

Curriculum Vitae

Qian Cao

Department of Philosophy
Columbia University
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Area of Specialization (AOS): Ancient Greek and Roman Philosophy, Psychoanalysis

Area of Competence (AOC): Ethics, Classical Chinese Philosophy, History of Early Modern Philosophy

EMPLOYMENT

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Postdoctoral Research Scholar and Lecturer, the Initiative in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy 2025-Present

EDUCATION

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

New York, NY

Ph.D. in Philosophy

October 2025

Dissertation: Appearance and Reality—Plato and the Psychological Difficulties of Inquiry

Committee: Katja Vogt (Chair), Dhananjay Jagannathan, Achille Varzi, Francey Russell, Jessica Moss (external examiner)

Abstract: What, for Plato, makes inquiry difficult? This question has been explored with a view to Plato's metaphysics. Our engrossment in the sense perceptible domain—characterized by its instability and deceptiveness—makes it difficult for us to attend to intelligible reality and often leads us astray. In addition, I argue, Plato is interested in the psychological challenges of inquiry. I examine famous as well as neglected passages in *Cratylus*, *Republic*, and *Theaetetus*—on relativism, *doxa*, education, and mathematics—and draw on psychoanalytic contributions that, in my view, help elucidate how Plato conceives of the conflation of appearances with reality.

M.Phil. in Philosophy

May 2021

M.A. in Philosophy

May 2020

INSTITUTE FOR PSYCHOANALYTIC TRAINING AND RESEARCH (IPTAR)

New York, NY

2022-Present

Advanced candidate in the Adult Program & the Child and Adolescent Program (CAP)

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

New York, NY

Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy

May 2017

- **Honors:** Phi Beta Kappa, and High Honors in Philosophy
- **Honors Thesis:** *Aristotle on the Voluntary and Prohairesis* (Advisor: Jessica Moss)

PAPERS

“Plato on Dizziness, Projection, and the Psychology of Relativism” (R&R)

“Mathematics, Play, and Reality in the *Republic*” (Under Review)

“Measure Doctrine and Immediate Sense Perception in the *Theaetetus*” (In Progress)

“Hide and Seek: The Wish to Be Sought and Found in the Treatment of a Latency-Aged Child” (In Progress)

“Guilt, Need for Punishment, and Moral Responsibility” (In Progress)

“Different Audience of Imitative Poetry: A Tale of Human Psychology in *Republic* Books 3 and 10” (In Progress)

FELLOWSHIPS & AWARDS

2025-2028	Core Curriculum Postdoctoral Lectureship in Contemporary Civilization, Columbia University <i>*Awarded. (Declined in order to accept the postdoctoral position with the Initiative in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy)</i>
2024-2025	Core Curriculum Preceptorship in Contemporary Civilization, Columbia University
2022	Center for the Ancient Mediterranean Summer Research Fund (\$1,000), Columbia University
2021-2022	Teaching Observation Fellowship, Center for Teaching & Learning, Columbia University
2019-2022	Benjamin Wolstein Fellowship, Columbia University
2021-2022	Columbia Tutor Corps Operations Fellow, Office of Public Affairs/Government & Community Affairs

PRESENTATIONS

April 2026	“Psychic Flux and Transformation in Plato,” <i>The Meade Anderson Forum in Philosophy Conference</i> , Columbia University
March 2026	“Measure Doctrine and Immediate Sense Perception in the <i>Theaetetus</i> ,” Katja Vogt’s graduate seminar on Aristotle and the Measure Doctrine, Columbia University
March 2026	“Hide and Seek: The Wish to Be Sought and Found in the Treatment of a Latency-Aged Child,” <i>Rebecca Shaffer Memorial Lecture</i> , Institute for Psychoanalytic Training and Research (IPTAR)
February 2026	“Hans Loewald’s ‘Man as Moral Agent,’” Invited Guest Lecture for <i>Living, Dying, and the Meaning of Life</i> class, Columbia University
November 2025	“Mathematics, Play and Reality in Plato’s <i>Republic</i> ,” APS Graduate Panel, <i>The Ancient Philosophy Society</i>
August 2025	“An Account of Why Perception Fails to Reach Truth and Being in the <i>Theaetetus</i> ,” <i>End-of-Summer Workshop</i> , Columbia University
August 2024	“Mathematics, Play, and Reality—on the Difficulty of Turning the Soul Around in the <i>Republic</i> ,” <i>Research Group in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy</i> , Columbia University
July 2024	“Plato on Dizziness, Projection, and the Psychology of Relativism,” <i>Athena in Action: A Networking and Mentoring Workshop for Graduate Student Women in Philosophy</i> , University of Notre Dame

March 2024	“Plato on Dizziness, Projection, and the Psychology of Relativism”, <i>Keeling Graduate & Early Career Conference in Ancient Philosophy</i> , University College London, United Kingdom
August 2023	“Different Audience of Imitative Poetry: A Tale of Human Psychology in <i>Republic</i> Books 3 and 10”, <i>End-of-Summer Workshop</i> , Columbia University
June 2023	“Collective Appearances, Individual <i>Psyche</i> , and Collective Responsibility”, <i>The Aristotle-Confucius Symposium on Ethics for the 21st Century</i> , a week-long conference held at Academy of Athens and at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
October 2022	“On the Difficulty of Turning the Soul Around in the <i>Republic</i> ”, presentation in Katja Vogt’s graduate seminar, Columbia University
July 2022	“Plato and the Appeal of Relativism”, <i>Graduate Students Workshop</i> , University of Colorado, Boulder
March 2022	“Plato and the Appeal of Relativism”, <i>Ancient Philosophy WIP Workshop</i> , New York University
October 2021	“The Meno Problem”, guest lecture in Katja Vogt’s undergraduate class, Columbia University
August 2021	“Plato on the Descriptive and Dynamic Use of Language”, <i>Research Group in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy</i> , Columbia University
August 2020	“Language and Reality in the <i>Cratylus</i> : Correctness as Imitation”, <i>Research Group in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy</i> , Columbia University
August 2019	“The Skeptics’ Non-Doxastic Assent as an Alternative to Holding <i>Dogmata</i> —A Reading Through the Lens of Plato”, <i>Research Group in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy</i> , Columbia University
January 2019	(with Mariana Beatriz-Noe, Olivia Branscum, and Yarran Hominh) “Mutual Skill-Building through Undergraduate Writing Workshops”, MAP Panel on Skill-Building and Improving the Profession, Eastern APA

INVITED COMMENTS

October 2022	Comment on Catherine Rowett, “Platonic Method”, <i>Workshop in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy</i> , Columbia University
February 2022	Comment on Amber Carpenter, “Ethics of Atomism”, <i>Lecture Series of Center for the Ancient Mediterranean</i> , Columbia University
March 2021	Comment on Suzanne Obdrzalek, “Platonic Dualism Reconsidered”, <i>Workshop in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy</i> , Columbia University
April 2020	Comment on Molly Gordon Pinkoski, “Aristotelian Absolute Prohibitions”, in Dhananjay Jagannathan’s graduate seminar, Columbia University
March 2020	Comment on Hadassa Noorda, “Exprisonment: Deprivation of Liberty on the Street and at Home”, <i>Munich-New York City Workshop in Ethics</i> , Columbia University
March 2019	Comment on Klaus Corcilius, “Cosmological ethics and internal order in the <i>Timaeus</i> ”, <i>Workshop in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy</i> , Columbia University

November 2018 Comment on James Doyle, “No Morality: Modern Moral Philosophy (1958)”, *Workshop in Ancient and Contemporary Philosophy*, Columbia University

TEACHING

Co-leader, Columbia University

Fall 2026 Ancient Greek Philosophy Reading Group – Empedocles

Instructor of Record, Columbia University

Fall 2025 History of Philosophy I - Pre-Socratics through Augustine, Philosophy
 Spring 2025 Contemporary Civilization II, Core Curriculum
 Fall 2024 Contemporary Civilization I, Core Curriculum
 Summer 2024 Ethics, Philosophy

Teaching Assistant (TA), Columbia University

Spring 2024 Living, Dying, and the Meaning of Life (Katja Vogt, Lydia Dugdale, and Ian Rottenberg)
 Fall 2023 History of Philosophy I - Pre-Socratics through Augustine (Dhananjay Jagannathan)
 Spring 2022 History of Philosophy II - Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy (Christina Van Dyke)
 Fall 2021 History of Philosophy I - Pre-Socratics through Augustine (Katja Vogt)
 Spring 2021 Introduction to Philosophy (Francey Russell)
 Fall 2020 Philosophy of Law (Michele Moody-Adams)
 Spring 2020 Introduction to Philosophy (Francey Russell)
 Fall 2019 Feminism and Philosophy (Christia Mercer)

Co-Facilitator, *RETHINK*, a Columbia philosophy community outreach program

Summer 2022 Co-led a series of discussions centering around the theme of “Happiness” to a group of youth affected by the criminal legal system

Instructor of Record, *BIG QUESTIONS*, a NYU-led outreach program for high schools

2015-2018 — Led weekly philosophy discussion in both English and Mandarin for a group of 20 high school students;
 — Led discussion on “Big Questions,” including freedom and determinism, Responsibility and Determinism, Personal Identity, Happiness, Equality, Right and Wrong, and Animal Rights;
 — Designed lesson plans to introduce students to philosophical questions in Confucian ethics

PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING

2021-2022 As a Teaching Observation Fellow with Columbia Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), I worked closely other fellows from different disciplines to build skills in teaching observation, formative assessment, inclusive teaching, and peer mentorship.

2020 Innovative Teaching Summer Institute (TTSI), Columbia Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL),
Columbia University

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION

2024-2026 Referee for *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*
 2023-2026 Referee for *Noûs*
 2020-2023 Assistant Managing Editor for North America, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*
 2021-2022 Graduate Student Representative, Columbia University Philosophy Department
 2018-2022 Co-organizer, Columbia University MAP (Minority and Philosophy) Chapter
 2018-2022 Organizer, Non-Western Philosophy Reading Group, Columbia University
 2021 Organizer, “Life of a Paper” talk series, Columbia University Philosophy Department
 2018-2021 Workshop leader of the *Reading & Writing Philosophy Workshop*, organized by the Minorities and Philosophy (MAP) chapter, Columbia University
 2019 Co-organizer, Columbia-NYU Graduate Conference in Philosophy
 2018 Judge, NYC High School Ethics Bowl

GRADUATE COURSEWORK

**indicates audit*

Ancient Philosophy

Plato’s *Republic*, Katja Vogt
Protagoras, Wolfgang Mann
Hellenistic Philosophy: Ancient Relativism and Skepticism, Katja Vogt
Aristotelian Naturalisms, Dhananjay Jagannathan
Plato, Katja Vogt
*** Early Stoic Philosophy: Logic, Physics, and Ethics**, Katja Vogt
Plato’s *Timaeus*, Katja Vogt
*** Practical Wisdom in Plato and Aristotle**, Jessica Moss and Iakovos Vasiliou (NYU)
*** Plato**, Jessica Moss (NYU)
Democracy and Its Discontents in Late Fifth-century Athens, Elizabeth Scharffenberger (Classics)
*** Aristotle**, Katja Vogt
*** Ancient Epistemology**, Jessica Moss (NYU)
Theophrastus, Wolfgang Mann
*** Lucretius**, Wolfgang Mann

Other Courses

Self-Knowledge, Akeel Bilgrami
Self-Opacity and Human Agency, Francey Russell
Symbolic Logic, Tamar Lando
Metaethics: What, if Anything, Is Morality?, Katja Vogt
Democratic Citizenship: Problems and Possibilities, Michele Moody-Adams

* **Kant**, Patricia Kitcher

Kant's Ethics, Patricia Kitcher

Feminist, Social, and Political Philosophy of Language, Karen Lewis

Metaethics: The Value of Truth, Katja Vogt

Boundaries — from Politics to Metaphysics (and back), Achille Varzi

Heidegger, Taylor Carman

* **Buddhist Ethics**, Graham Priest (CUNY)

* **Classical Chinese Philosophy**, Hagop Sakissian (CUNY)

LANGUAGES

Ancient: Greek (scholarly proficient), Classical Chinese (intermediate)

Modern: English (fluent), Mandarin Chinese (fluent), Italian (intermediate)

REFERENCES

Katja Vogt, Professor of Philosophy, Columbia University

kv2101@columbia.edu

Jessica Moss, Professor of Philosophy, New York University

jm5706@nyu.edu

Amber Carpenter, Professor of Ancient Philosophy, Oxford University

amber.carpenter@philosophy.ox.ac.uk

Michele Moody-Adams, Professor of Philosophy, Columbia University

mm3735@columbia.edu

Dhananjay Jagannathan, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Hunter College — City University of New York

ghananjay.jagannathan@hunter.cuny.edu