

Dear members of the search committee,

I am writing to apply for the position of _____. I would be thrilled to join our department.

I am currently a Ph.D. candidate in philosophy at _____, working in philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, metaphysics and epistemology. I am supervised by Prof. _____, Prof. _____ and Prof. _____, and I expect to graduate in Spring 2024. This application contains my CV, research statement, writing sample, teaching statement, diversity statement and reference letters from Profs. _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____ and _____ (teaching letter).

The work in my dissertation lies in the intersection of philosophy of mind, philosophy of language and metaphysics. One of the most important features of our lives is our ability to represent the world, to direct ourselves towards a particular piece of reality. This feature is not only intrinsically interesting, but is also extremely important for understanding other features of ours, like our ability to act and affect the world. This is because the latter depends on our ability to represent the world, and in particular, on what it is that we're representing and how. It's because I desire coffee and believe that there's coffee in the kitchen that I make my way there. If I had a belief with a different content—say, that there's beer in the kitchen, rather than coffee—then I wouldn't have bothered going to the kitchen given that I don't particularly desire beer.

In my dissertation, "Explaining Content", I argue that this extremely mundane observation has major consequences: we can use it to rule out widely accepted metasemantic views—views that purport to tell us in virtue of what our mental representations have their contents. In a nutshell, views such as functionalism and informational semantics—two of the most popular views in metasemantics—fail because they reverse the order of explanation. Instead of explaining why I am disposed to make certain decisions or to entertain certain thoughts by appealing to their contents, they try to explain those contents by appealing to those dispositions. Given that (even partial) ontic explanatory relations, such as grounding and causation, are asymmetric—that is, if A partly explains B, then it is not the case that B partly explains A—these views are inconsistent with the explanatory efficacy of content.

The first two chapters of the dissertation are dedicated to motivating and using this constraint. In the first chapter of my dissertation, entitled "The Euthyphro Challenge to Theories of Content" (partly published; see next paragraph), I argue against these views on the basis of this constraint, and further show that this constraint is very hard to give up on. If one gives up on the explanatory efficacy of mental content, one must give up on the normative role of mental content as well. For example, we wouldn't be able to accept claims such as 'Ella was rational to make coffee because she wanted to drink coffee'. In the second chapter, entitled "The Euthyphro Principle" (in preparation for publication), I motivate and defend the claim that ontic explanations (even partial ones) are asymmetric. This constraint, though, turns out to be extremely hard to satisfy: it rules out most of the components philosophers have appealed to in metasemantics. In the third chapter of the dissertation, entitled "Representation is Re-Presentation" (work in progress), I propose a novel metasemantic view that meets this constraint, motivate this view further, and defend it against what I take to be the most pressing objections to it. This paves the way for solving notoriously hard questions in philosophy of mind, philosophy of language and metaphysics.

A version of the first chapter of my dissertation that applies the aforementioned challenge to functionalism is forthcoming in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* under the title "_____". This paper also serves as my writing sample. During my time in graduate school, I have also co-authored a paper with _____ from _____, entitled "_____", which came out in *Analysis* in 2022. In this paper, we argue that a popular view of perception (naïve realism) cannot be extended to account for our epistemic access to abstract domains such as mathematics and morality.

I have another important project in epistemology. While distinct from the work I do in my dissertation, I see this project as being conducted in the same spirit as the dissertation—one that takes representations, and accurate ones at that, to be explanatorily privileged. The most developed outcome of this inquiry is a paper

entitled [REDACTED], which argues that epistemic akrasia—believing both p and that one shouldn't believe that p —is impermissible. The argument in the paper is based on a certain picture of positive epistemic statuses, which allows them to come apart from truth, but not knowingly so. In a nutshell, a subject ought not be epistemically akratic because she is in a position to know that her belief in the conjunction p , *but her belief in p is impermissible* cannot be both permissible and true at the same time.

My main aim in teaching is to motivate philosophical inquiry, and I am very enthusiastic about helping my students see just how interesting philosophical questions can be. As anyone who ever taught philosophy knows, it is sometimes hard for undergraduate students to see the point of philosophical discussion: they tend to think that very radical answers ('we know nothing') or very common sensical answers ('we shouldn't perform the transplant') are not only true, but obviously so, and thus there's not much to discuss here. Therefore, I primarily strive to demonstrate how difficult and challenging philosophical questions might be. Regardless of what they choose to do with their lives later on, I aim for them to graduate with deep curiosity about the world and with the ability to think seriously about those things that they are curious about. During my time at [REDACTED], I have taught a course in epistemology as a main instructor, and have acted as a recitation instructor for the following courses: the nature of values, philosophy of science, minds and machines, and ethics. In the future, I'd be happy to teach graduate and undergraduate courses in a broad range of topics within philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, metaphysics and epistemology, as well as undergraduate courses in ethics (including metaethics) and logic.

I love being a part of a philosophical community, and I deeply care about my role in helping it thrive. Therefore, I have been very involved in the departmental life of the departments I have been a part of. For instance, at the [REDACTED], where I did my undergraduate degree in Philosophy, I started a reading group in philosophy of language, which at the time wasn't being offered by the department, and I participated in and later co-ran the Women in Philosophy group in the department, where graduate students and advanced undergraduate students presented their work with fellow students and got feedback. At [REDACTED], I co-ran two reading groups, one on the work of Quine and Davidson, and one on metasemantics. I also filled many graduate roles throughout my time at the department, the most notable of which were running the visits for prospective PhD students and acting as the representative of the graduate students at the faculty meetings. In addition, I organized a couple of events for gender minority members of the department.

Thank you for considering my application. Please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED] if you have any questions. You can also find more samples of my work on my website, at: [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]