

# Bill Watson

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109 Griswold Hall, 1525 Massachusetts Avenue, 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

## Research & Teaching Interests

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**Primary:** Legislation, Constitutional Law, Jurisprudence, Civil Procedure, Administrative Law  
**Secondary:** Evidence, Federal Courts, Criminal Law, Professional Responsibility

## 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

## Published Articles

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An asterisk (\*) denotes publication in a peer-reviewed journal

*Obstructing Precedent* [job talk paper], NW. U. L. REV. (forthcoming)

\**Metalinguistic Negotiation in Legal Speech*, 42 LAW & PHILOSOPHY 487 (2023)

\**Explaining Legal Agreement*, 14 JURISPRUDENCE 221 (2023)

\**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)

## Book Reviews, Essays, Etc.

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*Did the Court in SFFA Overrule Grutter?*, 99 NOTRE DAME L. REV. REFLECTION 113 (2023)

*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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What Are We Debating When We Debate Legal Interpretation?

## Presentations

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Textualism in Statutory Interpretation without Originalism in Constitutional Interpretation

- National Conference of Constitutional Law Scholars (Feb. 24, 2024)

Obstructing Precedent

- Law and Philosophy Workshop, Harvard Law School (Nov. 15, 2023)
- AALS Jurisprudence Junior Scholars Workshop (Aug. 4, 2023)
- 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)
- Southwest Graduate Philosophy Conference, Arizona State University (Mar. 26, 2022)
- Philosophy Department Workshop, Cornell University (Nov. 3, 2021)

Shifting Concepts of Law

- Philosophy Department Workshop, Cornell University (Mar. 11, 2022)

## **Teaching Experience**

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### **Harvard Law School**

- Legal Research and Writing, Fall 2022, Spring 2023, Fall 2023, Spring 2024

### **Cornell University**

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

## **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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Contributing editor for the Jurisprudence Section of JOTWELL

Referee for *Law and Philosophy*, *Journal of Ethics & Social Philosophy*, *Yale Law Journal*, and Routledge Publishing

## **Admissions**

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State of Illinois (inactive); Northern District of Illinois; Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals