

SAVANNAH PEARLMAN

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Area of Specialization: Normative Epistemology, Feminist Philosophy & Philosophy of Race

Area of Competence: Ethics, Epistemology

Dissertation: “Why You Ought to Defer: Moral Deference and Marginalized Identity”

Committee: Matthew Adams & Adam Leite (Co-Chairs), Kate Abramson, Tom Laird

EDUCATION

Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

August 2023

Ph.D. Philosophy

- Graduate minor in Higher Education and Student Affairs
- Certificate in College Pedagogy

University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland

Spring 2022

Visiting Academic

Tufts University, Medford, MA

May 2016

M.A. Philosophy

- Epistemology Area of Strength Exam Passed Fall 2014

Brandeis University, Waltham, MA

May 2012

B.A. Philosophy, French and Politics Minors

- Dean’s List, all semesters
- Graduated Magna Cum Laude with High Honors in Philosophy

PUBLICATIONS

Journals

- “An Epistemic Injustice Critique of Austin’s Ordinary Language Epistemology,” forthcoming in *Hypatia*
- “Solidarity Over Charity: Mutual Aid as a Moral Alternative to Effective Altruism” in the *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, Vol. 33 No 2 (2023)
- “Mutual Aid and a Pluralistic Account of Solidarity,” in *The Philosopher*, Vol. 110 No. 2 (2022)
- “Why You Ought to Defer: Moral Deference and Marginalized Experience,” co-authored with Elizabeth Williams, in *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly*, Vol. 8 No 2 (2022)
- “Flipping the Logic Classroom: Arguments for and Challenges Addressed” in *Teaching Philosophy*, Vol. 42 No. 4 (2019)

Public Philosophy

- Interview with Slate’s Hi-Phi Nation: “Effective Altruism and its Critics,” posted May 9, 2022
- “In Tension: Effective Altruism and Mutual Aid” on the APA Blog, posted June 23, 2022
- “A Puzzle for Racial Constructivism: ‘Race Faking’ as an Appeal to Moral Authority and Community Inclusion” on the UT Austin Ethics Project Blog, posted April 7, 2021
- “Is Effective Altruism Inherently Utilitarian?” on the APA Blog, posted March 29, 2021
- “Duties to Graduate Workers: Labor Protections in the Era of Covid-19” on the APA Blog, posted June 22, 2020

- “White Philosophers: It’s Time to Stop Using Digital Blackface” on the APA Blog, posted December 2, 2019 and reformatted as a case for the national High School Ethics Bowl

Invited Contributions

- Editor’s note and introduction to the special issue of the Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal (KIEJ) on Mutual Aid, in the *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, Vol. 33 No. 2 (2023)

Under Review

- “Experiential Deference: A Reason for Optimism about Moral Deference”

INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD

- Howard University: Intro to Philosophy Fall 2023
- Design and implement curriculum for 3 sections of 20 students
 - Teach three times weekly, offer weekly office hours and grade all written assignments
- Howard University: Classical Ethics Fall 2023
- Design and implement curriculum for a class of 37 students
 - Teach twice weekly, provide weekly office hours and grade all written assignments
- Indiana University: Applied Ethics Spring 2023
- Design and implement curriculum for a class of 43 students
 - Teach twice a week, offer weekly office hours, and grade all written assignments
- Indiana University: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Philosophical Perspectives Spring 2020
- Design and implement curriculum for this class of 40 students
 - Teach twice a week, offer weekly office hours, and grade all written assignments
 - This class was re-designed for online implementation due to the COVID-19 pandemic

ASSOCIATE INSTRUCTORSHIPS

- Indiana University Philosophy Department: Intro to Ethics with John Robison Fall 2019 & Fall 2022
- Teach weekly discussion sections for 40 students; grade all written works and assignments
- Indiana University Philosophy Department: Philosophical Writing and Methods Spring 2019
- Serve as tutor for 6 philosophy majors and minors as they develop their philosophical writing, meeting with them twice weekly
- Indiana University Philosophy Department: Elementary Logic with Krasimira Filcheva Fall 2018
- Teach weekly discussion sections for 44 students; grade all problem sets
- Indiana University Philosophy Department: Intro to Philosophy with Adam Leite Spring 2018
- Teach weekly discussion sections for 42 students; grade all papers and assignments
- Indiana University Philosophy Department: Intro to Philosophy with Kirk Ludwig Fall 2017
- Teach weekly discussion sections for 44 students; grade all papers and assignments

TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

- Tufts Philosophy Department: Mind and Language with Daniel Dennett Spring 2016
- Grade all exams, problem sets and papers for 47 students; lecture during the professor’s occasional absence

Tufts Philosophy Department: Feminist Philosophy with Nancy Bauer Fall 2015

- Hold weekly office hours for 62 students; Grade all written assignments and moderate online forum

Tufts Philosophy Department: Logic with Susan Russinoff Spring 2015

- Hold weekly office hours for 72 students; grade all exams and problem sets

COURSES I AM PREPARED TO TEACH

Introductory Courses:

Intro to Philosophy, Intro to Ethics, Critical Thinking, Intro to Symbolic Logic

Intermediate and Advanced Courses:

Applied Ethics, Feminist Philosophy, Philosophy of Race, (alternatively, one course on Philosophy of Race, Gender, and Sexuality), Special Topics: AI and Digital Ethics, Moral Theories and their Critics, Biomedical Ethics, Philosophy of Mind, Intro to Philosophy and Art, Topics in Epistemology: Social Epistemology

Courses I am Interested in Developing:

Normative Epistemology: Seminar on Epistemic Injustice and the Ethics of Belief, Philosophy and Protest: Contemporary Social Movements, Solidarity or Charity: Philosophy of Philanthropy, Philosophy of Sex and Love

REFEREED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2022 Pacific American Philosophical Association Divisional Meeting April 2022

- Presented a paper, “Solidarity Over Charity: Mutual Aid as a Moral Alternative to Effective Altruism” (main program)

2022 Eastern American Philosophical Association Divisional Meeting January 2022

- Presented a paper, “Is Moral Deference Permissible?” (main program)

Stanford Ethics Center Junior Scholars Workshop September 2020

- Scheduled to present a paper, “Why You Ought to Defer: Epistemic Deference, Actional Deference, and Marginalized Identity,” co-authored with Elizabeth Williams, at a workshop for early career scholars in political philosophy, political theory, and moral philosophy. (Canceled due to Covid)

American Association of Philosophy Teachers Workshop July 2020

- Presented a pedagogical method on developing anti-racist learning activities and assignments. Our group (which included Valerie Williams, Sharon Mason, Barbara Fultner, and Yvette Pearson) developed an assignment for centering non-western philosophers, philosophies, and lived experience.

Athena In Action Workshop June 2020

- Presented a paper, “Why You Ought to Defer: Epistemic Deference, Actional Deference, and Marginalized Identity,” co-authored with Elizabeth Williams, at a networking and mentoring workshop for graduate women in philosophy

2019 Pacific American Philosophical Association Divisional Meeting April 2019

- Presented a paper, “Moral Deference and Identity-Based Moral Harms” co-authored with Elizabeth Williams, on a panel hosted by the APA Committee of LGBTQ People in the Profession
- Presented a paper, “Creating Inclusive Spaces: Flipping the Logic Classroom” in a session directed by Minorities and Philosophy (MAP)

- 2019 Central American Philosophical Association Divisional Meeting** February 2019
- Presented a paper, “An Epistemic Injustice Critique of Austin’s Ordinary Language Epistemology” (main program)

INVITED RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

- Widener University** February 2023
- Presented a paper, “Solidarity over Charity: Mutual Aid as a Moral Alternative to Effective Altruism”
- Nelson Fellowship Symposium** April 2021
- Presented on my dissertation work to the Indiana University Philosophy Department
- Indiana University Philosophy Department Graduate Colloquium** February 2021
- Presented a paper, “Solidarity over Charity: Mutual Aid as an Alternative to Effective Altruism”
- Indiana University Philosophy Department Graduate Colloquium** April 2019
- Presented a paper, “Moral Deference and Identity-Based Harms
- Indiana University Philosophy Department Graduate Colloquium** October 2019
- Presented a paper, “It’s Time to Stop Using Digital Blackface”

INVITED COURSE LECTURES

- CUNY Queens College**
- Taught a guest course titled “Miranda Fricker on Testimonial Injustice” April 2023
- Widener University** February 2023
- Taught a guest course titled “Ethical Frameworks: Case Study on the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment”

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

Fellowships and Scholarships

- Indiana University College of Arts and Sciences Dissertation Research Fellowship, awarded Fall 2021
- Indiana University Nelson Dissertation Fellowship, awarded Fall 2020
- Indiana University College of Arts and Sciences Graduate Fellowship, awarded Fall 2016
- Indiana University Nelson Fellowship, awarded Fall 2016
- Tufts University Philosophy Tuition Scholarship, awarded Fall 2014

Prizes

- Winner of the **Bo and Lynn Clark Outstanding Associate Instructor Award**, which is based on faculty nominations, student evaluations and classroom observations, awarded by Indiana University in Spring 2018
- Winner of the **Cariana Prize** for best undergraduate philosophical essay, awarded by Brandeis University in Spring 2012

Travel Awards

- **American Philosophical Association Pacific Division Graduate Travel Stipend**
Awarded in April 2022 to offset the cost of participating in the 2022 Pacific APA
- **IU College of Arts and Sciences Graduate Travel Award**
Awarded in November 2021 to offset the cost of participating in the 2022 Eastern APA
- **IU Graduate and Professional Student Government Travel Award**
Awarded in March 2020 to offset the cost of participating in the 2020 Pacific APA
- **American Philosophical Association Central Division Graduate Travel Stipend**

- Awarded in December 2018 to offset the cost of participating in the 2019 Central APA
- **IU College of Arts and Sciences Graduate Travel Award**
Awarded in November 2018 to offset the cost of participating in the 2019 Central APA
- **IU College of Arts and Humanities Institute Graduate Conferenced Travel Award**
Awarded in October 2018 to offset the cost of participating in the 2019 Central APA

Grants

- **American Philosophical Association Diversity and Inclusiveness Grant**
Awarded a small grant in Spring 2017 to facilitate a workshop at IU on inclusive pedagogy in philosophy

SERVICE

American Philosophical Association Committee on Virtual Programming October 2021 - Present
Committee Member

- Facilitated two Spring 2023 panels, one on Philosophy and Activism and one on Student Engagement

American Philosophical Association Committee on the Teaching of Philosophy July 2021 - Present
Committee Member

- Member on the committee charged with assessing trends and needs in the teaching of philosophy, making recommendations to the APA board, and sponsoring sessions at APA division meetings

Minorities and Philosophy (MAP), Bloomington, IN January 2017 - Present
Founder, IU Chapter

- Coordinate a group for underrepresented philosophers, provide a space to discuss underrepresentation in the discipline; organize relevant reading and discussion groups

2020 Pacific American Philosophical Association Divisional Meeting April 2020
Facilitator

- Organized a panel for a session titled “Bullying, Microaggressions, and Harassment” (Canceled due to Covid)

National High School Ethics Bowl February 2020
Guest Case Writer

- Designed a case based on my APA blog article on Digital Blackface for debate in the Spring 2020 national competition of High School Ethics Bowl

2020 Central American Philosophical Association Divisional Meeting February 2020
Facilitator

- Reviewed and selected submissions for a session titled “Productive Conversations on Problematic Issues: Graduate Student Edition”

American Philosophical Association Graduate Student Council July 2017 – June 2020
Vice-Chair, Council Member

- Serve as a liaison between the graduate students and the APA, with the aim of reporting to the board of officers on issues of interest, concern, and relevance to graduate students

Indiana University Philosophy Department

August 2017 – August 2019

Undergraduate Activities Coordinator

- Schedule, advertise, and implement department programming
- Serve as the staff advisor for the Philosophy Club and MAP

Indiana University Graduate Association of Students in Philosophy

August 2016 – August 2017

Climate Liaison

- Responsible for bringing general graduate climate concerns to the attention of the faculty, being familiar with university policies (Title IX)
- Generate the annual climate survey for graduate students, gather and interpret results, provide suggestions to faculty to address climate problems

Brandeis University Philosophy Department, Waltham, MA

April 2010 - May 2012

Undergraduate Department Representative

- Execute department programming and events
- Developed an honors track that was implemented in Fall 2011

GRADUATE COURSEWORK

Epistemology and Metaphysics

- Graduate Seminar in Epistemology with Mark Kaplan, Indiana University
- External World Skepticism with Adam Leite, Indiana University
- Epistemology with Patrick Forber, Tufts University
- Metaphysics with Brian Epstein, Tufts University
- Independent Study in Epistemology with Jody Azzouni, Tufts University
- Graduate Writing Seminar with David Denby and Avner Baz, Tufts University
- Graduate Seminar in Epistemology with Berislav Marušić, Brandeis University

Logic

- Mathematical Logic with Larry Moss, Indiana University
- Formal Logic with Gary Ebbs, Indiana University
- Logic with George Smith, Tufts University

Ethics

- Interpersonal Thought with Berislav Marušić, University of Edinburgh**
- Dissertation Research with Marcia Baron, Indiana University
- Contemporary Ethical Theories with Kate Abramson, Indiana University
- Slavery: Its Moral History with George Smith and Lionel McPherson, Tufts University

Social & Political Philosophy

- Feminist Philosophy with Kate Abramson, Indiana University*
- Justice with Matthew Adams, Indiana University*
- Philosophy of Law with Erin Kelly, Tufts University
- Philosophy of Gender, Sexuality and Race with Katy Meadows, Indiana University**

* Indicates audit of a graduate course

** Indicates audit of an undergraduate course

History of Philosophy

- Kant with Allen Wood, Indiana University
- Medieval Philosophy with Rega Wood, Indiana University
- History of Analytic Philosophy with David Denby, Tufts University
- History of Modern Philosophy with Christiana Olfert, Tufts University

Philosophy of Mind

- Seminar in Mind and Action: Collective Action with Kirk Ludwig, Indiana University
- Evolving Minds: Bacteria to Bach with Dan Dennett, Tufts University

Philosophy of Language

- Qualifying Research with Kirk Ludwig, Indiana University
- Proseminar with Kirk Ludwig, Indiana University
- Philosophy of Language with Dilip Ninan, Tufts University

Higher Education and Student Affairs

- Supervised College Teaching with Tom Laird, Indiana University
- Independent Study on College Pedagogy with Tom Laird, Indiana University
- College Teaching and Learning with Joan Middendorf, Indiana University
- Higher Education Organization and Administration with Samuel Museus, Indiana University
- Curriculum in Higher Education with Tom Laird, Indiana University

WORKSHOPS ATTENDED

- Teaching Hub at the Pacific APA in San Francisco April 2023
- Teaching Hub at the Pacific APA in Vancouver April 2022
- APA Webinar: Anti-Racist Pedagogy in Philosophy January 2021
- AAPT 2020: Anti-Racist and Pandemic Pedagogies July 2020
- Athena in Action June 2020
- Teaching Hub at the Central APA in Chicago February 2020
- Transforming Your Research Into Teaching at Indiana University Summer 2019
- Teaching Hub at the Pacific APA in Vancouver April 2019
- Teaching Hub at the Central APA in Denver February 2019
- Teaching Hub at the Pacific APA in San Diego April 2018
- Inclusive Pedagogy in Philosophy facilitated by the AAPT at IU September 2017

JOURNAL REFEREE

- Synthese
- The European Journal of Women's Studies
- Erkenntnis

READING GROUPS

- "Racial Formations," Fall 2020
- "Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance," Spring 2021

WORK EXPERIENCE

VIPKid

English as a Second Language Teacher

May 2018 – May 2021

- Taught more than 850 online classes on English language, grammar, reading and oral communication to children ages three to sixteen
- Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language (TESOL) certified

Tufts University Dean of Students Affairs Office, Medford, MA

August 2014 – May 2016

Graduate Assistant

- Coordinate schedules, appointments, and special assignments for four university deans
- Facilitate office operations, maintain confidential information, and field inquiries by phone and email

Harvard University Division of Continuing Education, Cambridge, MA

August 2013 - August 2014

Enrollment Services Representative

- Provide professional front-line customer service for all prospective and continuing student
- Assist Harvard Extension and Summer School students with academic advising and course selection

Emerson College Graduate Admissions, Boston, MA

June 2012 - August 2013

Application Coordinator

- Process thousands of applications, credentials, and recommendations for ten graduate programs
- Supervise the graduate Visitor's Center Coordinator and oversee all tours

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

In my dissertation I argue that it is not only permissible, but sometimes morally and epistemically required to defer to another's moral testimony. I do this by focusing on a subset of moral testimony: testimony provided by members of marginalized groups about the identity-based harms that they, themselves, have experienced.

Moral deference involves accepting another's testimony about moral information based, at least in part, on the testifier's say-so. This includes, but is not limited to, deferring to another's moral guidance, believing another's moral testimony, or acting in accordance with moral advice. Moral deference has traditionally created a cause for concern: deferring to another on moral issues has been characterized as too easy, epistemically irresponsible, or the wrong way to acquire moral knowledge.

Critics have focused on a small subset of cases, where the deferrer blindly adopts the moral opinions of another. I reject this characterization in favor of focusing on those cases where the testifier has additional empirical information, which form the basis for their moral judgment.

I argue that members of marginalized groups are better epistemically positioned in relation to experiencing the relevant identity-based harms and have greater moral authority to provide moral recommendations than their non-marginalized counterparts. Living as a particular socio-political identity will mean that these testifiers gain easy access to certain relevant, non-moral information. Members of marginalized groups are also better equipped to recognize certain moral distinctions, and advocate for more targeted solutions than their non-marginalized counterparts. As such, marginalized persons have localized empirical and moral expertise.

While deferring to domain experts can provide greater accuracy for our beliefs, there is also a sense in which deference is owed to the marginalized testifier. That is, deferring to another is part of a robust interpersonal exchange, which recognizes others as persons, worthy of trust and respect, rather than as a mere means to more accurate moral conclusions. When non-members fail to defer to marginalized persons when they testify about their own identity-based harms, they doxastically wrong the testifier. Taken together, these reasons give rise to a *prima facie* obligation: non-group members ought to defer to marginalized members when they testify about their own identity-harms.

I take deference to include a variety of attitudinal and actional states. In contrast to the standard framing of deference as a merely epistemic attitude, where one "farms out" their moral beliefs to another, I argue that deference can manifest in a range of more reasonable attitudes, such as affording substantial epistemic weight, or even in action, as in the case where we follow another's moral recommendations.

Participating in this kind of moral deference addresses both a negative and positive project: to minimize harm—particularly to those who have already suffered interpersonal, institutional, and structural oppression—and to afford respect.

When a person testifies about the harms that they, themselves, have experienced, they provide an invitation for the receiver to trust *them*: to believe their testimony because they said so. Often, a marginalized person might stand on their identity *as an x* to make moral recommendations. Unless the receiver has good reason to believe that their testimony is incorrect, the receiver ought to recognize the credentials of the testifier by participating in some variety of deference.

A failure to defer to marginalized testifiers about their identity harms constitutes the denial of marginalized persons as full-fledged moral and epistemic agents, capable of understanding their own experiences. To the extent that members of particular marginalized communities have greater non-moral and moral information than their non-member counterparts, failing to defer is also a rejection of domain-expertise.

The upshot of my dissertation is that even if we do not have voluntary control over our beliefs, we do have voluntary control over our actions. As such, even if non-group members fail an obligation to epistemically defer to marginalized people when they testify about their own identity harms, they still ought to act in accordance with that testimony.