

Curtis Sommerlatte

Union College
Department of Philosophy
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Areas of Specialization

Kant, Early-Modern Philosophy, Phenomenology & Existentialism (especially Sartre)

Areas of Competence

Ancient Greek Philosophy, 19th-Century Philosophy, History of Early-Analytic Philosophy, Ethics

EMPLOYMENT

Visiting Assistant Professor
Union College, Department of Philosophy, Fall 2018–Present
Assistant Professor, Limited-Term Appointment
Concordia University (Montreal), Department of Philosophy, Fall 2016–Spring 2018

EDUCATION

Indiana University, Bloomington
2008-16, Ph.D. in Philosophy (Ph.D. Minor in 18th-Century Studies)
Freie Universität, Berlin
2011-12 Direct Exchange Fellowship with IUB
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
2006-08, M.A. in Philosophy
Southwestern University
2002-06, B.A. in Economics (Minor in Philosophy), *summa cum laude*

RESEARCH

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

02. 2017. "Sartre's Case for Nonthetic Consciousness: The Ground of the Cartesian Cogito's Certainty and the Methodological Basis for Phenomenological Ontology". *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*. 99:4, 405-442. DOI: [10.1515/agph-2017-0020](https://doi.org/10.1515/agph-2017-0020).
01. 2016. "Empirical Cognition in the Transcendental Deduction: Kant's Starting Point and his Humean Problem". *Kantian Review* 21:3, 437-63. DOI: [10.1017/S1369415416000273](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415416000273).

Invited Book Chapters

01. (forthcoming 2019.) "Sartre on Temporality". In *The Sartrean Mind*. Eds. Matthew C. Eshleman, Christophe Perrin, and Constance Mui. London: Routledge.

Peer-Reviewed Contributions to Conference Proceedings

01. (forthcoming 2018.) "Erkenntnis in Kant's Logical Works". In *Akten des 12. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses*. Eds. Violetta L. Waibel and Margit Ruffing. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Book Reviews

02. 2018. "Béatrice Longuenesse, *I, Me, Mine: Back to Kant, and Back Again*". *Kantian Review* 23: 2, 504-510. DOI: [10.1017/S1369415418000328](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000328).
01. 2016. "Sofia Miguens, Gerhard Preyer, and Clara Bravo Morando, eds., *Pre-Reflective Consciousness: Sartre and Contemporary Philosophy of Mind*". *Sartre Studies International* 22:2, 108-114. DOI: [10.3167/ssi.2016.220207](https://doi.org/10.3167/ssi.2016.220207).

Refereed Presentations

13. "Dramatic Dialectic in the *Meno*: Meno's Character and Divine Dispensation of True Beliefs"
2018, Oct. 20 2018 Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy, Christopher Newport Univ., VA
12. "Tetens on the Contribution of *Dichtkraft* to Human Cognition"
2018, May 4 Workshop on J. N. Tetens' *Philosophische Versuche*, St. Thomas University
11. "Kant's Argument for the Empirical Synthesis of Reproduction in Imagination"
2016, Dec. 13 Kant's A-Deduction, Institute of Philosophy of KU Leuven, Belgium
10. "Sartre on Subjectivity and Non-Knowledge: A Bridge between Existentialism and Marxism?"
2016, Nov. 5 22nd Meeting of the North Amer. Sartre Society, UNC, Wilmington
09. "Kant's Argument for the Empirical Synthesis of Reproduction in Imagination"
2016, Oct. 15 7th Quebec Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, Trois-Rivières, Quebec
08. "Prison Pedagogy: Challenges, Advantages, Aims, & Methods" (with Mariam E. Kazanjian)
2016, Jul. 29 21st Workshop of the American Association of Philosophy Teachers
07. "Sartre's Introduction to Husserl via Levinas"
2015, Nov. 14 21st Meeting of the North American Sartre Society, Bethlehem, PA
06. "*Erkenntnis* in Kant's Logical Works"
2015, Sep. 22 12th International Kant Congress, University of Vienna
05. "Kant's Denial that Animals have Consciousness"
2015, May 29 3rd Annual Leuven Kant Conference, Institute of Philosophy, KU Leuven
04. "Sartre's Case for Nonthetic Consciousness"
2015, Jan. 31 Thinking with Sartre Today, Maison Française d'Oxford
03. "Kant's Denial that Animals have Consciousness"
2014, Nov. 8 History of Science Society's 2014 Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL
02. "Kant's Subjective Deduction and the Copernican Revolution"
2014, Oct. 25 Midwest Group of the North American Kant Society, Washington Univ.
01. "Kant's Notion of Cognition and the Leibnizian-Wolffian Background of Clarity & Distinctness"
2014, Mar. 1 Southern Group of the North American Kant Society, Rhodes College

Other Presentations

02. "Kant's Conception of Cognition and Why Cognition Isn't Justified True Belief"
2014, Apr. 4 IUB Philosophy Dept. 2014 Nelson Fellowship Lecture
01. "Descartes' Conception of Clarity and Distinctness"
2013, Oct. 25 IUB Philosophy Dept. Graduate Student Colloquium

Professional Commentaries

05. On N. Hoffer, "Kant's *CPJ* as the 'True Apology' to Leibniz's Pre-Established Harmony"
2019, Jan. 7-10 APA Eastern Division Meeting, New York
04. On Joshua Wilburn, "*Thumos* and Friendship in Plato's *Republic*"
2018, Feb. 24 APA Central Division Meeting, Chicago
03. On Samuel Kahn, "A Kantian Take on Fallible Principles and Fallible Judgments"
2014, Oct. 18 Indiana Phil. Assoc. Fall Meeting, Indiana Uni.-Purdue Univ., Fort Wayne
02. On Zhiheng Tang, "The Contrastive Question & Bottom-Up Principle of Causal Explanations"
2009, Dec. 5 Indiana Phil. Assoc. Fall Meeting, Indiana University, Bloomington
01. On Matt Kopec, "Reference and the Cause of Non-Existent Objects"
2007, Nov. 3 Graduate Philosophy Conference, Virginia Tech

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Visiting Assistant Professor, Union College

17th & 18th Century European Philosophy (introductory level): Fall 2018
Reason, Science, and Humanity (intermediate early-modern): Fall 2018
Evil (interdisciplinary First-Year Preceptorial): Winter 2019
The Contemporary Crisis of Truth (intermediate phenomenology): Winter 2019
Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Philosophy (introductory level): Spring 2019
Existentialist Literature (intermediate level): Spring 2019

Assistant Professor (Limited Term Appointment), Concordia University

Kant's Epistemology (cross-listed undergraduate & graduate): Winter 2018
Empiricism: Winter 2017, Winter 2018
Biomedical Ethics (*online course*): Fall 2016, Winter 2017, Fall 2017, Winter 2018
Plato's Epistemology (cross-listed undergraduate & graduate): Fall 2017
Rationalism: Fall 2016, Fall 2017
Kant & 19th-Century Philosophy: Fall 2016, Fall 2017
Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (undergraduate & graduate level): Winter 2017

Volunteer Adjunct Instructor, Indiana Women's Prison accredited by Holy Cross College

Topics in Social & Political Philosophy (co-taught with Mariam E. Kazanjian): Spring 2016
Introduction to Philosophy: Fall 2015

Lead Instructor, Indiana University

Introduction to Philosophy: Fall 2014, Spring 2013
Introduction to Ethics: Fall 2012

Teaching Assistant, Indiana University (lead instructor in parentheses)

Introduction to Philosophy: Spring 2011 (Kirk Ludwig), Fall 2010 (Gary Ebbs)
Introduction to Ethics: Spring 2010 (Matt Caldwell)
Introduction to Existentialism: Fall 2009 (Paul Vincent Spade)
Thinking and Reasoning: Fall 2008 (Chris Tillman)
Ancient Greek Philosophy: Spring 2015 (*grader*) (Pieter Sjoerd Hasper)
Classics in Social and Political Philosophy: Fall 2012 (*grader*) (Allen W. Wood)

Teaching Assistant, Virginia Tech (lead instructor in parentheses)

Knowledge and Reality: Spring 2008 (James C. Klagge), Fall 2006 (Joseph Pitt)
Global Ethics: Fall 2007 (*grader*) (Kevin Michael Klipfel)
Morality and Justice: Spring 2007 (Steven Daskal)

Supervision of Undergraduate Research

Armig Batmanian, Concordia Undergraduate Student Research Award: "Immanuel Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and its Reception in German Philosophy"

ADDITIONAL COURSES I AM PREPARED TO TEACH

Introductory

- * Critical Thinking
- * Symbolic Logic
- * Philosophy of Religion

Intermediate Undergrad.

- * Ancient-Greek Philosophy
- * History of Ethics
- * Kierkegaard

Advanced Undergrad./Grad.

- * Kant's Ethics
- * Sartre
- * Hist. of Early Analytic Phil.

TEACHING DEVELOPMENT

2018, Aug. 27-29 Faculty Development Institute (Union College)
2014, Jun. 06-13 Summer Course Development Institute (Indiana University, Bloomington)
2012-15 Consulting with Katie Kearns (IUB Innovative Teaching & Learning)

HONORS AND AWARDS

- 2018 Selected for the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* Master Class, “Lady Mary Shepherd: Causation, Perception, and Knowledge of the External World”
- 2015-16 College of Arts and Sciences Dissertation Year Research Fellowship
- 2015-16 Eighteenth-Century Studies Dissertation-Year Fellowship [*declined*]
- 2015 Graduate Conference Travel Award, IUB College Arts & Humanities Institute
- 2014 History of Science Society Travel Grant
- 2014 Oscar R. Ewing Graduate Essay Prize, IUB Dept. of Philosophy
- 2014 Graduate Student Travel Grant, IUB College of Arts and Sciences
- 2013-14 James B. Nelson Dissertation Fellowship, IUB Dept. of Philosophy
- 2013 Irving and Shirley Brand Graduate Fellowship, IUB Graduate School
- 2011-12 Graduate Direct Exchange Fellowship, IUB—Freie Universität, Berlin
- 2010 Bo & Lynn Clark Essay Prize for 1st & 2nd Year Grad. Students, IUB Dept. of Phil.
- 2010 Award for Graduate Academic Excellence, IUB Dept. of Philosophy
- 2006 Southwestern University Outstanding Economics Student Award
- 2006 Phi Beta Kappa

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- * American Philosophical Association
- * American Association of Philosophy Teachers
- * Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy
- * North American Kant Society
- * North American Sartre Society

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

- 2017- Editor for PhilPapers of “Kant: Cognition and Knowledge”
- 2017 Panel Member for Information Session about Graduate School, Concordia, Apr. 3
- 2016 Chair, Colloquium on Kant’s Logic & Aesthetics, Eastern APA, Jan. 8
- 2015 Chair, Kant on Knowledge and Cognition, Univ. of Wisc.-Madison, Oct. 23
- 2013 Chair, Midwest Group of NAKS, IU—Southeast, New Albany, IN, Mar. 9
- 2012-13 Representative to the Graduate Curriculum Committee, IU Dept. of Philosophy

REFEREEING

- Translations: Detailed comments & report on Sarah Richmond’s forthcoming translation of Sartre’s *L’Être et le Néant* with Routledge
- Journals: *Philosophical Papers*, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, *Kantian Review*, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*
- Books: MIT Press (proposal)
- Conferences: Indiana Philosophical Association

OUTREACH

- 2016 With Margaret E. Gray, Interview for WFHB Radio Program *Interchange*, January 19, URL: <http://wfhb.org/news/interchange-freedoms-just-another-word-for-absurdity-sartre-beauvoir-and-camus/>
- 2015-16 Volunteer Adjunct Instructor, Indiana Women’s Prison
Teaching Philosophy Courses (accredited by Holy Cross College) to inmates

LANGUAGES

- * German (Reading, Translating, Speaking)
- * French (Reading, Translating)
- * Attic Greek (Reading)
- * Latin (Reading)

GRADUATE COURSEWORK

HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

Ancient and Medieval

- * Plato & Aristotle (Mark Gifford) ‡
- * *Theaetetus* in Greek (Pieter Hasper) ‡
- * History of Ethics (Paul D. Eisenberg)
- * Medieval Prob. of Universals (Paul Spade)

Early Modern

- * Locke and Berkeley (Walter Ott)
- * Meaning in Early Mod. Phil. (Walter Ott) †
- * Hume (Frederick F. Schmitt) †

Kant

- * Kant's First *Critique* (Allen W. Wood)
- * Kant's Ethics (Allen W. Wood)
- * *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Georg Bertram) †

Post-Kantian

- * Fichte's Ethics (Allen W. Wood) †
- * Kierkegaard (Paul Vincent Spade) ‡
- * Jean-Paul Sartre (Paul Vincent Spade)

Early Analytic

- * Frege (Joan Weiner)
- * Hist. of Analytic Phil. (James C. Klagge) †
- * Carnap and Quine (Gary Ebbs)
- * Wittgenstein (James C. Klagge)
- * Later Wittgenstein (Adam Leite) †

REFERENCES

Corey W. Dyck (cdyck5@uwo.ca)

Professor of Philosophy, Western University, London, Ontario

Gary Ebbs (gebbs@indiana.edu) [*reference for research & teaching*]

Chair of Department & Professor of Philosophy, Indiana University, Bloomington

Matthew Eshleman (eshlemanm@uncw.edu)

Associate Professor of Philosophy, University of North Carolina, Wilmington

Gregory Lavers (Greg.Lavers@concordia.ca) [*teaching reference*]

Interim Chair & Associate Professor of Philosophy, Concordia University, Montreal

Adam Leite (aleite@indiana.edu)

Associate Professor of Philosophy, Indiana University, Bloomington

Walter Ott (wo5n@virginia.edu)

Associate Professor of Philosophy, University of Virginia

Paul Vincent Spade (spade@indiana.edu)

Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus, Indiana University, Bloomington

Allen W. Wood (awwood@indiana.edu)

Ruth Norman Halls Professor of Philosophy, Indiana University, Bloomington

CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

Metaphysics, Epistemology, and Phil. of Science

- * Epistemology (Walter Ott)
- * Self-Knowledge (Adam Leite)
- * Sebastian Rödl's *Self-Consciousness* ‡
- * Philosophy of Science (Daniel Parker)

Logic

- * Symbolic Logic (Brian Epstein)
- * Metalogic (Daniel Parker)
- * Logical Theory I (David Charles McCarty)

Value Theory

- * Metaethics (William FitzPatrick)
- * Metaethics (Kevin Toh)
- * Normative Ethics (William FitzPatrick) †

INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

- * English Syntax (Clare Dannenberg)
- * Game Theory (Robert Gilles)
- * 18th-Century Studies (Mary Favret & Dror Wahrman)
- * French Revolution (Rebecca Spang)

(*audited courses indicated by †; reading groups indicated by ‡*)

DISSERTATION

Title: The Central Role of Cognition in Kant's Transcendental Deduction ([link](#))

Committee: Allen W. Wood (chair), Gary Ebbs, Adam Leite, Paul Vincent Spade, Rebecca Spang (Department of History)

Short Abstract:

I argue that Kant's primary epistemological concern in the *Critique of Pure Reason's* transcendental deduction is empirical cognition. I show how empirical cognition is best understood as "rational sensory discrimination": the capacity to discriminate sensory objects through the use of concepts and with a sensitivity to the normativity of reasons. My dissertation focuses on Kant's starting assumption of the transcendental deduction, which I argue to be the thesis that we have empirical cognition. I then show how Kant's own subjective deduction fleshes out his conception of empirical cognition and is intertwined with key steps in the transcendental deduction's arguments that the categories have objective validity and that we have synthetic a priori cognition.

Longer Abstract:

The transcendental deduction of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* aims to establish that the categories—a priori concepts including "substance" and "cause and effect"—genuinely apply to objects of experience. I argue that Kant's under-investigated notion of empirical cognition is the transcendental deduction's central epistemological notion and that it refers primarily to "rational sensory discrimination". Kant's focus on empirical cognition is of interest insofar as more familiar epistemological concerns—e.g., about certainty or justification—are secondary to his distinctive task of explaining how it is possible for us to make rational sensory discriminations.

Chapter 1 traces the history, beginning with Descartes but continuing through Leibniz and Wolff, of the epistemological notions of clarity and distinctness. With this historical background, I argue in Chapter 2 that Kant conceives of empirical cognition as clear and discursively distinct representation: the identification or differentiation (whether correct or not) of objects of experience from each other, occurring through a capacity to become aware of and express normative reasons (whether good or not) for those identifications or differentiations. That is, empirical cognition is "rational sensory discrimination".

I show in Chapter 3 that the transcendental deduction's starting assumption is that we have empirical cognition in this sense. Although others have held that Kant assumes we have empirical cognition, I provide fuller evidence for this interpretation over its competitors and show how Kant understood Hume as likewise assuming we have empirical cognition.

Kant's argumentative strategy consists of two intertwined strands: (1) the objective deduction, which aims to show that the categories have objective validity; and, (2) the subjective deduction, whose purpose has been a matter of scholarly debate. I argue in Chapter 4 that the subjective deduction has two aims: elucidating the objective deduction's starting assumption in order to show how the understanding has a cognitive relation to objects, and preparing the reader for Kant's extension of his Copernican Revolution—the guiding thought that objects must conform to our cognition rather than the other way around—to the faculty of the understanding.

In Chapter 5, I present an account of the empirical side of the subjective deduction. I show that Kant's argument is that an empirical threefold synthesis, grounded on three empirical faculties of the mind, is required for a cognitive subject to represent normative reasons, which representations are shown to be necessary on my interpretation of empirical cognition.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 concern the a priori side of the subjective deduction, namely why Kant thinks that—in addition to the a priori faculty of sensibility investigated in the *Transcendental Aesthetic*—two additional a priori faculties make possible the empirical threefold synthesis: transcendental apperception and pure imagination. And as I argue in those chapters, Kant's

arguments for each of these a priori faculties are not only shared by the subjective and objective deductions, but are also central to the Transcendental Deduction chapter of both editions of the first *Critique*.

Chapter 6 concerns transcendental apperception, which guarantees the possibility of a cognitive subject's a priori self-consciousness of her own numerical identity as a cognitive subject. I argue that Kant holds transcendental apperception to be necessary for empirical cognition insofar as a cognitive subject must be sensitive to the normativity of concepts used in her empirical cognition. I conclude this chapter by sketching how this argument for transcendental apperception sets up the objective deduction's attempted demonstration of the categories' objective validity.

In Chapter 7, I present the A-edition's argument that a faculty of pure imagination is necessary for empirical cognition. This argument is of great importance because it also shows that the understanding uses the categories to legislate a priori laws of nature. Nevertheless, the A-edition's argument suffers from a crucial flaw.

Accordingly, I show in Chapter 8 how the B-edition's argument attempts to avoid the aforementioned flaw. In explaining this new argument, I thereby offer a new answer to Dieter Henrich's famous "problem of the two-steps-in-one-proof", viz., the oddity that the B-edition's argument contains two steps, the second of which seems to be redundant. I argue that the solution to this problem lies in recognizing that whereas the first step attempts to establish that the categories have objective validity insofar as any appearance *directly given* and cognized by us must stand under them, the second step appeals to our formal intuitions of space and time in order to show that *all appearances*—even those that are not directly presented to our senses—must stand under the categories. Kant attempts to achieve the latter by showing that, insofar as all appearances are in space and time, and insofar as space and time are apperceived as "formal intuitions", all appearances must be subject to a priori laws of nature legislated by our faculty of understanding.