

Rachel Etta Rudolph

Department of Philosophy ◇ University of California, Berkeley
rachelrudolph@berkeley.edu ◇ sites.google.com/view/rachelettardudolph

Updated: January 2019

Education

- 2019 **University of California, Berkeley**
(expected) Ph.D., Philosophy
- 2017 **University of Chicago**
(spring) Visiting Scholar (supervised by Chris Kennedy)
- 2011 **McGill University**
B.A. (First Class Honours), Philosophy, with minor in German

Areas of Research

- AOS Philosophy of language, Metaethics
- AOC Value theory, Epistemology, Philosophy of mind

Dissertation

Talking about Appearances: Experience, Evaluation, and Evidence in Discourse

When we talk about appearances — for instance, saying that a dress looks blue, or that a drink tastes sweet — we seem to communicate both about the objective world and about our subjective experience. This comes out in two puzzling features of appearance claims. First, they generate *faultless disagreement*: cases where two speakers disagree, as if over an objective fact, and yet neither seems to be mistaken, given that each has a different perceptual experience of the subject matter. Second, they license the *acquaintance inference*: the inference that the speaker has first-hand acquaintance with the subject matter of the claim. I account for these two features through an expressivist analysis of *experiential language*, and argue that the analysis also illuminates the evaluative language of personal taste.

Committee: John MacFarlane (co-chair), Seth Yalcin (co-chair), Line Mikkelsen (linguistics)

Publications

Refereed journal articles

- 2018 “Talking about appearances: the roles of evaluation and experience in disagreement.” *Philosophical Studies*. DOI: 10.1007/s11098-018-1185-5.

Conference proceedings papers

- 2018 “A closer look at the perceptual source in copy raising constructions.” *Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung 23* (forthcoming).

- 2018 “The acquaintance inference with *seem*-reports.” *Proceedings of the 54th meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society* (forthcoming).

Presentations

Refereed

- 2019 *The Relevance of Moral Language to Moral Metaphysics*
Central APA, Denver, CO (upcoming)
- 2019 *Appearance Reports and the Acquaintance Inference*
Eastern APA (poster session), New York, NY
- 2018 Society for Exact Philosophy, University of Connecticut
- 2018 Berkeley-Stanford-Davis Graduate Conference, Stanford University
- 2018 *A Closer Look at the Perceptual Source in Copy Raising Constructions*
Sinn und Bedeutung 23, Universitat Autònoma, Barcelona
- 2018 *The Acquaintance Inference with Seems*
Society for Philosophy and Psychology, University of Michigan
- 2018 54th meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society (poster session), University of Chicago
- 2017 *Subjective Language without Evaluation*
Subjectivity in Language and Thought Conference, University of Chicago
- 2017 *Talking about Appearances*
Pacific APA, Seattle, WA
- 2017 *Differences of Taste*
Central APA, Kansas City, MO
- 2016 Faces of Disagreement Conference, McGill University & Université de Montréal
- 2016 Berkeley-London Graduate Conference, University of London
- 2016 *The Language of Appearance*
NASSLLI (poster session), Rutgers University

Invited

- 2017 *Searching for the Perceptual Source*
PhLing Workshop, Northwestern University
- 2016 *Appearance Language & Relative Truth*
New York Philosophy of Language Workshop, NYU
- 2016 *Moral Language and Moral Metaphysics: Error Theory and Beyond*
UC Berkeley Undergraduate Philosophy Forum

Other presentations

- 2018 *Moral Language and Moral Metaphysics*
Graduate Research Colloquium, UC Berkeley
- 2018 *Is there a practical/theoretical puzzle in ethics?*
Richard Wollheim Society, UC Berkeley

- 2017 *Appearance Reports and the Acquaintance Inference*
California Universities Semantics and Pragmatics (CUSP) 10, UC Irvine
- 2017 *Searching for the Perceptual Source*
Philosophy and Linguistics Workshop, University of Chicago
- 2016 *Talking about Appearances*
California Universities Semantics and Pragmatics (CUSP) 9, UC Santa Cruz
- 2016 *The Language of Appearance*
Syntax and Semantics Circle, UC Berkeley
- 2016 *The Language of Appearance and Evaluation*
New Directions Fellowship Talk, UC Berkeley
- 2015 *How to be a Moral Antirealist*
Richard Wollheim Society, UC Berkeley

Comments

- 2017 *Presupposing Counterfactuality*, Julia Zakkou
Philosophy Meets Linguistics Workshop, University of Zurich
- 2016 *Non-Realism in Metanormativity, Disagreement, and Commitments to Universal Principles of Action*, Carlos Núñez
Berkeley-Stanford-Davis Graduate Conference, UC Berkeley
- 2015 *Thought Experiments, Misjudgments and Sufficiency*, Alex Geddes
Berkeley-London Graduate Conference, UC Berkeley

Other refereed conference participation

- 2016 *Athena in Action*, Session chair
Workshop for Graduate Women in Philosophy, Princeton University

Teaching

Primary instructor (UC Berkeley)

- 2018 Individual Morality and Social Justice
2017 Introduction to Logic

Graduate student instructor (UC Berkeley)

- | | | |
|------|---|-----------------|
| 2019 | Moral Questions of Data Science (current) | Niko Kolodny |
| 2018 | Formal Semantics | Amy Rose Deal |
| 2017 | Contemporary Ethical Issues | Tim Crockett |
| 2016 | Theory of Meaning | John Perry |
| 2016 | Introduction to Logic | Seth Yalcin |
| 2015 | Introduction to Logic | Paolo Mancosu |
| 2014 | Ancient Philosophy | Klaus Corcilius |
| 2014 | Introduction to Logic | Michael Rieppel |
| 2014 | Knowledge and its Limits | Wes Holliday |
| 2013 | Ancient Philosophy | Tim Clarke |

2013 Nature of Mind Umrao Sethi

Tutor (Prison University Project, San Quentin, CA)

2019 Social Ethics (current)
2018 Introduction to Philosophy
2016–18 General College Writing
2017 Social Ethics
2016 Introduction to Philosophy

Fellowships & Awards

2017–18 Doctoral Completion Fellowship
2016 NASSLLI Student Scholarship
2015 New Directions Fellowship – competitive departmental funds for interdisciplinary research
2012–13 Ralph W. Church Fellowship
2007–10 Women Associates Centennial Entrance Scholarship
2009–10 James Darling McCall Scholarship
2008–09 Dow-Hickson Scholarship

Coursework

(*: audited)

Philosophy

2018	Arguments from Illusion*	Michael Martin
2018	Vagueness, Truth and Meaning*	John MacFarlane
2017	Feminist Philosophy*	Martha Nussbaum
2016	Nonfactual Thought and Discourse*	Seth Yalcin
2015	Modalities of Discourse*	Seth Yalcin
2013	Assessment Sensitivity*	John MacFarlane
2013	Recent Work on Reasons and Normativity	Jay Wallace
2013	Theory of Meaning	John MacFarlane
2013	Aristotle on Animal and Human Agency	Klaus Corcilius
2013	Descartes	Tim Crockett
2013	Conditions of Thought	Barry Stroud
2012	First-year Graduate Seminar	Hannah Ginsborg and John MacFarlane
2012	Epistemic Logic and Epistemology	Wes Holliday
2012	Uncovering Appearances	Michael Martin

Linguistics

2018	Formal Semantics Research Group*	Amy Rose Deal
2015	Syntax and Semantics	Line Mikkelsen
2015	Semantic Variation	Amy Rose Deal
2014	Advanced Logical Semantics	Ryan Bochnak

Pedagogy

2018 Reading Group on Inclusive Pedagogy*
2013 Philosophy Pedagogy Seminar Hannah Ginsborg

Other

2017 Course in Human Research (Social and Behavioral) CITI Program

Service & Outreach

2018– Organizer, Departmental First-Year Mentorship Program
2018– Project contributor, Minorities and Philosophy (MAP) Berkeley
2016– Volunteer tutor, Prison University Project (see “Teaching”)
2017–18 Organizer, Berkeley Work-In-Progress Lunch Talks
2013–18 Referee, Berkeley-Stanford-Davis Graduate Conference
2017 Referee, Subjectivity in Language and Thought Conference
2016–17 Mentor, Departmental First-Year Mentorship Program
2015–16 Organizer, Berkeley Metaethics Reading Group
2012–16 Organizer, Berkeley-Stanford-Davis Graduate Conference
2013–14 Organizer, Departmental Colloquium Series
2012–13 Organizer, Richard Wollheim Graduate Presentation Society
2008–10 Editor, *Philosophic Fragments*, McGill Undergraduate Philosophy Journal

Misc.

Languages: English (native), French (fluent), German (intermediate)

Citizenship: Canada, USA

References

John MacFarlane
Professor of Philosophy
UC Berkeley
jgm@berkeley.edu

Chris Kennedy
William H. Colvin Professor of Linguistics
University of Chicago
ck@uchicago.edu

Paolo Mancosu (teaching reference)
Slusser Professor of Philosophy
UC Berkeley
mancosu@socrates.berkeley.edu

Seth Yalcin
Associate Professor of Philosophy
UC Berkeley
yalcin@berkeley.edu

R. Jay Wallace
Judy Chandler Webb Distinguished Chair
UC Berkeley
rjw@berkeley.edu

Talking about Appearances: Experience, Evaluation, and Evidence in Discourse

Dissertation Abstract

When we say that a dress ‘looks blue’, or that a musical instrument ‘sounds off-key’, or that a soup ‘smells like it contains nutmeg’, what do we communicate? With claims about appearances like these we seem to communicate both about the objective world and about our subjective experience. This comes out in two puzzling features of appearance claims.

Faultless disagreement arises when speakers disagree, and yet neither seems to be mistaken. Speakers may faultlessly disagree about appearances, for instance if one holds that a dress ‘looks blue’, and the other that it doesn’t. There is a felt incompatibility here, just as with disagreement over objective claims. But assuming the speakers have different visual experiences of the dress, neither seems to be mistaken. Which appearance claim a speaker correctly makes depends not just on the objective world, but on their subjective experience as well. Faultless disagreement thus precludes viewing appearance claims as straightforwardly objective or subjective.

The acquaintance inference is the inference from an utterance to the conclusion that the speaker has relevant first-hand acquaintance. For instance, if a speaker says that the dress ‘looks blue’, one will infer that they have seen it. The utterance is infelicitous if they haven’t. However, this inference is not an ordinary entailment. Again, this phenomenon precludes taking appearance claims to be straightforwardly objective or subjective.

I defend an *expressivist analysis* of appearance claims, on which they are used to express speakers’ experiential states. On this view, faultless disagreement arises when speakers express incompatible experiential states, while nonetheless expressing experiential states they are in fact in. And the acquaintance inferences arises because when a speaker makes an appearance claim, one can infer that they are in an experiential state of the sort expressed by the utterance.

My analysis covers not only appearance language, but *experiential language* more generally, which encompasses both appearance language and the evaluative language of personal taste (e.g. ‘tasty’, ‘interesting’). Indeed, both faultless disagreement and the acquaintance inference have been associated primarily with evaluative vocabulary. I argue, however, that these features are not especially associated with evaluative language. The language of personal taste falls in the intersection of the evaluative and the experiential; but these puzzling features are due to experientiality. The investigation of appearance language is crucial for identifying the source of these features, for it includes claims that are experiential but not evaluative.

Appearance discourse also offers insight into epistemic notions, like adequacy of evidence. This comes out in my investigation of the acquaintance inference with appearance claims, which examines behavior with no analogue in the more widely-discussed evaluative cases. Some appearance claims (e.g. ‘Tom looks like he’s cooking’) require acquaintance with a specific stimulus (Tom), while others (e.g. ‘Tom looks like he’s well organized’) just require acquaintance with something evidentially-relevant (like Tom’s clutter-free office). Making use of experimental work, I argue that these two forms of acquaintance inference display our sensitivity, in discourse, to fine-grained evidential distinctions, for instance between transient properties (like cooking) and standing ones (like being well-organized). Appearance claims can thus serve to express our evidence. This integrates smoothly with the expressivist analysis I offer, as experience is a source of evidence about the world. Thus, in expressing experiential states, we can at the same time express our evidence.