Marshall Thompson Bierson

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Appointments

Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Catholic University of America, 2022–present

Education

Ph.D. Philosophy, Florida State University, Fall 2015–Spring 2022 Dissertation: *The Most General Rightive Activity: Moral Worth as the Formal Excellence of Practical Reason*

Graduate Certificate in Bioethics, Spring 2018

M.A. Philosophy, Florida State University, Spring 2018 M.A. Examination: Ethics and Natural Teleology

B.A. Philosophy, Wheaton College IL, Fall 2014 Departmental Honors

Research Areas

AOS: Ethics, Philosophy of Action, Epistemology

AOC: Applied Ethics, Philosophy of Religion

Academic Publications

"New Work for an Old Theory of Action" *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 123, No. 3, 2026

"Attention and Morality: An Attention Modulation Framework of Moral Cognition" *Neuroscience and Philosophy II*, MIT Press, forthcoming Co-authored with Samantha J. Fede, Ryan T. Daley, and Laura K. Soter

"Rules, Rights, and Hedges" *Ergo*, Vol. 13, 2026 Co-authored with John Schwenkler

"Understanding Anscombe's Absolutism" Invited for the annual volume of Penn's Program for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society (PRRUCS), Vol. 4, No. 2, 2024

"Famine, Affluence, and Aquinas" *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2023 Co-authored with Tucker Sigourney

"What is the Bearing of Thinking on Doing?" *The Anscombean Mind*, ed. R. Wiseman and A. Haddock, Routledge, 2021 Co-authored with John Schwenkler

"And All Shall Be Changed: Virtue in the New Creation" Winner of the Marc Sanders Prize in Philosophy of Religion *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 10, 2022

Academic Talks

"What's the Use of Theoretical Knowledge?" American Catholic Philosophical Association Annual Conference, 2026

"Why be Philosophical?" Veritas Conference at the Dominican House of Studies, 2026

"Utilitarian and Supra-Utilitarian Constraints" Anscombe and the Christian Tradition, 2024

"Rules, Rights, and Hedges" St. Louis Annual Conference on Reasons and Rationality, 2023 Co-authored with John Schwenkler

"Where are Constraints? an In-Form(ative) answer" Describing Human Action Conference, Florida State University, 2021

"An Explanatory Isomorphism Between Knowledge and Moral Worth" Winner of the Graduate Student Essay Prize Society of Christian Philosophers Eastern Conference, 2021

"Moral Worth, Kant, and the Basing Relation" Winner of the Graduate Student Essay Prize Florida Philosophical Association Meeting, 2021

"Moral Worth, Kant, and the Basing Relation" American Philosophical Association Central Meeting, 2021

"Happiness, Virtue, and a Non-Retributive God" Society of Christian Philosophers Eastern Conference, 2020

"Embodied Virtue and Recalcitrant Desire" Society of Christian Philosophers Midwest Conference, 2019

"USA vs. Narnia: A Base-Rate Problem for Fine-Tuning" Florida Philosophical Association Annual Conference, 2017

"Why Grownups Are Boring: How Everyday Acts Matter for an Immortal" Florida Philosophical Association Annual Conference, 2016

Popular Talks

"The Virtue of Chastity, the Substance of Life, and the Thought of Elizabeth Anscombe" Anscombe Society at Princeton University, 2026

"Why We Need Action Theory as a Foundation for Ethical Theory" Thomistic Institute Talk and Seminar Series given at Yale University, 2026

"Catholic Ethics in the Modern World" Thomistic Institute Talk given at Washington & Lee, 2025

"Understanding Anscombe's Absolutism" Thomistic Institute Talk given at U.I. Urbana Champaign, 2025

"Beyond Work and Play: Aristotle on Friendship, Contemplation, and The Value of Human Activity" Thomistic Institute Talk given at Cornell, 2025

"Famine, Affluence, and Aquinas" Thomistic Institute Talk given at Yale University and Purdue University, 2025

"The Wrong Questions of Modern Moral Philosophy" Thomistic Institute Retreat: G.E.M. Anscombe & Modern Moral Philosophy, 2024

"The Right Answers About Action" Thomistic Institute Retreat: G.E.M. Anscombe & Modern Moral Philosophy, 2024

Teaching Experience

Catholic University of America

- The Classical Mind, Phil 211
- The Modern Mind, Phil 212
- Introductory Logic, Phil 302
- Biomedical Ethics, Phil 303
- Theories of Ethics, Phil 309
- Contemporary Moral Issues, Phil 311
- Technê and Human Nature, Phil 713 (anticipated Spring 2027)
- The Intellect and the Will, Phil 905

Florida State University

- Ethical Theory, Phi 3670
- Reasoning and Critical Thinking, Phi 2100
- Bioethics, Phi 2635
- Introduction to Philosophy, Phi 2010

Further Teaching Experience

- Director of Instructional Design and Curriculum, Victory Briefs Institute, 2018–2022
- Director of Lincoln-Douglas Debate, Victory Briefs Institute, 2016–2018
- Instructor & Philosophy Director, Victory Briefs Institute, 2011–2016

MA Theses Directed

"Is it Ever Morally Permissible to Not Tell the Truth? On the Morality of Lying" Anna Forgét, Completed Spring 2026

"Anscombe's Guise of the Good Thesis" Francisco Socrates, Completed Spring 2026

"Can Embryos be Adopted? On the Permissibility of Prenatal Adoption" Ana Botelho, Completed Spring 2026

"The Meaning of 'Innocence' in Anscombe's Political Philosophy" Mathias Bishop, Completed Spring 2026

"On the Viciousness of Addiction" Patrick Sweeney, Completed Spring 2024

Awards and Fellowships

Summer Seminar: Honesty Project Wake Forest University, Summer 2023

The Rome Seminar: Eternal Beauty Institute for Human Ecology, Summer 2023

Marc Sanders Prize in Philosophy of Religion Marc Sanders Foundation, Spring 2019

Summer Seminars in Neuroscience and Philosophy Duke University, Summer 2022

Graduate Student Essay Prize Florida Philosophical Association, Spring 2021

Graduate Student Essay Prize Society of Christian Philosophers Eastern Division, Spring 2021

Teaching Evaluation Grant Leverage Debate, Spring 2019

Supplementary Departmental Fellowship Florida State University Werkmeister Fund, Fall 2018–Spring 2022

Graduate Fellows Society Florida State University, Fall 2019

Service

Refereeing

Refereeing for Journals: American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly, Australasian Journal of Philosophy, Mind, Analysis, Journal of Moral Philosophy, Ergo, Linacre Quarterly, The Philosophical Quarterly, Pacific Philosophical Quarterly, Croatian Journal of Philosophy

University Service

- BrightSpace Transition Committee

School Service

- Ad Hoc AI Policy Committee (1 year)
- Undergraduate Advising Committee (4 years)
- Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (2 years)
- Ad Hoc Committee on Undergraduate Experience (1 year)
- Library Committee (1 year)
- Committee on Failing Grades (3 years, 2 years as chair)
- Committee on Academic Dishonesty (3 years, 1 year as chair)
- Undergraduate Program Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (4 years)
- Organizer of the Philosophers Seeking Tenure group (3 years)
- Anscombe Reading Group with Graduate Students (2 years)
- Weekly Philosophy Discussion Lunches with Graduate Students (3 years)

Public Philosophy

News Analyst, Prindle Institute, Summer 2020–Spring 2022

Sample pieces out of 42 articles:

- “Stereotyping and Statistical Generalizations”
- “Judgment, Condemnation, and Historical Context”
- “The Politics of Imponderables”
- “The Knowledge Norms of Emotions”
- “A Strange Moral Disgruntlement with Giving”
- “Principles, Pragmatics, and Pragmatic Principles”