

# Bill Watson

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109 Griswold Hall, 1525 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02138

## Current Position

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

## Education

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**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

## Legal Experience

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**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

## Publications

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*Metalinguistic Negotiation in Legal Speech*, LAW & PHILOSOPHY (forthcoming)

*Explaining Legal Agreement*, JURISPRUDENCE (forthcoming)

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

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

*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)

Comment, *Disability Claims, Guidance Documents, and the Problem of Nonlegislative Rules*, 80 U. CHI. L. REV. 2037 (2013)

## **Works in Progress**

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*The titles of certain papers are suppressed for purposes of blind review.*

Obstructing Precedent

Positivist Legal Interpretation

How to Be a Textualist in Statutory Interpretation Without Being an Originalist in Constitutional Interpretation

A paper on a shift in our concept of law and its methodological implications

## **Research & Teaching Interests**

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### **Research Interests**

Legal Interpretation (esp. statutory interpretation); Legal Philosophy (esp. precedential reasoning, the nature of law, and related methodological questions)

### **Teaching Interests**

Primary: Legislation, Administrative Law, Civil Procedure, Evidence

Secondary: Criminal Law, Constitutional Law, Professional Ethics, Jurisprudence

## **Teaching Experience**

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### **Harvard Law School**

- Legal Research and Writing, Fall 2022 & Spring 2023

## **Cornell University**

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

## **Presentations**

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Obstructing Precedent, Rutgers Law School Camden Faculty Workshop (Feb. 8, 2023)

Commentator, Mitchell Berman's "How Practices Make Principles," Constitutional Law & Jurisprudence Conference, Dartmouth College (Sept. 24, 2022)

Metalinguistic Negotiation in Legal Speech, Mark L. Shapiro Graduate Philosophy Conference, Brown University (Apr. 10, 2022)

Metalinguistic Negotiation in Legal Speech, Southwest Graduate Philosophy Conference, Arizona State University (Mar. 26, 2022)

Shifting Concepts of Law, Sage School of Philosophy Department Workshop, Cornell University (Mar. 11, 2022)

Metalinguistic Negotiation in Legal Speech, Sage School of Philosophy Department Workshop, Cornell University (Nov. 3, 2021)

## **Fellowships & Awards**

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Graduate Teaching Fellowship, Center for Teaching Innovation, Cornell University, 2021–2022 (opportunity to design programs that foster teaching excellence and innovation)

Ann Watson Barber Outstanding Service Award, University of Chicago Law School, 2014 (for students who make an exceptional contribution to quality of life at the law school)

## **Professional Service**

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Referee for *Law & Philosophy* and *Journal of Ethics & Social Philosophy*

## **Admissions**

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State of Illinois; Northern District of Illinois; Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals