THOMAS M. WILK

Humanities Division
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Academic Positions

Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Widener University	2023-Present
Chair, Department of Philosophy, Widener University	2026-Present
Special Advisor to the Provost for AI Strategy, Widener University	2026-Present
Assistant Teaching Professor of Philosophy, Widener University	2020-2023

Professional Activities

Ethics Committee, Crozer Health Systems	2020-2025

Education

Johns Hopkins University, Ph.D., Philosophy 2019
- Preparing Future Faculty Teaching Academy Certificate of Completion
- Johns Hopkins Teaching Institute Certificate of Completion

Johns Hopkins University, M.A., Philosophy 2012

George Mason University, M.A. with departmental honors, Philosophy 2009

Gettysburg College, B.A. *cum laude* with departmental honors, 2005
Double Major in Philosophy and Economics

Areas of Specialization

Biomedical Ethics, Ethics (Theoretical and Applied), Philosophy of Language, Philosophy of Humor, Epistemology

Areas of Competence

Philosophy of Sport, Social and Political Philosophy, Logic (Formal, Informal, and Decision Theory), History of Early Modern Philosophy

Academic Publications

Books

In on the Joke: The Ethics of Humor and Comedy, with Steven Gimbel, Walter de Gruyter: 2024.

Peer-Reviewed Articles

"We'll Keep the Monocle: Defending (and Refining) the Joke Capital Theory of Humor Ethics" with Steven Gimbel, *The Philosophy of Humor Yearbook*, 2026, 7(1). Forthcoming.

"Joke Capital vs. Punching Up/Punching Down: Accounting for the Ethical Relation between Joker and Target" with Steven Gimbel, *The Philosophy of Humor Yearbook*, 2024, 5(1): 71-90.

"Conspiracy Theories, Echo Chambers, and Communal Epistemic Trust," *Azimuth: International Journal of Philosophy*, 2023, 22(2): 77-95.

"A Kernel of Truth: Outlining an Epistemology of Jokes," *The Philosophy of Humor Yearbook*, 2023, 4(1): 227-246.

"Proportion and the Personality of Humor," *The Philosophy of Humor Yearbook*, 2021, 2(1): 147-148. Peer-reviewed comment.

"I Said Something Wrong: Transworld Obligation in *Yesterday*" with Steven Gimbel, *Film-Philosophy*, 2021, 25(2): 151-164.

"Trust, Communities, and the Standing to Hold Accountable," *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, 2017, 27(2 Supplement): 1-22.

"Inferences, Experiences, and the Myth of the Given: A Reply to Champagne," *Logos and Episteme: An International Journal of Epistemology*, 2017, 8(1): 155-162.

Invited Book Chapters

"Joking as Truth-Telling," *It's Funny 'Cause It's True: An Introduction to Philosophy through Humor*. Jennifer Marra Henrigillis and Steven Gimbel (eds.) Lighthearted Open Access: 2021.

Book Reviews

Review of John Charles Simon and Jennalee Donian, *Understanding Laughter and Humor: Why We Laugh, Why We Don't, and Why It Matters* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025). In progress for *The Philosophy of Humor Yearbook*.

Popular Publications

"Druski, Whiteface, and the Ethics of the Bit" with Steven Gimbel, *3 Quarks Daily*. April 19, 2026.

"When Humor Hurts: Playful Ribbing or Malicious Ridicule?" with Steven Gimbel and John Charles Simon, *Psychology Today*. July 31, 2024. (Featured as an Essential Read in the topic area of Humor and Laughter.)

"When Humor Hurts: The Theory of Joke Capital" with Steven Gimbel and John Charles Simon, *Psychology Today*. July 25, 2024. (Featured as an Essential Read for 24 hours on the *Psychology Today* homepage and as an Essential Read in the topic areas of Humor, Laughter, and Ethics and Morality.)

"When Humor Hurts: The Ethics of Joking and Comedy" with Steven Gimbel and John Charles Simon, *Psychology Today*. July 19, 2024.

"Bad Comedians Are Told To Keep Their Day Jobs, This Dean Might Not Have A Choice" with Steven Gimbel, *3 Quarks Daily*. February 19, 2024.

"The Right Way to Win Over Posterity," *Hamilton and Philosophy*. Aaron Rabinowitz and Robert Arp (eds.) Open Court: 2017.

Under Review and In Progress

"An Authority That Won't Let Go: AI Companions, Standing, and the Firm Behind the Intimate." Under review at *Philosophical Studies*.

Presentations

Invited Talks and Author-Meets-Critics Sessions

2026 Comment on Michael Hoppmann's (Northeastern University) "On Boxing and Caressing: 'Capital' Mistakes in Wilk & Gimbel," 20th Annual Lighthearted Philosophers' Society Conference, Indianapolis, IN (October)

2026 Panelist: Vonnegut and Humor, with Mike Cundall and Vanessa Voss. 20th Annual Lighthearted Philosophers' Society Conference, Kurt Vonnegut Museum and Library, Indianapolis, IN (October)

2026 Comments on John Simon and Jennalee Donian's *Understanding Laughter and Humor*, International Association of Philosophy of Humor Session, APA Pacific Division Meeting

2025 Author-meets-critics symposium on Thomas Wilk and Steven Gimbel's *In on the Joke: The Ethics of Humor and Comedy*, with comments by Peter Westmoreland (St. Petersburg College), Brandyn Heppard (Pace University), Hanno Bulhof (McNeese State University), and Mike Cundall (North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University) and responses from the authors. 19th Annual Lighthearted Philosophers' Society Conference. (Refereed panel.)

2025 "Moral Debt and Revolutionary Humor: A Reply to Marvin (Lafayette College) and Ralkowski (George Washington University)," with Steven Gimbel. International Association of Philosophy of Humor Session, APA Eastern Division Meeting

2024 Author-meets-critics symposium on Thomas Wilk and Steven Gimbel's *In on the Joke: The Ethics of Humor and Comedy*, with comments by Stuart Hanscomb (University of Glasgow) and Giorgio Baruchello (University of Akureyri) and responses from the authors. International Society of Humor Studies Conference.

2024 Panelist: The Durable Skills you Need to Navigate Digital Disruption, Future of Work Conference, Widener University School of Business Administration

2023 Panelist: Big Questions about ChatGPT that Need Answers, Future of Work Conference, Widener University School of Business Administration

2022 "In on the Joke: Sketching an Ethics of Humor," Humanities Division Colloquium, Widener University

2018 Comment on Daniel Mendez's "Talking Ourselves Senseless," APA Eastern Division Meeting

2016 "Making Morality," Gettysburg College Philosophy Department

2015 Comment on Ross Colebrook's "Ethical Reductionism and the Darwinian Dilemma," Nature and Norms: Values in a Material World Conference

2013 "Moral Fictionalism: Some Concerns," Philosophy Department Summer Research Seminar, Johns Hopkins University

2011 "Wittgenstein's Rule-Following Considerations," Leadership, Ethics, and Law Division Workshop, United States Naval Academy

2010 "Joking and Meaning It: A Linguistic Trick of Non-Commitment," Osher Lifelong Learning Institute Lecture Series, George Mason University

2009 Comment on Richard C. Richards's "Laughter, Humor, and Incongruity," Lighthearted Philosophers' Society

Refereed Conference Presentations

2026 "Every Voice in the Room: A Cross-Functional Model for Campus-Wide AI Engagement," with Hilary Barnes, Jessica Storey, Edwin Dauber, and Daniel Roozbahani. AAC&U Conference on AI and Higher Education, Atlanta, GA (October)

2024 "Infected Knowledge: The Ethics of Using Illicit Research from Unit 731," with Elizabeth Martin. 14th Annual Midwestern Medical Humanities Conference.

2024 "Joke Capital and Humor Ethics" with Steven Gimbel, International Association of Philosophy of Humor Session, APA Eastern Division Meeting

2022 "A Contextual Social Contractarian Approach to Humor Ethics" with Steven Gimbel, International Association of Philosophy of Humor Session, APA Pacific Division Meeting

2021 "Joking Around with Truth," International Association of Philosophy of Humor Session, APA Pacific Division Meeting

2015 "Are Lived Normative Statuses Really Normative?," Philosopher's Cocoon Conference

2012 "Rehabilitating the Community View: Majority Agreement, Standard Conditions, and the Normativity of Meaning," Virginia Philosophical Association

2012 "Rehabilitating the Community View: Majority Agreement, Standard Conditions, and the Normativity of Meaning," In Wittgenstein's Footsteps, Reykjavik, Iceland (Accepted, could not attend.)

2011 "Epistemic Commitment and the Recognitive Aspect of Education," Virginia Philosophical Association

2009 "Jokes as Speech Acts: Exploring the Richly Linguistic Character of Some Jokes," Lighthearted Philosophers' Society

Grants and Awards

Awarded

2026 Humanities Division Faculty Award for Excellence in Research

2025 Swarthmore Humanities Leadership Program Grant, Humanities Leadership in an Era of Disruption, $11,500 (co-PI with Sara Berkowitz and Jessica Guzman)

2024 Provost Grant, Widener University, $500

2024 Faculty Development Grant, Widener University, $1,500

2023 Council of Independent Colleges (Mellon Foundation) New Currents in Teaching Philosophy Development Grant, $1,000

Submitted and Under Review

2026 U.S. Department of Education, Title III Strengthening Institutions Program, $3,000,000. Contributing author; would fund an appointment as Director of AI Curriculum Integration. Institutional capacity building for retention, persistence, and graduation, with expanded advising, tutoring, and financial wellness services and AI integration in student support and instruction. Under review.

2026 Swarthmore Humanities Leadership Program Mini-Grant, Room to Think: Building a Humanities Writing Lab, $11,500, with Leah Norris (PI). Not funded.

2026 U.S. Senate FY27 congressionally directed spending requests to Senators Fetterman and McCormick: AI-Enhanced Healthcare Equipment and AI Workforce Development Initiative. Author. Under review.

2025 U.S. Department of Education, Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) Special Projects, $2,366,880. Project Director, *The Widener LASER Project: Leveraging AI for Student and Educator Readiness*. Not funded.

2025 Mellon Foundation, Unruly Intelligences, concept note submitted (developed with Mark Graybill; now sole PI). Selected as a finalist and invited to submit a full proposal, August 2026; first draft of full proposal submitted September 2026.

Institutional Leadership in Artificial Intelligence

2024- Chair, LEAD-AI Council, Widener University. Interdisciplinary body that sets university AI strategy and reports to the President's Leadership Team.

2024- Convener, BRIDGE-AI Network. Campus-wide implementation body drawing representatives from all seven schools and colleges, key administrative units, and student government.

2024-26 Co-chair (2024-25, with Provost Andrew Workman) and Chair (2025-26), Widener's team for the AAC&U Institute on AI, Pedagogy, and the Curriculum

2026- Director, AI Faculty Fellows Program. Designed the program framework, selection criteria, and deliverables; seven fellows annually, one from each school and college.

2026 Organizer and Master of Ceremonies, Widener AI Week 2026 (March 2-5). Decentralized campus-wide programming including the AI Sparks lightning talk series and the student ethics poster showcase, AI Under the Ethiscope.

2025 Organizer, Widener AI Day 2025. Inaugural university-wide professional development and competition event; over 800 participants, including 500 students and members of the Board of Trustees.

2024- Author, Widener Critical AI Literacy Framework and the associated faculty facilitation materials

2024- Lead investigator, campus-wide AI use and literacy surveys of students, faculty, and staff

2025- Designer, Widener AI Syllabus Statement Tool; lead, BoodleBox platform rollout and faculty communications; editor, the AI at Widener website

University Service – Committee Work

University Committees

2026- Coordinated Community Response Team (CCRT) Advisory Board, WAVE (Widener anti-sexual violence education)

2025-26 Faculty Council Executive Committee Freedom of Expression Task Force

2025-26 Faculty Council Executive Committee Bridge Week Task Force

2023-27 Widener University Faculty Council, College of Arts & Sciences Representative

2025-26 Foundations and Transformations Advisory Board, Humanities Division Representative

2025-27 Faculty Council Promotion, Tenure, and Academic Freedom Committee, College of Arts & Sciences Representative and Vice Chair (served as acting Chair for Fall '25)

2024-26 Faculty Council Technology and Instructional Resources Committee, College of Arts & Sciences Representative and Vice Chair

College of Arts and Science Committees

2022-26 Widener College of Arts & Sciences, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, Chair; led creation of the Diversity Course Requirement in the Foundations and Transformations general education program

2022-23 Widener College of Arts & Sciences, Promotion, Tenure, and Academic Freedom Committee, Humanities Division Assistant Professor Representative

2021-22 Widener College of Arts & Sciences, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, Secretary

Humanities Division and Departmental Committees

2026-27 Chair, Assistant Professor of Philosophy Hiring Committee

2024-25 Humanities Division Recruitment and Retention Committee

2026 Chair, Visiting Assistant Professor of Philosophy Hiring Committee

University Service – Presentations, Workshops, and Student Groups

2024-26 Workshop: What should you know about generative AI? (2024, 2025) and Entrepreneurship and Generative AI (2026), FBLA Delaware County Leadership Conference, Widener University

2026 Invited faculty speaker: May Day Walkout, Widener University (May 1)

2026 Co-organizer and presenter: Freedom of Speech Teach-In, "Use Your Voice!" (March 18)

2025 Co-organizer and presenter: Teach-In on Authoritarianism (November 12)

2024-25 Judge: Summer Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities Symposium

2025 Organizer: Practical Examples: Integrating AI into Your Work and Classroom (Workshop), Bridge Week (with TLT)

2025 Facilitator: Sexual violence prevention workshop for the Interfraternity Council, with Jamie O'Leary (WAVE)

2023-25 Humanities Living Learning Community, Faculty Advisor

2024 A&S Living Learning Communities Liaison (temporary role)

2024 Presentation: Homework in a Post AI World, Provost's Food for Thought

2024 Presentation: AI in the Classroom, Bridge Week (with A&S TIRC)

2024 Presentation: AI in Education and Teaching, Provost's Food for Thought

2023 Presentation: AI in the Classroom: Adaptation, Integration, and Policy, Bridge Week

Service to the Profession

2026-29 APA Committee on the Status and Future of the Profession, Member

2026 External Reviewer, Tenure and Promotion Case, Pace University

2026- Reviewer, *Philosophical Studies*

2025- Treasurer, Lighthearted Philosophers' Society

2025- Reviewer, Bloomsbury Academic Press

2025- Reviewer, *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*

2023- Reviewer, *The Philosophy of Humor Yearbook*

2022 Panelist, Johns Hopkins University, Teaching Academy: Life after Grad School

2017 APA Eastern Division Meeting, Chair for colloquium on Values in Practice

2016 APA Eastern Division Meeting, Chair for colloquium on Moral Progress in the History of the Moral Norms

2012-14 Johns Hopkins University Philosophy Department Colloquia Committee

2012-14 Reviewer, *Prometheus: Johns Hopkins Undergraduate Philosophy Journal*

2012-13 Johns Hopkins University Center for History and Philosophy of Science Colloquia Organizer

2012-13 Reviewer, *Verge 9&10: Goucher College Undergraduate Journal*

2011-12 President, Hammond Society (Johns Hopkins University philosophy graduate student organization)

2010-11 Faculty Liaison, Hammond Society

2009 Graduate Student Liaison, Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy Conference hosted by George Mason University

Curriculum and Program Development

Program and Departmental Development

2025 Minor in Philosophy, Widener University. Designed and led through approval (Fall 2025); first conferrals expected Spring 2027.

2025 Certificate in Ethical Reasoning, Widener University. Designed and led through approval (Spring 2025); first conferred Spring 2026 to an inaugural cohort of eight students.

2024- Critical AI literacy integration across the general education and professional curricula, with the LEAD-AI Council: core competency matrix, curriculum integration framework, and school- and college-level integration plans.

2023-24 Department of Philosophy, Widener University. Led the proposal and approval process establishing the department, supported by Mellon Foundation funding through the Council of Independent Colleges New Currents in Teaching Philosophy Institute.

Course Development

Ethics of Artificial Intelligence. New course, also developed as a Values Seminar.

Business Ethics. Redesigned around environmental justice and racial capitalism, with Chester Residents Concerned for Quality Living v. Seif as a course throughline.

Introduction to Philosophical Ideas. Redesigned around a serialized simulation as a throughline for social contract theory.

Three ASC-101 first-year seminars, two of them team-taught across divisions.

Philosophy of Education and Epistemology and Philosophy of Science, developed for the Nursing PhD and DNP programs.

Student Mentorship and Advising

Mentored Student Projects

2026 Ritza K. Jean (Nursing), colonialism and the treatment of obstetric fistula. In progress.

2026 Jordy A. Chery (Social Work), abortion rights in the United States. In progress.

2026 Kennedy M. MacIntosh (Nursing), "Can AI Models Know?" In progress.

2025 Ritza K. Jean (Nursing), "Between Culture and Justice in Ethiopia: Rethinking FGM Interventions through a Feminist-Human Rights Lens," Widener University Summer Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities Symposium

2024 Elizabeth Martin (Nursing, History, and Philosophy), "Infected Knowledge: The Ethics of Using Illicit Research from Unit 731," Widener University Summer Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities Symposium (Humanities Group Best Poster Winner). Subsequently developed into a co-authored refereed conference paper (see Presentations, 2024).

2024 Elizabeth Ellis (Nursing), "Contracts, Curiosity, and Conversation: Building Community in ASC-101," Widener University High Impact Practices Fair

Program and Cohort Advising

2026- Faculty Advisor, Widener University football (NCAA Division III)

2026- Academic advisor, Philosophy minors and Ethical Reasoning certificate students

2026 Faculty Mentor, AI Under the Ethiscope student ethics poster showcase, Widener AI Week

2023-25 Faculty Advisor, Humanities Living Learning Community

Professional Society Memberships

American Philosophical Association
American Association of Philosophy Teachers
Richard Rorty Society
Wilfrid Sellars Society
Lighthearted Philosophers' Society
International Association of Philosophy of Humor
International Society of Humor Studies

Teaching Experience

Widener University (Fall 2020 – Present)

- Ethics
- Business Ethics
- Philosophy of Race and Racism
- Ethics of Artificial Intelligence
- Values Seminar: Biomedical Ethics (with Dr. Itzick Vatnick)
- Values Seminar: Ethics of Artificial Intelligence
- ASC-101: The Dangers of Our Digital Communities
- ASC-101: Just How Weird is Reality (with Dr. Martin Melhus)
- ASC-101: How Do You Know I'm Not AI Pretending to be Human? (with Dr. Daniel Roozbahani)
- Introduction to Philosophical Ideas
- Philosophy of Education (for Nursing PhD and DNP Programs)
- Epistemology and Philosophy of Science (for Nursing PhD and DNP Programs)

George Mason University (Fall 2017 – Spring 2020)

- Bioethics (10 times, 1 online)
- Philosophy of Law (3 times)
- Decision and Game Theory (3 times)

George Washington University (Spring 2014 – Fall 2019)

- Introduction to Philosophy (4 times)
- Philosophy of Law
- Ethics: Theory and Applications
- Contemporary Moral Issues

Johns Hopkins University (Spring 2013 – Fall 2018)

- Philosophy of Human Rights (4 times, 2 as a Freshman Seminar)
- Philosophy of Sport
- Introduction to Ethics (TA for Dr. Nandi Theunissen)
- Bioethics (3 times, TA for Dr. Hilary Bok)
- Decisions, Games, and Social Choice (TA for Dr. Justin Bledin)
- History of Modern Philosophy (TA for Dr. Michael Williams)
- History of Modern Psychology (2 times, TA for Dr. Paul Hofer)

Gettysburg College (Spring 2016, Spring 2020)

- Introduction to Philosophy
- Critical Thinking

Contemporary Moral Issues (3 times)

Goucher College (Fall 2012 – Fall 2013)

Introduction to Logic (3 times)

United States Naval Academy (Fall 2011)

Philosophy of Science