

KOBI FINESTONE

Curriculum Vitae

Department of Philosophy
Duke University
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Education

2022	Ph.D. Candidate, Philosophy, Duke University Graduate Certificates: College Teaching
2019	M.A., Economics, Duke University
2014	M.A., Philosophy, University College London
2013	B.Sc. Philosophy of Science, London School of Economics

Areas of Specialization

Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Economics, Business Ethics, and Philosophy Politics and Economics

Areas of Competency

Social and Political Philosophy, Epistemology, and Philosophy of Biology

Dissertation Committee

Making Models Work
Kevin D. Hoover (Chair), Alex Rosenberg, Robert Brandon, Jennifer Jhun

The prevalent use of models in scientific research programs has spurred a rise in methodological research into the nature of scientific modeling in recent years. However, despite the focus from both philosophers and scientists, there remains a relatively widespread perception amongst those interested in methodology that something is awry. This is perhaps best summarized by the well-known aphorism that ‘*all models are wrong but some are useful*’. Given the reasonable precept that truth is a guide to efficacy, it does seem mysterious how a false model could ever be useful. My dissertation attempts to resolve this mystery by explicating how even seemingly false or idealized models can be made true through the judicious use of statistical methods such as those deployed in modern economics. This is the constructive element of scientific modeling which, I argue, has been largely overlooked in the recent philosophical scholarship.

Academic Articles

Finestone, K. (2022) “Darwinian Rational Expectations”. *Journal of Economic Methodology*, 1-11. doi:10.1080/1350178X.2022.2035796

Finestone, K., & Kingston, E. (2021). “Crisis Prices: The Ethics of Market Controls during a Global Pandemic”. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 1-29. doi:10.1017/beq.2021.15

Fellowships and Grants

2021	Duke Competitive Summer Research Fellowship (\$5,500)
2020	Duke Competitive Summer Research Fellowship (\$5,500)
2018-2019	Duke Support for Interdisciplinary Graduate Networks (D-SIGN): Social Science Methods Network (\$6,000)
2018	Duke Competitive Summer Research Fellowship (\$5,500)

Peer Reviewed Talks

September 2021	International Network for Economic Methodology (Arizona State University). “The Propensity Interpretation of Rational Expectations.”
September 2019	Soul of Economics Conference (University of Zurich). “Situated Expertise and Democratic Governance.”
August 2019	International Network for Economic Methodology (University of Helsinki). “The Incompatibility of Rational Expectations and Knightian Uncertainty: A Limit of Economic Knowledge.”
August 2017	International Network for Economic Methodology (San Sebastian). “Mind the Inference Gap: The Necessity of a Dynamic Solution.”

Invited Talks

May 2019	The Consortium for the History and Philosophy of Biology (Université de Paris). “Replaying the Ticker Tape: Contingency and the Efficient Market Hypothesis.”
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Invited Comments

May 2017	The Consortium for the History and Philosophy of Biology (Université de Montreal). Comments on Marga Vicedo’s “The ‘Disadapted’ Animal: Niko Tinbergen on Human Nature.”
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Workshops

July 2021	Politics, Philosophy, and Economics Graduate Summer Workshop (Chapman University)
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Teaching Experience at Duke University

Instructor of Record

Summer 2021	Introduction to Logic
Fall 2020	Introduction to Logic
Fall 2020	Problems in Philosophy of Science

Summer 2020	Introduction to Logic
Spring 2020	Introduction to Logic
Fall 2019	Introduction to Philosophy
Summer 2109	Business Ethics
Spring 2018	Introduction to Logic
Fall 2018	Introduction to Philosophy

Teaching Assistant

Spring 2019	Philosophy of Economics	[Alex Rosenberg]
Spring 2018	Introduction to Philosophy	[Alex Rosenberg]
Fall 2017	Philosophy of Economics	[Alex Rosenberg]
Spring 2017	Philosophy of Biology	[Robert Brandon and Daniel McShea]
Fall 2016	Symbolic Logic	[Robert Brandon]

Other Experience

Spring 2022	Thomson Writing Studio Consultant
Fall 2021	Thomson Writing Studio Consultant

Graduate Coursework

Philosophy of Science

Metaphysics of Science [Fenton-Glynn], *Philosophy of Biology* [Brandon], *Causation* [Hoover], *Historical and Philosophical Perspectives on Science* [Janiak]

Epistemology

Epistemology of Disagreement [van Wietmarschen]

Philosophy of Mind

Philosophy of Mind [O'Brien]

Formal Methods

Symbolic Logic [Pavese]

Metaphysics

Metaphysics [Kalderon], *Experience* [Kalderon], *Conditionals* [Pavese], *Metaphysics* [Van Inwagen]

Value Theory

Proseminar in Value Theory [Buchanan and Hawkins], *Race Theory* [Brandon], *Advanced Studies in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics* [Bovens], *Social Choice Theory* [Adler]

History of Philosophy

Aristotle [Ferejohn], *Modern Political Theory* [Beattie]

Economics

Microeconomics [Yildirim], *Introduction to Econometrics* [Hotz], *Macroeconomic Theory* [Peretto], *Applied Econometrics* [Xu], *International Trade* [Tower], *Economic Growth* [Peretto], *Time Series Econometrics* [Quaedvlieg], *International Monetary Economics* [Kimbrough]

Departmental and Professional Services

2020-2022	President – Duke Philosophy Graduate Student Association
2018-2019	Department Representative – Duke Philosophy Graduate Student Association
2018-2019	President – Social Science Methods Network

References

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Alex Rosenberg, R. Taylor Cole Distinguished Professor of Philosophy
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Robert Brandon, Professor of Philosophy
Duke University
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Jennifer Jhun, Assistant Professor of Philosophy
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Dissertation Abstract

Scientific models stand at the center of a number of research programs. Such models facilitate explanations, predictions, and measurements and often serve as the foundation for more extensive theoretical and empirical research. However, despite their apparent efficacy, models seem to pose an inherent methodological puzzle which is well summarized by the well-known aphorism that ‘*all models are wrong but some are useful*’. That models are useful is in little doubt, though of course there are instances in which particular models may be misapplied. But as a general methodology, modeling has proven to be widely effective across a wide range of scientific contexts. Therefore, there does seem to be a genuine methodological puzzle, but only if one accepts the general precept that all models are in fact wrong.

In my dissertation, I reject the claim that all models are wrong. On a surface level this is due to the fact that models cannot technically be false as they are objects rather than propositions. However, more substantively, my argument revolves around the fact that even idealized models can be made true through the judicious use of statistical techniques. The old aphorism ought to be reformulated to ‘*not all models are false and some can be made useful*’.

In greater detail, my dissertation is composed of three substantive chapters and an introductory chapter. The introductory chapter, which is entitled *Modeling as Activity*, details my broad methodological framework, and situates me within the philosophical and scientific literature.

In the first substantive chapter, entitled *Decompositional Models*, I argue that scientific models can always be decomposed into their constituent parts and properties. This entails that it is possible to assess the efficacy of particular model components in a piecemeal fashion. And while this thesis may not sound overly controversial, it has recently been challenged in the philosophical literature by Collin Rice (2019). In defending the decomposability of models, my argument involves two distinct branches. The first emphasizes the importance of pragmatics in modeling which is unaccounted for on Rice’s account. The second proposes an account of representation which is only possible given model decomposition. Given this dependency, I argue there is good reason to believe in model decomposition.

In the second substantive chapter, entitled *Idealized Models are Ideal*, I argue that idealizations are necessary for successful representation and that models which exemplify idealizations constitute the true representational and modeling ideal. This entails a rejection of the standard philosophical modeling ideal of completeness which holds that the ideal model is maximally complex and maximally precise. My argument once again involves two main branches. In the first, I demonstrate how the ideal of completeness is conceptually unsound. In the second branch I demonstrate how the complete representation is fundamentally undesirable given the standard epistemic tasks associated with modeling.

In the third and final substantive chapter, entitled *Making Models Work*, I articulate the constructive process by which theoretical idealized models can be made to cohere with concrete target systems through the judicious use of statistical techniques. Drawing on theoretical and empirical research in economics, I detail precisely how idealizations can be *transformed* and *tailored* to fit actual target systems. Moreover, I argue that this constructive process differs in important respects from the philosophical de-idealization literature and points towards a new approach to understanding empirical modeling.