

VANESSA CHRISTINA WILLS

The George Washington University
Department of Philosophy
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Current Position

- Associate Professor of Philosophy (and Affiliated Faculty in the Program in Africana Studies), The George Washington University, August 2023 – present

Previous Positions

- Assistant Professor of Philosophy, The George Washington University, August 2015-August 2023
- Visiting Faculty Fellow, Dresher Center for Humanities at University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Spring 2022
- German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) Visiting Chair in Ethics and Practice, Munich Center for Ethics at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Fall 2019 – Spring 2020
- Assistant Professor of Philosophy, St. Joseph's University, August 2012 – August 2015

Education

- PhD in Philosophy, University of Pittsburgh, December 2011
 - Dissertation: "Marx and Morality"; Committee: Michael Thompson (Chair), John McDowell, Peter Machamer, Tommie Shelby
- Fulbright Scholar, Institut für Philosophie, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Fall 2010 – Spring 2011
- Dissertation Fellow, Department of Philosophy, University of Rochester, Fall 2009 – Spring 2010
- A.B. in Philosophy, Princeton University, June 2002

Areas of Specialization

- Moral Philosophy; Social and Political Philosophy; 19th Century German Philosophy (especially Karl Marx); Philosophy of Race; Philosophy of Gender

Areas of Competence

- Epistemology; Applied Ethics; German Idealism

Publications

- *Marx's Ethical Vision*
 - New York: Oxford University Press, 2024
- “The New Normals: Solidarity, Recognition, and Vulnerable Selves in the COVID-19 Pandemic”
 - in Gotlib, Anna (ed.) *Responses to a Pandemic: Philosophical and Political Reflections*, New York: Roman & Littlefield, 2022
- “PPE in Marx's Materialist Conception of History”
 - in Melenovsky, Chris (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy, Politics, and Economics*, New York: Routledge, 2022
- “Racist Ideology as False Consciousness”
 - in Cholbi, Michael, Brandon Hogan, Alex Madva, and Benjamin Yost (eds.) *The Movement for Black Lives: Philosophical Perspectives*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021
- “The ‘We’ in a State of Becoming: Comments on Balibar”
 - *Critical Times: Interventions in Global Critical Theory*, Volume 4, Issue 1, 2021
- “Marxism and White Privilege: Building on Du Bois”
 - *Spectre: a journal of Marxist politics, strategy, and analysis*, Spring 2020
- “Towards a Theory of Revolutionary Admiration: Marx and the Commune”
 - Archer, Arthur and André Grahle (eds.), *The Moral Psychology of Admiration*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2019
- “‘Man is the Highest Being for Man!': Marx's Radical Irreligion”
 - in Oppy, Graham (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Atheism and Philosophy*, Malden: John Wiley & Sons, 2019
- “A Latent Conservatism? The Challenge of Marxian Revolution to Hegelian Social Ethics”
 - *Syndicate*, July 2019
- “What Could it Mean to Say, ‘Capitalism Causes Racism and Sexism?’”
 - *Philosophical Topics*, Volume 46, Issue 2, 2018
- “Bad Guys and Dirty Hands: 'Ethical Policing' in the Presence of Racial Injustice,” *The Critique*, July 2016
- “‘What are you doing around here?': Trayvon Martin and the Logic of Black Guilt”
 - Book chapter in eds., Janine Jones and George Yancy, *Pursuing Trayvon Martin: Historical Contexts and Contemporary Manifestations of Racial Dynamics*,

Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012.

Selected Works in Progress

- "Marxism and the Ends of Moral Philosophy" (draft available by request)
- "The 'White Privilege' Concept in Marxism and Critical Race Theory" (draft available by request)
- *Lessons from Black Woman Marxists on Race, Gender, and Class* (book manuscript in preparation)
- "'Species-Being' and the Ethics of Human Enhancement" (in preparation)

Book Reviews

- Review of Kate Manne's *Entitled*
 - *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy*, Volume 20, Issue 3, Spring 2021
- Review of William Clare Roberts's *Marx's Inferno*
 - *Theory and Event*, Volume 22, Issue 3, July 2019
- Review of Terence Irwin's *The Development of Ethics*
 - *The Philosophical Forum*, Volume 42, Issue 3, Fall 2011. (Due to the great length of Irwin's three-volume history of ethics, the review of his work was a collaborative effort. I reviewed Irwin's entry on Karl Marx's moral philosophy.)

Selected Honors and Awards

- Inclusion Imperative Visiting Faculty Fellow
 - Dresher Center for Humanities at University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Spring 2022
- Visiting Chair in Ethics and Practice
 - Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst Fellowship Chair at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich Center for Ethics, 2019-20
- Saint Joseph's University
 - Faculty Research Grant, Summer 2014
- Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (German Academic Exchange Service)
 - Short-term Grant for Research at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany, Summer 2012
- J. William Fulbright U.S. Student Program

- Grant for Research at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany, 2010-11
- University of Rochester
 - Dissertation Fellow in the Department of Philosophy, 2009-10
- University of Pittsburgh
 - Provost Development Fund Dissertation Fellowship, 2009-10
 - Department of Philosophy Departmental Fellowship, 2006-2007
 - Department of Philosophy Summer Research Grant, Summer 2005
- K. Leroy Irvis Fund
 - Predoctoral Fellowship, 2002-2003

Presentations

- “Marxism from the Outside In?”
 - (Invited Keynote) Marxism and the Pittsburgh School, Berlin, June 2024
- “Freedom and Determinism in the Thought of Karl Marx”
 - UCLA, February 2024
- “Marxism and Philosophy”
 - Texas Christian University, November 2023
- “Marx in the Thought of Charles Mills”
 - London Post-Kantian Society, October 2023
- “Black Women Communists in/and the U.S. State”
 - Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora, Accra, Ghana, August 2023
- “Towards an Ontology of the ‘Social Individual’ in Marxist Theory”
 - (Invited Keynote) Conference on Social Ontology, International Social Ontology Society, Stockholm University, August 2023
- “On Marxist and Intersectional Theories of Race, Gender, and Class”
 - (Invited Keynote) Open Doors Philosophy Academy, University of Pittsburgh, July 2023
- “The Exploitation Concept in Marx”
 - Workshop on Exploitation, University of Cologne, July 2023
- “Marx’s Ethical Vision”
 - (Invited Keynote) Marx and Philosophy Conference, Berlin, June 2023
- “The Place of Species-Being in Marx’s Later Thought”

- (Invited) Workshop on Species-Being, University of Warwick, June 2023
- “Marxism and the Ends of Moral Philosophy”
 - (Invited) Institute for Philosophy and Religion, Boston University, November 2022
 - (Invited) Department of Philosophy, Northwestern University, November 2022
 - (Invited) Nuffield Political Theory Workshop, Oxford University, October 2022
 - (Invited) Penn Philosophy Colloquium Series, University of Pennsylvania, October 2022
- “Claudia Jones on Race, Gender, and Class”
 - (Invited) Brown Political Theory Workshop, Brown University, September 2022
- “Marx’s Critiques of Rival Moral Theories”
 - (Invited) Power and Domination Workshop, McGill University, August 2022
- “On Marx’s Critiques of Kantian Ethics”
 - Berlin Summer Colloquium on Kantian and Post-Kantian Philosophy, Freie Universität Berlin, June 2022
 - Department of Philosophy, University of Maryland – Baltimore County, April 2022
- “Race, Gender, and Class in the Thought of Black Woman Marxists”
 - (Invited) Marx and Philosophy Society Conference, University College London, June 2022
- “Labor as Sociobiological Human Essence”
 - Braga Meeting in Ethics and Political Philosophy, Centre for Ethics, Politics, and Society, University of Minho, June 2022
- “Ideology Critique and the Critique of Morality”
 - (Invited) Workshop on Marxism and Critical Theory, Dartmouth College, May 2022
- “Freedom and Determinism in Marx’s Thought”
 - (Invited Keynote) “Openness, Contingency, and Change” Conference, Gettysburg College, April 2022
- “Martin Luther King and the Relevance of Labor Struggle Today”
 - (Invited Keynote) Workshop in Honor of Martin Luther King, Howard University, February 2022
- “Claudia Jones and the Thesis of ‘Triple Oppression’”
 - (Invited) Department of Philosophy, University of Memphis, February 2022
 - Drescher Center for the Humanities Workshop Series, University of Maryland – Baltimore County, February 2022
 - (Invited) Department of Philosophy, Oxford University, February 2022

- “Why Think Like a Revolutionary?” (UNESCO World Philosophy Day Lecture)
 - (Invited) Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto, November 2021
- “Black Woman Marxists on Race, Gender, and Class”
 - (Invited) Department of Philosophy, University of Denver, October 2021
 - (Invited) Department of Critical Studies, George Mason University, October 2021
- “Should Philosophers be (Climate) Activists?”
 - Philosophy and the Climate Crisis Conference, Yale-NUS, June 2021
- “Marx and the ‘Abolition of Morality’”
 - (Invited) Stanford Political Theory Workshop, April 2021
- “Reason, Reaction, and Black Rebellion”
 - (Invited) 36th Annual Alfred P. Stiernotte Lecture at Quinnipiac University, February 2021
- Guest Lecture, “The Politics of Intersectionality”
 - Cambridge University, February 2021
- Respondent, Comments on Meena Krishnamurthy’s “Lessons from King’s Letter from Birmingham Jail”
 - Eastern Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, January 2021
- “‘Go Cry About It’: What do Celebrities Owe the Public?”
 - Philosophy of Fame and Celebrity Conference, Tilburg University, December 2020
- “The Concept of ‘Rich Individuality’ in Marx’s Moral Thought”
 - (Invited) Series in Contemporary Political Theory, Cambridge University, November 2020
- “The ‘White Privilege’ Concept in Marxism and Critical Race Theory”
 - (Invited) Harvard University, November 2020
- “Black Woman Marxists on Race, Gender, and Class”
 - (Invited) Claremont McKenna College, October 2020
 - (Invited) Minorities and Philosophy – Berlin, December 2019
 - (Invited) University of St. Andrews, October 2019
 - (Invited) Fillosophie Series, Université du Québec à Montréal, September 2019
 - (Invited) Minorities and Philosophy Conference, Stanford University, April 2019
 - (Invited Keynote) Minds of Our Own (Conference marking the 25th anniversary of Louise Antony and Charlotte Witt’s *A Mind of One’s Own*), Massachusetts Institute of Technology, November 2018

- “Whiteness and Anti-Black Racism”
 - (Invited) Olmsted Workshop on Whiteness and Anti-Black Racism, Lafayette University, September 2020
- “What Should ‘We’ Know About Race?”
 - (Invited) Social Epistemology Network Colloquium Series, June 2020
- “What Can it Mean to Say, ‘Capitalism Causes Racism and Sexism?’”
 - “Philosophies of Race, Gender, and Class” Conference, Munich Center for Ethics, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, January 2020
- “’Heaven is a place on Earth’: The Abolition of Morality in Marxist Thought”
 - (Invited) Tilburg University, November 2019
- “Historic-Geographic Perspectives on the Boundaries of Capitalism”
 - Third Annual Meeting of the Philosophy, Politics, and Economics Society, March 2019
- “Marx on Justice”
 - Invited Panel Session on Justice, Central Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, February 2019
- Discussant in Author-Meets-Critics session on Will Roberts' *Marx's Inferno: The Political Theory of Capital*
 - American Political Science Association, September 2018
- “Racial Injustice and False Consciousness”
 - Second Annual Meeting of the Philosophy, Politics, and Economics Society, March 2018
- “Classing Race and Gender: Interactions between Economic Exploitation and Identity-Based Oppressions”
 - Second Annual Meeting of the Philosophy, Politics, and Economics Society, March 2018
- “Race, Ethics, and Policing in the Context of Injustice”
 - (Invited), Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Department of Philosophy, October 2017
- “Individual Action, Social Emergence, and 'the Laws of History’”
 - First Annual Meeting of the Critical Social Ontology Workshop, Saint Louis University, June 2017
- “Heaven is a Place on Earth: Marx's call for the abolition of morality”
 - Eighth Braga Meeting on Ethics and Political Philosophy, University of Minho, June 2017

- Discussant in session on Naomi Zack's "Contemporary Claims of Political Injustice"
 - *Res Philosophica* Conference on Race and Gender, Saint Louis University, April 2017
- Panelist, "Teaching Race in the Age of Trump"
 - The George Washington University, March 2017
- "Fascism and Anti-Fascism"
 - (Invited Keynote) Conference on "Resisting, Organizing, and Building in the Age of Trump and Beyond, Georgetown University, January 2017
- Discussant in "Author-Meets-Critics" session on John Murungi's *An Introduction to African Legal Philosophy*
 - African Studies Association Conference, December 2016
- "Race Thinking as Ideology"
 - (Invited Keynote) Conference on the Philosophy of 'Race' and Racism, Oxford University, June 2016
 - (Invited Keynote) Annual Meeting of the International Society for MacIntyrean Enquiry, July 2015
- "False Consciousness"
 - Seventh Braga Meeting on Ethics and Political Philosophy, University of Minho, June 2016
 - (Invited) Georgetown University, Department of Philosophy, April 2016
 - (Invited) Wellesley College, Department of Philosophy, February 2016
- "Human Nature as a Standard of Ethical Evaluation"
 - (Invited) Texas A&M University, Department of Philosophy, October 2015
- "Marx and Morality"
 - (Invited) Morgan State University, Department of Philosophy, April 2016
 - Department of Philosophy, Howard University, November 2015
 - (Invited Talk in the Ian Moore Memorial Lecture Series), Towson University, Department of Philosophy, April 2015
- "The 'White Privilege' Concept in Marxism and Critical Race Theory"
 - (Invited) Department of Philosophy, University of Alabama, April 2015
 - California Roundtable on the Philosophy of Race, September 2014
 - Central Meeting of the American Philosophical Association (Group Session of the APA Committee for the Status of Blacks in Philosophy), February 2014
- "Species-Being and the Ethics of Human Enhancement"
 - Central Meeting of the American Philosophical Association (Group Session of the Marx and Philosophy Association), February 2015

- “Blaming Racists: Moral Responsibility in the Context of Social Control”
 - Central Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, February 2015
 - (Invited) Department of Philosophy, The George Washington University, February 2015
- “Ideals of Ethical Leadership in 'The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant'”
 - Central Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, February 2015 (Group Session Co-sponsored by Concerned Philosophers for Peace and the Committee on the Status of Black Philosophers)
- “Human Nature as an Ethical Ideal in the Thought of Frederick Douglass”
 - (Invited) Annual Interdisciplinary Conference on Frederick Douglass, Frederick Douglass Institute at West Chester University, October 2014
- “What's Wrong with Human Rights Talk?”
 - Paper given *in absentia* at the Central Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, February 2013
- “Human Nature, Human Rights, and the Struggle for Human Liberation”
 - (Invited Keynote) University of Memphis Ida B. Wells Conference, November 2012
- “Ethics, Essence, and Objectivity in Radical Thought”
 - Radical Philosophy Association Conference, October 2012
- “Democracy, Leadership, and Representation in Black Politics”
 - (Invited) Rock Ethics Institute, Pennsylvania State University, February 2012 (Invited)
 - Collegium of Black Women Philosophers Conference V, April 2012
- “Freedom and Morality in the Thought of Karl Marx”
 - (Invited) City College of New York, Department of Philosophy, February 2012
 - (Invited) University of New Mexico, Department of Philosophy, February 2012
 - (Invited) St. Joseph’s University, Department of Philosophy, February 2012
 - (Invited) Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Department of Philosophy, November 2011
- “Marx's Moral Philosophy”
 - Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Social Philosophy Research Colloquium, May 2011 (Invited)
- “Marx's Critique of Natural Right”
 - York University, Historical Materialism Conference, May 2010

Teaching Experience

- At The George Washington University
 - Thesis Committees
 - (Chair) Shawky Darwish, Undergraduate Honors Thesis: “Capitalism ad Absurdum: Re-entangling Race and Class in the Work of Charles Mills” (Spring 2022)
 - (Chair) Qiunyang Wang, Undergraduate Honors Thesis: “On the Right to Strike” (Spring 2020)
 - (Committee Chair) Albert Anaim, Master’s Thesis: “Inner-City Justice: Universal Basic Income, Capabilities, and Inner-City Black Men” (May 2017)
 - (Reader) Vance Whitesides, EdD Dissertation: “The Large Ensemble/European Classical Music Paradigm and African American-Originated Dance-Musicking: A Dispositival Analysis of U.S. Secondary Music Education” (May 2017, Graduate School of Education and Human Development)
 - (Reader) Derek S. Lee, Master’s Thesis: “Saving Libertarian Paternalism” (May 2016)
 - Independent Study
 - (Advisor) Jarrod Grammel, “Independent Study on Rosa Luxemburg” (Spring 2019)
 - Graduate Courses
 - Philosophy of Fascism and Anti-Fascism
 - Economic Justice
 - Hegel and Post-Hegelian Philosophy
 - The Idea of the Individual: Independence and Selfhood in the Political Philosophies of Locke, Rousseau, Marx, and Mill
 - Marx and Ethics (new in Spring 2023)
 - Undergraduate Courses
 - Philosophy of Race and Gender
 - The Philosophy of Fascism and Anti-Fascism (Pro-Seminar)
 - Social and Political Philosophy (Writing Intensive)
 - Marx and the Alienation Concept (Pro-Seminar)
 - Black Woman Marxists on Race, Gender, and Class (Pro-Seminar)
- At Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
 - Graduate Courses
 - The Ethics of Human Enhancement
 - Undergraduate Courses
 - Race, Gender, and Class
- At Saint Joseph’s University

- German Idealism
- Freshman Seminar on Race and Racism
- Philosophy of Race (Writing Intensive)
- Philosophy of Human Nature
- Philosophy of Karl Marx (Writing Intensive)
- At the University of Rochester
 - Marx and Morality (upper-level seminar for advanced undergraduates)
- At the University of Pittsburgh
 - Thesis Advisor (one-on-one advising of an undergraduate research project)
 - Directed Study on Georg Lukács
 - Instructor (classes designed and taught independently)
 - Introduction to Social Philosophy
 - Topics in Social Philosophy: Philosophy of Race
 - Concepts of Human Nature
 - Introduction to Ethics: Applied Ethics
 - Introduction to Ethics: Ethics and Class Society
 - Introduction to Philosophical Problems
 - Teaching Assistant
 - Philosophy and Public Issues (Writing Intensive)
 - Introduction to Philosophical Problems (Writing Intensive)
 - History of Ancient Philosophy (Writing Intensive)
 - Introduction to Ethics (Writing Intensive)
 - Concepts of Human Nature (Writing Intensive)
 - Introduction to Philosophical Problems
 - Political Philosophy

Public Philosophy

- "Philosophy in Times Like These"
 - *LA Review of Books*, November 2023
- Interviewed by David Camfield on the topic of "Moralism"
 - *Victor's Children* podcast, August 2022
- Panelist on the topic of "Freedom" as a concept in radical theory
 - *Red May TV*, May 2022
- Co-Organized and Appeared in discussion with Cornel West on the Legacy of Charles Mills
 - Program in Africana Studies, George Washington University, October 2021
- Interviewed by Peter Adamson for podcast episode, "Vanessa Wills on Africana

Marxism”

- *History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps*, April 4, 2021
- Interviewed for *The Guardian*: “What the arrests of Beverly Hills residents say about the US Capitol attack”
 - *The Guardian*, February 25, 2021
- Panelist on the topic, “No Human Being is Illegal: Organizing for a World Without Borders”
 - *Spectre Journal* in association with Haymarket Books, February 2021
- “From the Lockdown Protests to the Capitol”
 - *n+1 magazine*, January 29, 2021
- “On Setbacks”
 - *Night of Philosophy and Ideas*, Brooklyn Public Library, January 28, 2021
- “Black Life Under COVID-19 Capitalism”
 - “The Fire This Time: We Can’t Breathe” Democratic Socialists of America Afrosocialists Caucus, June 2020
- Interviewed by philosopher Peter Bloom on *Another World is Podable*, “Vanessa Wills on Morality, Revolution, and White Privilege”
 - *Another World is Podable*, June 21, 2020
- “‘Black Lives Matter’ as Identity Politics and Class Struggle”
 - *Women in Philosophy – Blog of the APA*, June 17, 2020
- “Ask a Philosopher w/ Vanessa Wills and Colleen Murphy”
 - Brooklyn Public Philosophers, June 14, 2020
- Interviewed for the documentary film, *End of Daze: A Manifesto for Socialism*
 - Directed by Matt Pillischer (2019)
- Interviewed for documentary film on the concept of “truth” in the work of women researchers
 - Directed by Alex Strada (2019)
- Featured interview subject on the topic of Marxism and Philosophy
 - in Cherry, Myisha, *Unmuted: Conversations on Prejudice, Oppression, and Social Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019
- Opening remarks, “Short Films from East Germany,” installment in the Cinemarx film series presented by the Goethe-Institut, Washington, DC, May 2018

- Presenter on Marx's concept of "History," *Dictionary of Marx: A Multimedia Birthday Anniversary*, presented by the Goethe-Institut at Capital Fringe, Washington, DC, May 2018
- "Philosophy as a Virtuous Irritation: Can there be 'ruthless criticism' in safe spaces?," *PoliticalPhilosopher.Net*, September 2016
- "Democracy and the Range of Options," *DailyNous.com*, July 2016
- "Where Do We Go From Here,' An Inter-Generational Teach-In on the Triple Evils of Militarism, Economic Exploitation, Racism," WPFW 89.3 radio, January 2016
- "Vanessa Wills on Marxism," The Un-Mute Podcast, August 2015

Professional Activities and Memberships

- Member, Marx and Philosophy Society, 2023-present
- Editorial Board Member, *The Journal of Social Ontology*, 2023-present
- Instructor, Open Doors Summer Institute in Philosophy at the University of Pittsburgh, August 2023
- Founding member, Editorial Board, *Spectre: a biannual journal of Marxist theory, strategy, and analysis*
- Founding Co-Chair, "Ethics of Blackness" Dissertation Workshop, Villanova University, April 2022
- Director, *Philosophies of Race, Class, and Gender* Conference at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, January 2020
- Member, Organizing Committee of the *Diverse Lineages of Existentialism II* Conference
- Member, Working Group on Slavery and Its Legacies, The George Washington University
- Board member, Critical Social Ontology Workshop
- Co-Chair, Sophia Lecture Committee, Department of Philosophy at The George Washington University
- Member, Program Assessment Committee, Department of Philosophy at The George Washington University
- Board member, The Job Candidate Mentoring Program for Women in Philosophy (2016-2018)
- Referee: *Political Theory*, *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*, *Ethics*, *Radical Philosophy Review*, *Rethinking Marxism*, *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, *Evental Aesthetics*, *Journal of Legal Philosophy*, *Oxford University Press*
- Committee on the Status of Blacks in Philosophy, American Philosophical Association
- Administrator, Society of Young Black Philosophers

- Member, Marx and Philosophy Association
- Advisory Committee of the Africana Studies Program, St. Joseph's University (2013-2015)
- Planning Committee of Thea Bowman Society Lecture Series, St. Joseph's University (2013-2015)
- Organizer, Panel Session on “Marx and Human Nature,” Central Meeting of the American Philosophical Association (Group Session of the Marx and Philosophy Association), February 2014
- Faculty commentator, University of Pennsylvania Philosophy Graduate Student Conference, November 2012
- Member, Collegium of Black Women Philosophers
- Member, American Philosophical Association

Languages

- English (native speaker); German (proficient); Spanish (good)