

# VALERIE O'BRIEN

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Department of English  
608 S. Wright St.  
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### EDUCATION

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- Ph.D., English** Defense August 2020  
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': Neurodiversity 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>Big Ten Emerging Scholar</b>	2019
<b>University of Illinois List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent</b>	2012 – 2019
Recognized Fall 2012, Spring 2013, Fall 2013, Fall 2014, Spring 2015, Spring 2016, Summer 2016, Fall 2016, Spring 2017, Fall 2018, Spring 2019, and Summer 2019 across seven different English, Rhetoric, and Gender and Women's Studies courses	
<b>Outstanding Designation on List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent</b>	2016 – 2019
Received outstanding designation Spring 2016, Summer 2016, Spring 2017, Spring 2019, and Summer 2019 for ranking in the top 10% in student evaluations	
<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>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**

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**Department of English, University of Illinois Laboratory High School*****Visiting Teaching Associate (Instructor of Record)***

The Short Story	Spring 2020
Language and Literature 2	Fall 2019 – Spring 2020
Nonfiction Writing	Fall 2019

**Department of English, University of Illinois*****Literature (Instructor of Record)***

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

***Literature (Teaching Assistant)***

Survey of British Literature to 1798 – Present	Fall 2012, Spring 2013
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***Composition (Instructor of Record)***

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

**Department of Gender and Women's Studies, University of Illinois*****(Instructor of Record)***

Fairy Tales and Gender Formation	Spring 2017, Summer 2017, Summer 2019
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**Teaching with Community Engagement, University of Illinois*****Odyssey Project (Instructor of Record)******Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities***

Introduction to the Humanities II: Literature and US History	Spring 2020
American Literature 1900 – Present	Fall 2018

***Agora Days, University Laboratory High School (Guest Instructor)***

Feminist Fairy Tales	Feb. 20 – 23, 2018
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***TRiO Upward Bound Summer College Prep Academy (Instructor of Record)******Office of Minority Student Affairs***

Reading III/IV	Summer 2012, Summer 2013
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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, Writers Workshop, UIUC	Fall 2012 – Spring 2013

## INVITED TALKS

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- “‘A hole in the narrative’: Disability, Voice, and Autobiographical Exclusion in J. M. Coetzee’s *Foe*.” Big Ten Emerging Scholars Program. Nov. 8, 2019. Michigan State University.
- “Beauty, Love, Power: How Fairy Tales Cultivate Conflict between Women.” Graduate Society of Women Engineers. Mar. 3, 2017. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

## CONFERENCES

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### 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**

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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.

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.

**ADVISING AND MENTORING**

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**Advisor and Student Experience Coordinator**, Odyssey Project, Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities, UIUC 2019 – present

**Campus Advisor**, Students Demand Action for Gun Sense in America 2018 – present

**Mentor and Organizer**, Student Activist Organization 2018

**Assistant to English Undergrad Advising Office – Career Services**, UIUC 2015 – 2016

**Advisor**, English Student Council, UIUC 2015 – 2016

**Graduate Student Mentor**, English Department, UIUC 2014 – 2015

**Campus Advisor**, Zonta International Golden-Z Club, UIUC 2012 – 2014

**DIGITAL CONTENT AND EDITING**

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**Social Media Editor** 2018 – present  
International Auto/Biography Assn. Students and New Scholars Network (IABA SNS)

**Blog Editor and Website Manager** 2017 – present  
International Auto/Biography Assn. Students and New Scholars Network (IABA SNS)

**Digital Archive Assistant** 2008  
Voices from the Gaps (VG): Women Writers of Color, University of Minnesota - Twin Cities

**ACADEMIC SERVICE**

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Member of Equity Committee, University of Illinois Laboratory High School 2020

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. 2014 – 2015, 2016 – 2017

Co-organizer, British Modernities Reading Group	O'Brien 6 2015 – 2016
Pitchapalooza Planning Committee Member	2015 – 2016
English Grad Student Assoc. Representative and Member of Online Education Subcommittee, Curriculum Committee, English Department	2013 – 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)  
 National Academic Advising Association (NACADA)  
 American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE)  
 National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

## **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  
 Email: vmahaffe@illinois.edu

ANDREW GAEDTKE, Associate Professor  
 Department of English  
 University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
 608 S. Wright St., Urbana, IL 61801  
 Email: gaedtke@illinois.edu

HINA NAZAR, Associate Professor  
 Department of English  
 University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
 608 S. Wright St., Urbana, IL 61801  
 Email: hnazar@illinois.edu

JENNIFER BURNS, Former Odyssey Project Coordinator and Teaching Assistant Professor  
Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities and Department of Art History  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
Email: [jenbee60@gmail.com](mailto:jenbee60@gmail.com)