

Patrick S. Lawrence

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Professional History

Professor of English, University of South Carolina, Lancaster, Aug. 2025 to present.

Associate Professor of English, University of South Carolina, Lancaster, Aug. 2021 to July 2025.

Assistant Professor of English, University of South Carolina, Lancaster, 2016 to July 2021.

Conferred Degrees

Ph.D., University of Connecticut, English, 2016.

M.A., New York University, Humanities, 2008.

B.A., University of Southern California, Comparative Literature, 2004.

Books

Out of the Gutters: Obscenity, Censorship, and Transgression in American Comics. Collection of scholarly essays, co-edited with Jorge Santos. University of Texas Press, 2025.

Contributors include Frederick Aldama, Hillary Chute, and Andy Kunka.

Reviews:

The Journal of Popular Culture, Feb. 2026

Belphegor, vol. 12, no. 2, 2025

CHOICE, Jan. 2026 (recommended)

Obscene Gestures: Counter-Narratives of Sex and Race in the Twentieth Century. 85,000-word scholarly monograph. Fordham University Press, 2022.

Reviews:

American Literary History, vol. 36, no. 3, 2024

Scholarly Essays and Reviews

Review of *Banning Books in America*, edited by Samuel Cohen. *ALH Review*. Forthcoming.

Review of *Land of Tomorrow*, by Benjamin Mangum, and *Resisting Dialogue*, by Juan Meneses. *American Literature*. Forthcoming.

“[It’s 2025.](#)” *Inks: The Journal of the Comics Studies Society*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2025, pp. 208-212.

- “‘Wise Up, Old Hags! Th’ Weak One Is a Valuable Possession to Us’: The Economics of Artificial Scarcity and R. Crumb’s *Bible of Filth*.” In [*Out of the Gutters: Obscenity, Censorship, and Transgression in American Comics*](#). University of Texas Press, 2025.
- [Review of *Growing Up Graphic: The Comics of Children in Crisis*, by Alison Halsall](#). *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*, vol. 49, no. 1, 2024, pp. 112-15.
- “[The Erotic Fictions of Finance Capitalism in *The Bonfire of the Vanities* and *American Psycho*](#).” *American Literature*, vol. 96, no. 1, 2024, pp. 113-37.
- “Lurid and Unlimited: Interpreting Bateman’s Banality in *American Psycho*.” 5,700-word book chapter. In [*Serial Killers and Serial Spectators*](#), Brill, 2024, pp. 152-65.
- “In the Shadow of History: Post-9/11 Citational Aesthetics in Art Spiegelman’s *In the Shadow of No Towers*.” In [*Artful Breakdowns: The Comics of Art Spiegelman*](#), University Press of Mississippi, 2023, pp. 177-91.
- “Transnational Sexualities.” In [*Asian American Literature in Transition: 1965-1996*](#), Cambridge University Press, 2021, pp. 310-25.
- 2022 Choice Award from the American Library Association for “Outstanding Academic Title” (series)
- “Intake and Orientation: The Role of Initial Writing Center Consultations with Graduate Students”; lead author, with Molly Tetreault and Tom Deans. [*Re/Writing the Center: Approaches to Supporting Graduate Students in the Writing Center*](#), Utah State University Press, 2018: pp. 107-23.
- “[Rehistoricizing Differently, Differently: American Literary Globalism and Disruptions of Neo-Colonial Discourse in Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Tropic of Orange* and Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters*](#).” *Asian American Literature: Discourses and Pedagogies*, vol. 7, 2016, pp. 15-38.
- “[The ‘Vocabulary of Human Behavior’: Gesture in *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*](#).” *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, vol. 49, no. 2, 2016, pp. 35-50.
- “The Unfinished Politics of Nathaniel Mackey’s *Splay Anthem*.” [*A Sense of Regard: Essays on Poetry and Race*](#), University of Georgia Press, 2014, pp. 210-20.
- [Review of *Critiquing Postmodernism in Contemporary Discourses of Race*](#), by Sue J. Kim. *MELUS* vol. 36, no.1, 2011, pp. 229-31.
- “Refugees of a Crisis in Reference: Holocaust Memoir and the Deconstruction of Paul de Man.” *Intertext*, vol. 13, no.1-2, 2009, pp. 17-35.
- “The Morelli Method and the Conjectural Paradigm as Narrative Semiotic.” *Watermark*, vol. 2, 2008, pp. 103-16.
- “The Comedic Devices of Tragedy: Inter-Generic Dialogic in Hardy and Shakespeare.” *Ohio Valley Shakespeare Conference Selected Papers*, vol. 1, 2007, pp. 118-42.

Public Scholarship

- Bret Easton Ellis. *Gale Literary Criticism Series*. Academic advisor, 2025.
- [Op-Ed concerning Free Speech and Anti-Diversity Efforts](#). *South Carolina Daily Gazette*, 19 March 2025.
- “[The War of Words over Obscenity](#)” (short course). *Get Ready, Stay Ready: A Community Action Toolkit*, June 2023.

[“Move to Ban *The 1619* Project from SC Classrooms Will Only Harm Future Generations”](#)
(editorial). *The State* [Columbia, SC], 2 Feb. 2022.

Manuscripts under Review and in Progress

Moral State of the People. 95,000-word scholarly monograph in progress. Proposal and sample chapters undergoing peer review with Temple University Press.

“Metaphors of Empire and the First Book Banned in America: *The New English Canaan* in the New American Israel.” 11,000-word article. Undergoing peer review at *Early American Literature*.

“‘Three Million Dead Is Obscene’: Re-Interpreting Culinary Self-Pleasure in Viet Nguyen’s *The Sympathizer*.” 8,500-word article in revision.

Conference Presentations, Colloquia, and Invited Lectures

Out of the Gutters Book Talk. University of South Carolina, Columbia Humanities Collaborative, in conjunction with Comics for Cultural Impact, 2025, virtual (Zoom).

“‘Sinful Nation, a People Laden with Iniquity’: Colonization, Removal, and Moralism Nationalism in the Antebellum Period.” Society for Historians of the Early American Republic Second Book Workshop, 2025, Providence, RI.

“American Censorship and Comics’ Self-Inflicted Wounds.” Course guest lecturer, 27 Feb. 2025, Comics and Censorship, University of South Carolina, Columbia.

“Thomas Morton’s *New English Canaan* in the New American Israel.” Panel presentation, Mar. 8, 2025. “‘Banned in Boston,’ Histories of Artistic Censorship in New England,” Wellesley-Deerfield Annual Symposium.

“‘The ‘Peculiar Moral Fitness’ of Colonization and Removal in the Era of the Second Great Awakening.” Lecture, Feb. 7, 2025. USC Lancaster Faculty Forum.

“Anti-Censorship Rhetoric and Racial Justice.” Course guest lecturer, 4 Nov. 2024, Racial Justice and Media Literacy, College of the Holy Cross.

“The Calculator Metaphor: The Impacts of Artificial Intelligence in Education.” Invited panelist, 2024. Chester County Chamber of Commerce.

“Rhetorics of Ideological Neutrality in CRT-Based Challenges to Jerry Craft’s *New Kid*.” Modern Language Association Annual Convention, 2024. Philadelphia, PA.

[Freedom to Read Panel Discussion](#). Invited panelist, 2023. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Libraries.

“Obscene Gestures: Counter-Narratives of Sex and Race in the Twentieth Century.” Brent W. Burgin Lunch and Learn Series, Native American Studies Center, 2023. USC Lancaster.

“Global License, Domestic Deviance: Editorial Opportunism in a Transnational Literary Market.” American Comparative Literature Association Annual Meeting, 2023. Chicago, IL.

“Transferred Violence: Race, Labor, and Victimization in *The Bluest Eye*.” Modern Language Association Annual Convention, 2023. San Francisco, CA.

“Out of the Gutters: Obscenity, Censorship, and Transgression in American Comics.” Invited talk, Comics Studies at USC, 2022. Columbia, SC.

- “Obscene Gestures: Counter-Narratives of Sex and Race in the Twentieth Century.” Keynote lecture, Medford Library Banned Books Week, 2022. USC Lancaster.
- “Recent Developments in Academic Freedom in the State and Nation.” Lecture, 2022. USC Lancaster Faculty Forum.
- “Sexual Awakening in the Kitchen: Erotic Foodways in Viet Nguyen’s *The Sympathizer* and Philip Roth’s *Portnoy’s Complaint*.” Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the United States Annual Conference, 2022. New Orleans, LA.
- “Roots and Ramifications of 21st Century Challenges to the Freedom to Read.” Panelist and Event Co-Organizer, 2022. Winthrop University.
- “‘Wise Up, Old Hags! Th’ Weak One Is a Valuable Possession to Us’: The Economics of Artificial Scarcity and R. Crumb’s *Bible of Filth*.” Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture since 1900, 2022. Louisville, KY.
- “Comics against Culture” Invited panelist, Medford Library Graphic Novel Collection Opening, 2022. USC Lancaster.
- “Free Speech in Education and Culture.” Invited lecture, 2022. Monday Luncheon Group, Columbia, SC.
- “Obscene Gestures: Counternarratives of Sex and Race in the Twentieth Century.” Virtual Keynote Lecture, Banned Books Week Program, 2021. USC Lancaster.
- “The Boston Busing Crisis: How Racism Divides and Conquers.” Arras Foundation DEIA Summer Internship Program, 2021. Lancaster, SC.
- “Obscenity Studies.” Invited talk, Undergraduate Research Club. USC Lancaster, 2021.
- “The Sensationalism of Evil: Obscuring the Banality of *American Psycho*.” Modern Language Association Annual Conference, 2021. Toronto, ON [held virtually due to COVID-19].
- “Censorship’s Dead End: What We Lose When We Limit Speech.” Virtual Keynote Lecture, Banned Books Week Program, 2020. USC Lancaster.
- “Patently Offensive and Lacking in Serious Value: Literature, Obscenity, and Policing the Nation.” Keynote Lecture, Banned Books Week Program, 2019. USC Lancaster.
- “A Semester Long Pile of Liberal Garbage: Reflections on Teaching Race in the South.” Modern Language Association Annual Conference, 2019. Chicago, IL.
- “Obscenity and Individualism: Uses of Arousal in Contestations over National Identity.” Modern Language Association Annual Conference, 2018. New York, NY.
- “Harbors and Homes: The Birth of Legal Hierarchies and Failure of Racial Coalitions in Toni Morrison’s *A Mercy*.” Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States Annual Conference, 2017. Boston, MA.
- “The Vocabulary of Human Behavior.” Invited talk, Undergraduate Research Club. USC Lancaster, 2017.
- “Anti-Reproductivity as Critique and Revelry in Cherrie Moraga’s *Heroes and Saints* and Kathy Acker’s *Don Quixote, Which Was a Dream*.” American Studies Association Annual Meeting, 2015. Toronto, ON.

- “‘Master of the Universe’: Reagan-Era Material Excess and Sexual License in Tom Wolfe’s *The Bonfire of the Vanities*.” American Literature Association Annual Conference, 2015. Boston, MA.
- “‘*A Politic Born out of Necessity*’: Disability, Racism, and Sexuality in Cherrie Moraga’s *Heroes and Saints*.” Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States Annual Conference, 2015. Athens, GA.
- “Predatory Blindness: Coercive Specularity in Cherrie Moraga’s *Giving Up the Ghost*.” Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States Annual Conference, 2014. Oklahoma City, OK.
- “Gesture Selves: Embodied Discourse in *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*.” American Literature Association Annual Conference, 2013. Boston, MA.
- “Nixon, the State, and the Obscene: Transition on the Warren Court.” Northeast Modern Language Association Annual Convention, 2013. Boston, MA.
- “In the Shadow of History: Post-9/11 Citational Aesthetics in Art Spiegelman’s *In the Shadow of No Towers*.” American Comparative Literature Association Annual Meeting, 2012. Providence, RI.
- “Multiple Perspectives, Singular Visions: Varieties of Narrative Power in *Dogeaters* and *Tropic of Orange*.” Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States Annual Conference, 2012. San Jose, CA.
- “The Morelli Method and the Conjectural Paradigm as Narrative Semiotic.” Mid-Atlantic Popular and American Culture Association Annual Conference, 2007. Philadelphia, PA.
- “The Comedic Devices of Tragedy: Inter-Generic Dialogic in Hardy and Shakespeare.” Ohio Valley Shakespeare Conference, 2007. Akron, OH.
- “Refugees from a Crisis of Reference: Holocaust Memoir, Paul de Man, and the Differend between Them.” United Kingdom Network for Modern Fiction Studies Summer Seminar Series, 2007. London, UK.

Grants and Fellowships

- Mellon Foundation Higher Learning Program (Co-PI with Qiana Whitted). Project title: “The Banned Books Lab at the USC Humanities Collaborative” [decision pending]. Amount requested: \$500,000.
- Knight First Amendment Institute Visiting Researcher Scholars Program. Project title: “The Word that COVID Made: Free Speech in an Altered Landscape” [decision pending].
- Research Initiative for Summer Engagement Grant. U of SC, 2026. Project title: “Composing ‘Antisemitism and the New Immigrants’” Award Amount: \$4746.
- Research and Productive Scholarship Grant. USCL, 2026. Project title: “Antisemitism and the New Immigrants: Rationalist Racism Takes Its Place alongside Moralistic Nationalism.” Award amount: \$8045.
- Research and Productive Scholarship Grant. USCL, 2024. Project title: “‘A Peculiar Moral Fitness’: Moralistic Nationalism, the ACS, and Native American Removal.” Award amount: \$9223.

Excel Grant. U of SC, 2023. Project title: “Beyond Laws and Borders: American Obscenity in Transnational Contexts.” Award amount: \$11,400.

Research and Productive Scholarship Grant. USCL, 2022. Project title: “Obscenity and Comics: Exploration of Key Themes and New Perspectives.” Award amount: \$6650.

Research and Productive Scholarship Grant. USCL, 2020. Project title: “Obscene Gestures: Counter-Narratives of Sex and Race in the Twentieth Century.” Award amount: \$8821.

Research Initiative for Summer Engagement Grant. U of SC, 2019. Project title: “‘All Politics Is Local’: Counter-Narratives of Obscenity through the Lens of Community Standards.” Award amount: \$7442.

Research and Productive Scholarship Grant. USCL, 2018. Project title: “Counter-Narratives of Sex and Race in the 1970s.” Award amount: \$6159.

Editorial and Administrative Experience

Press Committee Member: University of South Carolina Press; July 2026-June 2029.

Director: USC Lancaster Academic Success Center; January 2022 to present.

Coordinator for Graduate Writing Support: University of Connecticut Writing Center; fall 2015 to spring 2016.

Managing Editor: *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*; September 2013-May 2014.

Research Assistant: *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader*, edited by Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, K. Scott Wong, and Jason Oliver Chang (Yale UP); summer 2014 and spring 2015.

Research Assistant: *Keywords for Asian American Studies*, edited by Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, Linda Trinh Võ, and K. Scott Wong (NYU Press); summer 2014.

Editorial Assistant: *MELUS: The Journal of the Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*; May 2012-June 2014.

Assistant Editor: *MELUS: The Journal of the Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*; June 2010-May 2012.

Courses Taught

Free Speech in American Literature and Culture (ENGL 285, Special Topics; University of South Carolina, Lancaster)

American Literature (ENGL 287; University of South Carolina, Lancaster)

Obscenity Controversies in American Literary History (ENGL 429, Special Topics; University of South Carolina, Lancaster)

Race in American Literature and Culture (ENGL 285; University of South Carolina, Lancaster)

Children’s Literature (ENGL 431A; University of South Carolina, Lancaster)

Ethnic Literatures of the United States (ENGL 3218; University of Connecticut)

Short Story (ENGL 2407; University of Connecticut)

Business Writing (ENGL 463; University of South Carolina, Lancaster)

Upward Bound Summer Experience English and Composition (University of Connecticut and University of South Carolina, Lancaster)

Rhetoric and Composition (ENGL 102; University of South Carolina, Lancaster)
Critical Reading and Composition (ENGL 101; University of South Carolina, Lancaster)
Writing and Literature (Three Rivers Community College)
Introduction to Academic Writing (ENGL 1004; Student Support Services)
Seminar in Writing through Literature (ENGL 1011; University of Connecticut)
Seminar in Academic Writing (ENGL 1010; University of Connecticut):
Writing for Business and Professions (ENG 303; Rutgers University)
Expository Writing (ENG 101; Rutgers University)
College Composition (Essex County College)

Service

Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities. Modern Language Association, Member 2026-present.

Delegate Assembly. Modern Language Association, Representative for Academic Freedom, 2026-present.

Advances in Teaching Program Committee. USC Lancaster, Chair 2026-present.

Free Expression and Academic Freedom Committee. USC Lancaster, Chair 2025-present.

Research and Productive Scholarship Executive Committee. USC Lancaster, Chair 2025-present; Member 2020-2025; Acting Chair 2022.

Advances in Teaching Grant Committee. USC Lancaster, Chair 2026-present; proposal writer and program creator 2026.

Standards and Procedures Working Group. Commission for Public Higher Education, Member 2025-2026.

Graduate Alumni Research Discussion and Graduate Student Mentoring. University of Connecticut English Department, invited panelist 2025.

Free-Speech Task Force. USC Lancaster, Chair 2024-2025.

Native American Studies Faculty Advisory Committee. USC Lancaster, Member 2016-2025.

Library Committee. USC Lancaster, Chair 2020-2023; Member 2019-present.

ASPIRE Grant Evaluation Committee. University of South Carolina Office of the Vice President for Research, 2023.

Ad Hoc Committee on Freedom of Expression. USC Columbia Faculty Senate, Advisory Member 2021-2022.

Staff Librarian Search Committee. USC Lancaster, Member 2021-2022.

DEIA Research Mentor. Arras Foundation, 2021.

Assistant Professor of English Search Committee. USC Lancaster, Member 2021-2022.

Assistant Librarian Search Committee. USC Lancaster, Member 2020-2021.

Town-Gown Advisory Council. USC Lancaster, 2019-2020.

Palmetto College Campuses Faculty Senate. USC Lancaster, 2017-2020.

Academic Honor Code Council. USC Lancaster, 2016-2019.

Research and Productive Scholarship Grant Evaluation Committee. USC Lancaster, 2018.

Poetry Out Loud Recitation Competition (Judge). Lancaster County School District, 2018.

Invited Speaker: Roundtable on Collegiality, English Graduate Student Association. UCONN, 2017.

Awards and Honors

Denise R. Shaw Excellence in Scholarship Award, Palmetto College Campuses, 2023.

Chris Plyler Excellence in Service Award Nominee. USCL, 2022.

Horizon Education Teaching Grant. Arras Foundation, 2018. Project title: “Creating Lasting Partnerships through Collaboration.” Award amount: \$350.

Marion L. Brittain Postdoctoral Fellowship. Georgia Institute of Technology, 2015 (declined).

Aetna Graduate Teaching Award Nominee. UCONN, 2014.

Summer Predoctoral Fellowship. UCONN, 2014.

Aetna Graduate Teaching Award Nominee. UCONN, 2013.

CLAS Dean’s Summer Research Award. UCONN, 2012.

Aetna Graduate Teaching Award Nominee. UCONN, 2010.

Hirschorn Thesis Award Nominee. NYU, 2006.

Welch Award for Outstanding Major in Comparative Literature. USC, 2004.

Membership in Professional Organizations

Comics Studies at USC Working Group

Modern Language Association

American Studies Association

American Comparative Literature Association

Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States