

**Ph.D. Program in English
Graduate Center/CUNY
2021-2022 Dissertation Year Fellowships and Prizes**

Graduate Center Dissertation Year Fellowships

Alumni Fund Dissertation Fellowship

Jacob Aplaca

Bad Becomings: Melancholia and Complicitous Subjectivity in Contemporary American Queer Autobiography, 1993-2020

Supervisor: Nancy K. Miller

Marilyn J. Gittell Dissertation Fellowship

Ethan Goldberg

Reading Affect in the Post-1945 City: A Constellation of Literary and Filmic Reflections

Supervisor: Wayne Koestenbaum

Dissertation Year Fellowship

Margot Kotler

Queer Impersonality: Compulsory Visibility and the Politics of Form in Modernist Women's Life Writing

Supervisor: Nancy K. Miller

Labanya Unni

National Allegory or Allegory of a Nation?: Examining the Village Novel in India (1925-1955)

Supervisor: Peter Hitchcock

Dissertation Year Award

Param Ajmera

International Student Orientations: Indian Students, American Universities, and Struggles for Radical Change

Supervisor: Duncan Faherty

English Program Dissertation Year Fellowships

The Lynn Kadison Dissertation Year Fellowship [rewarding excellent scholarship and dedicated service to the English Program]

Olivia Wood

Rhetoric of the Invisible: Bisexuals Negotiating the Hetero/Homo Binary

Supervisor: Mark McBeth

The Morton Cohen Travel Grant

Madeleine Barnes

Women's Work: Digital Depictions of Survivorship in American Texts and Textiles
Supervisor: Wayne Koestenbaum

The Jane Marcus Dissertation Year Fellowship

Caleb Fridell

Vast Planetary Abstraction: Capital and Climate in the Modern Epic
Supervisor: Nico Israel

The Millennium Dissertation Year Fellowship

Destry Sibley

After Mother: Genres of the Maternal in Twenty-First Century Memoir
Supervisor: Kandice Chuh

The Robert Adams Day Dissertation Year Fellowship

William Arguelles

Governing Bodies: Queenly Labor, Reading, and Bureaucracy
Supervisor: Glenn Burger

The English Program Dissertation Year Fellowship (2)

Woo Ree Heor

Haunting at Troy: Troy Narratives and Desire for the Past in Late Medieval English Literature
Supervisor: Steven Kruger

Chad Frisbie

Fetish Cosmologies and the Attention to Attention in 21st Century Poetics
Supervisor: Kandice Chuh

The Milton F. Steinhardt Memorial Fellowship for the Most Distinguished Prospectus

Nathan Nikolic

Colonial Investments: The Global Foundations of Popular Sovereignty during the English Civil War and Commonwealth Period, 1640-1660
Supervisor: Peter Hitchcock

English Program Teaching Prize and Dissertation Awards

The Diana Colbert Award for Innovative Teaching

Jeff Voss

Title of Class: English 1012: Politically Incorrect, Politically Incoherent: Comedy & Power in Contemporary America

Course summary: This course is concerned with the ambivalent, contradictory, inconsistent, uncertain, fun, uncomfortable, combustive practice of comedy. Comedy's ubiquitous presence pervades our everyday lives and most intimate interactions, from the media we watch and share to the jokes we laugh at (or don't) with our friends, family, coworkers, and strangers. As the title of this course indicates, one of our guiding questions will be: who can bear to be politically incorrect and politically incoherent? How are we induced to respond to comedy —

and how does our response to and performance of comedy depend on form, time, and place?
Who is allowed to be funny and who is made available to be made fun of?

The Calder Prize for Best Dissertation Involving Interdisciplinary Work (2)

Daniel Jacobson

“You Can’t Be Shakespeare And You Can’t Be Joyce”: Lou Reed, Literature, and Mass-Production
Supervisor: Eric Lott

This dissertation inventively concentrates on, with, and through Lou Reed and his music. A philosophic literary, and sonic/musical project, the dissertation’s attention to Lou Reed orchestrates “a close look at the fantasy of *having everything*, listening to a literary music and reading a musical literary, and for the musicological, philosophical, and ethical consequences of this fantasy as they play out in Reed’s songbook.” The critical listening and reading remarkably enacted throughout the dissertation poses new avenues of study for the sonic and the literary.

Chris Campanioni

Drift Net: The Social and Political Agency of the Migrant Text

Supervisor: Wayne Koestenbaum

This dissertation is an imaginative organism teeming with ideas, dreams, forecasts, exegeses, peregrinations, itineraries, theories, attitudes, leaps, metaphors, summations, and illuminations. He examines a wide range of literary texts written by people in the process of migration as well as in migration’s perpetual aftermath; he also speculates about textuality itself—especially in its more fragmented, poetic, and experimental modes—as intrinsically migratory. Thus he finds a way to write a dissertation in the revelatory manner of a shard-conscious Walter Benjamin, entranced with terrified by the possibilities of motion, flight, and vanishing. Campanioni’s manuscript evades easy summary and thereby achieves a rare, enigmatic complexity: he has remarkable powers as writer of a hybrid critical prose that pulses with quickened, soulful intellection.

The English Program Prize for the Best Dissertation in Performance Studies

Allison Douglass

Clowning with Identity: Embodied Selves and Others in Comedy’s Gendered Character Performances

Supervisor: Marc Dolan

This dissertation sharply and brilliantly considers identity formation and comedic performance. Working through and across media studies, cultural studies, and performance studies, the dissertation proffers an original and astute historiography of comedic and gender performativity that moves from the 1980s to the early 21st century. Marshalling an impressive array of methodologies, Douglass’ conception of ‘clowning’ re-stipulates the way we understand the mechanisms of humor and character performance in illuminating ways.

The Robert Adams Day Prize for the Best Dissertation in Gender/Feminist Theory

Lynne Beckenstein

The Promise of Wellness in American Feminist Literature, 1980-2019

Supervisor: Kandice Chuh

This exceptional dissertation demonstrates the rigor and innovation of work and makes a vital contribution to the study of feminist literature. The project insightfully focuses on the ideology of mental health with a groundbreaking attention to wellness and aesthetics. Deeply steeped in critical theory and archival research, the dissertation is anchored in a generative meeting of race and gender studies, disability studies, and cultural studies as it richly considers how literature (fiction and memoir) renders and disputes the neoliberal labor and normative conceptions of happiness.

The Paul Monette Prize for Best Dissertation in Queer Studies

Christian Lewis

Narrative Side-Stepping: Disability Beyond the Narratology of Normalcy

Supervisor: Talia Schaffer

This dissertation invents a new critical term—narrative side-stepping—to describe the affordances granted to and coined by disabled female and nonbinary characters in Victorian fiction. Christian Lewis brings this new category of non-normative narrative procedure to bear on novels by Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Harriet Martineau, Anthony Trollope, and Charlotte Yonge; Lewis’s readings—executed with flair and imagination— theorize (in their words) “a queer-crip narratology that rejects the structures of normalcy.” Toward this vanguard narratology (what Lewis calls “criptopia”) this dissertation sets sail, providing the reader with vivid new ways to think about varieties of human movement (including limping, hopping, skating) as well as non-human movement (microbial, cellular). The committee commends Christian Lewis for the dexterity of the micro-readings and the boldness of the overall design: unconventional narrative forms, in Lewis’s recuperative interpretation, take flight from hopping, dragging, limping, and other velocities that a literary criticism as deft as Lewis’s has the power to measure.

The English Program Prize for Best Dissertation in Critical University Studies

Anna Zeemont

“The Act of the Paper”: Literacy, Racial Capitalism, and Student Protest in 1990s New York City

Supervisor: Carmen Kynard

This dissertation explores the “counter-institutional literacies” of CUNY students in the 1990s. In a period of battles around educational access, equity, race, and neoliberalism, the “insurgent rhetorics” of CUNY students offered “ground-up resistance in the face of profound, institutionally sanctioned raced-classed dispossession.” Zeemont’s transdisciplinary archival recovery of an astonishing range of CUNY students’ self-run publications—feminist zines, radical newspapers, hip-hop literacies, organizing materials, and early blogs—offers up a fierce and abiding celebration of multiracial student activist coalitions, and a fresh look at grass-roots literacies. The committee admired the rigor and range of Zeemont’s research, her eloquent prose, her courageous challenge to dominant narratives of the end of Open Admissions at CUNY, and her urgent attention to the voices of youth activists in this important moment.

The English Program Faculty and Alumni Prize for Most Distinguished Dissertation of the Year (2)

Brad Fox

On the Bathysphere Logbooks

Supervisor: Joan Richardson

In a project of laudable precision, imaginative reach, speculative daring, and writerly finesse, Brad Fox explores and revives the undersea discoveries made by marine biologist William Beebe, between 1930 and 1934, as he was suspended in a steel ball known as a bathysphere, in the vicinity of an Atlantic island oddly named Nonsuch. Turning nothingness into substance, or vision into words, while underwater he dictated his discoveries to his colleague Gloria Hollister, via telephone. Brad Fox takes these logbooks and divines their more than latent poetry; his dissertation uses these texts as springboards into an exploration of visionary experience and of the contemporary ecological imagination. Brad Fox has thereby created a brilliant work of literary art—at once fiction and nonfiction, history and science, poetry and analysis—that fulfills the highest purposes of a critical dissertation as well as the exacting standards of literature itself.

Elizabeth Weybright

Sound Minds: Women's Novels and the Listening Imagination

Supervisor: Nancy Yousef

This dissertation explores sonic and aural experience in Romantic and nineteenth-century novels by women—Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot—illuminating the sensational, affective, and cognitive experiences of sound in these works. Its examination of nineteenth century musicality, musical response, and ambient noise offers new insight into sound's role in shaping thought, feeling, and emotional responsiveness. The committee admired Weybright's deft combination of affect theory, sound studies, intellectual history, musicology, and literary analysis, and the correspondences she draws between philosophical appeals to music (Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche for example) and literary efforts to capture the phenomenological impact of music and sound. The dissertation is distinguished by its deep research, stylish writing, and poignant evocation of nineteenth century emotional and somatic experience.

