

Gary David O'Brien

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Research Interests

AOS: Applied Ethics, Population Ethics, Animal and Environmental Ethics, AI Ethics

AOC: Ethics of New Technology, Normative Ethics, Procreative Ethics

Employment

Department of Philosophy, Lingnan University

Research Assistant Professor, August 2023 – Present

Hong Kong Catastrophic Risk Centre

Research Fellow, August 2023 – Present

Education

DPHIL IN PHILOSOPHY | 2023 | OXFORD UNIVERSITY

DPhil in Philosophy at the Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics at Oxford. My supervisors were Professor Guy Kahane and Professor Jeff McMahan. My thesis was entitled 'Wild Animal Suffering and Human Responsibility: Essays on the Ethics of Beneficent Intervention in Nature'.

BPHIL IN PHILOSOPHY | 2017 | OXFORD UNIVERSITY

The BPhil is an intensive two-year graduate program in philosophy. I wrote papers on a wide range of topics in theoretical and practical philosophy, as well as in the history of philosophy, with a focus on ethics and political philosophy. I worked with Jeff McMahan, Guy Kahane, and Daniel Butt.

MASTER OF ARTS | OCTOBER 2014 | UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

I finished first in my class, graduating with a first-class honours and was awarded the Professor Magennis Memorial Prize 2014.

BACHELOR OF ARTS | OCTOBER 2013 | UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

I finished first in my class and was awarded both the Bachelor of Arts Graduate Scholarship 2013 -2014 and the Pierce Malone Scholarship in Philosophy 2013.

Publications

'Biodiversity and the Value of Positive Engagement with Reality' *The Monist*, forthcoming.

'Ethics For a Tragic World: Humanity, Insects, and Doing Good' *Journal of Practical Ethics*, forthcoming.

'Exploring Repro-Timing Harm and Benefit' (co-authored with Davide Battisti) *Bioethics*, 40(2): 201-210, (2026).

'All Play and No Work? AI and Existential Unemployment' *Journal of Ethics*, 29: 747-771, (2025).

'Bully For You? Breed-Specific Legislation and Dangerous Dog Breeds' *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 38, (2025).

'The Case for Animal-Inclusive Longtermism' *Journal of Moral Philosophy*, 22(3-4): 336-359, (2024).

'Totalism, Animals, and the Repugnant Conclusion', *Utilitas*, 36(3): 211-229, (2024).

'On Our Moral Entanglements with Wild Animals', *Food Ethics*, (2023).

'Directed Panspermia, Wild Animal Suffering, and the Ethics of World-Creation', *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 39(1): 87-102, (2022).

'Beneficence, Non-Identity, and Responsibility: How Identity-Affecting Interventions in Nature can Generate Secondary Moral Duties', *Philosophia*, 50: 887-898, (2022).

'The Definition of Consequentialism: A Survey' Co-authored with Oscar Horta and Dayrón Terán (I am the second author), *Utilitas*, 34(4): 368-385, (2022).

Introduction to Wild Animal Suffering: A Guide to the Issues, Oakland: Animal Ethics, Co-authored with other researchers at Animal Ethics (2020).

Works in Progress

'Populating the Future: Animals, AIs, and New Problems for Population Theory' (In preparation).

'The Value of Diverse Populations' (In preparation).

'Intergenerational Sufficientarianism for Space Settlements' (In preparation with Oskari Sivula).

'How to Live a Virtually Good Life in the Experience Machine' (In preparation with Rhys Borchert).

Invited and Peer Reviewed Presentations (selected)

'All Play and No Work? AI and Existential Unemployment' presented at 24th biennial international conference of the Society for Philosophy and Technology, June 2025.

'Population Axiology and Diversity' presented at the Lingnan-Genoa-Kobe Value Theory Conference, April 2025.

'Building Better Biospheres: Population Ethics, Animals, and Biodiversity' presented at the Institute for Futures Studies/MIMIR Center Workshop on Animals, Space, and Long-Term Well-Being, June 2024.

'Suffering Risks Through the Creation of New Biospheres' presented at the Sheffield-Santiago De Compostela Wild Animal Ethics Workshop, February 2024.

'Totalism, Animals, and the Repugnant Conclusion' presented at the HKCRC workshop on the ethics of nonhuman subjects, December 2023.

'Artificial Intelligence and Existential Unemployment' presented at the 2nd International Conference on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, University of Porto, November 2023.

'How Many Animals Should There Be?' presented at the University of Sheffield, April 2023.

'Longtermism and Animals' presented at The Society for the Study of Ethics and Animals (SSEA), December 2022.

'On Our Moral Entanglements with Wild Animals' presented at the [book launch](#) for Josh Milburn's *Just Fodder: The Ethics of Feeding Animals*, University of Sheffield, July 2022.

'Identity Affecting Interventions in Nature' presented at the [Wild Animal Ethics conference](#) at the University of St Andrew's, September 2021.

Academic Grants and Awards

University Grants Committee Hong Kong, General Research Fund Grant for a two year research project on 'Population Ethics and Nonhumans' 2025 (HKD 339,996).

Lingnan University Faculty Research Grant for a pilot project on meaning, value, and emerging technologies 2025 (HKD 40,000).

Lingnan University Faculty Research Grant for a pilot project on population ethics and animals 2024 (HKD 40,000).

Center on Long-Term Risk Fund grant to support wild animal suffering research 2022 (£8,000).

Animal Ethics grant to support research on Longtermism and animals 2021 (€2,500).

Royal Institute of Philosophy Bursary 2021 (£3,000).

Professor Magennis Memorial Prize 2014. This prize is awarded to the candidate who gets first place in the MA in Philosophy in UCD, provided they obtain a first-class honours.

Bachelor of Arts Graduate Scholarship, 2013-2014. (€2,540).

Pierce Malone Scholarship in Philosophy 2013. (€2,000).

Teaching Experience

LECTURER | LINGNAN UNIVERSITY | AUGUST 2023 – PRESENT

Understanding Morality. A series of 26 lectures introducing students to some of the most central questions in ethics. The course includes topics in metaethics, normative ethics, and practical ethics (x2).

Critical Thinking. A series of lectures aiming to teach first year students the fundamental skills of critical thinking. This includes basic logic and argument forms, natural deduction, fallacies and cognitive biases, and an introduction to ethical reasoning (x4).

RESEARCH SUPERVISOR | LINGNAN UNIVERSITY | JANUARY 2026 – JUNE 2026

Supervisor of Capstone research projects on AI Ethics for three graduate students on the Master of Arts in Artificial Intelligence and the Future course at Lingnan 2026.

LECTURER | UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD | OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 2022

Animal Ethics. I gave a series of lectures aimed at undergraduate students on key topics in animal ethics, including, speciesism, personhood and moral status, the ethics of eating animals, an introduction to wild animal ethics, and the problem of wild animal suffering.

TUTOR | VARIOUS OXFORD COLLEGES | 2019 – 2023

I was teaching assistant to Professor Mark Wrathall at Corpus Christi College during Michaelmas 2019 and Hilary 2020 teaching Intro to Moral Philosophy. In Trinity 2020 I was teaching assistant for Ethics to Professor Guy Kahane at Pembroke college. In Michaelmas 2021 I was teaching assistant for Logic to Dr Natalia Waights Hickman at Worcester college. In Trinity 2022 and Michaelmas 2023 I delivered a tutorial course in Animal Ethics to visiting students.

TUTOR | UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN | SEPTEMBER 2014 – JANUARY 2015

I was responsible for running undergraduate tutorials for two philosophy classes, 'Philosophical Revolutions' and 'The Philosophies of Wittgenstein'.

Service

Referee for *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *Journal of Value Inquiry*, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, *Utilitas*, *Journal of Moral Philosophy*, *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, *Journal of Ethics and Social Policy*, *Futures*, *The Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, *Journal of Applied Animal Ethics Research*, *Journal of Practical Ethics*, *Ethics Policy and Environment*, *Journal of Controversial Ideas*, *Space Policy*, *AI and Society*, *Food Ethics*, and *Etica e Politica*.

Co-organiser of The Second Lingnan-Genoa-Kobe Value Theory Conference 2026.

Interviewed candidates for the Master of Arts in Artificial Intelligence and the Future and the Master of Arts in Creative and Media Industries courses at Lingnan University, 2024.

Mentor in the Philosophy Mentoring Scheme in Oxford organised by Philiminality and PWIP (people for women in philosophy) 2021-2022.

Interviewed candidates for the PPE course at Oxford for Oriel college in November 2021.

Reviewer of papers for the Oxford Philosophy Graduate Conference in 2016, 2019, 2021, and 2022.

Public Engagement

Bitesize Ethics Summer Program, Uehiro Oxford Institute for Practical Ethics: All Play and No Work? AI and Existential Unemployment, July 2025; The Ethics of Creating People, August 2024; The Case for Animal-Inclusive Longtermism, August 2023; Wild Animal Ethics, July 2022.

Directed Panspermia with Gary O'Brien *Knowing Animals* episode 173, August 2021.

References

Name: Jeff McMahan
Title: Sekyra and White's Professor of Moral Philosophy (Emeritus)
Institution: University of Oxford
Email: jeff.mcmahan@philosophy.ox.ac.uk

Name: Guy Kahane
Title: Professor of Moral Philosophy
Institution: University of Oxford
Email: guy.kahane@uehilo.ox.ac.uk

Name: Roger Crisp
Title: Professor of Moral Philosophy
Institution: University of Oxford
Email: roger.crisp@uehilo.ox.ac.uk

Name: Jeff Sebo
Title: Associate Professor
Institution: NYU
Email: jeffsebo@nyu.edu

Name: Oscar Horta
Title: Professor of Philosophy
Institution: University of Santiago De Compostela
Email: Oscar.horta@usc.es