

JAMES HERNÁNDEZ MCINTYRE

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EDUCATION

Rutgers University	Expected May 2026
Ph.D. in Philosophy	
<i>Parsimony's Place in Philosophy</i>	
Juan Comesaña (co-chair), Ernest Sosa (co-chair), Jill North, and Matthew McGrath (external)	
Pomona College	2019
B.A. in Philosophy, <i>cum laude</i> , Phi Beta Kappa	

AREAS

Specialization: Epistemology, social and political philosophy (including AI)
Competence: Philosophy of science, metaphysics, philosophy of mind (including cognitive science)

PUBLICATIONS

Conceptual Misinformation	2025
<i>Synthese</i>	

PAPERS IN PROGRESS

Brute Fact Parsimony	<i>Revise and Resubmit</i>
Indoctrination and Democratic Legitimacy	<i>Under Review</i>
Conspiracy Theories and the Cost of Hidden Evidence	<i>Under Review</i>
The Right to Restrict AI Training	<i>Under Review</i>
Pragmatic Encroachment and Voluntary Knowledge	<i>Under Review</i>
Skepticism and Ontological Parsimony	<i>Completed Manuscript</i>
Individuating Artificial Minds	<i>Completed Manuscript</i>

PRESENTATIONS & COMMENTS

Presentations	
<i>The Right to Restrict AI Training</i>	2025
6th Biannual Conference on the Philosophy of Artificial Intelligence, VU Amsterdam	
<i>Individuating Artificial Minds</i>	2025
5th International Conference on Philosophy of Mind, University of Porto	
<i>Consciousness Multiplied</i>	2025
Society for Philosophy and Neuroscience, Washington University in St. Louis	
<i>Brute Fact Parsimony</i>	2025
PDX Phil Sci Now, Reed College	
<i>Skepticism and Ontological Parsimony</i>	2025
Society for Skeptical Studies, APA Eastern Division	
<i>Epistemically Sharpening Occam's Razor</i>	2024
8th Panhellenic Conference on Philosophy of Science, University of Athens	
<i>Efficient Information Storage as an Epistemic Norm</i>	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

Teaching Assistant

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*

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

Colloquium Committee 2024-2025
Member, Rutgers University

Graduate Student Assistant 2022-2023
Organizer for “Perceiving Divine Presences” Research Grant

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.

I argue that to vindicate its role in philosophy and science, a principle of parsimony must justify assigning a near-zero credence to unnecessarily ontologically extravagant alternatives. (And given some connection between credences and propositional attitudes, this amounts to a *prima facie* justification for disbelieving such alternatives.) Among the most paradigmatically “unnecessary” postulates are undetectable entities. This carries important implications for epistemology.

First, note that 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 a plausible principle of parsimony, 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. Second, an anti-undetectability principle can be brought to bear on the epistemology of conspiracy theories. Because conspiracy theories posit secret activities, they necessarily postulate hidden evidence. While not entirely undetectable, hidden evidence is highly so. If theories positing perfectly undetectable entities are to be *prima facie* disbelieved, presumably 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.

But *why* should parsimony have epistemic bite in the first place? We already have good reasons to think that brute facts (i.e., ungrounded facts) must be theoretically costly: if they weren't, then we could swiftly “resolve” any theoretical question by positing one. For example, to answer the question “why do organisms age?” I might say “that's just the way it is” without incurring a penalty. Blocking this move requires imposing a cost on brute facts. Indeed, I take the capacity of brute facts to magically make theoretical problems disappear as an indicator of their costliness. Thus, if other forms of parsimony reduce to the imperative to avoid positing brute facts, as I argue, then the mystery surrounding their epistemic force will be resolved, or at least subsumed under a more familiar and acceptable mystery.