

Contact

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Pretoria East, Gauteng

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ResearchGate profile

Qualifications

PhD in Philosophy
UP, 2023
Ainigma: Plato's Esotericism in Context

MA in Philosophy
UP, 2016, cum laude
Symphonia: Aristotle versus Plato Critiqued

BA Honours in Philosophy
UP, 2012, cum laude

BA Humanities: English Literature and Philosophy
UP, 2010

PGCE (FET Phase)
UP, in progress

TESOL/TEFL Certificate
120 hours, 2026

Languages

English
Home language

Afrikaans
Fluent

Dr Wehan M. Coombs

Philosopher and lecturer: Plato, Neoplatonism and esotericism

Profile

Philosopher with a PhD from the University of Pretoria and 15 years of university teaching experience, from tutoring to head lecturer. I have designed and taught undergraduate and honours modules, held a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Johannesburg, and published on Aristotle, Plato and Rorty. My research focuses on Plato, Neoplatonism and philosophical esotericism, and currently on what a Platonic account of learning means for teaching in the age of generative AI. I am also completing a PGCE.

Academic posts

University of Johannesburg Apr 2024 – Apr 2026
Postdoctoral Research Fellow: Platonic and African Esotericism

University of Pretoria, Department of Philosophy 2010 – 2026
Head Lecturer (2016 – 2026), Assistant Lecturer (2014 – 2018), Education Assistant (2015), Tutor (2010 – 2013)

- Head lecturer for first-year, second-year and honours modules, including first-year classes of more than 500 students
- Designed four modules from scratch and partly redesigned a fifth, writing their study guides, and co-compiled a custom reader
- Trained and managed tutor teams, planned lecture schedules and created assessments
- Taught live online and hybrid classes on ClickUP and Blackboard

Courses designed and taught

- **FIL710/810** Philosophy as a Rite of Rebirth: From Ancient Egypt to Neoplatonism (Honours, 2026)
- **FIL710** The (Secret) History of Thought: Introduction to Philosophical Esotericism (Honours, 2024, 2025)
- **FIL220** The Good Life (2nd year, 2024)
- **FIL110** Introduction to Metaphysics and Epistemology (1st year, 2019 – 2021)
- **FIL251** Introduction to Moral and Political Philosophy (2nd year, partly redesigned, 2018)
- Also taught FIL155 Philosophy of Medicine (2023), BPE211 Ethics (2018), FIL110 (2014, 2017), FIL120 (2014) and FIL251 (2016)

Research interests

- Plato and the Platonic tradition
- Neoplatonism and theurgy
- African philosophy and decolonial curricula
- Philosophical esotericism
- Philosophy as a way of life
- Socratic pedagogy in the age of AI

Memberships

Philosophical Society of Southern Africa (since 2017)

International Society for Neoplatonic Studies (since 2017)

Full resume

Every module taught, all conference papers, the teaching portfolio and student evaluations. Scan or click:

Open the full resume online

Dr Wehan M. Coombs

Publications

- Coombs, W.M. 2017. Aristotle's harmony with Plato on separable and immortal soul. *South African Journal of Philosophy* 36(4): 541–552. doi:10.1080/02580136.2017.1385951
- Coombs, W.M. 2013. Contingency, irony and morality: A critical review of Rorty's notion of the liberal utopia. *Humanities* 2(2): 313–327. doi:10.3390/h2020313

Selected conference papers

- Is Philosophy A(gnostic)? Post-disciplinary Interventions in the Time of Metacrisis. PSSA Annual Conference, University of Cape Town, 2026 (with Mitchell Black)
- Animism, Consilience and the Rights of Nature. South African Society for Environmental Philosophy, North-West University, 2025 (co-presented)
- Reflexive Esotericism: Insights from Literary and Theological Hermeneutics. PSSA Conference, North-West University, 2025
- The Curious Case of Neoplatonic Ritual Magic. PSSA Conference, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2020
- Immortal and Separable Soul in Aristotle. 42nd PSSA Conference, Rhodes University, 2017
- Twelve conference papers since 2012; the full list is in the full resume

Research funding

- UJ Postdoctoral Fellowship, Platonic and African Esotericism, 2024 – 2026
- UP Doctoral Support Bursary, Ainigma: Plato's Esotericism in Context, 2018 – 2020

Service

- Long-time member of Footnotes, the UP philosophy society (2010 – 2025), helping to organise talks and film screenings
- Co-organised the Aristotle Colloquium at UP for Aristotle's 2400th birth year (2016)

Referees

Prof. Emma Ruttkamp-Bloem
Head of Philosophy, University of Pretoria
emma.ruttkamp-bloem@up.ac.za

Prof. John F. Finamore
University of Iowa
john-finamore@uiowa.edu

Dr Asheel Singh
University of Johannesburg
asheels@uj.ac.za

Dr Mitchell Black
University of Pretoria
mblackmitchell@gmail.com