

Cameron Fenton

CONTACT INFORMATION

Department of Philosophy
Western University
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EDUCATION

Western University, London, Ontario, Canada

Ph.D., Philosophy

2012–2017

Supervisor: Samantha Brennan

Committee Member: Carolyn McLeod

Committee Member: Tracy Isaacs

Title: A Complete Special Goods Theory of Filial Obligations

M.A., Philosophy

2010–2011

Supervisor: Samantha Brennan

Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

Honours B.A., Philosophy

2006–2010

Graduated Summa Cum Laude

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Areas of Specialization

Normative and Applied Ethics

Areas of Competence

Legal Philosophy, Political Philosophy, Feminist Philosophy

PUBLICATIONS

- “Who Counts as a Parent for the Purposes of Filial Obligations?” in *Nordic Journal of Applied Ethics* (2017), 11(1), 17-32
- “Do Children Owe Their Parents Gratitude?” Forthcoming in *The Moral Psychology of Gratitude*.

MANUSCRIPTS IN PROGRESS

- Developing The Special Goods Theory of Filial Obligations: Getting from Special Goods to Special Duties
- Filial Obligations and Dementia

GRADUATE AWARDS

Western University

- SSHRC Doctoral Scholarship (\$60,000), 2014-2017
- Ontario Graduate Scholarship (\$15,000), 2012-2013
- Joseph-Armand Bombardier CGS Master's Scholarship (\$17,500), 2010-2011

Lead Teaching Assistant

- **Lead TA for Philosophy** **Sept. 2014 to Apr. 2015**

Supervisors: Aisha Haque and Tracy Isaacs, at Western University

In this position I was responsible for designing and facilitating monthly training workshops for teaching assistants in the Philosophy Department.

Workshops Facilitated:

- Being a TA in Philosophy at Western
- Effective Grading and Feedback
- Teaching Students How to Read and Write Philosophy Papers
- Micro-teach Sessions (one in December and one in April)
- Active Learning in Philosophy Tutorials
- Classroom Management Strategies
- Designing a Philosophy Course and Syllabus

Tutorial Leader

- **PHIL1200–Critical Thinking** **Sept. 2013 to Apr. 2014**

Instructor: Ryan Robb, at Western University

- **PHIL1022E–Adv. Introduction to Philosophy** **Sept. 2012 to Apr. 2013**

Instructors: Samantha Brennan and Chris Smeenk, at Western University

- **PHIL1022E–Adv. Introduction to Philosophy** **Sept. 2010 to Apr. 2011**

Instructors: Samantha Brennan and John Nicholas, at Western University

Grader

- **Critical Thinking** **Sept. 2009 to Apr. 2010**

Instructor: Sheldon Wein, at Saint Mary's University

Guest Teaching and Facilitation

- **Invited Speaker, Winter Teaching Conference, Western University**

Jan. 2016

I was invited to give a short lecture and then facilitate a discussion about how to teach undergraduates to be better readers.

- **Guest Facilitator at The Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry, Western University** **Sept. 2013 and Sept. 2014**

I was invited to facilitate a discussion about medical ethics with a group of first year medical students. We discussed the real-world implications of the Canadian Supreme Court case of Sue Rodriguez, who challenged the current laws on physician assisted suicide.

- **Guest Lecturer for Adv. Introduction to Philosophy** **Nov. 2012**

Topic: John Stewart Mill's Utilitarianism

RESEARCH

Research Assistant

- **External Perspectives on Corporate Moral Motivation**

Jan. 2010 to May 2010

Supervisor: Chris MacDonald, at Saint Mary's University
Primary Task: Article Summaries

- **Echoes from the Cave: Philosophical Conversations since Plato**

May 2008 to Aug. 2008

Supervisor: Lisa Gannett, at Saint Mary's University
Primary Task: Early Article Selection and Assessment

PRESENTATIONS

*Peer-reviewed †Abstract Submission

- * † "Filial Obligations and Dementia", Atlantic Regional Philosophers Association Conference, Saint Mary's University, 2017
- "Do Children Owe Their Parents Gratitude?", The Moral Psychology of Gratitude Conference, The University of Chicago, 2017
- * † "Who Counts as a Parent for the Purposes of Filial Obligations", Canadian Section of the International Association for Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy Meeting, Ryerson University, 2017
- * † "Developing the Special Goods Theory of Filial Obligations: Getting from Special Goods to Special Duties", Atlantic Regional Philosophers Association Conference, Acadia University, 2016
- "Filial Obligations: Special Goods and Special Duties", Fall Philosophy Graduate Student Association Colloquium Series, Western University, 2016
- "A Hybrid Theory of Filial Obligations", Winter Philosophy Graduate Student Association Colloquium Series, Western University, 2013
- "Competence and Value in Canadian Law", Summer Philosophy Graduate Student Association Colloquium Series, Western University, 2013

TRAINING ATTENDED

**American Association of Philosophy Teachers (AAPT)
Workshop on Inclusive Pedagogy** **Apr. 2016**

- This workshop was a one-day series of presentations and discussions with a focus on implementing more inclusive teaching practices.

Instructional Skills Workshop

Aug. 2014

- The Instructional Skills Workshop (ISW) is a 25 hour intensive instructor development program taking place over three days.

Lead TA Workshops **Sept. 2013 to Apr. 2014**

- Crash Course in being a TA for the Philosophy Department
- Leading Effective and Inclusive Tutorials
- Effective Grading Practices and Strategies
- Navigating Sensitive Topics in the Classroom
- Designing a Philosophy Course
- Exploring the Digital Humanities
- Preparing a Teaching Portfolio for the Philosophy Job Market

TA Day **Sept. 2010 and Sept. 2012**

- TA Day is a one-day series of lectures and workshops to prepare new graduate students to be teaching assistants.

SERVICE

Canadian Philosophical Association Equity Committee Member 2016-2017

- In this position I collaborated on the content, design, and distribution of the CPA's 2017 Equity Survey.

Philosophy Graduate Student Association (PGSA) Co-President

2013-2014 and 2015-2017

- This is an elected position held by two members of the philosophy graduate student body each year. The primary tasks include organizing regular meetings, attending department faculty meetings, attending Graduate Affairs Committee meetings, acting as treasurer for the Philosophy Graduate Student Association (PGSA), and overseeing the ten committees that make up the PGSA executive.

Graduate Student Representative on the Philosophy Department Climate Committee **2015-2017**

- This is an elected position held by two members of the philosophy graduate student body each year. The primary tasks include attending meetings of the Climate Committee, expressing the concerns of graduate students at these meetings, and summarizing Climate Committee meetings into a short report to be distributed at PGSA meetings.

Organizer of a Logic Competency Exam Study Group **Summer 2013**

- I organized and scheduled a study group to prepare for the Logic Competency Exam. This involved selecting a recommended reading for each week and preparing practice assignments for the group to complete.

PGSA Welcoming Committee Member **2012-2013**

- This is an elected position held by three members of the philosophy graduate student body each year. The primary tasks include organizing events for visiting prospective students in March, serving as a point of contact for new students who may have questions about student life in the department, collaborating with the Graduate Chair on the events for orientation week in September, and assisting new students to adjust to living in London.

READING GROUPS

Member of the Minorities and Philosophy Reading Group 2015-2016

Member of the Women, Underrepresented and Marginalized Groups, and Allies Strengthening Philosophy Reading Group 2013-2015

- We have read *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia*; *Rethinking Normalcy: A Disability Studies Reader*; *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race*; and *Reframing the Practice of Philosophy: Bodies of Color, Bodies of Knowledge*

Member of the Implicit Bias Reading Group 2013-2014

- We have read many articles on the role of implicit bias both in society generally and in the academic context.

GRADUATE
COURSEWORK

Western University

- Ancient Ethics, Karen Nielsen
- Darwin's On the Origin of Species, Devin Henry
- Egalitarianism, Samantha Brennan
- Evolutionary Perspectives on Epistemology and Ethics, Gillian Barker
- Feminist Ethics: Family Justice, Samantha Brennan
- Grotius and Hobbes, Dennis Klimchuk
- Moore's Ethics, Anthony Skelton
- Philosophy of Criminal Law, Andrew Botterell and Dennis Klimchuk
- Philosophy of Mathematics, John Bell
- Philosophy of Psychiatry, Louis Charland
- The Pre-Socratics, John Thorp
- Property (Audit), Dennis Klimchuk
- Trust and Testimony, Carolyn McLeod

TEACHING
REFERENCES

Samantha Brennan

Department of Philosophy, Western University
email: sbrennan@uwo.ca

Tracy Isaacs

Department of Philosophy, Western University
email: tisaacs@uwo.ca

DISSERTATION
ABSTRACT

Until very recently little philosophical attention has been paid to ethical issues arising within the family. This state of affairs has changed in the past few decades and a growing body of literature has developed on the obligations that exist within families. However, one area of family ethics that remains under-theorized is the nature of childrens obligations to their parents. What, if anything, do children owe their parents? And, on what parts of the filial relationship are obligations based? My argument runs along three major lines that correspond to the chapters of this dissertation.

In the first chapter, I claim that the two dominant theories of filial obligation, the friendship theory and the gratitude theory, have serious flaws. Both friendship theories of filial obligations and gratitude theories of filial obligations fail to account for a significant part of the filial relationship.

In the second chapter, I argue that special goods theories of filial obligations are the most promising in the current literature. Special goods theories claim that we have obligations to provide our parents with those goods that can only be obtained from a filial relationship. I then argue that there are two important problems for which current formulations of the special goods theory do not provide solutions. First, we need to know what special goods can only be obtained in filial relationships and why these goods cannot be obtained in other relationships. Second, we need to know how the ability to provide special goods to ones parents leads to an obligation to provide those goods.

In the third chapter, I argue for my positive thesis and develop a complete special goods theory of filial obligations. I develop solutions to the two major problems for existing special goods theories I outlined in the previous chapter. First, I demonstrate that there really are special goods attainable only in a parent-child relationship. I argue that love, purpose, fun, and several other goods have unique variations that occur only in parent-child relationships. Second, I argue that the imperfect duty of beneficence can explain why we ought to provide our parents with special goods.

In the fourth chapter, I address a few worries about my special goods theory and pose questions for future research. First, I address a concern that the special goods theory may be paternalistic because it can force children to be in a relationship they dont want to be a part of based on family values they may not share. Second, I discuss how we can apply sanctions to bad children who refuse to discharge their filial obligations. Third, I discuss a concern that the language of rights and duties might not be sufficient to describe filial obligations. Fourth, I consider what the law in Canada does and should require children to do for their parents. I evaluate the Canadian Criminal Code and Ontarios Family Law Act to determine if current Canadian laws align with my special goods theory. Fifth, I consider how filial obligations might be different outside of a contemporary North American setting.

Last updated: September 22, 2017