

## Michael W. Hickson

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Department of Philosophy  
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### Areas of Specialization

Early Modern Philosophy. History of Skepticism. Philosophy of Religion

### Academic Appointments and Affiliations

**Trent University**, Peterborough, Ontario  
Chair, Department of Philosophy, 2021 – 2026.  
Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, 2013 – present (tenured in 2018).  
Graduate Faculty Member, Applied Modelling and Quantitative Methods, 2015 – 2022.

**Santa Clara University**, Santa Clara, California  
Assistant Professor (tenure-track), Department of Philosophy, 2011 – 2013.  
Faculty Scholar, Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, 2012 – 2013.

**University of Notre Dame**, South Bend, Indiana  
Early Modern Research Fellow, Center for Philosophy of Religion, 2010 – 2011.

**University of Winnipeg**, Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Assistant Professor (limited term), Department of Philosophy, 2009 – 2010.

### Education

**Ph.D.** Philosophy. *University of Western Ontario*. 2010.  
*With distinction.*

Dissertation: “Solomon’s Cipher: Evil, Skepticism, and Toleration in Bayle.”  
Committee: Thomas M. Lennon (Chair); Lorne Falkenstein; Corey Dyck.

**M.A.** Philosophy. *The Catholic University of America*. 2006.  
*Magna cum laude* (oral examination).  
Thesis: “Moral Improvement in Kant: Possibility and Realization”  
Supervisor: Richard Velkley

*Carnegie Mellon University*. 2002 – 2004.  
Enrolled in PhD program in Logic, Computation, and Methodology.

**B.A.** Philosophy. *University of Western Ontario*. 2002.  
*Faculty of Arts Gold Medal. Philosophy Gold Medal.*

## Publications

### Edited Book

- B1** Pierre Bayle. *Dialogues of Maximus and Themistius*. Translated, edited, and introduced by Michael W. Hickson. Brill's Texts and Sources in Intellectual History 256/18. Leiden: Brill, 2016.

### Research Articles, Chapters, and Entries

- A24** “Racionalismo, ceticismo e a coerência do *Commentaire Philosophique de Bayle*.” *DoisPontos* 22, no. 1 (2025), special issue “Pierre Bayle – Crítica e luta filosófica”, 60-70. [This is a Portuguese translation by Maria Cecília Pedreira de Almeida of a revised version of A23.]
- A23** “From White to Black: Parts One and Two of Bayle’s *Commentaire philosophique*.” In *Pensées diverses autour de Pierre Bayle : Mélanges en honneur de Antony McKenna et Hans Bots*, edited by Olivier Mentz and Eva Rothenberger, 277-98. Germany: Lit Verlag, 2025.
- A22** “Pierre Bayle and the Persecutor’s Mind.” In Alonso, Marta García, and Armando Menéndez Viso, “Ilustración y cristianismo en las obras de Bayle y Feijoo, Oviedo,” 42-58, *Anejos de Cuadernos de Estudios del Siglo XVIII* 11 (2023).
- A21** “Pierre Bayle”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2023 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), [https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/bayle/].
- A20** “Illusory Checkmates: Why Chess is Not a Game.” *Synthese* 200, no. 5 (2022): 1-21.
- A19** “Pierre Bayle.” In *Oxford Bibliographies in Renaissance and Reformation*. Ed. Margaret King. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. [https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195399301/obo-9780195399301-0482.xml?rskey=eNtcVY&result=1&q=bayle#firstMatch].
- A18** “The Role of Skepticism in Bayle’s Theory of Toleration.” In *Sceptical Doubt and Disbelief in Modern European Thought: A New Pan-American Dialogue*, edited by Vicente Raga Rosaleny and Plínio Junqueira Smith, 161-76, Springer, 2021.
- A17** “Simon Foucher and Anti-Cartesian Skepticism.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Descartes and Cartesianism*, edited by Delphine Antoine-Mahut, Steven Nadler, and Tad Schmaltz, 678-90, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- A16** “Bayle on *Évidence* as a Criterion of Truth.” In *Libertinage et philosophie à l’époque classique (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècle), n° 14, La pensée de Pierre Bayle*, edited by Antony McKenna (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2018).
- A15** “Pierre Bayle and the Secularization of Conscience.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 79:2 (2018), 199-220.
- A14** “Varieties of Academic Skepticism in Early Modern Philosophy: Pierre-Daniel Huet and Simon Foucher.” In *Skepticism: From Antiquity to the Present*, 320-341, edited by Diego Machuca and Baron Reed (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).
- A13** with Thomas M. Lennon. “The Rise of Religious Skepticism in the Seventeenth Century.” In *The Routledge Companion to Seventeenth-century Philosophy*, 563-582, edited by Dan Kaufman (New York/London: Routledge, 2018).

- A12** “Disagreement and Academic Skepticism in Bayle.” In *Academic Skepticism in the Development of Early Modern Philosophy*, edited by Plínio Junqueira Smith and Sébastien Charles. International Archives of the History of Ideas 221 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2017), 293-318.
- A11** “Pierre Bayle.” In *The Cambridge Descartes Lexicon*, edited by Lawrence Nolan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 55-56.
- A10** “The Immortality of the Soul.” In *The Cambridge Descartes Lexicon*, edited by Lawrence Nolan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 686-690.
- A9** “Belief and Invincible Objections: Bayle, Le Clerc, Leibniz.” In *Leibniz et Bayle: Confrontation et Dialogue*, edited by Christian Leduc, Paul Rateau, and Jean-Luc Solère. Studia Leibnitiana Sonderheft 43 (Franz Steiner Verlag, 2015), 69-86.
- A8** “A Brief History of Problems of Evil.” In *A Companion to the Problem of Evil*, edited by Justin McBrayer and Daniel Howard-Snyder (Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 3-18.
- A7** “Theodicy and Toleration in Bayle’s *Dictionary*.” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 51:1 (2013), 49-73.
- A6** with Thomas M. Lennon. “The Skepticism of the First Meditation.” In *Descartes’ Meditations: A Critical Guide*, edited by Karen Detlefsen, (Cambridge UP, 2013), 9-24.
- A5** “*Reductio ad malum*: Bayle’s Early Skepticism about Theodicy.” *Modern Schoolman* 88:3/4 (2011): 201-221.
- A4** “The Moral Certainty of Immortality in Descartes.” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 28:3 (July 2011), 227-46.
- A3** “Conscientious Refusals without Conscience: Why Not?” *Philo: A Journal of Philosophy* 13:2 (2011), 167–84.
- A2** “The Message of Bayle’s Last Title: Providence and Toleration in the *Entretiens de Maxime et de Themiste*.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 71:4 (2010), 547-67.
- A1** with Thomas M. Lennon. “The Real Significance of Bayle’s Authorship of the *Avis*.” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 17:1 (2009), 191–205.

### Popular

- P3** “Why Canada Should Invest More in Teaching Kids How to Play Chess.” *The Conversation*. 13 October 2022. [https://theconversation.com/why-canada-should-invest-more-in-teaching-kids-how-to-play-chess-191413#:~:text=Teaching%20chess%20in%20Canadian%20schools,learn%2C%20compete%20and%20have%20fun.]
- P2** with Paul Frost, Michael Epp, and Marguerite Xenopoulos. “Scientific Certainty Survival Kit: How to Push Back Against Sceptics Who Exploit Uncertainty for Political Gain.” *The Conversation*. 3 January 2022. [https://theconversation.com/scientific-certainty-survival-kit-how-to-push-back-against-skeptics-who-exploit-uncertainty-for-political-gain-173578].
- P1** “How a Huguenot Philosopher Realized that Atheists could be Virtuous.” *Aeon*, 18 September 2018 [https://aeon.co/ideas/how-a-huguenot-philosopher-realised-that-atheists-could-be-virtuous].

## Book Reviews

- R11** Review of Marta Garcia-Alonso and John Christian Laursen (eds), *The Importance of Non-Christian Religions in the Philosophy of Pierre*, International Archives of the History of Ideas, Volume 251, Switzerland, Springer, 2024. *History of European Ideas*, 1-7. 2025. Online first. (<https://doi.org/10.1080/01916599.2025.2579388>).
- R10** “Pierre Bayle against the rationalists: on part II of Dmitri Levitin’s *The Kingdom of Darkness*.” *History of European Ideas*, 1–4. 2025. Online first. (<https://doi.org/10.1080/01916599.2024.2436279>)
- R9** Review of José R. Maia Neto, *Academic Skepticism in Seventeenth-Century French Philosophy: The Charronian Legacy, 1601-1662* (Springer, 2014). In *International Journal for the Study of Skepticism*.
- R8** Review of Sébastien Charles and Plinio J. Smith (eds.), *Scepticism in the Eighteenth Century : Enlightenment, Lumières, Aufklärung* (Springer, 2013), in *International Journal for the Study of Skepticism* 6:4 (2016), 405-411.
- R7** Review of Peter Anstey, *John Locke and Natural Philosophy* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), in *Review of Metaphysics* 67:2 (December 2013), 423-25.
- R6** Review of John Christian Laursen and María José Villaverde (eds.), *Paradoxes of Religious Toleration in Early Modern Political Thought* (Lexington Books, 2012), in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 2013.05.22 (online).
- R5** Review of José Maia Neto, Gianni Paganini, John Christian Laursen (eds), *Skepticism in the Modern Age: Building on the Work of Richard Popkin* (Brill, 2009), in *International Journal for the Study of Skepticism* 3:4 (2013), 304-307.
- R4** Review of Neven Leddy, Avi S. Lifschitz (eds.), *Epicurus in the Enlightenment* (Voltaire Foundation, 2009), in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 2010.06.34 (sic; online).
- R3** Review of Gianni Paganini, *Skepsis: Le débat des modernes sur le scepticisme* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2008). *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 18:1 (January 2010).
- R2** Review of Daniel Dahlstrom, *Philosophical Legacies: Essays on the Thought of Kant, Hegel and Their Contemporaries* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008). *The Review of Metaphysics* vol. LXII, no. 3 (March 2009).
- R1** Review of William Sweet, *Religious Belief: The Contemporary Debate* (Koramangala: Dharmaram Publications, 2003). *Philosophy, Culture, and Traditions*, 3 (2005).

## Selected Talks

- T26** “From White to Black: Parts One and Two of Bayle’s *Commentaire philosophique*.” *10th International Colloquium on Pierre Bayle: Critique and Philosophical Struggle*. University of Brasília. July 17-19, 2024.
- T25** “Why Do Sceptics Bother with Philosophy? The Case of Pierre Bayle.” *Early Moderns on the Power of Philosophy Workshop*. University College Dublin. October 12-14, 2022.
- T24** “Pierre Bayle and the Persecutor’s Mind.” Keynote address. *Enlightenment and Christianity in the Works of Bayle and Feijoo*. University of Oviedo, Spain. Online conference. May 19, 2021.
- T23** “Bayle, Locke, and the Philosophical Foundations of Western Secularism.” Invited talk to given at the University of Toronto on May 4, 2018.

- T22** “Secularism and Toleration in Bayle and Locke.” Invited talk given at the John Locke Workshop at Western University on June 23, 2017.
- T21** “Pierre Bayle and Secularization of Conscience.” Invited talk given to the Modern Philosophy Research Group at Western University, October 29, 2015.
- T20** “Bayle and Emergence of the Enlightenment Conscience.” Peer-reviewed presentation given at the Congress for the *International Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies* at Erasmus University in Rotterdam, Netherlands, July 27, 2015.
- T19** “Varieties of Academic Skepticism in Early Modern Philosophy.” Peer-reviewed presentation given at the *Canadian Philosophical Association* Congress, University of Ottawa, June 4, 2015.
- T18** “Skepticism and Cartesian Evidence: The Academic Objections of Huet and Foucher.” Invited talk given at the *Table ronde en philosophie moderne de Montréal*, Université du Québec à Montréal, March 20, 2015.
- T17** “Disagreement and Academic Skepticism in Bayle.” Given as part of a peer-reviewed symposium on Academic skepticism at the *Canadian Philosophical Congress*, University of Victoria, June 6, 2013.
- T16** “Belief and Disagreement: The Bayle/Le Clerc/ Leibniz Debate.” Invited talk given at the Université de Paris I—Panthéon-Sorbonne, September 5, 2012.
- T15** “A Brief History of the Problem of Evil.” Invited talk given at Santa Clara University, January 20, 2012.
- T14** “Theodicy and Toleration in Bayle’s *Dictionary*.” Invited talk given at the University of Notre Dame, December 12, 2010.
- T13** “Conscientious Refusals without Conscience.” Invited talk given at the University of Western Ontario, November 13, 2010.
- T12** “Bayle’s Cartesian Argument for Toleration.” Invited talk given at Santa Clara University, February 22, 2010.
- T11** “Solomon’s Cipher: Bayle’s Last Argument for Toleration.” Invited talk given at the University of Manitoba, October 30, 2009.
- T10** “Who were Bayle’s *Maxime* and *Themiste*?” Peer-reviewed talk given at the *Canadian Philosophical Association* Congress, Carleton University, May, 2009.
- T9** “Qui étaient Maxime et Themiste? Scepticisme, religion, et tolérance chez Pierre Bayle.” Peer-reviewed talk given at the *77è Congrès de l’Acfas*, University of Ottawa, May, 2009.
- T8** “The Impossible Supposition: An Alternative History of Autonomy.” Invited talk for the *Philosophy Graduate Student Colloquium Series*, University of Western Ontario, September, 2008.
- T7** “Fénelon and Malebranche on the Impossible Supposition.” Peer-reviewed talk given at the *17th European Conference on the Philosophy of Religion*, University of Oslo, Norway, August, 2008.
- T6** “The Moral Certainty of Immortality in Descartes.” Peer-reviewed talk given at the *Canadian Philosophical Association Congress*, University of British Columbia, June, 2008.

- T5** Commentary on Amanda Gibeault, “Bayle and the Possibility of Subversion.” *Canadian Philosophical Association Congress*, University of British Columbia, June, 2008.
- T4** “Atheism and Secularism in Bayle.” Invited talk for the conference, *Sacred and Secular in a Global Canada*, Huron University College, May, 2008.
- T3** Commentary on Richard Booher, “Kant on the Duty of Perfection.” *UWO Graduate Conference on the History of Philosophy*, University of Western Ontario, March, 2008.
- T2** “The Stoic Descartes.” Peer-reviewed talk given at the *Essays of Significance Graduate Conference*, University of Windsor, March, 2008.
- T1** “Early Modern Quietism.” Peer-reviewed talk given at the *Repetition and Return Graduate Conference*, University of Western Ontario, March, 2008.

## Grants and Fellowships

2017. *Trent University Centre for Teaching and Learning Teaching Fellowship* for 2017-2020 for the project “Teaching the News: A Case-Based Approach to Applied Ethics Teaching.” \$6,000.
2016. Grant from the *École Normale Supérieure de Lyon* to participate in the Junior Scholars Research School devoted to “*Historiographie de la philosophie: histoire, méthodes, pratiques.*” \$1,000.
- 2015: *SSHRC International Travel Grant*. Trent University. \$1,500.
- 2010-2013: *Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR)* grant for “Let Conscience Be Their Guide? Conscientious Refusals in Reproductive Health Care.” \$240,000. Along with Carolyn McLeod (principal investigator), Jocelyn Downie, Francoise Baylis, and Daniel Weinstock, I was a co-investigator in a research project that studied the moral, legal, and policy issues surrounding conscientious refusals by health care professionals in Canada.
- 2012: *Santa Clara University Faculty Summer Research Grant*. \$5,000.
- 2010: *Templeton Research Fellowship in Early Modern Philosophy of Religion*. University of Notre Dame. \$50,000. I was one of three research fellows chosen for the “Problem of Evil in Early Modern Philosophy” project.
- 2010: *SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship* for “Pierre Bayle and Academic Skepticism.” \$82,000. Declined.

## Awards and Nominations

- 2025: Service Merit Award (Trent)
- 2024: Nominated for the Humanities/Social Sciences Decanal Teaching Award (Trent)
- 2024: Nominated for the Symons Award for Teaching Excellence (Trent)
- 2023: Nominated for the Humanities/Social Sciences Decanal Teaching Award (Trent)
- 2023: Nominated for the Symons Award for Teaching Excellence (Trent)
- 2022: Nominated for the Humanities/Social Sciences Decanal Teaching Award (Trent)
- 2022: Nominated for the Symons Award for Teaching Excellence (Trent)
- 2021: Nominated for the Symons Award for Teaching Excellence (Trent)

2020: Nominated for the Symons Award for Teaching Excellence (Trent)  
2020: Nominated for Award for Excellence in Online Teaching (Trent)  
2020: Nominated to deliver The Last Lecture (Trent)  
2018: Research Merit Award (Trent)  
2016: Mil Clark Award for Faculty Engagement in College Life, Lady Eaton College (Trent)  
2012: Elected Faculty Scholar, Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (Santa Clara University)  
2009: Graduate Student Teaching Award (Western)  
2009: Ontario Graduate Scholarship (declined)  
2007: Faculty of Graduate Studies Entrance Award (Western)  
2004-2006: Johannes Quasten Graduate Scholarship (CUA)  
2002-2004: Logic and Computation Doctoral Scholarship (Carnegie Mellon)  
2002: Ontario Graduate Scholarship (declined)  
2002: Faculty of Arts Graduating Gold Medal (Western)  
2002: Philosophy Department Graduating Gold Medal (Western)  
2002: Gold medal, Moot Court Law Competition (Western)  
2001: Allison Johnson Philosophy Scholarship (Western)  
2001: Rose Gomberg Philosophy Scholarship (Western)  
2001: Faculty Association Scholarship (Western)  
2001: Alumni Association Scholarship (Western)  
1998: Faculty of Mathematics René Descartes Entrance Award (Waterloo). Declined.

## **Recent Teaching**

### **At Trent University**

PHIL 4610H: Pierre Bayle on Freedom of Thought and Action  
PHIL 4610H: The History of Skepticism  
PHIL 4610H: Pierre Bayle on Religion and Politics  
PHIL 4390H: Advanced Topics in Biomedical Ethics  
PHIL 4210H: Science Deniers, Skeptics, and Conspiracy Theorists  
PHIL 3430H: Early Modern Philosophy II: The 18<sup>th</sup> Century Enlightenment  
PHIL 3420H: Early Modern Philosophy I: Reason and Revolution  
PHIL 3370H: Cyberethics  
PHIL 3030H: The Meaning of Life  
PHIL 2590H: Philosophy and Film

PHIL-COIS 2410H: Formal Logic

PHIL 2390H: Biomedical Ethics

PHIL 2030H: Death

PHIL 1200H: Critical Thinking

PHIL 1100H: Introduction to Philosophy—Moral and Political

PHIL 1000H: Introduction to Philosophy—Knowledge and Reality

## **Graduate Supervision**

2015-2017: Brendan Rowe, M.A. in Applied Modelling and Quantitative Methods. Thesis title: “An Ethical Analysis of Bell’s Targeted Ads Program.” Successfully defended in May, 2017.

## **Service**

### **Department Service**

- Department Chair, 2021-present
- Personnel Committee, 2013-present (Committee Chair, 2021-present)
- Curriculum Committee, 2013-present (Committee Chair, 2021-present)
- Department Chair Search Committee, 2015
- Trent Philosophy Society Faculty Coordinator, 2013-17; 2019-20; 2021-24
- Open House representative, 2013-present

### **College and Other Department Service**

- Trent Reads, 2013
- ThinkTank, 2014
- LEC Faculty-Student Mashup, 2015
- Faculty FaceTime, 2015
- PanColleges Fund Selection Committee, 2015-16
- French and Francophone Studies Personnel Committee, 2015, 2016, 2017.
- French and Francophone Studies Chair Search Committee, 2017.
- LEC Advisory Council Faculty Representative, 2015-16, 2017-18
- LEC College Student Staff Training, 2016
- Pre-Modern Studies Coordinator, 2019-present.

### **Union Service**

- TUFA Bargaining Team, 2018
- TUFA Joint Subcommittee on SETS, 2021-22 (co-author of final report)

## University Service

- Undergraduate Academic Policy Committee, 2017-18, 2019-20
- Undergraduate Studies Committee, 2020-21, 2023-24
- Senate, 2021-22, 2024-25
- Decanal Council, 2021-present
- Faculty Board, 2021-present
- Provost's Subcommittee on Artificial Intelligence, 2024-25
- Policy Review Committee, 2025-present (two policies reviewed in summer 2025)

## Event Organization at Trent

- Trent Philosophy Society Student Symposium (8x)
- Philosophy Department beginning-of-the-year party (8x)
- Philosophy Department end-of-year party (4x)
- "Don't Bring Your Religion to Work!", 2013. Panel discussion of Quebec's Charter of Values.
- "Sex for Sale!", 2014. Panel discussion of Canada's Bill C-36.
- Philosophy Department 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, 2015.
- "Why Mind-Body Dualism is False," featuring John Burbidge, 2015.
- "Facts, Falsehoods, and Fake News!", 2016. Panel discussion of misinformation.
- 2018 Gilbert Ryle Lecture Series, featuring Luciano Floridi.
- "Bad Ideas: A Pre-Modern Symposium," 2020 (cancelled due to pandemic), 2022.
- "AI: Friend or Foe?" The Inaugural Groarke Debate, 2024.
- Peterborough Regional Ethics Bowl, 2025, 2026

## Recruitment, Retention, and Other Event Participation

- Trent Enrichment Program (6x)
- Indigenous Pathways Lecture, 2013
- Faculty Keynote, Orientation Week Welcome Ceremony, 2014.
- Student Support Certificate completed (9 sessions), 2015.
- "What is Love?" Panelist, Traill College, 2015.
- Recruitment training for Trent's recruitment team, 2022-25.

## Service to the Profession of Philosophy

- Article referee numerous times between 2013-present for journals including the following: *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, *Journal of Philosophical Research*, *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, *International Journal for the Study of Skepticism*, *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, *Lias: Journal of Early Modern Intellectual Culture*, *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, *Intellectual History Review*
- Book manuscript referee five times between 2013-present for Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press (2x), Brill Academic Publishers, and Springer.

- Postdoctoral Fellowship Proposal referee for Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2014.
- Tenure Application External Reviewer, Loyal University Chicago, 2020 and 2022.

### **Community Service**

- “Kids’ Chess”, twelve-week chess program for kids at Trent, 2018.
- Chess Day at the Library, Peterborough Public Library, July 2018.
- Chess for Kids, Peterborough Public Library, six weeks, 2018.
- Coach, Peterborough Youth Soccer Club, 2017-2019.
- Many-time parent volunteer at two elementary schools in Peterborough, 2013-present.
- Peterborough VegFest, 2025