

# Charlie Tanksley

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## Education

May 2009    Ph.D. in Philosophy, University of Virginia  
Dissertation: "Masses"  
Advisor: Trenton Merricks  
Best Graduating Student in Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (Shannon Award)  
May 2004    M.A. in Philosophy, Texas A&M University  
May 2002    B.A. in Philosophy, Samford University

## Area of specialization

Metaphysics

## Areas of competency

Epistemology, Free Will, Logic, Philosophy of Religion, 20th Century Analytic

## Academic positions

2010–2011    Clemson University—Instructor  
Spring 2010    University of Virginia—Instructor  
Fall 2009    University of Virginia—Visiting Scholar

## Publications & presentations

### PUBLICATION

[2010](#)    "The Mereological Constancy of Masses," *The Philosophical Quarterly*. 60:243–254. (DOI: [10.1111/j.1467-9213.2009.602.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9213.2009.602.x))

### UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS

Mar. 2011    American Philosophical Association, Central Division: "The Distributivity of Masses"

## PAST PRESENTATIONS

- Feb. 2010 American Philosophical Association, Central Division: “Masses and Extended Simples”  
Dec. 2009 American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division: “Masses and Four-Dimensionalism”  
Apr. 2009 Graduate Conference on the work of Lynne Baker, SUNY Buffalo: “Masses and Four-Dimensionalism”  
Nov. 2008 University of Virginia: “Masses and Four-Dimensionalism”  
Oct. 2006 Virginia Philosophical Association: “Coincidence and Masses”  
Apr. 2006 American Philosophical Association, Central Division: “The Third Man, Resemblance Regress, and *Parmenides*: A New Interpretation”  
Oct. 2005 Virginia Philosophical Association: “The Third Man, Resemblance Regress, and *Parmenides*: A New Interpretation”  
Oct. 2004 University of Virginia Philosophy Department Retreat: “Interpretations of the Forms in Plato’s *Parmenides*”  
Oct. 2003 University of Texas at San Antonio Philosophy Symposium: “Coming to Terms with the Elephant Man: Rekindling Hope in the Unity of Language”

## COMMENTS GIVEN AT CONFERENCES

- Oct. 2008 University of Virginia Philosophy Department Retreat: Comments on Eugene Mills’s “Ignorance and Lotteries”  
Apr. 2008 American Philosophical Association, Central Division: Comments on Daniel Johnson’s “Making Co-Instantiation Primitive: Consequences for the Bundle Theory’s Commitment to the Identity of Indiscernibles”

## OTHER CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

- Aug. 2008 Metaphysical Mayhem—Rutgers University: participated in invitation-only conference

## Awards & accomplishments

- 2009 Best Graduating Student in University of Virginia’s Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (The Shannon Award)  
2008–2009 Dissertation Year Fellowship, University of Virginia (competitive fellowship)  
2004 Best Historical Essay by a Texas A&M University Philosophy Graduate Student for “Interpretations of the Forms in Plato’s *Parmenides*”  
2003 Best Analytic Essay by a Texas A&M University Philosophy Graduate Student for “Modal Fictionalism and the Problem From Concern: Gaining Ground for the Fictionalist”  
2002 Lunceford Award for Outstanding Senior in Philosophy at Samford University  
2001 Pew Younger Scholar Series in Philosophy with Dean Zimmerman (competitive application)

## Departmental & professional service

- Spring 2010 Instituted and organized dissertation writing group for philosophy students  
Spring 2010 Co-facilitated writing group for Honors and Distinguished Majors students in philosophy  
2005–2009 Instituted and organized group for presentation of student work in metaphysics  
2007–2009 Instituted and organized metaphysics student reading group

2002–2004 Fellow of Texas A&M University’s Graduate Teaching Academy  
 2002–2004 Co-coach of Texas A&M’s Bovay Engineering Ethics Team  
 2002 Founder, Phi Sigma Tau—Alabama Beta Chapter  
 2000–2001 Founder and President, Samford University Philosophy Club

## Teaching experience

### AT CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

Spring 2010 Introduction to Logic  
 Fall 2010 Introduction to Logic  
 Fall 2010 Introduction to Ethics

### AS THE INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Spring 2010 Seminar for Majors (Senior/Capstone Seminar)  
 Jul. 2008 Free Will and Determinism  
 Jul. 2007 God and Evil  
 Jan. 2007 Philosophy Through Film  
 Jul. 2006 Introduction to Philosophy  
 Spring 2006 Philosophy of Religion  
 Fall 2005 Free Will and Determinism

### AS A TEACHING ASSISTANT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Spring 2008 Introduction to Philosophy (B. Gertler)  
 Fall 2007 Philosophy of Religion (T. Merricks)  
 Spring 2007 Issues in Life and Death (R. Stangl)  
 Fall 2006 Introduction to Philosophy (M. Green)  
 Spring 2005 Democracy (T. Brewer)  
 Fall 2004 Human Nature (H. Langsam)  
 2002–2004 Engineering Ethics (4 semesters, at Texas A&M)

### TUTORING EXPERIENCE (WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA’S ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT)

Fall 2007 Introduction to Philosophy  
 Spring 2007 Issues in Life and Death, International Ethics, God, Aristotle  
 Fall 2006 Introduction to Philosophy, Introduction to Logic  
 Spring 2006 Introduction to Philosophy  
 Fall 2005 Introduction to Philosophy, Human Nature, Introduction to Logic  
 Jul. 2005 Family Ethics  
 Spring 2005 Philosophy of Science, Democracy, Aristotle  
 Fall 2004 Introduction to Philosophy, Human Nature  
 Jul. 2004 Introduction to Ethics

## Courses prepared to teach

### INTRODUCTORY/SURVEY UNDERGRADUATE

Introduction to Philosophy, Philosophy of Religion, Symbolic Logic, Knowledge and Reality, Free Will, 20th Century Analytic Philosophy, Modern Philosophy, Ancient Philosophy, Critical Thinking, Issues in Life and Death, Philosophy of Science, Introduction to Ethics

### ADVANCED UNDERGRADUATE

Metaphysics, Epistemology, Libertarianism (Free Will)

### SURVEY GRADUATE

Metaphysics

### ADVANCED GRADUATE

Masses/Material Objects

## Dissertation abstract

### *Masses*

My dissertation argued for two main conclusions: first, masses exist; second, four-dimensionalism is true. Masses are the referents of mass nouns (e.g., ‘water’ and ‘metal’); they are physical objects that (a) can survive neither gaining nor losing parts and (b) satisfy the following fusion principle: for any masses of kind K, there is an object that has just those masses as parts and is itself a mass of kind K. Masses have been discussed and defended widely—W. V. O. Quine, Helen Cartwright, F. J. Pelletier, Dean Zimmerman, Judith Jarvis Thomson, and Ned Markosian have all argued for them; but they have also been widely criticized—Henry Laycock, Peter van Inwagen, Michael Burke, Lynne Rudder Baker, and Trenton Merricks have all argued they do not exist. I argued, *pace* those in the second list, that masses exist. And though the vast majority of the discussions about masses occur under the assumption that four-dimensionalism is false, I argued that proponents of masses should accept four-dimensionalism. My dissertation is a sustained defense of masses that traditional mass proponents should welcome; but it is also a challenge to the traditional way of thinking about masses, especially their persistence through time.

## Research agenda

I think it is quite natural to believe in masses. But once we explicitly add masses to our ontology, we end up with some surprising consequences. My research—at present and the near term—is centered around these consequences. You can see this clearly in two papers I have under review—one that (essentially) argues from masses to the truth of four-dimensionalism, and one that argues from masses to the truth of the Doctrine of Arbitrary Undetached Parts.

The three other papers I am working on during the 2010-2011 year fit with this project: One argues that masses are distributive—that every proper part of a mass of water, say, is also a mass of water; this has serious consequences for our notions of kinds and the way objects get their sortal or kind properties. Another argues that unrestricted composition is true. And a third argues that though they have some odd properties, masses are just objects like any other—that is, there is no metaphysically interesting distinction between things and stuff; one surprising consequence of this argument: extended simples are impossible.

In the end, I think masses are much more interesting and relevant than it first appears. If we think explicitly about masses, I contend we find interesting conclusions about other questions in metaphysics.

### References

References available upon request