GABRIEL VASQUEZ-PETERSON

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AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION AND COMPETENCE

AOS: Normative Ethics, Bioethics, Moral Psychology
AOC: Metaethics, Applied Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy, Ancient Philosophy (especially Aristotle), History of Ethics

EDUCATION

University of Pittsburgh Expected Summer 2027
Ph.D., Philosophy

Dissertation: The Conditionality of Intimate Relationships
Advisors: Jed Lewinsohn (Chair), Japa Pallikkathayil, Jennifer Whiting, Samuel Scheffler (external)
Short abstract: We often speak of our love and concern for our intimates (the people with whom we have intimate relationships) as unconditional. Yet the language of unconditionality can be misleading. How you feel about and act toward a given intimate will normally depend, at least to some extent, on a variety of conditions, including the way they treat you, their moral character, and even your desire to continue your relationship with them. In this dissertation, I investigate these three forms of conditionality, examine the normative considerations at play in each of them, and attempt to determine the extent to which they are normatively appropriate or even required. More specifically, I identify one important and unappreciated way in which our love for our intimates is appropriately dependent on how they treat and relate to us, show that it is often admirable and even required for us to make our relationships with our friends (and others) contingent on their meeting certain moral standards, and investigate the idea that romantic relationships come with a built-in 'exit option.'

University of Florida May 2018
B.A., Philosophy, *magna cum laude*

PRESENTATIONS

"Loving and Being Loved." SCSP 2025, March 28, 2025.

"Irrational Immunity or Rational Vulnerability?" Michigan Mind and Moral Psychology Graduate Conference, University of Michigan, November 5, 2022.

PUBLICATIONS

Book Reviews

Review of Sarah MacFarland Taylor's *Ecopiety: The Dilemma of Green Virtue*. *Environmental Values*, Volume 31, Issue 3 (June 2022), pp. 365–367.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

A paper on love and reciprocity (*draft available upon request*)
A paper on being friends with bad people (*draft available upon request*)
A paper on bodily autonomy (*draft available upon request*)
A paper on the ethics of breaking up
A paper on how we ought to respond to failures to reciprocate

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of Pittsburgh

As Instructor of Record

Concepts of Human Nature: Human Morality (online)	Summer 2026
Introduction to Ethics	Spring 2026
Introduction to Biomedical Ethics	Fall 2025
Social Philosophy: Identity, Diversity, and the Multicultural Society	Fall 2024
Concepts of Human Nature (online)	Summer 2024

As Teaching Assistant

Introduction to Ethics (Instructor: Michael Thompson)	Spring 2024
Introduction to Ethics (Instructor: Michael Thompson)	Spring 2022
Introduction to Ancient Philosophy (Instructor: Jacob Rosen)	Fall 2021
Introduction to Philosophical Problems (Instructor: Samuel Gavin)	Spring 2021
Concepts of Human Nature (Instructor: Gregory Strom)	Fall 2020

Other Teaching Service and Qualifications

University of Pittsburgh Achievements in Pedagogy Badge	In progress
Grader, Carnegie Mellon University (Course: Health and Human Rights)	Fall 2023
Philosophy Department TA Mentor, University of Pittsburgh	2022–2023
Participant, AAPT Teaching and Learning Seminar	Summer 2022

HONORS, AWARDS & FELLOWSHIPS

Elizabeth Baranger Teaching Award (nominated) 2026
University of Pittsburgh

Mellon Pre-Doctoral Fellowship Fall 2019–Spring 2020, Fall 2022–Fall 2023, Spring 2025
University of Pittsburgh

R.M. Hare Award for Best Undergraduate Essay in Moral Philosophy 2018
University of Florida Department of Philosophy

ACADEMIC SERVICE

Referee, *Dialogos*

Graduate Committee Member, Philosophy Colloquium Committee 2023–present
University of Pittsburgh Department of Philosophy

OTHER ACADEMIC WORK

GAINS Intern Summer 2026
University of Pittsburgh DSAS

GRADUATE COURSEWORK

(* indicates audited course)

Ethics

Ethics Core (Japa Pallikkathayil, Fall 2019)
The Good* (Nandi Theunissen, Spring 2020)
Value Theory* (Nandi Theunissen, Spring 2023)
Personal Identity and Ethics* (Jennifer Whiting, Fall 2023)

Social and Political Philosophy
- Exchange (Jed Lewinsohn, Spring 2020)
- Freedom (Japa Pallikkathayil, Spring 2021)
- Cooperation, Mutual Advantage, and Reciprocity* (Jed Lewinsohn, Spring 2022)
- Power* (Danielle Wenner (CMU), Spring 2023)
- Free-Riding* (Jed Lewinsohn, Fall 2025)

Theoretical Philosophy
- Philosophy of Science Core (Mark Wilson, Fall 2019)
- Metaphysics and Epistemology Core (Nicholas Rescher, Spring 2020)
- Advanced Logic Core (Tom Ricketts and Mark Wilson, Spring 2020)
- Rationality (Kevin Dorst, Spring 2021)
- Morality and the Mind-Brain Sciences* (James Woodward, Spring 2022)

History of Philosophy
- Kant's Practical Philosophy* (Steve Engstrom, Fall 2019)
- Marx* (Michael Thompson, Fall 2019)
- Psychic Unity in Ancient Greek Philosophy (Jennifer Whiting, Fall 2019)
- Hume's Ethics (Jed Lewinsohn, Fall 2020)
- Practical Wisdom* (Michael Thompson, Fall 2020)
- Aristotle on Cognition* (Jennifer Whiting, Spring 2021)
- Greek Philosophical Texts: the Meno (Sara Magrin, Fall 2021)
- Aristotle's Anthropology* (Jennifer Whiting, Fall 2022)
- Hume and Smith* (Kevin Zollman (CMU), Fall 2023)
- Aristotle on Justice* (Jacob Rosen and Jed Lewinsohn, Spring 2024)

Bioethics
- Global Justice and Health (Danielle Wenner (CMU), Fall 2020)
- The Theoretical Foundations of Bioethics (Mark Wicclair, Fall 2021)
- Issues in Bioethics (Mark Wicclair, Spring 2022)

REFERENCES

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Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy
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Japa Pallikkathayil
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LONG DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

The Conditionality of Intimate Relationships

We often speak of our love and concern for our intimates (the people with whom we have intimate relationships) as unconditional. This captures something important: our feelings for them, and our interest in having relationships with them, are neither fickle nor based on contingent instrumental considerations. Yet the language of unconditionality can be misleading. How you feel about and act toward a given intimate will normally depend, at least to some extent, on a variety of conditions, including the way they treat you, their moral character, and even your desire to continue your relationship with them. In this dissertation, I

investigate these three forms of conditionality, examine the normative considerations at play in each of them, and attempt to determine the extent to which they are normatively appropriate or even required.

In my first chapter, I identify one important, and unappreciated, way in which our feelings for our intimates are appropriately dependent on how they treat us. I begin by arguing that we take the fact that an intimate of mine has played a *loving role* in my life—that is, the fact that she has loved me and consistently expressed that love in appropriate ways over a long period of time—to be a reason for me to love her. I show that this sort of loving role-based reason for love is distinct from the other sorts of reasons commonly discussed by philosophers. Next, I argue that we are right to be committed to the existence of loving role-based reasons and develop a more complete account of such reasons. I also respond to several objections, including the idea that love should not, or even cannot, be conditional on how the beloved treats you. This idea, I show, illicitly conflates the form of conditionality operative reciprocal relationships with the one at play in purely transactional ones. Then, I suggest that we can explain *why* loving roles give rise to reasons for love by appealing to a general principle of reciprocity. Finally, I conclude by considering how the sort of reason for love I have identified relates to our other sorts of reasons for love.

In my second chapter, I ask whether our commitment to, and feelings for, our friends should be conditional on their meeting certain moral standards. Many of us judge that those who maintain friendship or friendly associations with people they know to be seriously bad—like serial sexual predators or violent, unrepentant bigots—thereby reveal, and express, an insufficient commitment to important moral values. This judgement is reflected in our criticism of the people who knowingly hobnob with figures like the disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein, and it has recently been endorsed by some philosophers. However, others have noted that it is not clear why being properly committed to morality should entail an unwillingness to associate with bad people. I respond to this concern by showing that commitment to morality has an important social element, one which involves finding certain radical forms of moral failure repulsive. This account allows us to (largely) vindicate the judgment under investigation and shows that it is often admirable and even required for us to make our relationships with our friends (and others) contingent on their meeting certain moral standards. However, I also show that this conditionality is limited, for we can, and often do, have strong reasons for standing by our friends when they are revealed to be bad people, reasons which can outweigh our reasons to disassociate from them.

In my third chapter, I explore an important tension in our thinking about intimate relationships. We think of such relationships as voluntary in that one partner can acceptably choose to exit the relationship regardless of what the other partner desires. If this is right, then these relationships are conditional in a quite radical way. Yet most of us agree that we have duties to our romantic partners, and it is hard to square the importance we give these duties (and the commitments which partially ground them) with the idea that we

can voluntarily extricate ourselves from them at any time. Some philosophers have suggested that we can explain this 'exit option' by appealing to the value of voluntary relationships. However, I argue against this idea, and then suggest that we can make more progress in resolving this tension by distinguishing between our reasons to love and care for our partners and our reasons to persist in a certain kind of relationship with them—as well as by distinguishing the different motivations one can have for breaking up. Furthermore, I argue that even if we do (sometimes) have an exit option in romantic relationships, our former partners can still often be justified in holding our use of that option against us.

Each of the three essays which constitute this dissertation argues for an independent set of claims. Taken together, though, they present us with a clearer picture of how our intimate relationships should be. On this picture, our love and commitment are appropriately conditional in a range of important and underappreciated ways. These forms of conditionality have limits, but they remain a central part of our intimate relationships.