

Alumni Profile

Maura Priest – Philosophy PhD Program



Career

Please provide a brief overview of your career path since graduating from UCI.

After finishing my PhD in The Department of Philosophy in the summer of 2016, I went straight into a one-year research postdoc at The University of Connecticut, while simultaneously beginning a Master of Science program in Bioethics at Columbia University. (from which I have now graduated.) After my time in Connecticut, I took a 6-month medical ethics research position at Children’s Mercy Hospital in Kansas City. In January of 2017, I began a tenure-track job at Radford University in Virginia. Much to my surprise, I was soon offered a great position in the department of philosophy at Arizona State University (ASU). ASU has a strong PhD program and strong support for faculty, so ultimately it was an offer I could not refuse. Hence, I have just begun my position at Arizona State as an assistant professor in the philosophy department, and also bioethicist, with the opportunity to do work at the Phoenix based Mayo Clinic. Since graduating from UCI, and to this current day, I held/continue to hold an affiliate research position at The University of Cologne, and make periodic visits to Germany for this purpose.

What made you get into the career that you are in?

Like many philosophers, I took a philosophy class by chance and loved it (my first class was taught by Gary Hartenburg, who was an adjunct at California State University Fullerton at the time. By chance, he was also a UCI Philosophy graduate student and is now employed as a philosophy professor at Houston Baptist University.) My passion for philosophy led me to graduate school. Somewhere along the line I had the desire to apply my philosophy to the “real world,” and this resulted in my path into bioethics. I still do plenty of theoretical philosophy, but I am happy to supplement this research with applied work.

Your Time at UCI

When did you attend UCI?

2009-2016

What program were you in?

Department of Philosophy doctorate program.

Why did you choose to come to UCI?

I had a number of offers and in the end, it came down to the City University of New York versus UCI. Location played a big role in my final decision.

Reflections

What is your most memorable moment/experience at UCI?

I don't know if I have one moment. But the intellectual friendships I made are what I cherish most.

Was there one thing or one person at UCI that really helped or made a difference in your graduate/postdoctoral career? If so, tell us about whomever or what it was?

The support I had from various UCI faculty members was much more than I could have hoped for. In particular, I can never give enough thanks to Sven Bernecker, Margaret Gilbert, Casey Perin, and Sonya Rasminsky.

Did you do any research while at UCI and what was it?

- How would you explain your research to your grandparent? How would you help someone understand the importance/significance of this research?

I did lots of research at UCI. My dissertation was focused on intellectual elites. Intellectual elites are those with either especially high intelligence, or especially extensive educational experience. My work explores the moral and intellectual responsibilities of these elites. In addition, while at UCI (and still now) I worked with Margert Gilbert on issues surrounding collective action. I am interested in how groups do things together, in particular, the way in which group action is different from individual action. Lastly, I worked in classic epistemology, i.e., I tried to analyze the way in which humans acquire knowledge.

- What has impressed you most about the subject matter that you chose for your research/degree while at UCI?

I am impressed by the earnestness, good will, and intellectual honesty within the community of virtue epistemology scholars.

Alumni Life

What are you currently up to?

I am an assistant professor of philosophy and bioethicist at Arizona State University.

How did your education at UCI benefit you in your current life?

The things I value most in life, i.e. my friends and my career, would not have been possible without UCI.

What book or podcast would you suggest to someone who is just getting started with their graduate career at UCI? (Examples – Podcast: Happier with Gretchen Rubin; Book: Who Moved my Cheese)

Clark Howard Podcast – graduate students are in difficult financial positions, and few of them know enough about money. Clark Howard is a great introduction to what you should know about finances.

What advice do you have for a new graduate student?

Do not be afraid to challenge authority, within your field or elsewhere. Advice from well positioned persons is not always good advice, even if it is well meaning. Also, as far as research is concerned, I believe the most successful scholars are those who are not afraid to say what they think as opposed to what they think others want them to think.

What was your biggest obstacle transitioning from life of a graduate student to your career?

Not sure if this is the biggest obstacle, but I sure do miss Southern California.

What are your hobbies/passions outside of your work/research?

Athletics has always, and continues, to play a major role in my life. I am a skateboarder, snowboarder, runner, and fitness fanatic. I also have two amazing rescue dogs, Christmas the beagle and Spooky the bulldog mix.