

# DERICK HUGHES

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Updated October 2026

## RESEARCH AREAS

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**AOS:** Ethics, Moral Psychology

**AOC:** Social & Political Philosophy, African Philosophy

## ACADEMIC APPOINTMENT

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Instructor, University of Colorado Boulder

2023–present

## EDUCATION

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Ph.D., Philosophy, University of Colorado Boulder

2017–2023

Dissertation: *Demystifying Modesty and Humility*

Committee: Iskra Fileva (Chair), Ajume Wingo, David Boonin, Alastair Norcross,  
Christian B. Miller (Wake Forest University)

B.A., Philosophy, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

2013–2017

*Magna cum laude*

Certificate in College Teaching, University of Colorado Boulder

2023

## PUBLICATIONS

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### Peer-Reviewed

1. Modest Compliments. *American Philosophical Quarterly*. Forthcoming.
2. Modesty's Inoffensive Self-Presentation. *Philosophical Psychology* 38 (2025): 2570–2592.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09515089.2024.2341796>.
3. Demystifying Humility's Paradoxes. *Episteme* 21 (2024): 425–442.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2022.6>.
4. Humility's Independence. *Philosophia* 51 (2023): 2395–2415.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11406-023-00682-5>.
5. Is Situationism Conservatively Revisionary for Ethics? *Journal of Ethics* 26 (2022): 69–91.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10892-021-09376-0>.

### Book Reviews

1. Review of John Deigh, *Introduction to Ethics*, 2nd ed. *Teaching Ethics* 26 (2026): 153–156.  
<https://doi.org/10.5840/tej20262612>.
2. Review of Mark Alfano, Michael P. Lynch, and Alessandra Tanesini (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Humility*. *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 18 (2021): 674–677.  
<https://doi.org/10.1163/17455243-18060007>.

## TEACHING

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\* *upper-division course*

### **Instructor of Record, University of Colorado Boulder**

**2020–present**

|                                                         |                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Ethical Theory *                                        | 2024, 2025, present       |
| Social & Political Philosophy *                         | 2024, 2025, 2026, present |
| Philosophy and Race                                     | 2022–present              |
| Poverty, Power & Patriotism (with TA)                   | 2025, 2026                |
| African Philosophy: Personhood and Morality *           | 2024, 2025                |
| Ethics and Information Technology                       | 2022–2025                 |
| Introduction to African Philosophy                      | 2024                      |
| Ethics                                                  | 2020, 2023                |
| Reading, Writing and Reasoning (topic: Moral Character) | 2020                      |
| Introduction to Medical Ethics                          | 2020                      |

### **Teaching Assistant, University of Colorado Boulder**

**2018–2020**

Contemporary Social Problems (Ajume Wingo, David Boonin, and Dan Kaufman)

### **Grader, University of Colorado Boulder**

**2017–2023**

*For Iskra Fileva unless otherwise noted*

|                                            |            |
|--------------------------------------------|------------|
| Philosophy of Religion *                   | 2021, 2023 |
| Philosophical Issues in Psychiatry         | 2017, 2022 |
| Philosophy and the Sciences                | 2022       |
| Aesthetic Theory *                         | 2021       |
| Philosophy and Psychology                  | 2018, 2020 |
| Contemporary Social Problems (Ajume Wingo) | 2020       |
| Philosophy and Science Fiction             | 2020       |
| Ethics and Economics                       | 2019       |
| Ethics and Sex                             | 2018       |
| Environmental Ethics (Dave Youkey)         | 2018       |

## CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

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### **Peer-Refereed**

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| “Are Consequentialist Virtues Character Traits?”<br>APA Central Division (Colloquium)                    | 2026 |
| “Consequentialism and the Amoralism of Friendship”<br>APA Central Division (Colloquium)                  | 2022 |
| “Humble Provocateurs”<br>72nd Northwest Philosophy Conference, Portland State University                 | 2021 |
| “Virtuous Migrants”<br>Struggle and Liberation Today, University of Texas at El Paso                     | 2021 |
| Concerned Philosophers for Peace, Cal State Fresno                                                       | 2021 |
| “Religious Virtues and Migration Justice”<br>Defining Justice in an Age of Turmoil, University of Denver | 2021 |
| “Humility Against False Courage and Improper Pride”<br>APA Central Division (Colloquium)                 | 2021 |

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| “Can Character Skepticism be Conservatively Revisionary for Ethics?”<br>71st Northwest Philosophy Conference, Pacific University Oregon | 2019 |
| “Rational Autonomy and Irrational Bias”<br>Philosophy of Social Science Roundtable, University of British Columbia                      | 2017 |

### Invited

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| “The Moral Psychology of Modesty and Humility”<br>6th Annual World Philosophy Day, Cal Poly Pomona | 2021 |
| “Against Virtue Externalism”<br>Center for Values and Social Policy, CU Boulder                    | 2021 |
| “Virtuous Migrants”<br>Minorities and Philosophy (MAP), CU Boulder                                 | 2021 |

### Commentaries

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Comments on Max Lewis, “Gratitude for the Grief-Worthy”<br>APA Central Division (Colloquium)                                 | 2024 |
| Comments on Charles Starkey, “Virtue Without Character”<br>APA Pacific Division (Colloquium)                                 | 2021 |
| Comments on Shawn Wang, “Disentangling the Aims of Blame”<br>71st Northwest Philosophy Conference, Pacific University Oregon | 2019 |

### FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

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|                                                                        |           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Eaton Graduate Student Research Award (\$500), University of Colorado  | 2022      |
| Emerson Dissertation Fellowship (1 AY Funding), University of Colorado | 2021–2022 |
| Graduate Student Stipend, APA Central Division                         | 2021      |

### SERVICE

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Referee for <i>Essays in Philosophy</i> , <i>Philosophical Studies</i> , and <i>Synthese</i> |            |
| Faculty Mentor, Minorities and Philosophy (MAP), CU Boulder                                  | 2024–2025  |
| Graduate Student Mentor, CU Boulder                                                          | 2022–2023  |
| Referee, Rocky Mountain Philosophy Conference                                                | 2019, 2021 |
| Philosophy Outreach Program of Colorado (POPCO)                                              | 2017–2018  |

### REFERENCES

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Letters from Iskra Fileva (research), Ajume Wingo (research and teaching), and Garrett Bredeson (teaching) are on file with Karen Sites, Graduate Program Assistant, Department of Philosophy, CU Boulder: [karen.sites@colorado.edu](mailto:karen.sites@colorado.edu), (303) 492-3172.

### DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Philosophers have argued that modesty and humility are special and mysterious: we can’t reflect on our virtue or self-attribute humility without also spoiling our humility; modesty concerns an individual’s private mental life about their own worth as opposed to their interpersonal life; humility isn’t a virtue in contexts of injustice or oppression, because there doesn’t seem to be anything good about lowering oneself in such circumstances; if modesty and humility are about not being arrogant or having an

inflated sense of worth, then they don't seem to be good on their own; instead, they seem to require virtues such as sincerity, kindness, self-respect, justice or other virtues that one must be humble about.

This dissertation shows that modesty and humility are not special or mysterious, but in fact, are interesting and valuable in ways that directly oppose these claims. I argue that modesty and humility are self-attributable and inoffensive forms of self-presentation; they can be elicited by both praise and criticism, can promote justice in contexts of oppression, are valuable independently from other virtues, and involve objectively good or meaningful qualities to be humble about. This dissertation consists of five papers on these themes: In "Demystifying Humility's Paradoxes," I explain how having and developing humility avoids pragmatic paradoxes arising from the utterance "I am humble." In "Modesty as Inoffensive Self-Presentation," I offer an interpersonal view of modesty based on ideas from William James and Mary Wollstonecraft that accounts for traditional norms in dress and other regulations of self-presentation. In "Compliments as Virtue Tests for Modesty," I argue that it is morally objectionable to compliment others if the compliment invites one to knowingly downplay one's skills and achievements. In "Humble Provocateurs," I identify a moral exemplar whose humility shines in contexts of oppression and injustice. In "Humility's Independence," I show that humility's value does not uniquely depend on any other virtue, and propose and defend an alternative view that one must possess objectively good qualities fitting for one's humility.