

# Russell Powell

Boston University / Department of Philosophy  
745 Commonwealth Avenue, Room 536B, Boston, Massachusetts 02215  
516-350-2110 / [powell@bu.edu](mailto:powell@bu.edu)

[HTTP://WWW.BU.EDU/PHILO/PEOPLE/FACULTY/FULL-TIME/RUSSELL-POWELL/](http://www.bu.edu/philo/people/faculty/full-time/russell-powell/)

## AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Science  
Philosophical Bioethics

**Areas of Competence:** Legal/Political Philosophy, Moral Psychology, Philosophy of Mind

## EDUCATION

**Ph.D.** Philosophy, Duke University (2009)  
**M.S.** Evolutionary Biology, Duke University (2009)  
**J.D.**, with honors, New York University Law School (2002)  
**B.A.** Philosophy, *summa cum laude*, SUNY Binghamton (1999)

## HONORS

*American Council of Learned Societies New Faculty Fellow*, 2011 (declined for tenure-track job)  
*James B. Duke Fellow*, Duke University Society of Fellows  
*Phi Beta Kappa*, Binghamton University Chapter

## ACADEMIC POSITIONS

**Boston University**, Department of Philosophy (since July 2011)  
*Assistant Professor*

**Konrad Lorenz Institute for Evolution and Cognition Research, Vienna** (Spring 2012)  
*Visiting Fellow*, Conceptual, Theoretical and Ethical Problems in Human Evolution

**Boğaziçi University, Istanbul** (Summer 2012)  
*Visiting Faculty Fellow*

**Oxford University**, Faculty of Philosophy (2009-2011)  
*Arts and Humanities Research Council Fellow*, Oxford Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics  
*James Martin Research Fellow*, Institute for Science and Ethics, Oxford Martin School  
*Research Associate*, Corpus Christi College

**Johns Hopkins University**, Berman Institute of Bioethics (2008-2009)  
*Greenwall Postdoctoral Fellow*

**Georgetown University**, Department of Philosophy / Kennedy Institute of Ethics (2008-2009)  
*Visiting Assistant Professor of Philosophy* and *Senior Research Scholar*, respectively

## JOURNAL APPOINTMENTS

**Journal of Medical Ethics**, *Associate Editor*, British Medical Journal Group (April 2011-present)

## PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

Powell, R. (2012), "The Future of Human Evolution," *British Journal for Philosophy of Science* 63: 145-175.  
Powell, R. and A. Buchanan (2011), "Breaking Evolution's Chains: The Prospect of Deliberate Genetic Modification in Humans," *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 36(1): 6-27. Re-printed in Briefing Book for the U.S. Presidential Commission for Bioethics, 2010.

- Powell, R. and S. Clarke (2012), "Religion as an Evolutionary Byproduct: A Critique of the Standard Model," *British Journal for Philosophy of Science* doi: 10.1093/bjps/axr035
- Powell, R. (2012), "Convergent Evolution and the Limits of Natural Selection," *European Journal for the Philosophy of Science* doi: 10.1007/s13194-012-0047-9
- Powell, R., S. Clarke and J. Savulescu (2012). "An ethical and prudential argument for prioritizing the reduction of parasite-stress in the allocation of healthcare resources," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 35(2): 90-1.
- Powell, R. (forthcoming), "Evolutionary Theory and the Ethics of Emerging Biotechnologies," *Philosophy & Technology*
- Powell, R. and S. Holm (forthcoming), "Artefactual Organisms and Function-Oriented Theories of Value," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*
- Powell, R. (2010), "The Evolutionary Biological Implications of Human Genetic Engineering," *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* doi: 10.1093/jmp/jhq004
- Powell, R. (2010), "What's the harm? An Evolutionary Theoretical Critique of the Precautionary Principle," *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* 20(2): 181–206.
- Douglas, T., R. Powell. K. Devolder et al. (2010), "Resisting Sparrow's Sexy *Reductio*: Selection Principles and the Social Good," *American Journal of Bioethics*
- Powell, R. (2009), "Contingency and Convergence in Macroevolution," *Journal of Philosophy* 106(7): 390-404.
- Buchanan, A. and R. Powell (2008), "Constitutional Democracy and the Rule of International Law: Are They Compatible?" *Journal of Political Philosophy* 16(3): 326-349
- Powell, R. (2007), "Is Convergence More than an Analogy? Homoplasmy and its Implications for Macroevolutionary Predictability," *Biology and Philosophy*, vol. 22, pp. 565-578
- Powell, R. (2007), "The Law and Philosophy of Preventive War: An Institution-Based Approach to Collective Self-Defense," *Australian Journal of Legal Philosophy* 32: 67-89

#### JOURNALS EDITED

- Powell, R. (main editor), G. Kahane and J. Savulescu (co-eds.) (forthcoming), "Evolution, Genetic Engineering and Human Enhancement," *Philosophy & Technology*
- Powell, R. and S. Holm (forthcoming), "Organism, Machine and Artefact: The Conceptual and Normative Challenges of Synthetic Biology," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*

#### BOOKS

- Clarke, S., R. Powell and J. Savulescu (forthcoming), *Scientific and Conceptual Investigations of Religious Conflict*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

#### INVITED ARTICLES / BOOK CHAPTERS / EDITORIALS

- Powell, R. (forthcoming), "Technological thinking in biology and science education," in *Philosophical perspectives on the role of technology in science*, S.O. Hansson (ed.), Springer.
- Powell, R. (2012). "Concise Argument: Governmental Coercion in the Name of Health." *Journal of Medical Ethics* 38(6): 325-326.
- Powell, R. (2011), "On the Nature of Species and the Moral Significance of their Extinction," in *Oxford Handbook on Animal Ethics*, T.L. Beauchamp and R.J. Frey (eds.), Oxford University Press.
- Powell, R. (forthcoming), "Beyond the Blueprint: Genetic Exceptionalism and the Enhancement of Development." *Philosophy Now*
- Powell, R. (2010), "Nanoethics: Big Ethical Issues with Small Technology," *Notre Dame Phil. Reviews*

Powell, R. and A. Buchanan (2009), “Fidelity to Constitutional Democracy and to Robust International Law,” in *Routledge Handbook of International Law*, D. Armstrong (ed.), Routledge.

### **EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERSHIP**

*Philosophy and Technology*, Executive Editor

### **PROFESSIONAL CONSULTING**

Panelist, National Endowment for the Arts, Collaborative Research Grant Program (2012)  
U.S. President’s Commission on Bioethics (2010): Synthetic Biology  
Nuffield Council on Bioethics (2011): Synthetic Biology  
American Psychological Association, *Monitor on Psychology*: Moral Psychology

### **UNIVERSITY SERVICE**

Admissions Committee, Accelerated Medical Program, Boston University (2012)

### **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

- *Healthcare Ethics— Graduate Level* (Boston University, 2012)
- *Philosophy of Biology – Graduate Level* (Boston University, 2012)
- *Biomedical Ethics* (Boston University, 2011)
- *Bioethics* (Oxford University, Ethox Centre, Department of Public Health, 2011)
- *Philosophy of Science* (Oxford University, Lectures, co-taught w/ Prof. Simon Saunders 2010)
- *Ethical Theory* (Oxford University, New College, Tutorial 2010)
- *Practical Ethics* (Oxford University, St Anne’s College, Tutorial 2010)
- *Philosophy of Biology - Graduate Level* (Georgetown University, Fall 2008, Spring 2009)
- *Philosophy of Environmental Science* (Georgetown University, Spring 2009)
- *The Ethics of War and International Affairs* (Duke University, mixed Grad/UG Seminar Spring 2008)
- *Genomics, Ethics and Public Policy* (Duke University, Fall 2007)
- *Biomedical Ethics* (Duke University, Summer 2007)
- *Philosophical Problems in Constitutional Law* (Duke University, Spring 2006)
- *Ethics and Public Policy* (w/ Allen Buchanan as primary instructor, Duke University, Fall 2006)

### **REFeree**

*Biology and Philosophy*, *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, *American Journal of Bioethics*, *Mind*, *Philosophy & Technology*, *Wellcome Trust Foundation*

### **DISSERTATION**

*Reading the Book of Life: Contingency and Convergence in Macroevolution*  
{Supervisors: Alex Rosenberg / Robert Brandon}

**Abstract.** Biologists have long debated whether the shape of complex life represents the fluky culmination of an eminently unrepeatable series of contingencies, or whether there is a greater necessity to life’s grand parade of forms. In his book *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History* (1989), the late paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould invites us to contemplate the following evolutionary thought experiment: rewind the “tape of life” to when the first animals evolved (some 550-700 million years ago), and consider how its story would again unfurl. Gould believed that replaying the tape of life would result in a radically different macroevolutionary outcome—a morphological menagerie bearing little resemblance to complex life as we know it. Others have argued that the evolution of animal life is highly replicable because it is significantly constrained by physical and biological laws. In this thesis, I analyze several key theoretical concepts in this debate, especially the

notion of contingency as it functions in macroevolutionary theory, and I explore various methodological hurdles confronting the empirical resolution of this controversy.

### EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY MASTERS THESIS

*Extinction and Reiteration in the History of Life: A Macroevolutionary Dialectic*  
{Supervisor: V. Louise Roth}

**Abstract.** In this thesis, I examine the macroevolutionary dialectic between the extinction of biological forms on the one hand, and their evolutionary reiteration on the other. Extinction is historical, contingent, and irreversible, while reiteration is general, timeless, and cyclical. The first Part treats the conceptual and methodological problems relating to biological extinction, while the second examines the iterated evolution of robust image-forming sensory modalities, including vision, echolocation, and electromagnetism.

### LAW SCHOOL THESIS

*Science and Law in the Construction of Human Races* (2002)  
{Supervisor: F. Michael Higginbotham}

**Abstract.** In this thesis I explore the interaction between racist law and flawed science in perpetuating the American racial caste system in the Antebellum and post-Civil War South.

### CONFERENCES / TALKS

- ❖ *Biological Evolution in a Technological Species*, Boston Philosophy of Science Colloquium, 2011
- ❖ *The Ethics of Germ-Line Modification*, Sabanci University, Istanbul, Turkey, August 2011
- ❖ *Genetic Modification and Preservation of Human Good*, Boston University, January 2011
- ❖ *The Ethics of Germ-Line Modification*, New York University, January 2011
- ❖ Co-organizer: *Organism and Machine: The Conceptual and Normative Challenges of Synthetic Biology*, University of Copenhagen, 2011 (w/ Sune Holm)
- ❖ *A Future Without Genetic Engineering: Medicine, Evolution and the Preservation of Human Good*, James Martin Advanced Research Seminar, Oxford University, 2010
- ❖ *The Ethics of Synthetic Biology: A Comprehensive Approach* (w/ Allen Buchanan), material presented at the meeting of the U.S. Presidential Commission for Bioethics, 2010
- ❖ *Genetic Engineering and Human Variation*, Consortium for the Ethics of Emerging Technologies, Oxford University, 2010
- ❖ *Adaptationism and the Limits of Natural Selection*, Altenberg Symposium in Theoretical Biology, Konrad Lorenz Institute for Evolution and Cognition Research, University of Vienna, 2010
- ❖ *Is Religion an Adaptation or a Byproduct?* University of Edinburgh, International conference on Science and Religion, 2010 (European Society for the Study of Science and Theology).
- ❖ Chief Organizer: *Scientific and Normative Perspectives on Religious Conflict*, University of Oxford, 2010 (with Steve Clarke)
- ❖ *Is Extinction Really Forever? Convergent Evolution and the Limits of Natural Selection*, Darwin Day Speaker, Department of Evolution, Ecology and Behavior, Georgetown University (2009)
- ❖ *What's the Harm? A Skeptical Assessment of the Precautionary Principle*, Georgetown Univ. Conference on the Ethics of Emerging Technologies, 2008
- ❖ *Precaution and Genetic Modification*, Johns Hopkins University, Berman Inst. of Bioethics, 2008
- ❖ *Contingency in Macroevolution*, Rutgers Univ. Philosophy Dept. Colloquium (2008)
- ❖ *Reading the Book of Life*, Florida State Univ. Department of Philosophy (2008)
- ❖ *This Gouldian View of Life*, University of Kansas, Philosophy Colloquium (2008)
- ❖ *Is Robust Image-Formation a Key Innovation?* Philosophy of Biology Conference on Complexity (Université de Montréal, 2006).
- ❖ *Constitutionalism and Robust International Law*, Duke University, Philosophy Department

- ❖ *Preventive War: Institutions and the Right to Self-Defense*, Graduate Conference in Ethics and Political Philosophy (Virginia Tech, 2006).
- ❖ *Faculty Advisory Committee*, Provost Lecture Series: *Science & Human Nature* (2007-2008)
- ❖ Organizer: 7<sup>th</sup> annual Conference in Philosophy & Biology, *Exploring the Major Transitions of Life: Individuality, Coloniality, and the Units of Selection*, Duke, 2008 (w/ Leonore Fleming)
- ❖ 6<sup>th</sup> annual Conference in Philosophy and Biology, *Chance in Evolution* (Duke, 2007)
- ❖ 5<sup>th</sup> annual Conference in Philosophy and Biology, *The Emotions as Norm Enforcers: The Interface between Evolution, Ethics, and Game Theory* (Duke, 2006).

## **LEGAL EXPERIENCE**

### ***Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP***, New York, NY

*Attorney*, Complex Mass Torts and Insurance Litigation, 2001-2004

Commercial Matters: Class action litigation, complex product liability, commercial contracts, intellectual property, insurance law, and corporate finance.

Pro Bono Matters: Immigration (asylum), domestic relations (VAWA petitions), housing discrimination, and animal welfare.

Awards: Pro Bono Publico Service Award, 2002-2003

### ***Animal Legal Defense Fund***

*Law Professional Volunteer*, Oct. 2002-Present

### ***The Legal Aid Society New York***, NY

*Student Attorney Practitioner*, Aug. 2001-May 2002

## **BAR MEMBERSHIP**

New York State Bar, 2002; U.S. District Courts, Eastern and Southern Dist. of N.Y.

## **LANGUAGES / ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

Proficient in written and spoken Korean; French

## **HOBBIES**

Fossil hunting, snorkeling, wildlife photography, aquariums, hiking, running, sports that involve balls

## REFERENCES

Alex Rosenberg ([alexrose@duke.edu](mailto:alexrose@duke.edu))  
R. Taylor Cole Professor of Philosophy  
Duke University

Owen Flanagan ([ojf@duke.edu](mailto:ojf@duke.edu))  
James B. Duke Professor of Philosophy  
Duke University

Julian Savulescu ([julian.savulescu@stx.ox.ac.uk](mailto:julian.savulescu@stx.ox.ac.uk))  
Uehiro Chair in Practical Ethics and Director  
Oxford Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics  
University of Oxford

Tom Beauchamp ([beauchat@georgetown.edu](mailto:beauchat@georgetown.edu))  
Professor of Philosophy  
Kennedy Institute of Ethics  
Georgetown University

Karen Neander ([kneander@duke.edu](mailto:kneander@duke.edu))  
Professor of Philosophy  
Duke University

Allen Buchanan ([allenb@duke.edu](mailto:allenb@duke.edu))  
James B. Duke Professor of Philosophy  
Duke University

Robert Brandon ([rbrandon@duke.edu](mailto:rbrandon@duke.edu))  
Professor of Philosophy  
Duke University

Dan McShea ([dmc Shea@duke.edu](mailto:dmc Shea@duke.edu))  
Associate Professor of Biology  
Duke University

V. Louise Roth ([vlroth@duke.edu](mailto:vlroth@duke.edu))  
Associate Professor of Biology  
Duke University