

# VALERIE O'BRIEN

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Department of English  
608 S. Wright St.  
Urbana, IL 61801  
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### EDUCATION

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- Ph.D., English** Defense September 2019  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- M.A., English** August 2013  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- B.A., English and Creative Writing** May 2011  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
*Magna cum Laude* and High Distinction  
Honors Thesis, "Virginia Woolf and the Transformation of the *Bildungsroman*"  
*Recipient of the Donald Smalley Prize for English Honors Thesis*

### DISSERTATION

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"Autobiographical Subjects: Disability and Social Identity in Fictional Life Writing"

This dissertation contends that life writing genres have had an unprecedented—and largely unrecognized—influence on twentieth- and twenty-first-century Anglophone fiction. Analyzing the coevolution of fiction and life writing, I argue that late modernist and contemporary fiction adapts autobiographical discourses to interrogate their social value and reimagine a more inclusive subject.

Director: Vicki Mahaffey

Committee: Andrew Gaedtke, Hina Nazar, Nancy Blake

### PUBLICATIONS

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#### Articles

"'A Genius for Unreality': Neurodivergent Identity in Elizabeth Bowen's *Eva Trout*." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 42, no. 2, Winter 2019, pp. 75-93.

#### Online Publications

"Personhood and Neurodiversity in *Eva Trout*: A Closer Look at *JML* 42.2." *Indiana University Press News Blog*, 12 Apr. 2019.

"On *S\*PeRM\*\*K\*T*." *Modern American Poetry Site*, edited by Cary Nelson and Bartholomew Brinkman, 2012.

"On 'Mummy of a Lady Named Jemutesonekh.'" *Modern American Poetry Site*, edited by Cary Nelson and Bartholomew Brinkman, 2012.

## **FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS**

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Conference Travel Grant (Spring), UIUC	2019
Gragg Barr Dissertation Completion Fellowship, UIUC	2017 – 2018
President's Research in Diversity Travel Award, UIUC	2017
Conference Travel Grant (Fall), UIUC	2017
Conference Travel Grant (Spring), UIUC	2017
Liberal Arts and Sciences Fellowship, UIUC	2016 – 2017
Conference Travel Grant (Spring), UIUC	2016

## **HONORS AND AWARDS**

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<b>University of Illinois List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent</b>	2012 – 2018
Recognized Fall 2012, Spring 2013, Fall 2013, Fall 2014, Spring 2015, Spring 2016, Summer 2016, Fall 2016, Spring 2017, Fall 2018 across seven different English, Rhetoric, and Gender and Women's Studies courses	
<b>Honorable Mention, Hobart L. and Mary Kay Peer Essay Prize</b>	2018
<b>Campus Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching</b>	2018
Principal university award for teaching excellence, granted to five graduate students annually across all UIUC colleges and departments	
<b>College of LAS Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching</b>	2018
Competitive award granted annually for sustained excellence in undergraduate teaching, innovative approaches to undergraduate teaching, and overall positive impact on undergraduate student learning	
<b>Department of English Undergraduate Teaching Award</b>	2017
Awarded annually for instructors nominated by students who have demonstrated excellence in teaching	
<b>Outstanding Designation on List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent</b>	2016 – 2017
Received outstanding designation Spring 2016, Summer 2016, Spring 2017 for ranking in the top 10% in student evaluations	
<b>Distinction for Special Fields Exam</b>	2015
<b>Bronze Tablet University Honors</b>	2011
Granted to UIUC students in the top 3% of their graduating class	
<b>Soybean Press Award for Literature and Art</b>	2011
<b>Robert D. Novak Scholarship for Writing in English</b>	2010
<b>Thatcher H. Guild Prize for Creative Writing – Poetry</b>	2010

## **TEACHING AND TUTORING EXPERIENCE**

### **Literature**

Introduction to Fiction: Global Postcolonial Literature	Spring 2019
Introduction to Fiction, Advanced Composition	Fall 2013, Spring 2015, Spring 2016, Fall 2018
Modernist Literature and Culture	Fall 2016
Beginnings of Modern Poetry	Fall 2015
Science Fiction	Fall 2014
Survey of British Literature to 1798 – Present ( <i>teaching assistant</i> )	Fall 2012, Spring 2013

### **Gender and Women's Studies**

Fairy Tales and Gender Formation	Spring 2017, Summer 2017, Summer 2019
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### **Composition**

Writing and Research	Fall 2011, Spring 2012, Spring 2014, Fall 2014 Spring 2015, Summer 2016, Spring 2019
Advanced Rhetoric and Composition, Service Learning	Fall 2013

### **Odyssey Project**

(*College-credit humanities course for low-income adults*)

American Literature 1900 – Present	Fall 2018
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### **TRiO Upward Bound Summer College Prep Academy**

(*Summer program for high school students who will be first-generation college applicants*)

Reading III/IV	Summer 2012, Summer 2013
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### **Agora Days, University Laboratory High School**

Feminist Fairy Tales	Feb. 20 – 23, 2018
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### **Tutoring**

Citizenship Teaching Assistant, Urbana Adult Education Center	Fall 2018
ESL Teaching Assistant, Urbana Adult Education Center	Spring 2017 – Spring 2018
Writing Consultant, UIUC Writers Workshop	Fall 2012 – Spring 2013

## **CONFERENCES**

### **Conferences Organized**

Co-organizer of the British Modernities Group 2016 Graduate Conference, *Feeling Real: Affect, Literature, and Reimagined Realities*. May 5–6, 2016. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

### **Roundtables Organized**

“Interdisciplinarity.” International Auto/Biography Association Americas Conference. June 13–15, 2019. University of the West Indies – Mona.

## Papers Presented

- “Autobiographical Absences: Kinship and Mourning in the Memoirs of Saidiya Hartman and Jesmyn Ward.” International Auto/Biography Association Americas Conference. June 13-15, 2019. University of the West Indies – Mona.
- “Dissent and Discipline: Reading Fictional Diaries by Institutionalized Women in *As We Are Now* and *The Secret Scripture*.” Midwest Modern Language Association Convention. Nov. 9–11, 2017. Cincinnati, OH.
- “Generic Transformations: Travel and Truth-Telling in *The Moor’s Account*.” South Central Modern Language Association Convention. Oct. 5–7, 2017. Tulsa, OK.
- “Rethinking the Autobiographical Subject in J. M. Coetzee’s *Foe*.” British Modernities Group Conference. May 4–5, 2017. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- “Disability, Voice, and Autobiographical Exclusion in J. M. Coetzee’s *Foe*.” Susan B. Anthony Institute for Gender and Women’s Studies International Graduate Conference. Mar. 31, 2017. University of Rochester.
- “‘Hole[s] in the narrative’: Giving an Account of the Non-Self in *Foe* and *Not I*.” Romance Languages and Literatures Graduate Student Conference. Apr. 1–2, 2016. State University of New York at Buffalo.
- “Bad Romance: The Sadeian Fairy Tales of Angela Carter and Kathy Acker.” British Modernities Group Conference. May 1–2, 2015. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- “Re-Membering through Forgetting: Life-Writing in *Never Let Me Go*.” School of Languages and Cultures Symposium. March 6–7, 2015. Purdue University.
- “‘Spinning a Yarn’ to Fabricate New Worlds: Metafiction in *The Stone Gods* and *Cloud Atlas*.” *Imagining Alternatives: A Graduate Symposium on Speculative Fictions*. October 18–19, 2013. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

## CAMPUS AND DEPARTMENTAL TALKS

- Discussant, “Preparing for Your Special Fields Exam” panel hosted by the English Graduate Student Association at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Apr. 11, 2018
- Invited lecturer, “Beauty, Love, Power: How Fairy Tales Cultivate Conflict between Women,” hosted by the Graduate Society of Women Engineers at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Mar. 3, 2017
- Discussant, “Surviving Graduate School” panel hosted by the English Graduate Student Association at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Oct. 11, 2016
- Discussant, “Grad School and You” panel hosted by the English Advising Office at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Apr. 4, 2016
- Presenter, Personal Statement Workshop hosted by the Writers Workshop at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Sep. 25, 2012
- Discussant, Graduate Student Panel hosted by the English Student Council at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Mar. 6, 2012

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

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<b>Social Media Editor</b>	2018 – present
International Auto/Biography Assn. Students and New Scholars Network (IABA SNS)	
<b>Blog Editor and Website Manager</b>	2017 – present
International Auto/Biography Assn. Students and New Scholars Network (IABA SNS)	
<b>English Student Council Advisor, UIUC</b>	2015 – 2016
<b>Assistant to English Department Career Services, UIUC</b>	2015 – 2016
<b>Digital Archive Assistant</b>	2008
Voices from the Gaps (VG): Women Writers of Color, University of Minnesota - Twin Cities	

**SERVICE**

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**Academic Service**

Member of Literature and Arts General Education Learning Outcomes Working Group	2019
Invited participant in General Education Assembly on Learning Outcomes – Advanced Composition and Literature and Arts	2019
Undergraduate Teaching Awards Committee Member, English Department	2018 – 2019
Communication Committee Member, English Grad Student Assoc.	2016 – 2017
Co-organizer, British Modernities Reading Group	2015 – 2016
Pitchapalooza Planning Committee Member	2015 – 2016
Communication Committee Member, English Grad Student Assoc.	2014 – 2015
Graduate Student Mentor, English Department	2014 – 2015
English Grad Student Assoc. Representative and Member of Online Education Subcommittee, Curriculum Committee, English Department	2013 – 2014
Academic Advisor, Zonta International Golden-Z Club, UIUC	2012 – 2014

**RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS**

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Anglophone literature | multi-ethnic American literatures | British and Irish literature  
 modernism | contemporary literature | fiction | poetry | life writing | disability studies  
 gender and women's studies | digital humanities | service learning

## **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

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International Auto/Biography Association (IABA)

Modern Language Association (MLA)

Midwest Modern Language Association (MMLA)

Modernist Studies Association (MSA)

## **REFERENCES**

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Please contact the Department of English Graduate Studies Office Support Specialist, Stephanie Shockey, at [shockey@illinois.edu](mailto:shockey@illinois.edu) for letters of reference.

VICKI MAHAFFEY, Department Head and Kirkpatrick Professor  
Departments of English, Gender and Women's Studies  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
608 S. Wright St., Urbana, IL 61801  
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ANDREW GAEDTKE, Associate Professor  
Department of English  
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HINA NAZAR, Associate Professor  
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