

# WILLIAM B. COCHRAN

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## Areas of Specialization

Ancient Greek Philosophy | Ethics (esp. Virtue Ethics) | Ethics of Emerging Technologies

## Areas of Competency

Computer Ethics | Philosophy of Education | Hellenistic Philosophy | Buddhist Ethics

## Academic Employment

Postdoctoral Fellow in Embedded EthiCS 2021-Present  
*Department of Philosophy*  
Harvard University

Postdoctoral Fellow in Computer Science 2020-2021  
*Program for Leadership and Character*  
Wake Forest University

## Education

**Ph.D., Philosophy**, Northwestern University 2013-2020  
Dissertation: *Aristotle's Notion of Teaching and Its Role in His Theory of Moral Education*  
Committee: Richard Kraut (Chair), Kyla Ebels-Duggan, Stephen White, Patricia Marechal

**M.A., Classics**, Dalhousie University 2009-2011  
Thesis: *The Doctrine of Due Measure in Plato's Statesman*

**B.A., Classics**, University of King's College 2004-2009  
*Magnis cum honoribus* & University Medal in Classics  
University of Toronto 2005-2006  
King's Foundation Year Program 2004-2005

## Dissertation Summary

Aristotle says that intellectual virtues are “generated and developed mostly by teaching (*didaskalia*),” yet no substantive work has been done to figure out what, on Aristotle’s view, such ‘teaching’ consists of. My dissertation fills this gap. First, I defend my interpretation: for Aristotle, teaching is the activity of instilling true accounts, grounded in explanatorily basic principles, in students ready to receive them. I then use this reading to argue, against some prevailing views in Aristotle’s ethics, that (1) habituation does not require teaching, and (2) Aristotle’s practically wise person possesses a philosophical conception of the human good. Finally, I use my interpretation to solve a problem for Neo-Aristotelian educational theory. I argue that Aristotle’s educational program, contrary to what critics have claimed, does not rob students of their autonomy.

## Publications

4. (2022). Review of *Aristotle on the Concept of Shared Life* by Sara Brill, Oxford University Press, 2020 in *Polis* 39 (2): 422-424.
3. (2019). “Dewey, Aristotle, and Education as Completion.” *Philosophy of Education* 74: 669-682.
2. (2011). “The Doctrine of Due Measure in Plato’s *Statesman*.” *Pseudo-Dionysius XIII*: 57-60.
1. (2010). “The Mysticisms of Al-Ghazali and Rumi.” *Pseudo-Dionysius XI*: 38-43.

### UNDER REVIEW

- “Teaching *Eudaimonia*: How Aristotle’s Notion of Teaching Supports the Grand End View”
- “Why did Plato Write Prologues?”

### WORKS IN PROGRESS

- “Designing Social Media For Dignity and Human Flourishing” (with Cathy O’Neil)
- “Cultivating Moral Agency in a Technology Ethics Class” (with Kate Allman)
- “Habituation vs. Teaching in Aristotle”
- “Enhancing Excellence: Aristotle and the Human Nature Objection Against Enhancements”
- “Towards a Third Myth about A.I.”

### WORKS EDITED

- Editorial Assistant, *Theory and Practice in Aristotle’s Natural Science*, edited by David Ebrey (Cambridge University Press, 2015).
- Co-Editor, *Pseudo-Dionysius* (2009-2011).

## Research Fellowships, Grants, Scholarships, & Awards

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Doctoral Fellowship	2013-2017
Classics Cluster Research Grant	2013-2014
Joseph Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship	2010-2011
King’s University Scholarship	2008-2009
King’s President’s List	2007-2009

## Teaching Fellowships & Awards

Embedded EthiCS Fellow, CS50 @ Harvard University	Spring 2022
Graduate Fellowship, Brady Scholars Program in Ethics & Civic Life	2019-2020
WCAS/TGS Teaching Fellowship	2017-2018
Graduate Fellowship, Brady Scholars Program in Ethics & Civic Life	2015-2018
Joseph Clyde Murley Prize for Outstanding Performance by a Graduate TA	2015-2016

## Presentations (\* = refereed; † = invited)

“Educating Character in STEM” (Panelist) † <i>Educating Character Across the University</i> Wake Forest University (in partnership with The Oxford Character Project)	December 2022
“Social Media and Dignity Violations” (Panelist) †	November 2022

*Designing AI with Dignity*  
Harvard Kennedy School

- “Developing Moral Agency in an Ethics of Emerging Technologies Course: Measuring Student Growth” (with Kate Allman) \* July 2022  
*48<sup>th</sup> Annual Association for Moral Education Conference: “Moral Development and Moral Education in Global Transition”*, Manchester, UK
- “Creating a Classroom Community with Unfamiliar Students and Limited Time” \* July 2022  
*2022 American Association of Philosophy Teachers Conference* (with Trystan Goetze)  
Otterbein University
- “Educating for Moral Agency in An Ethics of Emerging Technologies Course” June 2022  
*Harvard/MIT Conference on Ethics of Computing & A.I.*  
Harvard University
- “In Search of a Third Myth about A.I.” (Lightning Round Talk)  
*Harvard/MIT Conference on Ethics of Computing & A.I.*  
Harvard University
- “Teaching Ethical and Humanistic Thinking in Computer Science” (Panelist) \* May 2022  
*Canadian Philosophical Association Congress 2022*
- “The Problem of First Principles: Aristotle’s Teaching Methodology Recast” March 2022  
*Department of Philosophy Research Talk*  
Florida Atlantic University
- “Teaching Responsible Computing, An Interdisciplinary Approach” (Panelist) \* March 2022  
*MozFest 2022*
- “The Autonomous Trolley Problem: A ‘High Impact’ Thought Experiment” \* July 2020\*  
*2020 American Association of Philosophy Teachers Conference* [\*cancelled due to COVID-19]  
Otterbein University
- “Aristotle on Enhancing Human Excellence” \* April 2019  
*Great Lakes Philosophy Conference*  
Sienna Heights University
- “Dewey, Aristotle, and Education as Completion” \* April 2018  
*Philosophy of Education Society Conference*, Chicago, IL
- “Plato’s Philosophical Prologues: The Case of Plato’s *Statesman*” \* April 2018  
*Ancient Philosophy Society Conference*  
Emory University
- “Promising Children” \* April 2018  
*Great Lakes Philosophy Conference*  
Sienna Heights University
- “Aristotle’s Teaching” \* March 2017

*Philosophy & Education Graduate Conference*  
Catholic University of America

“Cooper, Hadot, and Receiving Philosophy as a Way of Life” April 2014  
*University of Michigan-Northwestern Classical Receptions Workshop*  
Northwestern University

“Does Plato’s Late Metaphysics Kill Socrates?” \* May 2011  
*Classical Association of Canada Conference*  
Dalhousie University

“The Doctrine of Due Measure in Plato’s *Statesman*” \* October 2010  
*Atlantic Classical Association Annual Conference*  
Saint Mary’s University

COMMENTS

On Bjorn Wastvedt’s “The *Eudemean Ethics* on Becoming Virtuous” April 2021  
*APA Pacific Division Meeting, Portland, OR*

On Kristina Grob’s “Aspiration vs. Moral Luck: A Murdochian Response” February 2020  
*APA Central Division Meeting, Chicago, IL*

On Paula McAvoy’s “Steering the sex education discussion” December 2017  
*Practical Philosophy Workshop*  
Northwestern University

On Max Parish’s “Human Nature, the Normativity Objection and the Practical Reason Response: No Cigar” May 2015  
*Northwestern University Society for the Theory of Ethics and Politics Conference*

On Tomasz Wysocki’s “Intuitions Aren’t on the Rocks” October 2014  
*Central States Philosophical Association Conference*  
Northwestern University

CAMPUS TALKS

“Value-Sensitive Design: Embedded EthiCS Module Demo” (with Trystan Goetze) October 2022  
*Design Studio Lab, Lily & Edmond Safra Center for Ethics, Harvard*

“Leadership, Character, and Ethics in Computer Science” May 2021  
*Special Joint Meeting of the Computer Science and Engineering Departments, WFU*

“Learning from *AlphaGo*: To Partner With A.I., Cultivate Character First” April 2021  
*Program for Leadership and Character Postdoctoral Research Series, WFU*

“Algorithmic Justice: What Future Lawyers Need to Know about A.I.” (Panelist) October 2020\*  
*Wake Forest Law School* [\*Cancelled due to COVID-19]

“Discussion-Based Teaching: Eliciting Conversation and Navigating Controversy” Nov. 2018  
*Searle Center for Teaching and Learning, Northwestern (with Lorien Elleman)*

“Privacy & Technology” February 2017  
*Brady Tea, Brady Scholars Program in Ethics & Civic Life, Northwestern*

“Well-Being, Wilt Chamberlain, and Welfare Reform” May 2016  
*Brady Tea, Brady Scholars Program in Ethics & Civic Life, Northwestern*

## Interviews

“Aristotelian Education and Ethics in Computer Science” Aug. 2022  
*Dialexicon. A platform for youth to engage in philosophy.*  
<https://open.spotify.com/episode/62VmrRk9OANFUJF7rqbGMM>

## Teaching Experience

### INSTRUCTOR

The Ethics of Emerging Technologies (Harvard Summer School)	Summer 2022
Ethical Leadership in Computer Science (Wake Forest University)	Spring 2021
The Ethics of Emerging Technologies (Wake Forest University)	Fall 2020
Future Tense: The Ethics of What Will Be (Northwestern)	Spring 2018
Aristotle and His Successors (University of Illinois at Chicago)	Spring 2018
Introduction to Ancient Civilizations (Saint Mary’s University, Halifax, NS)	Summer 2012

### CO-INSTRUCTOR

Embedded EthiCS Teaching Lab (Harvard University)	2022-2023
Embedded EthiCS Teaching Lab (Harvard University)	2021-2022
The Civically Engaged Life (Brady Senior Seminar, Northwestern)	2019 - 2020
Philosophy and the City (Brady Senior Seminar, Northwestern)	2017 - 2018

### SENIOR THESIS ADVISOR

Lavanya Singh, “Automating Kantian Ethics” (Harvard, CS/Phil. joint concentration)	2021–2022
<i>Recipient of Harvard’s Hoopes Prize “on the basis of outstanding scholarly work or research”</i>	

### MENTOR

Tenth Cohort, Brady Scholars Program in Ethics & Civic Life (Northwestern)	2019-2020
Eighth Cohort, Brady Scholars Program in Ethics & Civic Life (Northwestern)	2015-2018

### TEACHING ASSISTANT (BY TOPIC)

#### *Classical Philosophy, Literature, & History*

Ancient Athens: Drama, Democracy, Civilization (Wallace, Northwestern)	Winter 2016
History of Philosophy – Ancient (Wynne, Northwestern)	Fall 2015
Rome: Culture and Empire (Wynne, Northwestern)	Spring 2015
History of Philosophy – Ancient (Ebrey, Northwestern)	Winter 2015
Roman Legions and the Barbarians (Mitchell, Dalhousie)	Winter 2012
Magic, Religion, & Philosophy (Fournier, Dalhousie)	Winter 2011 & 2012
Classical Mythology (O’Brien, Dalhousie)	2009-2010

#### *Ethical Theory & Applied Ethics*

Religion & Bioethics (Advanced Undergrad, Traina, Northwestern)	Fall 2019
Introduction to Moral Philosophy (Zimmer, Northwestern)	Spring 2017
Ethical Problems and Public Issues (Sheldon, Northwestern)	Winter 2017

Philosophy and Ethics for Kinesiologists (online, Dalhousie)	Winter 2012
Technology & Engineering: From Industrial to Cybernetic Age, (Frappier, King's)	Winter 2012
<i>Non-Western Philosophy &amp; Religion</i>	
Introduction to Buddhism (Buckelew, Northwestern; <i>online—COVID-19</i> )	Spring 2020
Introduction to Eastern Religions (Austin, Dalhousie)	Winter 2011
Islam (Treiger, Dalhousie)	Fall 2011
Buddhism (Austin, Dalhousie)	Fall 2010

#### ETHICS MODULES FOR COMPUTER SCIENCE COURSES

Ethics modules for CS50: Introduction to Computer Science (Harvard University)	Spring 2022
"Cultivating Moral Imagination with Value-Sensitive Design" (Week 10)	
"Facial Recognition Software and Justice" (mini-module, Week 7)	
"Technical and Ethical Value Trade-offs" (mini-module, Week 5)	
"Trust & Trustworthiness in Computer Science" (mini-module, Week 2)	
"Ethics as the Fourth Axis of Good Code" (mini-module, Week 0)	
"Machine Learning & Justice" (CS 374: Machine Learning, WFU)	Spring 2021
"Programming Languages & Practical Wisdom" (CS 231: Programming Languages, WFU)	Spring 2021

#### GUEST LECTURER [At Northwestern unless otherwise specified]

Aristotle Unit (6 lectures) (for P. Marechal, History of Ancient Philosophy)	Fall 2019
"Aristotle: Form & Matter; The Four Causes"	
"Aristotle on Knowledge"	
"Aristotelian Psychology"	
"Aristotle on The Goal of Human Life"	
"Aristotle on the Virtues of Character"	
"Aristotle: <i>Akrasia</i> , Self-Control, Virtue, Vice"	
"Four Principles of Bioethics" (for C. Traina, Religion & Bioethics)	Fall 2019
"Three Classic Moral Theories" (for C. Traina, Religion & Bioethics)	Fall 2019
"On Justice as an Aim of Higher Education" (for S. Goldberg, What is College For?)	Fall 2017
"On Aristotle's <i>Categories</i> " (for D. Ebrey, History of Philosophy - Ancient)	Winter 2015
"On Plato's <i>Euthyphro</i> " (for E. Diamond, Philosophy on Trial, Dalhousie)	Fall 2011

#### WRITING COACH

Introduction to Environment, Sustainability, and Society (Dalhousie)	Fall 2011
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#### SECONDARY SCHOOL

Cover Supervisor, TimePlan Education, Kent, UK	2012-2013
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### **Pedagogical Training**

Leadership and Character Course Development Workshop (WFU)	Summer 2020
Graduate Digital Humanities Pedagogy Workshop (NU)	Fall 2017
Teaching Certificate Program, Searle Center for Teaching and Learning (NU)	2016-2017
AAPT Seminar on Teaching and Learning	Summer 2016

## Service to the Profession

Session Chair, Great Lakes Philosophy Conference, Sienna Heights University	April 2019
Session Chair, Submitted Symposium, APA Central Division Meeting, Chicago	Feb. 2018
Session Chair, Great Lakes Philosophy Conference, Sienna Heights University	April 2018
Session Chair, Plato's Late Dialogues Conference, Northwestern University	March 2016
Assistant Organizer, Classical Association of Canada Conference	Spring 2011

## Departmental Service

### AT NORTHWESTERN

T.A. Coordinator, Philosophy Graduate Student Association	2017-2018
Vice President, Philosophy Graduate Student Association	2017-2018
Coordinator, Philosophical Greek Reading Group	2014-2016
Coordinator, Ancient Philosophy Workshop	2014-2016
Department Representative (Philosophy) to Graduate Student Association	2014-2015

### AT DALHOUSIE

Vice President—Internal, Dalhousie Classics Graduate Student Society	2010-2011
Assistant Office Administrator, Dalhousie Classics Department	2010-2011
Department Librarian, Dalhousie Classics Department	2010-2011

## Languages

Ancient Greek	reading competency (and teaching competency: introductory-advanced)
Latin	reading competency (and teaching competency: introductory-intermediate)
French	reading & speaking competency
German	beginner-level reading & speaking

## Memberships

APA	American Philosophical Association
AAPT	American Association of Philosophy Teachers
AME	Association for Moral Education

## Graduate-Level Coursework [At Northwestern unless otherwise specified; \* = audit. ]

### ANCIENT GREEK & ROMAN PHILOSOPHY

Metaphysics of Goodness in Plato & Aristotle (Chris Shields)*	Spring 2017
Plato's <i>Phaedo</i> (David Ebrey)*	Spring 2016
Plato's <i>Philebus</i> (Gabriel Richardson-Lear, <i>University of Chicago</i> )*	Winter 2016
Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (Richard Kraut)	Winter 2015
Plato's <i>Ethics</i> (Richard Kraut)	Spring 2015
Matter in Aristotle's Natural Science (David Ebrey)	Spring 2014
Stoicism (J.P.F. Wynne)	Winter 2014

Skepticism: Ancient & Modern (Baron Reed)	Fall 2013
Aristotle's Ethics (Eli Diamond, <i>Dalhousie</i> )*	Fall 2010
Plato's Dialogues (Eli Diamond, <i>Dalhousie</i> )	2009-2010
Proclus, Plotinus, and Boethius on Providence (W.J. Hankey, <i>Dalhousie</i> )	2009-2010

ETHICS & VALUE THEORY

Inarticulacy & Reasonable Commitments (Kyla Ebels-Duggan)*	Spring 2016
Kant's Moral Theory (Kyla Ebels-Duggan)*	Spring 2015
Desires (Kyla Ebels-Duggan)	Winter 2015
Rawls and His Critics (Proseminar, Charles Mills)	Fall 2014 - Winter 2015
Ethics of Interaction, (Stephen White)	Fall 2014
Philosophy and Literature (Richard Kraut)	Fall 2014
Post-Kantian Ethics (Mark Alznauer)	Fall 2013
Philosophy of Education (Kyla Ebels-Duggan)	Fall 2013

GREEK & LATIN LANGUAGE

Philosophical Greek: Plato's <i>Protagoras</i> (J.PF. Wynne)	Winter 2016
Philosophical Greek: Plato's <i>Phaedo</i> (J.PF. Wynne)	Winter 2015
Philosophical Greek: Plato's <i>Symposium</i> (J.PF. Wynne)	Winter 2014
Latin Literature: Lucretius (J.PF. Wynne)	Spring 2014
Latin Literature: Seneca (John Schafer)	Winter 2014
Advanced Greek: <i>Symposium &amp; Hippolytus</i> (Leona MacLeod, <i>Dalhousie</i> )	2009-2010

OTHER

The Science of Rational Belief & Group Decision Making (Matt Kopec)	Spring 2015
Classics in the Philosophy of Language (Proseminar, F. Cariani)	Winter-Spring 2014



## References

### **Richard Kraut**

Charles and Emma Morrison Professor in the Humanities  
Department of Philosophy & Department of Classics  
Northwestern University  
[rkraut1@northwestern.edu](mailto:rkraut1@northwestern.edu)

### **Michael Lamb**

F. M. Kirby Foundation Chair of Leadership and Character  
Executive Director of the Program for Leadership and Character  
Associate Professor of Interdisciplinary Humanities  
Wake Forest University  
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### **Kyla Ebels-Duggan**

Professor  
Department of Philosophy  
Northwestern University  
[kebelsduggan@northwestern.edu](mailto:kebelsduggan@northwestern.edu)

### **Patricia Marechal**

Assistant Professor  
Department of Philosophy  
University of California, San Diego  
[pmarechal@ucsd.edu](mailto:pmarechal@ucsd.edu)

### **Alison Simmons**

Samuel H. Wolcott Professor of Philosophy  
Co-Director of Embedded EthiCS @ Harvard  
Harvard University  
[asimmons@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:asimmons@fas.harvard.edu)

### **Jeff Behrends**

Senior Research Scholar and Associate Senior Lecturer on Philosophy  
Director of Ethics and Technology Initiatives, The Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics  
Co-Director of Embedded EthiCS @ Harvard  
Harvard University  
[jbehrends@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:jbehrends@fas.harvard.edu)

## Dissertation Abstract

### Aristotle's Notion of Teaching and Its Role in His Theory of Moral Education

My dissertation offers a novel interpretation of Aristotle's account of teaching (*didaskalia*). In Part I, I defend my claim that we can find in Aristotle's works a conception of teaching, which is a crucial yet under-explored part of his theory of education. In Part II, I use this interpretation to settle two long-standing debates in Aristotle's ethics concerning the development of the virtues of character and practical wisdom. Finally, in Part III, I show how my reading helps Neo-Aristotelian moral educators respond to the objection that Aristotelian education deprives students of their autonomy.

I begin my interpretation in Part I with Aristotle's clear yet general statements about teaching and 'those who teach.' Chapter 2 establishes that for Aristotle the goal of teaching is to instill scientific knowledge (*episteme*) in students. On my view, scientific knowledge should be interpreted in this context as the possession of true, well-reasoned accounts (*logoi*), which are ultimately grounded in explanatorily basic, subject-specific first principles. Chapter 3 then shows how Aristotle's comments about the pre-conditions for teaching and didactic learning support this reading of teaching's ultimate goal. Teachers must possess the scientific knowledge they intend to teach, and students must both (i) have some prior knowledge of the subject being taught, and (ii) be familiar with the basic rules of logic. Chapter 4 concludes Part I by describing Aristotle's teaching methodology. Teachers use induction, definition, and analogy to generate students' conviction in indemonstrable first principles. Once students grasp these principles, teachers use demonstration and definition to explain what follows from them. When students internalize the whole account such that they can produce it themselves at will, the instillation process is complete.

I turn to Aristotle's moral philosophy in Part II. Chapter 5 contrasts teaching with habituation (*ethismos*)—the method of education primarily responsible for bringing about the virtues of character in the appetitive part of the soul. Some of the most prominent interpretations of Aristotle's theory of moral education contend that habituation must involve some teaching. I argue against this view by showing how Aristotle consistently maintains that teaching is solely devoted to cultivating intellectual virtues in the rational parts of the soul. Chapter 6 takes up a long-standing debate about what Aristotle's practically wise person (*phronimos*) knows. According to the Grand End View, the *phronimos* possesses a philosophical conception of the human good, which he uses as a lodestar in his decision-making. I support the Grand End View against its critics by arguing that since (i) teaching cultivates the intellectual virtues, one of which is practical wisdom, and (ii) teaching instills scientific knowledge, which includes a grasp of the explanatorily basic first principles of a subject, therefore, (iii) a necessary component of practical wisdom involves comprehending the first principle of action—*i.e.*, the human good (*eudaimonia*) as the final goal of *praxis*.

Finally, in Part III, I use my interpretation of teaching to fortify Aristotelian educational theory against the objection—often called 'the paradox of moral education'—that habituation robs students of their autonomy. That would be fair enough, if education only included habituation. But Aristotelian education also includes teaching, which furnishes students with the ability to provide true, well-grounded accounts. This ability, I argue, actually strengthens students' autonomy.