

# Brennan K. McDavid

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## Academic Positions

**Assistant Professor**, Chapman University, Philosophy Department and Smith Institute for Political Economy and Philosophy, August 2020 to present

**Visiting Assistant Professor**, Chapman University, Philosophy Department and Smith Institute for Political Economy and Philosophy, August 2018 to May 2020

**Seymour Reader in Ancient History and Philosophy**, Ormond College, a residential college at the University of Melbourne, July 2015 to June 2018

**Fellow**, University of Melbourne, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, July 2015 to June 2018

**Research Fellow**, Centre for Ethical Leadership at Ormond College, July 2015 to June 2018

**Visiting Research Fellow**, Chapman University, January 2017

## Education

**Ph. D., Classical Philosophy**, Princeton University, July 2015

Dissertation: *"Aristotle on Ethical Epistemology;"* advisers: Benjamin Morison (primary), John Cooper

**M.A. Classical Philology**, University of Arizona, May 2010

Thesis: *"Looking for Eudaimonia: An Examination of Plato's Conception of Happiness in the Republic;"*  
Committee: Rachana Kamtekar (adviser), Julia Annas, David Christenson

**B.A. Philosophy and Political Science**, minor in History, Vanderbilt University, May 2007

## Publications

### Articles & Chapters

7. "Prison-Breaking from Plato's Cave." In: *Classical Quarterly* (Forthcoming).
6. "The Psychology of Money in Plato's Republic." In: *History of Political Economy* (Forthcoming).
5. "Φύσις in Plato's Republic." In: *Ancient Philosophy* 44 (2024), pp. 1–16.
4. With Keith Hankins. "Adam Smith and the Creative Role of Imagination." In: *Adam Smith and Modernity*. Ed. by Alberto Burgio. Routledge, 2023.
3. "'Meddling in the Work of Another': πολυπραγμονεῖν in Plato's Republic." In: *Plato Journal* 23 (2022), pp. 95–107.
2. "Plato's Market Optimism." In: *Polis: The Journal for Ancient Greek and Roman Political Thought* 39 (2022), pp. 456–465.

1. "On Why the City of Pigs and Clocks are Not Just." In: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 57 (2019), pp. 571–594.

## Book Reviews

5. Merrick Anderson. *Just Prospering? Plato and the Sophistic Debate about Justice*. In: *British Journal of the History of Philosophy* (2025), pp. 1–6.
4. Lloyd Gerson. *Plato's Moral Realism*. In: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* vol. 63 (2025), pp. 479–480.
3. Melissa Lane. *Of Rule and Office: Plato's Ideas of the Political*. In: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* vol. 63 (2025), pp. 147–148.
2. Katherine Hawley. *How to be Truthworthy*. In: *Journal of Moral Philosophy* vol. 18 (2021), pp. 433–436.
1. *Bridging the Gap between Aristotle's Science and Ethics*. In: *Notre Dame Philosophical Review* (2015). Ed. by Devin Henry and Karen Margrethe Nielson. URL: <https://ndpr.nd.edu/reviews/bridging-the-gap-between-aristotle-s-science-and-ethics/>.

## Awards & Fellowships

**McGovern Training Program in Trusted Artificial Intelligence Grant**, Chapman University (2025–2026, \$10,000 for "Modeling Trust in Human-AI Iterations of Principal-Agent Relationships: An Experimental Approach")

*Co-PI with Erik Kimbrough. Competitive grant for research and activities relating to AI*

**Faculty Grant for Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities**, Chapman University (2025–2026, \$7,000 for "Economic Thought in the Ancient Academic and Peripatetic Schools")

*Competitive grant awarded by the Office of Research to promising new research in any discipline within the University*

**Pedagogical Innovation Grant**, Chapman University (2024–2025; \$5,000 for "Dangerous Ideas")

*Co-PI with Erik Kimbrough. Competitive grant awarded to professors developing new courses that advance the University's mission to provide a personal education*

**Laurance S. Rockefeller Graduate Prize Fellowship**, Center for Human Values, Princeton University (2014–15)

*Competitive fellowship awarded to students working on issues concerning human values*

**Stanley J. Seeger Fellowship**, Program in Hellenic Studies, Princeton University (2011, 2012, 2013, 2014)

*Summer travel grant for studies pertaining to the ancient world; utilized for the Princeton Classical Philosophy annual Greek philosophy reading group in Greece*

**P.E. More Fellowship**, Princeton University (2010–2015)

*Graduate fellowship awarded to students working on ancient philosophy*

## Presentations

**"Plato's Middlemen"**

*Social Justice in Ancient Greek and Roman Philosophy workshop at University of Colorado, Boulder. 10–13 April 2025.*

**"The Dangers of Craft Wisdom."**

*West Coast Plato Workshop. Seattle University. May 2024.*

*Central APA. Virtual. February 2025.*

**"The Economic Expertise of the Philosopher Rulers."**

*Economic Epistemologies in the Graeco-Roman World. Leiden. 24–27 August 2023.*

**“Aspiration in Adam Smith’s Virtue Ethics.”**

*International Adam Smith Society, St. Andrews Conference. July 2023.*

**“The Psychology of Money in Plato’s Republic.”**

*Stanford Ethics and Politics, Ancient and Modern workshop. Stanford, CA. 1 December 2022.*

*Central APA. Denver, CO. March 2023.*

**“Adam Smith on Imagination.”**

*Mid-West Political Science Association meeting. Chicago, IL. April 2022. (with Keith Hankins)*

**“Plato’s Market Optimism.”**

*Mid-West Political Science Association meeting. Chicago, IL. April 2022.*

**“Plato’s Market Pessimism.”**

*Chapman University. Orange, CA. February 2020.*

*University of California, Riverside Ancient Philosophy Workshop. 31 May–1 June 2019.*

**“Aristotle’s Empiricism.”**

*Classics in the City, Australian Club. Melbourne. 14 May 2018.*

**“Meddling in the work of another.”**

*Symposium at American Philosophical Association, Pacific Meeting. San Diego, CA. 28 March–1 April 2018.*

*Cambridge B Club. Cambridge, UK. 14 November 2017.*

**“Adam Smith’s Theory of Soul.”**

*International Adam Smith Society annual meeting, Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez. Viña del Mar, Chile. 12–13 January 2018.*

**“Peer Disagreement and Aristotle’s Ethics.”**

*Australasian Association of Philosophy annual conference, University of Adelaide. Adelaide. 2–6 July 2017*

**“Aristotle and the Uniqueness Thesis.”**

*Princeton Classical Colloquium. 2–4 December 2016.*

*University of Queensland philosophy colloquium series. 16 September 2016.*

**“Moral Habituation: a prerequisite for Aristotle’s Ethics Class.”**

*Connecting Virtues: Theoretical and Intellectual Insights. Genoa, Italy. 27–30 September 2016.*

*W.H. Allen Memorial Lecture for the Classical Association of Victoria. Melbourne. 14 September 2016.*

**“Knowledge in Aristotle’s Best Life.”**

*Aristotle World Congress: 2400th anniversary of Aristotle’s birth. Thessaloniki. 23–28 May 2016.*

*Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne, Victoria. 7 April 2016.*

*Keynote at Victoria Postgraduate Philosophy Workshop. Melbourne. 13 November 2015.*

*University of Sydney philosophy colloquium series. 7 October 2015.*

**“What’s Scientific about Aristotle’s Ethics?”**

*Monash University philosophy colloquium series. 8 April 2016.*

*Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy panel at the American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division meeting. Philadelphia. 28 December 2014.*

*Rocky Mountain Ethics Conference. 7–10 August 2014.*

**“Ancient Conceptions of Happiness.”**

*Victoria Association for Philosophy in Schools. Melbourne. 13 September 2015.*

**“The Virtue of Fine Deportment.”**

*Neglected Virtues: a conference in honor of Rosalind Hursthouse. Auckland, New Zealand. 15 August 2015.*

**“Aristotle on Knowing the Starting Points of Ethical Knowledge.”**

*Australasian Association of Philosophy, Macquarie University. Sydney, Australia. 5–10 July 2015.*

*Boston University. 23 January 2015.*

**“Aristotle on the Structure of Knowledge.”**

*Lawrence University. 27 January 2015.*

**Translation and commentary, Plato’s *Republic* 439b2-e2.**

*Princeton-University of São Paulo Workshop on Ancient Philosophy. Princeton. 16–18 January 2015.*

**Translation and commentary, Aristotle’s *De Partibus Animalium* I.**

*Princeton Classical Philosophy Summer Workshop. Spetses, Greece. 21–25 July 2014.*

**“Two Forms of Psychic Rule in Plato’s *Republic*.”**

*Princeton Philosophical Society. 10 April 2014.*

**Commentary, Aristotle’s *Physics* 1.6 and 1.8.**

*Princeton-University of São Paulo Workshop on Ancient Philosophy. São Paulo. 16–19 January 2014.*

**Translation and commentary, Aristotle’s *Physics* 204a8-204b4.**

*Princeton Classical Philosophy Summer Workshop. Athens, 8–12 July 2013.*

**“Understanding Aristotle’s Category Theory Through *Topics* 1.9.”**

*Catholic University of America’s graduate conference in philosophy. March 2013.*

**Translation and commentary, Aristotle’s *De Sensu et Sensibilibus* 436b8-437a18.**

*Princeton Classical Philosophy Summer Workshop. Athens. 10–14 July 2012.*

**Translation and commentary, Aristotle’s *On Dreams* 461b7-462a8.**

*Princeton Classical Philosophy Summer Workshop. Crete. 11–15 July 2011.*

**“Contentless Consciousness: The Dreamless Sleep Analogy in Indian Philosophy.”**

*Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy conference. New York. October 2010.*

**“The Happiness of the Virtuous Person.”**

*University of Arizona Classics Department Graduate Student Colloquium. Tucson. April 2010.*

## Teaching Experience

### Chapman University

Average global teaching score across Chapman courses: 4.56 out of 5

**From Socrates to Aquinas, PHIL 310 (every semester)**

*Primary Instructor. Survey of major intellectual developments in metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of science, and ethics.*

**Aesthetics and the Visual Arts (Spring 2025)**

*Co-Instructor with John Hoffman. Survey of aesthetic theories with both historical depth through great books and global breadth through comparative analyses of Western, Japanese, African, and South American traditions.*

**Dangerous Ideas, FFC 100 (Fall 2024)**

*Co-Instructor with Erik Kimbrough. Rigorous introduction to methods in argumentation and evidence evaluation, with focus on learning to engage rationally with controversial viewpoints.*

**Independent Study: Aesthetics, PHIL 399 (Spring 2024)**

*Primary Instructor. Survey of ancient (Plato/Aristotle) to modern (Kant/Nehamas/Riggle) theories of beauty and art.*

**Bootcamp in Aristotle Metaphysics, PHIL 360 (Fall 2021, Fall 2023)**

*Primary Instructor. Intensive concept- and skill-building in Aristotle’s theories of logic, epistemology, and metaphysics.*

**Topics in Humanomics: What is Progress?, ECON/ENG/PHIL 357 (Interterm 2023 and 2024)**

*Co-Instructor with Erik Kimbrough. Survey of multiple dimensions of progress (material, moral, and artistic) in context of great societies (Classical Greece, Roman Empire, and Industrial Revolution).*

**Introduction to Philosophy, PHIL 101 (Fall 2022)**

*Primary Instructor. Survey of significant contemporary problems in philosophy with attention to their historical roots and modern methodologies.*

**Topics in Humanomics: Shame: The Civilizing Emotion, ECON/ENG/PHIL 357 (Fall 2021)**

*Co-Instructor with Erin Crockett. Exploration of the personal and collective practices and consequences of shame*

*through literature and case studies depicting shame and shamelessness in widely different contexts (e.g. the partition of India and 1980s Wall Street).*

**Topics in Humanomics: Trust in Troubling Times**, ECON/ENG/PHIL 357 (Spring 2020)

*Co-Instructor with Jan Osborn. Conceptual and practical investigation of trust and trustworthiness from philosophical, economic, and literary perspectives. Coincided with first Covid 19 shut down.*

**Senior Seminar in Philosophy: Virtue Ethics**, PHIL 398 (Spring 2019)

*Primary Instructor. Examination of major contributions to philosophical literature on Virtue Ethics.*

**The Tragedy in Morality**, FFC 100 (Fall 2018)

*Co-Instructor with John Thrasher. Introduction to Greek tragedy through philosophy of Dodds, Nietzsche, and Williams.*

### University of Melbourne

**Greek Philosophy**, PHIL20040 (Sem 2 2015, Sem 1 2016, Sem 2 2017, Sem 1 2018)

*Lecturer and Tutor. Introduction to major philosophical thinkers of ancient Greece, pre-Socratics to Aristotle.*

**Latin 4**, CLAS10014/CLAS20031 (Sem 2 2016, Sem 2 2017)

*Lecturer, Tutor, and Grammar instructor: Introduction to Latin poetry through Lucretius' De Rerum Natura.*

### Rutgers University, New Brunswick

**Philosophy of the Greeks**, 730:208:01 (Spring 2015)

*Primary instructor. Introduction to major philosophical thinkers of ancient Greece, pre-Socratics to Aristotle.*

### Mercer County Community College

**Introduction to Philosophy**, Phi 102 (Summer 2013)

*Co-Instructor with Anthony Cross. Introductory survey course, pre-Socratics to Pragmatists.*

### Princeton University

**Aristotle and His Successors**, Cla/Phi 301 (Spring 2012)

*Teaching Assistant to Benjamin Morison. Upper-level undergraduate course.*

**Introduction to Ancient Philosophy**, Cla/Phi 205 (Fall 2011)

*Teaching Assistant to Hendrik Lorenz. Introductory survey course, pre-Socratics to Stoics.*

### University of Arizona

**Intermediate Latin**, Lat 202 (Spring 2010)

*Primary Instructor. Introduction to Virgil's Aeneid.*

**Intermediate Latin**, Lat 201 (Fall 2009)

*Primary Instructor.*

**Introductory Latin**, Lat 102 (Spring 2009)

*Primary Instructor.*

**Introductory Latin**, Lat 101 (Fall 2008)

*Primary Instructor.*

## Teaching Service & Development

**Summer Scholars Research Faculty**, Smith Institute (2022, 2023, 2024, 2025)

*Adviser for a group of 2-3 undergraduate students developing research skills both as assistants to my project and in their independent study. Research topics: Aristotle and AI (2022), Ancient Economies (2023), Historical Socrates (2024), Aristotle's Biology (2025)*

**Resident Scholar**, Ormond College (2015–2018)

*Mentor and tutor in residence for the largest of University of Melbourne's residential colleges.*

**Graduate Fellow**, McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning (2014–2015)

*Orientation leader for new teaching assistants; trainee in various pedagogy instruction modules.*

**Resident Graduate Student**, Forbes College, Princeton University (2014–2015)

*Graduate student mentor in residence for one of Princeton's six residential colleges. Forbes houses freshman and sophomores, so I advised students prior to their declaration of major.*

## Professional Activities & Service

**Web Designer and Manager**, West Coast Plato Workshop  
**Workshop Organizer**, 19th Annual West Coast Plato Workshop (2026)  
**Program Committee**, Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association (2025-2028)  
**Faculty Senator**, Schmid College of Science, Chapman University (2024–2026)  
**Coordinator**, Chapman University's Ancient Philosophy Themed Inquiry (2024–)  
**Reviewer/Panelist**, National Endowment of the Humanities (2024)  
**Interim Director**, Law and Liberal Arts Major, Chapman University (Spring 2024)  
**Organizer**, Faculty Research Working Group, Smith Institute (2020–2021)  
**Member**, Values and Ethics Inquiry Assessment Committee, Chapman University (2020)  
**Member**, General Education Committee, Chapman University (2020–2021)  
**Judge**, Southern California High School Ethics Bowl (2020–2021)  
**Reviewer**, Human Ethics Advisory Group, University of Melbourne (2017–2018)  
**Member**, Ormond College Reconciliation Action Plan Workgroup (2017)  
**President**, Senior Common Room, Ormond College (2016–2017)  
**Interviewer**, Undergraduate Admissions, Ormond College (2015–2017)  
**Co-Organizer**, Princeton-Rutgers Graduate Conference in Philosophy (2014)  
**Member**, Climate for Graduate Students Committee, Princeton Philosophy Department (2013)  
**Referee**, Princeton-Rutgers Graduate Conference in Philosophy (2013)  
**Member**, Classical Philosophy Committee, Princeton Philosophy Department (2012–2013)  
**Referee**, Princeton Classical Philosophy Graduate Conference (2012)  
**Graduate Student Representative**, Princeton Philosophy Department (2011–2012)  
**Reception Committee**, Princeton Philosophy Department (2010–2011)

## Professional Affiliations

**Alliance for Civics in the Academy** (2025– )  
**Society for Open Inquiry in Behavioral Science** (2024– )  
**Heterodox Academy** (2024– )  
**American Philosophical Association** (2014– )  
**Australasian Association of Philosophy** (2015, 2017)  
**Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy** (2010, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018)