Curriculum Vitae
Erich Riesen

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Areas of Specialization

Ethics and Applied Ethics, especially AI Ethics, Bioethics, and Military Ethics

Areas of Competence

Philosophy of Science & Technology, Philosophy of Mind, and Metaphysics

Academic Appointments

2022-   Visiting Assistant Professor, *Department of Philosophy,* Fort Lewis College

Education

2022   PhD in Philosophy – University of Colorado, Boulder
        Doctoral Thesis (abstract on final page)
            Title: "Systems and Machines: The Moral Import of Autonomous AI Technologies"
            Committee Members: David Boonin (Chair), Alastair Norcross, Rob Rupert, Brian
            Talbot, and Lisa Miracchi Titus.
2015   MA in Philosophy - Northern Illinois University
2012   Concurrent BA in Psychology and Philosophy – University of San Diego

Publications

2022   "The Moral Case for the Development and Use of Autonomous Weapon Systems" in *The Journal of Military Ethics*

A blog post based on this paper is featured on the *Blog of the American Philosophical Association* (https://blog.apaonline.org/2022/02/28/the-moral-case-for-the-development-of-autonomous-weapon-systems/)

Under Review (draft available upon request)

"A Technological-Systems Approach to AI Ethics"
"The Moral Case Revisited: Why Lethal Autonomy Is Still a Good Idea"

Work in Progress

"Consciousness and Considerability: Why AI Ethics is Asking the Wrong Questions"
"Overcoming the Biological N=1 Problem"

Awards and Honors

2023   Fli Hi Award for Contributions to Student Learning at Fort Lewis College (achievement
        award given to one faculty member each month)
2021   Wes Morriston Teaching Prize for the Outstanding Graduate Instructor at CU Boulder
        (department-wide competition)
2021   Center for Humanities and the Arts Dissertation Completion Fellowship at CU Boulder
        (department-wide competition)

Award and Honors continued
2020   Center for the Study of Origins Graduate Research Fellowship at CU Boulder (Spring &
        Fall; two university-wide competitions)
2020   Nominated for the Teaching Excellence Award at CU Boulder (department-wide
        competition)
2015   Magna Cum Laude Institutional Honors at Northern Illinois University
2012   Magna Cum Laude Institutional Honors at University of San Diego (USD)
2012   The 2012 Carolin Book Award for Outstanding Senior in Philosophy at USD
2012   Psychological Sciences Service Award at USD
2012   Departmental Honors in Psychology at USD
2012   Departmental Honors in Philosophy at USD

Paper Presentations
"The Moral Case Revisited: Why Lethal Autonomy is Still a Good Idea"
    International Society of Military Ethics Conference 07/2023
"A Technological Systems Approach to AI Ethics"
    International Society of Military Ethics Conference 07/2022
    CU Boulder's Center for Values and Social Policy 02/2022
"Autonomous Weapon Systems and the Principle of Unnecessary Risk"
    International Society of Military Ethics Conference 07/2021
    CU Boulder's Center for Values and Social Policy 05/2021
    Embedding AI in Society Symposium put on by the AI in Society Group at North Carolina State
    University 02/2021
 "Overcoming the Biological N=1 Problem"
    CU Boulder's Center for the Study of Origins 03/2021
    The 66th Annual Florida Philosophical Association Conference 02/2021
"The Moral Case for the Development and Use of Autonomous Weapons" –
    American Philosophical Association Conference, Eastern Division 01/2021
    Mid-South Philosophy Conference (cancelled due to Covid-19)
"Why it is Wrong to Kill Merely Conscious Beings"
    Animal and Political Theory session at the Manchester University Center for Political Theory
    (MANCEPT) conference 07/2015
    Alabama Philosophical Society Conference 05/2015
    Illinois Philosophical Association Conference 03/2015
"Experimental Philosophy and the Experience of Agency"
    Presented at the Center for Cognition and Neuroethics Free Will Conference at University of
    Michigan, Flint. 04/2014

Teaching Experience (as sole instructor)
Philosophy and Ethics of Artificial Intelligence: Fall 2023
Mind, Consciousness, & Language: Spring 2023
Bioethics: Summer 2020 (remote), Winter 2020 (online), Summer 2022 (remote)
Contemporary Social Problems: Fall 2018
Critical Thinking: Summer 2019
Ethics and Information Technology: Fall 2019, Spring 2021 (remote), Summer 2021 (online)
Introduction to Ethics: Fall 2017, Fall 2022, Spring 2023, Fall 2023
Introduction to Philosophy: Spring 2018, Spring 2019, Fall 2022, Spring 2023, Fall 2023
Philosophy and the Sciences: Summer 2018

Course Development

2021   Philosophy & Ethics of Artificial Intelligence – Developed an upper-level course on AI ethics offered at CU Boulder Spring 2022 & Fort Lewis College Fall 2023.

2020   Bioethics – Developed and taught a three-week intensive online course for CU Boulder's Continuing Education Program. The course leverages experiential learning and interactive pedagogy. It focuses on moral issues related to new biotech and the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Service

President of Graduate Students in philosophy (2020-2021)
Lead Graduate-Student Teacher (2020-2021)
Rocky Mountain Graduate Philosophy Conference Organizer (2019-2020)
Philosophy Outreach Program of Colorado Coordinator (Fall of 2017 – Spring 2020)
Climate Equity Diversity Committee (Fall 2018 – Spring 2020)

References/Letter Writers

1. David Boonin - (CU Boulder): david.boonin@colorado.edu, 303-875-5130
2. Alastair Norcross (CU Boulder): alastair.norcross@colorado.edu, 303-735-3034
3. Lisa Miracchi Titus (University of Denver): lisa.titus@du.edu, 617-824-0130
4. Julia Staffel (Teaching, CU Boulder): julia.staffel@colorado.edu
5. Sarah Roberts-Cady (Teaching, Fort Lewis College): roberts_s@fortlewis.edu 970-247-7002

*Contact CU Boulder Philosophy Department's administrator Karen Sites for letters of reference listed above (Karen.sites@colorado.edu; 303-492-3172)

Dissertation Abstract

My dissertation is comprised of four related papers investigating the ethics of autonomous AI systems (AAISs). Chapter 1 develops a systems-based account of AI technology that conceives of AAISs as extended socio-technical systems that include human beings and machines as parts. I argue that the systems framework does a better job than the dominant machine-based conception at capturing the metaphysics of AI technology. Furthermore, the systems conception opens the door to solutions to classic problems in AI ethics—such as the responsibility gap problem—whereas machine-based conceptions often lead to fatalism. Chapter 2 applies my systems framework to autonomous weapon systems (AWS). I argue that there are actually strong moral reasons in favor of AWS technology that have been underemphasized in the literature. I then respond to a number of objections to AWS, showing how they stem from an inaccurate (machine-based) portrayal of the technology as "killer robots," thereby eschewing the important roles that humans play in the design, operation, and testing of AWS. Chapters 3 and 4 investigate ethics *for* AI, meaning they explore whether AAIAs now or in the future might themselves deserve moral consideration. Chapter 3 argues that current and foreseeable AAIAs, including humanoid machines, are unlikely to have phenomenally conscious mental states, and further, that having such states is the best reason for thinking an entity is morally considerable. Chapter 4 assumes that intelligent machines will not be phenomenally conscious, and then investigates whether there might be other grounds on which to grant them moral status or moral rights. I look at a variety of reasons recently provided by philosophers and technologists and find them all wanting. The overarching conclusion from chapters 3 and 4, then, is that it is unlikely that AAIAs either now or in the future will be moral patients or deserve moral rights, suggesting that philosophers and technologists better spend their time doing ethics *of AI* as opposed to ethics *for AI.*