

**CASSIE HERBERT**

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Stevenson Hall, Illinois State University  
Normal, Illinois 61790

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**CURRENT POSITION:** Assistant Professor of Philosophy & Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Illinois State University, 2018-present.

**AREA OF SPECIALIZATION:** Philosophy of Language, Social Philosophy, Feminist Philosophy, Philosophy of Sex

**AREAS OF COMPETENCE:** Political Philosophy, Bioethics, Ethics, Social Epistemology

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**EDUCATION**

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Georgetown University (2009–2017): Ph.D. in Philosophy

Bates College (2003–2007): B.A. in Philosophy (with honors) and Politics

**Dissertation:** Exclusionary Speech and Constructions of Community

Chair: Quill Kukla

Readers: Alisa Carse, Wayne Davis, Daniel Silvermint

**Abstract:**

I explore the complex ways language, social power, and identity entwine to structure social interactions and the contours of community boundaries. I examine how we use language to construct ingroups and outgroups, and how this sets up and perpetuates norms for the treatment of particular people. Throughout, I look at how seemingly promising strategies of resistance can unintentionally recreate the harm they were intended to ameliorate. I begin by articulating the value of a non-ideal theory approach to philosophy of language; this approach draws explanatory power from moments of discursive disconnects, when speech acts are taken up as something other than what they were intended to be. Drawing on this approach I develop an account of the performative structure of reports and of accusations, and examine how taking up accounts of wrongdoing as one or as the other can materially affect community constitution. Next, I explore the power, for both good and ill, of using linguistic moves to call into salience particular aspects of identity. This kind of signaling can constitute the target as having a particular location within the discursive community and can either encourage or forestall specific pragmatic moves in response. In the third chapter I argue that we need a more complex taxonomy than ‘insults’ and ‘slurs’ to fruitfully make sense of harmful words. I offer an account of ‘derogatives’ that more precisely captures the complex variations between harmful terms. I pay particular attention to terms rarely recognized as taboo, such as ‘slut,’ ‘crazy,’ or ‘thug.’ I next present the pragmatic structure of reclamation projects; because of the overlapping discursive communities in which participants are situated, these projects are particularly precarious and risk reinforcing the very norms they are intended to subvert. Finally, I draw on empirical data to argue that even mentioning slurs can be harmful. Based on this, I offer practical guidance for how we ought to navigate talking about slurs.

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### PAST POSITIONS

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Visiting Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, 2017-2018.

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### PUBLICATIONS

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Kukla, Quill, Cassie Herbert, and Ari Watson (forthcoming). 'Sexual Violation and the Language of Moral Repair.' *Philosophy of #MeToo*, edited by Yolanda Wilson.

Kukla, Quill and Cassie Herbert (2020). 'Moral Ecologies and the Harms of Sexual Violation.' *Philosophical Topics* 46.2, 247-268.

Herbert, Cassie (2019). 'The Speech Acts of #MeToo.' *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy*. 19.1 (Fall), 16-20.

Herbert, Cassie (2019). 'Cassie Herbert on Risky Speech.' *Unmuted: Conversations on Prejudice, Oppression, and Social Justice*, edited by Myisha Cherry. New York: Oxford UP.

Herbert, Cassie (2018). 'Online Misogyny and Philosophy,' *Women in Philosophy Blog of the APA*, July 4, 2018.

Herbert, Cassie and Rebecca Kukla (2016). 'Ingrouping, Outgrouping, and the Pragmatics of Peripheral Speech.' *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*. 2.4, 576-596.

Herbert, Cassie (2015). 'Precarious projects: The performative structure of reclamation'. *Language Sciences*. 52 (Special Issue on Slurs), 131-138.

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### WORKS IN PROGRESS

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'Accusations, Reports, and Responding to Risky Speech.'

'Derogatives: Beyond Insults and Slurs.'

'How to Talk about Slurs.'

'Karens, beekies, and terfs.'

'Very Online Misogyny.'

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### AWARDS AND HONORS

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Graduate Student Paper Award. *North American Society for Social Philosophy*, Talking about Slurs, 2016.

Graduate Student Teaching Award. *Georgetown University*, Bioethics, 2014-15.

Graduate Student Paper Award. *Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology*, Slurs & Sluts: The Pragmatic Structure of Reclamation Projects, 2014.

Teaching Fellow. *Georgetown University*, Engelhard Project for Connecting Life and Learning, 2010-15.

## PRESENTATIONS

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### Invited

- 'Derogatives: Beyond Insults and Slurs.' *Cambridge University Meaning Reading Group*, (Zoom), July 2020.
- 'Talking About Slurs.' *Slurs, Name-calling, and Exclusionary Speech Workshop* at Technische Universität. (Berlin) March 2020.
- 'Epistemic Dumping: Performing Labor as a Survivor.' *Faculty and Staff Sexual Misconduct Conference*, (Madison, WI), July 2019
- 'Sexual Wrongdoing and the Ecology of Harm.' *APA Committee Session: Feminist Perspectives on MeToo at the American Philosophical Association Eastern Division meeting*, (New York, NY), January 2018.
- 'Jewess': What's In a Name? *Reimagining the Jewess In Art, Literature, and Film*, (Washington, DC), February 2018.
- Talking about Slurs. *Department of Philosophy Colloquium Series at Slippery Rock University* (Slippery Rock, PA), November 2017.
- Derogatives: Beyond Insults and Slurs. *Department of Philosophy Colloquium Series at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville* (Edwardsville, IL), September 2017.
- The Pragmatics of 'Slut'. *Promising Sex panel at the American Philosophical Association Eastern Division meeting*, (Baltimore, MD), January 2017.
- Implicit Associations and the Pragmatics of Slurs. *New York Philosophy of Language Workshop*, (New York, NY), March 2014.

### Refereed

- Very Online Misogyny.\* *North American Society for Social Philosophy annual meeting*, (Aston, PA), July 2020. *(Cancelled due to covid-19)*
- Very Online Misogyny.\* *Gender and Sexuality in Information Studies Colloquium*. (Washington, DC), July 2020. *(Cancelled due to covid-19)*
- Sexual Violence and the Language of Moral Repair.\* *Society for the Philosophy of Sex and Love at the American Philosophical Association Pacific Division meeting*, (San Francisco), April 2020. *(Cancelled due to covid-19)*
- Derogatives: Beyond Insults and Slurs. *Feminist Epistemologies, Methodologies, Metaphysics, and Social Sciences biannual meeting*, (Corvallis, OR), August 2018.
- Derogatives: Beyond Insults and Slurs. *Society for Analytic Feminism panel at the American Philosophical Association Central Division meeting*, (Chicago, IL), February 2018.
- Derogatives: Beyond Insults and Slurs. *Creighton Club: New York State Philosophical Society*, (Syracuse, NY), September 2017.
- Believing Survivors and Belief in Survivors. *Feminist Epistemologies, Methodologies, Metaphysics, and Social Sciences biannual meeting*, (South Bend, IN), October 2016.
- Believing Survivors and Belief in Survivors. *Society for Analytical Feminism*, (Lowell, MA), September 2016.
- Talking about Slurs. *North American Society for Social Philosophy annual meeting*, (Ottawa, ON), July 2016.
- Talking about Slurs. *Gender, Race, and Sexuality: Language and Politics annual workshop*, (Barcelona, Spain), June 2016.
- Talking about Slurs. *19<sup>th</sup> Annual CUNY Graduate Student Philosophy Conference*, (New York, NY), April 2016.

Identity and Discursive Signaling. *Philosophy of the City*, (Portland, OR), November 2015.

Insidious Sluts. *Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology annual meeting*, (New Orleans, LA), April 2015.

Speaking from the Margins: The Pragmatics of Pseudonyms in Peripheral Speech. *Canadian Society for Women in Philosophy/Feminist Epistemologies, Methodologies, Metaphysics, and Social Sciences biannual meeting*, (Waterloo, ON), August 2014.

Slurs & Sluts: The Pragmatic Structure of Reclamation Projects. *Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology annual meeting*, (Charleston, SC), February 2014.

Slurs & Sluts: The Pragmatic Structure of Reclamation Projects. *Edgington Lectures on Race and Gender Hate Speech*, (London, England), January 2014.

Peripheral Speech (with Rebecca Kukla). *American Philosophical Association Central Division meeting*, (New Orleans, LA), February 2013.

**Invited  
commenter**

On Marie-Hélène Desmeules’s ‘The Normativity of Sexual Desire.’ *American Philosophical Association Eastern Division meeting*, (New York, NY), January 2021.

On Samia Hesni’s ‘Philosophical Intuitions and Socially Significant Language.’ *American Philosophical Association Eastern Division meeting*, (New York, NY), January 2020.

On Amy McKiernan’s ‘Self-blame and Sexual Violence: A Feminist Intervention.’ *American Philosophical Association Eastern Division meeting*, (Savannah, GA), January 2018.

On Renee Bolinger’s ‘Testimonial Injustice and the Harm in Mental Illness Epithets.’ *American Philosophical Association Central Division meeting*, (Kansas City, MO), March 2017.

On The ‘Sexual Agency: Negotiating Autonomy, Attraction, and Intimacy’ Panel presentations. *American Society for Bioethics and Humanities annual meeting*, (Houston, TX), October 2015.

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**TEACHING**

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**Courses  
designed  
and taught** Feminist Philosophies. *Illinois State University* (Fall 2021, Fall 2020, Fall 2019, Fall 2018).

The Ideal of Democracy. *Illinois State University* (Fall 2021, Fall 2020, Fall 2019, Fall 2018).

Social Power & Ethics of the Internet. *Illinois State University* (Spring 2021).

Sex, Values, Human Nature. *Illinois State University* (Summer 2021, Spring 2021, Spring 2020, Spring 2019).

Language & Power. *Illinois State University* (Spring 2019); *Hobart and William Smith Colleges* (Spring 2018); *Georgetown University* (Fall 2016, Fall 2015, Fall 2013).

Environmental Ethics. *Hobart and William Smith Colleges* (Spring 2018, Fall 2017).

Cosmopolitanism and Global Ethics. *Hobart and William Smith Colleges* (Fall 2017).

Philosophy of Sex and Love. *Hobart and William Smith Colleges* (Fall 2017).

Intersectionality & Identity. *Georgetown University* (Spring 2017, Spring 2016).

Ethics: Sex & Sexuality. *Georgetown University* (Spring 2015, Summer 2014).  
Philosophy of Language. *Georgetown University* (Fall 2014).  
Bioethics. *Georgetown University* (Spring 2014).  
Sex, Science, Society (co-taught with Richard Fry). *Georgetown University* (Spring 2013).  
Gender & Justice. *Georgetown University* (Fall 2012, Summer 2012).

**Mentoring** Job Candidate Mentoring Program for Women in Philosophy, 2018-2019.  
Designated Teaching Mentor to Graduate Students. (Selected in competitive process). *Georgetown University*, Summer 2016.  
Senior Honors Thesis Mentor, 'Problematic Faves: How Fan Fiction and Fan Pairings Illustrate the Influence of Rape Culture on Young Women.' *Georgetown University*, Spring 2016.  
Philosophy in an Inclusive Key (PIKSI) Graduate Assistant. (Selected in competitive process). *Pennsylvania State University*, Summer 2015.  
Ethics and Bioethics Bowl team founder and co-coach. *Georgetown University*, Spring 2011-Spring 2012.

**Public philosophy** Podcast Guest, 'Graduate School and Intersectionality,' *She Runs the World*, May 2017.  
Philosophy Podcast Guest, 'Risky Speech,' *The UnMute Podcast*, April 2017.  
[PlatED](#) Residence Programming, 'Race and Identity,' *Georgetown University*, Fall 2016.  
First-year Residence Programming, 'Supportive and Engaged Community Membership.' *Georgetown University*, Spring 2016.  
Prison Scholars Program Instructor, 'Race and Philosophy of Language.' *Jessup Correctional Institution*, Summer 2014.  
First-year Residence Programming, 'Navigating Implicit Bias in Daily Life.' *Georgetown University*, Spring 2014.

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## LEADERSHIP

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National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow, Summer Institute on Diverse Philosophical Approaches to Sexual Violence, *Elon University*, Summer 2017. \$2,200 fellowship.  
Philosophy in an Inclusive Key Summer Institute (PIKSI) Graduate Assistant. *Pennsylvania State University*, Summer 2015. \$2,000 fellowship.  
Project Manager for Pregnancy and HIV: Seeking Equitable Study NIH Grant. *Kennedy Institute of Ethics*, December 2013-February 2015.  
Founder and coach, Georgetown Ethics and Bioethics Bowl Debate Teams, Spring 2011-Spring 2012.  
Founder and organizer, Georgetown Gender & Philosophy Group, Fall 2010-2013.

Student Representative (to faculty), Georgetown Graduate Philosophy Student Organization, 2009-2011.

### SERVICE ACTIVITIES

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Organizational committee for the *Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Symposium*, Illinois State University (Spring 2021).

Chair for panel session at *Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Symposium*, Illinois State University (Spring 2019).

Referee for *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, 2019.

Invited speaker at *Women's Empowerment Symposium*, Illinois State University (Fall 2018).

Referee for *Public Affairs Quarterly*, 2016.

Georgetown Philosophy of Language Workshop, Fall 2015-2017.

Georgetown 20<sup>th</sup> Century European Workshop, Fall 2014-2017.

Georgetown Diversifying Syllabi Workshop, Summer 2014-2017.

Georgetown Graduate Student Coalition for Gender Diversity in Philosophy, Fall 2013-2017.

Georgetown Graduate Student Writers Workshop, Spring 2010-2017.