

Benjamin J. Murphy

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The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Department of English

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Education

UNC - Chapel Hill, Ph.D., English | 2022 [expected]

Dissertation: “*Provisional Beings*”: *Crowds and the Color Line in American Literature, 1830-1930*

Committee: Matthew Taylor (director); Danielle Christmas; Gregory Flaxman;

Jane Thraikill; Priscilla Wald (Duke University)

Houghton College (NY), B.A., Humanities & Writing, *summa cum laude* with honors | 2014

Research & Teaching Areas

19th & early 20th-century American & African American Literature • Black Studies • Science & Literature • Biopolitics • Critical Theory • Medical Humanities • Genre Fiction

Fellowships

Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship	2020-2021
Quarry Farm Short-Term Fellowship, Center for Mark Twain Studies	2020
Maynard Adams Fellowship for the Public Humanities, UNC Public Humanities	2019-2020
Hobby Dissertation Fall Semester Fellowship, UNC English Department	2019
Summer Research Dissertation Fellowship, UNC Graduate School	2019

Selected Awards

Holman Award, Outstanding Record Writing a Diss. in pre-1900 American Lit	2021
Travel Grant, UNC Center for the Study of the American South	2019
Graduate Student Transportation Grant, UNC Graduate School	2019
Travel Award, UNC Department of English, Keffer Fund	2017
Travel Award, Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts (SLSA) NSF Grant	2016, '17, '18
Best Graduate Essay in Comparative Literature, UNC English Department	2016
Best Graduate Student Essay, South Atlantic MLA - <i>Declined for journal publication</i>	2016

Teaching Awards

Erika Lindemann Award for Teaching Composition & Literature (English Department)	2018
Tanner Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching (Provost, 5 awarded annually)	2018
Student Undergraduate Teaching Award (Student Government Association, 6 awarded)	2017

Publications

Peer Reviewed Articles

“‘Multiplied without Number:’ Lynching, Statistics, and Visualization in Ida B. Wells, Mark Twain, and W. E. B. Du Bois.” *American Literature* 93.2 (2021): 195-226

“Not So New Materialism: Homeostasis Revisited.” *Configurations: A Journal of Literature, Science, and Technology* 27.1 (2019): 1-36

Exceptional Infidelity: James Dickey’s *Deliverance*, Film Adaptation, and the Postsouthern.” *Mississippi Quarterly* 69.2 (2018): 206-225

Public Writing & Interviews

- “True Croc Cinema: The Fossil Horror of *Crawl* in the Anthropocene” [ASAP/7](#) 2019
- Interview of John Warner, author of *Why They Can't Write* and *The Writer's Practice* 2019
[Pedagogy and American Literary Studies \(PALS\)](#)
- “Why Does *Annihilation* Perpetuate the Hidden Figure of Henrietta Lacks?” [PopMatters](#) 2019
- “Tree Time and Mortality in the Eyes of Hitchcock, Powers, and Le Guin” [The Millions](#) 2018
- Interview of Noah Heringman and Jonathon Sachs, with Travis Alexander, on 2015
 “Deep Time, Decline, and Nostalgia,” *ETHOS*
- Interview of Kate Marshall, with Sean DiLeonardi, on “The Nonhuman Turn” *ETHOS* 2015

Digital Work

- Contributing Editor, “A Red Record,” a collaborative website to document and map lynching in the American south ([lynching.web.unc.edu](#)) 2019 - present

Book Reviews

- Driving in Cars with Homeless Men* by Kate Wisel (U. of Pittsburg Press) *Gulf Coast* 32.5 2020
- The Rapture Index: A Suburban Bestiary* by Molly Reid (BOA Editions) [Full Stop](#) 2020
- Futures A Science Fiction Series* (Radix Media) [PopMatters](#) 2020
- GlassHouse* by Louis Armand (Equus Press) [Full Stop](#) 2020
- Whitman Speaks* ed. by Brenda Wineapple (Library of America) [PopMatters](#) 2019
- Good Enough: The Tolerance for Mediocrity in Nature and Society* by Daniel S. Milo (Harvard UP) [PopMatters](#) 2019
- Song for the Unraveling of the World*, Brian Evenson (Coffee House) [Chicago Review of Books](#) 2019
- Terra Nullius* by Claire G. Coleman (Small Beer Press) [Full Stop](#) 2019
- Samuel Johnson's Eternal Return* by Martin Riker (Coffee House) [Gulf Coast](#) 2019
- An Untouched House* by Willem Frederik Hermans (Archipelago Press) [Full Stop](#) 2018
- The Biopolitics of Feeling: Race, Sex, and Science in the Nineteenth Century* by Kyla Schuller (Duke UP) *sympløke* 26: 453-456 2018
- The Gunners: A Novel* by Rebecca Kauffman (Counterpoint Press) [The Carolina Quarterly](#) 2018
- The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism*, Steven Shaviro (U. MN Press) [boundary 2](#) 2017
- Experimental Animals (A Reality Fiction)*, Thalia Field (Solid Objects) [Carolina Quarterly](#) 2017
- A Collapse of Horses* by Brian Evenson (Coffee House Press) [The Carolina Quarterly](#) 2015
- Where the Bird Signs Best*, Alejandro Jodorowsky (Restless Books) *Carolina Quarterly* 65.1 2015

Presentations

Conferences Organized

- 3rd Annual Grad Student “Post45” Symposium (hosted by Yale University) 2018
- 1st Annual Grad Student “Post45” Symposium (hosted by UNC-Chapel Hill) 2016

Conference Panels Organized

- “Crowds and Race in the 19th Century” Nov 2019
 (American Studies Association) Honolulu, HA
- “The Emergence of Emergence,” with Antoine Traisnel Nov 2018
 (Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts) Toronto

“Health & Environment: Tracking Ecological Metaphors”
(Association for the Study of Literature & the Environment) Detroit, MI June 2017

Conference Papers Delivered

“(Anti)Fascism Across the Color Line: Fighting Mob Violence in the Nadir”
(Modern Language Association) [Panel: Antifa before Fascism, Late c19 / early c20] Jan 2022

“Poe in Lovecraft Country: The Old Weird and the New Black Gothic” MLA
(Modern Language Association) [Panel: Reading Poe Now] Jan 2022

“Lies, Damned Lies, & Statistics: Gender, Numbers, & Lynching in
Mark Twain and Ida B. Wells” (Modern Language Association) Virtual Jan 2021

“An Unread Red Record: Unpublished Abolitionism, Crowd Psychology,
and Lynching” (C19) Coral Gables - *No presentation due to COVID-19* April 2020

“Charles Chesnutt’s ‘Age of Crowds’: Crowd Psychology and Racial
Violence in the 1890s” (American Studies Association) Honolulu, HA Nov 2019

“Stephen Crane’s Almost Mob: Crowd Psychology, Emergence,
and Literary Form” (Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts) Toronto Nov 2018

“‘Betwixt human and brute life’: Romancing the Biopolitical in
The Marble Faun” (Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts) Tempe, AZ Nov 2017

“Twitter, Drones, and Literature: Teju Cole on Undifferentiation”
(UNC-KCL Workshop) London, UK Aug 2017

“Diagnosing Eco-Theory: Tracking Health & Environment”
(Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment) Detroit, MI June 2017

“Homeostasis and the Ecology of Bodies”
(Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts) Atlanta, GA Nov 2016

“Combative Adaptation: Media and Deliverance in Novel and Film”
(Southern Atlantic Modern Language Association) Durham, NC Nov 2015
Winner of “Best Graduate Student Paper Award” – *declined to publish.*

“Damning the River of Deliverance”
(Association for the Study of the Arts and the Present) Greenville, SC Sept 2015

“‘Scientists of the Future’: Anthropocene Stories in *Beasts of the Southern Wild*”
(American Culture Association/Popular Culture Association) New Orleans, LA April 2015

“Inclusive Language and Writing Center Pedagogy”
(Penn-York Undergraduate Research Conference at Penn-State) Behrend, PA Nov 2013

Invited Talks

- “The Color of Crowds: Antebellum Fiction and the Race of Revolt” Oct 2020
Houghton College, Alumni Lecture
- “Going to Grad School in the Humanities” Sept 2020
Houghton College, English Department, “Texts and Tea Colloquium”
- Panelist, “Overhearing Frederick Douglass’s *The Heroic Slave*” May 2020
(UNC Public Humanities Virtual Happy Hour: “Religious Traditions of Solitude”)

Teaching Experience

Instructor of Record

ENGL 128: Major American Authors: 19th-Century Literature (1 section, Spring 2020)

A discussion-based survey (capped at 35) that introduces students to fiction, poetry, and memoir from the end of the early republic era (circa 1830) to the turn of the century. Particular attention paid to aesthetics, canonicity, and authenticity (i.e., of being a “major American author”), especially with respect to issues of race, gender, and class.

ENGL 144: Popular Genres (1 section, Fall 2017)

A discussion-based seminar (capped at 35) that introduces students to the historical, thematic, and formal horizons of four major “popular” genres: horror; fantasy; science fiction; and mystery/detective. Spanning the 19th century to the present; covering literature, criticism, film, and graphic narrative.

ENGL 105: Writing in the Disciplines (7 sections, 2015-2021)

UNC’s mandatory entry-level rhetoric and composition course. A project-based workshop-style class (capped at 17) where students compose written, oral, and multimedia work across academic disciplines; units variously based in the natural sciences, business and professional writing, the social sciences, and the humanities.

Teaching Assistant (including guest lecturing)

ENGL 268: Lit., Medicine, and Culture, with Professor Matthew Taylor (2 sections, Fall 2018)

Led two recitations for this lecture-style foundation course for UNC’s interdisciplinary minor in Medicine, Literature, and Culture. Drawing on literary studies, medicine, cultural studies, and anthropology, this course introduces students to Health Humanities, focusing on cultural histories of medicine, representations of illness, and the clinical potential(s) of the arts.

Graduate Research Consultant (including guest lecturing)

ENGL 261: Intro to Literary Criticism, with Professor Matthew Taylor (1 section, Fall 2021)

Entry-level survey of major developments in literary criticism and theory, with particular focus on how methods for interpreting texts become prescriptions for ways to live. Through primary texts, fiction, and film, covers such topics as psychoanalysis, Marxism, poststructuralism, critical race theory, gender and sexuality studies, and postcolonialism.

CMPL 142: Intro to Visual Culture, with Professor Gregory Flaxman (1 section, Spring 2019)

Entry-level seminar drawing on art history, film studies, and media studies. Introduces students to history and critical concepts in the arc of visual arts and the philosophy of visuality.

ENGL 344: Lit. of the American West, with Professor Gregory Flaxman (1 section, Fall 2018)
Advanced seminar on the frontier in history and myth; drawing on literature, film, criticism, and philosophy to consider the frontier vis-a-vis ideas of wilderness, settler violence, vigilantism, heroism, and exceptionalism.

Service

Mentor, Virtual Prison Writing Center, UNC Correctional Education	2021-present
Co-Chair and Organizer, American Literature and Science Speakers Series	2020-present
Editorial Assistant, <i>American Literature</i> , Duke University Press	2019-present
Staff Writer, <i>PopMatters</i>	2019-present
Peer Mentoring Committee, Elected position for pedagogy mentoring	2017-2019
Dept. Revision and Editorial Team, <i>The Tarheel Writing Guide</i>	2018-2019
Editor (Book Reviews), <i>The Carolina Quarterly</i> , UNC literary journal	2017-2019
Conference Assistant, “ <i>Novel Sounds</i> ” at the National Humanities Center	2016
Co-Founder and Steering Committee, Post-45 Graduate Collective	2015-2018
Co-Chair and Organizer, Duke-UNC Americanist Speaker Series	2015-2018
Research Assistant, Studio for Instructional Tech. in English Studies (SITES)	2014-2015
Research Assistant, Critical Speakers Series, dept. lecture series	2014-2015
Editor (Website), <i>The Carolina Quarterly</i> , UNC literary journal	2014-2015
Editor (Interviews), <i>ETHOS: Digital Review</i>	2014-2015
Editor-in-Chief, <i>The Lanthorn</i> , Houghton College Literary Journal	2013-2014

Related Work

Processing Specialist, UNC Music Library	2015-2019
Tutor, College Essay Specialist, ColPrep Tutoring , Chapel Hill, NC	2016
Tutor, UNC Academic Support Program for Student-Athletes	2016
Tutor, Writing Center, Houghton College	2012-2014
Circulation Desk, Willard J. Houghton Library, Houghton College	2011-2014

Languages: Reading proficiency: French, Spanish

References:

Matthew Taylor, Director, Associate Prof. of English (UNC) mattheta@email.unc.edu
Priscilla Wald, Prof. of English (Duke University) pwald@duke.edu
Jane Thraillkill, Associate Prof. of English (UNC) tkill@unc.edu
Gregory Flaxman, Associate Prof. of English (UNC) gflax@email.unc.edu
Danielle Christmas, Assistant Prof. of English (UNC) dchristmas@unc.edu