Concordia Writing Centre

Research Assistant:

- 2025 Scaffolding Explanations
Letitia Meynell
- 2021 Blockchain and Learning Management Software
Sharon Woodill and Yasushi Akiyama

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS COMPLETED

- Philosophy of Science
- Philosophy of Mind
- Early Modern Philosophy
- Ethics

GRADUATE COURSEWORK

Université du Québec à Montréal

Summer School in Cognitive Sciences: The Other Minds Problem/Animal Sentience and Cognition (Audit)

Dalhousie University

- Philosophy of Race
- Kantian Ethics
- Philosophy of Medicine

Logical Theory II

Work in Critical Animal Philosophy

Topics in the Philosophy of Psychology

Philosophy of Animal Cognition (Audit)

Concordia University

Topics in Metaphysics: Concepts

Origins of Contemporary Logic

Advanced Epistemology: Experimental and Naturalized Epistemology

Advanced Political Philosophy: Dignity and Human Rights

Virtue Ethics

Philosophy of Language

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION

Conference and Colloquia Organization

2016 Organizer of the *Revolutions: Scientific and Social Graduate Philosophy Conference*, April 1 & 2 at Concordia University.

2015-2016 Organizer of the Concordia Graduate Philosophy Colloquia Series.

Refereeing

Synthese

Journal of Contemporary Chinese Philosophy

Gnosis

REFERENCES

1. Andrew Fenton

Associate Professor of Philosophy

Dalhousie University

atf@dal.ca

2. Kristin Andrews

Professor of Philosophy

CUNY Graduate Center

York University (on leave)

andrewsk@yorku.ca

3. Letitia Meynell

Professor of Philosophy

Dalhousie University

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