**Dr. Alex R. Steers-McCrum**

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AOS: Indigenous Philosophy, Philosophy of Race, and Social, Political, and Ethical Philosophy

AOC: Social Epistemology, Ancient Chinese Philosophy, Philosophy of Emotion, Feminist Philosophy, Modern Philosophy

**Education**

2024 PhD, Philosophy CUNY Graduate Center

2019 MPhil, Philosophy CUNY Graduate Center

2009 BA, Creative Writing, honors, *magna cum laude* Seattle Pacific University

**Dissertation**

*“Hattak Vpi Homma” mvt Miha Nanta Fehna? What Does “Native American” Really Mean?*

Committee: Carol C. Gould (chair), Linda Martín Alcoff, Serene Khader

**Publications**

*Refereed Journals*

2019. “Don’t Put Words in My Mouth: Self-Appointed Speaking-for Is Testimonial Injustice Without Prejudice.” *Social Epistemology*. First published online. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02691728.2019.1682710>

2018. “Out of the Binary and Beyond the Spectrum: Redefining and Reclaiming Native American Race.” *Critical Philosophy of Race* Vol. 6, No. 2. 216-238. <https://doi.org/10.5325/critphilrace.6.2.0216>

**Fellowships and Prizes**

2025 CUNY Dissertation Showcase: *“Hattak Vpi Homma” mvt Miha Nanta Fehna? What Does “Native American” Really Mean?* Competitive presentation with monetary award.

2021 Robert M. Adams–Charlotte W. Newcombe Fellow in Philosophy. Institute for Citizens & Scholars. (Formerly the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation.) Dissertation Fellowship.

2021 Marilyn J. Gittell Dissertation Fellowship. Gittell Urban Studies Collective, CUNY.

2020-21 Writing Across the Curriculum Fellowship (WAC), CUNY John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

Graduate Student Stipend 2020 APA: “Here, We Are: A Native American Relational Social Ontology”

Graduate Student Travel Award 2017 SAAP: “Ongoing Erasure: Antinative Racism and Its Philosophical Origins”

**Talks**

[CUNY Dissertation Showcase: *“Hattak Vpi Homma” mvt Miha Nanta Fehna? What Does “Native American” Really Mean?*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSW40FT5Nps) (video)

 -May 2025, CUNY Graduate Center, New York, NY.

“Not Your Mascot, Not Your Grandmother, Not Your Land: Mascots and Playing Indian as Epistemic Injustice”

 -January 2024, American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division. New York, NY.

“Artificial Intelligence, Real Kinship: Sharing Indigenous Futures with AI”

-January 2024, American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division. New York, NY.

“Back to the Past: Temporal Erasure, Antinative Racism, and Native Racial Formation.”

-November 2020, UPenn MAP Conference on Philosophy of Race. Philadelphia, PA. (VIRTUAL)

“Here, We Are: A Native American Relational Social Ontology”

- January 2020, American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division. Philadelphia, PA.

“We Could All Use a Good Cry: In Defense of Sadness in Political and Moral Life”

-January 2019, American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division. New York, NY.

-March 2018, Marquette University Graduate Conference: Philosophy of Emotions. Milwaukee, WI.

“Self-Determination After the Deluge”

-October 2018, International Association of Environmental Philosophy Annual Meeting. State College, PA.

-May 2018, Globalization and Its Critics Graduate Conference, Center for Ethics, University of Toronto. Toronto, ON.

“‘You Rob Me of My Voice’: Speaking-for as Testimonial Injustice”

- May 2017, GC Princeton Student Workshop. The Graduate Center, CUNY. New York, NY.

“Ongoing Erasure: Antinative Racism and Its Philosophical Origins”

-March 2017, Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy Annual Meeting. Birmingham, AL.

**Courses Taught**

**Montgomery College (2025-present):**

Montgomery County, MD

Adjunct Lecturer (sole lecturer, undergraduate courses)

*Global Humanities* (in-person; traditional and dual-enrollment high school sections)

Interdisciplinary humanities course, introductory level, covering philosophy, history, literature, media studies, political theory, etc. from varied global and historical perspectives.

*Introduction to Philosophy* (online asynchronous)

Introduction to a breadth of topics, authors, traditions, and styles in philosophy, including Western and non-Western philosophy. Delivered via Blackboard Ultra LMS

*Introduction to Ethics* (online asynchronous)

Broad survey of topics, problems, and theories from a variety of contemporary and historical perspectives. Delivered via Blackboard Ultra LMS.

**Bernard M. Baruch College, CUNY (2017-2024):**

New York, NY

Adjunct and Graduate Teaching Fellow (sole lecturer, undergraduate courses)

*Critical Philosophy of Race* (online synchronous)

Capstone on race and racism, covering the topic from a variety of contemporary philosophical and interdisciplinary perspectives.

*Logic & Moral Reasoning* (hybrid and online asynchronous)

Critical reasoning and symbolic logic course. Developed OER/ZTC curriculum and digital humanities resources for all BaruchLogic courses. Taught in person, hybrid, and online.

*Global Ethics* (in-person)

Survey of ethical and political theories from a wide variety of philosophical traditions.

*Major Issues in Philosophy* (in-person)

Introduction to a breadth of topics, authors, traditions, and styles in philosophy.

**Graduate Courses Taken (CUNY Graduate Center, MA and PhD programs)**

2014 Fall

*Science and Metaphysics in the 17th-18th Century:* Catherine Wilson

 *Justice, Memory, and Forgiveness:* Jeffrey Blustein

 *Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty:* Omar Dahbour

2015 Spring

*Aesthetic Psychology:* Jesse Prinz

*Philosophy of Race:* Linda Alcoff

*Social Ontology and Democracy:* Carol Gould

2015 Fall

*Chinese Philosophy:* Hagop Sarkissian

*Social Construction:* Jesse Prinz

*Kant's Ethics & Politics:* Sibyl Schwarzenbach

2016 Fall

*Buddhist Metaphysics and the Catuskoti:* Graham Priest

*Ethics of Immigration:* Carol Gould

*Proseminar* (course for all first-year PhD students): Iakovos Vasiliou and Jesse Prinz

2017 Spring

*Emotion:* Jesse Prinz

*Contractarianism and Its Critics:* Charles Mills

*Social Epistemology:* Miranda Fricker

 2017 Fall

*Logic:* Kate Ritchie

*Corrective Justice:* Charles Mills

*Socialism and Democracy:* Carol Gould

 2018 Spring

*Philosophy of Feminism: Gender and Embodiment:* Linda Alcoff

*Rawls, Race, and Gender:* Charles Mills and Sibyl Schwarzenbach

2018 Fall

*Social Ontology: Between Theory Practice:* Carol Gould

**Academic Service**

2025-Current Referee: *Philosophical Quarterly*

2020-Current Referee: *Social Epistemology*

2018-22 Graduate Fellow, Center for Global Ethics and Politics, CUNY Graduate Center

2016-17 Coordinator, Social and Political Philosophy Working Group, CUNY Graduate Center

2015 Research Assistant, Historical Memory Project, CUNY John Jay College of Criminal Justice

**Academic Editing**

2019. Mooney, Jayne. *The Theoretical Foundations of Criminology: Place, Time, and Context.* Oxford: Routledge.

2017. Spunt, Barry. *Heroin, Acting, and Comedy in New York City*. London: Palgrave, Macmillan.

2017. Esparza, Marcia. *Silenced Communities: Legacies of Resistance to Militarization and Militarism in a Guatemalan Rural Town.* New York: Berghahn Books.

2016. Esparza, Marcia and Carla DeYcaza. (Eds.) *Remembering the Rescuers of Victims of Human Rights Crimes in Latin America*. Washington, DC: Lexington Books. (Select chapters edited.)

**References**

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Eric Mandelbaum (teaching reference)

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**Dissertation Abstract:** ***“Hattak Vpi Homma” mvt Miha Nanta Fehna? What Does “Native” Really Mean?***

Indigenous identities in North America are much more complex than generally assumed. No single definition of “Native (American),” “(American) Indian,” or related terms provides a set of necessary and sufficient conditions that accurately or usefully describe all and only the right individuals and communities. I argue that understanding Native identities in the contemporary context requires examining multiple interconnected dimensions of Nativeness, articulated here as Enrollment and Recognition, Tribal Ethnicities, Native Race, Indian Panethnicity, and Indigenous Nationhood.

In the U.S., Indigenous identities are usually oversimplified as either Enrollment in a Recognized Tribe or as Native Race. While both of these aspects of Nativeness are undeniably important, neither alone (or both jointly) can offer a complete picture of Native identity that is useful and accurate. A fuller understanding of Nativeness also includes Tribal Ethnicities, Indian Panethnicity, and Indigenous Nationhood. Different individuals—including the author—may rightly be considered Native in one sense and not-Native in another. Right now, these aspects of Nativeness are like a tangled net, with different aspects often being elided or confused one for another in ways that harm and erase Natives and sever settler colonial projects.

Making sense of Native identities requires examining them in light of Indigenous social ontologies that are fundamentally relational and conceive of persons and the land as constitutively interconnected by kinship relations defined by reciprocal responsibilities. Each aspect of Nativeness articulated in this dissertation is an expression of Native social ontologies, a response to the settler colonial suppression of Native ways of life, or a combination thereof.

Enrollment and Recognition is a crucial expression of tribes’ sovereignty, yet this legal status is directly tied to Western social ontological views and ultimately subject to settler governments’ authority. Tribal Ethnicities capture the way Native peoples are not exclusively political or institutional entities but also intergenerational ethnic families whose persistence transcends national, racial, and legal boundaries and permeates everyday life. Native Race is the shared racial identity thrust upon diverse Indigenous groups by settler colonial attempts to eliminate all other aspects of Nativeness. Properly understood, Native race has little to do with either phenotype or genetics, but rather turns on vulnerability to antinative racism—and solidaristic resistance to racism. Indian Panethnicity is a response to shared racialized experiences of both suffering and activism, and the resulting growth of shared kinship and culture across tribal lines. Instead of eliding specific tribal ethnic or national identities with a homogenized Indianness, Panethnicity arises in part through the shared experience of defending precarious ethnic and national identities. Finally, Indigenous Nationhood means exercising sovereignty in accordance with the kinship responsibilities of specific Indigenous political communities with the land. Decolonization does not aim at sovereignty as power over lands or citizens, but sovereignty as power to shape Indigenous futures in which peoples and lands are free to fulfill their responsibilities to each other.

My goal is to disentangle this conceptual net, providing useful explanations of these interconnected aspects of Nativeness. Each way of using the term “Native” exists only amid the context of the other uses; no one concept of Nativeness is ontologically prior to the others, but they are all needed to make sense of Native identities today. As for the question that titles this dissertation: “*Hattak Vpi Homma” mvt Miha Nanta Fehna*? What does “Native American” really mean? It means we are still here. We were always here, and we always will be.