

ROBERT VOLPICELLI

Professor of English
Director of Humanities Initiatives
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ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Academic Appointments

Professor of English, Randolph-Macon College, 2025–
Associate Professor of English, 2021–2025.
Assistant Professor of English, 2015–2021.

Administrative Position

Director of Humanities Initiatives, Randolph-Macon College, 2025–

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in English, The Pennsylvania State University, 2015.
M.A. in English, The Pennsylvania State University, 2011.
B.A. in English, *magna cum laude*, Honors Program, Ithaca College, 2009.

Research & Teaching Areas: twentieth and twenty-first century literature; modernism; poetry; disability studies; sociological approaches to art and literature; theories of empire and postcolonialism.

PUBLICATIONS

Book

Transatlantic Modernism and the US Lecture Tour, Oxford University Press, 2021. 218 pp.
Paperback 2024.
Modernist Studies Association First Book Prize.
Reviewed in [American Literary History](#), [Modernism/modernity](#), *The Year's Work in English Studies* (2023 and 2024) and [International Yeats Studies](#).

Special Issues

Essay cluster on "Disability on the Cusp," *Cusp: Late 19th-/Early 20th-Century Cultures* 2.2 (Summer 2024).
With Kamran Javadizadeh, special issue on "Poetry Networks," *College Literature* 47.1 (January 2020).

Journal Articles

"The Opacity of Djuna Barnes," forthcoming in *Modernism/modernity* 33.3 (September 2026).
"Countee Cullen's Harlem Decadence," *PMLA* 138.5 (October 2023): 1078–1093.

- “Saying Otherwise: Speech and Allegory in W.H. Auden’s WWII Lectures,” *Textual Practice* 33.1 (February 2019): 53–72.
- “Modernist Low Vision: Visual Impairment and Weak Narrative in Conrad and Joyce,” *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 51.1 (Spring 2018): 60–78.
- “William Carlos Williams’s Syphilitic Muse,” *Paideuma: Modern and Contemporary Poetry and Poetics* 42 (2015): 223–249.
- “Bare Ontology: Synge, Beckett, and the Phenomenology of Imperialism,” *New Hibernia Review* 17.4 (Winter 2013): 110–129.
- “Against Things: The At-Home Objects of Marianne Moore,” *Twentieth-Century Literature* 58.4 (Winter 2012): 640–662.

Book Chapters

- “Troubled Images: Disability and Vision in Modernist American Poetry” for *The Oxford History of Poetry in English*, Volume 11: *American Poetry: 1865–1939*, ed. Nadia Nurhussein, Oxford University Press, forthcoming.
- “Early Responses and Criticism (1910–1930),” *The Oxford Handbook of Gertrude Stein*, ed. Emily Setina, Katharine Boswell, and Lisa Siraganian, Oxford University Press, forthcoming.
- “The Poet’s Room as Archive,” *Marianne Moore and the Archives: From Material Culture to the Digital Humanities*, ed. Jeffrey Westover, Clemson University Press & Liverpool University Press, 2024: 43–58.

Interviews and Shorter Essays

- “Crip Negativity Now: An Interview with J. Logan Smilges,” forthcoming in a special issue on “Accessibility and Modernist Difficulty” for *Feminist Modernist Studies*.
- [“Recycling Modernism in the Pacific Islands: An Interview with Craig Santos Perez,”](#) *ASAP/Review* (December 2025).
- Featured Guest, *Close Readings*, podcast hosted by Kamran Javadizadeh, episode on W.H. Auden’s [“In Memory of William Butler Yeats,”](#) March 2024.
- [“Monet’s Cataracts, Re-examined,”](#) Visualities Forum, *Modernism/modernity* Print Plus 8.2 (January 2024).

Review Essays

- “The New Decadence,” *Modernism/modernity* 26.1 (January 2019): 213–218. Books considered: Vincent Sherry, *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence* (Cambridge UP 2014); Alex Murray, *Landscapes of Decadence: Literature and Place at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge UP 2016); and Robert Stilling, *Beginning at the End: Decadence, Modernism, and Postcolonial Poetry* (Harvard UP 2018).
- “The Varieties of Impersonal Experience,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 39.4 (Summer 2016): 180–186. Books considered: Rochelle Rives, *Modernist Impersonalities: Affect, Authority, and the Subject* (Palgrave, 2012); and Christina Walter, *Optical Impersonality: Science, Images, and Literary Modernism* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2014).

Book Reviews

- Review of Hannah Freed-Thall, *Modernism at the Beach: Queer Ecologies and the Coastal Commons* (Columbia UP, 2023), *Modern Fiction Studies* 70.4 (Winter 2024): 754–756.
- Review of Rochelle Rives, *The New Physiognomy: Face, Form, and Modern Expression* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2024), *Twentieth-Century Literature* 70.4 (December 2024): 419–424.
- Review of Jayme Stayer, *Becoming T. S. Eliot: The Rhetoric of Voice and Audience in Inventions of the March Hare* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2021), *American Literary History* 35.1 (Spring 2023): 585–588.
- “Modernist Illness Now,” review of Peter Fifield, *Modernism and Physical Illness: Sick Books* (Oxford UP, 2020), *Journal of Modern Literature* 45.1 (Fall 2021): 169–172.
- Review of Michael Patrick Gillespie, *James Joyce and the Exilic Imagination* (The Florida UP James Joyce Series, 2015), *New Hibernia Review* 19.4 (Winter 2015): 155–157.
- Review of *The Letters of Robert Frost, Volume 1: 1886–1920*, ed. Donald Sheehy, Mark Richardson, and Robert Faggen (Harvard UP, 2014), *New England Quarterly* 87.4 (December 2014): 747–749.

Work in Progress

Bad Visions: The Modern Aesthetics of Visual Impairment, book manuscript in preparation.

PRESENTATIONS

Selected Lectures and Public Events

- “Imagism, Ableism,” Centre for Health, Humanities and Science, University of Bristol, UK, January 2026.
- “James Joyce’s Bad Visions,” Georgetown University, co-sponsored by Global Irish Studies Initiative, the Department of English, the Disability Studies Initiative, and the Library, October 2024.
- “Disability at the Turn of the Century,” a special panel for Event 2024, the North American Victorian Studies Association, co-sponsored by the Aestheticism & Decadence Caucus, the Art History Caucus, and *Cusp: Late 19th–/Early 20th–Century Cultures*, May 2024. Virtual.
- Interviewer, “A Conversation with Jennifer Spitzer about *Secret Sharers: The Intimate Rivalries of Modernism and Psychoanalysis*,” Finger Lakes Environmental Film Festival, Ithaca College, March 2023. Virtual.
- “Modernist Circuits,” with Peter Howarth (Queen Mary University of London), Centre for Modernist Cultures, University of Birmingham, December 2022. Virtual.
- “Modernism on the Circuit,” with Peter Howarth, Modern and Contemporary Literature Research Seminar, All Souls College, Oxford University, November 2022. Virtual.
- “Literary Sensation and the US Lecture Tour,” Honors Program, Hampden-Sydney College, November 2022.
- “Wilde in America: Forging Identity on the US Lecture Tour,” Humanities Research Center, Virginia Commonwealth University, October 2021. Moderator: Nicholas Frankel (Virginia Commonwealth University). Virtual.

- “Yeats in America,” NYC Irish Studies Consortium, Columbia University, co-sponsored by the W.B. Yeats Society of New York, July 2021. Moderator: Anna Teekell (Christopher Newport University). Virtual.
- “Reading Disability,” Faculty & Staff Luncheon, Randolph-Macon College, February 2019.
- “James Joyce’s Low Vision,” Modernist Studies Workshop, The Pennsylvania State University, March 2017.
- “Gertrude Stein’s U.S. Guides,” Center for American Literary Studies Awards Symposium, The Pennsylvania State University, April 2015.
- “W.H. Auden as Modernist Lecturer,” Modernist Studies Workshop, The Pennsylvania State University, March 2014.
- “‘What a fine thing!’: Marianne Moore and the Object of Modernism,” Ithaca College, co-sponsored by Sigma Tau Delta Society, April 2011.

Conference Presentations

- “Gertrude Stein’s Artistic Approximations,” Gertrude Stein Conference, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, November 2025.
- “Ralph Ellison’s Visually Impaired Man,” New Directions in Black Disability Studies, University of Virginia, April 2025.
- “Aesthetics, Opacity, Access,” Modernist Studies Association Conference, Chicago, November 2024.
- “Not Difficult, Opaque,” Joseph Conrad Society of America, Modern Language Association Convention, Philadelphia, January 2024.
- “Aesthetics, Opacity, Impairment,” Roundtable on “Obscurity,” Modernist Studies Association Conference, Brooklyn, October 2023.
- First Book Prize Shortlist Roundtable, Modernist Studies Association Conference, Portland, October 2022. Invited.
- “The Harlem Decadence of Countee Cullen’s *Copper Sun*,” Northeast Modern Language Association Convention, Baltimore, March 2022. Virtual.
- “The Poet’s Room as Archive,” Conference on “Marianne Moore and the Archives,” The University at Buffalo, May 2021. Invited. Virtual.
- “Illegitimate Subjects: Wilde and Yeats at the American University,” Modernist Studies Association Conference, Toronto, CA, October 2019.
- “Touring the Great Depression with Gertrude Stein,” Modern Language Association Convention, Chicago, January 2019.
- “Djuna Barnes’s Phantom Limbs,” Modernist Studies Association Conference, Columbus, November 2018.
- “Charismatic Circuits,” Conference of the Society for Novel Studies, Cornell University, May 2018. Invited.
- “Information and the Imperial Novel: The Case of Kipling’s *Kim*,” Modernist Studies Association Conference, Pasadena, November, 2016.
- “Oscar Wilde’s Self-Improvement,” American Conference for Irish Studies, University of Notre Dame, April 2016.
- “Modernist Low Vision,” Modernist Studies Association Conference, Boston, November 2015.

- “Poor Vision: Conrad, Joyce, and Weak Epistemology,” International James Joyce Society, Modern Language Association Convention, Vancouver, January 2015.
- “Among College Students: W.B. Yeats and Anti-colonialism in America,” Modernist Studies Association Conference, Pittsburgh, November 2014.
- “California Celts: Oscar Wilde and Irish America,” Western Literature Society, Modern Language Association Convention, Chicago, January 2014.
- “Transatlantic Modernism and the U.S. Lecture Circuit,” Modernist Studies Association Conference, Sussex, UK, August 2013.
- “Robert Frost and Material Ideology in the New Deal Era,” Robert Frost Society, Modern Language Association Convention, Boston, January 2013.
- “Pater after Pound: Aesthetics, Erotics, Ethics,” Modernist Studies Association Conference, Las Vegas, October 2012.
- “Venereal Verses: William Carlos Williams and the Syphilis Cure,” Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture Since 1900, Louisville, February 2012.
- “The Blow of a Loy’: J.M. Synge and the Postcolonial Thing,” Canadian Association of Irish Studies Conference, Montreal, CA, July 2011.
- “Objects of Desire: Crusoe both *on* and *as* the Mercantile Commodity,” Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association Convention, Albuquerque, October 2010.
- “Toward a Postcolonial Lawrence?” British Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies Conference, Savannah, February 2010.

Seminar and Panel Organization

- Seminar Leader, with Emily C. Bloom (Sarah Lawrence College), “Diagnosis and/as Modernist Practice,” Modernist Studies Association Conference, Boston, October 2025.
- Chair, “Modernism and Foodways,” Modernist Studies Association Conference, Boston, October 2025.
- Seminar Leader, “The Decadence of Countee Cullen’s *Copper Sun*,” MADS (Modernism, Aestheticism, and Decadence Studies) Reading Group, January 2025. Virtual.
- Chair, “Modernist Portraits and/or Antiportraits,” Modernist Studies Association Conference, Chicago, November 2024.
- Organizer, Roundtable on “Obscurity,” Modernist Studies Association Conference, Brooklyn, October 2023.
- Chair, “(Post)Modernist Projections: Cinema, Gender, Race,” Modernist Studies Association Conference, Portland, October 2022.
- Seminar Leader, with Laura Heffernan (University of North Florida) and Rachel Sagner Buurma (Swarthmore College), “Other Scenes of Teaching,” Modernist Studies Association Conference, Portland, October 2022.
- Seminar Leader, with Robert Stilling (Florida State University), “New Directions in Decadence Studies: Contexts, Geographies, Histories,” Modernist Studies Association Conference, April 2021. Invited participant: Kristin Mahoney (Michigan State University). Virtual.
- Organizer and Presider, “Disability, Mentoring, and the Profession,” special session of the Committee on Disability Issues, Modern Language Association Convention, January 2022.

- Chair, "Aesthetics and Humor," Conference on "Marianne Moore and the Archives," The University at Buffalo, May 2021. Virtual.
- Organizer and Presider, "Sensing Disability: Low Vision," special session of the Committee on Disability Issues, Modern Language Association Convention, January 2021. Virtual. Selected for inclusion in the Presidential Theme on "Persistence."
- Chair, "Refuge, Upheaval, and Modernist Cultures of Welcoming," Modernist Studies Association Conference, Toronto, CA, October 2019.
- Organizer, "The Temporalities of Disability," Modernist Studies Association Conference, Columbus, November 2018.
- Seminar Leader, "Colonial Circuits: W.B. Yeats and Rabindranath Tagore as Poet-Diplomats," Central Virginia British Studies Seminar, Richmond, October 2017.
- Seminar Leader, with Lauryl Tucker (Sewanee, University of the South), "Modernist Parody, Past and Present," Modernist Studies Association Conference, Amsterdam, NL, August 2017.
- Organizer, "Empire, Archive, Information," Modernist Studies Association Conference, Pasadena, 2016.
- Chair and Respondent, "Where are they now? Returning to the Exiles of the New Modernist Studies," Modernist Studies Association Conference, Pasadena, 2016.
- Chair, "Joyce's Hauntings," American Conference for Irish Studies, University of Notre Dame, April 2016.
- Organizer, "Haze, Fuzz, Blur: The Aesthetics of Indistinction," Modernist Studies Association Conference, Boston, November 2015.
- Seminar Leader, with Cecily Swanson (Princeton University), "Modernist Sociologies: Now and Then," Modernist Studies Association Conference, Boston, November 2015. Invited participants: Merve Emre (McGill University) and Jeremy Braddock (Cornell University).
- Organizer, "Modernism's Para-Performative Spaces," Modernist Studies Association Conference, Pittsburgh, November 2014.
- Seminar Leader, "William Carlos Williams and the New York Avant-Garde," NYC Modernism Seminar, New York, February 2014.
- Organizer, "Managing Modernist Poetry," Modernist Studies Association Conference, Sussex, UK, August 2013.
- Organizer, "Poetics + Ethics," Modernist Studies Association Conference, Las Vegas, October 2012.
- Organizer and Chair, "Uncanny Conceptions: Literary and Biological Production in Jean Rhys," Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture, Louisville, February 2012.

AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND GRANTS

Awards

- Nominee, Libby and Hiter Harris Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Award, Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges, 2022.
- Thomas Branch Award for Excellence in Teaching, Randolph-Macon College, 2020.
- Philip Young Memorial Endowment Award in Literary Studies, The Pennsylvania State University, 2013.

Excellence in Teaching Award, Department of English, The Pennsylvania State University, 2011.

Recognized for Excellence in Teaching First-Year Students, Office of Student Affairs, The Pennsylvania State University, 2011.

The Center for American Literary Studies (CALS) Research Award, The Pennsylvania State University, 2010.

Fellowships

Jessie Ball duPont Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Fellowship, "Poetry! Politics! Protest!," Randolph-Macon College, 2023–2024.

Center for American Literary Studies (CALS) Dissertation Fellowship, The Pennsylvania State University, 2014–2015.

Institute of Arts and Humanities (IAH) Residential Summer Fellowship, The Pennsylvania State University, Summer 2013.

Edwin Erle Sparks Fellowship, The Humanities Program, The Pennsylvania State University, 2012–2013.

Selected Grants

Walter Williams Craigie Teaching Endowment Grant, research funds and additional stipend, Randolph-Macon College, Summers 2016, 2019, 2021, 2023, 2025.

Rashkind Grant, sabbatical leave and additional research funds, Randolph-Macon College, Fall and Winter 2022.

Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Grant, with Kate MacDonald (Disability Services), "Disability Programming Across the College," Randolph-Macon College, 2020–2021.

Publication Grant, funds for copyright licensing fees, Randolph-Macon College, 2021.

Junior Rashkind Grant, two course releases and additional research funds, Randolph-Macon College, 2018–2019.

Modernist Studies Association (MSA) Travel Grants, 2013, 2014.

Modern Language Association (MLA) Travel Grant, 2014.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Randolph-Macon College

Avant-Garde Networks (senior capstone, 495)

Decadence is the Art of Decline (senior capstone, 495)

Methods of Reading (398)

The Fiction of Empire (special topics, 381)

Irish Literature (special topics, 381)

Dublin, Literary Capital (travel course, 356)

The Neurodiverse Novel (340)

Poetry! Politics! Protest! (337)

Modern Poetry (334)

The Modern American Novel ("Local and Global," 332)

Making Multicultural America (formerly "Introduction to American Literature," 252)

Alternative Richmond ("ALT RVA") (local travel course, 206)

Reading Disability (204)

Critical Reading & Writing (“Issues in Higher Education,” “Literature & Censorship,” 185)
Road Trip! Going Places in American Literature (Honors Program, HONR116)

The Pennsylvania State University

The London Avant-Garde (travel course, 499)
Modern British Fiction, 1900-1945 (456)
American Drama (438)
Introduction to Critical Reading (200)
Advanced Writing in the Humanities (202B)
Rhetoric & Composition (15)

Directed Student Projects

“The Queer Spaces of Modernist Poetry,” Summer 2019.
“Modernist Magazines I: Curating the Periodical Culture of the Lost Generation,” Summer 2018.
“Modernist Magazines II: Little Magazines and the Presentation of Modernist Authorship,” Summer 2018.
“James Joyce, *Ulysses*, and Gender,” Summer 2017.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Associate Editor of the journal *College Literature* (Johns Hopkins UP), 2021–

Referee for the following presses:

SUNY Press

Oxford University Press

Reader for the following journals:

Modernism/modernity

Modernism/modernity Print Plus

Cusp: Late 19th-/Early 20th-Century Cultures

College Literature

Textual Practice

Public Humanities

New Hibernia Review

Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature

a/b: Auto/Biography Studies

Interdisciplinary Literary Studies: A Journal of Criticism and Theory

Langston Hughes Review

Canadian Review of Comparative Literature

Judge, Marianne Moore Society Essay Prize, 2020–2021.

Fulltime Researcher for the Hemingway Letters Project, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Penn State University Libraries, 2011–2012.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

National Committee Work

Vice Program Chair, Board of Directors of the Modernist Studies Association, 2024–2025.

Appointed Member, Committee on Disability Issues in the Profession, Modern Language Association, 2019–2022.
Committee Co-Chair, 2020–2022.

College Committee Work

Elected Member, The Committee on the Faculty, 2022–
Committee Chair, 2025–
Sitting Member, Executive Committee, 2018–2020, 2025–
Appointed Member, Technology Advisory Committee, 2018–2026.
Appointed Member, Study/Travel Course Committee, 2020–2023.
Elected Member, The Committee on College Life, 2016–2022.
Committee Chair, 2018–2020.

Search Committees for Administrative Positions

Chair, Search for Provost, 2026–2027.
Appointed Member, Search for Interim Provost, 2026.
Interviewer, Search for Vice President of College Advancement, 2026.

Search Committees for Faculty Positions

Committee Member, Search for Assistant Professor of English, 2022–2023.
Equity Advocate, Search for Assistant Professor of Communications, 2021–2022.
Committee Member, Search for Assistant Professor of Communications, 2017–2018.
Committee Member, Search for Assistant Professor of Asian Studies, 2016–2017.
Committee Member, Search Assistant Professor of Biology, 2015–2016.

Selected Events Organized as Director of Humanities Initiatives

“Clint Smith in Conversation,” moderated conversation with *Atlantic* writer, poet, and scholar as a part of the College’s Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration, upcoming in January 2027.
“SA Cosby in Conversation,” community book event and conversation with the bestselling author of neo-Southern crime fiction, upcoming in October 2026.
“Roscoe Burnems: Performance & Conversation,” spoken word performance from a National Slam Poetry Champion and Richmond’s inaugural Poet-laureate, March 2026; named the Outstanding Student Event for the 2025–2026 academic year.
Humanities Internship Showcase, November 2025.

Other Selected College Service

Presenter, “Notes toward an Activist Classroom,” Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Fellows Faculty Luncheon, February 2025.
Faculty Advisor, Sigma Tau Delta, International English Honor Society, Randolph-Macon College Chapter, 2017–2025.
New Faculty Mentor, 2023–2025.
Invited Speaker, with Elliott Fulmer, “Take-Offs, Landings, and Diversions: Structuring Longer Research Projects,” Faculty Scholar’s Retreat, May 2023.

Invited Speaker, "Disability, Identity, Literature," Induction Ceremony for Delta Alpha Pi Honors Society, May 2022.

Invited Speaker, "Celebrating Black Voices in Poetry," Multicultural Student Programming Board, February 2022.

Panelist, Honors Program "Lunch & Learn: Graduate School Ready," November 2019.

Presenter, Digital Pedagogy, Library "Info-to-go" Session, December 2019.

Organizer, Digital Pedagogy Workshop, February 2018.

Interviewer, Presidential Scholarship Candidates, 2015–2022.

Student-Teacher Tutorial Advisor (Secondary Education in English), 2016, 2018.

First-Year Student Advisor, 2016, 2019, 2020, 2024.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Modern Language Association (MLA)

Modernist Studies Association (MSA)

American Conference for Irish Studies (ACIS)