Joshua Kissel
Statement of Present and Future Research

The philosophy I am most passionate about is that which allows me to both interpret our world *and* think about how it might be changed. My research thus examines the intersections of social and political philosophy, moral philosophy, applied ethics, and the philosophy of education focusing on how we can cultivate social structures and norms that better enable individuals to flourish together. The concepts of equality and social freedom play heavily in my work alongside an increasingly important value of solidaristic community. While my training is in the 'analytic tradition' my work has become increasingly interdisciplinary since joining the National Science Foundation (NSF)–funded project at the University of Central Florida (UCF). An exciting development that will help me translate philosophical insights into actionable guidance in ethics, political theory, and education.

Dissertation Summary: Realizing Social Freedom

In my dissertation, *Realizing Social Freedom: Exit, Democracy, and an Egalitarian Ethos*, I introduce a novel account of social freedom that recognizes individuals as free to the extent they are not subject to constraints that other agents could alleviate. I draw on this account in defense of three ideals that would facilitate the widespread realization of freedom: (i) robust freedom of exit, (ii) democracy in collective institutions, and (iii) egalitarian informal norms. I demonstrate that one can legitimate a robustly egalitarian political program on the basis of freedom alone while providing a foundation for agents committed to the organizing work necessary to realize it.

Research Themes

I am advancing several projects that address the ethical responsibilities of both institutions and individuals in the realization of a more ethical community. At UCF I work with a team of chemists, rhetoricians, educationists, and philosophers to examine the role of values in the enculturation process that transforms students into professionals. This work is in line with my preexisting interest in the philosophy of education and ethics and my motivation to theorize in ways that have positive practical ramifications. I divide my research into three broad and overlapping themes.

Theme 1: Social Freedom, Egalitarianism, and Democratic Goods

The foundational ideals of social freedom and equality help me articulate the further limits of who warrants our consideration, identify the content of these obligations, and motivate the importance of making good on these commitments. I supplement the two ideals with solidaristic community because it makes socially sustainable – and thus practical – the principles that underlie flourishing communities big and small. I've been working on a paper that identifies a limit in egalitarian justifications of democracy. This argument deploys the idea of lottocratic minipublics as means of selecting administrators and leaders in political communities that are more receptive to the interests of members from diverse backgrounds such that governments better realize shared ends. Another project under this theme posits an expansion of our political circle to include all individuals who might suffer from a lack of social freedom. The idea is that some political rights stem from the interests' individuals have in avoiding unfreedom and some duties derive from their freedom-

effecting actions in the social systems of which they are denizens. An asset of this approach is its ability to generalize to and thus account for a wide range of non-standard political subjects; nonhuman animals, Artificial Intelligence(s), migrants, travelers, future people, and more.

Theme 2: Effective Altruism Beyond Ethics: The Importance of Politicizing EA

My work on Effective Altruism is grounded in my interest in theory with practical relevance as well as my personal commitments to a better world. I have defended the theoretical coherence of an anti-capitalist Effective Altruism by synthesizing insights from Analytic Marxism (AM) and Effective Altruist (EA) thought. I agree with critic that EA might be problematically apolitical. EA has wisely noticed the value of thinking in marginal terms about the impact individuals can make. However, its often-apolitical manifestation has left it less able to recognize some concurrent risks of this thinking and the consolidation of power in the hands of few. Corruption Scandal's like Sam Bankman-Fried's offer an illustrative political lesson about the costs of social stratification and the risks posed by the undemocratic consolidation of power in the hands of the few. I am thus developing a practical approach to and justification of anti-capitalist EA. This approach unites the individualist ethical orientation of EA and its wide conception of moral standing with the analytic and systematic thinking of theoretical movements like AM. I believe that a synthesis of these ideas offers a model for individual and collective action that will serve partisans from a diversity of orientations.

Theme 3: Education for All: Values, Diversity, and Common Goods

I have defended a robustly egalitarian aim for education against adequacy alternatives on grounds that the latter depends on an impoverished conception of class and power that treats all social and economic class too much like a socio-cultural trait instead of referencing the material conditions of individuals inside a social structure. This mistake obscures the difficulty of securing and sustaining a civic-minded elite precisely because the power that makes an elite also subjects them to a corrupting influence that overtime predicts their self-enrichment at the expense of the group. More recently I have led a paper in this vein exploring how universities can effectively enculturate ethical professionals who are more likely to serve a common good with my colleagues at UCF. Our work draws on feminist philosophy of science and democratic defenses of diversity broadly to defend the important of value diversity in particular. We offer an analogical argument for prioritizing value diversity in recruitment and retention to yield professional whose disciplinary competence is likely to serve common goods.

<u>Concluding Vision</u>

Whatever the subject area – from business ethics and environmental philosophy to political theory and the philosophy of AI – I aim to explore the normatively important foundations of an issue in a way that offer some prospect for facilitating positive action. Being subject to a wider range of justificatory approaches will allow me to better realize my commitment to theory *and* practice. I am therefore excited by the increasingly cooperative and cross-disciplinary nature of my work.