

Curriculum Vitae

Education

Ph.D. Candidate, Philosophy, 2009-Present, (degree expected Spring 2012), University of Oregon,
Dissertation Title: *Impossible and Necessary: The Problem of Luck and The Promise of Kindness*

University of Oregon, M.A., Philosophy, 2006, Thesis Title: *In Amicitia Veritas: On Truth and Friendship in the Ethics of Immanuel Kant*

Southern Oregon University B.A., *summa cum laude*, Interdisciplinary Studies, 2003

Areas of Specialization

Ethics

Moral Theory

Areas of Competence

History of Philosophy

Ancient Philosophy

Feminist Philosophy

Existentialism

Aristotle

Kant

Grants, Honors and Awards

2011-2 - Charlotte Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship in Ethics

2006-Present - Graduate Teaching Fellowship, University of Oregon (Philosophy)

(Concurrently) - Graduate Teaching Fellowship, University of Oregon (English)

2009 - *Paideia* Prize for Excellence in Teaching, University of Oregon (Philosophy)

2009 - CSWS RIG Development Grant, University of Oregon, for Conference: *Philosophical Inquiry into Pregnancy, Childbirth and Mothering*

2008 - University Club Foundation Fellowship, University of Oregon Philosophy Departmental Nominee and University of Oregon Finalist

2006 - Associate, Churchill Scholars Honors Program in Ethics, Southern Oregon University

Publications:

Coming to Life: Philosophies of Pregnancy, Childbirth and Mothering, co-edited with Sarah LaChance Adams, including Chapter, "Occasioning Wonder: The Philosophical Significance of Pregnancy, Childbirth and Mothering," co-authored with LaChance Adams. Fordham University Press, *Perspectives in Continental Philosophy* Series (Forthcoming).

“Recovering the Tragic: Exploring the Ethical Dimensions of Rape-Related Pregnancy,” in
Phenomenology 2010, Vol. 5, Zeta Books, 2010.

“Being Torn: Toward a Phenomenology of Unwanted Pregnancy.” *Hypatia*-
Special Issue on Iris Marion Young, Vol 23, No 3, Spring 2008, 136-155 (Peer reviewed).

Courses Taught:

(Instructor of Record)

Philosophy 102, *Ethics*: Summer 2009, Fall 2009, University of Oregon

Phil.332, *Philosophy of Film*, Summer 2011, University of Oregon

Writing 121, *Composition 1*: Fall and Winter 2005, Fall 2006, Fall 2010, Winter 2011, University of
Oregon (English)

Writing 122, *Composition 2*: Spring 2006, Winter 2006, University of Oregon (English)

Writing 123, *Composition 3*: Spring 2007, University of Oregon (English)

(Teaching Assistant)

Philosophy 102, *Ethics*: Winter 2004, Winter 2009, Winter 2010, University of Oregon

Philosophy 211, *Existentialism*: Spring 2004 and Spring 2008, University of Oregon

Philosophy 216, *Philosophy and Cultural Diversity*: Fall 2003 and Fall 2008, University of Oregon

Philosophy 310, *Ancient Philosophy*: Fall 2007, University of Oregon

Philosophy 311, *Modern Philosophy*: Winter 2007, Winter 2008, University of Oregon

Philosophy 312, *19th Century Philosophy*: Spring Spring 2009, Spring 2010, University of Oregon

Philosophy 332, *Philosophy of Film*, Fall 2008

Service:

2011 - Copy-editor, Dissertation: *The Ethics of Ambivalence: Maternity, Intersubjectivity and Ethics in
Levinas, Merleau-Ponty and Beauvoir*, by Sarah LaChance Adams.

2011 - Conference Promoter: 19th Annual Meeting of the International *Simone de Beauvoir Society*,
University of Oregon

2010 - Manuscript Reviewer: George Waller, *Against Moral Responsibility* (MIT Press, November
2011)

2009 - Conference Organizer and Grant Writer, Philosophical Inquiry into Pregnancy, Childbirth and
Mothering International Conference, University of Oregon (total of \$10K in grants awarded)

2008-9 - Graduate Student Coordinator, Feminist Philosophy Research Interest Group, University of
Oregon (Philosophy)

2005-6 - Graduate Student Representative, Committee of the Whole, University of Oregon (Philosophy)

Selected Conference Papers

“That Women, too, Might Flourish: Reproductive Tragedy and Beauvoir’s Ethics of Hope.” 19th International Conference of the Simone de Beauvoir Society, Eugene, OR, June 17, 2011

“The Promise of Kindness: Responding to Misogynist Cruelty,” Ninth Biennial Radical Philosophy Association Conference, Eugene, OR, November 2010

“Recover the Tragic,” Philosophical Inquiry into Pregnancy, Childbirth and Mothering International Conference, Eugene, OR, 2009,

“Being Torn: Toward a Phenomenology of Unwanted Pregnancy,” Society for Interdisciplinary Feminist Phenomenology, Silver Falls, OR, 2008

Professional Organizations

American Philosophical Association, member

Society for Phenomenological and Existential Philosophy, member

Society for Women in Philosophy, member

Society for Interdisciplinary Feminist Phenomenology, member

Ancient Philosophy Society, member

Languages

French- High proficiency in speaking and reading

Russian – Reading knowledge

Ancient Greek – Reading knowledge

References

Dr. Mark Johnson - Professor- markj@uoregon.edu

Dr. Bonnie Mann - Associate Professor – bmann@uoregon.edu

Dr. Peter Warnek – Associate Professor – warnek@uoregon.edu

Dr. John Lysaker – Professor - jlysake@emory.edu

Dissertation Abstract

My dissertation explores the promise of kindness as a response to the problem of luck which confronts both ancient and modern visions of the moral life. A rich articulation of kindness in the light of historical moral theory reveals that, far from being a trifling, merely and purely sentimental phenomenon, kindness involves many of the key ethical commitments that distinguish both Aristotelian ethics and Kantian morality. More importantly, at the level of individuals kindness has the power to mitigate the toll of bad luck on agents and to yield the types of judgments that dissolve the problem of moral luck. Where it finds expression at the institutional level kindness has tremendous ameliorative potential. I therefore contend that kindness is to be esteemed above all other modes of comportment; in a world that is not up to us, our greatest hope for flourishing lies in being kind and in remaining graciously open to the kindness of others.

I open my dissertation by characterizing the human/ethical situation as a tension between *impossibility* and *necessity*; between the demands of morality and that which nature or circumstance allows. This tension is felt in two ways, depending upon how we construe the ultimate end of moral comportment; for Aristotle, luck may prevent agents from becoming virtuous and thus from fulfilling the human *telos*, for Kant, an acknowledgment of luck clashes with the supposed autonomy which grounds moral assessment. I therefore claim that luck comprises a serious threat both to human flourishing and to the construction of an abstract ethics.

In Chapter Two I clarify the twofold problem of luck in greater detail. I begin with brief characterizations of the ancient/Aristotelian conception of ethics and the modern/Kantian account of morality. I then indicate where and how luck emerges to confront both systems, drawing from contemporary literature on moral luck. I briefly assess three popular solutions to moral luck, concluding that each ultimately fails. I tentatively offer kindness as a novel means of responding to the problem of luck, but argue that a richer articulation of kindness is first required.

In Chapters Three through Five I work to construct a rich conceptualization of kindness. In Chapter Three I bring the phenomenon of kindness into relief via comparison with related phenomena that have received more sustained philosophical treatment, including politeness, charity, benevolence, and compassion. I argue that kindness encompasses key elements of each, but cannot be reduced to any analogous phenomenon. I tentatively present kindness as a stable mode of comportment that involves and a willingness to attend to others on their own terms and a readiness to help and the cheer, even at the risk of offending.

Having established that kindness is best conceived of as a stable mode of comportment or *hexis*, in Chapter Four I begin by exploring the possibility that it may be conceived of as a moral virtue in the Aristotelian sense. I then turn to Aristotle's analysis of the emotions of kindness (*kharis*) and pity in the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, respectively. In the process of engaging Aristotle's ethical thought I gain several key insights which enrich the emerging conception of kindness: (1) kindness involves moral courage, (2) kindness involves care and concern for the *polis*, (3) kindness involves key judgments about agency and luck.

In Chapter Five I complete my conceptualization of kindness by turning to Kant's account of morality, with an emphasis on his analyses of truthfulness and friendship. Keeping Kant's insights in mind, I here characterize kindness as an approach to moral judgment that, like friendship, involves a tension between love and respect aimed at mutual moral amelioration.

In chapter Six I bring a now robust conceptualization of kindness into dialogue with the twofold problem of luck. I briefly engage Phillip Hallie's contention that kindness cannot function in and through institutions, and sketch in outline what kind institutions might look like. I end by arguing, mindful of Aristotle's attentiveness to the political as a ground for the ethical, that kindness is most powerful when it functions at the level of institutions— when, in short, it ameliorates those forces which, from the perspective of agency, yield bad luck.