

# Joshua Edward Pearson

Australian National University  
School of Philosophy, 146 Ellery Crescent  
Canberra 2600 ACT

Phone: +1 (857) 320 5841  
Email: [joshuaedwardpearson@gmail.com](mailto:joshuaedwardpearson@gmail.com)  
Website: [joshuaedwardpearson.com](http://joshuaedwardpearson.com)

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- **AOS:** Epistemology, Philosophy of Language, Logic.
  - **AOC:** Metaphysics, Philosophy of Science, Ethics.
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## EMPLOYMENT

- From July 2025 - Postdoctoral Fellow, ANU
  - June 2024-May 2025 - Postdoctoral Associate, MIT.
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## EDUCATION

- 2019-2024 - Ph.D. in Philosophy, MIT.
  - 2017-2019 - BPhil in Philosophy, Oxford.
  - 2013-2016 - B.Sc. in Mathematics and Philosophy, University of Manchester.
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## PUBLICATIONS

- 'Belief Revision Revised'. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, forthcoming.
  - 'A Puzzle about Weak Belief'. *Analysis*, 2024.
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## PAPERS IN PROGRESS

- 'Composing Composers'. Under review.
  - 'Chancy-but-true Counterfactuals'. Under Review.
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## PRESENTATIONS

- 'Chancy-but-true Counterfactuals'
  - MIT Works in Progress, October 2025
- 'Composing Composers'
  - APA Eastern Division, January 2025.
  - Formal Methods and Science in Philosophy V, Dubrovnik, May 2024.
  - Northwestern/Notre Dame Graduate Conference in Epistemology, April 2024.
  - 45th UIUC Philosophy Graduate Conference, April 2024.

- ‘A Puzzle About Weak Belief’
  - APA Eastern Division, January 2024.
  - MIT Works in Progress, September 2022.
- ‘Anticipation Preservation’
  - APA Eastern Division, January 2023.
  - UCLA/USC Graduate Conference, April 2022.

## Comments

- Mikayla Kelley, Calum McNamara, Richard Roth and Snow Zhang on ‘Accuracy and Epistemic Modalities’
    - Formal Epistemology Workshop, 2025
  - Nilanjan Das on ‘Imprecision, Dominance and Information Aversion’
    - MITing of the Minds, 2023.
  - Bernhard Salow on ‘Evidence, Normality, and KK’
    - MITing of the Minds, 2021.
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## PHD THESIS

- **Title:** Belief is Messy.
  - **Committee:** Roger White (chair), Kevin Dorst, Jack Spencer and Bob Stalnaker.
  - **Abstract.** My thesis investigates belief in three central areas, arguing in each case that belief is far messier than hitherto appreciated. Chapters 1 and 2 argue that there are fewer constraints on when and how justified beliefs should be revised than usually supposed. In particular, I argue against the plausible principle ‘Anticipation’, which states that if both learning  $p$  and  $not-p$  would render belief in  $q$  unjustified, one cannot now be justified in believing  $q$ . I defend a new theory of belief revision that can embrace this fact, predicated on the simple idea that one is justified in ruling out possibility just in case that possibility is sufficiently improbable. Chapter 3 considers beliefs formed by induction, arguing they can constitute knowledge only if they display striking egocentric asymmetries. For example, an agent can know an urn contains only green marbles if *their* random sample is all green, without being able to know that an urn contains only green marbles if *someone else’s* random sample is all green. This raises a challenge: can any plausible theory of justified belief accommodate such bizarre asymmetries? I show how the theory defended in Chapters 1 and 2 can. Finally, Chapter 4 — now forthcoming in *Analysis* — considers the increasingly popular ‘weak belief’ thesis that belief is rationally compatible with low confidence. I outline a puzzle concerning beliefs in conditionals demonstrating that the relationship between belief ascriptions and rational belief cannot be as straightforward as proponents of weak belief assume.
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## TEACHING

### Instructor

- Theory of Knowledge, co-taught with Roger White, Fall 2024.
- Being, Thinking, Doing (or Not): Ethics in Your Life, co-taught with Nicholas Collura. Spring 2025.

### Guest Lectures

- 'Credence, Belief Revision and the Gambler's Fallacy' (own research), Foundations of Probability, Spring 2023.
- 'Credence and The Principle of Indifference', Paradox and Infinity, Spring 2023.
- 'Doris's Situational Critique of Virtue Ethics', Ethics, Fall 2022.
- 'Williamson on Skepticism', Theory of Knowledge, Spring 2021.
- 'Feldman on Reasonable Religious Disagreement', Philosophy of Religion, Fall 2020.

### Teaching Assistant

- Paradox and Infinity, Josh Hunt, Spring 2023.
- Ethics, Tamar Schapiro, Fall 2022.
- Paradox and Infinity, Andreas Ditter, Spring 2022.
- Problems of Philosophy, Caspar Hare, Fall 2021.
- Philosophy of Religion, Jack Spencer, Fall 2020.
- Theory of Knowledge, Roger White, Spring 2021 (Grader).

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## SERVICE

- Reviewer for *The Philosophical Quarterly*, *Synthese*, *Inquiry*, *Mind & Language* and *Manuscrito*, 2023-2025.
  - MIT Epistemology Reading Group Co-organiser, 2020-2021 and 2023-2024.
  - Graduate Professional Development Officer, 2022-2023.
  - MIT Epistemic Modals Reading Group Co-organiser, Summer 2023.
  - Graduate Representative, 2021-2022.
  - MIT Colloquium Co-organiser, 2020-2021.
  - MITing of the Minds (Alumni Conference) Co-organiser, 2020.
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## **GRADUATE COURSEWORK**

### **MIT**

- Topics in History of Philosophy: Spinoza & Hume; James Van Cleve, Spring 2021.
- Topics in Theory of Knowledge: Self-locating Evidence; Roger White & Caspar Hare, Spring 2021.
- Moral Philosophy: Kant; Tamar Schapiro, Fall 2020.
- Topics in Linguistics and Philosophy: Conditionals; Justin Khoo, Kai von Fintel & Sabine Iatridou, Fall 2020.
- Topics in Philosophy of Language: Vagueness; Justin Khoo & Jack Spencer, Spring 2020.
- Topics in the Philosophy of Agency; Tamar Schapiro, Spring 2020.
- Proseminar 2: Contemporary Analytic Philosophy; Alex Byrne and Roger White, Spring 2020.
- Independent Study: Problems for Bayesianism; Miriam Schoenfield, Fall 2019.
- Topics in Metaphysics; Bob Stalnaker, Fall 2019.
- Proseminar 1: Early Analytic Philosophy; Steve Yablo and Sally Haslanger, Fall 2019.

### **Oxford**

- Thesis: Contextualism About Evidence; Bernhard Salow, Spring 2019.
  - Philosophy of Mathematics: The Epistemic Value of Proofs; Alexander Paseau, Fall 2018.
  - History of Philosophy Before 1800: Reid on Testimony; Alison Hills, Fall 2018.
  - Metaethics: Moral Contingentism; Alison Hills, Summer 2018.
  - History of Philosophy 1800-1950: Moore on Intrinsic Value; Alison Hills, Summer 2018.
  - Epistemology: Lewisian Contextualism; Alexander Paseau, Spring 2018.
  - Logic and Philosophy of Logic: Logical Pluralism; Alexander Paseau, Spring 2018.
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## **AWARDS, GRANTS AND HONORS**

- Prize for best paper at the 45th UIUC Philosophy Graduate Conference for 'Composing Composers', 2024.
  - Trinity College Academic Prize for excellent results in Year 1 of the BPhil, 2018.
  - Trinity College Academic Grant to attend the Urbino Summer School in Epistemology, 2018.
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## REFERENCES

*For confidential letters of recommendation, contact Christine Graham at [cgraham@mit.edu](mailto:cgraham@mit.edu).*

- Roger White, [rog@mit.edu](mailto:rog@mit.edu).
- Kevin Dorst, [kmdorst@mit.edu](mailto:kmdorst@mit.edu).
- Bob Stalnaker, [stal@mit.edu](mailto:stal@mit.edu).
- Jeremy Goodman (external, John Hopkins University), [goodman.jeremy@gmail.com](mailto:goodman.jeremy@gmail.com).
- Tamar Schapiro (teaching), [tamschap@mit.edu](mailto:tamschap@mit.edu).