

Amber Ross

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ACADEMIC POSITIONS HELD

Assistant Professor	2018 – pres.
University of Florida, Philosophy Department	
Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, The Network for Sensory Research	2015 - 2018
University of Toronto, Philosophy Department	
Lecturer	2014 - 2015
University of Toronto, Philosophy Department	
Research Assistant, The Network for Sensory Research	2013 - 2014
University of Toronto, Philosophy Department	
Research Fellow, The Center for Cognitive Studies	2010 - 2012
Tufts University	

EDUCATION

Ph.D. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (Philosophy)	Spring, 2013
Dissertation: <i>Inconceivable Minds</i>	
M.A. Tufts University (Philosophy)	Spring, 2006
Comprehensive Examinations: Philosophy of Mind, Epistemology, Metaphysics, Ethics	
B.A. Texas Christian University (Philosophy)	Spring, 2000

AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Philosophy of Mind, Animal Minds, Philosophy and Ethics of AI

AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Metaphysics, Epistemology, Social Epistemology

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Consciousness, Cognitive Science, AI, Non-human Selves

PUBLICATIONS

Forthcoming Ross, A., Mental Fictionalism: the costly combination of magic and the mind. In *Mental Fictionalism: Philosophical Explorations*. Eds. Tomas Demeter, T. Parent, & Adam Toon. Routledge <https://philpapers.org/archive/ROSMFT.pdf>

- 2021 Ross, A. & Matthen, M. (2021). Multisensory Perception in Philosophy: Editors' Introduction. *Multisensory Research*. 34. <https://philpapers.org/archive/ROSMPI-4.pdf>
- 2018 Ross, A., Destabilizing the Knowledge Argument and Modal Argument. *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2017.1385530>
- 2016 Ross, A. (2016). Illusionism and the Epistemological Problems Facing Phenomenal Realism. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 23 (11/12): 215-23.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

AI Ethics: “Why opaque AI will not go away; ethical AI without complete transparency”

Metaphysics & Philosophy of Mind: *All of “Us”*: a unified account of narrative-based selfhood, from simple systems to the human mind (collection of papers / book length manuscript)

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

- “Degrees of being a *Self*- Narrative Selfhood in human and non-human individuals” Jun, 2022
Plenary Speaker, [Mind and Matter 2022: Foundation of Information, Intelligence, and Consciousness](#). University of Helsinki, Finland
- “Why opaque AI will not go away; ethical AI without complete transparency” Dec, 2021
Philosophies of Nature, Technology and Artificial Intelligence Workshop, hosted by the journal *Ethics and the Environment*, University of Georgia
- “Expanding the Narrative Theory of Self” Apr, 2021
Logos Research Group, University of Barcelona (talk postponed due to Covid 19)
- “The nature of conscious thought and its relation to AI systems” Mar, 2021
Guest lecture, UF graduate course in Machine Learning, Department of Engineering (CAP6610)
- “What is Thinking?” Jan, 2021
Invited presentation for the UF *AI Institute* Faculty Seminar
- “Is Fictionalism Fit to Account for the Mental?” Oct, 2019
Budapest- *Mental Fictionalism Workshop Series (III)*- Organized by the MTA BTK Lendulet Morals and Science Research Group, Hungarian Academy of Sciences.
- “How Mary closed the explanatory gap” Mar, 2014
Invited Speaker, *The Moore Humanities Symposium on Consciousness*, TCU

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

- UF Summer Research Humanities Enhancement Grant for *All of “Us”* Summer, 2020
- Post-Doctoral Fellowship (SSHRC) *The Network for Sensory Research*, University of Toronto 2015 - 2018
- Research Fellowship: Tufts University, The Center for Cognitive Studies 2010 - 2012

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS (CONT)

Horace Williams Fellowship: UNC Department of Philosophy	2004 - 2010
Visiting Scholar Fellowship: University of Reading, UK	2007 - 2008
Graduate Student Opportunity Fund Grant, UNC- Chapel Hill	2007 - 2008
Scholars of Tomorrow Fellowship: UNC- Chapel Hill	2004 - 2005

SERVICE TO THE DEPARTMENT

UF Online Professional Development Course Creation, AI Ethics	Summer 2020
Committee to develop UF Graduate Certificate in Ethics, Technology, and AI	2018 – pres.
UF Online Course Development, Ethics and Technology Unit, <i>Contemporary Moral Issues</i>	Fall, 2019
Graduate Recruitment Officer, Philosophy Department	2019 – pres.
Hiring Committee, Philosophy Department, University of Florida	
Tenure track position in Philosophy of Science	2018 - 2019
Tenure track position in AI Ethics	2020 - 2021

SERVICE TO THE UNIVERSITY

Senior Project Personnel, NSF Grant (proposal) <i>UF AI Institute: iFIRST: Institute for Foodchain Intelligence, Resilience, Sustainability and Traceability</i>	2020 & 2021
Ethicist, <i>UF AI Institute</i>	2020 – pres.
Data Ethics Consultant, UF-FSU CTSA Hub NIH Research project, <i>DataStory: Using Story-Driven Strategies to Teach Data Science in Precision Health Settings</i> .	2020 - 2021
Faculty Advisor, Secular Student Association	2019 – pres.
Faculty Advisor, Acts of Random Kindness Project	2021 – pres.

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION

Committee Member, National Humanities Center multi-year project in AI and the Humanities, Ethics and AI (programs delayed due to Covid 19)	Oct 2019-pres. 2013-pres.
Co-Editor (with Mohan Matthen), Special Issue of <i>Journal of Multisensory Perception</i> , Vol. 34, Issue 3. https://doi.org/10.1163/22134808-034001ED	March, 2021
Commentator, Central APA	Feb, 2021
Commentator, Southern Society of Philosophy and Psychology	Spring, 2014
Referee:	2013-pres.
<i>Journal of Consciousness Studies</i>	<i>Inquiry; an Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy</i>
<i>Journal of Philosophical Research</i>	<i>Journal of the American Philosophical Association</i>
<i>South African Journal of Philosophy</i>	<i>Multisensory Research</i>

WORKSHOP ORGANIZATION

University of Toronto Workshop on Non-Human Cognition	May, 2018
University of Toronto Workshop on Metacognition	May, 2016
University of Toronto Workshop on Multisensory Integration	May, 2014

SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY

AI Ethics Discussion Leader, TEDx UF	Feb, 2020
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UNC Philosophy Outreach Program:

- Ethics for High School Students, Saxapawhaw Charter School
- Philosophy and Ethics Group at North Carolina Juvenile Detention Center

UNIVERSITY TEACHING EXPERIENCE

GRADUATE COURSES TAUGHT

- Philosophy of Mind: Seminar on Personal Identity and The Self (University of Florida)
- Philosophy of Mind: Seminar on Contemporary issues in Consciousness (University of Florida)

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES TAUGHT

- Ethics, Data, and Technology (3rd year course, University of Florida)
- AI Ethics and Emerging Technologies (3rd year course, University of Florida)
- Introduction to Philosophy (Large Lecture, University of Florida)
- Metaphysics; an introduction (2nd year course, University of Florida)
- Metaphysics: advanced undergraduate (3rd year course, University of Toronto)
- The Philosophy of Animal Minds (Senior seminar, University of Toronto & UF)
- Minds, Bodies, and Persons (2nd year course University of Toronto)
- Philosophy of Language (3rd year course, University of Toronto)
- Probability and Inductive Logic (2nd year course, University of Toronto)
- Experience and Reality (UNC-Chapel Hill)
- Introduction to Ethics (UNC-Chapel Hill)
- Philosophy of Religion (UNC-Chapel Hill)
- Existentialism (UNC-Chapel Hill)

ONLINE COURSES CREATED OR TAUGHT

- [Ethics of AI](#), Professional Development Course (Required for the [UF AI Micro-Credential](#))
- AI Ethics unit in “Contemporary Moral Issues” (2nd year course, University of Florida)
- Bioethics (UNC-Chapel Hill)

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

INCONCEIVABLE MINDS

The current debate over the metaphysical nature of the mind is dominated by two major philosophical views: property dualism and physicalism. According to property dualism, mental properties are of two metaphysically distinct types. There are “phenomenal properties”, or “qualia”, the properties that constitute conscious experience, and there are the cognitive or functional properties of the mind. According to physicalism, there is one metaphysical type of mental property, though there may be a deep conceptual divide between experience and cognition. I challenge both the dualist and typical physicalist assumptions.

Focusing on two of the most popular anti-physicalist arguments- the Conceivability Argument and the Knowledge Argument- I argue that the property dualist’s account of the relationship between consciousness and behavior- the “explanatory irrelevance” of consciousness to sufficient explanations of our behavior and how we make judgment about our conscious experience- make the first argument untenable and the second irrelevant to the metaphysical debate.

I also present a case against the typical physicalist conceptual separation between cognition and consciousness by challenging the “Phenomenal Concept Strategy”, the most popular argument supporting such a separation. This conceptual separation supposedly allows us to conceive of “philosophical zombies,” creature physically identical to human beings but who lack conscious experience. The phenomenal concept strategy aims to explain how we can conceive of zombies while maintaining a physicalist account of the metaphysics of mind. For this strategy to succeed, the physicalist must show that we share our epistemic situation regarding consciousness with our “zombie-twins”. Zombies make claims about their own phenomenal experience, just as we do, but by definition they have none. I examine the most common physicalist interpretation of the zombies’ beliefs about their own conscious experiences and show that this leads to the creation of *inconceivable minds*- creatures whose mental features would be incompatible with the very interpretation of zombie “phenomenal” belief on which this strategy is based.

My dissertation has two overarching goals. First, to undermine the plausibility of the two most popular arguments for property dualism, and second, to encourage physicalists to reconsider both the phenomenal concept strategy and their commitment to the genuine conceivability of philosophical zombies and, by extension, the intuitive appeal of property dualism in general.

REFERENCES

Daniel C. Dennett
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William G. Lycan
UNC-Chapel Hill, Philosophy
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Investigator, The Network for Sensory Research
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