

DERRICK R. SPIRES

Department of English
Vanderbilt University
2301 Vanderbilt Place
Box 1654 Station B
Nashville, TN 37235

5170 Hickory Hollow Pkw. #809
Antioch, TN 37013
615.478.9556
Email: derrick.r.spires@vanderbilt.edu
www.vanderbilt.edu/english/dspires

EDUCATION

Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN

Ph.D. English, Expected May 2012

M.A. English, August 2005 (Thesis: “‘Necessary Executions’: Heterotopic Visions of Slavery, Commerce, and Revolution in *Letters from an American Farmer*”)

Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, MS

Bachelor of Arts in English, May 2004

Dissertation

Black Theories of Citizenship in the Early U.S., 1793-1860

Committee: Teresa A. Goddu (Co-chair), Dana D. Nelson (Co-chair), Ifeoma Nwankwo, and Richard Blackett.

Studying a range of texts written between the 1780s and 1860s, *Black Theories* examines black civic discourse as central to understanding citizenship in the nineteenth-century U.S. Though early black citizenship was in constant legal flux, black writers' accounts of civic activity provide key critiques of developing civic models. They simultaneously index contemporary trajectories of U.S. citizenship and offer possibilities for what citizenship might become. By reading early U.S. citizenship through writers like Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, James McCune Smith and William “Ethiop” Wilson, periodicals including *Colored American* and the *Anglo-African Magazine*, and civic texts such as the proceedings of the black state convention, *Black Theories* reveals the print practices and aesthetic sensibilities that give form to and manage the everyday practices of citizenship while attending to how citizens go about the hard work of changing those practices.

PUBLICATIONS

“Neighborly Citizenship in Absalom Jones and Richard Allen’s *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People during the Late and Awful Calamity in Philadelphia in the Year 1793*.” In Progress.

“Imagining a Nation of Fellow Citizens: Early African American Politics of Publicity” in *Early African American Print Culture in Theory and Practice*. Eds. Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P. Forthcoming, 2012.

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave. A Penguin Enriched eBook Classic. Co-edited with Houston A. Baker, Jr. New York: Penguin, 2009.

- “Historically Black Colleges and Universities.” *A Gift of Story and Song: An Encyclopedia on Twentieth Century African American Writers*. Ed. Wilfred P. Samuels. New York: Facts on File, 2007.
- “Truth, Sojourner.” *A Gift of Story and Song: An Encyclopedia on Twentieth Century African American Writers*. Ed. Wilfred P. Samuels. New York: Facts on File, 2007.
- “Wells-Barnett, Ida B.” *A Gift of Story and Song: An Encyclopedia on Twentieth Century African American Writers*. Ed. Wilfred P. Samuels. New York: Facts on File, 2007.

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- American Studies Fellow: Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities, Vanderbilt University, 2008-2009.
- Robert M. Greenfield Fellow: Library Company of Philadelphia and Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 2008.
- Peterson Fellow: American Antiquarian Society, Kate B. & Hall J. Peterson Fund, 2008
- Robert Manson Myers Graduate Award in English: Vanderbilt University, 2008. Annually awarded to the dissertation prospectus with the most promise in the field of English studies.
- Oberlin College Archives: Frederick Binkerd Artz Research Grant, 2008.
- John M. Aden Award for Graduate Student Writing: Vanderbilt University, 2007.
- Vanderbilt University College of Arts and Sciences Summer Research Award, 2006, 2007.
- Social Science Research Council-Mellon Mays Predoctoral Research Grant, 2005, 2006, 2007.
- Ford Foundation Predoctoral Diversity Fellowship, 2004-2008.
- Mellon-Mays Undergraduate Fellowship, 2002-2004.

SELECTED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND LECTURES

- Roundtable Participant (with Carla Peterson, Zita Nunes, and Ivy Wilson). “The African American Archive and the ‘Memory Crisis.’” American Studies Association. San Antonio, TX. 18-21 November 2010.
- “Staging Citizenship in the Black State Conventions of the 1840s.” Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities Graduate Fellows Lecture Series. Vanderbilt University. 31 March 2009.
- “James McCune Smith's ‘Heads of the Colored People’ and the Politics of Representing Free Black Labor in the Antebellum U.S.” American Studies Association. Albuquerque, NM. 16-19 October 2008.
- “Appeals to the People: Defining Citizenship in the Black State Conventions of the 1840s.” Brown Bag Series. McNeil Center for Early American Studies. 24 September 2008.
- Panel Organizer: “Harmonizing Dissonance: Making Consultant/Student Differences Productive.” Southeast Writing Center Association. Nashville, TN. 10 February 2007.
- “Read Like a Victorian: Four Dimensions of Engagement in *Little Dorrit*.” Southwest Modern Language Association. Chicago, IL. November 2006.
- “Fellow Citizens and Respectable Men: Richard Allen and Absalom Jones’ Response to Matthew Carey’s ‘Short Account.’” American Literature Association. Boston, MA. May 2005.

“Patient/Doctor Communication: A Communicative Journey.” American Society for Bioethics and Humanities. Philadelphia, PA. October 2004.

WORKSHOPS and SEMINARS

- “Diversity Fellowships from the Ford Foundation, Woodrow Wilson Foundation, and Others.” Vanderbilt University Grant and Fellowship Workshop. Vanderbilt University. 28 March 2009.
- “Reconsidering the Manichean Allegory in C. L. R. James’s *Beyond a Boundary*.” Slavery, Modernity, and the Americas: Navigating the African Diaspora. Vanderbilt University. 26 February 2008.
- “Graduate School Preparation and Survival.” McNair Program. Murray State University, Kentucky. March 2006.
- “Intersections: Culture and Disease—‘Lesbians under the Medical Gaze,’ ‘The Disease of Masturbation,’ and ‘Double Lives on the Downlow.’” Tougaloo College. 29 March 2006.
- “Finding Focus in Your Writing.” Vanderbilt University Writing Studio. 21 Feb 2006.
- “Philosophical Perspectives and Principles of Bioethics.” Jackson Heart Study Undergraduate Training Center. Tougaloo College. 08 Feb 2006.
- “Applying to and Surviving Graduate School.” Tougaloo College English Department. 21 Nov 2005.

RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

American Studies
Early African American Print Culture
Early U.S. Literature and History
Twentieth Century African American Literature and Culture
Citizenship Studies and Race Theory
Literature and Religion
Science/Speculative Fiction, Literature and Science

TEACHING POSITIONS

Graduate Instructor (full instructional responsibility)

AMER 100W, Introduction to American Studies, Spring 2010

Topic: “Richard Wright: Texts and Contexts”

Course organized the life and works of Richard Wright, taking the concept of “the negro” as “America’s metaphor” as its central theme. Topics include: intersections of race, class, and gender, the Chicago School of Sociology, Marxist and psychoanalytic theory, existentialism, modernism/modernity, legacies of slavery and colonialism, vernacular culture, and configurations of African Diaspora. Texts include: Wright’s work from 1935-1953, fiction and essays by Hurston, Baldwin, Ellison, Faulkner, Crane, Drake, Dreiser, and Fanon.

ENGL 118 W, Literature and Cultural Analysis, Fall 2009

Topic: “Richard Wright: Texts and Contexts”

Course organized around the life and works of Richard Wright. Texts include poetry, short stories (*Uncle Tom's Children*), novels (from *Native Son* to *The Outsider*), and film (*Native Son*, 1951).

ENGL 102W, Literature and Analytical Thinking, Spring 2007, Fall 2006

Topic: "The Future's Past...Or...Now as I remember it." Part I-II

Course organized around how narratives of the past (histories, slave narratives, scientific accounts) and future (science/speculative fiction) help shape and challenge our understandings the present. Texts include short fiction (Octavia Butler, John Edgar Wideman, and Evie Shockley), poetry (Wheatley, Hayden, Du Bois), novels (*Ceremony*, *The Cattle Killing*, *The Man in the High Castle*, *Oryx and Crake*), and films (*Blade Runner*, *Stepford Wives*).

Teaching Assistant

ENGL 232A, Twentieth Century American Novel (Instructor: Vereen Bell), Spring 2011

Introduction to Film Studies (Instructor: Paul Young), Fall 2005

Ethics Medicine and Society (Instructor: Madhu Singh), Spring 2004 (Tougaloo College)

Vanderbilt University Writing Studio

Consultant, Spring 2006

RESEARCH/ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS

Coordinator, The Program in American Studies Sustainability Project (2011-2012)

<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/americanstudies/sustainability/index.php>.

Research Assistant. Teresa A. Goddu. Summer 2010-Spring 2012. Most recent work was on anti-slavery visual culture in the early U.S., for which I compiled primary and secondary sources.

Conference Coordinator: MSA X, 10th Annual Conference of the Modernist Studies Association. 2007- 2008. Nashville, TN.

PROFESSIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SERVICE

Organizer, Richard Wright Centennial Reading Series, Vanderbilt University, 2008-2009.

President, English Graduate Student Association. Vanderbilt University, 2007-2008.

Co-Founder and Coordinator: "Reclaiming Citizenship" Reading and Working Group, 2007-2009, Sponsored by Vanderbilt University Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities, American Studies, and the Office of Active Citizenship and Service.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

African American Literature and Culture Society

American Studies Association

C19: The Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists

Modern Language Association

REFERENCES

- Teresa Goddu. Associate Professor of English and Director of American Studies. Vanderbilt University. teresa.a.goddu@vanderbilt.edu.
- Dana Nelson. Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of English and American Studies, Joe B. Wyatt Distinguished University Professor. Vanderbilt University. dana.d.nelson@vanderbilt.edu.
- Ifeoma Nwankwo. Associate Professor of English. Vanderbilt University. i.nwankwo@Vanderbilt.Edu.
- Houston A. Baker, Jr. Distinguished University Professor. Vanderbilt University. houston.a.baker@Vanderbilt.Edu.
- Carla L. Peterson. Professor of English. University of Maryland, College Park. cpeterso@umd.edu.
- Jerry W. Ward, Jr. Distinguished Professor of English and African American World Studies, Dillard University. jerry.ward31@hotmail.com.