

BRÉOND DURR
durr@g.harvard.edu

AOS – Philosophy of Law, Philosophy of Race, Social and Political Philosophy, Ethics

AOC – Philosophy of Architecture, Aesthetics, Philosophy of Mind

EDUCATION

May 2023	HARVARD UNIVERSITY [IN PROGRESS] <i>PhD, African & African American Studies</i>	Cambridge, MA
Oct 2018	HARVARD UNIVERSITY <i>MA, Philosophy</i>	Cambridge, MA
May 2014	UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA <i>BA, Sociology; American Studies & Ethnicity; Religion</i>	Los Angeles, CA
May 2010	SOUTH SUBURBAN COLLEGE <i>AA, General Studies, Criminal Justice emphasis</i>	South Holland, IL

DISSERTATION

My dissertation offers two critiques of penitentiaries in the United States from considerations about designed environment. First, drawing on a view of psychosocial development that recognizes the effects of the built-environment, I argue that recent Supreme Court rulings on transferring juveniles from juvenile court to criminal court deny transferred juveniles sentencing protections to they are constitutionally entitled. Second, I argue that penitentiaries are monuments of government hate speech, insofar as they fall short of meeting the governments' democratic responsibility to affirm the equal status of all citizens. Hate speech of this kind undermines the proper functioning of democracy and installs a rival public good that legitimizes and endorses group inequality.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2022	HARVARD UNIVERSITY, Cambridge, MA <i>Head Teaching Fellow, GOV 1249: Authoritarianism</i> - <i>Head Instructor: Professor Sarah Hummel</i> <i>Head Teaching Fellow, GENED 1015: Ethics of Climate Change</i>
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- *Head Instructor:* Professor Lucas Stanczyk

2021 **HARVARD UNIVERSITY**, Cambridge, MA

Head Teaching Fellow, PHIL 138: Heidegger's Being and Time

- *Head Instructor:* Professor Sean Kelly

Head Teaching Fellow, PHIL 11: Philosophy of Law

- *Head Instructor:* Professor Emilio Mora

2020 **HARVARD UNIVERSITY**, Cambridge, MA

Head Teaching Fellow, GENED 1142: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Question of Conscientious Citizenship

- *Head Instructor:* Professor Brandon Terry

Teaching Fellow, AFRAMER 98: Junior Tutorial

2019 **HARVARD UNIVERSITY**, Cambridge, MA

Teaching Fellow, GENED 1146: Race and Justice

- *Head Instructor:* Professor Tommie Shelby

Head Teaching Fellow, AFRAMER 199Y: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Question of Conscientious Citizenship

- *Head Instructor:* Professor Brandon Terry

2018 **HARVARD UNIVERSITY**, Cambridge, MA

Head Teaching Fellow, AFRAMER 182: From R&B to Neo Soul: Black Popular Music and Cultural Transformation

- *Head Instructor:* Professor Ingrid Monson

Teaching Fellow, AFRAMER 122X: The History of African Americans from the Civil War to the Present

- *Head Instructor:* Professor Elizabeth Hinton

Teaching Fellow, AFRAMER 10: Introduction to African American Studies

- *Head Instructor:* Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. & Professor Lawrence Bobo

**MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES - COLLABORATIVE
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, Roslindale, MA**

History, Civics, & Social Studies Instructor, Judge John Connolly Center

History, Civics, & Social Studies Instructor, Suffolk Detention Center

2017 **HARVARD UNIVERSITY, Cambridge, MA**

Head Teaching Fellow, AFRAMER 197: Poverty, Race and Health
- *Head Instructor: Professor David Williams*

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2022 **PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA**

Research Assistant for Professor Sean Kelly

- Responsible for researching and developing an understanding of racial politics between Barbados and the British empire, as well as interracial relations in shipping and whaling across the Atlantic, and the role of family dignity in the rankings system of early Harvard.

2021 **HARVARD PHILOSOPHY TEACHING INITIATIVE, Cambridge, MA**

Research Assistant

- Collaborative project undertaken to modify and update courses in terms of their structure and content in order to facilitate the transition into online courses during the pandemic. This included developing new assignments, activities, and pedagogical goals.

2021 **PHILOSOPHY & AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.** *Research Assistant for Professor Tommie Shelby*

- Responsible for researching and developing a comprehensive bibliography that tracked the history and various branches of prison abolition.

2019-2020 **HIP-HOP ARCHIVE AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE (HARI), Cambridge, MA**

Research and Methods Director

- Responsible for directing and editing student research projects, and helping plan, and organize events and research ideas.

2016 **CENTER FOR RELIGION AND CIVIC CULTURE, Los Angeles, CA**

Researcher, University of Southern California

- Served as a researcher on a team tasked with compiling a comprehensive list of all the religious institutions in Los Angeles. This required identifying such locations and conducting in-depth interviews with congregation leaders and members.

ADDITIONAL TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2018-2020 **DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES**, Roslindale, MA

Founder & Instructor, "The World"

- Created a course "The World" that engages juveniles in the care of the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services with the historical, social, and artistic dimensions of different countries, on a weekly basis, in order to cultivate students' understanding of international politics and economics.

2018-2020 **MASSACHUSETTS CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION - NORFOLK**, Norfolk, MA

Co-Instructor, "Hip-Hop & Philosophy"

- In conjunction with a self-organized collection of young men incarcerated at MCI-Norfolk, developed a Hip-Hop & Philosophy course. The course employed hip-hop as a vehicle through which to investigate philosophical questions of morality, ethics, justice, and aesthetics.

2017-
2018 **DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES**, Roslindale, MA

Founder & Instructor, "Emerging Scholars: Youth in Care of the Law"

- Created a program (ESYCL) where juveniles in the care of the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services attend a weekly Philosophy of Law course. The course aims to provide a space where students can critically reflect on the history, design, and purpose of the American juvenile system, and to cultivate their curiosity, reasoning, and fluency in law, sentencing, and punishment.

PRESENTATIONS & CONFERENCES

2018 **AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION - DISCUSSANT**,
Boston, MA

- Discussant on APSA panel: "Power, Persuasion, and Disruption in Activist Politics."

AFRAMER 10: INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES, Cambridge, MA

- Presented a lecture to undergraduates entitled ‘Accommodation and Protest’ which focuses on how Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., are commemorated in the American political imagination and its relation to their philosophical approaches to resisting oppression.

2018 **“BELONGING: THE CHALLENGES OF RE-ENTRY”**, Cambridge, MA
Organizer

- Organized a conference that brought together scholars, activists, and formerly incarcerated persons from around the country in order to discuss the practical challenges returning citizens and their family members face upon re-entry into their respective communities.

COURSEWORK

PHIL 106 – Augustine, Professor James Doyle

PHIL 125 – Beyond Dualism, Professor Alison Simmons

PHIL 132 – Marx and Marxism, Professor Tommie Shelby

PHIL 137 – The Later Philosophy of Wittgenstein, Professor Warren Goldfarb

PHIL 140 – Fundamentals of Logic, Professor Warren Goldfarb

PHIL 156 – Philosophy of Mind, Professor Cheryl Chen

PHIL 158X – Self-Consciousness and Self-Knowledge, Professor Matthew Boyle

PHIL 179 – African American Philosophy, Professor Tommie Shelby

PHIL 179 – Race and Social Justice, Professor Tommie Shelby

PHIL 273L – Language and Power, Professor Mark Richard & Professor Sally Haslanger

PHIL 300AA – Colloquium, Professor Ned Hall & Professor Rusty Jones

PHIL 300B – Colloquium, Professor Selim Berker

PHIL 305 – Philosophy of Punishment, Professor Tommie Shelby

AFERAMER 132X – The Black Power Debates, Professor Brandon Terry

AFRAMER 135X – Reading DuBois, Professor Tommie Shelby & Professor Walter
Johnson

AFERAMER 301 – Graduate Proseminar, Professor Marcyliena Morgan

AFRAMER 302 – Graduate Seminar, Professor Jim Sidanius

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

My research is driven by two lines of query. The first is the relationship between criminal and juvenile law, and the second is on the symbolic environment of democratic societies.

The late 20th century saw a racialized punitive turn where the number of juveniles eligible for and transferred into the criminal court increased. In the early 21st century, the Supreme Court took steps towards reversing that punitive turn by deeming capital punishment and life without parole unconstitutional. The Court mandated that state sentencing schemes must grant transferred juveniles a meaningful opportunity for release based on demonstrated rehabilitation and maturity.

In my first chapter, “A Meaningful Opportunity to Attain Release,” I argue that the kinds of environments one is subject to help determine whether one will have a meaningful opportunity to demonstrate rehabilitation and maturity. Merely requiring an assessment at some later point during one’s sentence does not amount to a meaningful opportunity, because the environment can undermine one’s chances at demonstrating the required maturity and rehabilitation. The Court’s ruling thus supports constraints on the kind of environments juveniles can be subjected to.

The rest of my dissertation focuses on the symbolic environment of democratic societies, with a particular focus on penitentiaries. In the second chapter, “Government Hate Speech,” I argue that denizens of democratic societies are entitled to at least one constraint on the visible environment: that they can lead their lives without encountering enduring artifacts that deny their standing as social equals and bearers of the full range of constitutional entitlements. That entitlement is violated by monuments that communicate a government endorsement of group defamation. Among the most pernicious examples of defamatory monuments are Confederate monuments. These monuments can be understood as instances of government group defamation, or government hate speech, insofar as they can be interpreted to express a message that is incompatible with the governments’ democratic responsibility to affirm the equal status of all citizens. In instances of government hate speech, not only is the proper functioning of democracy undermined, but a rival public good which legitimizes and endorses group inequality is installed and augmented. Such assaults on the social standing of group members not only render the world more hostile and unpredictable for members of the targeted group but can also diminish their sense of belonging in that community.

The third chapter, “Monuments of Hate,” applies the government hate speech framework to the case of American penitentiaries. Since prison exteriors are purposefully scripted, like commemorative monuments, they embody and symbolize social and cultural commitments. The castellated penitentiaries that recall martial buildings of medieval Europe, were designed to induce a deterrent effect. These design principles were replicated across the country and established a

common visual vocabulary for American penitentiaries. I argue that the architectural vernacular that has emerged with the rise in mass incarceration is, in part, a consequence of the state's endorsement of and commitment to racial hierarchies and oppressive penal philosophies. In response, targeted group members have reason to view the state and its actors as illegitimate, insofar as such racial hierarchies deny the equal standing of all members of society. And the continued presence of such penitentiaries serve as enduring reminders of the state's commitment to antagonistic values and ideas.