Oscar Cheng

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Personal Profile

My work applies methods from analytic philosophy, including conceptual analysis, epistemology, and philosophy of language, to questions of meaning across digital media, urban ecology, and institutions. I have examined how digital media structures individual identity, explored contested definitions of humanity within urban and ecological conflicts, and analyzed how state institutions exercise control over subjects. I now integrate these strands by studying global digital systems, using philosophy to clarify how design architectures shape thought and belief, and extending conceptual engineering into the domains of interface design and digital infrastructures.

Education

University of Oxford   2023 - 2024
MSc., Criminology and Criminal Justice
- **Dissertation**: *Immigration Detention in Japan: A Legal, Institutional, and Normative Analysis*
- **Focus**: Examined institutional mechanisms of biopolitical control in immigration detention, analyzing how normative structures operate within constrained autonomy, and ethical implications of discretionary authority.

University of Hong Kong   2021 - 2022
MSocSc. , Criminology, **Distinction**
- **Dissertation***: Beyond Ecocentrism and Anthropocentrism: A Trans-Species Approach to the Wild Boar-Human Relationship in Hong Kong*
- **Focus**: Investigated the concepts of urbanity and humanity, contrasting posthumanism with utilitarian logics of governance and situating human–animal conflict in urban contexts within broader philosophical debates.

University of Hong Kong   2017 - 2021
BA., Language and Communication, **First Class Honours**
- **Capstone Thesis**: *How the Union of Posthumanism and Liminality Fosters Co-curation: Understanding Virtual YouTubers and Their Audiences*
- **Focus**: Built a foundation in sociolinguistic analysis of digital media, examining parasociality in networked platforms and the visual-design principles of proto-posthuman figures through theories of performativity.

Research Experience

Independent Research Project   UK / Hong Kong | 2025 - Present

- Initiated advanced training through independent research in philosophy of language and philosophy of technology, with a focus on conceptual engineering.
- Examined how symbolic systems and cultural narratives shape cognition, institutions, and technical designs.
- Integrated insights from generative AI, psychoanalysis, anthropology, and comparative mythology into analytic frameworks.
- Developed a research proposal on *Design as Epistemic Architecture,* forming the basis for PhD applications and future publication.
- **Philosophical concepts addressed**: Conceptual engineering, design as cognition, semantic representation. .

Researcher – Immigration Detention Study, Oxford (as part of the MSc Program)   Japan (remote) | 2024

- Investigated how immigration detention in Japan institutionalizes state categories of personhood and mobility, rendering ethically contested practices socially and legally legitimate.

- Collected sensitive qualitative data under strict ethical protocols, raising questions about the epistemic conditions of testimony under coercion.
- Assessed institutional practices as technologies of biopolitical control, analyzing how abstract legal categories become materially operational in detainees' lives.
- **Philosophical concepts addressed:** Ethics of testimony, epistemic injustice, biopolitics, norm enforcement.

Policy Researcher – Policing & Community Risk Study, Oxford (as part of the MSc Program)   **UK | 2024**

- Investigated how police–community interactions generate competing epistemic claims about public trust.
- Designed and administered interviews with officers, examining how norms are instantiated and contested in everyday practice.
- Authored analytical reports as part of a two-person research team, highlighting how institutional narratives structure collective reasoning about risk and responsibility.
- **Philosophical concepts addressed**: Institutional facts, hermeneutics of trust, collective agency, normativity.

Researcher – Human–Wildlife Conflict Study, University of Hong Kong   **Hong Kong | 2022**

- Analyzed how urban governance frames nonhuman life as risk, revealing tensions between utilitarian management and emerging posthumanist ethics.
- Mapped interview responses to uncover how competing conceptualizations of 'human' and 'animal' influenced governance decisions.
- Situated the wild boar conflict within wider philosophical debates about governance, and ecological ethics.
- **Philosophical concepts addressed**: Posthumanism, governance, risk epistemology, ethics of urbanity.

Research Assistant – Anti-Asian Hate Crime Study, University of Hong Kong   **Vancouver (remote) | 2021**

- Examined the role of testimony in shaping collective understanding of vulnerability and resilience.
- Systematically analyzed qualitative data, investigating how credibility deficits and testimonial injustice shaped narratives of vulnerability and resilience.
- Contributed to comparative philosophical inquiry on race, security, and epistemic injustice.
- **Philosophical concepts addressed**: Identity and recognition, power and resistance, social epistemology.

Teaching Experience

Freelance Academic Tutor – Humanities, Philosophy, and Writing   **Remote / Hong Kong | 2022 – Present**

- Delivered individualized academic support to university students across disciplines, including philosophy, sociology, and media studies.
- Advised students through concept formation, argumentative writing, and research planning.

Peer Mentor – University of Hong Kong   **Hong Kong | 2020 – 2021**

- Advised junior students in the Faculty of Arts on academic planning and thesis writing.
- Supported peers in navigating interdisciplinary research and communication-based coursework..

Professional Development

Conference Host – Workshop on Immigration Detention, University of Oxford   **UK | 2024**

- Organized and moderated a dialogue led by Professor Mary Bosworth between scholars and AVID (a UK network supporting people in detention), examining how action-based perspectives can inform normative analysis and vice versa.