

Bill Watson

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Academic Appointments

University of Illinois College of Law, Champaign, IL
Assistant Professor of Law, 2024–Present

Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA
Climenko Fellow and Lecturer on Law, 2022–2024

Education

Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
Ph.D. in Philosophy, 2023

- Committee: Andrei Marmor (chair), Emad Atiq, Julia Markovits
- Dissertation: “Explaining Legal Agreement and Disagreement”

University of Chicago Law School, Chicago, IL
J.D., with high honors, 2014

- The University of Chicago Law Review, Book Review & Essays Editor
- Order of the Coif and Kirkland & Ellis Scholar

University of Saint Thomas, Saint Paul, MN
B.A. in Philosophy and English, *summa cum laude*, 2011

Experience

The Honorable Jay S. Bybee, Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals, Las Vegas, NV
Law Clerk, 2017–2018

Kirkland & Ellis, Chicago, IL
Associate, 2014–2017
Summer Associate, Summer 2013

International Human Rights Clinic, University of Chicago Law School, Chicago, IL
PILI Fellow, Summer 2014

Professor Martha C. Nussbaum, University of Chicago Law School, Chicago, IL
Research Assistant, 2012–2014

Articles

An asterisk (*) denotes publication in a peer-reviewed journal

What Are We Debating When We Debate Legal Interpretation?, BOSTON UNIV. L. REV. (forthcoming)

Obstructing Precedent, NW. U. L. REV. (forthcoming)

**Metalinguistic Negotiation in Legal Speech*, 42 LAW & PHILOSOPHY 487 (2023)

**Explaining Legal Agreement*, 14 JURISPRUDENCE 221 (2023)

**How to Answer Dworkin's Argument from Theoretical Disagreement Without Attributing Confusion or Disingenuity to Legal Officials*, 36 CAN. J. L. & JUR. 215 (2023)

**In Defense of the Standard Picture: What the Standard Picture Explains that the Moral Impact Theory Cannot*, 28 LEGAL THEORY 59 (2022)

Essays, Reviews, Etc.

In What Sense Is Law a Moral Practice?, WASH. U. JUR. REV. (forthcoming) (reviewing SCOTT HERSHOVITZ, LAW IS A MORAL PRACTICE)

How to Choose an Interpretive Method, JOTWELL (June 26, 2024) (reviewing Francisco Javier Urbina, *Reasons for Interpretation*)

Did the Court in SFFA Overrule Grutter?, 99 NOTRE DAME L. REV. REFLECTION 113 (2023)

The Decline of Natural Law and the Rise of Exclusive Positivism, 75 SMU L. REV. F. 174 (2022) (reviewing STUART BANNER, THE DECLINE OF NATURAL LAW)

Textualism, Dynamism, and the Meaning of "Sex," 2022 CARDOZO L. REV. DE NOVO 41 (2022)

Literalism in Statutory Interpretation: What Is It and What Is Wrong with It?, 2021 U. ILL. L. REV. ONLINE 218 (2021)

Works in Progress

A paper on why textualists need not, and should not be, originalists

A paper on conceptual analysis and a shift in our concept of law over the last two centuries

Presentations

Textualism in Statutory Interpretation without Originalism in Constitutional Interpretation

- National Conference of Constitutional Law Scholars (Feb. 24, 2024)

Obstructing Precedent

- Law and Philosophy Workshop, Harvard Law School (Nov. 15, 2023)
- AALS Jurisprudence Junior Scholars Workshop (Aug. 4, 2023)
- Rutgers Law School Camden Faculty Workshop (Feb. 8, 2023)

Metalinguistic Negotiation in Legal Speech

- Mark L. Shapiro Graduate Philosophy Conference, Brown University (Apr. 10, 2022)
- Southwest Graduate Philosophy Conference, Arizona State University (Mar. 26, 2022)
- Philosophy Department Workshop, Cornell University (Nov. 3, 2021)

Shifting Concepts of Law

- Philosophy Department Workshop, Cornell University (Mar. 11, 2022)

Teaching Experience

University of Illinois College of Law

- Legislation and Regulation, Spring 2025
- Constitutional Law, Fall 2024

Harvard Law School

- Legal Research and Writing, Fall 2022, Spring 2023, Fall 2023, Spring 2024

Cornell University

- Introduction to Philosophy (assisting Shaun Nichols), Spring 2021
- Moral Dilemmas in the Law (assisting Andrei Marmor), Fall 2020, Fall 2019
- Introduction to Ethics (assisting Julia Markovits), Spring 2020

Professional Service

Contributing editor for the Jurisprudence Section of JOTWELL

Referee for *Journal of Ethics & Social Philosophy*, *Law and Philosophy*, *Legal Theory*, *Yale Law Journal*, and Routledge Publishing

Admissions

State of Illinois (inactive); Northern District of Illinois; Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals