

Chenyu Bu

Curriculum Vitae | March 2026

Department of Philosophy
University of Texas, Austin
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EDUCATION

University of Texas at Austin 2021 –

Ph.D. in Philosophy (ABD)

Dissertation: *Objects, Structures, and Abstraction*

Committee: Kathleen Higgins (co-chair), Jon Litland (co-chair),

Robbie Kubala, James Buhler, Josh Dever

University of Wisconsin–Madison 2017 – 2021

B.A. in Philosophy, Music Composition, Mathematics

with Honors in the Liberal Arts

RESEARCH

AOS: Metaphysics, Aesthetics, Philosophical Logic

AREAS

AOC: Philosophy of Mathematics, Epistemology, Philosophy of Language

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

Music without Works: A Case for Compositional Ontology 2026
The Philosophical Quarterly (forthcoming).

Schopenhauerian Musical Formalism: Meaningfulness without Meaning 2023
Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics **46** (4), 92-101.

Sound as Representation: A Reconstruction of the Transcendental Aesthetic 2020
Logos: The Cornell Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy **16**, 9-22.

Sound as Silence: Nothingness in the Music of Anton Webern and John Cage 2020
Dianoia: The Undergraduate Philosophy Journal of Boston College **7**, 36-45.

Book Reviews

Daniel Albright, *Music's Monisms: Disarticulating Modernism* (2022) 2024
The British Journal of Aesthetics, **65** (4), 691-695

Tristan Grøtvedt Haze, *Meaning and Metaphysical Necessity* (2022) 2023
Review of Metaphysics **77** (2), 351-353.

WORKS IN

PROGRESS

A paper developing a general theory of generativism

A paper arguing for a top-down structuralist approach to essences

A paper reconciling platonist and creationist views of music

A paper reconstructing a Hanslickian formalism

A paper on higher-order generalizations of neutral relations

**SELECTED
TALKS**

Conference Presentations

- Generating Structures: An Essentialist Account
2026 Henle Conference, St. Louis, MO March 2026
- How to Stop Worrying and Embrace Musical Platonism
American Society for Aesthetics (ASA) Pacific Division Meeting, Berkeley, CA
March 2026
- Beyond the Given: Toward a General Theory of Generativism
American Philosophical Association (APA) Central Division Meeting, Chicago, IL
February 2026
- Doing Away with Works: Let's Talk About *Music*
APA Central Division Meeting [virtual] February 2025
- Cohesion, Clarity, Closure: How Music Navigates the Wake of Tragedy
Performance Philosophy Biennial Conference, Austin TX May 2024
- Structuralism Made Simple via Morphisms
uAnalytiCon Annual International Conference [virtual] May 2024
- Musical Formalism Reconsidered: A Category-Theoretic Approach
ASA Eastern Division Meeting, Philadelphia, PA April 2024
- Music as Meaningfulness Without Meaning: A Schopenhauerian Account
Jahrestagung der Schopenhauer-Forschungsstelle [virtual] November 2023
UT-Austin Graduate Colloquia Series, Austin, TX September 2022
- In Defense of a Real Musical Platonism
ASA Rocky Mountain Division Meeting, Santa Fe, NM July 2023
- An Inferentialist Account of *I*
Society for Philosophy in the Contemporary World Annual Meeting, Fresno, CA
July 2023
- Sound, Silence, and Sartrean Nothingness
Boston College Dianoia Publication Symposium [virtual] July 2020

Workshop

- Toward a General Theory of Generativism
Metaphysical Mayhem, New Brunswick, NJ May 2025
- Abstract Object and Platonic Inheritance
APA Eastern Division Meeting, New York, NY January 2025

Commentary

- Andrew Kania, "Justifying and Advancing the Explication of the Musical-cover Concept," *ASA 83rd Annual Meeting*, Baltimore, MD October 2025
- Matthew Shields, "The Impossibility of Conceptual Abandonment," *APA Central Division Meeting* [virtual] February 2025
- Minseok Kim, "Way-Nominalism: An Ontological Ground for Non-Nominal Quantification," *APA Central Division Meeting*, New Orleans, LA February 2024

ACADEMIC AWARDS	University Graduate Continuing Fellowship (UT Austin)	2025-26
	Humanities Research Awards (The Humanities Institute)	2025-26
	Billy Bob Draeger Graduate Research Fellowship in the Humanities	2024-25
	Summer Graduate Fellowship (UT Austin)	2024
	Professional Development Award (UT Austin)	2023, 2024
	Irene H. Chayes Travel Grant (ASA)	2023, 2024
	Best Graduate Student Essay Prize (Center for Philosophical Studies)	2023
	Summer Research Funds (UT Graduate Studies)	2023
	Top Paper of <i>Logos</i> Volume XVI (Cornell University)	2020

TEACHING EXPERIENCE	Assistant Instructor at University of Texas at Austin	
	Philosophy and Film (sole instructor)	Spring 2025
	Introduction to Philosophy of the Arts (primary instructor)	Fall 2024
	Teaching Assistant at University of Texas at Austin	
	Introduction to Philosophy of the Arts (under Matthew Bisconti)	Spring 2024
	Intermediate Symbolic Logic (under Joshua Dever)	Fall 2024
	Introduction to Philosophy of the Arts (under Kathleen Higgins)	Spring 2023
	Problems of Knowledge and Valuation (under Mark Sainsbury)	Fall 2022
	Introduction to Philosophy of the Arts (under Alicia Armijo)	Spring 2022
	Philosophy of Law (under Jeffrey Leon)	Summer 2022
Ideas of the Twentieth Century (under Daniel Bonevac)	Fall 2021	

SELECTED COURSEWORK	Graduate Seminars at University of Texas at Austin	
	Higher-Order Metaphysics (with Jon Litland and Harvey Lederman)	Fall 2025
	Issues in Philosophy of Music (with Kathleen Higgins)	Spring 2024
	Plenitude and Generation (with Jon Litland)	Fall 2023
	Artworks and Persons (with Robbie Kubala)	Fall 2023
	MSDRT Model Theory (with Hans Kamp)	Summer 2023
	Formal Epistemology (with Harvey Lederman)	Spring 2023
	Theories of Meaning (with Joshua Dever)	Spring 2023
	Kant's <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> (with Ian Proops)	Spring 2023
	Logic and Inferentialism (with Jon Litland and Sinan Dogramaci)	Fall 2022
	<i>De Se</i> and the Self (with Joshua Dever and Miriam Schoenfield)	Fall 2022
	Perception and Action (with Galen Strawson)	Spring 2022
	Aesthetics (with Kathleen Higgins)	Fall 2021
	Metaethics and Aesthetics (with Karl Schafer and Robbie Kubala)	Fall 2021
	Conference Courses at University of Texas at Austin	
	Musical Structuralism and Category Theory (with Jon Litland)	Fall 2023
	Music and Meaning (with Kathleen Higgins)	Spring 2023
	Undergraduate Seminars at University of Wisconsin-Madison	
	Music, Capitalism, and Speculative Future (with Nadia Chana)	Spring 2021

Renaissance Polyphony (with Leslie Blasius)	Spring 2021
Orchestration (with Laura Schwendinger)	Spring 2021
Form and Analysis (with Leslie Blasius)	Spring-Fall 2020
Schopenhauer and Nietzsche (with James Messina)	Spring 2020
Existentialism (with Henry Southgate)	Fall 2019

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Program Committee	2022 – 2023
Faculty Colloquium at University of Texas at Austin	
Conference Organizer, Peer Reviewer	2023
Graduate Conference at University of Texas at Austin	

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Society for Aesthetics	2023 – Present
American Philosophical Association	2023 – Present

LANGUAGES Mandarin (native), English (fluent)

REFERENCES

Kathleen M. Higgins University of Texas at Austin kmhiggins@austin.utexas.edu	Jon E. Litland University of Texas at Austin jon.litland@utexas.edu
Robbie Kubala University of Texas at Austin rkubala@gmail.com	

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

My dissertation is an interdisciplinary project lying in intersections of metaphysics, aesthetics, and music. It consists of a series of papers proceeding in two complementary directions. The first goes from metaphysics to aesthetics, especially to the philosophy of music. I set out and defend a *compositional* ontology of music, moving away from focusing on the notion of musical *works*, which is historically contingent and practice-relative. I analyze music as generated from fundamental elements (such as pitches and rhythms) via compositional operations. This framework reveals that the nature of musical objects (and of *music* by extension) at least partially overlap with mathematical objects/structures. Such shared nature sheds new light, not just on musical ontology, but on musical meaning and representation as well. The second direction goes in the opposite way. By drawing insights from musical analysis and applying them in addressing questions about structures and abstraction, I demonstrate that thinking about music itself enriches metaphysical inquiries more generally. A fruitful result from this direction is a general theory of generativism, where I synthesize essentialist and structuralist approaches, arguing that generative operations, whether in music or mathematics, are characterized by certain structural constraints. This unified theory explains how the ‘paradigmatically abstract’ objects, from natural numbers to musical forms, are introduced into our ontology and have their identities explained in terms of the process by which they are generated.