

Thomas A. Berrueta

CONTACT	tberrueta@u.northwestern.edu	tberrueta.github.io
EDUCATION	Northwestern University, Evanston, IL Ph.D. Candidate in Mechanical Engineering	Harvey Mudd College, Claremont, CA B.S. Engineering, Graduated with Honors
HONORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Northwestern University Presidential Fellow (highest honor attainable) 2022-2024Microsoft Future Leader in Robotics and AI 2024Schmidt Science Fellows Finalist 2023Microsoft Ada Lovelace Fellowship Finalist 2019Walter P. Murphy Fellowship 2017-2018Harvey S. Mudd Merit Scholarship 2013-2017Dean's List 2013-2017	
RESEARCH	Center for Robotics and Biosystems <ul style="list-style-type: none">I help robots self-organize their own intelligence.My work explores the role of agent embodiment in robot learning and control across scales. I combine insights from artificial intelligence, statistical physics, and materials science to make engineered systems more life-like by exploiting their physical intelligence and emergent capabilities.	
PUBLICATIONS	<i>Journal Papers</i> (* indicates equal authorship) <ul style="list-style-type: none">T. A. Berrueta, A. Pinosky, T. D. Murphey, "Maximum diffusion reinforcement learning." <i>Nature Machine Intelligence</i> (In Review).T. A. Berrueta, T. D. Murphey, R. L. Truby, "Materializing autonomy in soft robots across scales." <i>Advanced Intelligent Systems</i>, vol. 6, no. 2, 2300111, (2024).T. A. Berrueta*, J. F. Yang*, A. M. Brooks, A. T. Liu, G. Zhang, D. G. Medrano, S. Yang, V. B. Koman, P. Chvykov, M. Z. Miskin, T. D. Murphey, M. S. Strano, "Emergent microrobotic oscillators via asymmetry-induced order." <i>Nature Communications</i>, vol. 13, 5734, (2022).J. F. Yang, A. T. Liu, T. A. Berrueta, G. Zhang, A. M. Brooks, V. B. Koman, S. Yang, X. Gong, T. D. Murphey, M. S. Strano, "Memristor circuits for colloidal robotics: Temporal access to memory, sensing, and actuation." <i>Advanced Intelligent Systems</i>, vol. 4, no. 4, 2100205 (2022).P. Chvykov, T. A. Berrueta, A. Vardhan, W. Savoie, A. Samland, T. D. Murphey, K. Wiesenfeld, D. I. Goldman, J. L. England, "Low rattling: A predictive principle for self-organization in active collectives." <i>Science</i>, vol. 371, no. 6524, pp. 90-95 (2021).A. Taylor, T. A. Berrueta, T. D. Murphey, "Active learning in robotics: A review of control principles." <i>Mechatronics</i>, vol. 77, 102576, (2021).W. Savoie, T. A. Berrueta, Z. Jackson, A. Pervan, R. Warkentin, S. Li, T. D. Murphey, K. Wiesenfeld, D. I. Goldman, "A robot made of robots: Emergent transport and control of a smarticle ensemble." <i>Science Robotics</i>, vol. 4, no. 34 (2019).T. A. Berrueta, A. Pervan, K. Fitzsimons, T. D. Murphey, "Dynamical system segmentation for information measures in motion." <i>IEEE Robotics and Automation Letters</i>, 4 (1), 169-176 (2019). <i>Conference Papers</i> (* indicates equal authorship) <ul style="list-style-type: none">T. A. Berrueta*, A. Q. Nilles*, A. Pervan*, T. D. Murphey, S. M. LaValle, "Information requirements of collision-based micromanipulation." <i>Proceedings of the Workshop on the Algorithmic Foundations of Robotics (WAFR)</i> (2020).A. Kalinowska, T. A. Berrueta, T. D. Murphey, "Data-driven gait segmentation for walking assistance in a lower-limb assistive device." <i>IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA)</i> (2019). <i>Book Chapters</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">T. A. Berrueta, I. Abraham, T. D. Murphey, "Experimental applications of the Koopman operator in active learning for control." <i>The Koopman Operator in Systems and Control</i>, Springer (2020). <i>Workshop Papers and Abstracts</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">J. F. Yang, T. A. Berrueta, A. M. Brooks, A. T. Liu, G. Zhang, S. Yang, V. B. Koman, T. D. Murphey, M. S. Strano, "Emergent microrobotic oscillators via asymmetry-induced order." <i>AIChE Annual Meeting</i> (2022).A. Taylor, T. A. Berrueta, T. D. Murphey, "Emergent mechanism design via robot swarms." <i>Robotics: Science and Systems</i>, (2022).	

- **T. A. Berrueta**, J. F. Yang, A. M. Brooks, A. T. Liu, M. S. Strano, T. D. Murphey, “Emergent beating in colloidal matter: Stabilization via symmetry breaking.” *Bulletin of the American Physical Society*, (2022).
- A. Taylor, **T. A. Berrueta**, T. D. Murphey, “Optimizing the locomotion of a robotic active matter system of smarticles.” *Bulletin of the American Physical Society*, (2021).
- A. Q. Nilles, A. Pervan, **T. A. Berrueta**, T. D. Murphey, “Controlling active Brownian particles with ‘active billiard’ particles.” *Bulletin of the American Physical Society*, (2020).
- **T. A. Berrueta**, A. Pervan, T. D. Murphey, “Towards robust motion planning for synthetic cells in a circulatory system.” *Robotics: Science and Systems*, (2019).

INVITED TALKS

- **T. A. Berrueta**, “Towards transparent & reliable embodied reinforcement learning agents.” *Microsoft Future Leaders in Robotics and AI Seminar Series*. University of Maryland, April 26th, 2024.
- **T. A. Berrueta**, “Robot thermodynamics: Making complex systems task-capable.” *Gordon Research Conference (GRC): Complex Active and Adaptive Material Systems*, Ventura Beach Marriott, February 1st, 2023.
- **T. A. Berrueta**, “Engineering robotic active matter through nonequilibrium self-organization.” *Gordon Research Seminar (GRS): Emergent Phenomena in Active and Living Materials*, Ventura Beach Marriott, January 29th, 2023,
- **T. A. Berrueta**, “Imprecision engineering: Lowering cost while increasing capability.” *Presidential Fellows Lecture Series*, Northwestern University, October 20th, 2022,
- **T. A. Berrueta**, “Designing for emergence: Making materials ‘robotic’ with self-organization.” *Center for Robotics and Biosystems Seminar Series*, Northwestern University, June 17th, 2022, [YouTube Video](#).
- **T. A. Berrueta**, “Robot thermodynamics: Analysis, control, and design of complex systems.” *Allen Discovery Center Invited Seminar*, Department of Biology, Tufts University, April 26th, 2022.
- **T. A. Berrueta**, “Online learning in physical systems.” *SIAM Dynamical Systems*, Symposium on Leveraging Machine Learning for Dynamics and Control, May 26th, 2021, [YouTube Video](#).
- **T. A. Berrueta**, “Low rattling: Predicting driven self-organization.” *Center for Robotics and Biosystems Seminar Series*, Northwestern University, December 4th, 2020, [YouTube Video](#).

SERVICE

Reviewer

- IEEE Transactions on Robotics (T-RO), IEEE Robotics and Automation Letters (RA-L), IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA), IEEE International Conference on Intelligent Robots and Systems (IROS), Nature Scientific Reports.

TEACHING

Northwestern University

- ME314: Theory of Machines - Dynamics Teaching Assistant (2019), Grader (2018, 2021)
- Lectured large senior-level course (~70 students) on rigid body dynamics and Lagrangian mechanics.
 - Redesigned class content and homeworks as it pivoted to an online-friendly format.
- ME455: Active Learning in Robotics Guest Lecturer (2022, 2023)
- Invited to give a series of lectures for a graduate-level course on active learning in robotics.
 - Lecture topics included deriving the ELBO objective, CVAE architectures, and building real-time closed-loop robot perception pipelines based on CVAEs.

EXPERIENCE

Harvey Mudd College

- Kaiam Corporation Capstone 2016-2017
- Designed a MEMS-based laser diode burn-in platform for testing of optical transceivers, which are crucial to data centers worldwide.
- Amazon Lab126 Capstone 2016
- Designed a robotic hardware platform for improving the voice-responsiveness of the Amazon Echo.

Northrop Grumman

- Control Systems Intern: Survivability Group 2016
- Developed an infrared signature estimator model and worked on algorithms to minimize aircraft IR exposure in real-time.

SpaceX

- Vehicle Engineering Intern: Engine Dynamics Group 2014-2015
- Modelled and characterized flight environments experienced by M1D and MVacD rocket engines in order to anticipate design failure modes and ensure mission safety.

LEADERSHIP &
OUTREACH

Northwestern University

- Board member of the Northwestern Mechanical Engineering Graduate Student Society (2017-2019).
- Organizer of recruitment activities for incoming mechanical engineering graduate students (2018).
- Mentor to 8 Ph.D. and Masters students through the department mentorship program (2017-current).
- Volunteer at the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry, teaching members of the public about robots and technology (2017-current).

Harvey Mudd College

- Member of the Harvey Mudd College Entrepreneurial Network (2017).
- Mentor in the Harvey Mudd College mentorship program (2016-2017).

SKILLS

Technical

- Proficient in Python, C++, and MATLAB.
- Expertise in robotics, control theory and dynamical systems, as well as artificial intelligence, information theory, statistical physics, and optimization.

Other

- I am fluent in Spanish and English, and conversational in French.
- I have played jazz guitar/bass since 2008.
- I do music composition and production in my spare time.
- I love to run, and ran competitively in a NCAA college track and field team.

NOTABLE PRESS

- *Northwestern News*, “Chemistry flexes robotic arm without electronics,” 2022
- *MIT News*, “Tiny particles work together to do big things,” 2022
- *Northwestern News*, “Two Graduate Students Receive Presidential Fellowships,” 2022.
- *Science Magazine (Podcast)*, “The uncertain future of North America’s ash trees, and organizing robot swarms,” 2021.
- *Gizmodo*, “Meet the Pint-Sized Robots that Spontaneously Dance,” 2020.
- *Popular Mechanics*, “These Robots Literally Just Flap Their Wings. That’s It. But the Army Loves Them.,” 2019.
- *Scientific American*, “Prehistoric Suckers, Slapping Robots and Three Billion Birds Gone,” 2019.
- *Science Magazine (News)*, “Watch a robot made of robots move around,” 2019.