

ALEXANDER PRESCOTT-COUCH

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
77 Massachusetts Avenue, Building 32-D808
Cambridge, MA 02139

Phone: (617) 460-4575
Email: alexpc@mit.edu

APPOINTMENTS

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Postdoctoral Associate, July 2016-present

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
Law and Philosophy Fellow, July 2015-June 2016

EDUCATION

HARVARD UNIVERSITY, Ph.D., Philosophy, 2008-2015
Visitor at the Australian National University, Nov 2013-July 2014
Visitor at Princeton, Jan 2012-May 2012

HUMBOLDT UNIVERSITÄT, Berlin, Germany, 2005-2006
DAAD Visiting Student

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, B.A. in Philosophy with Honors, 2001-2005
Summa Cum Laude, Salutatorian

DISSERTATION

RATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN INTERLOCUTOR

In a diverse society characterized by conflicting perspectives, what tools do we have to understand others' points of view? Combining democratic theory and philosophy of science, my dissertation explores how journalists and social scientists enable us to understand others by constructing certain idealized – purposefully inaccurate – interpretations of their perspectives that I call “rational reconstructions.” After explaining how inaccurate representation can facilitate understanding and why, the dissertation considers moral concerns about misrepresenting others' thoughts in the public sphere. Rather than being objectionable, inaccurate representation of the kind envisaged can express an important kind of respect and is crucial for resolving a problem for democracy: how deliberative institutions can integrate marginalized and inchoate points of view into democratic discussion.

COMMITTEE: Ned Hall (chair), Selim Berker, Tommie Shelby, Philip Pettit

SPECIALIZATION

AOS: Social and Political Philosophy, Philosophy of Science (particularly Social Science)

AOC: Social Epistemology, Ethics, Nineteenth and Twentieth Century European Philosophy, Metaphysics, Philosophy of Race and Gender

PUBLICATIONS

- (1) “Explanation and Manipulation.” *Noûs* (forthcoming).
- (2) “Genealogy and the Structure of Interpretation.” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* (2015).
- (3) “Nietzsche, Genealogy, and Historical Individuals.” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* (2015).
- (4) “Williams and Nietzsche on the Significance of History for Moral Philosophy.” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* (2014)*
*Winner of Bowen Prize for Best Paper in Moral Philosophy at Harvard 2013-2014

UNDER REVIEW

- (5) “Deliberation Through Misrepresentation,” revise and resubmit at *Ethics*
- (6) “Group Attitudes Without Group Agents,” revise and resubmit at *Philosophy and Public Affairs*

IN PREPARATION

- “Rational Reconstruction: Understanding Others Through Misrepresentation”
- “Hermeneutic Injustice and the Public Sphere”
- “Adam Smith and Seeing Oneself from Another Point of View”

BOOK REVIEWS

Review of *The Epistemic Life of Groups*, commissioned by *The European Journal of Philosophy*

HONORS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- 2015. GSAS Dissertation Completion Fellowship
- 2014. Bowen Prize for Best Paper in Moral Philosophy at Harvard
- 2014. Deakin-Royce Graduate Fellowship
- 2014. Westengard Fellowship for Summer Study
- 2014. Mind, Brain, and Behavior Award
- 2013. Safra Center for Ethics Graduate Fellowship
- 2013. Mind, Brain, and Behavior Award (Fall)
- 2013. Graduate Affiliate of Center for European Studies
- 2013. Mind, Brain, and Behavior Award (Spring)
- 2012. Teaching Award (2x)
- 2005. German Academic Exchange Service Fellowship
- 2005. Salutatorian of Columbia College

ALEXANDER PRESCOTT-COUCH

2005. Graduated with Honors in Philosophy
2004. Phi Beta Kappa
2003. Golden Key Honors Society
2002. Kopit Writing Prize Finalist

SERVICE

Reviewer for *Political Theory*
Co-organizer of Harvard-MIT Graduate Conference 2010

INVITED TALKS

“Hermeneutic Injustice and the Public Sphere,” *Law and Philosophy Workshop*, University of Chicago, February 2016

“Hermeneutic Injustice and the Public Sphere,” *Practical Philosophy Workshop*, Northwestern University, January 2016

“Deliberation Through Misrepresentation,” *Departmental Colloquium*, New York University, February 2016

“Hermeneutic Injustice and the Public Sphere,” *Practical Philosophy Workshop*, University of Chicago, November 2016

“Hermeneutic Injustice and the Public Sphere,” *Departmental Colloquium*, Harvard University Government Department, November 2015

“Nietzsche and the Significance of Genealogy,” *European Philosophy Workshop*, Harvard University, December 2015

“Nietzsche and the Significance of Genealogy,” *Departmental Colloquium*, University of Essex, July 2015

“Idealization and Interpretive Social Science,” *Analyzing Social Wrongs*, Vienna, Austria, May 2015

“Social Facts and Collective Recognition,” *Workshop on Dependence in Social Ontology*, Berlin, Germany, December, 2012

PEER-REVIEWED CONFERENCES

“Group Attitudes Without Group Agents,” *Australian Association of Philosophy Conference*, Canberra, July 2014

“Political Equality and Legislative Diversity,” *11th Pavia Graduate Conference in Political Philosophy*, Pavia, Italy, September 2013

“Two Problems for Interventionism,” *European Network for the Philosophy of Social Sciences and Philosophy of Social Science Roundtable Joint Conference*, Venice, Italy, September 2013

“Two Problems for Interventionism,” *Causality and Experimentation in the Sciences*, Paris, France, June 2013

“Adam Smith and Seeing Oneself From Another Point of View,” *Princeton Graduate Conference in Political Theory*, Princeton, NJ, April 2013

“Genealogy and the Structure of Interpretation,” *American Philosophical Association Central Division Meeting*, New Orleans, February 2013

“Nietzsche’s Genealogy and Historical Individuals,” *American Philosophical Association Central Division Meeting*, Chicago, February 2012

“Interventionism and Manipulation,” *Causality and Explanation in the Sciences*, Ghent, Belgium, September 2011

“Nietzsche and Williams on the Use of History,” *American Philosophical Association Central Division Meeting*, Minneapolis, April 2011

“Manipulability and Social Science” at *Discovery in the Social Sciences*, Leuven, Belgium, March 2011

“The Limits of Control: Interventionism, Manipulation, and Social Reality” at *Emerging Forms of Sociality*, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, October 2011

COLLOQUIUM PRESENTATIONS

“Deliberation Through Misrepresentation: The Rational Reconstruction of Inchoate Speech,” Workshop in Moral and Political Philosophy, Harvard University, January 2015

“Idealization and The Role of Values in Social Science,” Workshop in Moral and Political Philosophy, Harvard University, December 2014

“Group Attitudes Without Group Agents,” Workshop in Moral and Political Philosophy, Harvard University, September 2014

“Rational Reconstruction and the Role of Values in Social Scientific Idealization,” Philsoc Seminar, Australian National University, May 2014

“Group Attitudes without Group Agents,” MSPT Seminar, Australian National University, March 2014

“Explanation and Manipulation,” Metaphysics-Epistemology Workshop, Harvard University, April 2013

“Rational Reconstruction: What Is It and Why Should We Care About It?” Safra Graduate Seminar, Harvard University, November 2013

“Social Regularities and Moral Responsibility,” Safra Graduate Seminar, Harvard University, October 2012

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“Institutional Facts and Collective Recognition,” Metaphysics-Epistemology Workshop, Harvard University, January 2012

“Social Structure and Moral Responsibility,” Metaphysics-Epistemology Workshop, Harvard University, September 2011

“*Zeitgeist* explanation,” Metaphysics-Epistemology Workshop, Harvard University, June 2011

“Social Science and Manipulation,” Michael Pauen’s *Kolloquium* at the Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, June 2009

“Nietzsche and Williams on Morality and History,” *Collegium Philosophicum* at the Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, November 2007

“What Is a Mood?” *Colloquium Probleme der theoretischen Philosophie*, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, November 2007

“Searle, Heidegger und der Hintergrund.” Colloquium for Philosophical Topics (*Colloquium Philosophische Themen*), Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, January 2006

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Social Theory and Practice: Ideology and Epistemic Injustice (primary instructor, Fall 2016) Seminar for undergraduate and graduate students. Topics included the history of the theory of ideology (Marx, Frankfurt School), contemporary work on racial and gender ideology, and the nature of epistemic injustice.

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Law and Philosophy Workshop: Racial Justice (co-taught with Martha Nussbaum, Fall 2015, Winter 2015, Spring 2016)

Advanced seminar with invited speakers. Topics included the metaphysics of race, the nature of discrimination, the purpose of social protest, and the difference between ideal and non-ideal theory.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Social Studies 40: Philosophy and Methods of the Social Sciences (TF for Eric Beerbohm and William English, Spring 2013)

Introduction to the philosophy of social science. Topics included explanation, interpretation, holism, rational choice, social structure, and the role of values in social science.

Junior Tutorial: Scientific Explanation (primary instructor, Spring 2012)

Seminar covering recent work on explanation in philosophy of science. Included deductive-nomological, causal, and unificationist views. Compared explanation in social science, history, and natural science.

Teaching Award

Junior Tutorial: Philosophy of Economics: Preferences, Rationality, and Politics (primary instructor, Spring 2012)

Seminar covering foundational concepts in decision theory and their use in political science and political theory. Focus on the descriptive and normative significance of concepts such as “preference,” “utility” and “efficiency.”

Teaching Award

Junior Tutorial: Choice, Markets, and Democracy (primary instructor, Fall 2011)

Seminar covering recent work on choice, consent, and market relations.

Junior Tutorial: Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History (primary instructor, Fall 2011)

Seminar focusing on Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals* and relevant secondary literature.

ER 14 Issues in Ethics (Teaching Fellow for T. M. Scanlon, Spring 2011)

Introductory ethics course covering both normative ethics and meta-ethics.

Junior Tutorial: Social Ontology and Social Science (primary instructor, Spring 2011)

Seminar concerning the nature of institutional facts, group agency, social structure, and social construction.

ER 21 Moral Reasoning about Social Protest (Teaching Fellow for Susanna Siegel, Fall 2010)

Introductory social and political philosophy course centered around the purpose and justification of social protest. Topics included political obligation, coercion, justice, civil disobedience, and violent vs. non-violent protest. Case studies of the Harvard living wage campaign, Attica prison riots, and Bus Riders Union protests.

IGA 304 Human Rights and International Politics (Course assistant for Rory Stewart and Mathias Risse, Spring 2010)

Lecture course concerning the normative questions about human rights. Topics included history of idea of human rights, normative justification for human rights practice, concerns about ethnocentrism and national sovereignty.

GRADUATE COURSES

*Taken for credit

MORAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Problems of Philosophy: Normative Ethics, Meta-Ethics, Moral Psychology; Princeton University, Spring 2012 (M. Smith)

Political Philosophy Seminar, Fall 2010 (T. M. Scanlon, M. Rosen)

Equality and Democracy, Spring 2010 (T. M. Scanlon)

Ethics, Economics, and Law, Fall 2009 (M. Sandel)

Religion in a Secular Age*, Spring 2009 (C. Taylor, M. Sandel)

Würde (Dignity), Summer 2009 at Humboldt Universität (M. Rosen)

Kant’s Ethical Theory*, Fall 2009 (C. Korsgaard)

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Independent Study on Nietzsche, Williams, and Genealogy*, Spring 2009 (S. Kelly, T. Brewer)

First-Year Colloquium on Moral Philosophy*, Spring 2009 (D. Lavin)

Metaethics*, Fall 2008 (S. Berker)

PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE, METAPHYSICS & EPISTEMOLOGY

Metaphysical Grounding, Spring 2013 (S. Berker)

Philosophy of Social Science, Spring 2012, Princeton University (G. Rosen)

Methods of Political Inquiry, Fall 2011 (C. Hiscox, N. Ichino)

Properties, Kinds, and Objectivity Seminar, Fall 2010 (M. Richard)

Rationality and Choice*, Spring 2010 (A. Sen, C. Jolls)

Philosophy and the Exact Sciences*, Spring 2010 (P. Koellner)

Quine seminar, Fall 2009 (W. Goldfarb)

Epistemology, Spring 2009 (S. Berker)

Metaphysics*, Fall 2008 (E. Hall)

Philosophy of Biology*, Fall 2008 (P. Godfrey-Smith)

First-Year Colloquium on Causation*, Fall 2008 (E. Hall, A. Simmons)

HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

Adam Smith, Fall 2011 (A. Sen, E. Rothschild)

German Social Thought, Fall 2010 (P. Gordon)

Hegels *Phanomenologie des Geistes*, Summer 2010, Humboldt Universität (M. Rosen)

Plato's Metaphysics and Epistemology*, Fall 2009 (G. Striker)

WORK EXPERIENCE

De Gruyter Verlag, Berlin, Germany, Dec 2006-2011

Translator

Translate press information regarding new philosophy books for a German academic press.

Freelance Journalist and Translator, Berlin, Germany, Dec 2006-2008

Wrote articles for *The New Republic* and the *Exberliner*, a Berlin city-culture magazine.

Translated for art magazines *Qvest* and *032c*.

McKinsey & Company, Berlin, Germany, May-Aug 2007

Fellow Intern

Worked full-time with McKinsey and client team on developing mortgage strategy for a banking client. All work done in German.

LANGUAGES

English (native)

German (fluent)

French (highly proficient)

REFERENCES

Ned Hall
Norman E. Vuilleumier Professor of Philosophy
Department of Philosophy
Harvard University
ehall@fas.harvard.edu

Selim Berker
Professor of Philosophy
Harvard University
sberker@fas.harvard.edu

Tommie Shelby
Caldwell Titcomb Professor of African and African American Studies and of Philosophy
Harvard University
tshelby@fas.harvard.edu

Philip Pettit
Laurance S. Rockefeller University Professor of Politics and Human Values
Princeton University
ppettit@princeton.edu

Sally Haslanger
Ford Professor of Philosophy and Women's & Gender Studies
Department of Linguistics and Philosophy
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
shaslang@mit.edu

Martha Nussbaum
Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics
University of Chicago Law School
martha_nussbaum@law.chicago.edu

Paul Katsafanas
Associate Professor of Philosophy
Boston University
pkatsa@bu.edu

William English (teaching reference)
Research Fellow
Harvard Initiative for Teaching and Learning
Harvard University
William_english@fas.harvard.edu