

Benjamin Laing McKean

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Employment

University of Chicago

Harper-Schmidt Fellow in the Society of Fellows & Collegiate Assistant Professor
in the Social Sciences, Collegiate Division, September 2010-present
Elected Collegiate Faculty Co-Chair of the University of Chicago Society of Fellows, 2011-2012

Education

Harvard University

BA, Summa Cum Laude, Social Studies, June 2002

Princeton University

MA, Department of Politics, May 2006

PhD, Department of Politics, August 2010

Examination Fields: Political Theory; International Relations; Modern Social Theory

Dissertation Title: Political Dispositions and Global Justice: Understanding the Duties of Individuals in an Unjust World

Committee: Charles Beitz (Politics), Jan-Werner Müller (Politics),
Stephen Macedo (Politics), & Melissa Lane (Politics)

Abstract: My dissertation places the dispositions, habits, and perspectives of individuals at the heart of political obligation rather than at its margins, where they are found in prevailing views that understand such obligation essentially as compliance with institutional rules. By demonstrating the surprising extent to which John Rawls's theory of justice relies on elements of Hegel at key junctures, I show how citizens must shape their own moral sentiments in order for political society to function fairly. The dissertation then develops a criterion of solidarity to help individuals understand their political obligations in a social world that forces them to cooperate internationally with others whom shared institutions and practices fail to treat as free and equal. In doing so, the project advances a methodology for better linking ideal and non-ideal theory.

Primary Teaching and Research Interests

Global Justice & Human Rights
Critical Theory

Liberalism & its Critics
International Relations

Teaching

University of Chicago, Collegiate Assistant Professor

Social Sciences (SOSC) 15100: Classics of Social & Political Thought, Fall 2010-Spring 2011

Political Science: Political Theory After Catastrophe (scheduled, Spring 2012)

Princeton University, Assistant-In-Instruction

POL 313: Global Justice, with Charles Beitz, Fall 2006

WWS 301/POL 308: Ethics & Public Policy, with Keith Shaw, Spring 2007

POL 240: International Relations, with Edward Rhodes, Fall 2007

Research Projects and Publications

Disposed to Justice

A book-length manuscript that develops a dispositional approach to political obligation with applications for domestic and international justice

Political Freedom and Resentment

A book-length research project that expands the dispositional approach to analyze the sources, effects, and possible responses to populist resentment of perceived elites in democracies

"Exploring the Outer Limit: The Hegelian Elements of Rawls's Egalitarian Liberalism" -

Paper under review by *American Political Science Review*

"Ideal Theory After Auschwitz? The Practical Uses and Ideological Abuses of Reconciliation in Rawls and Adorno"

Paper prepared for submission to *Political Theory*

Fellowships, Honors and Awards

2009-2010 Graduate Prize Fellowship, Princeton University Center for Human Values

2004-2009 Graduate Fellowship, Princeton University

2001 Phi Beta Kappa (inducted as a junior)

1999-2002 John Harvard Scholarship for academic achievement

1999 Cambridge Peace and Justice Award, given by the City of Cambridge for outstanding contribution to community service

Selected Conference Presentations

Paper Presentations

"Who Needs Rights? Justice and the Precariousness of Social Order in the Political Realism of Raymond Geuss and Bernard Williams," American Political Science Association Annual Meeting September 1-4, 2011 in Seattle, WA

"Political Freedom and Resentment: Equality, Difference, and Civic Friendship in Aristotle," American Political Science Association Annual Meeting September 2-5, 2010 in Washington, DC

"Hegel and Du Bois on Identity, Institutions, and the Global Economy," Western Political Science Association Annual Meeting, April 1-3, 2010 in San Francisco, CA; version also presented at New England Political Science Association Annual Meeting, April 22-24, 2010 in Newport, RI

"Close Encounters? Power and Recognition in Terrence Malick's *The New World*," American Political Science Association Annual Meeting September 3-6, 2009 in Toronto, Canada

"The Holocaust and the Politics of Reconciliation: Rawls and Adorno on Historical Trauma and the Methods of Theory," American Political Science Association Annual Meeting August 28-31, 2008 in Boston, MA; version also presented at Western Political Science Association Annual Meeting March 19-21, 2009 in Vancouver, BC, Canada

"Global Justice & the Perils of the Social Contract Tradition," Midwest Political Science Association National Conference April 3-6, 2008 in Chicago, IL; paper also presented at New England Political Science Association Annual Meeting April 25-6, 2008 in Providence, RI; and Global Studies Association National Conference June 6-8, 2008 in New York, NY

"The Difference that Sovereignty Makes: Hobbes, Tocqueville & Foucault on the Anxiety of Equality," Southern Political Science Association Annual Meeting, January 10-12, 2008, in New Orleans, LA

Other Conference Roles

Discussant, "Schmitt, Althusser, and the Limits of the Political," American Political Science Association Annual Meeting September 2-5, 2010 in Washington, DC
Discussant and Chair, "Achieving Justice" Session, Western Political Science Association Annual Meeting March 19-21, 2009 in Vancouver, BC, Canada
Discussant, "Dilemmas in Establishing Collective Responsibility" session, Oxford/Princeton Research Collaboration on Global Norms and Global Justice, October 30-31, 2008, in Oxford, England
Discussant, "Rationalism and Relativism" panel, Princeton Graduate Conference in Political Theory, April 11-12, 2008, in Princeton, NJ; also served as conference co-organizer
Discussant and Chair, "New Perspectives on International Politics" Session, Midwest Political Science Association National Conference, April 3-6, 2008 in Chicago, IL

Professional Activity

Professional Affiliations

American Political Science Association
Midwest Political Science Association
New England Political Science Association
American Society for Political and Legal Philosophy

Manuscript Reviewer

American Journal of Political Science

University and Department Service

Collegiate Faculty Co-Chair of the University of Chicago Society of Fellows, 2011-2012
Co-Organizer and Outreach Coordinator, Graduate Conference in Political Theory at Princeton University, 2008 and 2009
Graduate Student Representative, Resources Committee of the Council of the Princeton University Community, 2006-2010
Graduate Student Representative, Politics Department Graduate Committee, 2004-2005

Community and Public Service

Member, Governing Board, Worker Rights Consortium (WRC), 2008-2010
The WRC is a non-profit monitoring group that investigates wages and working conditions in the factories that produce collegiate apparel around the world.

Other Languages

Spanish (proficient reading and speaking); German (proficient reading, competent speaking)