

# Margaret A. McGowan

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Yale University English Department  
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## Education

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Yale University, New Haven CT

Ph.D., English, Degree expected May 2023, Dissertation title, “A Natural History of the Novel: Species, Sense, Atmosphere”

M.Phil., English, May 2019

M.A., English, May 2019

Rhodes College, Memphis, TN

B.A., English, May 2014, summa sum laude and Phi Beta Kappa

## Articles

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“A Novel in Ruins: Thomas Amory’s Antiquarianism,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 34.1, Fall 2022

## Presentations

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“The Logic of the Specimen: The Aesthetic Ordering of Knowledge,” Yale University’s British Studies Colloquium, 2016

“Nature, Language, and the Hermetic Text in John Wilkins’s *Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language*,” MLA, New York City, 2018

“Cultivating Skill in William Cowper’s *The Task*,” American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, Orlando, 2018

“Genres of Thought in Thomas Amory’s *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain*,” American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, Denver, 2019

“Infinitely Small Differences’: Luke Howard, William Gilpin, and Atmospheric Effect,” Yale University English Department’s 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Colloquium, 2020

“Going Surprising with Aphra Behn,” American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, Baltimore, 2022

“Bored to Tears, or, What’s so Funny About *Tristram Shandy*?” to be presented at American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, St. Louis, 2023

## Awards and Honors

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Qualifying Exams passed with distinction, 2017

W.K. Wimsatt, Jr. Fellowship for Graduate Studies in English, 2017-2018

Beinecke Research Fellowship, summer 2018

Mellon Foundation Writing-in-Residence Dissertation Working Group, summer 2019

## Professional Service and Reviews

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Respondent, Professor Joseph Reznek, “The Lost Sermon of David Margrett (1775), Black Moses,” Yale University English Department’s Americanist Colloquium, 2017

Entries on *The History of Miss Harriot Watson*, *The Belle Widows*, and *Julia de St. Pierre* for the *Cambridge Guide to the Eighteenth-Century Novel, 1660-1820*, 2018

Respondent, Professor Heather Keenleyside, “Matter, Form, Idea: Thoughts and Things from Samuel Johnson to A. O. Lovejoy,” Yale University English Department’s 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Colloquium, 2018

Co-convenor, Yale University English Department’s 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Colloquium, 2016-2018

Review of Emily Sloan’s *The Landscape Studies of Hayman Rooke (1723-1806): Antiquarianism, Archaeology and Natural History in the Eighteenth Century*, in *Journal of British Studies*, 59.2, 2020

Member, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Colloquium, 2015-Present

Member, Yale English’s Theory and Media Studies Colloquium, 2015-Present

## Teaching Experience

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### Courses as Instructor of Record

ENGL 114: Why is Art so Boring? (Fall 2018 and Fall 2021): An undergraduate writing seminar that focuses on close-reading critical essays.

Course description: Sometimes visiting an art museum or reading a novel thrills us. Sometimes it bores us. Is boring art just bad art, or is something else at work? In this course, we will explore some contemporary art movements from the 1960’s to the present—including conceptual art, minimalism, and pop art—that seem designed to bore us. What do we make of artworks like Andy Warhol’s notorious *Empire*, for instance, an eight-hour continuous and unvarying shot of the Empire State Building? How are these artworks supposed to make us feel and what, if anything, is the good of feeling bored? In this course, we will explore the affect of boredom and how artworks ask us to engage with and think about this affect. We will consider ways of appreciating art that tests the limits of our attention, and way of evaluating art that shirks the familiar categories of the beautiful or the sublime in favor of the “merely interesting.” What might these works suggest about the fine arts in general, or about the art of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries in particular? We will encounter some critics who argue that boring art is a product of modernity and our changing relationships to labor and leisure, and others who argue for boring art’s radical political potential. As readers (and watchers and listeners), we will explore questions of artistic value and the value of boredom itself. As writers, we will consider strategies for making compelling arguments about objects that might not, initially at least, compel us.

ENGL 115: Narrating Desire (Fall 2020): An undergraduate writing seminar that focuses on close-reading literary texts.

Course description: What sparks desire, and what sustains it? What does desire do to us, and what can it do to the objects of our desire? When should we indulge desire, and when should we restrain it? Desire can make us act in strange and unaccountable ways. It can overwhelm

and consume us, or rouse us to say and do the unexpected. Sometimes desire feels life-affirming, sometimes destructive. Sometimes we struggle to communicate the source and strength of our desire to others; just as often, we struggle to understand these desires ourselves. In this course, we will read works of fiction that wrestle with this unpredictable and often unmanageable feeling. We will consider cases of misdirected, thwarted, and fulfilled desire. We will see some characters who acknowledge or enjoy their desire, and other who ignore or even fear it. And we will see that desire seems to take different forms in different historical and cultural contexts. As we discuss this feeling (or impulse, or obsession) more generally, we will also consider literature's unique capacity to describe desire in its many iterations. How do these authors use narrative techniques like plotting, point of view, or irony to make sense of a feeling that's difficult to explain? What can subtle shifts in mood or style convey about a character's desire, or about the text's or our own attitudes towards this desire? And finally, we will ask what role desire plays in our own reading habits and responses.

### Teaching Assistant Positions

“The Philosophy of Digital Media” (Professor John Durham Peters, Yale University, Fall 2017)

“Shakespeare’s Histories and Tragedies” (Professor David Kastan, Yale University, Spring 2018)

“Vampires, Castles, and Werewolves” (Professor Heather Klemann, Yale University, Spring 2019)

“The Modern French Novel” (Professors Alice Kaplan and Maurie Samuels, Yale University, Spring 2022)

“The Popular British Novel: Decadence, Degeneration, and Decline” (Professor Margaret Deli, Harvard Extension School, Fall 2022)

“World Shakespeare” (Professor David Nee, Harvard Extension School, Spring 2023)

### **Languages**

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French (reading proficiency)

Latin (intermediate reading proficiency)