James Hernández McIntyre

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Employment

University of Southampton *September 2026 - present*
Research Fellow
The Ethics of Doubt - ERC Advanced Grant
Genia Schönbaumsfeld (principal investigator)

Education

Rutgers University *2026*
Ph.D. in Philosophy
Parsimony's Place in Philosophy
Juan Comesaña (co-chair), Ernest Sosa (co-chair), Jill North, and Matthew McGrath (external)

Pomona College *2019*
B.A. in Philosophy, *cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa

Areas

Specialization: Epistemology, AI, social and political philosophy
Competence: metaphysics, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science

Publications († = invited; all others refereed)

Parsimony and Overfitting *Forthcoming*
Philosophy of Science

Conspiracy Theories and the Hidden Evidence Penalty *2026*
Synthese, *208*, 152

Consciousness Multiplied *2026*
Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, *113*(2), 465-479

Indoctrination and Democratic Legitimacy *2026*
Philosophy & Public Affairs, *54*(4), 274-288

Reply to Bozenhard: Why Creators Cannot Win† *2026*
Philosophy & Technology, *39*, 109

Skepticism and Ontological Parsimony *2026*
Pacific Philosophical Quarterly, *107*(2), 86-98

Individuating Artificial Minds *2026*
Erkenntnis, advance online publication

Brute Fact Parsimony *2026*
Philosophical Studies, advance online publication

The Right to Restrict AI Training *2026*
Philosophy & Technology, *39*, 25

Conceptual Misinformation *2025*
Synthese, *206*, 175

Papers in Progress

A paper about AI companions *R&R*
A paper about parsimony *Under Review*
A paper about pragmatic encroachment *Under Review*
A paper about trolling *Under Review*

Presentations & Comments († = invited; all others refereed)

Presentations

Updating AI Companions *2026*
6th Upstate Workshop on AI and Human Values, University of Rochester

The Right to Restrict AI Training *2025*
6th Biannual Conference on the Philosophy of Artificial Intelligence, VU Amsterdam

Individuating Artificial Minds *2025*
5th International Conference on Philosophy of Mind, University of Porto

Consciousness Multiplied *2025*
Society for Philosophy and Neuroscience, Washington University in St. Louis

Brute Fact Parsimony† *2025*
PDX Phil Sci Now, Reed College

Skepticism and Ontological Parsimony *2025*
Society for Skeptical Studies, APA Eastern Division

Epistemically Sharpening Occam's Razor *2024*
8th Panhellenic Conference on Philosophy of Science, University of Athens

Efficient Information Storage as an Epistemic Norm *2024*
MINT-Yale Workshop of Normative Philosophy of Computing, Yale University

Indoctrination as a Political Strategy *2024*
MANCEPT, University of Manchester

What is Indoctrination? *2024*
Colloquium, APA Central Division

Comments†

Sophia Arbeiter, "Moore's Paradox Generalized," APA Eastern Division *2024*

Teaching and Supervision

Teaching Assistant

Human Nature and Human Diversity with Jake Quilty-Dunn *Spring 2026*
Introduction to Cognitive Science with Shannon Bryant *Fall 2025*
Human Nature and Human Diversity with Jake Quilty-Dunn *Spring 2024*
Introduction to Philosophy (writing intensive) with Stephen Stich *Fall 2023*
Introduction to Philosophy (writing intensive) with Stephen Stich *Fall 2021*

Supervision

PhD co-supervisor - Amin Mostajir (University of Southampton) *October 2026 - present*

Grader

Philosophical Aspects of Cognitive Science with Jake Quilty-Dunn *Fall 2024*
Introduction to Philosophy with Richard Fry *Fall 2019*

Coursework

Epistemology, Metaphysics, Philosophy of Mind

Seminar in Epistemology (Ernest Sosa & Thomas Kelly) *Spring 2022*
Advanced Topics in Epistemology (Ernest Sosa & Matthew McGrath) *Spring 2021*
Metaphysics of Mind (Karen Bennett & Jonathan Schaffer) *Spring 2021*
Conceptualizing the World (David Chalmers & Michael Strevens at NYU) *Fall 2021*
Advanced Topics in Epistemology (Ernest Sosa & Matthew McGrath) *Fall 2019*

Philosophy of Science

Topics in Philosophy of Science (Brad Weslake at NYU) *Fall 2020*
Biological Essentialism (Michel Devitt at CUNY) *Fall 2020*

Value Theory

Aesthetics (Robert Hopkins & Anja Jauernig at NYU) *Fall 2021*
Social and Political Philosophy (Alexander Guerrero) *Spring 2020*
Advanced Topics in Ethics (Larry Temkin) *Fall 2019*

History of Philosophy

Philosophy of Perception and Religious Experience (Dean Zimmerman) *Fall 2022*
Seminar in Medieval Philosophy (Brian Leftow) *Spring 2020*
Seminar in Aristotle (Robert Bolton) *Fall 2020*

Other

Topics in Logic (Anthony Gillies) *Spring 2020*
Proseminar (Jeffrey King) *Fall 2019*

Service and Other Activities

Referee

AI and Ethics (4x), *Synthese* (4x), *Philosophical Studies* (2x), *AI & Society*, *Erkenntnis*, *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, *Journal of Social Philosophy*, *Philosophia*, *Philosophy & Public Affairs*

Volunteer Judge *2026*
New Jersey High School Ethics Bowl

Colloquium Committee *2024-2025*
Member, Rutgers University

Graduate Student Assistant *2022-2023*
Organizer for "Perceiving Divine Presences" Research Grant

Editorial Manager 2021-2022
Philosophy and Phenomenological Research

Minorities and Philosophy *2020-2022*
Co-coordinator, Rutgers University

Dissertation Abstract

Empirical evidence underdetermines theory—doubly so in philosophy, where such evidence is marginal. To adjudicate between empirically adequate theories, we must turn to the non-empirical virtues, with parsimony chief among them. Yet parsimony's epistemic credentials are precarious: why think that simpler theories are more likely to be true? My dissertation aims to answer this question and clarify parsimony's role in epistemology more generally. Its first part concerns the epistemology of *undetectable* phenomena; its second part concerns parsimony more broadly.

I argue that we are justified in *prima facie* disbelieving theories that posit undetectable entities, with important implications for epistemology. Because the skeptic denies that our faculties can support justified beliefs about the external world, they deny the possibility of acquiring undefeated evidence that it exists. In other words, by their lights, the external world is undetectable. Thus, appropriately supplemented with an anti-undetectability principle, the skeptical challenge intensifies into something far more radical: outright *denial* that the external world or its constituents, as we commonly conceive of them, exist. This poses problems for concessive responses to skepticism, such as entitlement-based and pragmatic strategies.

The anti-undetectability principle can also be brought to bear on conspiracy theories. Because conspiracy theories posit secret activities, they necessarily postulate hidden, highly undetectable phenomena. If theories positing perfectly undetectable entities are to be *prima facie* disbelieved, then positing highly undetectable entities should likewise incur some lesser epistemic penalty. This allows us to explain what makes conspiracy theories intrinsically epistemically suspicious without unduly implying that belief in a conspiracy theory could never be justified.

The dissertation then turns to more general questions of parsimony, beyond undetectability. Many philosophers have attempted to defend parsimony's use in philosophy by analogy to science. Against this, I argue that whereas science invokes parsimony under conditions of noisy evidence, philosophers require a notion of parsimony that applies in the absence of significant noise. When the evidence is noisy, parsimony safeguards against overfitting. But because the philosophical data (e.g., intuitions about thought experiments) are characterized by predictable *bias* rather than noise, the overfitting-based justification cannot vindicate parsimony's use in philosophy.

To defend ontological parsimony's use in philosophy, I argue that it ranges over only our metaphysically fundamental commitments. While this position has become influential in recent years, the arguments for it have been largely suggestive. By contrast, I offer an entailment. The key observation: ontological and ideological commitments can be traded without loss of explanatory power. It follows that with respect to parsimony, they must be treated analogously. Since we already have reason to believe that ideological parsimony ranges over only primitive ideology, we must accept that ontological parsimony ranges over only fundamental ontology.

The possibility of exchanging ontological and ideological commitments also suggests that both forms of parsimony reduce to a single, more foundational virtue: brute fact parsimony. I conclude the dissertation by developing this reduction, with implications for the metaphysics of laws.