

# JAMES M. OKAPAL

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Missouri Western State University  
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## EDUCATION

Ph. D **University of Tennessee**, Knoxville, TN; August 2004

*Dissertation*: "Pluralism and Practical Reason"

*Chair*: Betsy Postow

M. A. **Bowling Green State University**, Bowling Green, OH; May 1996

*Advisor*: Edward F. McClennen

B. A. **The Ohio State University**, Columbus, OH; June 1993

*Major*: Philosophy

*Minors*: Political Science, English

*Thesis*: "Morals by Accident"

*Chair*: Donald C. Hubin

## AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Normative Ethics

Practical Ethics

Ethics and Literature

## AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Social and Political Philosophy

Meta-Ethics

Logic

## EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Graduate School Faculty, Missouri Western State University, 2019 to present

Professor of Philosophy, Missouri Western State University, 2018-present

Associate Professor of Philosophy, Missouri Western State University, 2012-2018

Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Missouri Western State University, 2005-2012

Adjunct Professor, Department of Philosophy, Southern Methodist University, 2004-2005

Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, Ashland University, 2000-2001

Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, Denison University, 2000

Lecturer, Cuyahoga Community College, 1999 and 2001

Chair, Department of Philosophy and Religion, Missouri Western State University, 2015-2020

Chair, Department of History and Geography, Missouri Western State University, 2015-2020

## PUBLICATIONS

Single Author

"The Rise of Rey Skywalker in *Star Wars and Philosophy Strikes Back*. Eds. Decker, Kevin S. and Jason T. Eberl (Wiley-Blackwell, Forthcoming 2022).

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“She-Hulk: Superhero?” in *The Prindle Post*. Ed. Tucker Sechrest (Aug 26, 2022).  
Stable URL: <https://www.prindleinstitute.org/2022/08/she-hulk-superhero/>

“Moral Luck and the Judgment of Officials” in *The Prindle Post*. Ed. Tucker Sechrest (Sept 14, 2020). Stable URL: <https://www.prindlepost.org/2020/09/moral-luck-and-the-judgment-of-officials/>

“Harry Potter as Philosophy: Five Types of Friendship” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Popular Culture as Philosophy*. Ed. David Johnson (Palgrave, 2020)

““Who am I to You?”” in *Blade Runner 2049 and Philosophy*. Eds. Robin Bunce and Trip McCrossin. (Wiley Blackwell, Summer 2019)

““All Other Priorities are Rescinded”: The Moral Status of Employees in the *Alien Franchise*” in *Alien and Philosophy*. Eds. Decker, Kevin S. and Jeff Ewing (Wiley-Blackwell, Spring 2017).

““In Search of...” Friendship: What We Can Learn from Androids and Vulcans” in *The Ultimate Star Trek and Philosophy*. Eds. Decker, Kevin S. and Jason T. Eberl (Wiley-Blackwell, Spring 2016).

“Of Battle Droids and Zillo Beasts: Moral Status in the *Star Wars Galaxy*” in *The Ultimate Star Wars and Philosophy*. Eds. Eberl, Jason T. and Kevin S. Decker (Wiley-Blackwell, October 2015)

“13 Open Questions about Happiness” in *Philosophy Now* (Issue 87, Nov/Dec 2011, pp 46-47)

“Problematic Arguments for Comprehensive Values” in *Florida Philosophical Review* (Volume X, Issue 1, Summer 2010, pp 43-74)

#### Joint Author

With Patricia Donaher: “Causation, Prophetic Visions, and the Free Will Question in Harry Potter” in *Reading Harry Potter Again: Critical Essays* Ed. Anatol, Gisele Liza (Praeger, May 2009)

#### Book Reviews

Review of Dreyfus and Kelly, *All Things Shinning: Reading the Western Classics to Find Meaning in a Secular Age* in *Tradition and Discovery* Volume 38, Number 2 (2011-2012)

Review of Grene and Depew, *The Philosophy of Biology: An Episodic History* in *Tradition and Discovery* Volume 37, Number 2 (2010-2011)

Review of Narveson, *This is Ethical Theory* in *Teaching Philosophy* Volume 33, Number 4 (December 2010)

James M. Okapal

Review of Nichols, *et. al. Philosophy through Science Fiction: A Coursebook with Readings* in *AAPT News* Volume 31, Number 1 (Winter 2010).

Review of Alice Dreger's *One of Us*, in *Feminist Approaches to Bioethics* Volume 12, Number 2 (October 2004)

#### Editorial Activities

Series Editor: *Ethics and Culture*, McFarland Press

*Ethics after Poststructuralism: From Levinas to Posthumanism*, Ann Keniston, Lee Olsen, and Brendan Johnston, editors (2020)

*Ethics in Comedy: Essays on Crossing the Line*, Steven Benko, editor (2020)

*Having Their Say: Athletes and Entertainers and the Ethics of Speaking Out*, Kristie Buntun (2021)

#### Other

"Introductory Guide to Ethical Theory in Healthcare" for Heartland Regional Medical Center Ethics Committee" (2010; revised 2017 for MOSAIC Life Care)

#### **CURRENT RESEARCH**

*Ethics through Science Fiction*: A textbook on applied ethics topics supplemented by both philosophical articles and science fiction short stories

#### **PRESENTATIONS**

*Non-Peer Reviewed at Peer Reviewed Conference*

"The Rise of Rey Skywalker" (April 2022)

Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association, Virtual, planned Seattle, WA

"In Search of..." Friendship: What We Can Learn from Androids and Vulcans" (March 2016)

Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association, Seattle, WA

"Of Battle Droids and Zillo Beasts: Moral Status in the *Star Wars* Galaxy" (April 2015)

Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association, New Orleans, LA

"Give them a Better Chance: Potentiality and Moral Responsibility in Roger Zelazny's 'Keys to December'" (April 2014) Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association, Chicago, IL

"Slug Club versus Death Eaters: Benign and Malign Friendships in *The Half-Blood Prince*" (March 2013) Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association, Washington, D. C.

"Buggers and Piggies and AI, Oh My!: Moral Status in the Works of Orson Scott Card" (April 2012) Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association, Boston, MA

*Peer Reviewed*

"You don't want to go making friends with the wrong sorts: Friendship and Moral Development in Harry Potter" (May 2021)  
Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association, Virtual

"Exploring Strange New Worlds: Ethical Criticism in Science Fiction" (April 2019)  
Popular Culture Association, Washington D. C.

"Disentangling Human Nature from Moral Status in the Works of Philip K. Dick" (September 2018) Science Fiction Popular Cultures Conference, Kona, HI.

"Memory and *Ready Player One*: Identity and Identification" (March 2018)  
Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association, Indianapolis, IN

"All Other Priorities are Rescinded": the Moral Status of Employees in the *Alien* Franchise" (April, 2017) Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association, San Diego, CA

"In Space No One Can Hear You Scream": Problematic Bases for Being a Subject of Justice," Pacific Northwest Political Science Association, Portland, OR. (November 2016)

"Anthropomorphic Markers of Moral Status in Children's Literature" (September 2012)  
Ethics and Children's Literature: A Symposium, Greencastle, Indiana

"Lions, Tigers and Andys, Oh My!: The Moral Status of Non-Human Sentients in Philip K. Dick" (April 2011) Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association, San Antonio, TX

"A Common Form for a Variety of Ethics Papers" (July 2010) American Association of Philosophy Teachers Biennial International Workshop, Myrtle Beach, SC

"Integrating Reading and Writing by Modeling Argument Analysis in Class" (July 2010)  
American Association of Philosophy Teachers Biennial International Workshop, Myrtle Beach, SC

"13 Conversations about Happiness" (April 2010) Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association, St. Louis, MO

"Introducing Ethics into Introductory Biology" (Oct 2009) Association of College and University Biology Educators, Kansas City, MO

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“Subsumptive Reasoning and Science Fiction Literature” (April 2009) Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association, New Orleans, LA

“Voldemort’s Choice and the Determinism of Heroism” (Oct 2007) Midwest Popular Culture Association/Midwest American Culture Association, Kansas City, MO

“Comparative Choice without Comprehensive Values” (April 2007) American Philosophical Association, Chicago, IL

“Ethics in an Introductory Biology Class” (Feb 2007) Association for Practical and Professional Ethics, Cincinnati, OH

“A Sophisticated Orthodox Approach to Choice” (April 2006) University of Missouri at Kansas City, Kansas City, MO

“Comparativism and Covering Values” (April 2005) 32<sup>nd</sup> Value Inquiry Conference, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA

“The Problematic Nature of Covering Values” (March 2003) Graduate Student Colloquium, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN

‘Pluralism and Principles of Decision’ (November, 2001) Tennessee Philosophical Association Conference

‘Cognitivism without Truth-Values’ (April, 2001; September 2001) Ohio Philosophical Association

Philosophy Department Klatsch, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.

‘Practical Reason and Multi-Consideration Pluralism’ (November 1998) Tennessee Philosophical Association Conference

‘So You Want to Take a Vacation: The Problematic Defense of Continuity’ (March 1997) Graduate Student Colloquium, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN

‘Morals by Accident’ (May 1993). William Edward Bingham Lecture at the Ohio State University, Columbus, OH

*Invited*

“The Language of Bioethics” Clay County Public Health Center, Staff Training and Grub Events (June 2022)

“Legal and Ethical Issues with Opioid Epidemic and Marijuana in MO” MOSAIC Ethics Committee Lecture, St. Joseph, MO (July 2019)

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“Ethics, Piggies and AI, Oh My!: Social Justice for Non-Humans in Science Fiction”  
Keynote Speech for Science and Social Justice Series, Highland Community College,  
Highland, KS (October 2018)

“Ethics for Chaplains” MOSAIC Spiritual Health, St. Joseph, MO (September 2018)

“Sex in the City, Sex in the Hospital” MOSAIC Ethics Committee Lecture, St. Joseph, MO  
(July 2018)

“Ethical Decision Making and Consultation in Clinical Setting” MOSAIC Nurse Residency  
Program, St. Joseph, MO (2017-2020)

“The Principles of Healthcare Ethics” MOSAIC Life Care Ethics Committee, St. Joseph,  
MO (January 2018)

“Healthcare Ethics and Decision Making” MOSAIC Life Care Ethics Committee, St.  
Joseph, MO (January 2017)

“What Would Harry Do?: Virtue and Leadership” Missouri Department of  
Transportation, Northwest Regional Accelerated Leadership Development Meeting, St.  
Joseph, MO (July 2013)

Missouri Western State University Honor’s Committee Book Review Panel on *The  
Immortal Life of Henrietta Lachs* by Rebecca Skloot (April 2011)

“Rich and Poor: A Panel Discussion” (March 2006) Northwest Missouri State University,  
Maryville, MO

‘Comprehensiveness Explained’ (March 1999) Graduate Student Colloquium, University  
of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.

### *Interviews*

Interviewed by Richard Greene and Rachel Greene (2019) “Fantastic Friends and Where  
to Find Them” on *I Think, Therefore I Fan*. Podcast. <https://ithinkthereforeifan.com/>

Interview by Richard Greene and Rachel Greene (2019) “The Purple Replicant of Cairo”  
on *I Think, Therefore I Fan*. Podcast. <https://ithinkthereforeifan.com/>

### *Commentaries*

Commentary on the panel “Political Theory: Legality, Interpretation, and Judgement”  
(November 2016) Pacific Northwest Political Science Association

‘Comments on “The Impossibility of a Code of Ethics”’ (November 2002) Tennessee  
Philosophical Association Conference.

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'Comments on "Trust as a Source of Reasons"' (April 2000) Ohio Philosophical Association Conference.

'Comments on "Instrumental Reason: Kant's Reply to Achilles"' (March 1998) Graduate Student Colloquium, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.

### *Other*

Promotion Retrospective: "Exploring Strange New Worlds: A Research Retrospective on Ethics and Science Fiction" (October 2018) Missouri Western State University, St. Joseph, MO.

Panel Discussion "Science and Social Justice" (October 2018) Science and Social Justice Series, Highland Community College, Highland, KS

Panel Discussion "Science, Science Fiction and the Sacred" (September 2018) Science Fiction Popular Cultures Conference, Kona, HI.

Panel Discussion "Unresolved Questions about Morals and Values in *Black Panther*" (September 2018) Science Fiction Popular Cultures Conference, Kona, HI.

Panel Discussion of Robert Wise's *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (March 2013) Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association, Washington, D. C.

Panel Discussion of Troy Duffy's *The Boondock Saints* (April 2012) Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association, Boston, MA

Panel Discussion of Richard Linklater's *Waking Life* (April 2011) Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association, San Antonio, TX

"Respite Palliative Sedation for Refractory Symptoms at the End-of-Life" (July 2006) Center for Applied and Professional Ethics, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN

'The Moral Dilemmas Debate: A Misuse of Deontic Logic' (November 2003) Philosophy Department Klatsch, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.

'Pluralistic Consequentialism: A Functional Success' (November 2002) Philosophy Department Klatsch, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.

'Lexical Ordering as a Method of Adjudication' (March 1999) Philosophy Department Klatsch, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.

'Decision Analysis and Medicine' (April 1998) Center for Applied and Professional Ethics, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.

### **GRANTS**

Co-Principal with Karen Koy for *Galileo's Legacy Conference* from MWSU Foundation

(2014-2015) \$2000 for operations

Co-Principal with Karen Koy for *Galileo's Legacy Conference* from MWSU Foundation  
(2013-2014) \$3000 for operations

Co-Principal with Karen Koy for *Galileo's Legacy Conference* from MWSU Foundation  
(2012-2013) \$3500 for operations

Principal for Summer Research with Joshua Swindler from MWSU Program of Research,  
Teaching and Applied Learning (PORTAL)  
(2012) \$3500

Co-Principal with J. Mark Mikkelsen for *Galileo's Legacy Conference* from MWSU Foundation  
(2012-2013) \$4000 for operations

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

*Missouri Western State University, St. Joseph, MO. 2005-present*

### ***Lower-Level***

Introduction to Philosophy  
Bioethics  
Business Ethics  
Contemporary Ethical Issues  
Globalization  
Humanities: Ancient and Medieval  
Logic/Reasoning and Argumentation  
Honors Freshman Seminar—Philosophy, Literature, and Film

### ***Upper-Level***

Ethics and Literature  
Normative Ethical Theory  
Environmental Philosophy and Public Policy  
History of Social and Political Thought  
Contemporary Social and Political Theory  
Modern Philosophy  
Honors Seminar—Harry Potter as Literature and Philosophy

### ***Graduate-Level***

Foundations of Professional Ethics

*Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX 2004-5*

Business Ethics  
Contemporary Moral Problems  
Medical Ethics: End of Life Decision Making

*University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 1996-9; 2001-4*

### **Graduate Instructor**

Ethical Theory and Application



Value and Reality  
Ethical Theory  
Formal Logic  
**Graduate Teaching Associate**  
Knowledge and Reality

*Ashland University, Ashland, OH Spring 2000 to Spring 2001*

Introduction to Philosophy  
Introduction to Ethics  
The Philosophy of Human Nature

*Denison University, Granville, OH Spring 2000*

Introduction to Philosophy

*Cuyahoga Community College, Cleveland, OH 1999; 2001*

Introduction to Philosophy  
The Individual and Society

*Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH 1994-6*

**Graduate Instructor**

Introduction to Philosophy

**Graduate Co-Instructor**

Formal Logic

**Graduate Teaching Assistant**

Formal Logic  
Death and Dying

**THESIS DIRECTION**

- Chair for Molly (Joshua) Swindler's Undergraduate Senior Thesis "The Virtuous Euthyphro Dilemma"
  - First part published under Joshua Swindler in *Dialogue* (2013) Volume 55, No. 2-3, pp. 114-120.

**INDEPENDENT UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH DIRECTION**

- Directed research of Caleb Hazelwood on CRISPR-Cas9 technology
  - Senior paper "A Capabilities Approach to Justice in Human Germ Line Modification"
  - Presented work as part of the Emily Murray Student Fellowship at The Hastings Center, Summer 2016

**COURSE DEVELOPMENT**

- Foundations of Professional Ethics - Graduate level
- Ethical Theory and Literature
- Assisted development of multimedia, distance learning environment for Introductory Logic
- Created module on moral theory and reasoning for Introductory Biology

**TEACHING ENRICHMENT**

- Online Learning Consortium Certificate, Foundations Program, 2019
- AAPT Biennial International Conference, Coastal Carolina Univ., 2010
- Seminar on Critical Thinking, Center for Critical Thinking, 2006
- Teaching Effectiveness Seminars, Southern Methodist University, 2004
- Recognizing Students in Crisis, Southern Methodist University, 2004
- Grades, Grading, and Grade Inflation, Southern Methodist University, 2004
- Philosophy Teaching Seminar by Martin Benjamin, University of Tennessee, 2001
- Microsoft PowerPoint Training, University of Tennessee, 1999
- HTML Web Page Training, University of Tennessee, 1999
- GTA Mentoring Program, University of Tennessee, 1998-9

## **HONORS & AWARDS**

- Faculty Mentor of the Game, Missouri Western Student Athlete Advisory Committee, 2018
- Honorary Coach, Griffon Volleyball, Missouri Western State University, 2014
- Compass Award, Missouri Lambda Chapter of Alpha Chi National College Honor Society, 2014
- Honorary Coach, Griffon Softball, Missouri Western State University, 2012
- Honorary Coach, Griffon Volleyball, Missouri Western State University, 2011
- Honorary Coach, Griffon Basketball, Missouri Western State University, 2011-
- Outstanding Faculty Implementation of Critical Thinking, Missouri Western State University, 2008
- Service-Learning Newcomer, Southern Methodist University, 2005
- Graduate Teaching Award, University of Tennessee, 2002 (Currently named the John Hardwig Teaching Prize)
- Research Assistant to Edward F. McClennen, Bowling Green State University, 1995
- Member Phi Beta Kappa, Epsilon of Ohio at the Ohio State University, 1994
- Graduated Cum Laude, with Distinction in Philosophy, and with Honors in the Liberal Arts from the Ohio State University, 1993
- Recipient of the William Edward Bingham Award for the paper 'Morals by Accident': An Ohio State University Research Award for the Best Undergraduate Paper in Philosophy, 1993
- The Ohio State University Scarlet and Gray Scholarship, 1989-1991
- Outstanding College Student of America 1988-1989

## **SERVICE ACTIVITIES**

### *Professional*

- Session Chair, Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association National Conference 2010-2016, 2022
- Area Chair, Philosophy and Popular Culture, Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association, 2014-2016, 2022 to present
- Co-Area Chair, Philosophy and Popular Culture, Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association 2012-2013

### *University*

- Program Review Committee, Missouri Western State University, 2017, 2018
- Missouri Western State University Fall Commencement Announcer, 2015 to present
- Missouri Western State University Graduate Hooding Announcer, 2017 to present
- Co-Director, Galileo's Legacy Conference, Missouri Western State University, 2012 – 2015

- Chair, General Studies Committee, 2014 to 2016
- General Studies Committee, 2010 - 2014
- Chair of Galileo's Legacy Conference—Sustainability, Missouri Western State Univ. , 2009-2010
- Honors Committee, Missouri Western State Univ., 2009 to present
- Philosophy and Film Club Coordinator, Missouri Western State Univ., 2008-2010
- Philosophy Hiring Committee, Missouri Western State Univ., 2008-2010
- Academic Honesty Committee, Missouri Western State Univ., 2009-2010
- Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, Missouri Western State Univ., 2006 to 2009
- Critical Thinking Committee, Missouri Western State Univ., 2006 to 2008
- Co-Curricular Activities Committee, Missouri Western State Univ., 2005 to present
- HPG Western Excellence Committee, Missouri Western State Univ., 2005 to present
- Health Professional Review Committee, Southern Methodist Univ., 2005
- Departmental Meeting Graduate Student Representative, University of Tennessee, 2002-3
- Undergraduate Committee, University of Tennessee, 2001-2
- Speakers Committee, University of Tennessee, 1997-8, 1998-9
- Personnel Committee, Bowling Green State University, 1995-6

#### *Community*

- Heartland Health Ethics Committee, St. Joseph, MO, 2005 to 2014,
- MOSAIC Ethics Committee, 2016 to present

#### **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

- The American Philosophical Association, 1994 to present
- American Association of Philosophy Teachers, 2007 to present
- Pop Culture Association, 2009 to present

#### **REFERENCES**

Dr. Steven Greiert, Professor Emeritus  
Department of History & Geography  
Missouri Western State University  
115 Popplewell Hall  
St. Joseph, MO 64507  
816-271-4390  
[greiert@missouriwestern.edu](mailto:greiert@missouriwestern.edu)

Dr. Phil Mullins, Professor Emeritus  
Department of Philosophy & Religion  
Missouri Western State University  
115 Popplewell Hall  
St. Joseph, MO 64507  
816-271-5688  
[mullins@missouriwestern.edu](mailto:mullins@missouriwestern.edu)

Dr. Timothy Madigan, Professor of Philosophy

James M. Okapal

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St. John the Fisher College  
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