

**Meaghan O’Keefe**

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## **Education**

Ph.D. in Rhetoric, Carnegie Mellon University, 2012

M.A. in English/Rhetoric, Carnegie Mellon University, 2005

B.A. in English with Honors, University of Maryland - College Park, 2002

## **Areas of Expertise**

Contemporary Catholicism. Religious discourse in contemporary American political debate. Other areas include the Medical Humanities, bioethics, bureaucratic language, genetic and reproductive technologies, and public health policy.

## **Research**

My research focusses on American religion and politics as they relate to the biological sciences, public policy, and reproductive technologies and includes more public facing collaborative research on biotechnologies with an emphasis on health equity.

## **Projects in Progress**

Monograph: *Biblical Marriage and the Assisted Reproduction of Whiteness*, examines how white American Christians’ highly gendered and racialized theologies of marriage form their political approach to laws and public policies.

## **Academic Positions**

2020-present                      Associate Professor, Religious Studies, University of California Davis

2013-2020                        Assistant Professor, Religious Studies, University of California Davis

## **Monograph**

*The American Catholic Bishops and the Politics of Scandal: Rhetoric of Authority* (Routledge 2019)

## **Edited Volume**

My edited volume (co-edited with Emily Merchant) , [\*DNA, Race, and Reproduction\*](#), brings together experts in law, medicine, religion, history, anthropology, philosophy, and genetics to investigate how scientists, medical professionals, and laypeople use genomic concepts to construct racial identity and make reproductive decisions (forthcoming, February 2025).

## **Selected Peer-reviewed Publications**

### Single Author Publications

O’Keefe, M. (2015) "Borrowed Authority: The American Catholic Bishops’ Argument by Citation." *Written Communication*. 32 (2), 150-173

O’Keefe, M. (2013) “Sainthood as Rebuke: The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Strategic Canonization of Dorothy Day.” *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric*. 3(1):1-16.

## Co-Authored Publications

Perrault, Sarah and Meaghan O’Keefe. “New Metaphors for New Understandings of Genomes.” *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 62:1 (Winter 2019): 1–19.

Perrault, Sarah and Meaghan O’Keefe. "Journeys as Shared Human Experiences." *The American Journal of Bioethics* 16.10 (2016): 13-15.

O’Keefe, Meaghan, Sarah Perrault, Jodi Halpern, Lisa Ikemoto, Mark Yarborough & UC North Bioethics Collaboratory for Life & Health Sciences. "“Editing” Genes: A Case Study About How Language Matters in Bioethics." *The American Journal of Bioethics* 15.12 (2015): 3-10.

## **Research Support**

### Current Research Support

2025-2026 L&S Unites Grant. \$119,132. “Critical health studies: California as imperfect health refuge.” This project leverages expertise from the humanities and social sciences to engage with the issues California faces as a health refuge. The goal is to create institutional pipelines for interdisciplinary collaboration and facilitate the translation of research in critical health studies into better health outcomes through practice and policy. **Principal Investigator.**

### Completed Research Support

- 2019-23 Mellon New Directions Fellowship, \$215,000. “Technologies of Life.” The Fellowship covers tuition for courses in genetics and law and salary support for one year and travel and professional activities for three years (extended due to Covid).
- 2016-7 Feminist Research Institute Seed Grant, \$5000 (shared with Ranal Jaleel, Lisa Ikemoto, and Sarah Perrault) “Developing and Democratizing Feminist Frameworks for the Ethics of Genome Modification through Digital Humanities.”
- 2015-16 The University of California North Bioethics Collaboratory. Funded by a Multi-Campus Research Program grant from the University of California Office of the President. As a Collaboratory member, I was awarded summer salary in 2015 and 2016.

## Awards

- 2022 Graduate Program Advising and Mentoring Award  
2025 Distinguished Teaching Award for Undergraduate Teaching

## Selected Public Service and Outreach

- 2017-present University of California Davis Hospital Ethics Committee. Member  
2020-23 Bioethics Consultation Committee Self-Study. Co-Chair.  
2017-18 The California End of Life Option Act Task Force. Steering Committee Member