

Lisa Doerksen

Research Areas

AOS	Philosophy of Mind, Epistemology
AOC	Early Modern Philosophy, Kant, Metaphysics

Employment

Sept. 2025-	Postdoctoral Researcher with the Knowledge in Crisis project at the Central European University (Vienna)
Jan. 2023- Dec. 2024	Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Toronto (UTM campus)

Education

2023	PhD in Philosophy University of Toronto PhD Thesis: "Finding Oneself in the World" Committee: Gurpreet Rattan (supervisor), Jennifer Nagel, William Seager, Marleen Rozemond, Anil Gomes (external examiner)
2013	BA in Philosophy (Honours Specialization) and Art History (Major) Western University

Publications

2024	"Sceptical Hypotheses and Subjective Indistinguishability," <i>Philosophical Quarterly</i> . https://doi.org/10.1093/pq/pqae064
2022	"The Subject-as-Object Problem," <i>Inquiry</i> . https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2022.2114936

Conferences

Papers Presented

2024	"Sceptical Hypotheses and Subjective Indistinguishability" <i>American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division</i> , January 15
2023	"On the Possibility of Doubting One's Own Existence" <i>New Work on the Self</i> Workshop, University of Toronto, December 2

- 2023 “Sceptical Hypotheses and Subjective Indistinguishability” *Joint Session*, Birkbeck & The Institute of Philosophy, University of London, July 8
- 2023 “Sceptical Hypotheses and Subjective Indistinguishability” *Canadian Philosophical Association*, York University, May 31
- 2022 “Two Kinds of *De Se* Ignorance” *Self, Belief, and AI Workshop*, University of Toronto and the AI & Humanity Lab at the University of Hong Kong, July 19
- 2018 “On the Problem of Taking Oneself as an Object in the World” *Canadian Philosophical Association*, Université du Québec à Montreal, June 7
- 2017 “The First-Person Perspective and the External World” *Canadian Philosophical Association*, Toronto Metropolitan University, May 29
- 2015 “The First-Person Perspective and the Knowledge Argument: A Response to Stalnaker” *MindGrad’15*, University of Warwick, Dec. 12
- 2015 “The Role of the System of Double Existence in Hume’s Account of Identity” *American Philosophical Association, Pacific Division*, April 1
- 2015 “The Role of the System of Double Existence in Hume’s Account of Identity” *Modern Philosophy Research Group*, University of Toronto, Jan. 30

Comments Presented

- 2023 Benjamin Winokur, “A Dilemma for Inferentialism About Self-Knowledge” *Canadian Philosophical Association*, York University, May 29
- 2017 Kirk Ludwig, “Are There Limits on Intersubjective Understanding?” Philosophy Workshop, *The Intellect and Its Philosophical Limits*, Simon Fraser University, April 7
- 2015 Fatema Amijee, “Nonsense and the First Person” *15th Annual University of Toronto Philosophy Graduate Conference*, May 1

Teaching Experience

As Course Instructor

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Fall 2024 | 17 th and 18 th Century Philosophy (first half), enrolment: 100 |
| Winter 2024 | Special Topics in 17 th and 18 th Century Philosophy, enrolment: 45 |
| Fall 2023 | 17 th and 18 th Century Philosophy (first half), enrolment: 100 |
| Winter 2023 | Existentialism, enrolment: 69 |
| Summer 2018 | 17 th and 18 th Century Philosophy (second half), enrolment: 41 |

As Teaching Assistant

Winter 2020	Knowledge and Reality
Fall 2017	Knowledge and Reality
2016/2017	Introduction to Philosophy
Spring 2016	Persons, Minds, and Bodies
2015/2016	17 th and 18 th Century Philosophy
Spring 2015	Critical Reasoning
Winter 2015	Aesthetics

Professional Activities

2025	Judge for the Ontario High School Ethics Bowl (Feb. 8; March 22)
2024	Speaker at the Canadian Philosophical Association's (CPA) Summer Institute, a one-week program for philosophy undergraduates from underrepresented groups (June 17)
2024	Judge for the Ontario High School Ethics Bowl (Feb. 3)
2023-	Referee for <i>Canadian Journal of Philosophy</i> and <i>Dialogue</i>
2023	Co-organizer of <i>New Work on the Self</i> , Workshop, University of Toronto
2023	Commentator for the Socrates Project Conference, a chance for senior undergraduate students to present their work
2022	Panel Participant for the CPA's Summer Institute
2015	Research Assistant for Professor Marleen Rozemond
2014	Grant Writer for the 15 th Annual University of Toronto Philosophy Graduate Conference
2014	Participant, ATHENA IN ACTION, <i>A Networking and Mentoring Workshop for Graduate Student Women in Philosophy</i> , Princeton

Teaching Workshops

*Facilitated by the Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation, University of Toronto

2019	"Effective Lecturing for Better Learning: Strategies for an Engaging Lecture" (March 8)
2019	"Setting Students up for Success: Skills-Based Learning in Entry Level Tutorials" (Feb. 13)

2019	“Quercus for Teaching and Learning: Effective Q-Design and Q-Engagement” (Jan. 23)
2018	“Creating a Culture of Accessibility” (Nov. 8)
2018	“Social Media in Teaching: Making Learning Engaging and Active” (Nov. 7)
2018	“Transforming Learning with EdTech: Using Cool Tools Effectively” (Nov. 7)
2018	“Demystifying Library Research for Your Students” (Oct. 25)
2018	“Decolonizing the Syllabus” (Mar. 5)

Awards and Fellowships (Doctoral and Postdoctoral)

2025	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Postdoctoral Fellowship (\$140,000)—Award Declined
2023	David Savan Dissertation Prize
2023	Canadian Philosophical Association Student Essay Prize
2017-2018	Ontario Graduate Scholarship
2013-2018	UT Fellowship
2013-2017	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Doctoral Fellowship (\$80,000)
2013	Mary H. Beatty Fellowship
2013	Michael J. Herman Graduate Fellowship in Philosophy
2013	Gordon Cheesbrough Graduate Fellowship in Philosophy

References

Gurpreet Rattan, Professor of Philosophy (University of Toronto)

Anil Gomes, Professor of Philosophy (Trinity College, Oxford)

William Seager, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy (University of Toronto)

Nilanjan Das, Associate Professor of Philosophy (University of Toronto)

James John, Associate Professor of Philosophy (University of Toronto)

Dissertation Abstract

“Finding Oneself in the World” (2023)

Thinking about oneself as a subject with a perspective *on* the world leaves unanswered the following questions about one’s identity as an object *in* the world: *Which* thing am I? What *kind* of thing am I? Do I exist as an object in the world *at all*? My dissertation is devoted to elucidating the source and significance of these questions. I construct a new framework for understanding why these fundamental questions arise and why they persist in the face of ever-increasing information about the objects we think we might be.

I begin by articulating what I call *the subject-as-object problem*, a problem for any attempt to develop an objective account of oneself *qua* subject. I argue that its source lies in the relationship between a basic precondition for inquiry – that something be present – and a framework that enables us to conceive of ourselves as inquirers in an objective world – the framework of objectivity. I then show how the subject-as-object problem opens a gap between one’s first-person perspective on the world and accounts of what one is as an object in the world. This gap makes possible a range of questions and doubts about one’s nature, one’s circumstances, and even one’s existence. This gap is experienced as a limitation on one’s ability to see how an object, with a certain set of properties, situated in a certain way, could have *this* very perspective on the world (i.e., the perspective one takes to be one’s own).

My diagnosis of the difficulty associated with inquiry into one’s identity as an object stands apart from prominent accounts of this difficulty that rest on metaphysical assumptions about the subject and the subject’s relation to objects. I articulate the difficulty *without* assuming a metaphysical picture. The motivation for this approach is straightforward: if one tries to explain the difficulty of identifying oneself, *qua* subject, as an object, by appealing to a picture on which subjects are certain kinds of things that relate to themselves and other objects in certain ways, then one’s diagnosis will be vulnerable to the kinds of questions it seeks to explain (e.g., *is that really me?* *Is that really my situation in the world?*). This does not mean that the relevant diagnosis is false, but it does mean that, to accept it as true, one must be willing to bracket these questions at a certain point. My diagnosis accounts for these questions without blunting their force, and it foregrounds their significance for the very attempt to establish a philosophical system that includes assumptions about the subject and the subject’s place in the world.

After articulating the subject-as-object problem, I show how it can help us better understand the nature of *de se* ignorance, the special status of first-person identity statements, the source of sceptical doubt about the external world, and the possibility of a challenge to Descartes’ *cogito* argument. In each chapter, I clarify the relevant debate using the framework I developed to formulate the subject-as-object problem, and I trace key difficulties back to the gap between one’s first-person perspective and objective accounts of oneself and one’s circumstances. Having the subject-as-object problem in view allows for deeper engagement with these foundational issues and provides a unified diagnosis of some of the most difficult problems in philosophy of mind and epistemology.