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CURRENT POSITION

Professor of English and **Rosenthal Professor of Humanities**, Grinnell College (Assistant Professor 2001–2007, Associate Professor 2007–2013, Professor 2013–present, Rosenthal Professor 2017–present)

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in English Literature, University of Pennsylvania, 2001. Dissertation: “Revising Inspiration: Minstrels, Bards, and Improvisers in British and Irish Literature, 1757–1830,” directed by Stuart Curran, read by Michael Gamer, David DeLaura, and Penny Fielding

M.A. in English Literature, University of Pennsylvania, 1997

B.A. in English Literature, Highest Distinction and Phi Beta Kappa, University of Virginia, 1994

BOOKS

Mercenaries in British and American Literature, 1790–1830: Writing, Fighting, and Marrying for Money (Edinburgh University Press in the series Edinburgh Studies in Transatlantic Literatures, 2010). After the American Revolution, the figure of the mercenary was a meeting point of psychological, national, and ideological issues that connected the severed nations of Britain and America. Literary writers of the time portrayed characters fighting, writing, and marrying for money to animate the problems of incentive, independence, and national service in the context of commercial societies. This book analyzes the fictions of Charles Brockden Brown, Charlotte Smith, Walter Scott, Lord Byron, and James Fenimore Cooper, all of whom use the idea of mercenary action to explore the limits of modern liberty.

Literary Minstrelsy, 1770–1830: Minstrels and Improvisers in British, Irish, and American Literature (Palgrave Macmillan Studies in the Enlightenment, Romanticism and the Cultures of Print, 2008). This book argues that Romantic-era writers used the figure of the minstrel to imagine authorship as a social, responsive enterprise unlike the solitary process portrayed by Romantic myths of the lone genius. I demonstrate that the minstrel was central to developments as varied as the introduction of the word “improvisation” into English through portrayals of Italian improvisers, the rivalry between Wordsworth and Byron in the 1810s, and the emergence of poems that dramatized ancient minstrel contests to address the competitive dynamics of the literary marketplace. Reading *The Last of the Mohicans* alongside a wide range of materials from early nineteenth-century print culture, the book’s final chapter draws out the project’s implications for the emergence of transatlantic blackface minstrelsy in the 1830s and 1840s.

 PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES AND CHAPTERS

- “You Can’t Write ‘tombsteans’ in Shorthand: The Pitman Method, Polyglot Dictionaries, and the Suppression of Speech Difference in *Dracula*,” co-authored with Carolyn Jacobson, *Victorian Literature and Culture* 52:4 (December 2024), 681-711
- “*Pygmalion* and the Technologies of Global English,” co-authored with Carolyn Jacobson, *SHAW: The Journal of Bernard Shaw Studies* 43:2 (December 2023), 193-216
- “Bram Stoker’s Dialects: Nation, Race, and Speech in the Early Irish Fictions,” co-authored with Carolyn Jacobson, *Irish Studies Review* 30:3 (July 2022), 298–316
- “Networked Cross-Dressing: A Digital Refashioning of Shakespearean Gender Subversion,” co-authored with James J. Lee and Grinnell student/alum researchers Hannah Brown, Lana Sabb, and Molly Shortell, *DHQ (Digital Humanities Quarterly)* 16:3 (August 2022), <http://digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/16/3/000562/000562.html>
- “Blackface Othellos and Irish Melodies: James Joyce’s Minstrelsies,” *ELH (English Literary History)* 88 (2021), 715–42
- “Numbering *Ulysses*: Digital Humanities, Reductivism, and Undergraduate Research,” *Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy* 18 (December 2020), <https://jitp.commons.gc.cuny.edu/>
- “Orality and Improvisation,” *Oxford Handbook of British Romanticism*, Ed. David Duff, Oxford University Press, 2018, 373–87
- “Digital Transatlanticism: An Experience of and Reflections on Undergraduate Research in the Humanities,” in *Teaching Transatlanticism*, Ed. Linda Hughes and Sarah Robbins, Edinburgh University Press, 2015, 225–34
- “Germaine de Staël’s *Corinne, or Italy* and the Early Usage of Improvisation in English,” *Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies*, Ed. George E. Lewis and Benjamin Piekut, Oxford University Press, 2016, 255–261, and published online in June 2014 at [10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195370935.013.019](https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195370935.013.019)
- “On *Corinne, Or Italy*,” *BRANCH: Britain, Representation, and Nineteenth-Century History* [a peer-reviewed extension of *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*], [published May 2012], <http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=erik-simpson-on-corinne-or-italy>
- Entry on “Prize Poems,” *The Encyclopedia of Romantic Literature*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, 1065–1069
- “A Good One Though Rather for the Foreign Market’: Mercenary Writing and Scott’s *Quentin Durward*,” *Studies in Romanticism* 48.4 (2009), 667–85
- “Minstrelsy Goes to Market: Prize Poems, Minstrel Contests, and Romantic Poetry,” *ELH (English Literary History)* 71 (2004), 691–718
- “The Minstrels of Modern Italy’: Improvisation Comes to Britain,” *European Romantic Review* 14 (2003), 345–67
- “Threaded Discussion on the Internet and in the Classroom: Problems of Translation and an Approach to Emergence,” *Journal of the M/MLA* 36.2 (Fall 2003), 23–39

 HONORS, AWARDS, GRANTS, AND FELLOWSHIPS

- M. C. Lang Fellow in Book History, Bibliography, and Humanities Teaching with Historical Sources**, Rare Book School, 2024–2026
- Principal Investigator, Digital Bridges for Humanistic Inquiry, \$1.6 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**, Grinnell College (in collaboration with the University of Iowa), 2015–2018
- Project Co-Lead, Innovation Fund Grant** for the development of a Digital Studies interdisciplinary concentration, in collaboration with Sarah Purcell, Grinnell College, 2016–2018
- Academic Enterprise Leave**, Mellon-funded grant for one semester working on pedagogical applications of database programming, 2013
- Grinnell College Study Leave**, competitive grant extending a sabbatical to a full year, 2008–09
- Expanding Knowledge Initiative Curricular Development Grant**, Grinnell College, 2007
- Harris Fellowship**, Grinnell College, competitive yearlong research leave, 2005–06
- 2002 Diane Hunter Dissertation Prize**, University of Pennsylvania English Department

Penn Prize for Excellence in Teaching by Graduate Students, University of Pennsylvania, 2001
Dean's Award for Distinguished Teaching, University of Pennsylvania, 1998
Beinecke Memorial Scholar, 1993–96

OTHER SCHOLARLY, WRITING, AND MEDIA ACTIVITY

Grinnell Guides in the Study of the Book:

Printed Book Illustrations before 1900 (with Emmeline Perencevich)

Single Signature Pamphlet Construction

Carving Type from Potatoes

“When AI Use Makes You Uncool,” column by Emmy Martin in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 6, 2026, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/when-ai-use-makes-you-uncool>

“Trial and Error: Size Doesn't Matter,” column by Mark Lieberman in *Inside Higher Ed* about the Digital Bridges grant, August 30, 2017, <https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2017/08/30/grinnell-iowa-digital-humanities-partnership-benefits-small>

“Digital Bridges,” guest column for EdTech Digest, February 20, 2014, <https://edtechdigest.wordpress.com/2015/02/20/digital-bridges/>

“Going digital: It's not your grandma's humanities anymore,” column in the *Iowa City Press-Citizen* by Jeff Charis-Carlson about me and the Digital Bridges grant, <http://www.press-citizen.com/story/news/local/2015/02/23/digital-humanities-projects/23908343/>

“Grinnell College and University of Iowa collaborate on digital technology project,” radio interview and web column by Dar Danielson, February 3, 2015, <http://www.radioiowa.com/2015/02/03/grinnell-college-and-university-of-iowa-collaborate-on-digital-technology-project/>

“Digital Bridges,” column by Carl Straumsheim in *Inside Higher Ed* about the Digital Bridges grant, January 30, 2015, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/01/30/grinnell-college-u-iowa-announce-mellon-funded-digital-humanities-partnership>

REVIEWS

Review of Jason Richards's *Imitation Nation: Red, White, and Blackface in Early and Antebellum US Literature*, *American Nineteenth Century History* 20:2 (2019), doi: 10.1080/14664658.2019.1638037

Review of Maureen McLane's *Balladeering, Minstrelsy, and the Making of British Romantic Poetry*, *Studies in Romanticism* 50 (2010), 671–74

Review of Angela Esterhammer's *Romanticism and Improvisation, 1750–1850*, *The Review of English Studies* 2009; doi: 10.1093/res/hgp009

Review of Nick Groom's *The Making of Percy's Reliques*, *Modern Philology* 100:1 (2002), 116–18

HUMANITIES COMPUTING EXPERIENCE

Project Leader and Primary Programmer, *Ashplant* (PHP/MySQL database-backed Web project based on Grinnell students' academic work), first released in beta 2015

Web Developer and Author, *Connections: A Hypertext Resource for Literature*, 2002–present

Participant, AALAC Workshop on The Humanities Lab, Haverford College, Spring 2014

Participant and Organizing Committee Member, Mellon 23 Workshop: Liberal Arts Education, Collaborative Research and the Humanities, Swarthmore College, Spring 2011

Participant, NEH Advanced Seminar on TEI text encoding, Santa Barbara, 2009

Project Leader and Programmer, *The Transatlantic 1790s* (PHP/MySQL database-backed Web project with six students), Summer 2004

Participant, Midwest Instructional Technology Center Symposia on Teaching with Technology in the Humanities, Summer 2003 and Summer 2004

Primary Graphic Designer and Member of Web Development Team, English Department Web Site, University of Pennsylvania, 1999

Editorial Assistant, The [University of] Pennsylvania Edition of *Frankenstein* on CD-ROM, 1997 (now the Romantic Circles Edition of *Frankenstein*)

SELECTED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Symposium on Building Book Labs**, Invited Participant, University of Illinois, May 2025
- “Quality College, Made Your Way!”** Poster with Megan Tchong (Grinnell undergraduate scholar), Association for Computing and the Humanities Conference, Pittsburgh, July 2019
- “The ‘What Is DH?’ Question: An Approach to Introducing the Field,”** Digital Bridges Symposium, Iowa City, August 2018
- “Digital Bridges: The Pleasures and Challenges of Inter-Institutional Collaboration in DH,”** Digital Humanities Pedagogy pre-conference event at DH 2018, Mexico City, June 2018
- “Digital Transatlanticism: An Experience of and Reflections on Undergraduate Research in the Humanities,”** MLA Convention, Vancouver, January 2015
- “Landing a Job at a Liberal Arts College,”** Workshop Presentation for Stanford and Berkeley Graduate Students, Stanford, September 2014
- “What Up?”** Roundtable Presentation (on Liberal Arts College-University Partnerships) for the Imagining America Conference, Atlanta, October 2014
- “Professional Prospects.”** North American Society for the Study of Romanticism Annual Conference, Neuchatel, Switzerland, September 2012
- “Mercenary Transnationalism: James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Bravo* and the Nightmare of American Cosmopolitanism.”** Nordic Association for American Studies Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark, June 2009
- “Infiltrations: The Bravos of Venice and Philadelphia.”** Conference in honor of Stuart Curran at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, April 2009
- “Women Write of Mercenaries: Soldiering and Authorship in the Romantic-Era Women’s Novel,”** North American Society for the Study of Romanticism Supernumerary Conference, Bologna, Italy, March 2008
- “A Minstrel of the Western Continent’: *The Last of the Mohicans* and American Minstrelsy before Blackface,”** Scottish Romanticism and World Literatures, Berkeley, September 2006
- “Last Minstrels, Last Mohicans: Romanticism and Transatlantic Minstrelsy before 1840,”** North American Society for the Study of Romanticism Annual Conference, Purdue University, September 2006
- “Ormond’s Fighters: Authorship, Soldiering and the Transatlantic Charles Brockden Brown,”** Symbiosis Biennial Conference, Thessaloniki, Greece, July 2005
- “Good Though Rather for the Foreign Market: Mercenary Writing and Fighting in Scott’s *Quentin Durward*,”** North American Society for the Study of Romanticism Annual Conference, Boulder (CO), September 2004
- “Authors and Minstrels: Hogg’s *The Queen’s Wake*, Walter Scott, and the Romantic Canon,”** Eleventh James Hogg Society Conference, Selkirk (UK), July 2004
- “False Asymptotes, Wandering Minstrels and the Vexed Nationalisms of Sydney Owenson’s *Wild Irish Girl*,”** Women’s Writing in Britain, Winchester (UK), July 2003
- “Beattie’s Minstrel and Regency Poetry: Or, The Progress of Wordsworth’s Genius.”** Eighteenth-Century Scottish Studies Society Annual Meeting, Charleston (SC), April 2003
- “Mercenaries and the Enlightenment: Fighting and Writing from Adam Smith to James Hogg.”** Union and Cultural Identities in Eighteenth-Century Scotland, University of Edinburgh, July 2002
- “Women Writing the New Britain: William Wallace and Romantic-Era History.”** British Women Writers Conference, Madison (WI), April 2002
- “Improvisation, Gender, and Nationalism.”** North American Society for the Study of Romanticism Annual Conference, Tempe (AZ), September 2000
- “Another Last Minstrel: Macpherson, Scott, and Sydney Owenson’s *Lay of an Irish Harp*.”** MLA Convention, Chicago, December 1999 (Keats-Shelley Association panel)

“A Prize Poem: Felicia Hemans’ *Wallace’s Invocation to Bruce* and Women’s Rewriting of Minstrelsy.” Women Poets of the Romantic Period, Boulder (CO), February 1999

“The Common Crowd But See the Gloom: Reading the Growing *Giaour*.” American Conference on Romanticism, Athens (GA), January 1998

SELECTED INVITED PRESENTATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS

Presenter, “Phonographs, Bird Illustrations, and James Joyce's *Ulysses*: Three Strange Ways to Think about AI,” Friends of Drake Community Library Annual Meeting, March 2026

External Reviewer, Colorado College English Department, February 2026

Presenter, panel on teaching with the Salisbury House collection of rare books and manuscripts, Salisbury House, April 2024

Presenter, Faculty/Staff Research Series: Changing Directions in Research, April 2024

Bucket Course Presenter, Drake Community Library, “The History and Future of the Book,” March 2023

Community Friday Presenter, Grinnell College, Financial Futures of Higher Education (Fall 2013), Remaking College (Spring 2015), Digital Liberal Arts at Grinnell (Spring 2016), Art as a Restorative Practice for Teaching (Fall 2022)

Presenter and Workshop Leader on Digital and Public Humanities, invited presentation, University of New Hampshire Summer Institute in Public Humanities, June 4, 2019

Presenter of Three Lectures on Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and Writing Technologies, team-lecturing with Carolyn Jacobson, Jawaharlal Nehru University, March 2019

External Reviewer, Macalester College Digital Humanities program, November 2018

Presenter on the Digital Liberal Arts at Grinnell, Computer Science alumni reunion, Grinnell College, November 2016

Presenter and Workshop Leader on Digital Humanities and Undergraduate Research, invited presentation, Drew University, April 29, 2016

Co-organizer and Co-leader, Digital Bridges Summer Institute on Using Data in the Humanities and Social Sciences, Grinnell College and the University of Iowa, Summer 2016

Guest Lecturer, ACES Adult Education Program, two lectures on Word and Image, Grinnell, Summer 2016

Co-organizer and Co-leader, Digital Bridges Summer Institute on Teaching with Technology, Grinnell College and the University of Iowa, Summer 2015

Discussion Leader, International Pre-Orientation Program, “Navigating Academic Culture,” Grinnell College, Summer 2014

Guest Lecturer, Nanjing University, three lectures on early American cinema, Summer 2014

Presenter, Board of Trustees Meeting, “The Pedagogical Imperative: Teaching, Learning, and Mission-Driven Spaces,” Grinnell College, Spring 2014

Presenter, Board of Trustees Meeting, “The Ashplant Project: Technologies of Making and Sharing,” Grinnell College, Fall 2013

Presenter, Writing Mentors/Faculty Sponsors Orientation, Grinnell College, August 2013

External Reviewer, Swarthmore College English Department, March 2013

External Consultant on First-Year Teaching and Advising, Saint Mary’s College, Indiana, November 2012

“Mr. Hyde and the Bravo,” invited presentation, The University of Edinburgh, September 2011

Teaching-Learning Lunch Presenter, Responding to Student Papers, Grinnell College, Spring 2008

Early Career Faculty Group Presenter, Getting Scholarship Done at Grinnell, Spring 2008

Guest Lecturer, ACES Adult Education Program, three lectures on Romanticism, Grinnell, Summer 2008

New Faculty Orientation, Presenter on syllabus design, Grinnell College, Summer 2006 and 2007

Faculty Speaker at Baccalaureate, Grinnell College, 2005

Planning Committee Member and Presenter, Associated Colleges of the Midwest Workshop on Information Literacy in Literary Studies, 2004

MAJOR SERVICE ACTIVITIES AT GRINNELL COLLEGE

Interim Director of the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, Fall 2019 and 2026-present
English Department Chair, 2007–08, 2010–11, and 2021–22
Co-Proposer and Founding Chair, Digital Studies Concentration, 2020–22
Principal Investigator, Digital Bridges for Humanistic Inquiry, \$1.6 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Grinnell College (with the University of Iowa), 2015–2018
Co-chair, ARH-Carnegie (later HSSC) Building Committee, 2014–2018 (includes the committee itself and substantial service on other ad hoc committees related to Phase I building and landscape projects)
Co-chair (2013–2014) and Member (2012–2014), Academic Space Planning Committee President (2004–2005), **Vice President** (2003–2004), **Scholar’s Award Coordinator** (2006–07), and **Triennial Council Delegate** (2003), Grinnell College Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa

OTHER SELECTED SERVICE ACTIVITIES AT GRINNELL COLLEGE

Instructional Support Committee, Fall 2019 and 2026-present
Assessment Committee, Fall 2019 and 2026-present
Ad Hoc Working Group on AI, 2025–26
Grinnell Team Member, AAC&U Institute on AI, Pedagogy, and the Curriculum, 2025–26
Faculty Representative, Board of Trustees’ Academic Affairs Committee, 2024–26
Teaching Excellence Task Force, 2026
Personnel Appeals Board, 2024–26
Mentor for faculty colleagues, 2016–17, 2019–20, 2021–22, 2022–23, 2025–26, and 2026–27
Review Panelist, National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), 2025
CLS Summer Internship Funding Review Committee, Spring 2024
HSSC Dedication Committee, 2020–2022
Statistics Concentration Advisory Committee, 2015–22
Vivero Digital Scholarship Fellows Program Advisory Board, 2016–2020
Co-Chair, Faculty Working Group on the Evaluation of Teaching, Fall 2019
President’s Medal Committee, 2019–2020
Innovation Fund Committee, 2019–2020
Faculty Representative, Board of Trustees’ Ad Hoc Committee on Facilities, 2017–2019
Technology Studies Concentration Advisory Committee, 2016–2018
English Department Scheduler, 2007–08 and 2010–2018
Budget Planning Committee (as faculty representative from Executive Council), 2013–2015
Executive Council (elected at-large member), 2013–2015
Liberal Arts in Prison Program Advisory Board, 2012–2014
Co-facilitator, Faculty Summer Workshop on Technology Studies and Teaching with Technology, Grinnell College, Summer 2014
Co-facilitator, Faculty Summer Workshop on Teaching the Tutorial, Grinnell College, Summers 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013
Academic Advising Technology Working Group Member, 2010–2012
Faculty Mentor, student-led class in Newton Correctional Institute, Fall 2010
Rosenfield Program Committee Member, 2006–08, 2009–11
Guest Lecturer at Newton and Mitchellville Prisons, Fall 2007, Spring 2008, Fall 2008, Spring 2010
Faculty Organization Committee (elected at-large member), 2007–08
Curriculum Committee (elected humanities division representative), 2007–08
Co-leader, Faculty Summer Workshop on Teaching Writing through Revision, Grinnell College, Summer 2004 and Summer 2007
Writing Advisory Committee, 2003–2005
Strategic Planning Subcommittee: Improving the Grinnell Experience, 2004

Article Peer Reviewer, *PMLA*, *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*, *Journal of the Midwest Modern Languages Association*, *The Age of Johnson*, *European Romantic Review*, *Sound Studies*, and *Essays in Romanticism*
Book Manuscript Peer Reviewer, Ashgate and Broadview Presses

SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND COURSEWORK

Programming and Markup Languages: Python, MySQL, PHP, HTML, CSS

Coursework in Book History and Book Arts: Bookbinding for Book Historians (Rare Book School B-95), Book History, Bibliography, and Humanities Teaching (Rare Book School H-165), Paper Engineering (taught by Kelli Anderson, online), The History of the Book in America (Rare Book School H-15), Fundamentals of Graphic Design (California Institute of the Arts, online)

Coursework in Computing: Functional Problem Solving (CS 151, Grinnell College), Databases (Stanford University, online), Introduction to Interactive Programming in Python (Rice University, online), Python Data Structures (University of Michigan, online), Using Python to Access Web Data (University of Michigan, online), Using Databases with Python (University of Michigan, online) Physical Computing and Desktop Fabrication (DHSI 2016, Victoria)

Updated 23 April 2026