

Dr. Megan Dean

Harold N. Glassman Distinguished Dissertation Award in the Humanities

Dr. Megan A. Dean is the recipient of the 2020 Harold N. Glassman Distinguished Dissertation Award in the Humanities for her dissertation, “Eating as a Self-shaping Activity,” which she defended, with Distinction, in 2019. She was mentored by Philosophy Professor Quill Rebecca Kukla.

Dr. Dean’s dissertation argues that the ways we understand and practice eating shape our agency, affects, capacities, values, and other aspects of the self. Her analysis and critique of healthism, the view that good eating is healthy eating and good eaters eat for health above all else, was described by readers as “the most concrete and important upshot of her dissertation.” While healthism is the basis of much of our public policy and values, Dr. Dean developed a framework to critique this approach to eating as harmful to people and disrespectful of their agency. Her framework can be used in a variety of contexts including food ethics, clinical ethics, diet research, and public conversations about eating. Dr. Dean’s mentor Dr. Kukla wrote, “it is safe to say that no other student of [mine] has ever made as much of a concrete and publicly recognized contribution to scholarship while still a graduate student as did Megan. Megan Dean’s work lies at the intersection of philosophy of science, feminist and anti-oppression theory, bioethics, and phenomenology, and it contributes substantively to each.” Drs. Kukla, Stohr, and Withy added, “All of us find that reading her work always reshapes our understanding of bodies, eating, agency, and the culture of health and embodiment in surprising and helpful ways.”

Dr. Dean has published seven refereed journal articles, three book reviews, two commentaries, and a conference proceeding. She has also given 35 talks and presentations, primarily related to her dissertation work. She is currently a Chauncey Truax Postdoctoral Fellow and Visiting Assistant Professor in the Philosophy Department at Hamilton College.

The Graduate School is very proud to award Dr. Dean the Glassman Dissertation Award in the Humanities.