



# DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER



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# QUEEN'S TAKES OVER THE WEST!

## Graduate Alumni Placement

A wonderful series of successes in finding tenure-track positions among our recent PhDs shows a striking pattern – the Philosophy Department is leaving its mark on universities across western Canada, and in the U.S. too. Taking up positions in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia and Colorado, Queen's philosophers **Ikeoluwapo Baruwa**, **Derek Beamer**, **Owen Clifton**, **Michael Luoma** and **Andrew Lopez**, are joining **Agnes Tam**, who took up a tenure-track job at the University of Calgary back in 2022. Extremely impressive, particularly in the current gruelling job market. No wonder all of our stars are sharing that they are 'absolutely thrilled' to have landed these positions.

**Congratulations, everyone!**



**Agnes Tam** (PhD, 2020)  
University of Calgary



**Andrew Lopez** (PhD, 2024)  
Colorado State



**Ikeoluwapo Baruwa** (PhD, 2026)  
Canadian Mennonite University



**Owen Clifton** (PhD, 2024)  
University of Regina



**Michael Luoma** (PhD, 2023)  
University of Northern British  
Columbia



**Derek Beamer** (PhD, 2023)  
St. Thomas More College,  
Saskatchewan

**Arthur Hill** (PhD, 2025) Queen's University - Department of Political Studies and the  
Institute of Intergovernmental Relations - Postdoctoral Fellow

# FACULTY NEWS

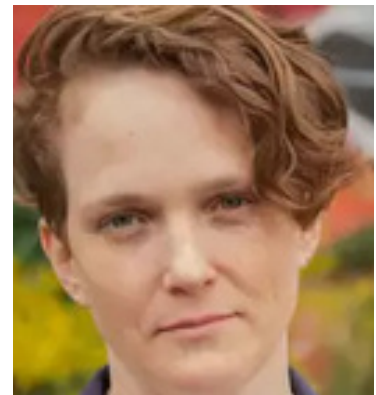
## Recent Works and Achievements

Joshua Mozersky (Professor)

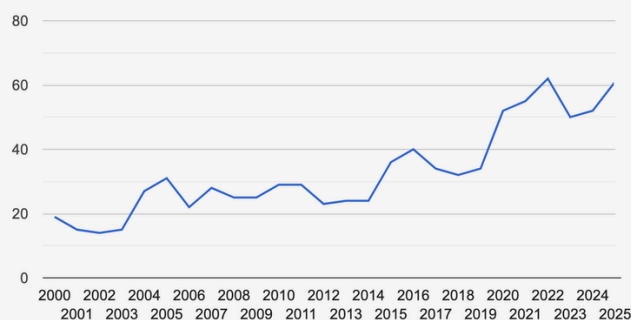
- 'Infinite Time and the Boltzmann Brain Hypothesis', *Philosophies* 10:34, 2025.
- 'Analytic Philosophy of Time: R-Theory, B-Theory, and the Scientific Worldview', *Manuscript: International Journal of Philosophy* (forthcoming).
- 'Arthur Prior's Philosophy of Time', *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (forthcoming).
- 'Making Sense of Presentism', in Kasia M. Jaszczolt and Giuliano Torrengo (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Time in Thought and Language*, Oxford University Press (forthcoming).

Catherine Stinson (Associate Professor)

- will be a Visiting Faculty Fellow at the University of Toronto's Centre for Ethics in 2026-2027
- SSHRC grant for "Eliza's Ghosts: Can Chatbots be Psychotherapists?"
  - First output from that project: '**Engagement versus Therapeutic Alliance: Large Language Models in AI Psychotherapy**', *American Journal of Bioethics*, 2026.
- With Andy Crosby, Alex McClelland, Tanya Sharpe, Evelyn Maeder, Kanika Samuels Wortley, Rina Khan and Zhongmin Lin, '**Tracking (In)justice: Documenting Fatal Encounters with Police in Canada**', *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, 2025. See also [www.trackinginjustice.ca](http://www.trackinginjustice.ca)



### Police-involved Deaths when Force Used



The number of police-involved use of force deaths has risen over the past 20 years, even when corrected for population growth. Some of this long-term trend may be due to increased access to information about police-involved killings and deaths. But access to information alone does not explain the striking increase in the past 4 years.

# FACULTY NEWS

## Recent Works and Achievements

Catherine Stinson (cont...)

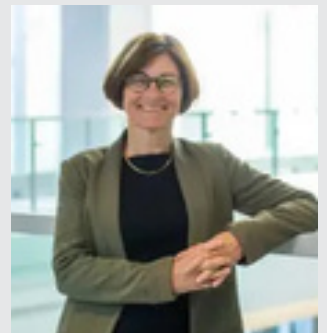
- co-authored 4 other publications with my grad students:
  - **'The Challenges of Web Scraping and AI for Research Ethics in Canada: A Survey of University REBs'** in Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics, 2026, with Alicia Cappello.
  - **'The Patient/Industry Tradeoff in Medical Artificial Intelligence'** in AI and Ethics, 2026, with Rina Khan, Annabelle Sauve, Imaan Bayoumi and Amber Simpson.
  - **'Analysis of Linguistic Effects of Self-Consuming Training'** in International Conference on Foundation and Large Language Models, 2025, with Veronika Grigoreva and Christian Muise.
  - **'Auditing Facial Emotion Recognition Datasets for Posed Expressions and Racial Bias'** in International Conference on Foundation and Large Language Models, 2025, with Rina Khan.

**David Bakhurst** (George Whalley Distinguished University Professor and John and Ella G. Charlton Professor of Philosophy)

- In recent years I have been exploring the philosophy of Iris Murdoch.
- Published **'Iris Murdoch on Moral Philosophy and How It Should Be Done'** in 2025.
- Two further papers are in progress, one on Iris Murdoch's relation to the tradition known as **'Oxford Realism'** and another on her ideas about moral education and improvement.
- I recently began my second five-year stint as Executive Editor of Journal of Philosophy of Education, published by Oxford University Press.

**Margaret Moore** (Professor of Political Studies, cross-appointed with Philosophy)

- Recognized with the Killam Prize in Social Sciences: ['Celebrating a National Honour'](#)
- Published an article in *The Globe and Mail*, **'The world order has changed. Now comes the hard part'**, on the death of the international rules-based order and Prime Minister Mark Carney's proposed middle power strategy.



# FACULTY NEWS

## Recent Works and Achievements

**Christine Synowich** (Professor and Queen's National Scholar)

- 3 Oxford lectures in spring 2025: **'Dreaming Spires and Colonial Nightmares: Cultural Heritage, Human Flourishing and Social Justice'**, Oliver Smithies Lecture, Balliol College; **'Justice and Community: Reflections on G.A. Cohen's Socialism'**, Oxford Philosophy Society; **'Property: Yours or Ours?'**, Cerberus (PPE) Society at Balliol College
- **'Against the Juridicalization of Political Philosophy: Equality, Morality, and the Rule of Law'**, in M. Walters and G. Cartier (eds.), *The Promise of Legality: Critical Reflections on the Work of T.R.S. Allan*, Bloomsbury, 2025.
- **'The Rule of Law and the Social Ethos'** for Michael Sevel, ed., *Routledge Handbook of the Rule of Law*, Routledge, 2025.
- **'Your Property Isn't Really Yours'** in *Too Weird to Believe, too Plausible to Deny: Mind-blowing Philosophical Ideas*, Routledge, 2026
- PI on SSHRC-supported team research project, 'Toppling Monuments' – final stage underway with plans for an art installation at the forecourt of the Isabel Bader Centre



**Daryn Lehoux** (Professor)

- Visiting Scholar at University of Melbourne, 2025
- New co-authored paper in *Phronesis*: **'Pseudo-Aristotle Problem 7.8: Text, Syntax, and Two Theories of Contagion'**
- Austin Lecture, University of Western Australia, 2025
- talks at University of Melbourne, Johns Hopkins, University of Sydney, Australia National University, McGill.

**Lisa Guenther** (Professor and Queen's National Scholar)

- Lecture and two workshops in Paris at the École normale supérieure, the Sorbonne, and Paris Nanterre - [Conference Information](#)
- SSHRC Partnership Engage Grant called "Gathering at Gwinoop: Weaving Research Partnerships into the Fabric of Gitxsan Legal Order," to collaborate with the Gwinoop School of Law and Land-Based Learning: a Gitxsan-governed organization mandated to strengthen Gitxsan legal education, intergenerational learning, and land-based practice on Gitxsan Lax'yip (Territories) located in the north interior of British Columbia.

# FACULTY NEWS

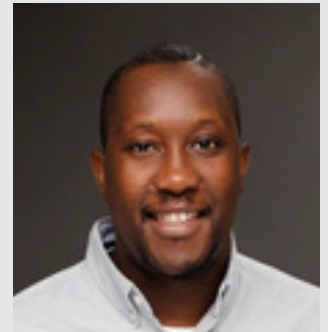
## Recent Works and Achievements

### Sergio Sismondo (Professor)

- Primary talking head in the video '**How Capitalism Broke Science**' by Alec Opperman about how pharmaceutical companies shape medical science.  
Watch on YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhnU-t\\_nPqE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhnU-t_nPqE)
- Co-Chair of the annual meeting of the Society for Social Studies of Science, to be held in Toronto in October of 2026. There will be a likely 2500 attendees from around the world, plus others participating online.
- In February, I hosted a special trivia night at the Clark Hall Pub on the theme of conspiracy theories, which was also the topic of my undergraduate seminar.
- Redesigned "What is Philosophy?" course (in 2025-26 and again next year in 2026-27) around the productive use of AI for understanding and writing about course material.

### Dalitso Ruwe (Assistant Professor)

- Published article, '**Black Male Disposability and the Dark Side of Canadian Multiculturalism**', has just come out in *Philosophy & Social Criticism*.
  - The first of its kind in Canadian political philosophy, the article argues that multiculturalism does not simply fail Black men but actively normalizes their disposability by framing exclusion as common sense. It shows how Canadian institutions construct Black men as unruly, criminal, or unteachable, rendering their marginalization legitimate rather than unjust.



### Kerah Gordon-Solmon (Associate Professor)

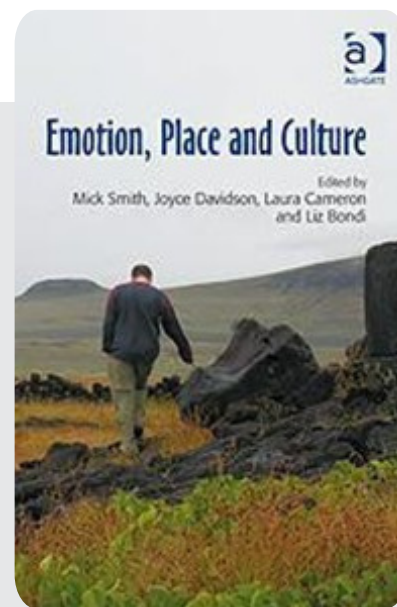
- Published an opinion article in the *Toronto Star* about grade inflation: '**How good grades went from achievement to entitlement**'.
- Published an opinion article in the *Toronto Star* on the perils of ChatGPT: '**You wouldn't ask a psychopath for advice, why on earth would you ask chatgpt?**'
- First ever guest post at Big iff True on '**Don't trash the Humanities**'.

# FACULTY NEWS

## A Colleague Retires

### Mick Smith

Mick Smith, jointly appointed to Philosophy and Environmental Studies, retires from Queen's on July 1, 2026. Mick's career had an interesting trajectory. Inspired by the upsurge in environmental consciousness from the 1970's onwards, Mick originally trained as an ecologist, receiving his B.Sc. in Ecology from the University of York, UK, in 1982. This was followed by two Master's degrees, one in Ecology, and one in Modern European Thought, followed by a PhD at the University of Stirling in 1993. Mick arrived at Queen's in 2003, where he taught and supervised in a wide range of fields in both Philosophy and Environmental Studies. Mick's research focussed on theoretical understandings of the complex intersections of nature and culture as they affect our evaluations and experiences of environments. His scholarship, often collaborative, can be found in seven books, along with dozens of articles. Below is a tribute to Mick given at a retirement celebration hosted by the School of Environmental Studies.



### Mick Smith Tribute

I've known Mick since he came to Queen's and joined our two departments more than 20 years ago. I was Head of the Philosophy Department for 6 of those years. The word philosophy derives from the Greek words for love of wisdom. Unfortunately, it might be said that we philosophers are not necessarily famed for that particular virtue! This may be because, Anglo-American philosophy, with its emphasis on analytical clarity, and sharp-minded, precise arguments, might be said to reward cleverness rather than wisdom.

However, Mick's philosophical approach departs from that methodology. Now, of course Mick is clever!!! But his orientation is phenomenological, focussed on being, and profound questions about how we ought to live in the world and with nature. At the same time, Mick bridges that divide among philosophers between the analytical and the phenomenological. He communicates his ideas in a clear, incisive, bracing style.

Mick's impressive corpus of several books and dozens of articles and book chapters delves into questions of the relation between nature and culture, tourism ethics, the emotional geography of place, justice and nature. In short, Mick's work seeks wisdom. Of course, in asking these big questions meant Mick was far ahead of his time. All of you in environmental studies have been on top of this, but not we philosophers. Yet long before such expressions as 'climate emergency' or 'climate crisis', Mick was acutely aware of the fraught relationship between human technologies and the flourishing of nature.

# FACULTY NEWS

I've learned such a lot from Mick. Some of my work in political philosophy on cultural heritage and NIMBYism has been very much influenced by his powerful ideas about emotional geography and connection to place.

Mick is also an inspiring teacher and supervisor. As Head I was especially impressed by his efforts to bring philosophy and experience together in his teaching, with all the cumbersome administration involved, hiring a bus to bring philosophy students out into the woods, long before 'experiential learning' was a thing.

Mick is, as you all know, a very witty person, with a playful sense of humour, and a great facility to see the absurdity of life – particularly the absurdity of campus life, a theme which alas alarmingly, increasingly, is a particularly rich vein here at Queen's. Good on you, Mick, for getting out while you can!

I've always appreciated his sage and amusing remarks about academic life, the value of humanities, the importance of the life of the mind. I recall many conversations in the corridor of Watson Hall, or at a department event, commiserating over the administration's latest folly. And you can see that combination of critique and fun in Mick's writing – I especially like the title of his contribution to a collection on tourism that refers to 'ego-tripping'.

Let me close with the hope that lots of fun tripping lies ahead for Mick. Not tripping as in the loss of balance that comes with old age, or the experience of being under the influence of hallucinogens (though I want to be broad-minded here and not rule that out!), but the tripping that is in play when exploring new vistas, embarking on adventures, and seeing the world.

Certainly, Mick has the openness, sense of fun, and wisdom, to make the most of retirement. And it is those qualities that we will all miss, of course, as our dear friend Mick takes his leave. Congratulations, Mick, and have a splendid retirement.

Christine Synowich

## News from Emeriti

**Jackie Duffin** is happily retired — biking daily and playing music with a recorder ensemble and horn with a brass quintet. Since her retirement in 2017, Jackie has published 5 books. Two more are due out this summer— you can find all titles at her [website here](#). She is also serving as Editor-in-Chief of the history of medicine module for the [Oxford Bibliographies online](#) and is contributing to the new [Medical Humanities portal](#).



# GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

## Recent Achievements and Publications

### Dean Joseph (PhD)

- Publication: **'Trusting Conspiracy Theories'**. *Social Epistemology* 1:1-14, 2025.
- Won a SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship (2025-2028)
- Won a SSHRC Michael Smith Foreign Study Award to fund a visiting doctoral research term at the University of Arizona's department of philosophy (2026)
- Joined Animals in Philosophy, Politics, Law, and Ethics (APPLE) at Queen's as a fellow
- Organized a conference sponsored by the Queen's department of philosophy -- "Emerging Challenges for Liberal Democracy" with speakers joining from Queen's.



### Sofie Vlaad (PhD)

- Radi, B., S. Vlaad, J. Wong & R. Bell. (forthcoming). **'On Trans Philosophy's Methods: A Roundtable'**. *Transgender Studies Quarterly*.
- Vlaad, S. & E. Paul. (forthcoming). **'Appreciating AI Art: Aesthetic Vices, Virtues, and Values'**. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*.
- Vlaad, S. (2025). **'Texts Without Authors: Ascribing Literary Meaning in the Case of AI'**. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*.
- Successfully defended dissertation in spring 2026

### Abigail Bergeron (PhD)

- Received two awards: a SSHRC doctoral fellowship, and a Graduate Student Scholarship for Studies in the History of Ideas funded by the Sansom Ideas Foundation under the aegis of the London Community Foundation.
- Archival research at the University of Montana, Mansfield Library Archives and Special Collections with the support of the Graduate Dean's Travel Grant for Doctoral Field Research.

# GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

## Recent Achievements and Publications

### Abigail Bergeron (PhD) (cont...)

- **'Two Thanksgivings: A Borgmannian Reflection of AI-Robot Kitchens'**, Environment, Science and Society Graduate Philosophy Conference, Michigan State University (March 2026). Forthcoming in an edited anthology on robot kitchens (*Food, Technology and Society*), Routledge: 2027).
- Curriculum Design and Research Support Intern for the Faculty of Arts and Science., Queen's Doctoral Internship in University Administration program (QDIUA), Winter 2026.
- **'Jacques Ellul's Trilogy: Technological Determinism?'** *The Ellul Forum* 74, Spring 2026.

### Léonard Bédard (PhD)

- Critical review of Michel Seymour's latest book, *Nation et Autodétermination au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2024), to appear in *Philosophiques*. (forthcoming Spring 2026)
- December 2025: Awarded the Michael Smith Fellowship to support a research exchange at the Department of Philosophy, University of Bristol, in Fall 2026.
- May 2025: Shortlisted for the 2025 CPSA John McMenemy Prize for the co-authored paper (with J. Gosselin-Tapp, F. Côté, and S.-E. Mossu), **'Par-delà l'obligation d'exploiter le territoire : Autodétermination des communautés locales et transition énergétique au Québec'** (CJPS, 2024).



### Jordan Desmond (PhD)

- **'Against the Right to Work, For the Right to Contribute'**, *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*,
- **'Explain Yourself: The Ethics of Soliciting Advice'**, *Journal of Social Philosophy*.
- presented papers at the CPA, the APA Eastern, and a workshop at Duke University.
- Successfully defended dissertation in spring 2026

# GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

## Recent Achievements and Publications

### Yuanjin Xia (PhD)

- Presented '**Pedagogical Labour: Rediscover an Overlooked Tradition within the Standpoint Theory**', CPA 2025
- Served as Co-Lead Steward (Shop Steward) for the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) Local 901 during the 2025–2026 term.
- Has been re-elected to continue in this role for the 2026–2027 term and will attend the PSAC Ontario 10th Triennial Convention as a delegate representing the Local.
- '**The Social Contradiction of Care in Union Work and the Politics of Mutual Aid**' at PSAC 901 International Women's Day Conference, March 8, 2026, Kingston

## SSHRC Fellowships

Abigail Bergeron joins the Queen's Philosophy contingent of doctoral students with prestigious fellowships funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. See the full list below.

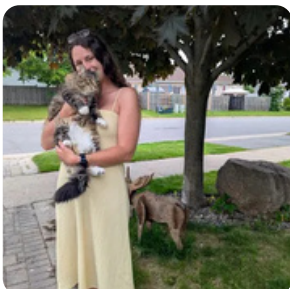
**Bravo everyone!**

**Abigail Bergeron** (Year 1 of funding of 3) (PhD year 4)

**Dean Joseph** (Year 2 of funding of 3) (PhD year 4)

**Léonard Bédard** (Year 3 of funding of 3) (PhD year 3)

**Jessica McMullin** (Year 4 of funding of 4) (PhD year 5)



Abigail Bergeron



Dean Joseph



Léonard Bédard



Jessica McMullin

# RECENT GRADUATES

## MAs

**Jake Beale** (May 2025); Supervisor: David Bakhurst; "A Bit of Stoicism Per Day Keeps Distress at Bay: Exploring Key Criticisms of CBT, Stoic Alternatives, and the Role of Education Therein"

**Tony Chen** (August 2025); Supervisor: Adele Mercier; "A Context-Based Analysis of Counterfactual Conditionals and Causations"

**Morgan Wark** (August 2025); Supervisor: Colin Farrelly; "Emotional Neuroenhancement: Paternalism, Apprehension, and Lessons for Other Mood Enhancing Interventions"

**Sam Gill** (August 2025); Supervisor: Deborah Knight

**Colin McDermot** (September 2025); Supervisor: David Bakhurst; "The Grammar of Sensation: On Anscombe's Philosophy of Perception"

**Melinda Robinson** (September 2025); Supervisor: Catherine Stinson; "Phenomenology of Neurodiversity: How Neurological Difference Expands our Understanding of Being Human"

**Cain Bissonette** (September 2025); Supervisor: Elliot Paul; "Epistemic Responsibility in Echo Chambers"

**Rhianna Grove** (September 2025); Supervisor: Lisa Guenther; "Homesickness: Housework, Worldbuilding, and Artmaking"

**Maxwell Pond** (January 2026); Supervisor: David Bakhurst; "Wittgenstein: Philosophy, Theory, and Therapy"

**Scott Richardson** (April 2026); Supervisor: Christine Sypnowich; "Empire's Law: A Positivist Critique of Natural Law Theory's Response to Legal Colonialism"

## PhDs

**Adam Schipper** (July 2025); Supervisor: Lisa Guenther; "A Critical Phenomenology of Social Reproduction"

**Darren Corpe** (November 2025); Supervisor: Will Kymlicka; "From Independence to Individuality: Rethinking Liberal Education for Multidimensional Autonomy"

**Jordan Desmond** (April 2026); Supervisor: Will Kymlicka; "Locating the Demos: A Place-Based Account of Democratic Boundaries"

**Sofie Vlaad** (April 2026); Supervisor: Catherine Stinson; "Art, Authorship, and Artificial Intelligence"

# COLLOQUIA AND SPECIAL LECTURES

The Philosophy Department held its regular colloquium series on Thursdays during the academic year. The 2025–26 series welcomed speakers locally and from around the world.

In addition to our regular colloquia, the Department hosted our annual special lectures.

For more information and the schedule, please visit: [Departmental Colloquiums](#)

To be added to the distribution list, please email: [philosophy@queensu.ca](mailto:philosophy@queensu.ca).

## Colloquium

September 25, 2025

Dalitso Ruwe (Queens)

**"From Public Hangings to IRCAS: The Construction of Black Male Criminality in Canadian Jurisprudence"**



## Lorne MacLachlan Lecture on Kant

March 12, 2026

Hannah Ginsborg (UC Berkeley)

**"Oughts Without Reasons: A Defence of Primitive Normativity"**

## Colloquium

September 11, 2025

Colin Farrelly (Queens)

**"Climate Geroscience: The Case for 'Wisdom Inquiry' Science"**



# COLLOQUIA AND SPECIAL LECTURES

## Colloquium

November 20, 2025

Jonathan Gingerich (Rutgers Law School)

**"The Politics of Spontaneous Freedom"**



## Alistair Macleod Distinguished Lecture

March 26, 2026

Carol Gould (CUNY)

**"The Social Ontology of Democracy:  
Beyond Atomistic Individualism"**

## Colloquium

December 4, 2025

Tarek Dika (University of Toronto)

**"Descartes' Theory of Distinctions and  
Ontology: Some Problems"**



# COLLOQUIA AND SPECIAL LECTURES



## Celebratory Discussion

January 15, 2026

Meena Krishnamurthy (Queens)

**"The Emotions of Nonviolence:  
Revisiting Martin Luther King Jr.'s  
"Letter from Birmingham Jail" "**

## Colloquium

November 6, 2025

Andrea Rivadulla-Duro (Universitat Autònoma  
de Barcelona)

**"Iconicity as Epistemic Pedigree: Format as a  
Cue of Content Lineage"**



## The Gregory Vlastos Memorial Lecture

January 29, 2026

James Allen (University of Toronto)

**"Aristotle, Dialectic and Philosophy"**

# COLLOQUIA AND SPECIAL LECTURES



## Colloquium

February 26, 2026

Patti Tamara Lenard (University of Ottawa)

**“Cultural Appropriation and Freedom of Expression”**

## Colloquium

October 30, 2025

Andrew Janiak (Duke Trinity)

**“Émilie Du Chatelet and the Origins of The Exclusionary Philosophical Canon”**



## Colloquium

February 5, 2026

William Paris (University of Toronto)

**“The Antinomies of Emancipation in Frederick Douglass’s My Bondage and My Freedom”**



For more information and to view upcoming scheduled events, please visit the:

**[Philosophy Department Website](#) | [Event Calendar](#)**

# DEPARTMENT SPONSORED EVENTS

## Democracy Conference a Big Success!

“Emerging  
Challenges for  
Liberal Democracy”  
was a two-day  
conference held at  
Queen’s University  
on April 16<sup>th</sup> and  
17<sup>th</sup>, 2026.



Emerging Challenges for Liberal Democracy speakers and participants

The conference brought together distinguished and early-career scholars from several Canadian universities, along with a special guest from the University of Hong Kong, to discuss the promises of liberal democracy, its current challenges, and future directions. Talks were well-attended by participants from the Departments of Philosophy and Political Studies, and each session was accompanied by lively discussion. The conference benefitted from generous funding support from the Department of Philosophy and Will Kymlicka.

The conference was convened by Dean Joseph and benefited from organizing support from Roda Mendoza, Léonard Bédard, Summer Chan, Joel da Silva, Jordan Desmond, Arthur Hill, Kaitie Jourdeuil, Meena Krishnamurthy, Michael Luoma, Jen McLaren, Jessica McMullin, Kesha Ongagna, Elliot Paul, Melinda Robinson, Christine Sypnowich, Sheena Wilkinson, James Winslow, and Isabel Xu.

### Speaker List (with assigned commentators)

**Tyra Maud Declerck** (Université du Québec à Montréal) “When Rights Are Not Enough: Vulnerability and Equal Standing in Liberal Democracies”

- Commentary: **Léonard Bédard** (Queen’s University)

**Elliot Goodell Ugalde** (Queen’s University) “Reframing Democratic Governance: Anishinaabeg Kinship and the Limits of Liberal Institutional Design”

- Commentary: **Michael Luoma** (University of Northern British Columbia)

**Hamid Andishan** (Cape Breton University) “The Right to Rebellion Against Imam”

- Commentary: **Arthur Hill** (Queen’s University)

Keynote – **Arash Abizadeh** (McGill University) “Popular Sovereignty vs Democracy: Or, How Rousseau Killed Democracy”

**John Edwards-Boone** (Queen’s University) “Occupation and Opportunity: Ottawa’s Freedom Convoy, Annexation and Sowing Chaos Abroad”

- Commentary: **Dean Joseph** (Queen’s University)

**Yutang Jin** (Hong Kong University) “Collective Self-Determination: A Transgenerational Conception”

- Commentary: **Jordan Desmond** (Queen’s University)

Keynote – **Will Kymlicka** (Queen’s University) “Membership-Making in a Mobile World”

# ETHICS BOWL AT QUEEN'S



The Philisoraptors from Regiopolis-Notre Dame advance to the Ontario Championship.

This year, eight teams and approximately forty students competed in the regional event, debating topics including — Free Speech in School Newspapers, Artificial Intelligence, Life Sentences, and Licensing Parents.

Teams were scored based on the clarity and systematicity of their argument, the moral dimensions and opposing viewpoints that they identified, their engagement with both the other team and judges, and finally their respectful dialogue. Through multiple rounds, teams had the opportunity to present a case, respond to commentary from their opponents, and answer questions directly from judges. In the end, the Philisoraptors team from Regiopolis-Notre Dame (Kingston) were named the winners and advanced to the Ontario Championship.

For more information about Ethics Bowl Canada, [visit their website](#).



All Ethics Bowl Participants, Judges and Moderators, smile before separating into the first round of debates.

The Ethics Bowl brings together teams from local high schools to debate difficult ethical questions involving moral dilemmas. It is an opportunity for students to hone their critical thinking and verbal skills, and to meet other students interested in discussing complex ethical questions.

## Regional Ethics Bowl hosted by Queen's Philosophy

On January 31, 2026, Queen's held its annual Regional Ethics Bowl at MacCorry Hall.

Another successful event brought in eight teams and students from across the Kingston and GTA areas.

# UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

## Department Student Council

This year, the Departmental Student Council was able to run many initiatives to create community within the department. We continued the tradition of Drinks with Profs at the Grizzly Grill which is our biggest hit! Gatherings took place in the fall term as well as at the end of the academic year, before the craziness of exams. Students, profs, and grad students chatted in a non-academic space, a great event for meeting profs you haven't had a class with yet while building rapport with those you already know.

We were able to make customizable merch so that philosophy students can show off their department, which was able to make enough profit to help run more events for the DSC next year!

We hosted a Town Hall, where faculty, undergraduate and graduate students addressed budget cuts, upcoming events, and news we should be aware of within the department, as well as various opportunities unique to philosophy at Queen's. This was a great way for students to learn about possible pathways and get up-to date on current challenges facing the department.

The Philosophy DSC helped out with the Ethics Bowl, garnering interest in philosophy at Queen's for high school students, which is really important for the future of our department (see article in this newsletter). Additionally, we attended Majors Night to let current students know what studying philosophy looks like at Queen's.

We had a great time this year despite the challenges facing the Arts and Science Faculty as a whole. We know that future philosophy students will carry the torch forward to navigate the changes and maintain a foundation of philosophy at Queens!

Kyra Seifred & Olivia Tucker  
DSC Co-presidents 2025-2026  
Julia Tronetti  
DSC President 2026-2027



TAs Dean Joseph (far left) and Joel da Silva (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) with Philosophy students during Drinks with Profs, November 2025



Town Hall, February 2026



End of Year Celebration, March 2026



Follow Philosophy DSC on Instagram:  
[queens\\_philosophy](https://www.instagram.com/queens_philosophy)

# IN MEMORIAM

## Stephen Leighton (1951-2025)

Professor Emeritus Stephen Leighton was a dear colleague, teacher, scholar and friend to many in the Philosophy Department. His death in Kingston on 22 May 2025 marked a very sad loss.

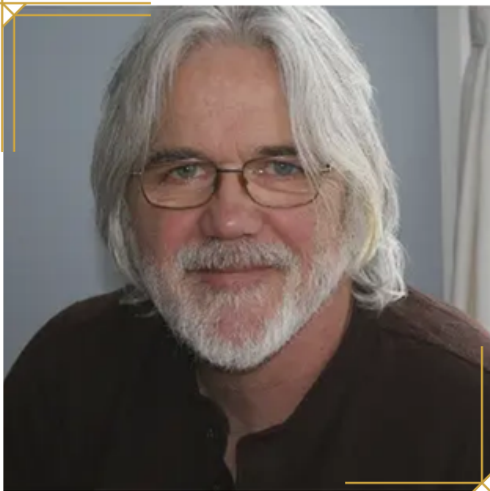
Steve graduated magna cum laude from the University of Alberta in 1973 and went on to do his doctorate in philosophy at the University of Texas, beginning his teaching career at the Florida International University. Steve arrived at Queen's in 1986 and was promoted to Full Professor in 1998.



Painted by France Pellicano in memoriam to Steve

Steve had a distinguished career as a scholar and teacher. He was honoured with the distinguished *Review of Metaphysics* Dissertation Essay Prize, and a grant from the American Council of Learned Societies, as well as funding bodies such as SSHRC. Steve was a renowned authority on Aristotle and the emotions, and he contributed many canonical essays, notably his well-known article, 'On Feeling Angry or Elated' in the *Journal of Philosophy*, considered by many to be the most important venue in the discipline, as well as writings in go-to reference works such as Blackwell's *Companion to Aristotle*. His edited collection, *Philosophy in the Emotions* (Broadview 2003), is a key reference work on the subject.

Steve was a very gifted teacher, whose gentle, probing, conversational pedagogical style long attracted a loyal following of students, some of whom went on to academic careers themselves, holding his example as a model. Truly dedicated to the wellbeing of the Philosophy Department, Steve served as Undergraduate Chair several times and was long a treasured advisor and source of kind and wise counsel for students and colleagues.



Steve retired in December 2020, enabling him to spend time with his beloved family – his wife Deborah, his daughters Catherine (Alex Meyers) and Doratheia, as well as his grandchildren Cameron and Gavin. Steve cherished his family and his home was a place of warmth and love, where meaningful conversations and laughter were abundant. He is greatly missed.

Below are two tributes to Steve which eloquently evoke what a special person he was.

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## Christine Overall (Emerita Professor) remembers Stephen Leighton

This is a time of grieving, grieving the loss of a wonderful man whom all of us respected and many of us loved. But it is also a time for celebrating, celebrating the man that Steve was, celebrating what he gave us during his life, and celebrating what he has left us.

Steve came to Queen's in 1986, two years after I got here, so ours was a friendship that was almost forty years long. I remember attending the colloquium where he gave a paper as part of his job interview. I knew almost immediately that he would be my new colleague. His engagement with the ancient Greek philosophers and his love for philosophy were palpable.

I have a photo taken about a year later, in 1987. It was snapped at a party my husband Ted and I gave, and it shows Steve sharing a joke with Michael Fox. That, by the way, is probably my last memory of Steve with short hair.

I also remember a Christmas party shortly after Steve arrived. The way Christmas parties used to be done in the Department was that the wives of all the men in the Department would do all the cooking—including roasting an enormous turkey—and then everyone would share the food. We ate at a house on Albert Street, which was owned by what was then called the University Women's Club. It was a jolly event, but it was an odd one for me, since I was the only Philosophy Department member there without a wife. Fortunately, I ended up being seated next to Steve. He and I began to discuss our children. This seemed unusual; I was not used to being able to discuss family, especially children, with my male colleagues.

That's when I first got a glimpse that Steve was a kindred spirit: the sort of person who deeply valued philosophy and academia, yes, but equally or even more cared about his spouse and his children. He was the kind of person, in other words, who led a full, rich, rounded life.

Over the succeeding decades, Steve and I talked a lot—casually in passing, in each other's office, or at lunches booked off-campus. We didn't discuss academic philosophy very much. Our philosophical interests were very different. He worked in moral philosophy, ancient philosophy, and philosophy of the emotions. He published in prestigious journals, including *The Review of Metaphysics*, *The Journal of Philosophy*, and the *American Philosophical Quarterly*, journals that I could not aspire to.

But I was always enriched by his thoughtful, generous comments on and questions about my papers and those of others presented at the weekly colloquium. He had a gentle, modest, yet careful and scholarly approach to doing philosophy, and to helping others do philosophy. He modelled careful and analytical thinking, thinking that was also thought-provoking and expansive.

This approach similarly imbued his teaching. Over the decades, the courses he taught were essential to the department's undergraduate curriculum, including the required course on ethics and the required course on ancient philosophy. He also often taught 100-level courses. This means that Steve played a significant and very positive role in the education of probably

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thousands of Queen's students who concentrated in philosophy.

He was also readily available to act as an examiner for graduate students, for area papers and MA and PhD thesis defences. He was a dedicated instructor, and persevered as a mentor and wise sage even as teaching conditions got harder—with larger and larger classes and some students who were not always fully engaged with philosophy.

As I said, Steve and I did not devote a lot of time to discussing academic philosophy. What we did discuss was philosophy in a more general and colloquial sense: What it's like to face the challenges of late twentieth- and early twenty-first century living. Making moral choices in a world where compromise can be difficult, and where it can be easy to be compromised. How we responded to our children and how we dealt with the education system. Steve was devoted to his daughters, Kate and Thea, whom he often called Theeby, and spoke of them with great commitment and love. He was also enormously devoted to and proud of Deborah, and on difficult issues he often cited her knowledge and expertise.

Steve and I frequently talked about how to understand the politics of the University, the Faculty of Arts and Science, and our Department in particular. How to do our jobs to the best of our abilities. How to teach small classes and large ones. And how to cope with the publish or perish syndrome of academia. For me, Steve was, as I know he was for many others, a reliable and wise sounding board and advisor.

I note that an important scholarly focus for Steve was the concept of virtue—and Steve himself was an exemplar of psychological, moral, and philosophical virtue. I want to draw these remarks to a close by citing something Steve wrote about virtue. It comes from a draft of a larger work entitled “Passion and Ethical Value” that he shared with me. I don't know where or even whether Steve published it in some form.

In this excerpt, he's discussing Aristotle, but what he says seems to me to be true of how Steve lived his life.

“Virtue's role runs deeper than that of external goods like wealth or beauty. These latter are a necessary means to and support of happiness, but wealth itself is no part of happiness. Virtue is: Human happiness is centred on virtuous activity (1098b16-17). There is, then, a dual role for virtue: becoming virtuous and being so is necessary as something that promotes and supports happiness, but it is also an ingredient in it. In making virtue and its activities so central to happiness, we are to choose the virtues for themselves, even knowing that in the particular case it mightn't bring about happiness (1.6 1096b-20, 1.7 1097b1-5, cf. Topic 106a5-9).”

Steve was a man who chose a life of virtue, a life of loyalty, kindness, patience, fairness, and wisdom. For almost forty years, he was an ally, a comrade, and a friend to me, as I know he was to many others.

I can't believe he's no longer with us. I will never forget him.

Thank you, Steve.

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## Rahul Kumar (Professor and Head of Department) remembers Stephen Leighton

I first met Steve in the Fall of 1986, as a student in Phil 127: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy. It was my first year at Queen's, and I was finding that some of my classes were not living up to my romantic ideas about what university life would be like. Steve's class was one of the shining exceptions. His lectures were lively and engaging. Pacing in front of the board, Steve would cover it with a scrawl I could mostly decipher, connecting words and phrases with circles and lines as the class went on. Questions were frequent and always taken seriously. I was genuinely mystified by friends telling me they did not care for the combative environment of the philosophy classroom; the ethos of Steve's classes could not have been more different.

I can't say that I was especially interested in whether existence is a predicate or the difference between primary and secondary qualities. What pulled me in was Steve's ability to convey that he found the questions we were discussing to be very interesting, and the patience with which he would lead us through the scrutiny of each step of an argument. I ended that first year convinced that philosophy was not remotely practical—in part because it was hard to imagine Steve being involved in practical matters—and that nothing could be more worthwhile than studying it.

I made a point of taking further classes with Steve, and he became both a teacher and a mentor. I liked dropping by his office to talk, always warmly greeted and invited to pull up a chair. Such was his kindness that, though in retrospect I'm certain it could have been true, nothing in his manner ever suggested that I might be interrupting or that he had other things to attend to that were more important than taking the time for a chat. I would not have applied to graduate school, let alone Oxford, were it not for his encouragement and his help with the daunting process of applying.

Steve's example as a mentor and a teacher is one I've long strived to emulate in how I relate to my own students, both because of its intrinsic virtues as a model and because paying it forward is the best way I can think of to repay the enormous debt I owe him.

Reflecting on Steve's passing, I've found myself continually returning to memories of sitting with him in his office, a custom I resumed when I returned to Queen's as his colleague. We would talk, and often laugh, about matters having to do with philosophy, classes, students, departmental and university administrative matters, and most enjoyably, sci-fi tv shows. Without fail, no matter how unsettled or troubled I was by something when I sat down, I would get up feeling both lighter and more grounded.

I've missed Steve's good humour and fair-minded counsel these past few years. Now that he is gone, I regret never having told him how grateful I am to have had a teacher who did such a good job of instilling in me a deep appreciation of these virtues and their importance in a life well-lived.

# A MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD



## Department Head – Rahul Kumar

Lately, it feels like I am inundated with magazine articles, Substack posts, and newspaper op-eds that all ask the same question: with the advent of AI, is doing a degree in a humanities subject just foolish? The Ontario government clearly thinks so: it is much more prepared to provide funding for healthcare and STEM education than humanities training. And judging by the signals being sent by the Queen's senior leadership team, they share the government's priorities.

Despite the reasons for pessimism, the department's faculty and students are optimistic and excited about the future of philosophy as a discipline and remain resolute in their belief that philosophical training is as valuable as it has ever been, if not more so. The critical, communicative, and imaginative skills that the close study of philosophy inculcates in our students are exactly what they'll need to intelligently navigate a social, political, and economic environment being reshaped by AI.

Effective teaching in this new AI age has, unsurprisingly, required a fair amount of pedagogical innovation on the part of the faculty. Their ability to continue to deliver a quality philosophical education in the face of both new technological challenges and further resource constraints is both impressive and inspiring.

This newsletter documents the recent activity of the philosophy department as a hub of philosophical research and teaching, as well as the efforts of the faculty to bring philosophy to those outside the academy. Particular points of pride include the Ethics Bowl, the Emerging Challenges for Liberal Democracy Conference, and faculty contributions to the media.

The one thing I want to add is a pitch for stories from our alumni.

*How has your philosophy degree influenced or informed the course of your life since you graduated?*

I know our undergraduates are eager to hear these stories. If what you read here brings you back, please do drop us an email and tell us about your memories of Queen's philosophy and how what you learned here has informed your journey.

# PLEASE SUPPORT THE DEPARTMENT

The Philosophy Department at Queen's is grateful for the generous support of donors, which plays a crucial role in enhancing the educational experience for our students. Your contributions directly fund initiatives such as Graduate Student Travel; allowing our students to present their research at prestigious professional conferences, and support our vibrant departmental colloquia.

Recently, your donations have been instrumental in advancing several key priorities, including expanding our graduate and undergraduate student support and fostering new and maintaining outreach initiatives (such as hosting the annual regional Ethics Bowl).

Whether you choose to make a one-time gift or become a recurring donor, your generosity will help sustain and expand vital programs. We deeply appreciate your ongoing support. Every contribution, no matter the size, makes a significant impact. Together, we can continue to shape the future of philosophy at Queen's and beyond.

Thank you for being a part of our journey.



## Philosophy

**We want to hear from you!**

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