

# SAM SOMMERS

Department of English  
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## ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Professor In-Residence, Department of English, University of Connecticut, Waterbury Campus  
2021–present

Lecturer, Department of English, Auburn University  
2020–2021

Limited-Term Lecturer, Department of English, Georgia College & State University  
Fall 2019

President's Postdoctoral Scholar, Department of English, The Ohio State University  
2018–2019

## EDUCATION

2018 UCLA, Ph.D., English

2015 UCLA, C.Phil., English

2014 UCLA, M.A., English  
Exam Fields: 18<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup>-Century African American, Early American, 19<sup>th</sup>-Century American Literatures

2009 Wesleyan University, B.A. with High Honors, English and American Studies

## RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

African American and American Literatures to 1900, History of the Book, Print Culture, Manuscript Culture, History of Reading, Early African American Print Cultures, US Abolitionist Press, Media Studies, Critical Race Theory, Theories of the Subject, Queer Theory, Sexuality Studies.

## BOOK PROJECT

*Reading in Talking Books: Theories of Race and Reading from Nineteenth Century America*

*Reading in Talking Books* suspends the assumption that to read is always to participate in a process of liberal self-formation. Instead, the project begins with a challenge to Americanist theories of reading that neglect the ways U.S. racial formations scaffold our most persistent beliefs about the uses of reading. From the fantasy of the ideal (white) reader, to the belief that reading is a self-improving act; from preoccupations with critical reading, to assertions that literacy is the key to liberation; the stories we tell about reading in America are intimately connected with the idealization of whiteness by U.S. institutions. By examining archival sources, scenes of reading from fiction, and autobiographical literacy narratives, *Reading in Talking Books* asks what theories of reading could look like if we divested the value of literacy from the privileges of democratic participation. Invoking early African American writers' use of the "talking book" trope the project seeks a maximalist definition of reading that accounts for manifold relations between people and texts.

## PUBLICATIONS

### Peer-Reviewed Articles

“Harriet Jacobs and the Recirculation of Print Culture”

Reprinted in 2018 Norton Critical Edition of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*  
*MELUS* 40.3 *Special Issue on African American Print Cultures* (Fall 2015): 134–149.

“Cut Out of the Nation: Mediation and Materiality in ‘The Man Without a Country’”

(revise and resubmit at *Studies in American Fiction*)

“Rediscovering *Our Nig*’s 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Popular Reception” in preparation for

*Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*

### Book Reviews

*Against a Sharp White Background* edited by Brigette Fielder and Jonathan Senchyne for  
*Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* (forthcoming Spring 2022)

*Rethinking Sympathy and Human Contact in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, by  
 Marianne Noble. *The New England Quarterly* 94.1 (2021): 173–176.

*Herman Melville Among the Magazines* by Graham Thomson. *SHARP News*, March 2019.

### Conference Proceedings

“The Year in Conferences—2014” (collaboratively authored)

*ESQ: Journal of the American Renaissance* 60.1 (Spring 2015): 114–211.

### Online Writing

SEA Junior Scholar of the Month, July 2019. Interview for The Society of Early Americanists (July 2019).

## EXTERNAL FELLOWSHIPS, AWARDS, AND GRANTS

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 2020        | Travel Grant for Scholars with Limited Funds, C19: Society for Nineteenth-Century Americanists  |
| 2018        | Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellowship, Library Company of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania                                     |
| 2017–2018   | Friends of the MCEAS Dissertation Fellowship, McNeil Center for Early American Studies, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania                      |
| 2017        | Reese Fellow, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts<br>Biennial Conference Travel Grant, Society of Early Americanists |
| 2011 & 2014 | Winchester Fellowship for Graduate Study in English, Wesleyan University  |
| 2013        | McCracken Library Research Fellowship, Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Cody, Wyoming   |

## INTERNAL FELLOWSHIPS, AWARDS, AND GRANTS

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|-----------|---|
| 2021      | Distance Education Course Development Grant, College of Liberal Arts, Auburn University |
| 2019      | Research Travel Grant, OSU Office of the President                                      |
| 2017–2018 | Dissertation Year Fellowship, UCLA Graduate Division (University-wide competition)      |
| 2017      | Collegium of University Teaching Fellows, UCLA Graduate Division (alternate)            |
| 2016–2017 | Harold J. Kendis, Jr. Dissertation Research Fellowship, UCLA Department of English      |
| 2016      | Mellon Professionalization Initiative Fellowship, UCLA Department of English            |

**INTERNAL FELLOWSHIPS, AWARDS, AND GRANTS (CONT.)**

- 2016 Mellon Pre-Dissertation Fellowship, UCLA Humanities Division
- 2012 & 2016 Research Travel Grant, UCLA Department of English
- 2015 Mellon Pedagogy Fellowship, UCLA Department of English
- 2014–2015 Graduate Research Mentorship, UCLA Graduate Division (University-wide competition)
- 2012 & 2013 Graduate Summer Research Mentorship, UCLA Graduate Division (University-wide competition)
- 2011–2012 University Fellowship, UCLA Graduate Division
- 2009 Juan Roura-Parella Prize for Catholic Curiosity and General Learning, Wesleyan University  
Dorchester Prize for Best Thesis submitted to the English Department, Wesleyan University

**INVITED PRESENTATIONS**

- 2021 “Teaching with Digital Archival Materials,” Invited Presentation, Clements Library, Ann Arbor, MI, April 23.
- 2020 “Methods for Reading and Teaching Early American Literature,” Invited Talk, Department of English, University of North Alabama, Florence, AL, January 23.
- 2019 “What does 19th-Century America have to do with Childish Gambino’s ‘This is America?’” *What is “This is America?”: Hot Takes from Three Disciplines*, Department of English, Georgia College, Milledgeville, GA, November 30.
- “Reading *Wieland*,” Invited Talk, Department of English, North Dakota State University, Fargo, ND, February 19.
- 2018 “Reading in Books,” Workshop in the History of Material Texts, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, November 21.
- “*The Sketch Book’s* Theory of Reading,” Seminar, McNeil Center for Early American Studies, Philadelphia, PA, November 16.
- 2018 “Introduction to *Reading in Books*,” Colloquium, The Library Company of Philadelphia and Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, September 11.
- “Enchanted Bodies,” Roundtable Response to Michelle Sizemore’s *American Enchantment*, American Literature Association Conference, San Francisco, CA, May 25.
- 2018 “Revelations of Reading in *Wieland*; or, *The Transformation*,” Invited Talk, Department of American Culture and Literature, Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey, February 11.
- 2017 “*Reading in Books*: Theories of Reading from Nineteenth-Century American Fiction,” Fellow’s Talk, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA, July 26.
- Speaker, Luncheon for Patrons of Graduate Studies, UCLA Department of English, Los Angeles, CA, June 7.
- 2016 “‘She was brought to bed’: The Queer Temporality of Childbirth and Mary Vial Holyoke’s Diary,” 18<sup>th</sup>-Century/Romantics Working Group, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA February 24.
- 2013 “Circulating Print Culture in African American Literature,” Southern California Book History Consortium, UCLA, November 12.

## CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION

- 2020–2021 Committee Member, *Past Futures: Thinking in Crisis*, Charles Brockden Brown Society Biennial Conference, Providence, RI, October 14–16.
- 2020 Virtual Program Committee, *Dissent*, C19: The Society for Nineteenth-Century Americanists, Virtual Conference at Penn State, October 16–25.
- 2018–2020 Executive Committee Member, *Dissent*, C19: The Society for Nineteenth-Century Americanists Biennial Conference, Coral Gables FL, April 2–5 2020. (postponed)
- 2017–2019 Committee Member, *Dissent of the Governed: c18 and c21*, Charles Brockden Brown Society Biennial Conference, Lexington KY, October 3–5.
- 2017 Committee Member, *Lenses and Contacts: Framing Early America*, Graduate Conference, McNeil Center for Early American Studies, Philadelphia, PA, October 6–7.
- Co-Chair, *Critical Recursions*, Friends of English Southland Graduate Conference, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA, June 9–10.

## CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS

- 2021 “*Unionize! An imperative for our Higher Education Labor Crisis*,” *Past Futures: Thinking in Crisis*, Charles Brockden Brown Society Conference, Providence RI, October 14–16.
- “Talking Books, Race, and Reading; or, Black Readers before Citizenship,” Society of Early Americanists Biennial Conference, Virtual/Atlanta GA, March 7.
- 2020 Panel Co-organizer and Presenter, “The Visual Politics of Redaction,” Virtual C19 Biennial Conference, October 23.
- 2019 “Intertextuality as Abolitionist Political Strategy,” Society of Early Americanists Biennial Conference, Eugene, OR, February 28–March 2.
- 2018 Panel Chair and Presenter, “Resisting Mediation: Embodied Performance and Familial Connection in Frances Harper’s *Iola Leroy*,” SSAWW Conference, Denver, CO, November 7–11.
- “‘She was brought to bed’: The Queer Temporality of Early American Childbirth” SSAWW Sponsored Panel, American Literature Association, San Francisco, CA, May 26.
- “Networked Reading in *Hope Leslie*; or, *Early Times in Massachusetts*,” 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Workshop, McNeil Center for Early American Studies, January 31.
- 2017 “Transformational Reading in *Wieland*,” *Migration, Diaspora, Circulation, and Translation*, Charles Brockden Brown Society Biennial Conference, University College Dublin/Clinton Institute for American Studies, October 6.
- “Reading as Perceiving in *The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon*,” 18<sup>th</sup>-Century/Romantics Working Group, UCLA, May 10.
- “Revelations of Reading in *Wieland*; or, *The Transformation*,” Americanist Research Colloquium, UCLA, March 9.
- “Memory Held in Common: The Rhetorical Campaigns of Early Historical Societies,” *Society of Early Americanists Biennial Conference*, Tulsa, Oklahoma, March 4.
- 2016 “The Queer Temporality of Nineteenth-Century Childbirth,” *Untimely Erotics Seminar*, C19 Biennial Conference, Penn State University, March 18.

## CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS (CONT.)

- 2014 “Harriet Jacobs and the Recirculation of Print Culture in Early African American Literature,” *African American Expression in Digital and Print Culture Conference*, Center for Print and Digital Culture, UW-Madison, September 20.
- “Rediscovering *Our Nig*’s Popular Reception” *American Literature Association Annual Conference*, Washington, DC, May 24.
- 2013 Respondent, “Reading (Sur)faces: Physiognomy and Character,” *At Face Value: Re-thinking Surfaces*, Friends of English Southland Conference, UCLA, May 29.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 2022 Red Praxis: Teaching Against Empire, Pedagogy Workshop with Prof. Sandy Grande, Native American and Indigenous Studies Symposium, University of Connecticut, April 13.
- 2021 Course (Re)Design Seminar, Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, Auburn University Office of the Provost, July 12–16.
- 2020 Online Learning Deep Dive, Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, Auburn University Office of the Provost
- Vendor-Sponsored Teacher Training, Panopto for Education, Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, Auburn University Office of the Provost
- 2019 Making Excellence Inclusive, All-Day Faculty Workshop, Georgia College Office of Inclusive Excellence
- Addressing Equity and Inclusion in Your Research Mentoring, Postdoctoral Training, OSU Institute for Teaching & Learning
- REACH Suicide Prevention Training, The Ohio State University
- 2019 Accessible Classrooms and Learning Accommodations, Disability Services Workshop, OSU Office of Student Life & OSU Department of English
- 2018 Supporting LGBTQ Students in Classrooms, Diversity and Inclusion Workshop, OSU Center for the Advancement of Teaching
- 2014 UCLA Faculty & Staff LGBT Ally Training Program

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING

- 2016 *The History of the Book in America, c. 1700-1830*, Rare Book School, Philadelphia, PA  
Instructor: James N. Green, Library Company of Philadelphia
- 2013–2017 Graduate Student Researcher, UCLA Center for 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Studies  
Faculty Supervisors: Helen Deutsch, Felicity Nussbaum, Sarah Kareem
- 2012 *African American Cultures of Print*, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA  
Instructors: Lara Langer Cohen, Swarthmore College & Jordan Stein, Fordham University

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

### UCONN, Waterbury Campus

- ENGL 1007: Seminar and Studio in Multimodal Composition (2 sections) *What is College Reading?*
- ENGL/AMST 1201: Introduction to American Studies (2 sections) *American Media in American Culture*
- ENGL/AFRA 2214: African American Literature *Black American Writers on Revolution, Faith, and Freedom*
- AMST 3265W: Methods in American Studies *Memoirs of Migration and Diaspora*

**Auburn University**

ENG 2280: African American Literature after 1900 *Black Women Writers*

ENG 1200: Composition II (2 sections) *On Grief and Mourning*

ENG 2270: African American Literature to 1900 (2 sections)

*Early Black Writers on Revolution, Faith, and Freedom*

ENG 1100: Composition I (2 sections) *The Who, What, Where, and Why of "College Reading"*

ENG 2250: American Literature to 1865 (2 sections) *Confounding American Origins*

**Freedom University: A Modern-Day Freedom School for Undocumented Youth**

CLEP College Composition: *Common College Reading*

**Georgia College & State University**

ENGL 1102: Composition II (3 sections) *On Death and Mourning*

ENGL 2130: Intro to American Literature (beginnings to now) *The Self-Making of American Literature*

ENGL 2200: Writing about Literature (required course for English and Education majors)

**Invited Teaching**

"Harriet Jacobs and the Politics of Reprinting," April 2019

Lecture, ENGL 2290: *Colonial & U.S. Literatures to 1865*, The Ohio State University, Molly Farrell

"From Seminar Paper to Publication," May 2017

Guest Speaker, ENGL 262: *Literature of Slavery and Abolition*, UCLA, Richard Yarborough

"A Long History of Women and the Land in Western Massachusetts," July 2016

Curated Archival Visit, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA

*Spiral: A Permaculture Design Course for Young Women*, Grace Oedel and Juna Muller

"Keywords for American Studies: Class," April 2016

Lecture, ENGL 100: *Intro to Ethnic Studies*, UCLA, Marissa López and Uri McMillan

"Washington Irving, 'Rip Van Winkle,' and 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,'" February 2014

Lecture, ENGL 10B: *Literatures in English 1700–1850*, UCLA, Helen Deutsch and Michael Cohen

"Fiction, Reality, and History: Sources and Frameworks for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," November 2012

Lecture, ENGL 168: *Major American Writers*, UCLA, Christopher Looby

**UCLA Instructor of Record**

ENGL 4W: Critical Reading and Writing, *On Grief and Mourning*

**UCLA Teaching Assistantships**

ENGL 10A: *Literatures in English to 1700*

ENGL 10B: *Literatures in English 1700–1850*

ENGL 10C: *Literatures in English 1850–present*

ENGL 91C: *Introduction to Fiction*

ENGL 100: *Introduction to Ethnic Studies*

ENGL 168: *Major American Writers*

**PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AND AFFILIATIONS**

2020–present Faculty Representative, Advisory Board (elected twice by international membership),  
Charles Brockden Brown Society

2018–2020 Graduate Student Representative, Advisory Board (elected by international membership),  
Charles Brockden Brown Society

Fall 2020 Project Lead, Virtual Celebration of Authors, C19: Society for 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Americanists

- Fall 2020 Convener & Contingent Faculty Rep, C19 Open Forum on the Field and the Profession
- Spring 2020 Volunteer Faculty, Freedom University: A Modern-Day Freedom School for Undocumented Youth in Atlanta
- 2018–2020 Member-at-Large, Executive Committee (elected by international membership), C19: Society for 19th-Century Americanists
- 2018 Undergraduate Research Workshop Mentor, McNeil Center for Early American Studies
- 2017–2018 Participant, 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Workshop, McNeil Center for Early American Studies
- 2016–2017 Volunteer Tutor, Reading Partners Los Angeles, Wilshire Crest Elementary School
- 2016–present Referee for *MELUS Journal*, *African American Review*

## UNIVERSITY SERVICE AND AFFILIATIONS

- 2022 English Faculty Representative, Spring Open House for Admitted Students, UCONN Waterbury
- 2021–2022 English Department Representative, CLAS Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, UCONN  
Full-Time Faculty Representative, UCONN Waterbury, Regional Campus Representative, UCONN-AAUP Delegate Assembly
- 2021 Faculty Presenter, Research Connections Regional Campuses Research Fair, Office of First Year Programs, UCONN Hartford
- 2020–2021 Action Committee Leader, AU Campus Pride Index/LGBTQ+ Inclusion Initiative, Office of Inclusion and Diversity, Auburn University  
Graduate Student Teaching Mentor, Department of English, Auburn University
- Fall 2019 English Department Representative, Diversity Leadership Team, College of Arts & Sciences, Georgia College  
Faculty Presenter, MURACE Research Round-up, Office of Transformative Learning Experiences, Georgia College
- 2018–2019 Organizer, Graduate Writing Accountability Group, OSU Department of English
- 2017–2018 Participant, Workshop in the History of Material Texts, University of Pennsylvania
- 2016–2017 Graduate Student Representative, Early Americanist Search Committee, UCLA Department of English
- 2016 Coordinator, UCLA Book/Arts Event & Workshop Program
- 2013–2017 First Year Graduate Student Mentor, UCLA Department of English
- 2015 Volunteer Reader, UCLA Humanities Career Panel Series: Undergraduate SOP Workshop
- 2015 Participant, Queer Studies Working Group, UCLA Department of English
- 2014 & 2016 Teaching Mentor, UCLA Department of English
- 2014–2015 Mellon Pedagogy Seminar, “Designing English 100: Intro to Ethnic Studies”
- 2013–2014 Vice President, English Graduate Union, UCLA Department of English
- 2012–2016 Co-Founder & Co-Coordinator, Southern California Book History Consortium, UCLA Center for 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Studies
- 2011–2017 Participant, Americanist Research Colloquium, UCLA Department of English
- 2007–2009 Co-Chair, Academic Honor Board, Wesleyan University

## **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS**

AFT – Local 06593

C19: The Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists

Charles Brockden Brown Society

Society for the Study of American Women Writers

Society of Early Americanists

UCONN-AAUP

## **REFERENCES**

Available upon request.