

John Morrison, 4/27/2026

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Areas

Specialization:

Philosophy of Mind (esp. cognitive neuroscience and AI)
Early Modern Philosophy (esp. Spinoza)

Competence:

Metaphysics, Medieval Philosophy, Philosophy of Language, Logic

Education

New York University

PhD, Philosophy, September 2009

University of Pittsburgh

MA, Philosophy, May 2004

Williams College

BA, Philosophy and Mathematics, May 2001

Employment

Barnard College, Columbia University

Professor of Philosophy, 2022-present
Director of Cognitive Science, 2022-2024
Chair of Philosophy, 2020-2024
Affiliate of Neuroscience and Behavior, 2019-present
Associate Professor of Philosophy, 2018-2022
Assistant Professor of Philosophy, 2009-2018

Zuckerman Mind Brain Behavior Institute, Columbia University

Affiliate, 2018-present
Affiliate, Center for Theoretical Neuroscience, 2019-present

Neurobiology and Behavior Program, Columbia University

Mentor, 2019-present

Paris 1: Pantheon-Sorbonne University (December 2015)

Visiting Professor, Philosophy Department

In progress

“Using Transfer Learning to Identify a Neural System’s Algorithm,”
with Niko Kriegeskorte and Benjamin Peters (under review, first author)

“Representation in the Hippocampus: Clarifying the Disagreement,”
with Abhishek Shah (draft circulating, equal contribution)

“Source Invariance and Probabilistic Transfer: A Testable Theory of
Probabilistic Neural Representations,”
with Sam Lippl, Raphael Gerraty, and Niko Kriegeskorte (draft circulating, co-last author)

“Learning to Count Interferes with Proportional Reasoning in
Convolutional Neural Networks,”
with Miriam Rosenberg-Lee (accepted at MCLS 2026, equal contribution)

“Revisiting Iconic Memory With a New Paradigm,”
with Gal Vishne, Miranda Ye, Zoe Haynes, Nick Turk-Browne,
and Mike Shadlen (accepted at VSS 2026, co-last author)

“Othello-GPT Does Not Have a World Model: General Lessons for
Attributing World Models to Neural Systems,”
with Mouad Oulouali and Teo Maayan (submitted to conference, first author)

“Algorithms for Neural Networks”

“Representations for Neural Networks”

“Flavors of Abstraction: Comparing Methods for Identifying
Algorithms in Neural Networks,”
with Tiannan Wang, Amir Zur, Atticus Geiger, and Benjamin Peters (last author)

Publications

Articles

“Using Transfer Learning to Define a Neural System’s Algorithm”
with Niko Kriegeskorte and Benjamin Peters,
forthcoming in *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*

“Third-Personal Evidence for Perceptual Confidence”
Philosophy and Phenomenological Research (2024), v.108, p.106–135.

“Three Medieval Aristotelians on Numerical Identity and Time”
Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy (2022), v.10, p.153–194.

“Spinoza on Mind, Body, and Numerical Identity,”
Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Mind (2022), v.2, p.293–336.

“Descartes on Numerical Identity and Time,”
The Australasian Journal of Philosophy (2022), v.100, p.230–246.

“Perceptual Variation and Ignorance”
Synthese (2021), v.199, p.5145–5173.

↔ Appendix: <https://doi.org/10.7916/d8-d20y-1g83>

“Perceptual Variation and Structuralism”
Noûs (2020), v.54, p.290–326

“Perceptual Confidence and Categorization”
Analytic Philosophy (2017), v.58, p.71–85

“Perceptual Confidence”
Analytic Philosophy (2016), v.57, p.15–48

*Winner of the 2015 Sanders Prize in Philosophy of Mind

“Triangulating How Things Look”
Mind & Language (2015), v.30, p.140–161

“Anti-Atomism about Color Representation”
Noûs (2015), v.49, p.94–122

“Restricting Spinoza’s Causal Axiom”
Philosophical Quarterly (2015), v.65, p.40–63

“Relation Between Conception and Causation in Spinoza’s Metaphysics”
Philosophers’ Imprint (2013), v.13, p.1–17

“Colour in a Physical World”
Mind (2012), v.121, p.333–373

↔ Appendix: <https://doi.org/10.7916/D84J0P02>

Chapters

“Seven Challenges for Garrett’s Interpretation of Mind-Body Identity,”
Naturalism in Early Modern Philosophy, Garrett and Cottrell (eds.) (forthcoming),
Oxford University Press

“Spinoza on Numerical Identity and Time”
A Companion to Spinoza, Melamed (ed.) (2021),
Wiley Blackwell, p.189–203

“Perceptual Variation and Relativism”
Epistemology After Sextus Empiricus, Vogt and Vlastis (eds.) (2020),
Oxford University Press, p.13–47

↪ Appendix: <https://doi.org/10.7916/D8Q546GJ>

“Two Puzzles about Thought and Identity in Spinoza”
Cambridge Critical Guide to Spinoza’s Ethics, Melamed (ed.) (2017),
Cambridge University Press, p.56–81

“Truth in the *Emendation*”
Young Spinoza, Melamed (ed.) (2015),
Oxford University Press, p.67–91

Reviews

Valtteri Viljanen’s *Spinoza’s Geometry of Power*
British Journal for the History of Philosophy (2013), v.21, p.610–613

Raffaella De Rosa’s *Descartes and the Puzzle of Sensory Representation*
Mind (2014) v.123, p.1187–1191 (with Elliot Paul)

Talks

“Othello-GPT Does Not Have a World Model: General Lessons for
Attributing World Models to Neural Systems”
Columbia, May 2026 (Center for Theoretical Neuroscience lab meeting)
University of Pittsburgh, November 2026 (HPS colloquium)

“Representation in the Hippocampus: Clarifying the Disagreement”
Society for Philosophy and Psychology, June 2025 (conference, poster)
Population Doctrine Workshop, Center for Philosophy of Science,
University of Pittsburgh, October 2025 (conference, talk, jointly presented with Abhi Shah)

“Learning to Count Interferes with Proportional Reasoning in
Convolutional Neural Networks”
Mathematical Cognition and Learning Society, June 2026
(conference, talk, presented by Miriam Rosenberg-Lee)

“Revisiting Iconic Memory With a New Paradigm”
York University, February 2026 (Center for Vision colloquium)
Johns Hopkins University, March 2026 (Firestone/Phillips lab meeting)
NYU, April 2026 (graduate seminar, presented by Gal Vishne)
Reason in Perception, Graz, May 2026 (conference, keynote)
Vision Sciences Society, May 2026 (conference, talk, presented by Gal Vishne)

Comments on Frances Egan's *Deflating Mental Representation*
Society for Philosophy and Neuroscience, April 2025 (conference)

"Algorithms for Neural Networks"

"Using Transfer Learning to Identify a Neural System's Algorithm"

(A collection of related talks using a range of related titles)

Columbia, April 2021 (Kriegeskorte lab meeting)

University of Glasgow, March 2022 (PPN colloquium)

University of Texas at Austin, April 2022 (lunchtime talk)

CUNY, October 2022 (cognitive science colloquium)

NYU, March 2023 (mind discussion group)

London Institute of Philosophy, July 2023 (colloquium)

University of Antwerp, March 2024 (colloquium)

London Institute of Philosophy, June 2024 (colloquium)

Society for Philosophy and Psychology, June 2024 (conference, talk)

Computational Cognitive Neuroscience, MIT, August 2024 (conference, poster)

Columbia, September 2024 (Center for Theoretical Neuroscience lab meeting)

Indiana University, December 2024 (joint cognitive science lab meeting)

Ranch Metaphysics Workshop, January 2025 (talk)

Pacific APA, April 2025 (invited symposium)

Columbia, May 2025 (Kriegeskorte lab meeting)

Rutgers University Newark, May 2025 (conference, talk)

Vision Sciences Society, May 2025 (conference, poster)

Cognitive Sciences Society, August 2025 (conference, poster)

Computational Cognitive Neuroscience, Amsterdam, August 2025 (conference, talk)

Yale, December 2025 (CompCog colloquium)

University of Edinburgh, December 2025 (ILCC colloquium)

Barnard, February 2026 (cognitive science colloquium)

"Probabilistic Representations: Subpersonal and Personal"

Johns Hopkins University, April 2024 (conference, talk)

"Representations for Neural Networks"

Columbia, November 2023 (university seminar)

New York University, October 2023 (graduate seminar)

"Spinoza on Mind, Body, and Numerical Identity"

University of Colorado at Boulder, July 2015 (NEH institute)

University of Texas at Austin, October 2015 (conference)

Pantheon-Sorbonne University, December 2015 (colloquium)

UC Irvine, February 2016 (scientia colloquium)

UC Los Angeles, February 2016 (informal workshop)

University of Toronto, September 2017 (conference)

NYU, May 2023 (conference)

Yale, December 2025 (SEMPY colloquium)

Comments on Andrea Kern's "Perceiving that p'-Capacities, Opportunities and Hindrances"
University of Pittsburgh, December 2021 (conference)

"Representation in the Brain"

Columbia, January 2021 (Center for Theoretical Neuroscience lab meeting)
Zuckerman Mind Brain Behavior Institute, September 2020 (conference, talk)

"Probabilities in Perception, Probabilities about Perception"

London Institute of Philosophy, May 2021 (conference on metacognition, talk)

"Inferences in Complex Systems (including Brains)"

MIT, November 2019 (work-in-progress talk)

Comments on Schellenberg's *The Unity of Perception*

Inter-American Congress, October 2019 (conference)

"Perceptual Structuralism: Bees and Toads"

MIT, November 2019 (graduate seminar)
Columbia University, April 2019 (neuroscience lab meeting)
Rutgers University, May 2019 (workshop)
Oxford University, May 2019 (colloquium)
King's College London, May 2019 (MMP colloquium)
Pacific APA, April 2019 (invited symposium)

"Perceptual Confidence: Empirical Evidence"

Israel Institute for Advanced Studies, January 2020 (conference, talk)
Inter-American Congress, October 2019 (conference, talk)
Cambridge University, August 2019 (conference, talk)
Ruhr-University Bochum, July 2019 (conference, talk)
University College London, May 2019 (neuroscience lab meeting)
Eastern APA, January 2019 (invited symposium)

"Perceptual Confidence: Implications for Consciousness and Content"

UC Berkeley, March 2017 (conference, talk)
Ryerson University, May 2017 (conference, talk)
Institut Jean Nicod, École Normale Supérieure, July 2017 (colloquium)
University of Toronto, September 2017 (group talk)

"Perceptual Structuralism: Objects, Kinds, and Qualities"

UC San Diego, February 2016 (conference, talk)
UC Los Angeles, February 2016 (informal workshop)
University of Bristol, May 2016 (colloquium)
London Institute of Philosophy, May 2016 (LEM colloquium)
Oxford University, May 2016 (informal workshop)

Johns Hopkins University, February 2017 (colloquium)
Institut Jean Nicod, École Normale Supérieure, July 2017 (conference, talk)
University of Notre Dame, [date?] (colloquium)

“Two Puzzles about Thought and Identity in Spinoza”
Pantheon-Sorbonne University, December 2015 (colloquium)

“Perceptual Structuralism” (Formerly “A New Approach to Perceptual Variation”)
Union College, May 2014 (philosophy club)
Pantheon-Sorbonne University, June 2014 (conference, talk)
New York University, November 2014 (graduate seminar)
Yale University, November 2014 (ELMM colloquium)
Rutgers University, March 2015 (graduate seminar)
University of Gothenburg, June 2015 (conference, talk)

“Perceptual Confidence”
Oxford University, November 2012 (colloquium)
University of Antwerp, August 2013 (conference, talk)
University of Texas at Austin, October 2013 (colloquium)
Society for Philosophy and Psychology, Duke, June 2015 (conference, talk)
University of Oslo, June 2015 (colloquium)
Cornell University, July 2015 (conference, talk)
New York University, December 2015 (conference, talk)

Comments on Rosenthal’s “How to Think about Mental Qualities”
Pacific APA, April 2014 (conference)

“Spinoza on the Nature of Truth”
Johns Hopkins University, September 2011 (conference, talk)

“Knowing How Things Look”
CUNY, February 2011 (cognitive science colloquium)
Columbia University, March 2011 (colloquium)

Comments on Della Rocca’s *Spinoza*
Eastern APA, December 2010 (Author Meets Critics)

“Spinoza on Causation and Conception”
Johns Hopkins University, April 2010 (conference, talk)
Oxford University, October 2010 (conference, talk)

Postdoctoral Advising

Raphael Gerraty (Columbia, co-mentor, 2023-2025)
Nedah Nemati (Columbia, co-mentor, 2019-2021)

Graduate Advising

Aaron Wang (Columbia, advisor, ongoing)
Weiming Sheng (Columbia, advisor, ongoing)
Matthew Morgado (John Hopkins, committee, ongoing)
Lisa Clark (Columbia, advisor, ongoing)
Andrew Richmond (Columbia, advisor, PhD 2022)
Natalie Hejduk (Columbia, committee, PhD 2021)
Simon Brown (Columbia, committee, PhD 2020)
Jorge Morales (Columbia, advisor, PhD 2018)
Jeremy Wolos (Columbia, advisor, PhD 2016)

Honors

2015 Sanders Prize in the Philosophy of Mind
Annual essay competition open to scholars who are within fifteen years of receiving a Ph.D., \$10,000 prize.

Grants

NSF Fellowship

Granting Agency: National Science Foundation
Purpose: Funds to develop useful and precise definitions of ‘representation’ and ‘inference’ for attribution to the brain.
Amount: \$298,656

Collaboratory Fellowship

Granting Agency: Columbia’s Data Science Institute
Purpose: Funds to develop a course on neural networks with Christos Papadimitriou, a Columbia computer scientist.
Amount: \$100,000

Mellon New Directions Fellowship

Granting Agency: Mellon Foundation
Purpose: Funds for a year-long sabbatical for Spring 2019 and Fall 2019 while I take courses in neuroscience.
Amount: \$205,000

The Sources of Perceptual Intentionality

Co-investigator: Uriah Kriegel (École Normale Supérieure, Institut Jean Nicod)
Granting Agency: Columbia’s Faculty of Arts & Sciences
Purpose: Funds for Uriah’s visit to Columbia in November 2016, and for me to visit Institut Jean Nicod in July 2017 (incl. a conference)
Amount: approx. \$12,000

Situating Core Analytic Philosophy within the Liberal Arts Curriculum

Co-investigators: Yuval Avnur (Scripps) and Troy Cross (Reed)
Granting Agency: Alliance to Advance Liberal Arts Colleges

Purpose: Funds for a conference on teaching courses in “core philosophy” in liberal arts colleges in Portland, Oregon in August 2016.

Amount: approx. \$20,000

Short-Term Alliance Visiting Professorship

Granting Agency: Columbia’s Alliance Program

Purpose: Funds to visit Pantheon-Sorbonne University in December, 2015.

Amount: approx. \$3,000

Values and Agency. A Franco-American Philosophical Symposium

Co-investigators: Akeel Bilgrami (Columbia), Chantel Jaquet (Pantheon-Sorbonne University), and Laurent Jaffro (Pantheon-Sorbonne University)

Granting Agency: Columbia’s Alliance Program

Purpose: Funds for a conference at Pantheon-Sorbonne University in June, 2014.

Amount: approx. \$12,000

Reconceiving Spinoza’s God

Granting Agency: National Endowment for the Humanities

Purpose: Funds for a sabbatical in 2014-2015 to write a series of connected papers on Spinoza’s metaphysics.

Amount: \$50,400