

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Regents Communication

ACTION REQUEST

Subject: Report of Faculty Retirement

Action Requested: Adoption of Retirement Memoir

Peter Railton, Ph.D., Gregory S. Kavka Distinguished University Professor of Philosophy, John Stephenson Perrin Professor, Arthur F. Thurnau Professor, and professor of philosophy in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, retired from active faculty status on May 31, 2025.

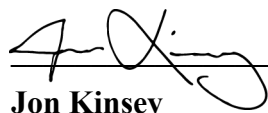
Professor Railton attended Harvard University where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1971. He then attended Princeton University where he earned his Doctorate in 1980. He joined the faculty at the University of Michigan as an assistant professor in 1979; he was promoted through the ranks to associate professor in 1983, and then professor in 1990.

Professor Railton has made lasting contributions to many areas of philosophy, especially normative ethics, metaethics, moral psychology, and the philosophy of science. His two most famous articles, “Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality” (1984) and “Moral Realism” (1986), have each been cited well over a thousand times and reprinted in multiple venues. His papers on scientific explanation, especially “A Deductive-Nomological Model of Probabilistic Explanation” (1978) and “Probability, Explanation, and Information” (1981), fundamentally changed the way philosophers think about explanation. His work in moral psychology places him among the world leaders in that field. An interdisciplinary scholar, Railton’s co-authors include the legal scholar Scott Shapiro, the psychologists Fiery Cushman, Martin Seligman and Roy Baumeister, and the physician/philosopher Chandra Sripada. His *Homo prospectus* (OUP, 2016), co-authored with Seligman, Baumeister and Sripada, is a pioneering defense of the idea that human beings are fundamentally future-directed creatures. His most recent research focuses on philosophical issues that arise in connection with AI.

Professor Railton has received many honors. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2004. From 2011-12 he was president of the American Philosophical Association, Central Division and was invited to give the division’s Dewey Lecture in 2015. He held fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. He presented the Immanuel Kant Lectures at Stanford University, the Bell Lecture at Brown University, the Quain Lectures at University College, London, and the John Locke Lectures and Uehiro Lectures at Oxford University.

The Regents now salute this distinguished faculty member by naming **Peter Railton, Gregory S. Kavka Distinguished University Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Arthur F. Thurnau Professor Emeritus, and professor emeritus of philosophy.**

Requested by:



Jon Kinsey
Vice President and Secretary of the University

May 2025