

## Carmen De Schryver

[www.carmen-deschryver.com](http://www.carmen-deschryver.com)

Trinity College  
Assistant Professor of Philosophy  
300 Summit Street  
Hartford, CT, 06106  
carmen.deschryver@trincoll.edu

### AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Africana Philosophy  
Decolonial Theory  
20<sup>th</sup> Century European Philosophy  
(esp. Phenomenology)

### AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Critical Race Theory  
Feminist Philosophy (esp. Latinx)  
19<sup>th</sup> Century European Philosophy  
Early Modern Philosophy  
Social & Political Philosophy

### EDUCATION

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 2022 | PhD in Philosophy, Northwestern University <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Dissertation</i>: “The Decolonization of Phenomenology: Dialogical Universality in Césaire, Fanon and Hountondji”</li><li>• Committee: Penelope Deutscher (Chair), José Medina, Rachel Zuckert, Peter Fenves, Souleymane Bachir Diagne (Columbia University)</li></ul> |
| 2016 | Graduate Credit Program in Philosophy, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven  |
| 2015 | MSc with Distinction in Political Theory, London School of Economics and Political Science <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Thesis</i>: “Rousseau and Nietzsche on Individuality and Community”, Prof. Katrin Flikschuh</li></ul>  |
| 2014 | BA with First Class Honors in History and Politics, University of Warwick  |

### JOBS, FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 2022-Present | Assistant Professor in Philosophy, Trinity College  |
| 2021-2022    | Visiting Assistant Professor in Philosophy, <a href="#">Sarah Lawrence College</a>                |
| 2021-2022    | Global Impacts Graduate Fellow, <a href="#">Northwestern Buffett Institute for Global Affairs</a> |
| 2018-2022    | Research Assistant for the Grant  |

[Andrew W. Mellon Project: Critical Theory in the Global South](#), (award # 41 600 618), Northwestern University

## PUBLICATIONS

### Peer-Reviewed Articles

“Absolute Ideas and Empirical-Anthropological Types: Tracking Husserl’s Eurocentrism”, forthcoming in *Husserl Studies*

“[Deconstruction and Epistemic Violence](#)”, *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 59/2 (2021), pp. 100-121.

### Book Chapters

“Philosophical Universality in Crisis: Hountondji’s Interruption of Phenomenology” in *Phenomenology in an African Context: Contributions and Challenges*, ed. Abraham Olivier, M. John Lamola and Justin Sands (Albany: SUNY Press, forthcoming 2021).

### Encyclopedia Entries

“Ethnophilosophy” in *Encyclopedia of Diversity*, ed. Mitja Sardoc (Dordrecht: Springer, forthcoming 2022).

## RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Paper on Lugones and Heidegger (under review)

“Humanity Reduced to a Monologue: Césaire and Fanon on the Relationship between Colonialism and Universality”

## DISSERTATION

Committee: Penelope Deutscher (Chair), José Medina, Rachel Zuckert, Peter Fenves, Souleymane Bachir Diagne (Columbia University)

*The Decolonization of Phenomenology: Dialogical Universality in Césaire, Fanon and Hountondji*

### Brief Abstract

My dissertation explores how philosophy, historically associated closely with Europe, might finally make good on its claims to universality by transforming itself into a global discipline. My main resource is the African phenomenological tradition and its oft-overlooked investment into a *decolonized* conception of universality. Unlike other current critical-phenomenological and decolonial thinkers, I focus not on questions of embodiment and lived experience, but on one of phenomenology’s foundational methods, *viz.* the reduction. This attempt to bracket presuppositions is central to phenomenology’s ambition to attain a form of universalistic thinking. Although this method has fallen into philosophical disfavor in recent years, I argue that it is ripe for a reevaluation. Mapping the uptake and radicalization of the reduction in the African phenomenological tradition, I

show how Césaire, Fanon and Hountondji give us resources to appraise universality from a decolonial lens. Far from conceiving universality as an exclusionary Eurocentric concept, each of these thinkers shows us that decolonization is the first step towards a *genuine* form of universality, which I call “dialogical universality”. Disarticulating the orthodox opposition between the particular and the universal, I argue that it is only from a particular situation that insights with universal value can and do emerge, in the continual dialogical encounter between different, situated, perspectives.

## PRESENTATIONS

### Invited Papers

- 2021 “Universality and Decoloniality: Souleymane Bachir Diagne’s ‘On the Post-Colonial and the Universal?’”, Invited Speaker, Critical Theory Workshop, Northwestern University, June 2021
- 2020 “María Lugones on Multiplicitous Selfhood”, Guest Lecture, Feminist Philosophy Course, Prof. Gina Zavota, Kent State University, October 2020
- 2020 “Decolonizing the Canon: Reading Strategies”, Invited Speaker, *Minorities and Philosophy Chapter*, Kent State University, February 2020

### Conference Presentations

- 2022 “‘The Crisis of the Crisis’: Deconstruction beyond Europe”, Conference Presenter, Decolonization and Post-Structuralism, Department of Logic and Theoretical Philosophy, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, February 2022
- 2021 “Universality through Dialogue: Fanon on the Relationship between the Universal and the Particular”, Conference Presenter, International Association for Dialogue Analysis, September 2021
- 2021 “Hountondji’s Interruption of Phenomenology”, Conference Presenter, 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Philosophy Conference at Villanova University: Phenomenology and its Worlds, March 2021
- 2018 “Responding to Others: Deconstruction and Epistemic Violence”, Conference Presenter, Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference: Displacement, The Graduate Center, CUNY, November 2018
- 2017 “Hospitality: On the Space Between Ethics and Politics”, Conference Presenter, 24<sup>th</sup> Annual DePaul University Graduate Student Conference: Place and Space, DePaul University, February 2017
- 2016 “Liberal Interventionism and African Political Philosophy: Applbaum’s ‘Forcing a People to be Free’”, Conference Presenter, 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Bath Spa Colloquium for Global Philosophy and Religion, Bath Spa University,

April 2016

### Workshop Presentations

- 2021 “Dialogical Universality: Hountondji’s Inheritance of Césaire and Fanon”, AFRISEM, Northwestern University, May 2021
- 2020 “Hountondji on Decolonial Universality”, Dissertation Research Seminar, Northwestern University, June 2020
- 2019 “Epistemic Injustice and Deconstruction”, Dissertation Research Seminar, Northwestern University, May 2019

### Discussant

- 2021 Paulin J. Hountondji, “Cooptation: Global Knowledge as it Works”, Northwestern University, Online Conference, [Decolonizing Universality](#), [Decolonizing the University](#), Andrew W. Mellon Critical Theory in the Global South Project, June 2021
- 2019 Noémi Michel, “Embodied Voices and Paradoxical Inclusion: A Black Feminist Critique of Democracy”, Northwestern University, Workshop: Democracy, Critique, and Europe’s Crises, August 2019
- Renxiang Liu, “Between Repetition and Renewal: Varieties of Duration in Alia Al-Saji’s Critical Phenomenology of Race”, Northwestern University Graduate Conference in Critical Theory, February 2019
- 2018 Nadia Yala Kisukidi, “Racial Hospitality: On Decoloniality and Afro-Pessimism”, Northwestern University Workshop on Decolonizing Critical Theory: Decolonial Aesthetics and Epistemic Violence, November 2018
- 2017 Anastasia Berg, “You Can’t Move Without Being Moved: On the Moral Significance of the Human Capacity for Feeling”, 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Northwestern University Society for the Theory of Ethics and Politics, April 2017

### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

#### Instructor of Record

- Spring 2022 [Critical Race Theory: Philosophical Perspectives](#), Instructor of Record, Sarah Lawrence College
- Fall 2021 [Decolonizing Philosophy](#), Instructor of Record, Sarah Lawrence College

**Teaching Assistant**

- Fall 2020                      Ways of Knowing: Learning in (Post-)Colonial Times, Prof. Hermez and Prof. Menge, Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University in Qatar, cross-listed with Anthropology (Online Class)
- Spring 2020                    Introduction to Africana Philosophy, Dr. William Paris, Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University (Online Class)
- Winter 2020                    Introduction to the Philosophy of Language, Prof. Megan Hyska, Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University
- Winter 2019                    Introduction to Critical Theory, Prof. Mark Alznauer, Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University
- Fall 2018                        Bioethics, Prof. Mark Sheldon, Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University
- Winter 2018                    History of Early Modern Philosophy, Prof. Baron Reed, Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University
- Fall 2017                        Bioethics, Prof. Mark Sheldon, Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University

**PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING**

- 2019                              Syllabus Workshop: “Errant Syllabi: Latin American and Latinx Feminist, Cuir/Queer, and Gender Theory”, Invited Scholar, Northwestern University, November 2019
- 2019                              Caribbean Philosophical Association Summer School, Participant, Williams College, June 2019
- 2018                              Rethinking Pedagogy Workshop and Practicum, Participant, National Autonomous University of Mexico, November 2018
- 2018                              “Inventing School/Hacer Escuela” Workshop, Participant, Fordham University, April 2018

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE & SERVICE**

- 2021                              Referee, *Hypatia: A Feminist Journal of Philosophy*, December 2021
- 2021                              Chair and Moderator, “The Twenty Years Since 9/11/2001: What Can We Learn from the (Mis)conduct of the War on Terror”, Sarah Lawrence College, September 2021

- 2021 Principal Organizer, [“Decolonizing Universality, Decolonizing the University: International Conference”](#), Andrew W. Mellon Project: Critical Theory in the Global South, Northwestern University, June 2021
- 2020 Referee, *Puncta: Journal of Critical Phenomenology*, December 2020
- 2020 Graduate Convener, “Critical Theory in Critical Times: Santiago Castro-Gómez’s *Critique of Latin American Reason*,” Northwestern University, October 2020
- 2018-2021 Organizer and co-founder, “Northwestern University’s Annual Graduate Conference in Critical Theory”, Northwestern University.
- 2018 Principal Organizer, “Annual Inclusiveness Lecture: Professor Ariana Stokas, ‘Tracing Epistemic Reparation: The University as a Collective Site of Amends’”, Department of Philosophy, Northwestern University, November 2018
- 2017-2020 Organizer, “After-Life of Phenomenology Workshop”, Northwestern University
- 2017-2019 Member, [Climate Committee](#), Northwestern University
- 2016-2018 Mentor and ESL Teacher, RefugeeOne Mentorship Program, Chicago
- 2014-2015 Tutor Volunteer, London School of Economics Widening Participation Programme, Newham Collegiate Sixth Form

## GRADUATE COURSEWORK

### *Northwestern University (Philosophy)*

- “Heidegger and Gadamer”, Prof. Cristina LaFont, Winter 2019
- “Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle”, Prof. Richard Kraut, Spring 2018
- “Habermas”, Prof. Cristina LaFont, Winter-Spring 2018
- “Critical Race Theory”, Prof. José Medina, Winter 2018
- “Kant’s First Critique”, Prof. Axel Mueller, Winter 2018
- “Nietzsche and Bernard Williams on Ethics”, Prof. Mark Alznauer, Fall 2017
- “Biopolitics After Foucault”, Prof. Penelope Deutscher, Spring 2017
- “Global Capitalism and Law”, Prof. Cristina LaFont, Winter 2017
- “Love, Reasons and Reasoning” (Audit), Prof. Kyla Ebels-Duggan, Winter 2017
- “Wittgenstein”, Prof. Sean Ebels-Duggan, Fall 2016
- “Hegel and Honneth”, Prof. Mark Alznauer, Fall 2016
- “Epistemic Psychology”, Prof. Baron Reed, Fall 2016-Winter 2017

### *Northwestern University (Other Disciplines)*

- “Indian Ocean Epistemologies”, Prof. Evan Mwangi (Comparative Literature), Spring 2018
- “Benjamin and Derrida on Phenomenology”, Prof. Peter Fenves (German), Fall 2017
- “Kafka and his Critics”, Prof. Sam Weber (Comparative Literature), Spring 2017

*Fordham University*

“Husserl and Heidegger” (Audit), Prof. John Drummond, Spring 2021

*DePaul University*

“Heidegger’s Being and Time”, Prof. William McNeill, Spring 2017

*KU Leuven*

“Jewish Philosophy”, Prof. Luc Anckaert, Spring 2016

“Ethics”, Prof. William Desmond, Spring 2016

“Aquinas on Aristotle’s Metaphysics”, Prof. Henning Tegtmeier, Fall 2015

“Plato’s Timaeus”, Prof. Guy Claessens, Fall 2015

*London School of Economics*

“Global Justice and African Political Philosophy”, Prof. Katrin Flikschuh, Spring 2015

“Europe Beyond Modernity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida”, Prof. Simon Glendinning, Spring 2015

“Philosophy of History and the Idea of Europe”, Prof. Simon Glendinning, Winter 2015

“Kant’s Political Theory”, Prof. Katrin Flikschuh, Winter 2015

“Hobbes”, Prof. Johan Olsthoorn, Fall 2014

“Foundations of Political Theory”, Prof. Kai Spiekermann and Joe Mazor, Fall 2014

**LANGUAGES**

English: Native

Dutch: Native

German: Advanced in reading, intermediate in speaking and writing

Spanish: Intermediate in reading, speaking and writing

French: Intermediate in reading, beginner in speaking and writing

Italian: Beginner in reading, speaking and writing

**REFERENCES**

Available on request

**EXTENDED DISSERTATION ABSTRACT**

Contemporary decolonial criticism and critical phenomenological thought may be characterized as proceeding from a disenchantment with the philosophical aspiration towards universality. The overarching argument put forward in this dissertation is that there is, to the contrary, an intimate and even necessary connection between the decolonization of philosophy and the affirmation of philosophical universality. By way of an engagement with the Africana tradition of phenomenology – a tradition which culminates in the thought of Paulin J. Hountondji – I make a case for the pertinence of a conception of universality I term “dialogical universality” to debates about pluralizing the canon, academic decolonization, and communication across geographical and cultural frontiers.

In the first half of this dissertation, I look at Hountondji’s transformation of the Husserlian project of phenomenology as universal science. Therein I employ a novel comparative methodology I call “reading from the margins”: rather than beginning with Husserl’s thought and interpreting Hountondji’s intellectual output by those lights, I invert the traditional order of reading. That is, I begin with the concerns characteristic of Hountondji’s thinking, and re-interpret Husserlian phenomenology from this

perspective. This subtle methodological shift is motivated by decolonial concerns regarding the reification of European thought as pivotal, even when it is considered in dialogue with traditions from the Global South. I thus resist the suggestion – still dominant in the Hountondji scholarship – that his philosophical trajectory is entirely explicable by reference to the European “canon”. On my methodology, the very terms “canon” and “margin” begin to shift in meaning: “reading from the margins” is self-destructive in that its ultimate aim is to reconstitute what is considered canonical in the first place. One of the central contributions of my dissertation is thus methodological in nature: “reading from the margins” is offered in the spirit of an inaugural example of a decolonial approach to the history of philosophy.

Beyond suggesting itself as a decolonial framework, “reading from the margins” enables substantive interpretive interventions foreclosed on the standard approach. Within the context of Chapter One, the interpretive upshot of my methodology is to throw into relief a Hountondjean departure from Husserl. Through an exegetical consideration of Hountondji’s critique of what he calls ethnophilosophy, I argue that Husserl remains beholden to an ethnophilosophical logic which identifies Europe as the unique site of universal thinking while casting the colonized world in the mold of the particular. This then raises the question: why retain the name “phenomenology” if its founder is subject to such a criticism? Chapter Two answers this questions through an investigation into the relationship between the Husserl’s methods and the entrance of Eurocentrism into his work.

This chapter makes two interrelated arguments. First, I follow Hountondji in focusing on the phenomenological method of a reduction that puts out of play all presuppositions as an important resource for developing a decolonized conception of universality. I then, second, explore two different ways of accounting for Husserl’s failure to fully effect the reduction. Drawing upon Merleau-Ponty, I first consider the possibility that Husserl’s method is insufficiently empiricist. I then consider Derrida’s criticism of this Merleau-Pontyan view which focuses instead on the way that Husserl is at his most Eurocentric when he is at his most empiricist, *i.e.*, when he abandons the explicitly transcendental orientation of phenomenology. I thus show that Eurocentrism does insinuate itself in Husserl’s methodological framework – *not*, however, in a manner that renders phenomenology simply irredeemable. Given the opposition between these two insightful criticisms, however, I argue that the challenge for a decolonial version of phenomenology is considerable; for, in order that it avoid Eurocentrism, it would need to both realize phenomenology’s transcendental ambitions and yet remain in contact with concrete, empirical intersubjectivity.

One of the issues that arises in considering Merleau-Ponty’s proposal for a more empirical and consequently multicultural form of phenomenology is that it is naïve, within a “post”-colonial context, to assume that non-domineering form of contact between cultures – requisite for philosophical communication with universal aims – is possible. Chapter Three focuses on this problematic by elucidating the arguments made by Césaire and Fanon regarding the incompatibility between colonialism and the aspiration to universality. Beyond making this conceptual argument, this chapter contributes to the scholarship on these thinkers by (i) emphasizing the universalistic dimension of the Négritude tradition and (ii) reconsidering Fanon’s relationship to that tradition of thought. Chapter Three also involves an important feature of the decolonial methodology carried out in this dissertation, since the turn to Césaire and Fanon is motivated by Hountondji’s own construction of his philosophical inheritance.

With the conceptual terrain thus laid out, Chapter Four moves on to think through a decolonial, phenomenological conception of universality which I call “dialogical universality”. I develop this notion through a close reading of Fanon and Hountondji and their respective discussions of how the universal emerges within, but is not for that reason vitiated by, particular sites of dialogical exchange. One key intervention made in this chapter is thus to challenge the still commonly presumed opposition between



the particular and the universal. Here, I set out the conditions that dialogical settings would have to meet in order to be conducive to the sharing of universalizing insight. Although both Fanon and Hountondji direct our focus to the manner in which the universal is already on the horizon within localized, intra-African debates, an implication of their fallibilistic views of the universal is that such debates eventually be expanded to the trans-cultural. Herein lies the crux of the indissociability claim: I argue that dialogical universality depends upon the in principle inclusion of *all* particular perspectives. This speaks to the provisionality and revisability of any proposition claiming universal status, for no claim meets this demanding standard so long as there are others who have yet to provide criticism of it in dialogue. I argue that this does not invalidate universality, speaking instead to the endlessness of the debate.

Yet Fanon and Hountondji are not equally consistent on this point. In the fifth and final chapter, I argue that it is in Hountondji's thought that we find the most thoroughgoing commitment to the view that claims demanding universal assent arise within *all* contexts. Against Fanon's suspicions regarding the possibility for endogenous systems of knowledge to rise to universal validity—and, indeed, against the pessimism attending these suspicions—Hountondji's positive valuation of endogenous *epistemes* provides an important counter and supplement. In doing so, I argue that Hountondji (i) draws on his distinctive interpretation of Césaire, an interpretation at odds with Fanon's and (ii) enacts a radical version of the phenomenological reduction as a suspension of methodological biases which surreptitiously favor European scientific and philosophical paradigms (a methodological bias to which Fanon falls prey). In so doing, I argue that Hountondji's work offers a resolution to the dilemma with which Chapter Two concluded: it is attentive at one and the same time to the exigency that universality be developed through encounters with concrete others *as well as* the demand that whatever is empirically actual at any time not prejudge a sense of what is possible. Hountondji thus maintains the transcendental vector of Husserlian phenomenology in his attempt to break through embedded presuppositions that dictate what can be a source of universal insight.

The conclusion brings the various strands of this dissertation together by way of a reflection on the connection between the conception of “dialogical universality,” the method of the reduction, and the decolonial strategy of “reading from the margins” utilized in the dissertation. I show that “reading from the margins”, inasmuch as it is undertaken from the positionality of someone who (like myself) is culturally situated within the European tradition, itself enacts a version of the reduction. This is because it intentionally puts out of play the presumptive favoring of the European canon still perpetuated by a number of comparative approaches. Because the strategy of “reading from the margins” operates to deflate the overblown status of the European philosophical tradition in global philosophical research, it contributes to the production of a more egalitarian conversational space – one of the conditions of dialogical universality. My proposed strategy and the phenomenological method of the reduction are thus shown to be intimately connected to the central concept proposed and defended in this dissertation.