

THEO DAVIS

English Department
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ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Professor of English, Northeastern University, 2017-present

Associate Professor of English, Northeastern University, 2012-17

Associate Professor of English, Williams College, 2008-12

Assistant Professor of English, Williams College, 2002-08

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Johns Hopkins University, English and American Literature, 2002
Dissertation: "Types of Experience: Form and Affect in American Literature"
Directors: Sharon Cameron and Walter Benn Michaels

M.A. Johns Hopkins University, English and American Literature, 1999

B.A. Brown University, Art/Semiotics, magna cum laude, 1994

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Nineteenth-Century American Literature; Philosophy and Literature; Political Theory; Aesthetics; Embodiment; Somatics; Humanism in the Twentieth Century; Education and the Humanities

PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS

Ornamental Aesthetics: The Poetry of Attending in Thoreau, Dickinson, and Whitman. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2016.

Formalism, Experience, and the Making of American Literature in the Nineteenth Century. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

JOURNAL ARTICLES

“Emerson Attuning: Issues in Attachment and Intersubjectivity.” *ALH* 31.3 (Fall 2019): 369-94.

“Interpreting the Survey.” *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 4.1 (Spring 2016): 160-64.

“Harriet Jacobs’s ‘Excrescences’: Aesthetics and Politics in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.” *Theory & Event* 13.4 (2010).

“‘Just Apply a Weight’: Thoreau and the Aesthetics of Ornament.” *ELH* 77.3 (Fall 2010): 561-87.

“‘Out of the Medium in Which Books Breathe’: Tactile Abstraction in *The Golden Bowl*.” *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 34:3 (Summer 2001): 411-33.

BOOK CHAPTERS

“Hawthorne’s Rage: On Form and the Dharma.” In *American Impersonal: Essays with Sharon Cameron*. Ed. Branka Arsić. New York: Bloomsbury, 2014.

“Critical History I.” In *Dickinson in Context*. Ed. Eliza Richards. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013.

“Opening Up Close Reading: Melville and Decorative Aesthetics.” In *Melville and Aesthetics*. Ed. Samuel Otter and Geoffrey Sanborn. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

ONLINE ESSAYS

Response to Toril Moi, *Revolution of the Ordinary: Literary Studies After Wittgenstein, Austin, and Cavell*. The Tank. *non-site.org*. May 3 2019.

“Satomi Myōdō’s *Journey in Search of the Way*.” B-Sides. *publicbooks.org*. January 17 2019.

EDITED VOLUMES

Stephen Crane. *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets and Other Tales of New York*. Ed. Larzer Ziff, with assistance of Theo Davis. New York, Penguin, 2000.

BOOK REVIEWS

Review of K. L. Evans, *One Foot in the Finite*. *Leviathan* 27.1 (2019): 147-50.

Review of John Michael, *The Secular Lyric: The Modernization of the Poem in Poe, Whitman, and Dickinson*. *American Literary History Online Review* series XVII (2018).

Review of Mark Noble, *American Poetic Materialism from Whitman to Stevens*. *American Literary History Online Review* series IX (2017).

“Usable Poetry.” Review of Michael C. Cohen, *The Social Lives of Poems in the Nineteenth Century. Common-Place: The Journal of Early American Life* 16.4 (Fall 2016).

Review of Dorri Beam, *Style, Gender, and Fantasy in Nineteenth-Century American Women’s Writing. Legacy: A Journal of Women Writers* 30.1 (Spring 2013): 204-6.

AWARDS AND HONORS

Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, 2018-19

Ornamental Aesthetics selected Choice Notable Academic Book, 2017

Residential Faculty Fellowship, Northeastern University Humanities Center, 2015-16

Sabbatical Fellowship, Oakley Center for the Humanities and Social Sciences, Williams College, 2009-10

Tutorial Development Grant, Williams College, 2006

CRAAS Fellowship, Williams College, 2003-04

Visiting Scholars Program Fellowship, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2002-03 (declined)

Dean’s Teaching Fellowship, Johns Hopkins University, 2001

Center for Research on Culture and Literature Fellowship, Johns Hopkins University, 1999-2000

Albert Arnold Bennett Award for Outstanding Thesis, Brown University, 1994

Elected to Phi Beta Kappa, Brown University, 1994

PRESENTATIONS

INVITED LECTURES

“‘Other Force May Be Presumed to Move’: Dickinson’s Kinesthetic Aesthetics.” Invited lecture and seminar discussion. Bowdoin College. Brunswick, ME. January 2019.

“Attachment Issues: On Development in Daniel Stern and Rita Felski.” Invited lecture. Columbia University American Literature Seminar. New York, NY. March 2018.

“Attachment Issues: On Development in Daniel Stern and Rita Felski.” Invited lecture and seminar discussion. Yale University Americanist Seminar. New Haven, CT. March 2018.

“Whitman’s Ornamental Distinction.” Invited lecture. Seminar on American Literature and Culture. Mahindra Center for the Humanities. Harvard University. Cambridge, MA. April 2015.

“Gorgeous Walt: Rethinking Whitman's Poetics.” Invited keynote lecture. Graduate Student Conference. Northeastern University. Boston, MA. March 2014.

“Decorous Whitman.” Invited lecture. Case Western Reserve University. Cleveland, OH. March 2014.

“Emily Dickinson’s Ornament.” Invited lecture. SUNY Buffalo. Buffalo, NY. March 2012.

“Dickinson and the Aesthetics of Ornament.” Invited lecture. Northeastern University. Boston, MA. February 2012.

“Dickinson and the Art of Notice.” Invited keynote lecture. Undergraduate Research Conference. SUNY Albany. Albany, NY. May 2011.

“Ornamental Thoreau.” Invited lecture. Johns Hopkins University. Baltimore, MD. March 2008.

CONFERENCE PAPERS

“Daniel Stern on Childhood Development: Some Implications for Semiotics and Materialism.” American Comparative Literature Association Conference. Washington DC. March 2019.

“Somatic Politics: Sensation In and Around ‘The Body.’” American Political Science Association Conference. Boston, MA. August 2018.

“Somatic Politics: Sensation In and Around ‘The Body.’” Capacious: Affect Inquiry/Making Space Conference. Lancaster, PA. August 2018.

“Emerson’s Attachment.” C19: The Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists Conference. Albuquerque, NM. March 2018.

“Daniel Stern’s Forms of Vitality: On Intersubjectivity.” Becoming Media: Objects Conference. Center for 17th- and 18th-Century Studies. Clark Library. University of California, Los Angeles. Los Angeles, CA. October 2017.

- “Wharton’s Sumptuary Values.” Society for the Study of American Women Writers Conference. Philadelphia, PA. November 2015.
- “Crèvecoeur’s Habitual Distress.” New England Association for the Study of Eighteenth Century Society Conference. Syracuse, NY. September 2014.
- “Bright Whitman.” American Political Science Association Conference. Washington, DC. August 2014.
- “Dickinson and the Critique of the Senses.” Modern Language Association Convention. Chicago, IL. January 2014.
- “Whitman’s Candor.” C19: The Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists Conference. Durham, NC. March 2014.
- “Margaret Fuller and the Aesthetics of Phenomenophilia.” C19: The Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists Conference. State College, PA. May 2010.
- “Appearing and Disappearing in Emily Dickinson.” Western Political Science Association Conference. San Francisco, CA. April 2010.
- “The Aesthetics of Ornament.” A Return to the Senses: Political Theory and the Sensorium Conference. Peterborough, ON, Canada. May 2009.
- “The Prospect of Ornament.” American Comparative Literature Association Conference. Cambridge, MA. April 2009.
- “Dickinson and Delight.” Modern Language Association Convention. Philadelphia, PA. December 2009.
- “Ornamental Thoreau.” Modern Language Association Convention. Philadelphia, PA. December 2006.
- “Hawthorne’s Emblems.” Modern Language Association Convention. Philadelphia, PA. December 2004.
- “Bronson Alcott’s *Conversations* at the Temple School.” American Literature Association Conference. San Francisco, CA. May 2004.
- “John Neal and the Problem of Literary Nationalism.” Outside American Studies Summer Institute. Hanover, NH. June 2003.
- “Harriet Beecher Stowe: Representing Slavery Through the Slave Codes.” American Studies Association Conference. Houston, TX. November, 2002.

SYMPOSIA

Symposium Participant. "The End of the End of the Canon?" Sponsored by *J19: Journal of the Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists*. Vanderbilt University. Nashville, TN. May 2015.

"Hawthorne's Rage: On Criticism and Persons." Invited symposium paper. *The Art of Decreation: A Symposium in Honor of Sharon Cameron*. Johns Hopkins University. Baltimore, MD. February 2015.

CONFERENCE PANELS ORGANIZED AND CHAIRED

"Becoming Attached." American Comparative Literature Association Conference Seminar. Co-Organized with Sarah Kareem. Washington DC. March 2019.

"Uncle Tom's Descendants." Panel Chair. American Literature Association Conference. Boston, MA. May 2007.

"Decorative Aesthetics." Panel Chair and Organizer. Modern Language Association Convention. Philadelphia, PA. December 2006.

"Thinking Things." Panel Chair and Organizer. American Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies Conference. Las Vegas, NV. March 2005.

RESPONSES AND PANELS

Respondent to Anita Patterson, "Projections in the Haiku Manner." Mahindra Center for the Humanities. Harvard University. Cambridge, MA. April 2018.

Respondent to Michael Warner, "The Evangelical Black Atlantic." Mahindra Center for the Humanities. Harvard University. Cambridge, MA. September 2013.

Panelist. "What Makes a Dickinson Poem Dickinsonian?" Emily Dickinson International Society Meeting. Amherst, MA. July 2011.

SEMINARS AND INSTITUTES

Mind and Life Summer Research Institute. People, Place, and Practice: Putting Contemplative Studies into Context. Garrison, NY. June 2016.

National Humanities Summer Seminar. Forms of Life in Emily Dickinson's Poetry. July 2008.

Futures of American Studies Institute. Dartmouth College. Hanover NH. June 2003.

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

SERVICE TO THE INSTITUTION (NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY)

Director of Graduate Studies, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18

Chair of Barrs Committee, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18
Humanities Center Board Member, 2015-16, 2016-17
Executive Committee Member, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18
Masters' Program Commencement Marshal, 2017
Search Committee Member, 2012-13, 2016-17
Experiential PhD Committee Member, 2016-17, 2017-18
Graduate Studies Committee Member, 2014-15
Barrs Committee Member, 2014-15
Placement Officer, 2015-16
Committee on Excellence in Teaching Award Member, 2015
Spectrum Faculty Advisor, 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16
Undergraduate Studies Committee Member, 2012-13, 2013-14
Merit Committee Member, 2013, 2014
Undergraduate Commencement Marshal, 2013

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION

Co-organizer, Seminar on American Literature and Culture, Mahindra Center for the Humanities at Harvard University, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20
Editorial Board Member, *J19: The Journal of the Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists*, July 2016-July 2019
Manuscript Reviewer for *diacritics* (2019), *Mosaic* (2017), University of Virginia Press (2017), *Emily Dickinson Review* (2014), *Style* (2014), Oxford University Press (2011), *PMLA* (2004)
Tenure Reviewer for Tufts University English Department, 2018
Full Professor Reviewer for Univ. Of North Carolina English Department, 2018
Lecturer Promotion Reviewer for Stanford University English Department, 2014
Tenure Reviewer for Lewis and Clark College English Department, 2010

TEACHING

TEACHING INTERESTS

Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century American Literature, Political Theory and Literature, Philosophy and Literature, Literary Theory

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY COURSES

ENGL 1502 American Literature I
ENGL 2330 The American Renaissance
ENGL 3190 Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers
ENGL 3619 Emerson and Thoreau
ENGL 4664 Eighteenth Century American Literature
ENGL 4790 American Naturalist Fiction

ENGL 5102 Graduate Proseminar
ENGL 7211 Intimacy in the American Renaissance
ENGL 7214 Aesthetics and Politics in Nineteenth-Century American Poetry
ENGL 7214 Emerson, Thoreau, and Fuller

DISSERTATION SUPERVISION

William Bond, "Genial Aesthetics: Materiality, Nature, and American Poetry,"
2017-present

DISSERTATION COMMITTEES

Tabitha Clark (2014-16), Jeffrey Cottrell (2012-16), Emily Artiano (2013-15),
David Ober (2012-15), Max White (2012-15) Vesna Kuiken (2011-14)

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS

Kenneth Oravetz (2019), Eamon Schlotterback (2019), William Bond (2016-17),
Jimmy Duggan (2016), Frank Capogna (2015), Michael Turner (2015)

UNDERGRADUATE THESES

Michelle Noyer-Granacki (2011), Bonnie Rae O'Keefe (2009), Hannah Wong
(2008), Emily Chepiga (2007), Ingrid Diran (2005)

DIRECTED STUDIES

William Bond (2016), Nicholas D'Amore (2015), Mark Heinrich-Wallace (2003)

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Literature Society; C19: The Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists;
Modern Language Association