

JOSHUA PASCHAL

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Areas of Specialization Legal and Political Philosophy, Ethics (Normative and Applied)
Areas of Competence Environmental Philosophy, AI & Technology Ethics

Employment

Independent Contractor 2026-present
Currently working with **Mercor Intelligence** and **Handshake AI**
Associate Instructor and Doctoral Candidate at Indiana University 2019-2026

Education

Indiana University (Bloomington, IN)
 Ph.D., Philosophy 2026
 Ph.D. minor in Law, Maurer School of Law
 M.A., Philosophy 2021
University of Mary Washington (Fredericksburg, VA)
 B.A., Philosophy (minor in Practical Ethics), *summa cum laude* 2019

Research

Dissertation: Criminal Law and the Setting of Standards

My dissertation examines and challenges a contemporary trend in legal theory that is sometimes called ‘minimalism’: a trend that involves a desire to drastically reduce the scope of criminal law. Some minimalist views fail to convincingly capture the range of significant commitments in our moral practices and in turn fail in their practical suggestions of how to reform the criminal law (chapter 1). Of particular interest are minimalists’ criticisms of criminal negligence and hate crime statutes where such criticisms rest on dubious moral grounds. Against the minimalist picture, I develop a broader account of what the criminal law is interested in: holding people accountable for the violation of fair standards, specifically standards which serve to signal, to symbolize, and to discipline (chapter 2); I then apply that account to the aforementioned controversies about criminal negligence (chapter 3) and hate crime statutes (chapter 4).

Committee: *Marcia Baron*, Matthew Adams, Timothy O’Connor, Nicholas Almendares

Publications

- 1) “Combating Hostility through Organizing: Indiana Graduate Workers Unionization and Strike,” co-authored with Savannah Pearlman, *American Association of Teachers in Philosophy Studies in Pedagogy: Teaching in Hostile Contexts (Special Issue)*, ed. Alida Liberman. ([link](#))
- 2) Book review of Travis Hreno’s *Jury Nullification: The Jurisprudence of Jurors’ Privilege* (Ethics International Press, 2024), *Canadian Journal of Law and Jurisprudence*. ([link](#))

Projects Under Review

- 1) “Revisiting the Last Man and Human Chauvinism” (Environmental Philosophy)
- 2) “The Threefold Origin of *Mens Rea*: From Augustine to Edward Coke” (History of Ideas)

Presentations

- [x2] “Hate Crimes and the Project of Liberal Democracy”
 - 2025 Pacific APA
 - 2024 IU-Grad Colloquium
- “Questioning Minimalism about the Criminal Law” IU Fellowship Symposium 2025
- Panel on AI and Education, Midwest Ethics Symposium at Prindle Institute for Ethics 2024
- “Challenges of Justified Distrust for Contemporary Liberalism” PPE Society 2023
- [x3] “Revisiting the Last Man and Human Chauvinism”
 - 2023 Indiana Philosophical Association
 - 2023 IU Grad. Association Colloquium
 - 2023 Philosophy in the Wild
- [x2] “Three Accounts of Justified Deplatforming”
 - 2023 Bowling Green State University Workshop
 - 2023 IU Grad. Association Colloquium
- “Criminal Negligence and the Standard of Care” IU Grad. Association Colloquium 2022

Comments

- IPA Fall 2024, Noah Davis McKay’s “Debunking the Function(s) of Moral Cognition”
- IPA Fall 2023, Valerii Latyshev’s “Two Paradoxes with Self-Authorship”
- IPA Fall 2022, Mark Satta’s “Democracy’s Unpluckable Feathers”

Teaching

Courses Instructed as Sole Instructor (incl. syllabus design)

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| ○ Philosophy & the Environment (IU Philosophy) | Spring 2024 |
| ○ Philosophy & the Environment (IU Philosophy) | Fall 2023 |
| ○ Environmentalism & Extremes (IU Collins Living-Learning Center) | Spring 2023 |
| ○ Business & Morality (IU Philosophy) | Fall 2022 |

Courses Assisted (All ‘TA’ including discussion sections, grading, and office hours)

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| ○ TA: Introduction to Ethics (Aleksy Tarasenko-Struc) | Spring 2022 |
| ○ Grader: Biomedical Ethics (John Robison) | Fall 2021 |
| ○ TA: Applied Ethics: Environmental Ethics (Matthew Adams) | Spring 2021 |
| ○ TA: Introduction to Ethics: The Good Life (Tim O’Connor) | Fall 2020 |
| ○ TA: Introduction to Philosophy: Appearance and Reality (Adam Leite) | Spring 2020 |
| ○ TA: Introduction to Ethics: Moral Theory and its Critics (John Robison) | Fall 2019 |

See teaching portfolio for syllabi for courses such as philosophy of criminal law, environmental ethics, technology and AI ethics, business ethics, biomedical ethics, various introductory courses, and ideas for courses I could prepare with sufficient notice.

Service & Honors

Professional Service

Bloomington Faculty Council	
SAA (Graduate Worker) Representative at-large	2023-23
SAA Affairs Committee (Co-Chair 2023-24)	2022-24
SAA Board of Review	2022-23
Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition—United Electrical Workers	
IGWC-UE Bargaining Coordinator	2023-24
IGWC-UE Rights Officer	2022-23
Graduate Association of Students in Philosophy (Indiana University)	
President	2023-24
Social Chair	2022-23
Graduate Curriculum Advisor	2020-21

Awards and Honors

James B. Nelson Dissertation Fellowship	2024-26
Shirley and Irving Brand Fellowship	2024-25
PPE Travel Award (\$500)	2023
Outstanding Graduate in Philosophy, University of Mary Washington	2019
Phi Beta Kappa	2019

Miscellaneous

- Many public blog posts, both with the Blog of the APA and my own blog, Paschal's Post
- Organized job market materials workshop for philosophy department, February 2026
- Organized syllabus design workshop for philosophy department, September 2023
- Fireside chat about the IGWC-UE for the Collins Living-Learning Center, Fall 2022
- "On the Political Causes of the American Civil War" *Center for Talented Youth* special presentation, Franklin & Marshall College, Summer 2022
- "The Trial and Death of Socrates: The Story of the Four Dialogues" *Center for Talented Youth* special presentation, Franklin & Marshall College, Summer 2022

References

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Dissertation Long Abstract: The Criminal Law and the Setting of Standards

In the context of modern criminal justice reform and overcriminalization in the United States, there is a tendency toward deflationary explanations of the criminal law. One such deflation occurs by restricting the inquiry to a central moral claim: we, as good political liberals, should only criminalize “true” moral wrongs like murder and theft. Broadly, this dissertation seeks to show that our understanding of criminal law should go beyond the narrow conception of our moral lives endorsed by some minimalist views. Further, I sketch out an account of the criminal law as a system of accountability for the violation of fair and just standards of multiple kinds as to highlight what the minimalists in question fail to capture in their own thinking.

In my first chapter, I seek to identify minimalism about criminal law, explain the wider range of views that fall under the label than may appear at first, and offer two main criticisms. Following a discussion of liberty restricting principles and the special status of criminal law, I contrast Husak’s influential view from similar projects by figures such as Michael Moore, Heidi Hurd, Larry Alexander, and Kimberley Ferzan. I argue that the latter group, motivated by questionable moral grounds, end up leading us astray as to how to address the present issues in criminal justice. I then offer two main critiques of minimalism grounded in, I contend, a common narrow moral outlook. Firstly, I argue that they fail to explain the aforementioned special status of criminal law. Secondly, I argue that our moral and legal practices are more complex and interconnected than they appear at first, particularly regarding matters of how moral demands come to shape our very identities.

In the second chapter, I sketch an account of what else the criminal law is about besides the central cases of wrongdoings ranging from petty theft to murder and arson. Particularly, I advance an account of the criminal law as a system of setting and maintaining standards. These standards vary in their objective: some standards serve to coordinate, some standards serve to guide a society in a particular direction, and some standards serve to demand more out of certain people. I sketch this view as to draw out, more importantly, the wide range of complex moral concerns found within the actual criminal law and practices. In exploring each of these types of standards, I argue each can have a rightful place in just criminal law, and in doing so I seek to show that the range of justifiable concerns of criminal law is broad.

This broad picture is helpful for clarifying some difficult debates within the philosophy of criminal law. As my third chapter explores, skeptics about criminal negligence oppose allowing for negligence to suffice for criminal liability. They argue that negligence is not morally blameworthy and so should never be criminally punished. I argue that negligence is at least about demanding more from people in certain roles such as parents and doctors, thereby shifting the question of criminal negligence toward the question of role responsibility. Certain obligations are role-specific in a way that the minimalists about punishment cannot argue away. While there are open questions about how much we want to demand from certain people, it is from this conception of role-responsibility as accountability for violations of narrow disciplinary standards that we can construct a more robust sense of moral identity across various cases.

The hate crime debate, too, is often framed in a way that misses something important. Critics of penalty enhancement and hate crime statutes more generally argue that a hateful attitude does not enhance an accused agent’s culpability. I table the question of the culpable attitude in favor of another approach. I argue that there is a further question about how a free society should collectively respond to these types of violations, which I argue does not threaten the project of political liberalism and does not require us to answer the initial critique. Hate crime statutes importantly symbolize a collective political commitment and, in turn, seek to hold those who violate that commitment accountable as a matter of fair collective responsibility.