

# Curriculum Vitae

## Kalena Holeman

kdholema@cougarnet.uh.edu | cell: 832.212.4802 | she/her  
LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/kalena-holeman-b4850b230/>

### EDUCATION

---

**The Honors College at the University of Houston | Houston, TX** Expected May 2025  
Bachelor of Arts in English Literature with Collegiate Honors and Honors in Major  
Minors in Creative Work and Classical Studies  
Honors in Co-Curricular Engagement | Certificate Track  
GPA in Major: 4.0, Overall GPA: 3.96, Dean's List Honors all semesters

**Harvard University | Cambridge, MA** Summer 2024  
Visiting Student | Classics Scholars-in-Training Program

### RESEARCH INTERESTS

---

Black Classicism & Medievalism | Reception Theory | Postcolonial Theory | Black Feminist Criticism |  
20/21 C African American & African Diasporic Literatures | Intellectual History | Archival Studies

### RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

---

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 2024-2025 | <p><b>“In the Mecca”: The Journey Motif in 20C Black Women’s Writing</b><br/><i>Summer Research Opportunity at Harvard   Mentor: Dr. Emily Greenwood, Department of Classics and Comparative Literature</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Selected as one of 10 for the cohort of humanities researchers, where I was funded to conduct faculty-mentored research on 20th century Black womanist receptions of Dante’s <i>Commedia</i> and redefining the “journey motif,” using Gwendolyn Brooks’s <i>In the Mecca</i> (an expansion of the project I conducted with Mellon) and her digital archives at the University of Illinois.</li><li>Research will culminate in an article and chapter in Senior Honors Thesis.</li></ul>   |
| 2023-2024 | <p><b>Notes on the Journey Motif in 20th-Century Black Women’s Writing</b><br/><i>Mellon Research Scholarship   Mentor: Dr. Haylee Harrell, Department of English and African American Studies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Selected as one of 20 for the sixth cohort of underrepresented humanities researchers, where I was funded to conduct faculty-mentored research on 20th century Black womanist receptions of Dante’s <i>Commedia</i> and redefining the “journey motif,” using Gayl Jones’s <i>Corregidora</i>. I draw largely on the critical frameworks which inspired my project on Dantean receptions in Walcott and Ellison. I also critically interrogate early Black feminist criticism of the 20th century to reinterpret the concept of gender and psychological vs. sociopolitical journeying.</li><li>Receiving professional graduate school training to promote diversity in humanities programs. Program is also funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.</li></ul> |
| 2023-2024 | <p><b>Tracing Homeric Influences in Afro-Diasporic Art (Digital Humanities Project)</b><br/><i>Provost’s Undergraduate Research Scholarship   Mentors: Dr. Daniel Davies, UH Department of English, Dr. Emily Greenwood, Harvard University Department of Classics and Comparative Literature   In collaboration with Dr. Linda Garcia-Merchant, UH Digital Humanities Core Facility</i></p>   |

- Initially funded to conduct a research project and create a digital exhibit exploring the role of women in Romare Bearden's and Chris Ofili's receptions of Homer's *Odyssey*.
- Creating an Omeka-powered digital exhibition to be published through the UH Digital Humanities Core Initiative.
- Received department funding to conduct an archival research trip at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture's Bearden papers in June 2023. Continuing project as a Digital Research Assistant for the UH Digital Research Commons fall 2023.

2022-2023

**Dante's Pilgrim as a Medium for Black Experience in Ellison and Walcott**  
*FrameWorks Fellowship | Mentor: Dr. Daniel Davies, Department of English*

- Selected as one of 17 for the fourth cohort, where I was funded to conduct faculty-mentored research on Dantean receptions in the works of Ralph Ellison and Derek Walcott, drawing on Black Classicist and Black Medievalist frameworks.
- Wrote an academic article published in the 2023 issue of *Frameworks: A Journal of Undergraduate Research in the Interdisciplinary Humanities*, winner of the FrameWorks Prize for Excellence in the Interdisciplinary Humanities.

2022-2023

**The Year 1771 in Three British Cities (Digital Humanities Project)**  
*Research Assistant | PI: Dr. Dave Mazella, Department of English*

- Sole developer of the process and script for text cleaning and analysis for MacOS using OCR software, Python, and Voyant.
- Conducted digital archival research, compiled and analyzed information about the various sources in the dataset of 1k+ publications in London, Edinburgh, and Philadelphia in 1771.
- Analyzed metadata, wrote author personographies, contributed descriptions to the accompanying articles/website (including glossary definitions, data summaries, etc.).
- Posed and answered questions regarding the purpose and makeup of a novel, how that (as well as authorship) have transformed over time, the benefits of topic modeling and clumping regarding research in the digital humanities.

## HONORS, FELLOWSHIPS, & GRANTS

---

### Honors & Awards

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 2024 | <b>Phi Beta Kappa</b><br>Junior inductee into the nation's oldest and most prestigious honor society.  |
| 2024 | <b>3rd Prize in the Terry Kershaw Student Essay Contest</b><br>National Council for Black Studies; Undergraduate essay prize awarded for "Notes on the Journey Motif and its Dantean Resonances in Twentieth-Century Black Women's Writing."   |
| 2024 | <b>Alfred Hibbler Scholarship</b><br>Honors College at the University of Houston; Merit- and need-based scholarship for select members of the Honors College.  |
| 2023 | <b>Elizabeth D. Rockwell Scholarship in Leadership and Ethics</b><br>Rockwell Center on Leadership and Ethics; 1 of 6 students selected based on academic record, leadership, community involvement, commitment to ethics, and financial need. |
| 2023 | <b>FrameWorks Prize for Excellence in the Interdisciplinary Humanities</b><br>University of Houston Office of Undergraduate Research and Major Awards; Best essay prize for "Katabasis in the Black Diaspora."                                 |
| 2023 | <b>David and Jackie Gardner Scholarship</b><br>University of Houston; Merit- and need-based scholarship awarded to select members of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences.  |

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| 2023               | <b>Jimmie Katherine Morris Gentile Scholarship in Literary Criticism</b><br>University of Houston Department of English; Best essay prize awarded for “The Dantean Katabasis as a Medium for Black Experience in Ralph Ellison’s <i>Invisible Man</i> and Derek Walcott’s <i>Omeros</i> .”   |
| 2023               | <b>Robert and Jennifer Reichel Award</b><br>University of Houston; Co-winner of the award for best essay submitted in an Introduction to Literary Studies class.   |
| 2023               | <b>Phi Kappa Phi</b><br>Sophomore inductee into the nation’s oldest and most selective multidisciplinary collegiate honor society.   |
| 2023               | <b>Outstanding Student Award</b><br>University of Houston College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences; Students nominated for the award are connected with appropriate scholarships, internships, and mentoring opportunities.   |
| 2022               | <b>Sigma Tau Delta</b><br>Freshman inductee into the international English honor society.  |
| <b>Fellowships</b> |  |
| 2024               | <b>Summer Research Opportunity at Harvard</b><br>Harvard University; Selected as one of 5 for the Classics cohort of summer researchers.   |
| 2024               | <b>Classics Scholars-in-Training Program</b><br>Harvard University; The Department of the Classics offers scholarships to enable students to take courses in Ancient Greek, Latin, and/or Ancient Greek history and culture at the Harvard Summer School in summer 2024.   |
| 2023               | <b>Cooper-DuBois Mentoring Program</b><br>Pennsylvania State University; The Cooper-Du Bois Mentoring Program supports doctoral study for 16 underrepresented students across the nation studying African American literature, language, culture, and Black digital and public scholarship.  |
| 2023               | <b>Rutgers English Diversity Institute</b><br>Rutgers University Department of English; Founded by the late Professor Cheryl A. Wall, participation in this institute is competitive and offered only to 15 promising undergraduates or recent graduates who may benefit from participation in a series of intensive workshops and exploration of opportunities in graduate study. |
| 2023               | <b>Rowan Writing Internship Program</b><br>Alexandra L. Rowan Foundation & University of Houston; Accepts select applications for work with organizations that focus on editing, publishing, literary activism, literary event planning, or arts administration in Houston and beyond.   |
| 2023               | <b>Mellon Research Scholars Fellowship</b><br>University of Houston Office of Undergraduate Research & Major Awards; 1 of 20 cohort members selected to conducting a summer research project and participating in developmental academic and mentorship activities from spring of their junior year through spring of their senior year.   |
| 2023               | <b>Provost’s Undergraduate Research Scholarship</b><br>University of Houston Office of Undergraduate Research & Major Awards; awarded funding to participate in a semester-long research project under the direction of a UH faculty mentor.   |
| 2022-2023          | <b>FrameWorks Program</b><br>University of Houston Office of Undergraduate Research & Major Awards; Selected as one of 17 members of the 2022-2023 cohort to conduct a year-long humanities research project.  |
| <b>Grants</b>      |  |
| 2023               | <b>Sis and Hasty Johnson Fellowship</b><br>University of Houston Department of English; Awarded travel funding to conduct archival research at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Summer 2023.  |

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 2023 | <b>Mellon Scholars Travel Fellowship</b><br>University of Houston Office of Undergraduate Research & Major Awards; Awarded travel funding to present at Johns Hopkins University's Macksey Symposium.          |
| 2023 | <b>Research Travel Fellowship</b><br>University of Houston Office of Undergraduate Research & Major Awards; Awarded travel funding to present at Harvard University's National Collegiate Research Conference. |

## PUBLICATIONS

---

- "Katabasis in the Black Diaspora: Dante's Pilgrim in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Derek Walcott's *Omeros*." *Frameworks: A Journal of Undergraduate Research in the Interdisciplinary Humanities* 4 (2023): 55-72.
- "Blackness and the "Classics" in the Twentieth Century." Archives Exhibition in the Rice University Fondren Library, Houston, TX, August - October 2023.
- Forthcoming, Podcast Episodes (Co-contributor — interviews with local, national, and international educational equity advocates), *SPED Inspired*, *The Kaleidoscope Collaborative*.

## WRITTEN WORKS

---

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| SPRING 2024 | "Fear of a 'Race of Devils': Reading Mary Shelley's <i>Frankenstein</i> as a Critique of Colonialism"                                      |
| FALL 2023   | "Interrogating the Canon of Filipino American Literature: Reading Bulosan Through Elaine Castillo's <i>America is not the Heart</i> "      |
| SPRING 2023 | "Recovering the Women of Homer's <i>Odyssey</i> in the African Diaspora: Romare Bearden's <i>Odysseus Suite</i> "                          |
| SPRING 2023 | "Mafia Influences, the "Cool Pose," and Gangsta Rap Critiques in The Fugees's <i>The Score</i> "   |
| FALL 2022   | "Emma Donoghue's <i>Room</i> , Kiley Reid's <i>Such a Fun Age</i> , and the Age of Institutional Surveillance"                             |
| FALL 2022   | "Where Does the Future of Literary Studies Lie? A Case for Increased Accessibility in the Dissemination of Antiracist Academic Research"   |
| SPRING 2022 | "A New Historicist Reading: The Persian War, Aeschylus's <i>Persae</i> , and the Dichotomy of East v. West"                                |
| SPRING 2022 | "The Dantean <i>Katabasis</i> as a Medium for Black Experience in Ralph Ellison's <i>Invisible Man</i> and Derek Walcott's <i>Omeros</i> " |
| FALL 2021   | " <i>The Rover</i> : Aphra Behn as a Product of Her Time"  |
| FALL 2021   | "The Removal of a Name and Its Impact on Identity in Atwood's <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> and Ellison's <i>Invisible Man</i> "              |

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

---

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| SPRING 2024 | <b>59th International Congress on Medieval Studies</b><br>Academic Paper Presentation   Kalamazoo, MI<br><i>Forthcoming, Katabasis in the Black Diaspora: Dante's Pilgrim in Ellison and Walcott</i>                                   |
| SPRING 2024 | <b>19th Annual University of Houston's Undergraduate Research Day</b><br>Academic Poster Presentation   Houston, TX<br><i>Forthcoming, Notes on the Journey Motif and its Dantean Resonances in Gayl Jones's Corregidora</i>           |
| SPRING 2024 | <b>20th Annual Yale Bouchet Conference on Diversity and Graduate Education</b><br>Academic Paper Presentation   New Haven, CT<br><i>Forthcoming, Notes on the Journey Motif and its Dantean Resonances in Gayl Jones's Corregidora</i> |

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| SPRING 2024 | <b>48th Annual National Council for Black Studies Conference</b><br>Invited to Present (Kershaw Award Winner)   San Jose, CA<br><i>Forthcoming, Notes on the Journey Motif and its Dantean Resonances in Gayl Jones's Corregidora</i>   |
| SPRING 2024 | <b>University of Houston's College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences Undergraduate Research Showcase</b><br>Academic Poster Presentation   Houston, TX<br><i>Notes on the Journey Motif and its Dantean Resonances in Gayl Jones's Corregidora</i>                              |
| SPRING 2023 | <b>4th Annual FrameWorks Symposium</b><br>Paper Presentation and Panel Discussant   Houston, TX<br><i>Reframing Dante's Pilgrim in the Black Diaspora: Literary Inheritance in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man and Derek Walcott's Omeros</i>                                       |
| SPRING 2023 | <b>Richard Macksey National Undergraduate Humanities Research Symposium</b><br>Oral Presentation and Panel Discussant   Baltimore, MD<br><i>Reframing Dante's Pilgrim in the Black Diaspora: Literary Inheritance in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man and Derek Walcott's Omeros</i> |
| SPRING 2023 | <b>Capitol of Texas Undergraduate Research Conference</b><br>Oral Presentation   Austin, TX<br><i>Reframing Dante's Pilgrim in the Black Diaspora: Literary Inheritance in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man and Derek Walcott's Omeros</i>   |
| SPRING 2023 | <b>National Collegiate Research Conference</b><br>Academic Poster Presentation   Cambridge, MA<br><i>Reframing Dante's Pilgrim in the Black Diaspora: Literary Inheritance in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man and Derek Walcott's Omeros</i>  |

## SELECT LEADERSHIP & WORK EXPERIENCE

---

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| 2023 - Present | <b>Undergraduate Advisor</b>   Office of Undergraduate Research & Major Awards, University of Houston <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advising interested undergraduates about OURMA's research program offerings and national fellowships opportunities.</li> <li>• Communication, programming, and recruitment with current and future Mellon Scholars cohorts (20 students each) and REACH cohorts (17 students each).</li> <li>• Acting as peer mentor and student admin for the FrameWorks Program (including leading and assisting informational and writing-focused workshops of 15 students).</li> <li>• Application and file management for various research programs.</li> <li>• Supporting office efforts in the annual Undergraduate Research Day (poster organization, logistics, etc.).</li> </ul> |
| 2023 - Present | <b>Digital Research Specialist</b>   Digital Humanities Core Facility, University of Houston <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting the 1771 Project by refining the Python script used to clean OCR-scanned texts, lowering the code's error rate to move the project to the next stage.</li> <li>• Acting as the main point of contact between the 1771 Project, the Digital Research Commons, and data scientists at the Hewlett-Packard Enterprise Data Science Institute in "micro-salon" brainstorming workshops.</li> <li>• Advising faculty and student stakeholders about digital humanities projects and research methods; researching various DH softwares and their potential campus use.</li> <li>• Completing an individual Omeka-based digital humanities project.</li> </ul>                 |
| 2023           | <b>Archives Intern</b>   Woodson Research Center, Rice University Fondren Library <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Processed a donation to the Dr. Alan Grob academic career papers.</li> </ul>   |

- Curated an exhibition about America's changing perspectives of the Western literary canon, diversity, and Blackness in the 20th-century using the General and Mrs. Maurice Hirsch Limited Editions Club Collection.
- Assisted with public-facing Center workshops.

2023 **Oral History Intern** | African American History Research Center, Houston Public Library

- Worked with the Center's Oral History Archivist to research local civil rights activists chosen for interviews; assisted the production of oral history interviews.
- Shadowed the Center's Processing Archivist.
- Organized and created metadata for the library's digital collections.
- Transcribed interviews post-production using Sonix.

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

---

SPRING 2024 **Digital Humanities Undergraduate Micro-Credential Program** | Teaching Assistant

2023-2024 **FrameWorks Program** | Peer Mentor & Workshop Teaching Assistant

## UNIVERSITY SERVICE & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

---

### Ongoing

2022 - Present **English Undergraduate Association**  
'23-'24 Treasurer & Faculty Liaison, Spring '23 Interim President — University of Houston

2023 - Present **"Black Feminist Theory Now" Reading Group**  
Co-Organizer and Student Developer — University of Houston

2024 **"Ethical Leadership in the Digital Age" Panel at the Elizabeth Rockwell Center**  
Forthcoming, Co-organizer — University of Houston

2024 **Boldface Writer's Conference**  
Forthcoming, Co-organizer — Houston, TX

2023 - Present **Glass Mountain Magazine Reading Events**  
Emcee — University of Houston

2023 - Present **"Faculty Favorites" English Department Reading Events**  
Co-organizer — University of Houston

2022 - Present **Glass Mountain Undergraduate Literary Magazine**  
'23-'24 Web Editor, Associate Prose Editor — University of Houston

2022 - Present **Sigma Tau Delta**  
'23-'24 Epsilon Phi Chapter Vice President — University of Houston

### Past

2023 **"Graduate School in English Studies: Where to Begin" English Department Panel**  
Co-organizer and Sole Undergraduate Developer — University of Houston

2022 - 2023 **The Kaleidoscope Collaborative (Educational Equity Non-Profit)**  
Creative Director (Media and Publishing) — Houston, TX

2022 - 2023 **Defunkt Literary Magazine**  
Prose Intern & Reader — Houston, TX

2022 - 2023 **The Readers of the Rye (Campus Book Club)**  
Treasurer — University of Houston

## RECOGNITION

---

Forthcoming testimonial featured in the 2024 University of Houston Undergraduate Research Day Program Booklet. The Honors College at the University of Houston, April 2024.

Forthcoming feature in the University of Houston Scholars Walk. University of Houston, April 2024.

Interview featured on the FrameWorks Program webpage. The Honors College at the University of Houston, March 2024.

“CLASS undergraduate Kalena Holeman creatively researches across eastern U.S.” Press Release, University of Houston College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, August 2023.

“Undergraduate Kalena Holeman Reimagines Dantean Katabasis at Harvard University.” *FORWARD: Newsletter of the University of Houston Department of English*, Spring 2023 issue.

## RELEVANT COURSEWORK

---

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| SPRING 2024 | <b>Honors 4391:</b> Modernity Revisited<br><i>Topics Studied:</i> Classical Greek Literature and Roman Literature, 21 <sup>st</sup> C Classical Receptions   |
| SPRING 2024 | <b>Classics 3307:</b> Greek and Roman Myths of Heroes<br><i>Topics Studied:</i> Heroic Conceptions in Greek and Roman Myth; Classical Reception  |
| FALL 2023   | <b>Italian 4308:</b> Dante’s Legacy<br><i>Topics Studied:</i> Dante, Dantean Reception, Medieval Studies, Medievalism  |
| SPRING 2023 | <b>English 4396:</b> Senior Seminar   War & Representation<br><i>Topics Studied:</i> War Literature, Cultural Identity, Ethics, Classical and Medieval Reception   |
| SPRING 2023 | <b>Honors 3397:</b> Selected Topics   Research & Writing in the Humanities<br><i>Topics Studied:</i> Humanities Research Methods and Career Paths, Humanities Academic Writing   |
| FALL 2022   | <b>English 3322:</b> Contemporary Novel   21st Century Transnational Novel<br><i>Topics Studied:</i> Foucault, Transnational Literature, Cultural Identity   |
| SPRING 2022 | <b>English 3301:</b> Intro to Literary Studies   The Fates & the Furies<br><i>Topics Studied:</i> Classical Reception, Cultural Identity, New Criticism, Structuralism, Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, Feminism, Queer Studies, Marxism, Historicism and Cultural Studies, Postcolonial and Race Studies, Reader Response |
| SPRING 2022 | <b>Classics 4305:</b> Fifth-Century Athens   Readings in Intellectual, Political, & Literary History<br><i>Topics Studied:</i> Aristotle, Plato, Thucydides, Aristophanes, Sophocles, Aeschylus, Classical Greek History, Comedy, and Tragedy  |

## TECHNICAL SKILLS

---

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Languages</b>      | Intermediate: Japanese, Korean<br>Research (Reading) Proficiency: Italian, Spanish<br>Basic: French, Tagalog                                   |
| <b>Softwares</b>      | Zotero, Omeka, Figma, Submittable, Adobe Suites, WordPress, Squarespace, Canva, Python, HTML, Jupyter Notebook, OCR Softwares, Sonix           |
| <b>Certifications</b> | Humanities Responsible Conduct of Research, CITI Program   May 2023-May 2027<br>Adobe Certified Associate (ACA), Certiport   Feb 2019-Feb 2022 |