Polonsky Academy
The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute
43 Jabotinsky Street, Jerusalem 9214116
Israel

Phone: +86-15611433887
+972-0534905820
Email: zeyuc@vanleer.org.il
Website: www.zeyuchi.com
Updated Jan 2026

ZEYU CHI

APPOINTMENTS

THE VAN LEER JERUSALEM INSTITUTE (Jerusalem, Israel)
2021 Oct-present. Polonsky Fellow.

PEKING UNIVERSITY (Beijing, China)
2019 Oct-2021 Sep. Boya Postdoctoral Fellow. Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY (Ithaca, New York, USA)
2017-2018. Instructor of First-Year Writing Seminar. John S. Knight Institute.
GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY(Atlanta, Georgia, USA)
2012-2013. Instructor of Critical Thinking. Department of Philosophy.
LINGNAN UNIVERSITY(Hong Kong, China)
2010-2011. Research Assistant. Department of Sociology and Social Policy.

EDUCATION

CORNELL UNIVERSITY   2013-2019
Ph.D., Philosophy
Dissertation Title: Essence, Explanation and Kind-membership
Dissertation Committee: Karen Bennett (Chair), Derk Pereboom, Nicholas Silins

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY   2011-2013
M.A., Philosophy
Thesis Title: Kant's Humanity Formula in the Groundwork
Thesis Committee: Eric E. Wilson (Chair), Tim O'Keefe, Christie Hartley

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG   2009-2011
M.A., Cultural Studies

PEKING UNIVERSITY   2004-2008
B.A., Arabic & B.S., Psychology

AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Metaphysics

AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Ancient Greek Philosophy, Modern Philosophy (esp. Kant), Classical Chinese Philosophy, Comparative Philosophy

PUBLICATIONS

"Essence, *Propria*, and Essentialist Explanation". *History of Philosophy & Logical Analysis* 23 (2020): 338-361.

"Sortal Counterparts". *Metaphysica*, forthcoming (doi:10.1515/mp-2025-0004)

"The Identity of Identity". Under Review

"Aspects and the Puzzle over Dual Essence". Under Review

"Essence, Explanation, and Kind-Membership". PhD Dissertation

"Kant's Humanity Formula in the *Groundwork*".   MA Thesis

WORK-IN-PROGRESS

"Metaphysical Arguments from Arbitrariness"

"Why Contraries are not Contradictories?"

"The Role of Metaphor in Metaphysics" (Book Project)

PRESENTATIONS

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2022. "The Form of David". *Metaphysical Explanation: Theory, Applications and Prospects*. Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel.

2021. "Event Dependence and Determinism". *Free Will and Moral Responsibility*. Peking University, Beijing, China.

2019. "The Double Lives of Ordinary Objects". *Language, Truth and Epistemology*. Peking University, Beijing, China.

2013. "Kant's Conception of Humanity in the *Groundwork*". *Joint meeting of the Midwest Study Group of the North American Kant Society and Indiana Philosophical Association*. Indiana University Southeast, New Albany, Indiana, USA.

2012. "The Kantian Reply to the Fool's Challenge". *Georgia State University Philosophy Symposium*. Georgia State University, Atlanta, USA.

COMMENTS

2016. "Original Synthesis and Unity of Intuition". By Jessica Williams. *The North American Kant Society the Third Biennial Meeting*. Emory University, Atlanta, USA.

WORKSHOPS

2025. "How to Argue from Metaphor". *Polonsky Seminar*. The Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, Israel.

2024. "Why Should We Talk About Metaphysical Unity Rather Than Identity?". *Polonsky Seminar*. The Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, Israel.

2023. "Kooky Objects". *Polonsky Seminar*. The Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, Israel.

2023. "Kooky Objects Revisited". Tel Hai College, Israel.

2023. "Accidental Unity". Haifa University, Haifa, Israel.

2022. "Sortal Counterparts". *Polonsky Seminar*. The Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, Israel.

2020. "Event Dependence and Determinism". *Philosophy Symposium*. Peking University, Beijing, China.

2020. "*Propria* and Essentialist Explanation". *Tsinghua Philosophy Colloquium*. Tsinghua University, Beijing, China.

2019. "Is David Essentially a Statue? Yes and No". *Cornell Philosophy Department Workshop*. Cornell University, Ithaca, USA.

2018. "Essentialist Explanation". *Cornell Philosophy Department Workshop*. Cornell University, Ithaca, USA.

2017. "Essence as a Philosopher's Concept". *Cornell Philosophy Department Workshop*. Cornell University, Ithaca, USA.

2016. "Two Approaches to Essence". *Cornell Philosophy Department Workshop*. Cornell University, Ithaca, USA.

2015. "Can Kant Defend the Rationality of Holding Inconsistent Beliefs?". *Cornell Philosophy Department Workshop*. Cornell University, Ithaca, USA.

FORMAL WORKSHOPS

Cornell Workshop Series on Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics* VII.1-10.36
2016. Cornell University, Ithaca, USA, August.
Yale-Kings College London *Republic* X Seminar
2016. Yale University, New Haven, USA. June.

TEACHING
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Israel
2022. The Post-Modal Approach to Metaphysics.
Peking University, Beijing, China

2021. Graduate Seminar in Metaphysics: The Post-Modal Approach to Metaphysics

2020. Introduction to Metaphysics.

2020. Seminar on Free Will & Moral Responsibility. (co-taught with prof. Nan Xing)
Auburn Correctional Facility, Auburn, New York, USA

2019. Plato.
Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, USA

As Full Course Instructor:

2018. Aristotle's Science: Method and Criticism.
2017. How to Disagree?

As Teaching Assistant:
2019. Modern Philosophy. Instructor: Cole Mitchell.
2018. Introduction to Philosophy. Instructor: Theodore Korzukhin.
2016. Introduction to Philosophy. Instructor: Karen Bennett.
2015. Ancient Philosophy. Instructor: Tad Brennan
2015. Modern Philosophy. Instructor: Derk Pereboom
2014. Introduction to Philosophy. Instructor: Nate Bulthuis.

Training:

2017. Completed First-Year Writing Seminar Instructor's Training Program.
John S. Knight Institute. Cornell University. Ithaca, New York, USA.

GRADUATE COURSES(*FOR COURSES AUDITED)
Metaphysics:
Grounding (Karen Bennett)
Free Will & Determinism (Derk Pereboom)

*Contemporary Issues in Metaphysics (Karen Bennett)
*Causation (Karen Bennett)

Logic:
Mathematical Logic (Anil Nerode)
Logic for Philosophy (Ted Sider)
*Modal Logics (Harold Hodes)
*Set Theory (Ted Sider)

Ancient Philosophy:
Plato (Gail Fine)
Plato's Psychology (Rachana Kamtekar)
Nichomachean Ethics (Tad Brennan)
Hellenistic Philosophy (Tad Brennan)
*Plato's Metaphysics and Epistemology (Gail Fine)
*Aristotle's Theoretical Philosophy (Tad Brennan)
*Aristotle (Rachana Kamtekar)

Modern Philosophy & 19th century philosophy:
Kant's Critique of Pure Reason (Andrew Chignell)
Kant's Critique of Pure Reason (Eric Wilson)
Leibniz (Andrew Chignell)
Hume (Eric Wilson)
The Ethics of Kant and Fichte (Michelle Kosh)
Kant's Groundwork and Adam Smith (Eric Wilson)
Kant's Critique of Practical Reason (Eric Wilson)
Hegel (Sebastian Rand)
19th Century Philosophy (Greg Moore)

Philosophy of Science & Philosophy of Mind:
Philosophy of Physics (Jill North)
Philosophy of Mind (George Graham)
*Naturalism (Richard Boyd)

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

The American Philosophical Association
The North American Kant Society

DISSERTATION

My dissertation centers around questions about essence, explanation and kind-membership. In the first chapter of my dissertation, I argue that we should not use essence to define ontological dependence. The essentialist definition suffers the same problem that faces the modal definition of dependence: it is insensitive to the direction of particular instance of dependence. In the second chapter I propose a notion of *propria* inspired by Aristotle, on which *propria* are non-essential, necessary properties explained by the essence of a thing. My proposal differs from the characterization of *propria* by Kit Fine and Kathrin Koslicki: unlike Fine, the relation of explanation on my account can't be assimilated to a notion of logical entailment. In disagreement with Koslicki, I suggest that the explanatory relation at issue needs not be necessary. My account of essence is conceptually parsimonious: it illuminates the contribution of essence to explanation without relying on obscure notions such as Aristotelian form or identity. In the third chapter, I defend a one-thinger view of material constitution, on which an object can be members of distinct kinds at the same time by bearing different similarity relations to different entities in the same world. I argue that the multi-thinger's argument for coincidence based on non-modal, sortalish differences between the constituted entity and its constituting matter is invalid, due to different usages of names such as

"Goliath" and "Lumpl" across the argument. Further, I offer a metaphysical picture of how a single object can possess conflicting sortalish properties.

LANGUAGES

Chinese (native)
Classical Greek (read)
German (read)
Arabic (read, speak)

AWARDS & HONORS

2016–2017	Sage Fellowship, Cornell University
2013–2014	Sage Fellowship, Cornell University
2007	May 4th Scholarship, Peking University
2006	Chancellor's Funding for Undergraduate Research, Peking University
2005	Kwang-Hua Fellowship, Peking University

REFERENCES

Karen Bennett (Rutgers University): kbennett@philosophy.rutgers.edu

Derk Pereboom(Cornell University): dp346@cornell.edu

Nicholas Silins (Cornell University): nico.silins@cornell.edu

Gail Fine (Cornell University): gail.fine@cornell.edu

Gabriel Motzkin (The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute): gabrielm@vanleer.org.il

Rachana Kamtekar (Cornell University; Teaching Reference): rk579@cornell.edu