

Matthew J. Kisner
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Employment

University of South Carolina, Department Chair, Philosophy, 2022-present
University of South Carolina, Professor, Philosophy, 2018-present
University of South Carolina, Associate Professor, Philosophy, 2011-2018
University of South Carolina, Assistant Professor, Philosophy, 2004-2010

Education

PhD Philosophy: University of California San Diego, 2004
Dissertation: *Descartes's Naturalistic Rationalism*, Don Rutherford (chair),
Nicholas Jolley, Alan Nelson
MPhil Philosophy: University of California San Diego, 2001
BA Philosophy: Hampshire College, 1997

Area of Specialization

Early Modern Philosophy, Environmental Ethics

Areas of Competence

History of Ethics, Metaethics, Moral Psychology, Philosophy of the Emotions

Grants

Principle Investigator, Luce Foundation, Strengthening Democracy and Trust with South Carolina Environmental Justice Communities, August 2025-July 2027, \$200,000, funds a two-year Post-Doctoral Fellow in embedded environmental ethics.

Principal Investigator, Environmental Protection Agency, Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers, South Carolina subaward \$1 million over 5 years, engages with local communities to provide technical assistance for receiving federal funding to address environmental justice needs, September 2023, terminated April 2025.

Principal Investigator, Climate Ready Columbia, \$50,000 Grant from the Ann Johnson Institute for Science, Technology, and Society, to support community engagement work to assist local government and higher education in securing federal funding for local response to the climate crisis.

Principal Investigator, Climate Ready Columbia, \$37,700 Grant from the Ann Johnson Institute for Science, Technology, and Society, for course development, a speaker's series, and a conference (2020-2021)

Theme Semester Course Development Grant for Climate Justice and Columbia from the College of Arts and Sciences, UofSC (2020)

Books

Spinoza on Free Will, Cambridge Elements Series, Cambridge University Press, forthcoming, 2026.

Editor and co-translator with Michael Silverthorne, *Spinoza's Ethics*, *Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Editor, with Andrew Youpa, *Essays on Spinoza's Ethical Theory*, Oxford University Press, 2014.

Spinoza on Human Freedom: Reason, Autonomy and the Good Life, Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Essays

The Cambridge Spinoza Lexicon, Eds. Karolina Hübner and Justin Steinberg. Cambridge University Press, 2024. Entries on gloria, virtue, model of human nature, will, pietas.

"Maimonidean and Crescian: Spinoza on Moral Education and Human Perfection," *Theory and Research in Education*, special issue responding to the work of Steve Nadler, 22 (3), published online November 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14778785241291136>

"A Story of Three Fables: Mandeville, Montesquieu, and Spinoza on the Development of Secular Morality," *Roczniki Filozoficzne: Modern Faces of Law, Freedom and Toleration*, 72 (3): 2024, 109-128. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18290/rf24723.5>

"Shaftesbury's Distinctive Sentiments: Moral Sentiments and Self-Governance," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1515/agph-2022-0061>.

"Spinoza's Defense of Toleration: The Argument from Pluralism," *Roczniki Filozoficzne*, special issue on Spinoza and toleration, celebrating the work of Ed Curley, 70 (4): 2022.

“Spinoza, Baruch,” *Oxford Bibliographies in Renaissance and Reformation*. Ed. Margaret King, Oxford University Press (approximately 10,000 words, peer reviewed), revised version, 2021.

“Spinoza’s Guise of the Good: Getting to the Bottom of 3p9s,” *Philosophical Explorations*, 24: 2021, 34-47.

“Spinoza on Natures: The Metaphysics of Relational Autonomy,” in *Spinoza and Relational Autonomy*, eds. Andrea Sangiacomo, Keith Green, Aurelia Armstrong, University of Edinburgh Press, 2019.

“Spinoza Activities: Freedom without Independence,” in *Freedom, Action, and Motivation in Spinoza’s Ethics*, ed. Noa Naaman-Zauderer, Taylor and Francis, 2019.

“Descartes on the Ethical Reliability of the Passions: A Morean Reading,” *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy*, volume 8, eds. Don Rutherford and Daniel Garber, Oxford University Press, 2019.

“Introduction,” Spinoza’s *Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, 2018.

“Spinoza, Baruch,” *Oxford Bibliographies in Renaissance and Reformation*. Ed. Margaret King, Oxford University Press (10,755 word, peer reviewed), 2017.

“The Natural Law” (reprint), in *Spinoza and Law*, ed. Andre Santos Campos, Ashgate 2015.

“Introduction,” with Andrew Youpa, *Essays on Spinoza’s Ethical Theory*, Oxford University Press, 2014.

“Spinoza’s Liberalism,” *Philosophy Compass*, 7 (11): 2012, 782-93.

“Perfection and Desire: Spinoza on the Good,” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 91 (1): 2010, 97-117.

“Spinoza’s Model of Human Nature: Rethinking the Free Man,” *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy*, volume 5, 2010, 91-114.

“Spinoza’s Benevolence: The Rational Basis for Acting to the Benefit of Others,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 47 (4): 2009, 549-68.

“Spinoza’s Virtuous Passions,” *Review of Metaphysics*, 61 (4): 2008, 759-83.

“Rationalism and Method,” in *A Companion to Rationalism*. Ed. Alan Nelson. New York: Blackwell Publishing Co. 2005a, 137-155.

“Scepticism and the Early Descartes,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 13 (2): 2005b, 207-32.

“Lions, Foxes and Polecats: Would Hobbesian Subjects Agree to Covenant?” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 21: 2004, 81-100.

Reviews and Editorial Work

Descartes’s Moral Perfectionism, Frans Svensson, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 2024.08.11.

The Ethics of Joy: Spinoza on the Empowered Life, Andrew Youpa, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 2020.06.11.

Spinoza’s Ethics: A Critical Guide, ed. Yitzhak Melamed, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 2017.11.19.

The Spiritual Automaton: Spinoza’s Science of the Mind, Eugene Marshall, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* 2014.08.17.

Emotion and Cognitive Life in Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy, eds. Martin Pickavé and Lisa Shapiro, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* 2013.06.09.

Spinoza’s Radical Cartesian Mind, Tammy Nyden-Bullock, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* 2008.02.23.

Guest Editor, *Inquiry*, 51.2, September, 2008, issue devoted to “Naturalism in Modern Philosophy.”

Radical Cartesianism: The French Reception of Descartes, Tad Schmaltz, *Review of Metaphysics* 57: 2003, 439-441.

Descartes Embodied, Daniel Garber, *International Philosophical Quarterly* 42: 2002, 412-413.

Work in Progress

Wow: A Theory of Wonder and its Uses, book manuscript

The Moral Revolution: Spinoza and the Fate of Virtue in a Godless World, book manuscript

Spinoza on Free Will, book, under contract, Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2025.

Presentations

February 2025: “The Embedded Model for Environmental Ethics,” APA Central Division Meeting, virtual.

August 2024: “Spinoza on Human Perfection and the Love of God,” Conference on Spinoza and Education, hosted by Malmö University, Malmö, Sweden (virtual)

May 2024: “Environmental Ethics and Community Engagement at USC: A Case Study,” Society for the Philosophy of Science in Practice, Annual Meeting, University of South Carolina

October 2023: “How Spinoza Invented Modern Moral Philosophy,” invited talk, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland

October 2023: Invited Workshop Leader, Spinoza’s Theological-Political Treatise, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland

April 2022: “Spinoza’s Comparison Argument,” Colloquium, Pacific APA, Vancouver

February 2022: Critic, Author Meets Critics for Steve Nadler’s *Think Least of Death: Spinoza on How to Live and How to Die*, Johns Hopkins University

November 2021: Presentation on Climate Ready Columbia, UofSC Climate Change Research Panel

May 2021: “Spinoza on the Freedom of Reasoning: Uncommon Notions,” Spinoza on Freedom Workshop (virtual), University of California, San Diego

April 2021: “Spinoza Against the Transcendentals,” Spinoza Works in Progress Workshop (virtual), Cornell University

March 2020: Author Meets Critics Session, response to Sam Newland’s *Reconceiving Spinoza*, APA Central Division Meeting, Chicago

March 2018: Comments on Andrew Youpa’s manuscript, *Spinoza’s Moral Philosophy*, for a workshop on the subject, University of Toronto

November 2017: “Wondering about Wonder,” Queen Street Symposium, Columbia SC

October 2016: “Spinoza’s Activities,” invited, Philosophy Colloquium, Coastal Carolina University

October 2016: “Wondering about Wonder: How to Empathize with the Universe,” invited, The Jackson Family Center for Ethics and Values, Coastal Carolina University

March 2016: “Spinoza’s Activities,” Symposium, Central APA, Chicago

February 2016: “Spinoza’s Uncommon Notions,” North Carolina and South Carolina Society for Philosophy Meeting, Appalachian State University

July 2015: “Spinoza on the (Un)Reality of Goodness,” invited, Spinozanum Collegium, University of Groningen

April 2015: Comments on Daniel Collette’s “Passions Embodied: Descartes’s Ethics in the Letters to Elizabeth Revisited,” invited, Colloquium, Pacific APA, Vancouver

March 2015: “The Origin of Morality and Hobbes’s Criticism of Eudaimonism,” South Carolina Society for Philosophy, Wofford College

November 2014: “The Origin of Morality and Hobbes’s Criticism of Eudaimonism,” invited, Workshop on Morality and the Good Life, Uppsala University

September 2014: “Spinoza’s Surprising Aristotelianism about Powers,” invited, Workshop on Spinoza and Relational Autonomy, University of Groningen

September 2014: “Spinoza’s Activities,” Society for European Philosophy, Utrecht

April 2014: “Are Cartesian Passions Representational,” Descartes Society, Pacific APA, San Diego

April 2014: “Descartes’s Change of Heart About the Passions,” Colloquium, Pacific APA, San Diego

February 2014: “Spinoza on the Basis of Reason’s Dictates,” South Carolina Society for Philosophy, Furman University

May 2013: “Not So Common Notions: Spinoza on the Basis of Reason’s Dictates,” Scottish Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, University of Aberdeen

February 2013: “Descartes on the Moral Guidance of the Passions,” Southwest Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, California Polytechnic Institute

September 2011: “Excellent and Rare: Spinoza on the Good,” invited, Workshop on the Ethics of Spinoza’s *Ethics* Workshop, Texas A&M

July 2011: “Why Take Up the General Point of View?: Hume on Moral Motivation,” The International Hume Society, University of Edinburgh

November 2010: “Spinoza on the Possibility of Adequate Ideas: A Solution to the Wild Goose Chase Problem,” South Central Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, Texas A&M

January 2010: “Spinoza on the Ethics of Love,” invited, Philosophy Colloquium, Tufts University

April 2009: “The Perfection of Pleasure: Spinoza, Shaftesbury and Leibniz,” invited, Workshop on Conceptions of the Passions in Modern Philosophy, University of San Francisco

March 2009: “Rethinking Spinoza’s Free Man,” Colloquium, Pacific APA, Vancouver

February 2009: “Spinoza on the Value of Freedom,” North Sea Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, University of Leiden

December 2008: “Spinoza on the Value of Freedom,” invited, Philosophy Colloquium, University of Southern Illinois, Carbondale

May 2008: “Spinoza and the Liberal Tradition,” Workshop on Spinoza’s *Theologico-Political Treatise*, University of Leiden

March 2008: Commentator for Michael LeBuffe’s “Projectivism in the Ethics: 3p9s and 3p39s,” invited, Miniconference on Spinoza’s Psychology, Pacific APA, Vancouver

April 2007: Commentator for Michael Della Rocca’s “Causation without Intelligibility and Causation without God in Descartes,” Workshop on Naturalism in Modern Philosophy, University of South Carolina

March 2007: “Spinoza on the Intelligence of the Emotions,” Colloquium, Pacific APA

March 2007: “Spinoza’s Virtuous Passions,” Midwest Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, University of Chicago

January 2007: “Spinoza’s Virtuous Passions,” invited, Philosophy Colloquium, University of Miami

October 2006: “Virtuous Passions: Spinoza on the Power of Passivity,” invited, History of Philosophy Round Table, University of California, San Diego

April 2006: “Descartes on the Limits of Reason,” Colloquium, Central APA, Chicago

October 2005: “Descartes on the Limits of Reason,” invited, Philosophy Colloquium, University of South Carolina

October 2005: “Descartes on the Limits of Reason,” Southeast Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, University of Virginia

March 2005: “Descartes’ So-Called ‘Psychologism,’” Pacific APA, San Francisco

November 2004: “Descartes’ So-Called ‘Psychologism,’” Southeast Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, Hampden-Sydney College

February 2004: “Would Hobbesian Subjects Covenant?” invited, Philosophy Colloquium, William Paterson University

February 2004: “Descartes on Judgment,” invited, Philosophy Colloquium, University of South Carolina

February 2004: “Would Hobbesian Subjects Covenant?” invited, Philosophy Colloquium, Purchase College, SUNY

February 2004: “Descartes on Judgment,” invited, Philosophy Colloquium, Tulane University

February 2004: “Would Hobbesian Subjects Covenant?” invited, Philosophy Colloquium, Beloit College

April 2003: Commentator, UCSD Graduate Conference in Philosophy of Science, “Hobbes’ Methodological Materialism,” Stewart Duncan, Rutgers University

March 2003: “Skepticism and the Early Descartes,” Colloquium, Pacific APA, San Francisco

December 2002: “Mersenne’s Influence on Descartes,” Midwest Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, Lecce, Italy

October 2002: “Would Hobbesian Subjects Covenant?” Southern California Philosophy Conference, University of California, Irvine

October 2002: “Skepticism and the Early Descartes,” South Central Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, Texas Tech University, Lubbock

Academic Fellowships and Awards

Thank a Teacher note, teaching award, College of Arts and Science, August 2023

Principle Investigator, Luce Foundation, Strengthening Democracy and Trust with South Carolina Environmental Justice Communities, August 2025-July 2027

Principle Investigator, Environmental Protection Agency, Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center, 5-year, \$1 million subaward of a \$10 million grant, September 2023, terminated April 2025

Grant, Climate Justice, College of Arts and Sciences, for the Justice Themed Semester, 2020

Grant, Climate Change and Columbia, Ann Johnson Institute, for course development and a public facing conference, 2019, \$37,700

Two Thumbs Up Award for Undergraduate Teaching from the UofSC Office for Disability Services, 2017

Graduate Student Essay of the Year, UCSD, 2003, “Lions, Foxes and Polecats: Would Hobbesian Subjects Agree to Covenant?”

Summer Teaching Fellowship, 2003 (awarded on the basis of a university wide competition)

Outstanding Graduate Student Paper Award, “Skepticism and the Early Descartes,” APA Pacific Division, 2003

Center for the Humanities Fellowship, UCSD, Spring 2002 (awarded for outstanding dissertation work in the humanities at UCSD)

Dissertation Fellowship, UCSD, 2000-2001

First Year Fellowship, UCSD, 1997-1998

Languages

Reading competence in Latin, German and French

Professional Organizations

American Philosophical Association

Faculty Affiliate, Research Centre in Medieval and Early Modern Thought, Groningen University

Board Member, North American Spinoza Society

References

Steven Nadler, University of Wisconsin, smnadler@wisc.edu
Michael Della Rocca, Yale University, michael.della@yale.edu
Don Rutherford, Emeritus, University of California, San Diego,
drutherford@ucsd.edu
Michael LeBuffe, Otago University, Michael.lebuffe@otago.ac.nz
Leah McClimans, University of South Carolina, LMM@sc.edu