

# Jonathan Vandenburg

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## Academic Employment

### **Stanford University**

Postdoctoral Fellow, McCoy Family Center for Ethics and Society  
and Apple University, 2022-present

## Education

### **Northwestern University**

Ph.D., Philosophy, 2022.

Dissertation: “Causal Models, Meaning, and Beliefs”

Committee: Sandy Goldberg, Fabrizio Cariani, Michael Glanzberg, and Lance Rips

### **Northwestern University**

M.A., Philosophy, 2018.

### **University of Notre Dame**

B.S., Mathematics, *magna cum laude*, 2016.

## Dissertation

“Causal Models, Meaning, and Beliefs”

This dissertation develops a causal theory of the relevant alternatives in a situation and applies this theory to the semantics and epistemology of conditionals, the theory of knowledge, and the epistemology of stereotyping. The first chapter presents the theory of causal models and causal alternatives. The second chapter applies this theory to the meaning of conditional and counterfactual sentences, developing a semantic framework for conditionals with familiar logical properties. The third chapter argues that how people change their beliefs when learning conditional information depends on the causal background and provides a model for conditional learning. The fourth chapter uses the theory to develop a causal version of the safety condition for knowledge, where knowledge requires that one’s belief be true in all causally relevant alternatives consistent with one’s evidence. The final chapter applies the theory to the epistemology of stereotyping, arguing that stereotypical judgments often rely on false causal models of group differences.

## Areas of Specialization

AOS: Epistemology, Philosophy of AI, Philosophy of Language

AOC: Ethics, History of Philosophy

## Publications

“A Causal Safety Criterion for Knowledge,” *Erkenntnis* (2023)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10670-023-00678-3>

“Backtracking Through Interventions: An Exogenous Intervention Model for Counterfactual Semantics,” *Mind & Language* (2022)

<https://doi.org/10.1111/mila.12447>

“Conditional Learning Through Causal Models,” *Synthese* **199**, 2415-2437 (2021)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-020-02891-x>

In Preparation “Triviality Results, Conditional Probability, and Restrictor Conditionals”  
Available on Philpapers

“Learning as Hypothesis Testing”  
Available on Philpapers

“Statistical Generalization and the Ethics of Belief” (Draft available)

“Deontological Reasons, Risk, and Uncertainty” (Draft available)

Academic Talks “Counterfactuals and Algorithmic Fairness”  
Philosophy, AI, and Society Workshop, 2023

“Statistical Generalization and the Ethics of Belief”  
Stanford Political Theory Workshop, 2023

“A Causal Safety Criterion for Knowledge”  
Stanford Logic and Formal Philosophy Seminar, 2022

“Generics, Stereotypes, and Causal Beliefs” \*  
Dual Character Concepts, Normative Generics, and Evaluative Language, 2022

“Learning as Hypothesis Testing” \*  
Prolog: Combining Probability and Logic, 2021

“A Bayesian Approach to Conditionals Without Triviality” \*  
European Summer School in Logic, Language, and Information (ESSLLI), 2019  
(\* indicates refereed talks)

Conference Participation Chair, “Causation, determinism, and decision-making”  
Central APA, 2022

Commenter, “Might- and would-counterfactuals, indeterministic structural equations, and synchronized interventions”  
Central APA, 2021

Teaching **Instructor, Northwestern University**  
PHIL 110-CN: Intro to Philosophy, Fall 2021

**Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University**  
PHIL 210: History of Philosophy: Modern, Spring 2022  
PHIL 260: Intro to Moral Philosophy, Fall 2019  
CLASSICS 212: Rome: Culture and Empire, Spring 2019  
PHIL 210: History of Philosophy: Ancient, Winter 2019 [4 sections]  
PHIL 254: Intro to the Philosophy of the Natural Sciences, Winter 2018  
PHIL 150: Intro to Logic, Fall 2017

Service and Affiliations	Mentor for Technology and Racial Justice Graduate Fellowship, 2023 Vice President, Philosophy Graduate Student Association, 2020-21 TA Coordinator, Northwestern Philosophy Department, 2020-21 Reviewer for <i>Philosophical Studies</i> , <i>Synthese</i> (x3), <i>Erkenntnis</i> , <i>Linguistics and Philosophy</i> , <i>Acta Analytica</i> , and <i>Theoria</i> Member, American Philosophical Association, 2019-present	
Languages and Skills	English (native), German (intermediate), French (basic), Python, MATLAB, L <sup>A</sup> T <sub>E</sub> X	
References	Fabrizio Cariani Department of Philosophy University of Maryland, College Park fabrizio@umd.edu	Michael Glanzberg Department of Philosophy Rutgers University michael.glanzberg@philosophy.rutgers.edu
	Sanford Goldberg Department of Philosophy Northwestern University s-goldberg@northwestern.edu	Patricia Marechal Department of Philosophy University of California, San Diego pmarechal@ucsd.edu