

GRETCHEN ELLEFSON

Phone: (509) 554-9389
gretchenellefson2018@u.northwestern.edu

Northwestern University
Department of Philosophy
1880 Campus Drive
Evanston, IL 60208

EDUCATION

PhD Northwestern University, Department of Philosophy 2019 (Anticipated)
Dissertation: “Communicative Context and Normativity”
Committee: Sanford Goldberg (chair), Fabrizio Cariani, José Medina,
Gregory Ward (Department of Linguistics, Northwestern University), Elisabeth Camp
(Rutgers University)

In my dissertation I aim to understand the phenomenon of miscommunication. Philosophers of language focus on understanding how communication works when it goes well. As such, the views are limited in their ability to say much about what happens when communication goes wrong. I make two primary contributions. First, I defend a novel descriptive account of communicative context according to which contexts are relativized to individual agents. This descriptive account can capture cases of miscommunication as well as successful communication. Second, I argue that there are prescriptive norms that govern those contexts. These norms distinguish innocent miscommunications—when someone misunderstands a request for directions to a coffeeshop and directs her interlocutor elsewhere—and those that strike us as legitimately criticizable—when man interprets a woman’s refusal of his sexual advances as lacking any linguistic content, or even as an expression of interest.

BA Seattle University, Department of Philosophy 2012
Graduated Summa Cum Laude
Honors Thesis, “The Reference of Empty Names”

RESEARCH AREAS

Areas of Specialization

Philosophy of Language, Social Philosophy of Language

Areas of Competence

Feminist Philosophy, Epistemology, Ethics, Metaethics

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- November 2018 “The Pragmatics of Ambiguous Consent,” 4th International Conference of the American Pragmatics Association, University at Albany, SUNY (declined to attend due to conflict)
- July 2018 “The Pragmatics of Ambiguous Consent,” International Social Philosophy Conference, Oakland University
- May 2018 “Power and (mis)communication,” WIPHICA Mini Conference, Northwestern
- April 2018 “The Pragmatics of Ambiguous Consent,” Western Michigan MAP Social and Political Philosophy Workshop
- March 2018 “Cooperation and the Conversational Record,” Mind, Language, and Action Group Graduate Conference II, University of Porto, Portugal
- February 2018 “Cooperation and the Conversational Record,” Graduate Works in Progress Series, Northwestern University
- May 2017 “Metonymy and Deferred Reference,” Fifth International Conference on Philosophy of Language and Linguistics, University of Lodz, Poland
- March 2017 “Metonymy and Deferred Reference,” Dissertation Research Seminar, Northwestern University
- March 2016 “Meaning Transfer in Deferred Interpretation,” Dissertation Research Seminar, Northwestern University
- February 2016 “Deferred Interpretation and What is Said,” Graduate Works in Progress Series, Northwestern University

OTHER CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

- August 2018 Chair, Joanna Lawson’s “Dynamicity and the Metaphysics of Experience: A New Argument Against the B-Theory of Time,”
The Vancouver Summer Philosophy Conference, University of British Columbia

- June 2018 Commentator, Eleanore Neufeld's "An Essentialist Theory of the Meaning of Slurs,"
Athena in Action, Princeton University
- February 2018 Chair, Malte Willer's "Two Puzzles about Agentive 'Can,'"
APA Central Division Meeting
- May 2016 Commentator, Zoë Johnson-King's "Trying is Good,"
Northwestern University Society for the Theory of Ethics and Politics
- February 2016 Chair, Fabrizio Cariani and Paolo Santorio's "Will Do Better,"
APA Central Division Meeting
- April 2015 Commentator, Joshua Smart's "Toward an Own-Standards Account of Epistemic Rationality,"
Northwestern/Notre Dame Epistemology Conference
- October 2014 Commentator, Leigh Vicens' "Self-Forming Actions and Conflicts of Intention,"
Central States Philosophical Association
- April 2014 Commentator, Jonathan Dixon's "Intuition and Epistemic Self-Defeat,"
Northwestern/Notre Dame Epistemology Conference

PAPERS

"Misattributed Consent and Interpretive Context" (Under Review)

"Power and (Mis)communication" (In Progress)

SERVICE

2018 Graduate Student Liaison to Search Committee, Philosophy Department,
Northwestern University

2017-present APA Graduate Student Council, 2 year term

2018-present	Graduate Student Liaison to the APA Committee on the Status and Future of the Profession
2014-2018	Organizer, Northwestern University PhLing Philosophy and Linguistics Workgroup
2016-2017	Co-organizer, Women in Philosophy in the Chicago Area (WIPHICA)
2015-2017	President, Northwestern University Philosophy Graduate Association
2013-2015	Northwestern Philosophy Department Climate Committee
2014-2015	Chair, Climate Committee

HONORS AND AWARDS

2012	Seattle University Reichmann Award, awarded to the philosophy major graduating with the highest GPA
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TEACHING

Instructor

Introduction to Philosophy, Winter 2019, Northwestern University

Teaching Assistant

Introduction to Philosophy, Fall 2018, Northwestern University

Gender, Politics, and Philosophy, Spring 2017, Northwestern University

Introduction to Pragmatism, Winter 2017, Northwestern University

Introduction to Logic II, Winter 2016, Northwestern University

Ethical Problems and Public Issues, Fall 2015, Northwestern University

Logic: Principles of Reasoning, Summer 2015, Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth

Introduction to Existentialism, Winter 2015, Northwestern University

Introduction to Logic I, Fall 2014, Northwestern University

GRADUATE COURSES

Enrolled

Language and Thought, Dedre Gentner, WQ 2017
The Fundamentals of Meaning, Alexis Wellwood, FQ 2015
Kant's Moral Theory, Kyla Ebels-Duggan, SQ 2015
Reference, Gregory Ward, SQ 2015
Desires, Kyla Ebels-Duggan, WQ 2015
Independent Study: Formal Semantics, Michael Glanzberg, WQ 2015
Proseminar: Rawls and His Critics, Charles Mills, FQ 2014-WQ 2015
Advanced Logic: Sets and Incompleteness, Sean Ebels-Duggan, FQ 2014
Ethics of Interaction, Stephen White, FQ 2014
The Contents of Thought, Sanford Goldberg, SQ 2014
Social Epistemology, Jennifer Lackey, SQ 2014
Proseminar: Philosophy of Language, Fabrizio Cariani, WQ 2014-SQ 2014
Implicature, Gregory Ward, WQ 2014
The Nature of Objects, Michael Glanzberg, WQ 2014
Aristotle as Scientist, David Ebrey, FQ 2013
Epistemic Agency, Baron Reed, FQ 2013
Philosophy of Language, Michael Glanzberg, FQ 2013

Audited

The Mind and Mental Representation, Michael Glanzberg, WQ 2017
Indexicals, Malte Willer, SQ 2016 (University of Chicago)
Inarticulacy and Reasonable Communication, Kyla Ebels-Duggan, SQ 2016
Social Epistemology, Jennifer Lackey, SQ 2016
Philosophy of Language, Michael Glanzberg, WQ 2016
The Practical Point of View, Stephen White, WQ 2016
Kant's Critique of Judgment, Rachel Zuckert, FQ 2015
Future Contingents, Fabrizio Cariani, FQ 2015
Plato's Moral Theory, Richard Kraut, SQ 2015