



Don Holmes

Assistant Professor of English
Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences
Department of English

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EDUCATION

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC)

2021

Doctor of Philosophy—English

Dissertation: “Black Diplomatic Rhetoric: Literacy, Personhood, and Citizenship in Eighteenth-Century Black America”

Advisers: Jordynn Jack, Professor; Candace Epps-Robertson, Assistant Professor

Ph.D. Committee: Dan Anderson, Professor; GerShun Avilez, Associate Professor (UM-College Park, English); Tanya Shields, Associate Professor (Women and Gender Studies, UNC)

University of Southern Mississippi (USM)

2014

Bachelor of Arts-*Magna Cum Laude*—English

Minors: Black Studies and American History

Honors Thesis: “‘My Freedom is a Privilege Which Nothing Else Can Equal’: The Life and Writings of Venture Smith and Phillis Wheatley, American Slaves”

Adviser: Sherita L. Johnson, Associate Professor/Center for Black Studies, Director

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

University of Pittsburgh (Pitt)

2023 to present Assistant Professor of English

Department of English

Carnegie Mellon University (CMU)

2021-2023 Lecturer of English, Writing and Communication Program

Department of English, Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences

RESEARCH AND TEACHING AREAS

African American Rhetoric, African American Literature, American Literature, Rhetoric and Composition,
African American Cultural History, African American Intellectual History

PUBLICATIONS

Writing in Progress

Holmes, Don, “**For Freedom’s Cause: African American Rhetoric of Responsibility and Spirituality in Early America,**” Book Project

Holmes, Don, and Kevin Pyon, co-editors, Special Issue, “**Reconceptualizing Religion in Early African American Literature** for *Early American Studies*

Forthcoming Writing

- 2026** Holmes Don, “**In the Spirit of Free Men**”: African American Collective Spirituality in the Early National Period (accepted; article, *Early American Studies*, Don Holmes and Kevin Pyon, editors)
- 2026** Holmes, Don. “**American Revolution**” (edited book chapter, *Phillis Wheatley Peters in Context* (Cambridge University Press, Wendy Roberts and April Langley, editors))

Peer-Reviewed Writing

- 2026** Holmes, Don (2025) “**Teaching Phillis Wheatley Peters’s Morals on Words and Actions in American Literature to 1860,**” *ABO: Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts, 1640-1830*: Vol. 15: Iss. 2, Article 13, <http://doi.org/10.5038/2157-7129.15.2.1467>
- 2022** Holmes, Don. “**Provocation: Diplomatic Negotiations in Phillis Wheatley's Ambassadorial "On Being Brought from Africa to America."** *Early American Literature*, vol. 57 no. 3, 2022, p. 687-699. *Project MUSE*, [doi:10.1353/eal.2022.0064](https://doi.org/10.1353/eal.2022.0064).
- 2021** Holmes, Don. A “**charitable institution**”: University of North Carolina in the Era of the Civil War” in *Persistence through Peril: Episodes of College Life and Academic Endurance in the Civil War South*. Ronald Eric Platt and Holly Foster, General Editors. University Press of Mississippi, Spring 2021

Book Reviews

- 2025** Holmes, Don. **Review of *The Life and Times of Hannah Crafts: The True Story of The Bondswoman’s Narrative***, by Greg Hecimovich, *Resources for American Literary Studies*
- 2019** Holmes, Don. **Review of *Passing***, by Nella Larsen, Editor Daryl Pickney and Illustrations by Maggie Little, *Carolina Quarterly* <https://thecarolinaquarterly.com/2019/02/passing-a-review/>
- 2018** Holmes, Don. **Review of *The Souls of Black Folks***, by W.E.B. Du Bois, Editors Vann R. Newkirk and Steve Prince, *Carolina Quarterly* <https://thecarolinaquarterly.com/2018/01/the-souls-of-black-folk-a-review/>

Public-Facing Writing

- 2025** Holmes, Don. “[Phillis Wheatley](#)” Encyclopedia Entry, The George Washington Presidential Library at Mt. Vernon, July 2025.
- 2020** Holmes, Don. “[The Lasting Fruits of Randall Kenan’s South: A Memorial Reflection](#).” In “A Gathering of Friends” with Dr. Andrew Belton, Dr. James Cobb, Dr. Jameela F. Dallis, Dr. Gale Greenlee, and Dr. El-Tariq Roberson. *Southern Cultures Literary Magazine*. November 12, 2020.
- Holmes, Don. “[To Iraq and Back: A Veteran’s Writing Journey](#).” How I Write and Learn Blog Series. UNC Writing Center. August 20, 2020.
- Holmes, Don. “[I Like to Hear My Own Work](#).” How I Write and Learn Blog Series. UNC Writing Center. April 14, 2020.

- 2019 Holmes, Don. "[What is Masculinity Without Senseless Domination?](#)" *The Commons Crit. Indy Week*. May 30, 2019.
- Holmes, Don. "[Black Masculinity Reconsidered Through Movement in "Nu Mas\(k\)ulinites."](#)" *The Commons Crit. Indy Week*. May 30, 2019.
- Holmes, Don. "[A Ritual Deconstruction of Toxic Masculinity Takes Shape in Silence.](#)" *The Commons Crit. Indy Week*, May 23, 2019.
- 2018 Holmes, Don. "[Silent Sam: Geographic Marker of Violence, Politics, and the Racialized.](#)" *Lift Institute*, September 6, 2018.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND TALKS

Invited Talks and Conference Presentations

- 2027 **Phillis Wheatley Peters in Context—American Revolution**, (proposed roundtable), Society for Early Americanists Conferences, Phillis Wheatley Peters in Context, Chicago, IL, March 2027
- 2026 **"From Whence the Spirit Came": Tracing the Spiritual in Sandy Jenkins' Root in African American Memoirs of the Antebellum,"** C19: The Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists Annual Conference, Panel: (Re)turning to the Hold: Early Black Study, Methods, and Culture, Cincinnati, Ohio, March 2026
- 2025 **George Mason University, Invited Talk on Rhetorical Presences in Colonial Virginia**, October 2025
- 2025 Modern Language Association Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA, Roundtable on Teaching Wheatley, New Orleans, Louisiana, January 2025
- 2024 **"The Winning Rhetoric of Elizabeth Key Grinstead,"** Modern Language Association Conference, Panel: Reading #BlackJoy Before 1800, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, January 2024
- 2023 **"Diplomatic Negotiations in Phillis Wheatley's "On Being Brought from AFRICA to AMERICA,"** Modern Language Association Conference, Roundtable on Phillis Wheatley-Peters, San Francisco, California, January 2023
- 2023 **"Decidedly Other": Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* and Benjamin Banneker's Constitutive Rhetoric in the Early Republic,"** Society for Early Americanists Conference, Milestones in Black Studies Panel Stream, Baltimore, Maryland, June 2023

Submitted Conference Presentations

- 2026 **"In the Spirit of Free Men": African American Collective Spirituality in the Early National Period,** Rhetoric Society of America Annual Conference, Individual Paper Submission, Portland, Oregon, May 2026
- 2024 **"Writing for the Black Collective as Rhetorical Practice in the January 1st "Thanksgiving Sermons,"** Modern Language Association, Panel: Reconceptualizing Religion in Early African American Literature, Presidential Theme: [Celebration: Joy and Sorrow](#), Panel Chair with Dr. Kevin Pyon (Pennsylvania State University), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, January 2024
- 2019 **"Lyrical Autobiography in Phillis Wheatley's 'On Being Brought from Africa to America,'"** Association for the Study of African American Life and History Annual Conference, Charleston, South Carolina, October 2019

- “Identity (in) Place: Defining Generations in the Morales’ “Ending Poem,”** The UNC Latina/o Studies Program, Spring 2019 Graduate Symposium, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, April 2019
- 2018** **“a clever fellow”:** **The Subversive Trickster in *The Narrative of Lunsford Lane*,** South Atlantic MLA Conference, *NCLR* Presents African American Writers of North Carolina I, 18th-20th Centuries, Birmingham, Alabama, November 2018
- “Phillis Wheatley’s Black Religious Rhetoric through Discursive Spaces,”** *International Festival of Authors*, Humber College’s School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Toronto, Canada, October 2018
- 2017** **“Becoming Dispossessed in Phillis Wheatley’s ‘On Being Brought From Africa to America,’”** South Atlantic MLA Conference, Re-Thinking Generic Boundaries in African American Literature, Atlanta, Georgia, November 2017
- “Exposing the Black Man’s Burden in Alice Walker’s *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*,”** Northeast MLA Conference, New Directions in Trauma Studies (Seminar), Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, March 2017
- 2016** **“Somewhere Between Slavery and Freedom’: #Blacklivesmatter, George Moses Horton, Toni Morrison, and the 21st Century’s Struggle for Racial Equity,”** Race in the Americas Conference, The Pennsylvania State University, State College, Pennsylvania, April 2016
- 2014** **“My Freedom is a Privilege Which Nothing Else Can Equal:’ The Life and Writings of Venture Smith and Phillis Wheatley,”** Undergraduate Symposium on Research and Creative Activity, The University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, April 2014; Winner – Donald Drapeau Undergraduate Research Prize. First Place - Best Work on a Topic in Race/Ethnicity
- “Practical: Civic Engagement for High School and College Students,”** The Freedom Summer 1964 - 2014 Conference, The University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, June 2014

Discussions, Podcasts, Guest Lectures, and Classroom Visits

- 2025** **BLK LIT: A Guide to Our Stories,** [Reimagining Phillis Wheatley, Let’s Discuss](#), March 4, 2025
BLK LIT Podcast, Jacquees Thomas, host
- 2025** **BLK LIT: A Guide to Our Stories,** [Phillis Wheatley—The Letters](#), April 8, 2025, BLK LIT Podcast,
Jacquees Thomas, host
- 2025** **Guest Lecture in Early African American Literature,** Stefan A. Wheelock’s African American Literature Class, George Mason University
- 2024** **Guest Lecture in Introduction to the MFA and Writing Life,** Diana Khoi Nguyen, University of Pittsburgh
- 2024** **Your Bookstore Besties Interview with Dr. Don Holmes,** Your Bookstore Besties, Season 2, Episode 17, Becky Wierschen (Host), February 2024
- 2023** **Streamlining Resources and Lesson Plans In First Year Writing,** The Teaching Table, Writing and Communication Program, Carnegie Mellon University, April 2023
- 2023** **Your Bookstore Besties Interview with Dr. Don Holmes,** Your Bookstore Besties, Season 1, Episode 17, Becky Wierschen (Host), February 2023

- 2023** **The Black Writing Record *In* the World: From Salem’s Witches to Douglass’s Daguerreotypes**, Guest Lecture for Dr. Ezelle Sanford III “Introduction to African American History: Black Americans and the World” Seminar, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA, January 2023
- 2021** **America’s Failed Promises and Hopes in the “first fruits of peace,”** Saints Memorial Community Church, Philadelphia, PA, February 2021
- 2020** **What Do Writers Get Wrong About Black Folks?** Scuppernon Independent Book Sellers with Dr. Gale Greenlee and Dr. Jameela Dallis, *Remote* in North Carolina, October 2020
Loving the Black Mind: Black Thoughts on Scholarship, Literature, and Readings, Saints Memorial Community Church, Philadelphia, PA, February 2020
- 2019** **Discussion about Veterans’ Writing Groups and Statuses in American Life**, The Center for Human Science, UNC Chapel Hill, September 2019
Bring Forth New Life with Don Holmes, The First-Gen Lounge Podcast, Session 46, Dr. Evingerlean D.B. Hudson (Host), January 2019
- 2017** **Workshop on Confederate Symbols and Pedagogy Panel**, UNC Chapel Hill, Center for the Study of the American South, October 2017
Passing the Torch Panel, UNC Chapel Hill, Black Graduate and Professional Student Association, September 2017
McNair Scholars Program Orientation Panel, UNC Chapel Hill, September 2017
The Realities of Graduate School: Selecting the Right Program & Preparing for the Experience, Moore Undergraduate Research Apprentice Program, UNC Chapel Hill, June 2017
McNair Scholars Summer Collaborative Panel, McNair Scholars Program, UNC Chapel Hill, June 2017
- 2016** **Effective Oral Communication Presentation**, Tar Heel Preview Day Academic Session UNC Chapel Hill, October 2016
Writing and Speaking Strategies, Medgar Evers College, CUNY, New York, New York Music History Class (Jerrick Matthews, Prof.), October 2016
- 2015** **Race and Identity in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man***
Carteret County High School, Newport, North Carolina (via Google+ Hangout)
AP Literature and Composition Class Students, April 2015
“What is Evidence”: From Wheatley to Trethewey, the Black Poets’ Powerful Pen
Project Uplift at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Presented two sections during the summer 2015

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of Pittsburgh (2023 to present)

- English 0570: American Literature (Spring 2026)
- English 0200: Composition (Spring 2026, Fall 2025)
- English 2264: Black Rhetorical History: Graduate Seminar in Rhetoric (Fall 2024)
- English 1200: American Literature to 1860 (Fall 2025, Spring 2025, Fall 2024, Spring 2024, Fall 2023)
- English 0570: Topics in Black Rhetoric: “The Word at Work” (Spring 2025, Spring 2024)

- English 0200: Seminar in Composition (Spring 2026, Fall 2025)
- English 0570: American Literature (Spring 2026)

Carnegie Mellon University (2021-2023)

- English 76-101: Interpretations and Arguments: Black Social Justice Rhetoric (Fall 2021-Spring 2023)—nine sections taught
- English 76-270: Writing for the Professions (Fall 2021-Spring 2023)—two sections taught
- English 76-106: Writing for Literature: Imagining a Black Future (Fall 2022-Spring 2023)—four sections taught

North Carolina Central University—Aspiring Eagles Academy (2017-2023)

- English 1110: Composition I—(Summers 2017-2023)—18 sections taught

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

- English 105: Rhetoric and Composition (Spring 2015 to Spring 2021)—Eleven sections taught
- English 128: Major American Authors (American Women’s Literature and the Production of Knowledge (Spring 2019)—one section taught
- English 248: Intersectionality: Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Social Justice (Spring 2018)—Two sections as Teaching Assistant
- UNC Writing Center (2015-2016); UNC Writing Center (2019-2021)
- Project Uplift, English 105: Rhetoric and Composition (Summer 2020)

Related Teaching Experience

Spring 2025 Coming Together with Courtney Welke-Mills (English 1200 + English 1150: Discussions of Phillis Wheatley (Peters) on the verge of the British Empire and the American Revolution)

Spring 2024 Coming Together with Courtney Welke-Mills (English 1200 + English 1150: Discussions of Abolitionism in the British Empire)

WRITING WORKSHOP FACILITATOR: Carolina’s Veteran Writing Workshop (Spring 2019)

ACADEMIC COORDINATOR: Duke University Talent Identification Program (Duke TIP) (Summer 2016)

GRADUATE RESEARCH CONSULTANT: Office of Undergraduate Research, UNC-CH with Dr. William Sturkey, Assistant Professor, History 089: Black Life in the Fifties (Fall 2015)

INSTRUCTOR: Duke University Talent Identification Program (Duke TIP) Choosing Sides: Debate and Speech (Summer 2015)

GRADUATE MENTORSHIP AND SERVICE

2024	Cody Helmer, PhD Student Project Committee
2024	Nicene McNeil, PhD Student Project Committee
Spring 2023	Trista Powers, Independent Study, Black Rhetorical Humanism, Carnegie Mellon University

UNDERGRADUATE MENTORSHIP AND SERVICE

Spring 2026	Maggie Breault, Undergraduate Honors Thesis, University of Pittsburgh
Fall 2024	Tessa Madonna, Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Program, University of Pittsburgh

Summer 2023	Maximillian Luer, Research Apprenticeship, SURA Program, Carnegie Mellon University
Fall 2022	Victoria Shats, Independent Study, Archival Research in Print Culture Databases, Carnegie Mellon University
Fall 2022	James, Pascale; Jiaheng Han; Dana Lau; and Willy Yeh WOVEN Student Publication mentorship, Carnegie Mellon University
Summer 2022	Victoria Shats, Research Assistantship, SURA Program, Carnegie Mellon University

ACADEMIC SERVICE

2025-2026	Member , Department of English, Composition Curriculum Committee (Pitt)
2024-2025	Member , University of Pittsburgh, Mellon Fellowship Committee
2024-2025	Member , Department of English, Graduate Admissions Committee (Pitt)
Spring 2024	Invited Judge , Department of English, Graduate Composition Awards Committee (Pitt)
2023-2024	Member , Department of English, Undergraduate Composition Awards Committee (Pitt)
2022-2023	Member , Department of English, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (CMU)
Spring 2021	Co-Facilitator , Writing Program Workshop on Teaching Social Justice in Composition (UNC)
Spring 2020	Co-Facilitator , Writing Program Workshop on Teaching Race and Politics in Composition (UNC)
Fall 2019	Co-Facilitator , Writing Program Workshop on Designing an Inclusive Course (UNC)
2019-2020	Writing Program Liaison , Department of English and Comparative Literature (UNC)
2019-2020	Writing in the Disciplines Assistant , Department of English and Comparative Literature, Writing Program (UNC)
2019-2020	Member , Department of English and Comparative Literature, Peer Mentoring Committee (UNC)
Spring 2019	Teaching Mentor , Center for Faculty Excellence, New TA Institute (UNC)
Spring 2019	Member , Department of English and Comparative Literature, <i>Tarheel Writing Guide</i> Revision Team (UNC)
Spring 2019	Member , Department of English and Comparative Literature, Teaching Institute Planning Committee (UNC)
2017-2019	Programming Coordinator , Black Graduate and Professional Student Association (UNC)
2015-2016	Deputy Attorney General for the Graduate School , Graduate and Professional Honor Court System (UNC)
2015-2016	Co-Social Chair , CoLEAGS, Department of English and Comparative Literature Graduate Student Association (UNC)
2014-2015	Attorney General's Staff Member , Graduate and Professional Honor System, UNC Chapel Hill (UNC)

PRESS FEATURES

2022	Stacy Kish, Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Carnegie Mellon University, Investigating the Life of America's First Black Poetess
2022	Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Carnegie Mellon University, Faculty Spotlight
2022	Emma Pabst, " Don Holmes Teaches Students to Find Their Own Voice ," Department of English, News and Events, Carnegie Mellon University

EXTERNAL WORK EXPERIENCE

May-June 2019 **Embedded Writer**, The Commons at Carolina Performing Arts, Commons Residency
Summer 2019 **Archival Assistant**, Dr. Jennifer Ho, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC
2018-2019 **Research Assistant**, Dr. Meta Jones, National Humanities Center, Durham, NC
2018-2019 **Affiliated Scholar for the Poetry of Phillis Wheatley**, Recited Verse, San Francisco, CA
Spring 2018 **Research Assistant**, Dr. Andrea N. Williams, National Humanities Center, Durham, NC

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

2016 Kennard-Washington Men of Distinction Awards Banquet (USM)
Keynote Speaker, Hattiesburg, MS, March 2016
2014 Remember '64 Freedom Day Re-Enactment March
Closing Address, Hattiesburg, MS, January 2014
2014 Afro American Student Organization, Celebration of Scholastic Excellence
Keynote Speaker, Hattiesburg, MS, April 2014
2013 Pike County, Mississippi Scholars Banquet
Keynote Speaker, Summit, MS, April 2013

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

2022 Educator of the Year, Black Alumni Gala, USM (Nominated)
2021 Krista Turner Memorial Award for Excellence in Teaching (\$100)
2021 ACLS Emerging Voices Fellowship, UNC Chapel Hill (Nominated)
2020 Krista Turner Memorial Award for Excellence in Teaching (\$100)
2018 Initiative for Minority Excellence (UNC) Travel Grant (\$800)
2017 Center for Faculty Excellence Graduate Student Fellowship (\$5000)
2016 Ford Foundation Pre-doctoral Fellowship (Honorable Mention)
2014 Julius Sylvester Hanner Memorial Fund Fellowship (2014-2015)
2014 Alpha Phi Alpha Scholar Scholarship Award Winner (\$2000)
2014 The University of Southern Mississippi Student Hall of Fame
2009 United States Army Commendation Medal (Operation Iraqi Freedom 09-10)

FOUNDATIONS/PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Modern Language Association
Rhetoric Society of America
Society for Early Americanists

ARMED SERVICE VETERAN STATUS

2006-2012 United States Army, Mississippi Army National Guard, Military Police Officer
Operation Iraqi Freedom, 09-10: Awarded Army Commendation Medal for Meritorious Service, et.al.