

Aaron West

Harvey Mudd College

Department of Humanities, Social Sciences, and the Arts

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ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Harvey Mudd College, Claremont, CA

Adjunct Assistant Professor, January 2025 – Present

EDUCATION

University of California – Los Angeles

Ph.D., Philosophy, December 2024

Dissertation: *Understanding, Real Definitions, and Causes in Spinoza*

Committee: John Carriero (chair), Calvin Normore, Barbara Herman, Adam Crager

University of California – Los Angeles

C.Phil., Philosophy, July 2018

University of California – Los Angeles

M.A., Philosophy, June 2017

University of California – Los Angeles

B.A., Philosophy, *summa cum laude*, September 2013

AREA OF SPECIALIZATION

Early Modern Philosophy

AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Ancient Philosophy, Metaphysics, Epistemology, Philosophy of Mind

PUBLICATIONS

“Explicate,” with John Carriero. (2025) In Karolina Hübner & Justin Steinberg (eds.), *The Cambridge Spinoza Lexicon*. Cambridge University Press.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

“Understanding (in) Spinoza’s 1a4: Real Definition and the Cognitive Ideal” (under review)

“Real Definition and the Essence of Composite Bodies in Spinoza”

“The First Causes of the Passions: Spinoza, Descartes, and Proximate Causation”

FELLOWSHIPS, AWARDS, HONORS

Dissertation Year Fellowship, UCLA (2021–2022)

Competitive university-wide funding award

Teaching Assistant Consultant, UCLA (2019–2020)

Elected by department to train and prepare second-year Ph.D. students for classroom instruction; includes a fellowship award to teach Phil 495 graduate seminar

Pauley Fellowship, UCLA (2017–2018)

Funding award for two quarters of relief from teaching duties

Graduate Summer Research Mentorship, UCLA (2014)

Competitive university-wide funding award

Donald Kalish Prize for Intellectual Excellence (2013)

Awarded by the UCLA Philosophy department “to one or more of their most promising undergraduate students.”

PRESENTATIONS

“Understanding (in) Spinoza’s 1ax4”

2021 Pacific APA, North American Spinoza Society

“Spinoza’s Causal Axiom: From Cognition to Definition and Essence and Back”

2019 UCLA History of Philosophy Workshop

2019 Guest Lecture, John Carriero’s Early Modern undergraduate course

“Spinoza on Real Definition”

2017 UCLA Albritton Society

“On the Incoherence of Physicalism”

2011 HTCC Research Conference, University of California, Irvine

RESEARCH LANGUAGES

Reading: Latin, German

DEPARTMENTAL SERVICE

2021–2022 First-Year Mentor, UCLA Philosophy department

2019 Reviewer for USC-UCLA Graduate Conference

2019 Latin Reading Group, co-organizer, UCLA

2016–2017 Prospective Ph.D. Student Liaison and Prospective Week Organizer

2015–2016 Prospective Ph.D. Student Liaison and Prospective Week Organizer

2014–2015 UCLA Colloquium Coordinator

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION

2021 Chair, Book Symposium on Don Garrett’s *Nature and Necessity in Spinoza*, American Philosophical Association Pacific Division

COURSES TAUGHT AND SCHEDULED

As instructor:

Harvey Mudd College

- Special Topics in Philosophy: Knowledge, Understanding, and Cognitive Success, Fall 2026

- Introduction to Academic Writing, Fall 2026
- Special Topics in Philosophy: Echo Chambers, Attention, and Authority, Spring 2026
- Special Topics in Philosophy: Echo Chambers, Attention, and Authority, Spring 2025

University of California – Los Angeles

- Seminar on Teaching College Philosophy for new TAs, Fall 2020
- Seminar on Teaching College Philosophy for 2nd year PhD students, Fall 2019

As teaching assistant at UCLA:

- Principles of Critical Reasoning [Calvin Normore], Summer 2023
- Symbolic Logic [William Kowalsky], Spring 2021
- Skepticism and Rationality [Andrew Hsu], Winter 2021
- History of Ancient Philosophy [Adam Crager], Fall 2020
- History of Early Modern Philosophy [John Carriero], Fall 2019
- Philosophy of Language [David Kaplan], Winter 2019
- History of Ancient Philosophy [Adam Crager], Fall 2018
- Philosophy and Literature [Jonathan Gingerich], Spring 2018
- Skepticism and Rationality [Andrew Hsu], Spring 2017
- Classical Arabic Philosophy [Adam Crager], Winter 2017
- History of Ancient Philosophy [Adam Crager], Fall 2016
- History of Early Modern Philosophy [John Carriero], Spring 2016
- Philosophy of Science [Sheldon Smith], Winter 2016
- Skepticism and Rationality [Andrew Hsu], Fall 2015

GRADUATE LEVEL COURSES TAKEN (* = COURSE AUDITED)

History of Philosophy

Spinoza's Ethics – John Carriero

**Spinoza's Ethics: The Affects and the Intellectual Love of God* – John Carriero

**Sensation in Early Modern Philosophy* – John Carriero

**Descartes' Ontology* – Deborah Brown & Calvin Normore

**Leibniz's Physics* – John Carriero & Peter Myrdal

Aristotle's Metaphysics Γ – Adam Crager

**Philosophical Theology from Ancient to Early Modern* – John Carriero

**Proof and Definition in Aristotle's Analytics* – Adam Crager

**Avicenna's Epistemology and Logic* – Adam Crager & Calvin Normore

Epistemology

**Epistemology: Epistemic Entitlement* – Tyler Burge

**Philosophy of Perception* – Tyler Burge

Philosophy of Mind, Language, and Logic

20th Century Analytic Philosophy Pro-Seminar – David Kaplan & Pamela Hieronymi

Mind and Action: Moore to Anscombe – Andrew Hsu

Pictorial Semantics – Gabriel Greenberg

Topics in Philosophy of Language: Truth and Imprecision – Joshua Armstrong

Metalogic – Tony Martin

**Perceptual Representation* – Tyler Burge

Ethics & Value Theory

Ethics Pro-Seminar – Gavin Lawrence

Communication and Conversation – Daniela Dover

Ethics and Political Philosophy – A.J. Julius

Friendship and Mutual Recognition – A.J. Julius

REFERENCES

John Carriero

UCLA

carriero@humnet.ucla.edu

Darryl Wright (teaching)

Harvey Mudd College

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Calvin Normore

UCLA

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Andrew Hsu (teaching)

UCLA

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Karolina Hübner

UCLA

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Kristin Primus

UC Berkeley

kprimus@berkeley.edu