

Jacob McDowell

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Research Areas

Areas of Specialization

Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Language, History of Analytic Philosophy

Areas of Competence

Logic, Philosophy of Mind, Epistemology (incl. Social Epistemology)

Education

University of Chicago

PhD in Philosophy 2020 - present
Dissertation: *The Fluctuation of Scientific Definitions: Reference, Externalism, Incommensurability*
Committee: James Conant (chair), Kevin Davey, Anubav Vasudevan

University of Sydney

Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) in Philosophy (First Class) 2019
Thesis: *Rational, Where Pragmatic: An Essay on the A Priori After Quine*
Supervisor: David Macarthur

Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Mathematics 2014 - 2018

Publications

Journal articles

("*" indicates invited)

“Sense, Shadows, and Use: On Charles Travis’s Wittgenstein” Forthcoming
Topoi (Special issue)

“An Externalist Semantics for Liberal Naturalism”* Forthcoming
Journal of Language, Mind, and the Arts (Special issue)

“Externalism without Essentialism: Hilary Putnam on Natural Kind Terms” 2025
Synthese

“Thomas Kuhn and the Causal Theory of Reference.” 2025
HOPOS: International Journal for the History of Philosophy of Science 15 (2):435 – 472.

Conference proceedings

“Wittgenstein and the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme” 2026
50 Years Wittgenstein Symposium, edited by Christian Kanzian, Volker Munz, Anja Weiberg,

Joseph Wang-Kathrein. Beiträge der Österreichischen Ludwig Wittgenstein Gesellschaft,
Vol. XXXII. Kirchberg am Wechsel: ALWS.

“Wittgenstein vs. the Conceptual Engineers” 2025
Feminist Philosophy: Language, Knowledge, Politics, edited by Isabel G. Gamero, Amadeusz
 Just, Jasmin Trächter. Beiträge der Österreichischen Ludwig Wittgenstein Gesellschaft,
 Vol. XXXI. Kirchberg am Wechsel: ALWS.

“Kripke and Wittgenstein on Essence, Necessity, and the A Priori” 2024
Facets of Reality – Contemporary Debates, edited by Asya Passinsky, Julio De Rizzo, and
 Benjamin Schnieder. Beiträge der Österreichischen Ludwig Wittgenstein Gesellschaft,
 Vol. XXX. Kirchberg am Wechsel: ALWS

Under Review

“Anscombe on Rule Following” Revise and Resubmit
European Journal of Philosophy

In Preparation

“Wittgenstein vs. the Conceptual Engineers” Draft available
 “The Fluctuation of Scientific Definitions: Wittgenstein and the Standard
 Meter” Draft available
 “The Pluralities of Reference” Draft available
 “John Dupré on Essence, Reference and Theory Change” Draft available
 “Indexicality and the Contribution of the Environment” Draft available
 “Incommensurability Resurrected?” In Progress

Presentations

("*" indicates refereed) ("†" indicates invited)

“Indexicality and the Contribution of the Environment”
 “Themes from the History of Analytic Philosophy” at *SOPhiA*, Salzburg† September, 2026
 “Wittgenstein and the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme”
 46th International Wittgenstein Symposium, Kirchberg am Wechsel* August, 2026
 “Wittgenstein vs. the Conceptual Engineers”
 The Society for the Study of the History of Analytical Philosophy (*SSHAP*), Toronto* July 2026
 German Philosophy Workshop, University of Chicago March, 2026
 45th International Wittgenstein Symposium, Kirchberg am Wechsel* August, 2025
 “Incommensurability Resurrected?”

International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science (HOPOS), Columbus*	June, 2026
European Philosophy of Science Association (EPSA), University of Groningen*	August, 2025
“The Pluralities of Reference”	
Theoretical Philosophy Workshop, University of Chicago	May, 2025
“Charles Travis and Wittgenstein on Senses and Shadows”	
German Philosophy Workshop, University of Chicago	November, 2024
Symposium for Charles Travis at <i>SSHAP</i> , Hartford*	June, 2024
“Kripke and Wittgenstein on Essence, Necessity, and the A Priori”	
44th International Wittgenstein Symposium, Kirchberg am Wechsel*	August, 2024
“Thomas Kuhn and the Causal Theory of Reference”	
HOPOS, Vienna*	July, 2024
German Philosophy Workshop, University of Chicago	April, 2024
“John Dupré on Essence, Meaning, and Reference”	
Theoretical Philosophy Workshop, University of Chicago	March, 2024
“Externalism without Essentialism: Hilary Putnam on Natural Kind Terms”	
<i>Göttingen/Chicago Graduate Conference</i> , Göttingen*	July, 2023
Theoretical Philosophy Workshop, University of Chicago	May, 2023

Teaching

Primary Instructor (University of Chicago)	Winter 2025
<i>Introduction to Logic</i>	
Course Assistant (University of Chicago)	
<i>Social Epistemology</i> (Ginger Schulteis)	Fall 2025
<i>Introduction to the Philosophy of Science</i> (Kevin Davey)	Fall 2024
<i>Paradoxes</i> (Arnold Brooks and Benjamin Callard)	Spring 2024
<i>Mind, Brain, Meaning</i> (Jason Bridges, Leslie Kay, Chris Kennedy)	Fall 2023
<i>The Mind/Body Problem</i> (Benjamin Callard)	Winter 2023
<i>Introduction to the Philosophy of Language</i> (Benjamin Callard)	Fall 2022

Pedagogical Training

University of Chicago	
Pedagogy lunch with Molly Brown (Grand Rapids Community College)	May, 2026
CCTE 5000: Course Design and College Teaching. Chicago Center for Teaching and Learning (CCTL)	Winter 2026

Pedagogy lunch with Pascal Brixel (Northwestern University)	April, 2025
Philosophy department Syllabus Workshop	January, 2025
Pedagogy lunch with Mikayla Kelley (University of Chicago)	October, 2024
CA Orientation and Overview Meeting (panelist)	April, 2024
<i>Inclusive Pedagogy: Small Changes for Effective Learning</i> . CCTL	February, 2024
Pedagogy lunch with Pascal Brixel (Northwestern University)	February, 2024
CA Training Workshop	October, 2022
Teaching @UChicago webinar, CCTL	September, 2022

Professional Service and Experience

Session Chair	2026
<i>SSHAP</i>	2026
<i>HOPOS</i>	2026
<i>Central APA</i>	2025
<i>International Wittgenstein Symposium</i>	

University of Chicago

<i>Theoretical Philosophy Workshop Student Co-ordinator</i>	2023 - 2024
<i>Graduate Student Representative</i>	2021 - 2023
<i>HDGSC Representative</i>	2022 - 2023
<i>Graduate Social Chair</i>	2021 - 2022

Research Assistant to David Macarthur

Editorial work for the book <i>Philosophy as Dialogue</i>	2020
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Awards & Honors

Herschel G. Shaw Scholarship University of Chicago	2020 - present
National Science Foundation Travel Grant HOPOS	2024
Humanities Division Conference Travel Grant University of Chicago	2024
GS Caird Scholarship for Philosophy II University of Sydney	2018

Graduate Level Coursework

("*" indicates audit)

University of Chicago

Philosophy of Science and Metaphysics

<i>Chance*</i> (Lorraine Daston)	Spring 2026
<i>The Philosophy of Thomas Kuhn*</i> (James Conant)	Winter 2024
<i>Space and Time*</i> (Kevin Davey)	Winter 2024
<i>The Philosophy of Quantum Mechanics*</i> (Tom Pashby)	Fall 2023
<i>The Concept of the World and Its Vulnerability*</i> (Matthew Boyle and Jonathan Lear)	Spring 2023
<i>Non-Deductive Inference</i> (Kevin Davey)	Winter 2022
<i>Metaphysical Writings of C.S. Peirce</i> (Anubav Vasudevan)	Fall 2021
<i>Heidegger's Concept of Metaphysics*</i> (Robert Pippin)	Winter 2021

Language, Mind, Epistemology

<i>Semantics and Pragmatics*</i> (Chris Kennedy)	Fall 2025
<i>Sign and Symbol*</i> (James Conant)	Winter 2024
<i>Logico-Mathematico vs Logico-Philosophical Conceptions of Logic*</i> (James Conant and Irad Kimhi)	Fall 2022
<i>Wittgenstein's Treatment of Rule Following in Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics and Philosophical Investigations</i> (James Conant)	Spring 2022
<i>The Philosophy of Donald Davidson</i> (Olivia Sultanesco)	Winter 2022
<i>Foundations of the Philosophy of Action*</i> (Jason Bridges)	Winter 2022
<i>Wittgenstein and Skepticism</i> (David Finkelstein)	Spring 2021
<i>Intentionality in Mind and Action</i> (Matthew Boyle and Anton Ford)	Winter 2021
<i>First Year Seminar II</i> (David Finkelstein)	Winter 2021
<i>Transparency and Reflection</i> (Matthew Boyle)	Fall 2020
<i>Tim Williamson's Knowledge and Its Limits</i> (Ginger Schulteis)	Fall 2020
<i>First Year Seminar I</i> (David Finkelstein)	Fall 2020

Value Theory

<i>The Philosophy of Cora Diamond</i> (James Conant and Cora Diamond)	Spring 2021
<i>The Philosophy of Elizabeth Anscombe</i> (Candace Vogler)	Spring 2021

Early Modern Philosophy

<i>Hume's Theoretical Philosophy*</i> (Daniel Moerner)	Fall 2022
<i>Locke, Consciousness, and Personal Identity</i> (David Finkelstein)	Spring 2022

Ancient Philosophy

<i>Plato on Knowledge</i> (John Proios)	Fall 2021
<i>Different Senses of Being*</i> (Irad Kimhi)	Fall 2021

University of Sydney

Honours Coursework

<i>Diverse Minds</i> (Carrie Figdor)	2019
<i>Concepts</i> (David Braddon-Mitchell)	2019
<i>Social Epistemology</i> (Maira Gatens)	2019
<i>Themes from Cavell</i> (David Macarthur)	2019

References

James Conant
University of Chicago
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Kevin Davey
University of Chicago
kjdavey@uchicago.edu

Anubav Vasudevan
University of Chicago
anubav@uchicago.edu

Benjamin Callard (teaching reference)
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bcallard@uchicago.edu