

Department of English and Comparative Literature
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Phillip R. Polefrone

Education

Columbia University

PhD Candidate, English and Comparative Literature, 2013–Present (expected August 2020).

Dissertation: “Human/Nature: American Literary Naturalism and the Anthropocene”

Committee: Bruce Robbins (Chair), Jennifer Wenzel, T. Austin Graham

MPhil, English and Comparative Literature, 2016.

MA, English and Comparative Literature, 2014.

Certificate, Columbia Publishing Course, School of Journalism, 2012.

New York University

BA, English and American Literature, 2012. *Magna Cum Laude*.

Articles and Chapters

Published and
Forthcoming

“The Stock Ticker in the Garden: *The Octopus*, American Literary Naturalism, and Capitalocene Aesthetics,” forthcoming in *American Literature* 92, no. 3 (Sept. 2020): 485-511.

“Gilman’s Garden: *Herland*’s Economics of a Good Anthropocene.” (Forthcoming from *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*.)

“Ecology Without Us: Ecological Succession and History in *Earth Abides*,” in *Extrapolation* 59, no. 3 (2018): 244-280. [\(link\)](#)

“Critical Computing in the Humanities,” with Dennis Tenen and John Simpson, in *Doing Digital Humanities* (London: Routledge, 2016). [\(link\)](#)

Reviews and Public Criticism

2018 “Rewriting Finance’s Fiction,” *Politics Slash Letters Quarterly* (May 28, 2018). [\(link\)](#)

2017 “The Importance of the ‘Steady State,’” *Politics Slash Letters Live* (Dec. 2017). [\(link\)](#)

“Rising Tides, Rising Profits,” *Public Books* (June 28, 2017). [\(link\)](#)

2016 “Regreening Technology: Gestures Beyond Prometheanism in Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Mars Trilogy*,” *Politics Slash Letters Quarterly* (June 27, 2016).

Fiction and Media

- 2020 *Alethea* (Co-writer). Audio drama podcast under development with Audible as an Audible Original.

Grants and Awards

- 2018 Teaching Scholars Fellowship for course “Speculative Fiction and the Environment in 20th-Century America.”
- Departmental Travel Award to attend 29th Annual American Literature Association Conference.
- 2017 Departmental Archival Research Travel Award for research on the Jack London Papers at the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.
- 2016 Digital Centers Internship, award to develop “Semi-Automated Literary Mapping” platform.
- 2015 SIPA and Carnegie Corporation of New York Grant for Doctoral Student Research on Internet Policy for “Semantic Analysis of One Million #GamerGate Tweets: Fighting Hatespeech with Natural Language Processing.”
- 2014 *Robert John Bennett Memorial Award* for best Masters Essay on a comparative or interdisciplinary topic.

Conference Papers, Lectures, and Presentations

- June 2019 “A Hitchhiker’s Guide to Gaian Spaceships,” ASLE, University of California, Davis.
- August 2018 “*Herland* (1915), *Earth Abides* (1949), *New York 2140* (2017): Literature, Architecture, and Ecology,” The Cooper Union’s Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture, New York.
- May 2018 “Ecological and Historical Succession in *Earth Abides*,” American Literature Association Conference 2018, San Francisco. Part of the “Future Earths” panel hosted by ASLE.
- March 2018 “Wasteland as Countercultural Space in John McPhee’s *The Pine Barrens*,” Columbia University, New York. Guest lecture in “Literature of the 1960s.”
- May 2017 “Gilman’s Garden: *Herland* and the Anthropocene,” American Literature Association Conference 2017, Boston.
- April 2017 “Location Extraction and Georeferencing with Python and QGIS,” Columbia University, New York. Part of *The Art of Data Visualization* workshop series.

February 2017 “Semi-Automated Literary Mapping,” Columbia University, Department of Latin American and Iberian Cultures PhD Program.

Teaching

Fall 2019 – Contemporary Civilization: Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West (instructor of record)
Spring 2020

The second year of Columbia’s Core Curriculum, Contemporary Civilization introduces students to a range of major texts in political, social, moral, and religious theory and philosophy, from Plato to Hannah Arendt.

Spring 2019 “University Writing: Contemporary Essays,” Columbia University (instructor of record).

A first-year composition course featuring readings by major contemporary essayists. Students wrote four essays, from an op-ed to a full research essay, and discussed readings by Zadie Smith, Jamaica Kincaid, William Cronon, and others.

Fall 2018 “Speculative Fiction and the Environment in 20th-Century America,” Columbia University (instructor of record).

A seminar tracing the history of ideas in ecology and environmentalism across the 20th century alongside the works of speculative fiction that adopted, adapted, and challenged them. Readings range from Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* to Ursula Le Guin’s *The Lathe of Heaven* to Octavia Butler’s *Dawn*, and from primary scientific documents like Frederic Clements’s *Plant Succession* to Donna Haraway’s *Staying with the Trouble*.

Spring 2018 – Architecture Writing Fellow, Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture of The Cooper Union.
Spring 2019

A series of workshops and individual tutoring sessions to improve written and verbal communication across the Architecture School, from the first-year studio to the Masters program.

Spring 2016 – Writing Associate, Cooper Union Writing Center.
Present

Writing Associates are paired with ongoing students for weekly writing sessions, teaching academic writing and research while mentoring a diverse range of students.

Fall 2015 – “University Writing: Readings in Sustainable Development,” Columbia University, University
Spring 2017 Writing Program (instructor of record).

A first-year composition course with a theme in “sustainable development,” broadly conceived; students read work from Aldo Leopold’s “The Land Ethic” to Jamaica Kincaid’s “To Name is to Possess” to William Cronon’s “The Trouble with Wilderness,” writing analytic essays and researched reviews in response.

Spring 2015 Teaching Assistant, “Computing in Context,” Columbia University, Computer Science and English

An introduction to digital humanities and programming in Python, conducted in two weekly sections that taught the basics of Python programming through exercises in computational literary analysis and stylistics.

Fall 2014 Teaching Assistant, "History of English," Columbia University, English and Comparative Literature

A survey in the history of the English language; graded exams, prepared lecture materials, and hosted review sessions.

University Service and Affiliations

2016-2018 Co-Organizer, 20/21 American Literature Colloquium, Department of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University

Managed schedule, communications, and announcements for a colloquium attended by faculty and graduate students; events ranged from workshops to invited speakers.

2014-2016 Representative, Graduate Student Council, Department of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University

Acted as a representative for the graduate student body of the English department, hosting social events, visits for accepted students, and advocating for student programs such as departmental travel funding to attend archives.

2014-2016 Core Team Member, Group for Experimental Methods in the Humanities

Helped develop the ethos, practices, and website for an interdisciplinary consortium of digital humanists.

Digital Projects

Framework for Semi-Automated Literary Mapping, 2016-2017. Columbia University Digital Centers Intern Program.

LitCity, January 2016. CODEX Hackathon at MIT.

RogefTools, Summer 2014. Columbia University.

Sortes Vergilianae/Pynchoniana Twitter Bot, 2015.

Languages and Skills

Spanish (reading)

Latin (rudimentary reading)

Python (programming language; proficiency) HTML/CSS (markup languages; proficiency)

QGIS and ArcGIS Mapping Programs