

# Christian Tarsney

## Areas

- AOS Normative Ethics, Metaethics
- AOC Decision Theory, Philosophy & Economics, Political Philosophy, Philosophy of Time

## Employment

- Sept 2017 - **Postdoctoral Research Fellow**, *Centre for Philosophy, Politics and Economics*, University of Groningen.

## Education

- July 2017 **PhD**, *University of Maryland*.  
(expected) Title: *Rationality and Moral Risk: A Moderate Defense of Hedging*  
Supervisor: Dan Moller
- Summer 2017 **Summer Research Fellow**, *Centre for Effective Altruism*.  
Research project: "Are Philanthropic Long Shots a Pascal's Mugging?"
- Spring 2017 **Visiting Student**, *Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics, University of Oxford*.
- June 2011 **BA**, *University of Minnesota*.

## Publications

- forthcoming **Moral Uncertainty for Deontologists**, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*.
- forthcoming **Thank Goodness That's Newcomb: The Practical Relevance of the Temporal Value Asymmetry**, *Analysis*.
- forthcoming **Intertheoretic Value Comparison: A Modest Proposal**, *Journal of Moral Philosophy*.
- 2017 **Does a Discount Rate Measure the Costs of Climate Change?**, *Economics & Philosophy*.

## Work in Progress

- under review **Rejecting Supererogationism**
- under review **A Cure for Infinitarian Paralysis**
- in preparation **The Relevance of Moral Uncertainty**
- in preparation **Inheritance and Historical Wrongs**
- in preparation **Ideal Theory for Consequentialists**

---

## Conference Presentations and Workshops

- August 2017 **Normative Uncertainty and Regress**, *Philosophy Days 2017*, Uppsala University. (upcoming)
- August 2017 **Moral Uncertainty for Deontologists**, *European Congress of Analytic Philosophy*, LMU Munich.
- July 2017 **Moral Uncertainty for Deontologists**, *British Society for Ethical Theory*, University of Bristol. (upcoming)
- June 2017 **Thank Goodness That's Newcomb**, *International Association for Philosophy of Time*, Gargnano del Garda, Italy.
- Apr 2017 **Intertheoretic Value Comparisons: A Modest Proposal**, *APA Pacific Division Meeting (Symposium Paper)*.
- Feb 2017 **Invited Participant**, *Workshop on the Practical Implications of Normative Uncertainty*, Future of Humanity Institute (University of Oxford).
- Jan 2017 **Competitive Debate as a Vehicle for Philosophy Education**, *Teaching Philosophy across the Pre-College/College Boundary (APA Eastern Division Meeting)*.
- Oct 2016 **Intertheoretic Value Comparisons: A Modest Proposal**, *Virginia Philosophical Association*.
- Mar 2016 **The Relevance of Moral Uncertainty**, *APA Central Division Meeting (Colloquium Paper)*.
- Jan 2016 **Thank Goodness That's Newcomb**, *Philosophy of Time Society (APA Eastern Division Meeting)*.
- Nov 2015 **A Cure for Infinitarian Paralysis**, *Philosophers' Cocoon Conference*, University of Tampa.
- Aug 2015 **Rejecting Supererogationism**, *Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress*, University of Colorado.
- June 2015 **The Heritable Wealth Dividend**, *Association for Social and Political Philosophy*, University of Amsterdam.
- Apr 2015 **Rejecting Supererogationism**, *Long Island Philosophical Society Conference*, St. John's University.

---

## Graduate Conferences

- Apr 2017 **Moral Uncertainty for Deontologists**, *Columbia-NYU Graduate Philosophy Conference*.
- Oct 2015 **The Relevance of Moral Uncertainty**, *Nature and Norms*, Johns Hopkins University.
- June 2015 **The Heritable Wealth Dividend**, *Institute for Humane Studies Summer Graduate Research Colloquium*, Chapman University.
- Nov 2014 **The Relevance of Moral Uncertainty**, *Northern Graduate Philosophy Conference*, Northern Illinois University.
- Nov 2014 **The Relevance of Moral Uncertainty**, *Mark L. Shapiro Graduate Philosophy Conference*, Brown University.

Apr 2014 **Normative Uncertainty and Subjective Oughts**, *Rocky Mountain Philosophy Conference*, University of Colorado.

---

## Colloquium Presentations

- April 2017 **Moral Uncertainty for Deontologists**, *Philosophy Colloquium Series*, University of Maryland.
- Feb 2017 **Rejecting Supererogationism**, *Applied Ethics Graduate Discussion Group*, University of Oxford.
- Feb 2017 **Moral Uncertainty for Deontologists**, *Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics*, University of Oxford.
- Jan 2015 **A Cure for Infinitarian Paralysis**, *Philosophy Colloquium Series*, University of Maryland.
- Sept 2013 **Normative Uncertainty and Subjective Oughts**, *Philosophy Colloquium Series*, University of Maryland.
- Oct 2012 **Passage, Identity, and Prudence**, *Philosophy Colloquium Series*, University of Maryland.

---

## Awards and Honors

- Apr 2017 **Graduate Student Travel Stipend (\$400)**, *Pacific APA*.
- Jan 2017 **Jacob K. Goldhaber Travel Grant (\$600)**, *University of Maryland*.
- Apr 2016 **Outstanding Graduate Assistant Award**, *University of Maryland*.  
Awarded to 2% (80 of ~4000) graduate students at the University of Maryland annually, based on departmental nominations.
- Apr 2016 **Dean's Dissertation Fellowship (\$25,000)**, *University of Maryland*.  
Awarded to 0.25% (10 of ~4000) graduate students at the University of Maryland annually, based on departmental nominations.
- March 2016 **Graduate Student Travel Stipend (\$300)**, *Central APA*.
- June 2015 **International Conference Student Support Award (\$75)**, *University of Maryland*.
- July 2015 **Travel Grant (\$200)**, *Institute for Humane Studies*.
- June 2015 **Graduate Student Travel Award (\$700)**, *University of Maryland*.
- June 2017 **Travel Grant (\$400)**, *Institute for Humane Studies*.
- Spring 2015 **Dean's Fellowship**, *Philosophy Department, University of Maryland*.
- Fall 2011 **Moreland Perkins Fellowship**, *Philosophy Department, University of Maryland*.

---

## Teaching – Lead Instructor

- Summer 2016 **The Art of Thinking (PHIL 209Q)**, *University of Maryland*.  
19 students. Taught as part of Terp Young Scholars, a program hosted by the University of Maryland that offers courses for college credit to academically talented high school students.  
Syllbus: [goo.gl/N7tCj7](http://goo.gl/N7tCj7)
- Spring 2016 **Political & Social Philosophy (PHIL 245)**, *University of Maryland*.  
64 students. Syllabus: [goo.gl/N9FFWH](http://goo.gl/N9FFWH)

- Fall 2015 **The Nature of Morality (PHIL 408K)**, *University of Maryland*.  
23 students. Syllabus: [goo.gl/8qjcUY](http://goo.gl/8qjcUY)
- Summer 2015 **Introduction to Philosophy (PHIL 100)**, *University of Maryland*.  
18 students. Fully online. Syllabus: [goo.gl/64JUu1](http://goo.gl/64JUu1)
- Summer 2014 **Time's Arrow (PHIL 308A)**, *University of Maryland*.  
20 students. Fully online. Syllabus: [goo.gl/g6l4XL](http://goo.gl/g6l4XL)
- Spring 2014 **Metaphysics of Mind (PHIL 308X)**, *University of Maryland*.  
32 students. Hybrid course (1/3 online). Syllabus: [goo.gl/swV1Am](http://goo.gl/swV1Am)
- Winter 2014 **Philosophy of Time (PHIL 308K)**, *University of Maryland*.  
16 students. Fully online. Syllabus: [goo.gl/vssRxZ](http://goo.gl/vssRxZ)

## Teaching – Teaching Assistant

- Fall 2014 **Ethical Theory (PHIL 341)**, *University of Maryland*.  
Lead Instructor: Patricia Greenspan
- Fall 2013 **Introduction to Philosophy (PHIL 100)**, *University of Maryland*.  
Lead Instructor: Brock Rough
- Spring 2013 **Free Will and Determinism (PHIL 282)**, *University of Maryland*.  
Lead Instructor: Patricia Greenspan
- Fall 2012 **Contemporary Moral Issues (PHIL 140)**, *University of Maryland*.  
Lead Instructor: Mark Engelbert
- Spring 2012 **Introduction to Philosophy (PHIL 100)**, *University of Maryland*.  
Lead Instructor: Paul Pietroski

## Service

- 2005–present **Teaching philosophy through competitive high school debate.**
- Lecturer in philosophy (2011–2016) and curriculum director (2014–2016) at Victory Briefs Institute (VBI), the largest summer institute for high school Lincoln-Douglas debate.
  - Lincoln-Douglas debate coach (2005-present), currently for West Des Moines Valley High School in Iowa.
  - Coached national champions in Lincoln-Douglas debate at the high school level (2010) and middle school level (2011).
- 2015–present **Faculty Adviser, VegTerps**, *University of Maryland*.
- 2015 **Reviewer for “Social Minds” Conference**, *University of Maryland*.

## Graduate Coursework

### Courses for Credit

- Spring 2014 **Logical Form**, Paul Pietroski.
- Fall 2013 **Models, Confirmation, and Decisions Under Uncertainty**, Mathias Frisch.
- Fall 2013 **Libertarianism and Markets**, Dan Moller.
- Spring 2013 **Scarce Resource Allocation**, Samuel Kerstein.
- Spring 2013 **Gödel's Theorems**, Eric Pacuit.
- Fall 2012 **Defaults, Defeasibility, and Argumentation**, John Horty.

- Fall 2012 **Moral Intuitions**, Patricia Greenspan.  
Spring 2012 **Nichomachean Ethics**, Rachel Singpurwalla.  
Spring 2012 **Proseminar: Value Theory**, Patricia Greenspan.  
Fall 2011 **Chance**, Aidan Lyon.  
Fall 2011 **Why Be Just?**, Christopher Morris.  
Fall 2011 **Proseminar: Metaphysics, Mind, and Language**, Georges Rey.

#### Courses Audited

- Fall 2016 **Aesthetics and Cognitive Science**, Jerrold Levinson.  
Spring 2016 **Distributive Justice**, Dan Moller.  
Fall 2015 **Bananaworld: Quantum Mechanics for Primates**, Jeff Bub.  
Spring 2015 **Ethics and Evolution**, Patricia Greenspan.  
Fall 2014 **Global Order**, Christopher Morris.  
Spring 2014 **Epistemic Game Theory**, Eric Pacuit.  
Fall 2012 **From Social Choice to Theory Choice**, Michael Morreau.

---

#### References

**Samuel Kerstein**, *University of Maryland*, kerstein@umd.edu.

**Dan Moller**, *University of Maryland*, dmoller@umd.edu.

**Christopher Morris**, *University of Maryland*, cwmorris@umd.edu.

**Eric Pacuit**, *University of Maryland*, epacuit@umd.edu.

---

## Dissertation

- title *Rationality and Moral Risk: A Moderate Defense of Hedging*
- committee Dan Moller (chair), Samuel Kerstein, Christopher Morris, Eric Pacuit, Karol Soltan
- abstract How should an agent deliberate and act when she is uncertain not just about morally relevant empirical matters, like the consequences of a course of action, but about the basic principles of morality itself? This question has only very recently been taken up in a systematic way by philosophers. Advocates of *moral hedging* claim that an agent should weigh the reasons put forward by each moral theory in which she has positive credence, considering both the likelihood that that theory is true and the strength of the reasons it posits. The view that it is sometimes rational to hedge for one's moral uncertainties, however, has recently come under attack both from those who believe that an agent should be guided by the dictates of the single moral theory she deems most probable and from those who believe that an agent's moral beliefs are simply irrelevant to what she ought to do or is rationally required to do. Among the many objections to hedging that have been pressed in the recent literature is that rational hedging seems to require quantitative comparison between the reasons and values offered by rival moral theories, and there seems to be no non-arbitrary way of making such comparisons. The main objective of this dissertation is to defend the claim that it is sometimes (indeed, often) rational to hedge for one's moral uncertainties against this recent spate of objections. In the process, I devote particular attention to the question of how non-arbitrary intertheoretic comparisons of moral value are possible, arguing for a "bottom-up" approach that locates the bases for comparison in the shared structure and content of clusters of related moral theories. In the process of defending the rationality of hedging and developing this bottom-up approach to intertheoretic comparisons, I draw practical conclusions concerning the consequences of moral uncertainty and risk for questions including the practical force of potentially-supererogatory moral reasons and the strength of our obligations to future generations.