Kellan D. L. Head

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(as of: November 2025)

Areas of Specialization

Ethics, Epistemology (including Social Epistemology)

Areas of Competence

Media Ethics, Philosophy of Language, Logic

Education

Syracuse University

Ph.D. - Philosophy   2018-2020, 2021-Spring 2026 (*expected*)
Ph.D. Dissertation: 'Epistemic Value and Epistemic Goods'
Adviser: Hille Paakkunainen
Committee: Richard Feldman (Rochester*)*, Catherine Z. Elgin (Harvard), Mark Heller

Brandeis University

M.A. - Philosophy   Fall 2017
*Master's Thesis: 'Kripke on Speaker's Reference
and Proper Names: An Explication and Defense'*
Adviser: Eli Hirsch

University of Rochester

B.A. - Linguistics (*Honors in Research)*   Spring 2012
*Honors in Research Thesis: 'The Binding Theory as an Initial
Processing Constraint and Visual World Eye-tracking Data'*
Adviser: Jeff Runner
B.A. - English: Creative Writing

Publications
'Resonance, Alienation, and Cognitive Subjectivism about Well-being'
forthcoming in The Journal of Ethics

Papers - under review
'Lucky Doxastic Justification'
currently under review
> (I argue that it's possible for a belief to be doxastically justified only luckily. I then examine whether merely lucky doxastic justification is consistent with knowledge - I argue it is.)

'Against Veritism'
currently under review
> (I argue that veritism - the idea that epistemic value is rooted only in the importance of truth - is false. Something in addition to truth serves as a fundamental epistemic value and grounds epistemic evaluative facts. I examine and reject plausible veritist replies.)

Papers - in progress
'Moral Praiseworthiness and Epistemic Sacrifice'
e-mail for draft
> (I argue that we can be distinctly morally praiseworthy for the good will we exhibit in our epistemic behavior. I then introduce the concept of *epistemic sacrifice*: the forgoing of an epistemic good for a moral good. Similar to how prudential sacrifice works, agents can be *more* morally praiseworthy if believing/behaving morally well comes at an epistemic cost.)

'Internalist Perspectives on Encroachment'
e-mail for draft
> (I propose an internalist variant of encroachment views of epistemic justification. My view maintains that relevant pragmatic features related to a belief only encroach on the belief's justificatory status if the agent's evidence indicates that they obtain.)

'Etiology and Epistemic Evaluation'
e-mail for draft
> (Restrictivism says that only doxastic attitudes that were formed as an expression of an agent's epistemic agency (e.g. not implanted or spontaneous) can serve as fundamentally valuable epistemic goods. I argue against this view.)

'Vividity Dualism: A Dualist Account of Epistemic Goods'
> (I propose an account of epistemic evaluation according to which there are two species of fundamental epistemic goods: veridicality (truth) and vividity (richness and coherence).)

'Epistemic Pluralism and The Allure of Misinformation'
> (I claim that species of epistemic pluralism which recognize a sort of coherence as a fundamental epistemic value (rather than *just* truth) can better make sense of the allure of misinformation. Propaganda and misinformation thrive because they offer victims cohesive, though false, representations of the world.)

Refereed Presentations

'Etiology and Epistemic Evaluation'
  poster at *APA: Central - Poster Session*   2026
'Moral Praiseworthiness and Epistemic Sacrifice'
  at *APA: Eastern - Symposium*   2026
  poster at *Rocky Mountain Ethics (RoME) congress*   2025
'Lucky Doxastic Justification'
  at *Workshop on Luck and Achievement, Simon Fraser University*   2024
'Against Veritism'
  at *APA: Central - Colloquium*   2024
  at *168th Meeting of the Creighton Club, NYS Philosophical Society*   2023
    (Co-winner of the Graduate Student Presentation Award)
  at *Edgington Lectures Workshop, Birkbeck, University of London*   2023
'Internalist Perspectives on Moral Encroachment'
  at *APA: Eastern - Colloquium*   2024
  at *Understanding Value Conference XI, University of Sheffield*   2023
  at *Mark L. Shapiro Graduate Philosophy Conference, Brown University*   2023
'Alienation, Idealization, and Judgment Subjectivism'
  at *APA: Pacific - Colloquium*   2023
'Sacrificing Epistemic Goods: A New Argument Against Moral Encroachment'
  poster at *APA: Eastern - Poster Session*   2023
  at *Responsibility for Belief Conference, University of Helsinki*   2022
  at *Central States Philosophy Association Conference*   2022
  at *Graduate Epistemology Conference, University of Rochester*   2022
  at *Graduate Philosophy Society Conference, University of Iowa*   2022

In-house Presentations

'Sacrifice and Epistemic Goods'   2025
  Early Career Well-being Working Group
'A Case Against Epistemic Etiological Restrictivism'   2025
  Syracuse Faculty & Grad Talk Series
'Cognitive Representation and Epistemic Teleology'   2024
  Syracuse ABD Workshop
'Pretty to Think So: Aesthetic Epistemic Norms'   2023
  Syracuse Graduate Working Papers Conference
'Vividity Dualism: A Dualist Account of Epistemic Value'   2023
  Syracuse ABD Workshop
'Alienation, Idealization, and Judgment Subjectivism'   2022
  Early Career Well-being Working Group
'Internalist Perspectives on Moral Encroachment'   2022
  Syracuse ABD Workshop
'The (In)Significance of Singular Thought'   2021
  Syracuse Graduate Working Papers Conference

'Understanding and Epistemic Value: Amending Elgin'	2020
Syracuse Graduate Working Papers Conference	
'Varieties of Speaker's Reference'	2018
Syracuse Graduate Working Papers Conference	
'Kripke and Speaker's Reference'	2017
Brandeis Graduate Philosophy Workshop	
'Personal Identity: Defending Lewis against Parfit'	2016
Brandeis Graduate Philosophy Workshop	

Papers and Presentations - Linguistics

Refereed Publications

'What Can Visual World Eye-tracking Tell Us About the Binding Theory?' (with Jeffrey T. Runner) 2014 - *Empirical Issues in Syntax and Semantics 10*

Refereed Presentations

'What can visual world eye-tracking tell us about the binding theory?'   2013
     (with Jeffrey T. Runner)
     at *Colloque de Syntaxe et Sémantique à Paris*

'Assessing the on-line application of binding constraints without gender stereotype'   2013
     (with Jeffrey T. Runner)
     poster at *CUNY Conference for Human Sentence Processing 26*

Awards

Syracuse University Humanities Dissertation Fellowship (highly selective, two-semester fellowship with full funding + additional research grant)	2025-26
Mary Hatch Marshall Essay Award (funded award from Syracuse University, *for* 'Alienation and Cognitive Subjectivism about Well-being')	2025
Syracuse University Graduate Dean's Award for Excellence in Research	2024
Syracuse University Outstanding T.A. Award (*as instructor of record*)	2024
APA: Central Graduate Funding Award	2024, '26
APA: Eastern Graduate Funding Award	2023, '24, '26
Graduate Student Presentation Award (Creighton Club, NYS Philosophical Association, *for* 'Against Veritism')	2023
Syracuse University Dissertation Summer Funding Fellowship	2023
Birkbeck, University of London Travel Grant	2023
APA: Pacific Graduate Funding Award	2023
University of Helsinki Travel Grant	2022
Syracuse University Pre-Dissertation Summer Funding Fellowship	2022
Syracuse University Philosophy Department Travel Grant	2022, '23, '24, '25, '26

Syracuse University Graduate Student Organization Travel Grant	2021, '22, '23, '24, '25, '26
Syracuse University Philosophy Department Summer Research Grant	2021
Brandeis University Graduate Merit Scholarship	2016, '17

Comments

selected to serve as 'Commentator-at-large'	2024
Inquiry Workshop at Brown University	
on Cristina Ballarini's 'Uncertainty in Credence and Belief'	2024
APA: Pacific - Colloquium	
on Seungtaek Lee's 'Varieties of Referential Intentions'	2024
Syracuse Graduate Philosophy Conference	
on Brandon Williams' 'Choose Error Theory or Realism'	2022
Central States Philosophy Association Conference	
on Edvard Aviles Mesa's 'The Neurotic and the Dogmatist'	2022
Syracuse Graduate Philosophy Conference	
on Michael Sechman's 'Attitudes: States Not Traits'	2022
APA: Central - Colloquium	
on Huzeyfe Demirtas' 'Wrong, but Praiseworthy, Right, but Blameworthy'	2022
Syracuse Graduate ABD Workshop	

Academic Service

President, Syracuse University Philosophy Graduate Student Organization	2023-24
Organizer, Syracuse University Graduate Working Papers Conference	2021-22, '22-23
Member, Excellence in Graduate Education Faculty Award Selection Committee, Syracuse University	2022
Instructor, Philosophy Lab	2021-22
Philosophy Lab is an organization made up of members of the SU philosophy department that engages in instructional philosophy outreach to the local K-12 community in Syracuse, NY	
Teaching Mentor, Syracuse University TA Orientation Program	2020, '21
The Teaching Mentor position is a selective, paid position that helps to facilitate, run, and organize the week-long summer All-University TA Orientation Program. Duties include: curriculum development, small-group mentoring, and instructional coaching	
Co-organizer, Syracuse University Graduate Philosophy Conference	2019-20
Chair	
'The Epistemology of Attention: Norms, Modes, and Virtues' *APA Eastern*	2025

Anna Binkerhoof's 'Moral Testimony, Moral Understanding,
and Prejudiced Beliefs' *Philadelphia Normativity Conference*   2025

Collegiate Teaching Experience

as **Primary Instructor of Record**

at Syracuse University

P192 Introduction to Moral Theory	Spring 2023, '24, '25
P251 Logic	Fall 2022, '23, '24
P293 Ethics and the Media Professions	Summer 2021, '24, '25
P107 Theories of Knowledge and Reality	Spring 2022
P109 (Honors) Introduction to Philosophy	Fall 2021

as **Teaching Assistant**

at Syracuse University   2018-21

Ethics and the Media Professions

Theories of Knowledge and Reality

Logic

Human Nature

Introduction to Moral Theory

at Brandeis University   2016-17

Philosophy of Religion

Critical Reading in the Humanities and Social Sciences

> *part of the Gateway Scholars Program designed for international, non-native speakers of English*

Introduction to Philosophy

Business Ethics

at Harvard University   2017

Introduction to Philosophy

Other Professional Experience

Phoenix House of New England RISE - Burlington, VT   2015-16
Interim Supervisor, Lead Substance-abuse Counselor

> *RISE is a full-residency substance-abuse recovery program for men supervised by the Vermont Department of Corrections*

Teach For America - Henry Ford High School, Detroit, MI   2012-14
Chemistry Teacher, Varsity Golf Coach (boys, girls), 12th Grade Teacher Leader

> *Teach For America is a highly-selective, non-profit organization which recruits college graduates to serve as public high school teachers in severely disadvantaged communities*

Graduate Coursework in Philosophy (* denotes audited course)

at the University of Rochester
>Epistemology
>>Epistemic Value* (Richard Feldman)

at Syracuse University
>Ethics &c.
>>Moral and Political Proseminar (David Sobel and Ben Bradley)
>>The Metaphysics of Ethics (Ben Bradley and Kris McDaniel)
>>Prudence (Ben Bradley)
>>Society, Language, and Interpretation (*independent study with* Luvell Anderson)
>>German Political Philosophy 1780-1830 (Frederick Beiser)

>Epistemology
>>Epistemology, Mind, and Metaphysics Proseminar (Kevan Edwards)
>>Reasons For Belief (*independent study with* Hille Paakkunainen)
>>Epistemic Consequentialism, Virtue Theory, and Deontology (Hille Paakkunainen)

>Language
>>Logic and Language Proseminar (Michael Rieppel)
>>Opacity (Michael Rieppel)
>>Social Philosophy of Language (Luvell Anderson)
>>Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein* (Michael Rieppel)

>Misc
>>History of Philosophy Proseminar (Kara Richardson)
>>Ontology: Ordinary Objects (Kris McDaniel)
>>Kant's Critique of Pure Reason (Frederick Beiser)
>>Methodology* (Janice Dowell)

at Brandeis University
>>Graduate Proseminar (Beri Marušić)
>>Graduate Seminar in Epistemology: Epistemology of Modality (Jennifer Marušić)
>>Graduate Seminar in Mind/CogSci: Origins of Objectivity (Jerry Samet)
>>Master's Project - Kripke: An Explication and Defense (Eli Hirsch)
>>Mathematical Logic (Jennifer Marušić)

References

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Professor, Syracuse University

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