

# JAMES A. WOODBRIDGE

Department of Philosophy  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
4505 S. Maryland Parkway, Box 455028  
Las Vegas, NV 89154-5028  
Phone: (702) 895-4051  
email: james.woodbridge@unlv.edu  
<http://faculty.unlv.edu/jwood>

## CURRENT POSITION

Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2012-

## PREVIOUS POSITIONS

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Philosophy, 2006-2012 (Assistant Professor)  
Yale University, Department of Philosophy, 2005-2006 (Visiting Position)  
The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Department of Philosophy, 2004-2005 (Visiting Position)  
The College of William and Mary, Department of Philosophy, 2001-2004 (Visiting Position)

## AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Philosophy of Language, Philosophical Logic, Metaphysics

## AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Science, Logic, Epistemology, History of Analytic Philosophy

## EDUCATION

Ph.D., The University of Michigan (Philosophy), 2001; M.A., The University of Michigan, 1994  
B.A., Amherst College (Philosophy, Physics), 1987 (*Magna cum laude*, Honors in Philosophy)

## PUBLICATIONS

- “Alethic Fictionalism, Alethic Nihilism, and the Liar Paradox,” (w/ B. Armour-Garb) *Philosophical Studies* 174(12): 3083–3096.
- Pretense and Pathology: Philosophical Fictionalism and its Applications*, (w/ B. Armour-Garb) (Cambridge University Press, 2015).
- “Truth, Pretense and the Liar,” (w/ B. Armour-Garb) in *Unifying the Philosophy of Truth*, eds. T. Achourioti, K. Fujimoto, H. Galinon, J. Martinez, pp. 339-354, (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015).
- “From Mathematical Fictionalism to Truth-Theoretic Fictionalism,” (w/ B. Armour-Garb) *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 88(1): 93-118.
- “Semantic Defectiveness: A Dissolution of Semantic Pathology,” (w/ B. Armour-Garb) in *Recent Trends in Philosophical Logic (Trends in Logic, Vol. 41)*, eds. R. Ciuni, H. Wansing, and C. Willkommen, pp. 1-12, (Cham: Springer International Publishing Switzerland, 2014).
- “Semantic Defectiveness and the Liar,” (w/ B. Armour-Garb) *Philosophical Studies* 164(3): 845-863.
- “Sellars and Pretense on “Truth & ‘Correspondence’” (with a Detour through Meaning Attribution),” (w/ B. Armour-Garb) *Discusiones Filosóficas* Year 13, Issue 21: 33-63.
- “Liars, Truth-tellers, and Naysayers: A Broader View of Semantic Pathology I,” (w/ B. Armour-Garb) *Language & Communication* 32: 293-311.

## **PUBLICATIONS (continued)**

- “The Story about Propositions,” (w/ B. Armour-Garb) *Noûs* 46(4): 635-674.
- “Truthmakers, Paradox and Plausibility,” (w/ B. Armour-Garb) *Analysis* 70(1): 11-23.
- “Why Deflationists Should be Pretense Theorists (and Perhaps Already are),” (w/ B. Armour-Garb) in *New Waves in Truth*, eds. N. Pedersen and C. Wright, pp. 59-77, (Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
- “Linguistic Puzzles and Semantic Pretense,” (w/ B. Armour-Garb) in *New Waves in Philosophy of Language*, ed. S. Sawyer, pp. 250-284, (Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
- “The Pathology of Validity,” (w/ B. Armour-Garb) *Synthese* 160: 63-74.
- “Dialetheism, Semantic Pathology, and the Open Pair,” (w/ B. Armour-Garb) *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 84: 395-416.
- “Propositions as Semantic Pretense,” *Language & Communication* 26: 343-355.
- “Semantic Pathology and the Open Pair,” (w/ B. Armour-Garb) *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 71(3): 695-703.
- “Truth as a Pretense,” in *Fictionalism in Metaphysics*, ed. Mark Kalderon, pp. 134-177, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- “F.J.E. Woodbridge,” in *Dictionary of Modern American Philosophers, 1860-1960, 4 vols.*, ed. John R. Shook, *et al.*, vol. 4, pp. 2641-2646, (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2005).
- “A Neglected Dimension of Semantic Pathology,” *Logica Yearbook 2004*, pp. 277-292, (Prague: Filosofia, Institute of Philosophy, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic).
- “Deflationism and the Generalization Problem,” *Logica Yearbook 2003*, pp. 285-297, (Prague: Filosofia, Institute of Philosophy, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic).
- “Curried Katz with Epimenidean Dilemma,” (w/ B. Armour-Garb) *The Philosophical Forum* 34: 351-366.

## **INVITED TALKS**

- “Fictionalism and the Semantics of Fictional Discourse.”  
Institute of Philosophy, Czech Academy of Science, October 2016.
- “Identity Claims are Not about Identity.”  
University of Nevada Las Vegas, NV, October 2015.
- “Revisiting Truth as a Pretense.”  
University of Nevada Las Vegas, NV, May 2012.  
University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, November 2011.  
University of Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands, November 2011.  
Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA, October 2011.  
University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT, April 2011.
- “The Fiction of What’s Known in Understanding.”  
University of Nevada Las Vegas, NV, September 2009.
- “Linguistic Puzzles and Semantic Pretense.”  
Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ, October 2008.  
University of Nevada Las Vegas, NV, October 2008.
- “The Story about Propositions.”  
University of Nevada Las Vegas, NV, April 2007.

## INVITED TALKS (continued)

- “From Semantic Pathology to Semantic Pretense.”  
University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, February 2006.  
Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX, January 2006.  
University of Nevada Las Vegas, NV, January 2006.  
Concordia University, Montreal, QC, January 2006.
- “Liars, Truth-tellers, and Naysayers: A New View of Semantic Pathology.”  
The University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, March 2005.  
Wayne State University, Detroit, MI, January 2005.
- “Truth, Pathology, and Pretense.”  
Universiteit Leiden, The Netherlands, August 2004.
- “Liars and Truth-tellers: Semantic Pathology and Semantic Pretense.”  
The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA, November 2003.
- “Propositions as Semantic Pretense.”  
The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA, October 2002.  
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, September 2002.
- “Truth as a Pretense.”  
The University at Albany/SUNY, Albany, NY, February 2002.  
The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA, October 2001.  
Haverford College, Haverford, PA, February 2001.

## CONFERENCES

- “Fictionalism and the Semantics of Fictional Discourse.” (With Bradley Armour-Garb)  
Philosophy of Language (1): Semantics of Fictional Discourse, Institute of Philosophy,  
Slovak Academy of Science, Bratislava, Slovakia, October 2016.
- “Alethic Fictionalism, Alethic Nihilism, and the Liar Paradox.” (With Bradley Armour-Garb)  
Truth: Deflationism and Beyond, University of Sassari, in partnership with the Italian 2012  
PRIN Project “Models and Inferences in Science”, Alghero, Italy, September 2016.
- “Sellars and Pretense on Truth and Meaning.” (With Bradley Armour-Garb)  
Sellars Centenary Conference and Workshop 2012, Department of Philosophy, University  
College Dublin and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Dublin, Ireland, June 2012.
- “Semantic Defectiveness and the Liar Paradox.” (With Bradley Armour-Garb)  
Trends in Logic XI: Advances in Philosophical Logic, Department of Philosophy II, Ruhr-  
Universität Bochum, in co-operation with *Studia Logica*, Bochum, Germany, June 2012.
- “Revisiting Truth as a Pretense.”  
Truth at Work Conference, IHPST: Institut d’Histoire et de Philosophie des Sciences et  
Techniques, Université Paris-1, et Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris, France, June 2011.
- “Semantic Defectiveness and the Liar.” (With Bradley Armour-Garb)  
BW7 | Seventh Barcelona Workshop on Issues in the Theory of Reference: Paradoxes of Truth  
and Denotation, LOGOS: Logic, Language, and Cognition Research Group, Universitat de  
Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain, June 2011.
- “Meaning Attribution, Normativity, and Pretense.”  
Normativity of Meaning: Sellarsian Perspectives, Department of Logic, Institute of  
Philosophy, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic, May 2011.

## CONFERENCES (continued)

- “The Fiction of What’s Known in Understanding.”  
Meaning, Understanding and Knowledge: 5<sup>th</sup> International Symposium for Cognition, Logic and Communication, University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia, August 2009.
- “Negation and Non-Assertoric Denial.” (With Bradley Armour-Garb)  
Workshop on Negation and Denial, Universidade de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal, July 2008.
- “Why Propositions Cannot Be (Anything More Than Pretense).” (With Bradley Armour-Garb)  
Joint Session of The Aristotelian Society and The Mind Association  
University of Bristol, Bristol, England, July 2007.
- “The Story about Propositions.” (With Bradley Armour-Garb)  
Mimesis, Metaphysics, and Make-Believe: A Conference in Honour of Kendall Walton,  
University of Leeds, Leeds, England, June 2007.
- Comments on Glen Hoffmann’s “The Semantic Theory of Truth: Field’s Incompleteness Objection.”  
American Philosophical Association, Central Division, 104<sup>th</sup> Meeting, Chicago, IL, April 2007.
- “The Pathology of Validity.” (With Bradley Armour-Garb)  
Society for Exact Philosophy, 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting, Toronto, ON, Canada, May 2005.
- “How (and Why) Not to Take Semantics Seriously.”  
Young Scholars Summer Institute, Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, Germany, August 2004.
- “A Neglected Dimension of Semantic Pathology.”  
18th International Symposium Logica, Hejnice Monastery, Czech Republic, June 2004.
- “Deflationism and the Generalization Problem.”  
17th International Symposium Logica, Kravsko Chateau, Czech Republic, June 2003.
- “Truth as a Pretense.”  
2002 Mountain-Plains Philosophy Conference, Las Vegas, NV, October 2002.  
Virginia Philosophical Association, 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting, Richmond, VA, October 2002.

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Course Webpages/Syllabi linked at <http://faculty.unlv.edu/jwood/#teach>

University of Nevada, Las Vegas (2006- )

Great Philosophers: Wittgenstein (Spring 2018, 2015)  
Metaphysics (Fall 2017, Spring 2014, Fall 2011, Spring 2010)  
Capstone Seminar: Fiction and Fictionalism (Spring 2017)  
Philosophy of Mathematics (Fall 2016, 2012)  
Advanced Logic (Fall 2016, 2013, 2012, 2009, Spring 2016, 2007-2009)  
Philosophy of Science (Spring 2016, Fall 2013, Spring 2011)  
Theories of Truth (Fall 2015, Spring 2012, Fall 2007)  
Philosophy of Language (Fall 2014, 2010, 2008, Spring 2013)  
Freshman Seminar: Science Fiction and Philosophy (Fall 2017, 2016, 2015)  
Introduction to Symbolic Logic (Spring 2007-2014, Fall 2006)  
Introduction to Philosophy (Spring 2018, 2017, 2015, Fall 2014, 2008-2012)  
Critical Thinking (Fall 2007)

Yale University (2005-2006)

Philosophy of Mind (Spring 2006)  
Directed Studies II (Spring 2006)  
Seminar: Theories of Truth (Fall 2005)  
Philosophy of Science (Fall 2005)

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE (continued)**

The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (2004-2005)

Seminar: Theories of Truth (Winter 2005)

Language and Mind (Winter 2005)

Problems of Philosophy (Fall 2004)

First-Year Seminar: Relativism (Fall 2004)

The College of William and Mary (2001-2004)

Philosophy of Language (Spring 2004, 2002)

Introduction to Philosophy (Spring 2004, Fall 2003, 2002, 2001)

Philosophy of Science (Fall 2003)

Freshman Seminar: Relativism (Spring 2003)

Symbolic Logic (Spring 2003, Fall 2001)

Contemporary Metaphysics (Fall 2002)

## **ACADEMIC SERVICE**

Invited Co-organizer for *5<sup>th</sup> International Symposium for Cognition, Logic and Communication: Meaning, Understanding and Knowledge*, University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia, August 2009.

Referee for *Noûs*, *Philosophical Studies*, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, *Res Philosophica*, *Mind*, *Erkenntnis*, *Philosophical Quarterly*, *Philosophers' Imprint*, and *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*.

University of Nevada Las Vegas: University Academic Standards Committee (2017-2019).

University of Nevada Las Vegas, College of Liberal Arts: Curriculum Committee (2012-2014); Bylaws Committee (2011-13); Financial Aid Committee (2009-11); Department of Philosophy: Colloquium Committee (Chair), Webpage Committee (Chair), Personnel Committee, Student Awards Committee, Neon Stoa (Philosophy Club) Advisor, Merit Committee (2006-7, 2007-8 (Chair)), Search Committee (Senior Hire, 2006-7), Phi Sigma Tau (Honors Society) Advisor (2006-8).

The College of William and Mary, Department of Philosophy: Colloquium/Philosophy Club Committee, Freshman Advising, Honors Thesis Committee (Physics Department) (2002-4).

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Office of Academic Assessment Faculty Workshop. University of Nevada Las Vegas, January 2013.  
Teaching and Learning Center Workshops: Learning & Teaching Styles, Course Assessment Techniques. University of Nevada Las Vegas, June 2008.

2007 Regents' Academy. The Nevada System of Higher Education, May-June 2007.

Faculty Seminar: Teaching Freshman Seminars. The College of William and Mary, May 2002.

## **FELLOWSHIPS, HONORS AND AWARDS**

University of Nevada, Las Vegas: University Faculty Travel Committee Award, 2017, 2012, 2009.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, College of Liberal Arts: CLA Travel Stipend, 2016, 2012;  
Summer Research Stipend, 2011, 2010; Summer Term Fellowship, 2007.

National Humanities Center / Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin:

European-American Young Scholars Summer Institute, 2003 and 2004.

Andrew W. Mellon Dissertation Fellowship, 1996-7.

Charles L. Stevenson Prize, for excellence in the Graduate Program in Philosophy, 1995-6.  
(Awarded by the University of Michigan Philosophy Department)

Jacob K. Javits Fellowship, 1990-4. (Awarded by the United States Department of Education)

## CURRENT RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Metaphysics, philosophical logic, philosophy of language, and philosophy of mind investigate a collection of issues that I see as connected on two different levels. The first pertains to the ways that some of their central questions intersect. Recent deflationary analyses prompt metaphysical questions about truth and the other semantic notions. Related concerns arise from philosophical logic's examination of the semantic paradoxes, such as the Liar, and their resistance to solution. Similar paradoxes of non-existence bolster traditional metaphysical worries about abstracta, in current debates about the ontological status of fictional characters and other objects of imagination. These issues connect with philosophy of language's concerns about reference failure in discourse about fiction, and about the general problem that empty names pose for a causal, or any direct or non-descriptivist, theory of reference. The foregoing issues in metaphysics and philosophical logic also bear on the status of truth-conditional / referential theories of meaning versus use-based alternatives. They further intersect with debates about the robustness of meaning, including whether there are meaning entities, such as propositions. In philosophy of mind, these questions about the nature or even existence of propositions generate concerns about the nature of belief and the other intentional attitudes, and about mental content and psychological explanation.

The second level of connection I see between the various issues that I pursue in my research is the focus of *Pretense and Pathology*, the monograph I wrote with Bradley Armour-Garb, published in 2015 by Cambridge University Press. We argue that a particular fictionalist strategy offers significant advances throughout our theorizing about these different issues. The specific strategy we apply extends the analysis from my earlier paper, "Truth as a Pretense," where I explain truth-talk as an instance of *semantic pretense*. This non-error-theoretic, fictionalist approach accounts for fragments of discourse in terms of games of make-believe. For truth-talk, the relevant game involves pretend attributions of a pretend property (truth) to pretend objects (propositions); the game's rules make truth-talk an indirect means of making certain serious (non-semantic) claims we cannot make directly. The overall result is a new way of understanding deflationism, one that retains the advantages of that approach while avoiding various logical problems that confront its standard formulations.

This fictionalist strategy has been extended and refined in my collaborative research with Armour-Garb. In "The Story about Propositions" we apply it to an account of talk that appears to implicate propositions. Our other main application of the strategy takes off from concerns about the semantic paradoxes. We see these putative paradoxes as only one aspect of *semantic pathology*, a broader apparent phenomenon that seems to manifest in two different symptoms: inconsistency (as in liar sentences) and indeterminacy (as in truth-teller sentences). Our current work expands on the diagnosis of truth's pathology that I had developed in my pretense account of truth-talk. Unlike most standard approaches to semantic pathology, this fictionalist strategy diagnoses and allows treatment for both of its symptoms. It explains them both as arising only in *purely pretend* claims, which turn out to lack any content about the world outside the pretense behind truth-talk. This motivates our current consistentist treatment, involving a new revenge-immune appeal to the meaningless strategy. But the isolation of the apparent pathology entirely within a fiction opens up the range of permissible treatment strategies, allowing anything from a dialethic appeal to paraconsistent logic, to an *ad hoc* stipulation of a Tarski-style hierarchy. Moreover, the pretense view provides treatment for the neglected symptom of indeterminacy, either in terms of meaninglessness or an arbitrary, stipulative resolution. While a stipulative resolution is *ad hoc*, within fictionalism, as opposed to realism, the *ad hoc* is benign. Here, stipulation just amounts to extending a fiction one way, rather than another.

In my future research I will continue to examine applications of this fictionalist strategy. Some topics that I think it will helpfully illuminate include talk putatively about fictional or non-existent objects and our talk of linguistic meaning and linguistic understanding. I foresee the latter application forging connections between the pretense account of proposition-talk and Wilfrid Sellars's inferentialism and linguistic nominalism. This account of proposition-talk also points to a fictionalist account of folk psychology, which I see connecting with Daniel Dennett's intentional stance.