

Kelly Ann Cunningham

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kellyanncunningham.com

Research Interests

AOS: Ethics, Applied Ethics (especially medical ethics)

AOC: American Pragmatism, 20th Century Philosophy

Academic Appointments

July 2024-present

Lecturer, Philosophy Department, Bentley University

Education

August 2019-August 2024

Vanderbilt University, PhD in Philosophy

Dissertation Chair: Diana B. Heney

Dissertation Committee: Robert B. Talisse, Matthew Congdon, Jason D'Cruz (external)

August 2014-June 2018

DePaul University, BA in Philosophy, English, Chinese Studies

Graduated *summa cum laude* from Honors Program

Publications

Academic Journal Articles

1. "Cooperation and Climates of Trust"
Social Theory and Practice (accepted, publication forthcoming January 2026)
2. "Revitalizing Baier: A Developmental Interpretation of 'Trust and Anti-trust'"
Journal of the History of Women Philosophers and Scientists. doi:10.1163/2666318X-bja00034, April 2025
3. "For and By: Reflections on Graduate Student-Led Initiatives to Support FGLI Community."
Co-authored with Erica Scarpitti, *Journal of First-Generation Student Success*, 1-12. Published online February 28th, 2025: <https://doi.org/10.1080/26906015.2025.2461787>
4. "'As thin as a sheet of light': Jane Addams on Narrative and End-of-Life Care"
Transactions of the Charles S. Pierce Society, Volume 59, No. 1, Winter 2023

Book Reviews

5. Review of Thomas W. Simpson's *Trust: A Philosophical Study*. Oxford University Press, 2023. *Journal of Moral Philosophy* (accepted, publication forthcoming)

Public-facing Publications

6. A blog post on legacy and end of life care for American Philosophical Association's Bioethics Blog Series, invited contributor, (forthcoming June 2026)

Work in Progress

An essay on honesty and trust (under review)

An essay on trust in the classroom and co-creating AI policy (under review)

An essay on legacy work and end-of-life care (in progress)

Conferences

Presentations

1. “Why Honesty is (Still) a Hard Virtue”, Poster Presentation, 2026 Central APA Meeting, Chicago, IL, Feb 18-21st, 2026 (upcoming)
2. “Shaping Patient Legacy: Alzheimer’s, Well-Being, and Hard Choices”
Emory University 30th Annual Healthcare Ethics Consortium: Shaping the Future: Healthcare Ethics in 2035, March 24th-25th, 2025
3. “Murdoch on Friendship and Virtue” Panel Presentation
Co-panelists: Alyssa Tudor and Peiyang Yang
11th Iris Murdoch Conference, University of Chichester, England (accepted, unable to attend)
4. “*Xin, Li*, and Repairing Climates of Trust” Panel Presentation
Co-panelists: Brandon Underwood and Sydney Morrow
Philosophy East and West, University of Hawai’i: May 24th-31st, 2024
5. “Trust, Trauma, and Identity”
Philosophy East and West, University of Hawai’i: May 24th-31st, 2024
6. “Amplifying First-Generation and Low-Income Voices through a Multi-Component Campus Support Program”
Co-presenters: Erica Scarpitti and Suhaah Nadir
2024 NASPA Annual Conference, Seattle, Washington: March 9th-13th, 2024
7. “Risk and Reckoning in Community-Institution Collaborations: An Exploration of Trust”
Co-Panelists: Leah Lowe, Victoria Hensley
Imagining America 2023 National Gathering, Providence, Rhode Island: October 20th-22nd, 2023
8. “Knowing Shakespeare, Knowing the Self, Knowing Love: Murdoch on Friendship, Self-Knowledge, and Moral Development”
Iris Murdoch Transatlantic Ties Conference, online: June 30th, 2023
9. “The Case Against Demoralizing Trust”
Congress of Canadian Philosophical Association 2023, York University, Toronto, Canada: May 29th-June 1st, 2023

Graduate Conference On Friendship, Affection, and Other-Concern, , Toronto Metropolitan University, Toronto, Canada: March 18th - 19th, 2023
10. “Revitalizing Baier: Trust Beyond Beliefs and Attitudes”
Tennessee Philosophical Association Annual Meeting, , Vanderbilt University, Nashville Tennessee: October 29th-30th, 2022

11. “Atmospheres of Trust and Terrains of Respect: Cultivating Conditions for Cooperation”
American Philosophical Association Central Division Meeting, Palmer House, Chicago, Illinois: February 23rd-26th, 2022

Chairing & Commentaries

1. Chaired Justin Broackes’ “Plato, Freud and Murdoch: What exactly is the Reality that Human Beings (so we are told) find it hard to face up to?”
Philosophy After Murdoch Workshop at Vanderbilt University: March 28th-29th, 2025
2. Chaired Social and Political Philosophy Session
Congress of Canadian Philosophical Association 2023, York University: May 29th-June 1st, 2023,
3. Commented on Courtland D. Lewis’s “Always Look on the Brightside of Crisis”
Tennessee Philosophical Association: October 29th, 2022, Vanderbilt University
4. Commented on Timothy Miller’s “Teaching Formulations of Rule Consequentialism and the Divergence Objection”
Tennessee Philosophical Association, online: November 20th, 2021
5. Commented on William Stephen’s “Stoicism and Food”
Vanderbilt Philosophy Department Colloquium Series: February 5th, 2021
6. Commented on Daniel J. Smith’s “Schelling’s Contributions to the Kant-Reinhold Controversy”
Tennessee Philosophical Association: November 8th, 2019, Nashville, TN

Teaching Experience

Bentley University, Philosophy Department

All courses were taught to undergraduate students. Honors classes had 18 students; all other classes had an enrollment of 25-30.

As Instructor of Record

PH110: Debating Ethical Problems: Fall 2025
PH 190: Friendship & Trust: Spring 2025, Spring 2026
PH 102: Practical Ethics: Fall 2024, Spring 2025
PH 102: Practical Ethics (Honors): Fall 2024
PH 103: Ultimate Questions: Fall 2024, Fall 2025, Spring 2026

Vanderbilt University, Philosophy Department

All courses were taught to undergraduate students. Writing-Intensive courses had 15 students; all others had an enrollment of 25-30.

As Instructor of Record

Introduction to Medical Ethics: Spring 2024
Introduction to Ethics (Writing-Intensive): Fall 2023
Introduction to Ethics: Spring 2023
Introduction to Medical Ethics (Online, Writing-Intensive): Summer 2021

Introduction to Philosophy (Online, Writing-Intensive): Spring 2021

As Teaching Assistant/Discussion Section Leader

Introduction to Medical Ethics: Fall 2022

primary instructor Diana Heney

Introduction to Philosophy (Writing-Intensive): Fall 2021

primary instructor Julian Wuerth

Introduction to Medical Ethics (Online, Writing-Intensive): Fall 2020

primary instructor Diana Heney

Introduction to Ethics: Spring 2020

primary instructor Matthew Congdon

As Grading Assistant

Philosophy & Literature (Writing-Intensive), grading assistant for Michael Hodges: Spring 2020

Philosophy of Religion (Writing Intensive), grading assistant for Michael Hodges: Spring 2020

Vanderbilt University, Center for Teaching

All courses taught through the Center for Teaching were taught to graduate students or post-doctoral fellows with the aim of deepening their understanding of pedagogy and developing skills as instructors and teaching assistants.

As Instructor/Facilitator

Certificate in College Teaching Seminar (online, synchronous): Fall 2023, Spring 2024

Teaching Assistant Orientation (online, hybrid): Summer 2023

Vanderbilt University, Alexander Heard Library

I designed this course with Erica Scarpitti and Emily Bush for the Buchanan Fellowship program, which supports hands-on student learning and the development of desirable skills in undergraduate students. Two fellows were selected to participate.

As Mentor/Facilitator

Amplifying First-Generation College Student Voices: Fall 2023

Teaching Training & Awards

Inclusive Teaching Fellowship, Bentley University, Center for Teaching & Learning Fall 2025

Selected to participate in faculty seminar on inclusive teaching and engaged pedagogy

Berry Teaching Award, Vanderbilt Philosophy Dept. Spring 2023

Annual Award from Vanderbilt Philosophy Department for excellence in teaching

Finalist for Patricia K. Cross Future Leaders Award Fall 2022

Award from AAC&U for promising leaders in higher education and innovation in equity, community engagement and teaching

Certificate in College Teaching, Vanderbilt Center for Teaching Fall 2021

Completed two 8-week courses covering pedagogical theory, course design, and collaborative learning techniques

Online Course Design Institute, Vanderbilt Center for Teaching Spring 2021

One-week intensive course covering use of learning management systems, pedagogical uses of evolving technologies, and asynchronous and hybrid course design

First Year Teaching Award Spring 2020

Annual Award from Vanderbilt Philosophy Department for excellence in teaching as a first year

Research Grants & Experience

Center for Health and Business Health Initiative Seed Funding	Winter 2025
Award from Bentley University's Center for Health and Business for supporting healthcare-related research	
Curb Center Public Scholar Grant	Fall 2021-Spring 2024-
-\$2000 Grant from Vanderbilt University, Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, & Public Policy for Open Book Collective, a project that aims to foster community and promote creativity among first-generation, low-income students (FGLI) from 2021-2023	
-Additional \$1000 awarded for 2023-24 academic year to support FGLI programming and mentorship pilot	
Vanderbilt Alumni Association Board Fund	Fall 2023-Spring 2024
\$2000 in funding to support Open Book Collective's ongoing efforts to support first-generation students	
Graduate Leadership Institute Programming Grant	Fall 2023-Spring 2024
\$2000 Grant awarded to support programming and pilot mentorship program for first-generation students	
Honesty Project Summer Seminar & Conference	Summer 2023
Selected as participant for summer seminar led by Dr. Christian Miller	
Fully funded for the duration of seminar and conference from July 12 th -23 rd , 2023 at Wake Forest University	
Ethcetera Reading Group Member	Fall 2020-Summer 2024
Faculty-led reading group with annual themes including food, friendship, moral progress, and emotions	
Research Assistant for Diana Heney	Fall 2022-Summer 2024
Assisted with editing and formatting of essays, indexing of book manuscript, and organizing book workshop	
Professional Development and Training Grant	Fall 2022
\$1000 grant for conference travel from Vanderbilt University, Graduate Leadership Institute	
Summer Language Training Grant	Summer 2020
\$5000 Grant from Vanderbilt University, College of Arts and Sciences for language training course	

Awards & Scholarships

Vanderbilt's Sesquicentennial Scholarship Exhibition and Celebration	February 15 th , 2024
One of ten graduate students selected for university-wide Research Exhibition & Lighting Talk	
Graduate Student Department Service Award	Spring 2024
Annual Award from Vanderbilt Philosophy Department for commitment to department service	
Berry Student Publication Award, Vanderbilt Philosophy Department	Spring 2024
Annual Award from Vanderbilt Philosophy Department for graduate student academic publications	
Provost's Pathbreaking Discovery Award	Spring 2024
\$2,500 award for exceptional research and scholarship	
Kendall Berry Ethics Dissertation Prospectus Prize	Spring 2023
Annual Award from Vanderbilt Philosophy Department for best ethics dissertation prospectus	
Berry Student Publication Award, Vanderbilt Philosophy Dept.	Spring 2023
Annual Award from Vanderbilt Philosophy Department for graduate student academic publications	
Graduate Student Department Service Award	Spring 2022
Annual Award from Vanderbilt Philosophy Department for commitment to department service	
Provost Graduate Fellowship	Fall 2019-Summer 2024
\$5000 in additional annual funding for PhD Studies from Vanderbilt University Graduate School	
Trader Joe's Employee Scholarship	Fall 2019
\$3000 Award from Trader Joe's for outstanding employees pursuing higher education	
Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship	Fall 2015
\$5000 award from U.S. State Department for undergraduates studying a critical need language abroad	

Discipline, University, and Community Service

Reviewer

Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy (x1)

Teaching Philosophy (x1)

Association for Practical and Professional Ethics (APPE)

Coach for Bentley's APPE Ethics Bowl Team (Fall 2025)

Judge for Northeastern Regional APPE Ethics Bowl Competition (2024, 2025)

Graduate Student Coach for Vanderbilt's APPE Ethics Bowl Team (Fall 2022-2024)

-2023 Vanderbilt Team Upper Midwest Regional Champions/Nationals Qualifying

Bentley University Tri-Alpha Honors Society

Founder and Co-Organizer of Tri-Alpha Mentorship Program (Fall 2024-present)

Member (Fall 2024-present)

Vanderbilt University Minorities and Philosophy (MAP) Chapter

Co-Chair/ Internal Communication Liaison (Fall 2020-2024)

Vanderbilt University, McGill Project

Invited Speaker, McGill Hour: "Snapshots: Creativity, Trust, and the 'Academic' Life"

February 17th, 2023, McGill Hall, Vanderbilt University

Vanderbilt University, Undergraduate Philosophy Club

Invited Speaker, Philosophy Club Speaker Hour: "Fostering Trust in the Classroom

Through the Co-Creation of AI Policy" November 6th, 2023, Furman Hall, Vanderbilt University

Vanderbilt Philosophy Graduate Student Association (PGSA)

President (2023-2024) Vice-President (2022-2023), Department Faculty Representative

(2022-2023) Teaching Committee Member (2019-2020), Graduate Student Council

Member-at-Large (2023-2024), VGWU Representative (2021-2024),

Graduate Student Council Representative (2022-2023), Programming Committee Member

(2020-2022) Undergraduate Education Committee Member (2020-2021)

Waltham Fields Community Farm, Waltham, Massachusetts

Community Garden Volunteer (Fall 2025-present)

The Nashville Food Project, Nashville, Tennessee

Full Circle Community Garden Volunteer (Summer 2021-2024)

Languages

Chinese (Simplified Mandarin), intermediate reading/writing, basic speaking

Completed Language Intensive Program at Beijing Foreign Studies University in Fall 2015

German, basic reading

Completed "Reading German for Research Purposes" at University of Chicago Summer Language Institute in Summer 2020

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Professional References

Diana B. Heney, Assistant Professor
University of Saskatchewan
dianaheney@usask.ca

Jason D'Cruz
Associate Professor
SUNY Albany
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Christian Miller
AC Reid Professor of Philosophy
Wake Forest University
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Robert B. Talisse, Alton Jones Professor of Philosophy and Political Science
Vanderbilt University
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Matthew Congdon, Assistant Professor
Vanderbilt University
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Leah Lowe
Director of Vanderbilt's Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy
Professor of Theatre, Directing, and Dramaturgy
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Non-Academic Work Experience

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Before my career in academia I worked at the cash register, wrote orders for multiple store sections, and worked on the floor at Trader Joe's for nearly a decade. During college, I wrote reviews on local music, restaurants, and events for [*The Real Chicago*](#); tutored middle school students in writing and reading; taught English to children in China, and worked as a marketing intern at Albert Whitman & Company. I also volunteered as a daycare assistant for Children's Home & Aid in my hometown during summer and winter breaks.