

"I AM AN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHER"



Núria Sara Miras Boronat is an Associate Professor of Moral and Political Philosophy and Head of the Gender Equality Office at the University of Barcelona. Her most recent book *Filòsofes de la contemporaneïtat* ("Women Philosophers for Contemporary Times", Edicions UB, 2023) is devoted to women political philosophers: Jane Addams, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Judith Shklar, Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, and Vandana Shiva. In addition, she has co-edited (with Michela Bella) *Women in Pragmatism: Past, Present, and Future* (Springer, 2022) and contributed chapters to *The Oxford Handbook of Jane Addams* (2023) and *The Routledge Companion to Pragmatism* (2023). Together with Just Serrano, she edits the Spanish and Catalan section for the

European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy's multilingual board and is the co-founder, with Chiara Ambrosio, of the *Women in Pragmatism Network*. She has also edited the first translation of Jane Addams into Catalan (*Democràcia i ètica social*, Edicions UB, 2022).

What does American philosophy mean to you?

In my mind, American Philosophy is the adventurous, experimentalist, and pluralistic philosophy that emerged during the progressive era. It was pursued by women and men who were trying to respond to the challenges posed by the rapid transformations of science, economy, and politics. I guess most of those people would be labeled today as "pragmatists", but my interest is not restricted to them. If there is something such as "American," "European," or "African" philosophy, this has been built across national boundaries, in fruitful interaction and dialogue with other traditions.

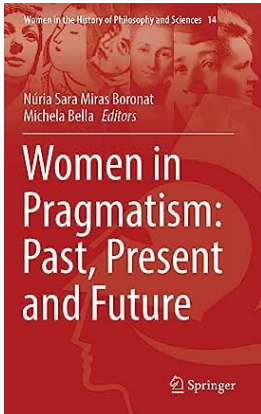
Filòsofes de la contemporaneïtat

Núria Sara Miras Boronat



How did you become an American philosopher?

I guess that more than a decade of studying American philosophers and social scientists qualifies me as an "honorary American philosopher" (as my colleague and friend Chiara Ambrosio states in her [interview](#)).

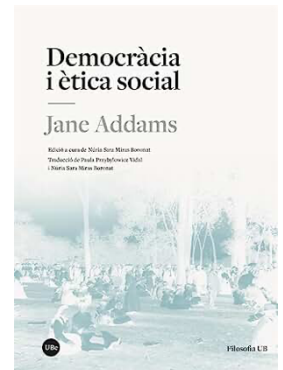


American philosophy and pragmatism were both accidental discoveries for me. I wrote my doctoral dissertation on Wittgenstein and Gadamer and was planning to specialize in German philosophy. During those years I met my colleague Ramón del Castillo and he first brought me to read William James's *Pragmatism*. Then he invited me to attend the American and European Values Conference Series organized by Chris Skowronski in Poland (2005–2014). I attended several of those and this gave me the chance not only to get more familiar with the Classical Pragmatists (Dewey, Mead, Peirce) but also to meet some of my dearest pragmatist friends (Michela Bella, Guido Baggio, Matteo Santarelli, Agnieszka Hensoldt, Jackie Kegley, Judith Green, etc).

At the time I was developing my postdoc research on games and play in philosophy and social science (first at the University of Leipzig and then again in Barcelona). I was reading a lot of Mead and through him got to Jane Addams and other progressive-era women. I remember reading Mary Jo Deegan's books about Mead on play and games and being shocked by the news that there were so many talented women working in the social sciences at Chicago's Hull-House. I felt I had to learn more about that period and about these women.

How would you describe your current research?

I'm working on building a feminist pragmatist theory of injustice, oppression, exclusion, and other forms of social suffering. For this I am reading a lot of Jane Addams, of course, but also texts by other women with whom she was related such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Florence Kelley, Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells-Barnett and others. I am also fascinated by Mary Parker Follett, although it is quite difficult to find good editions of her books or to find her mentioned in historical accounts of political science. I am currently finishing a book on feminist pragmatist social philosophy provisionally titled *Mothers of the Progressive Revolution*.



What do you do when you're not doing American philosophy?

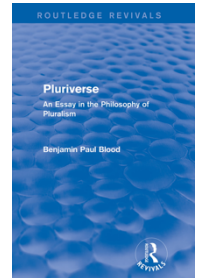
I am very "promiscuous" philosophically speaking: I become fascinated by almost everything that sounds like philosophy or literature, especially feminist books. I would need several lives to find enough time to read everything I want to read and to write everything I need to write.

Administrative duties take a lot of time and energy. Since March 2022 I have been Head of the Gender Equality Office at the University of Barcelona. This is a huge responsibility: I am responsible for the gender equality policies covering almost 70,000 people. This is potentially overwhelming but also a huge opportunity to learn in practice after years of feminist activism.

When I am not lecturing or doing politics I love to dance, swim and spend time with family and friends.

What's your favorite work in American philosophy? What should we all be reading?

One of my first "crushes" in American philosophy was William James's *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909). It strikes me that that book was related to the almost unknown Benjamin Paul Blood's *Pluriverse* (1920), a posthumous compilation edited by Horace Kallen. One of my philosophical projects is to one day trace the conceptual relations between James, Blood, and the pluralistic British political scientists of the 1950s. In James and Blood I found the definitive distinction between a monistic and a pluralistic worldview.



Something similar happened as I read Richard Bernstein's *Between Objectivism and Relativism*. Bernstein presented the kind of dialogue between traditions I was looking for as I finished my Ph.D. The most important thing is that Bernstein personified dialogical philosophy and pragmatist fallibilism. He was such a kind and gifted person—and his death is a big loss for the pragmatist world community.

As a feminist pragmatist, I have lots of difficulty picking my favorite books by women pragmatists, but here are some suggestions. Addams' *The Long Road of Woman's Memory* (1916) is a delicious piece on personal experience, memory, and sisterhood. "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman is an all-time classic. It is the first short literary piece that revealed some of the gender biases in psychological science. *The New State* (1918) by Mary Parker Follett is a fascinating work on social psychology that I recommend reading in parallel to Mead's *Mind, Self & Society* (1934).

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