Stanford

Mark Howard

Postdoctoral Scholar, Biomedical Ethics

Curriculum Vitae available Online

Bio

BIO

Mark Howard, PhD is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Stanford Training Program in ELSI Research (T32) at The Laurie J. Girand Center for Biomedical Ethics. He is a political economist, political theorist, and social philosopher by training. Mark earned his PhD in Politics with a Designated Emphasis in History of Consciousness at the University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC), where his research focused on the role of venture capital and disruptive innovation in shaping social practices. His forthcoming book, Hypergrowth: A Political Economic Theory of Venture Capital (University of Michigan Press), represents the culmination of this research. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in journals such as Finance and Society, Distinktion: A Journal of Social Theory, Politics, and Societies.

While at UCSC, he helped co-launch the Humanizing Technology Certificate Program for STEM-focused undergraduates seeking education in humanistic social science approaches to technology and innovation. Since then, he has designed and taught courses on Ethics and Technology and the Politics of Technology, alongside various courses in Politics and Legal Studies.

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

- PhD, University of California Santa Cruz , Politics (Designated Emphasis: History of Consciousness) (2024)
- MSc, London School of Economics and Political Science , International Relations Theory (2016)
- BA, Macquarie University , Philosophy (2013)

STANFORD ADVISORS

- Mildred Cho, Postdoctoral Faculty Sponsor
- Holly Tabor, Postdoctoral Research Mentor

Research & Scholarship

CURRENT RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY INTERESTS

At Stanford, Mark is pursuing research on the politics, philosophy, and economics of AI-enabled genomic discovery and drug development, exploring in particular how financial processes influence biomedical innovation, therapeutic priorities, and the selection of targets for intervention. More broadly, Mark is working on several interrelated projects concerning the relationship between computational ontologies and the legibility of biological processes. Proceeding under the working title "Legible Life," these projects examine how advances in artificial intelligence and computational biology influence the ways that biological processes are conceptualized and presented as amenable to therapeutic intervention.

Of particular concern is how the computational representations through which biological processes become legible can acquire authority to define those processes themselves, potentially subordinating biological complexity and variation to the requirements of technological tractability and the demonstration of commercial value. This raises questions as to how investment incentives, especially those particular to venture capital, might privilege

more readily tractable therapeutic targets over complex biological problems, and how this may influence biomedical research priorities in ways that do not primarily correspond to the distribution of disease burden or unmet medical need.

Taken together, this research explores the ethical, political economic, and philosophical implications of such developments for evolving distinctions between health and disease, or between the normal and the pathological.