

Brennan K. McDavid

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Updated: October 7, 2025

Academic Positions

Assistant Professor, Chapman University, Philosophy Department and Smith Institute for Political Economy and Philosophy, August 2020 to present

Visiting Assistant Professor, Chapman University, Philosophy Department and Smith Institute for Political Economy and Philosophy, August 2018 to May 2020

Visiting Research Fellow, Chapman University, January 2017

Seymour Reader in Ancient History and Philosophy, Ormond College, a residential college at the University of Melbourne, July 2015 to June 2018

Fellow, University of Melbourne, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, July 2015 to June 2018

Research Fellow, Centre for Ethical Leadership at Ormond College, July 2015 to June 2018

Education

Ph. D., Philosophy, Princeton University, July 2015

Dissertation: *Aristotle on Ethical Epistemology*; advisers: Benjamin Morison (primary), John Cooper

M.A. Classical Philology, University of Arizona, May 2010

Thesis: *Looking for Eudaimonia: An Examination of Plato's Conception of Happiness in Republic*; Committee: Rachana Kamtekar (adviser), Julia Annas, David Christenson

B.A. Philosophy and Political Science, minor in History, Vanderbilt University, May 2007

Publications

Articles & Chapters

10. "Aspiration in Adam Smith's Virtue Ethics." In: *Adam Smith Review* (Forthcoming).
9. "Lessons from an Exemplar of Playfulness: A Critical Response to Trujillo." In: *Journal of Philosophical Research* (Forthcoming).
8. "The Psychology of Money in Plato's Republic." In: *History of Political Economy* (Forthcoming).
7. "Prison-Breaking from Plato's Cave." In: *Classical Quarterly* (2025), pp. 1–12.
6. "Φύσις in Plato's Republic." In: *Ancient Philosophy* 44 (2024), pp. 1–16.
5. With Keith Hankins. "Adam Smith and the Creative Role of Imagination." In: *Adam Smith and Modernity*. Ed. by Alberto Burgio. Routledge, 2023.

4. “‘Meddling in the Work of Another’: πολυπραγμονεῖν in Plato’s Republic.” In: *Plato Journal* 23 (2022), pp. 95–107.
3. “Plato’s Market Optimism.” In: *Polis: The Journal for Ancient Greek and Roman Political Thought* 39 (2022), pp. 456–465.
2. “Aristotle.” In: *Encyclopedia of Business and Professional Ethics*. Ed. by Deborah Poff and Alex Michalos. 2021.
1. “On Why the City of Pigs and Clocks are Not Just.” In: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 57 (2019), pp. 571–594.

Book Reviews

5. Merrick Anderson. *Just Prospering? Plato and the Sophistic Debate about Justice*. In: *British Journal of the History of Philosophy* (2025), pp. 1–6.
4. Lloyd Gerson. *Plato’s Moral Realism*. In: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* vol. 63 (2025), pp. 479–480.
3. Melissa Lane. *Of Rule and Office: Plato’s Ideas of the Political*. In: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* vol. 63 (2025), pp. 147–148.
2. Katherine Hawley. *How to be Truthworthy*. In: *Journal of Moral Philosophy* vol. 18 (2021), pp. 433–436.
1. *Bridging the Gap between Aristotle’s Science and Ethics*. In: *Notre Dame Philosophical Review* (2015). Ed. by Devin Henry and Karen Margrethe Nielson. URL: <https://ndpr.nd.edu/reviews/bridging-the-gap-between-aristotle-s-science-and-ethics/>.

Awards & Fellowships

McGovern Training Program in Trusted Artificial Intelligence Grant, Chapman University (2025–2026, \$10,000 for “Modeling Trust in Human-AI Iterations of Principal-Agent Relationships: An Experimental Approach”)

Co-PI with Erik Kimbrough. Competitive grant for research and activities relating to AI

Faculty Grant for Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities, Chapman University (2025–2026, \$7,000 for “Economic Thought in the Ancient Academic and Peripatetic Schools”)

Competitive grant awarded by the Office of Research to promising new research in any discipline within the University

Pedagogical Innovation Grant, Chapman University (2024–2025; \$5,000 for “Dangerous Ideas”)

Co-PI with Erik Kimbrough. Competitive grant awarded to professors developing new courses that advance the University’s mission to provide a personal education

Laurance S. Rockefeller Graduate Prize Fellowship, Center for Human Values, Princeton University (2014–15)

Competitive fellowship awarded to students working on issues concerning human values

Stanley J. Seeger Fellowship, Program in Hellenic Studies, Princeton University (2011, 2012, 2013, 2014)

Summer travel grant for studies pertaining to the ancient world; utilized for the Princeton Classical Philosophy annual Greek philosophy reading group in Greece

P.E. More Fellowship, Princeton University (2010–2015)

Graduate fellowship awarded to students working on ancient philosophy

Public Scholarship & Media

"The Noble Lie: Plato's Republic, Book 3." *The Philosophy Teaching Library*, edited by Wes Siscoe. 2025.

"On Knowing Good Character: A Comparison of Adam Smith and Confucius.", *Adam Smith Works*: <https://www.adamsmithworks.org/speakings/mcdavid-comparison-smith-confucius>. 2 March 2023.

Podcast appearance, *The Good Omen*, hosted by Joshua Oommen. Discussing Socrates and intellectual humility. <https://joshuaoommen.substack.com/p/brennan-mcdavidon-becoming-an-ancient>. 1 June 2022.

Presentations

"The Logic of the City of Pigs"

Florida Ancient Philosophy Workshop, University of Florida. Gainesville. 15-16 November 2025.

"State Capacity in Plato's Political Theory"

PPE Society. New Orleans. November 2025.

"Peer Disagreement in Aristotle"

Conference on Civic Thought, Education, and Leadership, Chase Center, Ohio State University. 26-28 September 2025.

"Plato's Middlemen"

Social Justice in Ancient Greek and Roman Philosophy workshop at University of Colorado, Boulder. 10-13 April 2025.

"The Dangers of Craft Wisdom."

West Coast Plato Workshop. Seattle University. May 2024.

Central APA. Virtual. February 2025.

"The Economic Expertise of the Philosopher Rulers."

Economic Epistemologies in the Graeco-Roman World. Leiden. 24-27 August 2023.

"Aspiration in Adam Smith's Virtue Ethics."

International Adam Smith Society, St. Andrews Conference. July 2023.

"The Psychology of Money in Plato's Republic."

Stanford Ethics and Politics, Ancient and Modern workshop. Stanford, CA. 1 December 2022.

Central APA. Denver, CO. March 2023.

"Adam Smith on Imagination."

Mid-West Political Science Association meeting. Chicago, IL. April 2022. (with Keith Hankins)

"Plato's Market Optimism."

Mid-West Political Science Association meeting. Chicago, IL. April 2022.

"Plato's Market Pessimism."

Chapman University. Orange, CA. February 2020.

University of California, Riverside Ancient Philosophy Workshop. 31 May-1 June 2019.

"Aristotle's Empiricism."

Classics in the City, Australian Club. Melbourne. 14 May 2018.

"Meddling in the work of another."

Symposium at American Philosophical Association, Pacific Meeting. San Diego, CA. 28 March-1 April 2018.

Cambridge B Club. Cambridge, UK. 14 November 2017.

“Adam Smith’s Theory of Soul.”

International Adam Smith Society annual meeting, Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez. Viña del Mar, Chile. 12–13 January 2018.

“Peer Disagreement and Aristotle’s Ethics.”

Australasian Association of Philosophy annual conference, University of Adelaide. Adelaide. 2–6 July 2017

“Aristotle and the Uniqueness Thesis.”

Princeton Classical Colloquium. 2–4 December 2016.

University of Queensland philosophy colloquium series. 16 September 2016.

“Moral Habituation: a prerequisite for Aristotle’s Ethics Class.”

Connecting Virtues: Theoretical and Intellectual Insights. Genoa, Italy. 27–30 September 2016.

W.H. Allen Memorial Lecture for the Classical Association of Victoria. Melbourne. 14 September 2016.

“Knowledge in Aristotle’s Best Life.”

Aristotle World Congress: 2400th anniversary of Aristotle’s birth. Thessaloniki. 23–28 May 2016.

Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne, Victoria. 7 April 2016.

Keynote at Victoria Postgraduate Philosophy Workshop. Melbourne. 13 November 2015.

University of Sydney philosophy colloquium series. 7 October 2015.

“What’s Scientific about Aristotle’s Ethics?”

Monash University philosophy colloquium series. 8 April 2016.

Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy panel at the American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division meeting. Philadelphia. 28 December 2014.

Rocky Mountain Ethics Conference. 7–10 August 2014.

“Ancient Conceptions of Happiness.”

Victoria Association for Philosophy in Schools. Melbourne. 13 September 2015.

“The Virtue of Fine Deportment.”

Neglected Virtues: a conference in honor of Rosalind Hursthouse. Auckland, New Zealand. 15 August 2015.

“Aristotle on Knowing the Starting Points of Ethical Knowledge.”

Australasian Association of Philosophy, Macquarie University. Sydney, Australia. 5–10 July 2015.

Boston University. 23 January 2015.

“Aristotle on the Structure of Knowledge.”

Lawrence University. 27 January 2015.

Translation and commentary, Plato’s *Republic* 439b2-e2.

Princeton-University of São Paulo Workshop on Ancient Philosophy. Princeton. 16–18 January 2015.

Translation and commentary, Aristotle’s *De Partibus Animalium* I.

Princeton Classical Philosophy Summer Workshop. Spetses, Greece. 21–25 July 2014.

“Two Forms of Psychic Rule in Plato’s *Republic*.”

Princeton Philosophical Society. 10 April 2014.

Commentary, Aristotle’s *Physics* 1.6 and 1.8.

Princeton-University of São Paulo Workshop on Ancient Philosophy. São Paulo. 16–19 January 2014.

Translation and commentary, Aristotle’s *Physics* 204a8-204b4.

Princeton Classical Philosophy Summer Workshop. Athens, 8–12 July 2013.

“Understanding Aristotle’s Category Theory Through *Topics* 1.9.”

Catholic University of America’s graduate conference in philosophy. March 2013.

Translation and commentary, Aristotle’s *De Sensu et Sensibilibus* 436b8-437a18.

Princeton Classical Philosophy Summer Workshop. Athens. 10–14 July 2012.

Translation and commentary, Aristotle's *On Dreams* 461b7-462a8.

Princeton Classical Philosophy Summer Workshop. Crete. 11–15 July 2011.

"Contentless Consciousness: The Dreamless Sleep Analogy in Indian Philosophy."

Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy conference. New York. October 2010.

"The Happiness of the Virtuous Person."

University of Arizona Classics Department Graduate Student Colloquium. Tucson. April 2010.

Teaching Experience

Chapman University

Average global teaching score across Chapman courses: 4.56 out of 5

Topics in Humanomics: What is Competition?, ECON/ENG/PHIL 357 (Interterm 2026)

Co-Instructor with Erik Kimbrough. Investigation of the domains, mechanisms, and value of competition among humans.

Bootcamp in Aristotle, PHIL 360 (Fall 2021, 2023, 2025)

Primary Instructor. Intensive concept- and skill-building in Aristotle's theories of logic, epistemology, metaphysics, and science.

Dangerous Ideas, FFC 100 (Fall 2024, Fall 2025)

Co-Instructor with Erik Kimbrough. Rigorous introduction to methods in argumentation and evidence evaluation, with focus on learning to engage rationally with controversial viewpoints.

From Socrates to Aquinas, PHIL 310 (every semester)

Primary Instructor. Survey of major intellectual developments in metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of science, and ethics.

Aesthetics and the Visual Arts, PHIL 329 (Spring 2025)

Co-Instructor with John Hoffman. Survey of aesthetic theories with both historical depth through great books and global breadth through comparative analyses of Western, Japanese, African, and South American traditions.

Independent Study, Greek 201 (Spring 2025)

Primary Instructor. Reading excerpts of Plato's Greek along with full dialogues in translation, accompanying PHIL 310

Independent Study: Aesthetics, PHIL 399 (Spring 2024)

Primary Instructor. Survey of ancient (Plato/Aristotle) to modern (Kant/Nehamas/Riggle) theories of beauty and art.

Topics in Humanomics: What is Progress?, ECON/ENG/PHIL 357 (Interterm 2023 and 2024)

Co-Instructor with Erik Kimbrough. Survey of multiple dimensions of progress (material, moral, and artistic) in context of great societies (Classical Greece, Roman Empire, and Industrial Revolution).

Introduction to Philosophy, PHIL 101 (Fall 2022)

Primary Instructor. Survey of significant contemporary problems in philosophy with attention to their historical roots and modern methodologies.

Topics in Humanomics: Shame: The Civilizing Emotion, ECON/ENG/PHIL 357 (Fall 2021)

Co-Instructor with Erin Crockett. Exploration of the personal and collective practices and consequences of shame through literature and case studies depicting shame and shamelessness in widely different contexts (e.g. the partition of India and 1980s Wall Street).

Topics in Humanomics: Trust in Troubling Times, ECON/ENG/PHIL 357 (Spring 2020)

Co-Instructor with Jan Osborn. Conceptual and practical investigation of trust and trustworthiness from philosophical, economic, and literary perspectives. Coincided with first Covid 19 shut down.

Senior Seminar in Philosophy: Virtue Ethics, PHIL 398 (Spring 2019)

Primary Instructor. Examination of major contributions to philosophical literature on Virtue Ethics.

The Tragedy in Morality, FFC 100 (Fall 2018)

Co-Instructor with John Thrasher. Introduction to Greek tragedy through philosophy of Dodds, Nietzsche, and Williams.

University of Melbourne

Greek Philosophy, PHIL20040 (Sem 2 2015, Sem 1 2016, Sem 2 2017, Sem 1 2018)

Lecturer and Tutor. Introduction to major philosophical thinkers of ancient Greece, pre-Socratics to Aristotle.
Latin 4, CLAS10014/CLAS20031 (Sem 2 2016, Sem 2 2017)
Lecturer, Tutor, and Grammar instructor: Introduction to Latin poetry through Lucretius' De Rerum Natura.

Rutgers University, New Brunswick

Philosophy of the Greeks, 730:208:01 (Spring 2015)
Primary instructor. Introduction to major philosophical thinkers of ancient Greece, pre-Socratics to Aristotle.

Mercer County Community College

Introduction to Philosophy, Phi 102 (Summer 2013)
Co-Instructor with Anthony Cross. Introductory survey course, pre-Socratics to Pragmatists.

Princeton University

Aristotle and His Successors, Cla/Phi 301 (Spring 2012)
Teaching Assistant to Benjamin Morison. Upper-level undergraduate course.
Introduction to Ancient Philosophy, Cla/Phi 205 (Fall 2011)
Teaching Assistant to Hendrik Lorenz. Introductory survey course, pre-Socratics to Stoics.

University of Arizona

Intermediate Latin, Lat 202 (Spring 2010)
Primary Instructor. Introduction to Virgil's Aeneid.
Intermediate Latin, Lat 201 (Fall 2009)
Primary Instructor.
Introductory Latin, Lat 102 (Spring 2009)
Primary Instructor.
Introductory Latin, Lat 101 (Fall 2008)
Primary Instructor.

Teaching Service & Development

Summer Scholars Research Faculty, Smith Institute (2022, 2023, 2024, 2025)
Adviser for a group of 2-3 undergraduate students developing research skills both as assistants to my project and in their independent study. Research topics: Aristotle and AI (2022), Ancient Economies (2023), Historical Socrates (2024), Aristotle's Biology (2025)

Resident Scholar, Ormond College (2015–2018)
Mentor and tutor in residence for the largest of University of Melbourne's residential colleges.

Graduate Fellow, McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning (2014–2015)
Orientation leader for new teaching assistants; trainee in various pedagogy instruction modules.

Resident Graduate Student, Forbes College, Princeton University (2014–2015)
Graduate student mentor in residence for one of Princeton's six residential colleges. Forbes houses freshman and sophomores, so I advised students prior to their declaration of major.

Professional Activities & Service

Search Committee Chair, Research Associate position, Smith Institute (2025-2026)
Web Designer and Manager, West Coast Plato Workshop (2025-)
Workshop Organizer, 19th Annual West Coast Plato Workshop (2026)
Program Committee, Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association (2025-2028)
Faculty Senator, Schmid College of Science, Chapman University (2024–2026)
Coordinator, Chapman University's Ancient Philosophy Themed Inquiry (2024–)
Reviewer/Panelist, National Endowment of the Humanities (2024)
Interim Director, Law and Liberal Arts Major, Chapman University (Spring 2024)
Organizer, Faculty Research Working Group, Smith Institute (2020–2021)
Member, Values and Ethics Inquiry Assessment Committee, Chapman University (2020)

Member, General Education Committee, Chapman University (2020–2021)
Judge, Southern California High School Ethics Bowl (2020–2021)
Reviewer, Human Ethics Advisory Group, University of Melbourne (2017–2018)
Member, Ormond College Reconciliation Action Plan Workgroup (2017)
President, Senior Common Room, Ormond College (2016–2017)
Interviewer, Undergraduate Admissions, Ormond College (2015–2017)
Co-Organizer, Princeton-Rutgers Graduate Conference in Philosophy (2014)
Member, Climate for Graduate Students Committee, Princeton Philosophy Department (2013)
Referee, Princeton-Rutgers Graduate Conference in Philosophy (2013)
Member, Classical Philosophy Committee, Princeton Philosophy Department (2012–2013)
Referee, Princeton Classical Philosophy Graduate Conference (2012)
Graduate Student Representative, Princeton Philosophy Department (2011–2012)
Reception Committee, Princeton Philosophy Department (2010–2011)

Professional Affiliations

Alliance for Civics in the Academy (2025–)
Society for Open Inquiry in Behavioral Science (2024–)
Heterodox Academy (2024–)
American Philosophical Association (2014–)
Australasian Association of Philosophy (2015, 2017)
Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy (2010, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018)