

Jacob Zellmer

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AREA OF SPECIALIZATION

Early Modern Philosophy

AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Epistemology, Philosophy of Religion, Social Philosophy

EDUCATION

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| University of California, San Diego , PhD, Philosophy Dissertation: <i>Inscribed in our Hearts: Spinoza on Religion and Rationality</i> Committee: Donald Rutherford (chair), Samuel Rickless, Clinton Tolley, Kristin Primus (UC Berkeley), John H. Evans | 2017-Present |
| Princeton University, Visiting Student Research Collaborator | Spring 2023 |
| Erasmus University Rotterdam, Visiting Fellow | Fall 2022 |
| San Francisco State University , MA, Philosophy | 2017 |
| Azusa Pacific University , BA, Biblical Studies, <i>cum laude</i> | 2013 |

PUBLICATIONS:

Journal Articles:

1. “Descartes on Certainty in Deduction,” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* (2024) 105: 158-164.
2. “La Peyrère’s Polygenism and Human Species Hierarchy,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (forthcoming)

Public-facing:

1. “Baffled by human diversity” *Aeon* (July 2024)

MANUSCRIPTS UNDER REVIEW:

1. A paper on Spinoza’s political philosophy
2. A paper on Spinoza’s epistemology
3. A paper on Spinoza’s method of Biblical interpretation
4. A paper on early modern philosophy of language

IN PREPARATION:

1. A paper on Spinoza and faith
2. A paper on Spinoza’s separation of philosophy and theology

PRESENTATIONS

Refereed:

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| 15. | “What Philosophy and Theology Have in Common for Spinoza” North American Spinoza Society – <i>Junior Scholar Event</i> Commentator: Julie Klein | May 2024 |
| 14. | “La Peyrère’s Polygenism and Human Species Hierarchy” University of San Diego – <i>Renaissance Conference of Southern California</i> | Sep 2023 |
| 13. | “Spinoza on the Natural Light” University of Groningen – <i>Collegium Spinozanum IV</i> | July 2023 |
| 12. | “Spinoza on Philosophical Language” University of Toronto – <i>History & Philosophy of Science/Tech Grad Conference</i> | May 2023 |
| 11. | “What Philosophy and Theology Have in Common for Spinoza” Princeton University – <i>Philosophy, Religion, & Existential Commitment</i> | March 2023 |
| 10. | “Reconceiving Spinoza’s Dogmatism” American Philosophical Association (Central Division) – Denver, CO | Feb 2023 |
| 9. | “Paths to God in Spinoza” Radboud University Nijmegen – <i>Passions and the Mystical Conference</i> | Dec 2022 |
| 8. | “Spinoza and the Problem of Imperfect Rationality” University College, Dublin – <i>Early Moderns on the Power of Philosophy</i> | Oct 2022 |
| 7. | “Paths to God in Spinoza” Oriel College, Oxford – <i>European Society for Philosophy of Religion</i> | Sep 2022 |
| 6. | “Did Spinoza Interpret Scripture Dogmatically?” University of Bologna – <i>European Academy of Religion</i> | June 2022 |
| 5. | “Reconceiving Spinoza’s Dogmatism” Princeton University – <i>Philosophy of Religion Incubator II</i> | May 2022 |
| 4. | “Spinoza and the Problem of Imperfect Rationality” Princeton-Bucharest Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy | April 2021 |

3. “Spinoza on Language, Knowledge, and Geometric Method”
Stanford University – *Math and Numerical Inspirations in Philosophy* April 2020
2. “Spinoza on the Separation of Philosophy and Theology”
University of Queensland – *Australasian Seminar in Modern Philosophy* Nov 2019
1. “The derivation of Spinoza’s *conatus* doctrine”
University of Groningen – *Collegium Spinozanum III* July 2019

Invited:

5. “Capitein on Christianity and Slavery”
UC San Diego – *Graduate Philosophy Colloquium* June 2024
4. “Spinoza on the Natural Light”
UC San Diego – *History of Philosophy Roundtable* Nov 2023
3. “What Philosophy and Theology Have in Common for Spinoza”
Princeton University – *Princeton Project in Philosophy of Religion Workshop* May 2023
2. “Reconceiving Spinoza’s Dogmatism”
Erasmus University Rotterdam – *PhD Seminar for Work in Progress* Oct 2022
1. “Epistemic Puzzles in Data and Algorithms”
UC San Diego – *Institute for Practical Ethics* April 2021

Comments:

3. Comments on TBA
Princeton University – *Reason and Revelation in the 17th Century* upcoming Oct 2024
2. Comments on Eric Sheng’s “Gassendi on Happiness”
École Normale Supérieure, Paris – *Forum Descartes* Jan 2024
1. Comments on Zachary Gartenberg’s “Spinoza on Faith”
UC San Diego – *Modern Philosophy Graduate Workshop* May 2022

Guest Lectures:

5. “Alexander Nehamas and Vida Yao on Friendship”
UC San Diego – Philosophy of Love and Sex April 2024
4. “Proofs in Sentential Logic” (×2)
UC San Diego – Intro to Logic Nov 2023
3. “Paley and Hume on the Cosmological Argument”
SFSU – Philosophy of Religion 2016
2. “The Book of Genesis”
SFSU – World Religions 2016
1. “Descartes’s *Search for Truth*”
SFSU – Modern Philosophy 2015

HONORS & AWARDS

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| 13. Judith & Neil Morgan Endowed Fellowship (UCSD) | 2024-25 |
| 12. Philosophy Department Best TA Award (UCSD) | 2023-24 |
| 11. Dita & Erwin Gumpel Jewish Studies Endowed Fellowship (UCSD) | 2022-23 |
| 10. Institute for Arts and Humanities Graduate Summer Fellowship (UCSD) | 2022 |
| 9. Institute for Practical Ethics—Summer PhD Fellowship (UCSD) | 2020 |
| 8. Dean of Arts and Humanities Travel Awards (UCSD) (×5) | 2019-23 |
| 7. Jason Louis Zarri Philosophy Memorial Scholarship (SFSU) | 2016-17 |
| 6. Judith Anne Ott Scholarship (SFSU) | Fall 2016 |
| 5. James Kaufmann College of Liberal & Creative Arts Scholarship (SFSU) | Spring 2016 |
| 4. Judith Anne Ott Scholarship (SFSU) | Spring 2016 |
| 3. James Kaufmann College of Liberal & Creative Arts Scholarship (SFSU) | Fall 2015 |
| 2. Judith Anne Ott Scholarship (SFSU) | Fall 2015 |
| 1. President’s Scholarship (APU) | 2009-13 |

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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| Summer Research Assistant to Donald Rutherford Topic: Spinoza’s metaphysics of normativity | Summer 2018 |
| Research Assistant to Donald Rutherford (Assisted in editing <i>Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy</i> by creating indexes for volumes 8, 9, 10, and 11; assisted with copy-editing volume 10) | 2018-2022 |
| UCSD Geisel Special Collections and Archive Training | May 2023 |

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY & SERVICE

6. Volunteer – UCSD Summer Program for the Advancement of Women in Philosophy (2020-22)
5. Co-organizer. UCSD Modern Philosophy Graduate Workshop: ucsdmodernphil.weebly.com (May 2022)
4. Co-organizer: “Spinoza on Freedom Workshop” at UC San Diego (May 2021)
3. Invited Panelist for “Minorities and Philosophy Grad Life Panel” – University of Massachusetts, Amherst (March 2021)
2. Chair: Session of “Spinoza’s TTP: Politics, Power, and Imagination,” Open University, UK (2021)
1. Chair: Early Modern section of SFSU Undergraduate Philosophy Symposium (2017)

PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING

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| SFSU Graduate Teaching Associate Training - Shelley Wilcox | Jan-May 2016 |
| Revelle College Writing Program Pedagogy Seminar - Stephen Cox | Sep-Dec 2019 |
| UCSD Summer Graduate Teaching Scholars Program | 2024 |

TEACHING EXPERIENCE**Instructor of Record:**

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| Philosophy and the Rise of Modern Science – UCSD | Planned for Summer 2024 |
| Intro to Logic – UCSD | Summer 2022 |
| Intro to Philosophy – UCSD (course for high schoolers, co-taught) | Summer 2019 |
| Medieval Philosophy – San Francisco State University | Spring 2017 |
| Philosophy of Religion – San Francisco State University | Spring 2017 |
| Critical Thinking – San Francisco State University | Fall 2016 |
| Critical Thinking – San Francisco State University | Fall 2016 |
| Critical Thinking – San Francisco State University | Spring 2016 |
| Critical Thinking – San Francisco State University | Spring 2016 |

Teaching Assistant at UCSD (2017-present):

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| Philosophy of Love and Sex, w/Patricia Marechal | Spring 2024 |
| Philosophy and the Rise of Modern Science, w/Monte Johnson | Winter 2024 |
| Intro to Logic, w/Jennifer Carr | Fall 2023 |
| Ethics and Society (War, Terrorism, & Complicity), Saba Bazargan-Forward | Fall 2021 |
| Ethics and Society (Liberalism and Justice), w/David Brink | Spring 2021 |
| Intro to Logic, w/Rick Grush | Winter 2021 |
| Ethics and Society (Climate Change), w/Andy Lamey | Fall 2020 |
| Freedom, Equality, and Law, w/Samuel Rickless | Summer 2020 |
| Western Civilization: Rome, Christianity, & Middle Ages, w/ K. Markman | Spring 2020 |
| Western Civilization: Israel & Greece, w/Kristina Markman | Winter 2020 |
| Ethics and Society (Redistribution and Identity), w/Andy Lamey | Spring 2019 |
| Intro to Logic, w/Paolo Santorio | Winter 2019 |
| Ethics and Society (Contemporary Society), w/Manuel Vargas | Fall 2018 |
| Intro to Philosophy: Ethics, w/Andy Lamey | Spring 2018 |
| Intro to Logic, w/Rick Grush | Winter 2018 |
| Ethics and Society (Climate Ethics), w/Andy Lamey | Fall 2017 |

Teaching Assistant at SFSU:

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|---|-------------|
| Modern Philosophy, w/Alice Sowaal | Spring 2015 |
| Philosophy of Religion, w/Michael Sudduth | Spring 2015 |

LANGUAGES

English, Latin (reading), French (beginner)

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT: *Inscribed in Our Hearts': Spinoza on Religion and Rationality*

My dissertation analyzes the central argument of Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise* (TTP), namely, how philosophy and theology can be separated such that there is no conflict between the two. This central argument is designed to give philosophy and science independence from theological constraints. Many commentators find Spinoza's separation thesis to be inconsistent, which poses a significant problem for the TTP's broader political goal of defending the freedom to philosophize. The predominant approach among scholars is to focus on the separation or suppose the separation thesis exhausts the relationship between philosophy and theology. On this view, any overlap between philosophy and theology is seen as inconsistent with the separation thesis and therefore counts against the overall argument of the TTP.

I argue in this dissertation that, for Spinoza, philosophy and theology overlap in various ways even while they remain separate in other ways. More concretely, I argue that the divine law 'inscribed' in the human mind, for Spinoza, underlies both philosophy and theology even while divine law is represented differently on each path. The divine law teaches love of God and neighbor from the 'heart,' which on my account means with one's cognition and affects. Given that Spinoza defines virtue as acting in accordance with one's own nature, and the divine law is part of human nature, acting according to the divine law is virtue for Spinoza. Philosophy and theology thus overlap in the end of virtue even while they remain separate in how they cognize the world.

Their joint grounding in God explains why philosophy and theology both utilize the power of the natural light which is an underexamined concept in the TTP. In contrast to the default view, I offer four arguments that the 'natural light' (*lumine naturale*) is a broader power of inference than 'reason' (*ratio*). Reason is the power of inference that begins from things known; the natural light is a power of inference that begins from things 'known *or* given as known.' The distinction between reason and the natural light helps make sense of Spinoza's method of Biblical interpretation, which is a foundational part of how philosophy and theology remain separate. Commentators often accuse Spinoza of 'dogmatism,' the charge that the TTP manipulates the meaning of scripture to make it align with Spinoza's own philosophy. I reconstruct Spinoza's method of Biblical interpretation and argue it uses the power of the natural light, but not reason. Given that reason is the domain of philosophy, theology can use the natural light without infringing on the domain of philosophy. Additionally, I examine Spinoza's conception of canonization, i.e., the process of choosing which books are part of scripture. Though most commentators do not give any weight to the notion, I argue that Spinoza's theory of canonization helps explain how scripture's moral core agrees with philosophy without dogmatism.

The various points of overlap between philosophy and theology help explain long-standing difficulties in scholarship on Spinoza's TTP, namely, the underlying epistemology, the apparent dogmatism in Biblical interpretation, how to conceive religion, the nature of faith, how the theological life provides momentum towards the rational life, and how a faithful person may grow in rationality while remaining virtuous.