

KEVIN STERLING SEIDEL

curriculum vitae

Eastern Mennonite University | 1200 Park Road | Harrisonburg, VA 22802 | 540-432-4570 | kevin.seidel@emu.edu

FACULTY POSITIONS

Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia

Professor of Literature in English	9/21–present
Associate Professor of English Language and Literature	9/16–8/21
Assistant Professor of English Language and Literature	9/08–8/16

EDUCATION

University of Virginia

Ph.D. in English Language and Literature	5/07
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Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia

M.A. in interdisciplinary Christian studies	5/00
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University of California, Berkeley

B.A. in English Literature	5/92
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PRIMARY INTERESTS

History of the novel / early global literature / ecology and speculative fiction

Religion and secularism / the Bible and literature / contemporary poetry

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Eastern Mennonite University, Department of Language and Literature

Ecology and Science Fiction

Some short stories, theology, environmental writing, history of technology, and fiction by Philip K. Dick, Ursula K. Le Guin, Octavia Butler, and Kim Stanley Robinson. FA24, FA23, FA22, FA21, FA20, FA19, FA17, FA16, FA15, FA14, FA12

Global Conflicts, Global Novels

How novel reading might make you a better peacebuilder, with readings on restorative justice, conflict transformation, trauma theory, globalization, and, in the most recent class, novels by Laila Lalami, Toni Morrison, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Yiyun Li, and David Mitchell. SP 23, SP20, SP18, SP16, SP14

Global Literatures 1 and 2

On living freely related to your past with Indigenous creation stories, *Genesis*, *Gilgamesh*, *The Odyssey*, *The Ramayana*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *The Arabian Nights*, and *Paradise Lost*. FA23, SP22, SP20, FA17, FA16, FA15, FA14, FA13, FA12, FA10, FA09, FA08

Global Literatures 3 and 4

On freedom and community with Phillis Wheatley, Olaudah Equiano, Jane Austen, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Ella Deloria, Lorraine Hansberry, and Mariama Bâ. SP 23, SP 22, FA21

Reading Poetry/Intro to Poetry/Major Poets

Contemporary poetry, form, and emotion. SP 25, SP22, FA20, FA19

Foundations of the Humanities

Close-reading, research, and storytelling class for lit, history, and visual and communication arts majors (co-taught). FA23, FA22, FA21, FA20, FA19

Seminar in the Humanities

Capstone thesis class for lit, history, and Bible and religion majors (co-taught). SP24, SP 23, SP22, SP21, SP20

Senior Seminar: Navigating Digital Seas

How algorithms shape our lives (co-taught). SU 25, SP24, SU23, SP23, SU22, SP22, SU, SU20, SP20

College Writing

A research and argumentative writing class for first-year students. FA 22, FA21, FA19, FA16, SP17, FA15, SP16, FA14, SP14, FA13, SP13, FA12, SP12, FA11, SP11, FA10, SP10, FA09, SP09, FA08

Communication Foundation

A speech and presentation class for first-year students. SP 25

Old courses at EMU

Imagining the Future after COVID-19

A one-evening-a-week-for-7-weeks online course offered free to EMU students and larger Harrisonburg community and beyond (co-organizer). 15 EMU faculty and 11 staff and student small-group leaders contributed to the leadership of the course. Weekly attendance ranged from 125 to 180 people. SU20

Intro to Literary Theory

SP18, SP14, SP13, SP12, SP11, FA09, SP09

Intro to the Novel/History of the Novel

SP20

Senior Seminar: Faith, Sexuality, and Vocation

FA18, FA17, FA16, FA15

Honors Colloquium on David Foster Wallace

SP17

Romanticism

SP16, SP13

Good Secular Novels

Emma to White Noise. SP12, SP10

Literature Around the Atlantic

SP11

Love and Politics in Dante and Milton

FA11

British Literature II, SP09 / British Literature I

FA08

The Oregon Extension

The OE is a former logging camp in the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument that has been turned into an environmentally focused Great Books program for sophomores and juniors from colleges around the country. I co-taught four courses in sequence during the fall 2019 semester: What Is Nature?, What Is Society?, Nature Writing, and What Does It Mean to Be Human?

University of Virginia, Department of English

Literature in English II

Section instructor, SP07, SP02

Academic Writing

FA06, FA03, SP03, F02

Introduction to the English Major

SP04

ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATIVE WORK

Faculty Senate, Co-President	9/24–present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supported and advocated for non-tenure-track faculty whose positions were cut. FA 24 tried and failed to organize a university financial reporting committee to raise financial transparency and literacy among faculty, staff, administration, and board. FA24 co-led senate's taking over responsibility for assigning faculty to university committees. SP 25 	
Faculty Senate	9/14–5/18, 9/20–present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> co-led the process and took the lead editing university-level performance criteria for teaching, scholarship service. SP 25 co-led the process for revising all program-level performance criteria for teaching, scholarship and service. SP 24 organized the teaching award committee. SP 24, SP 23 worked with Institutional Research and Effectiveness to launch a "faculty dashboard" of data about the composition, pay, and workload of faculty. SP 24 as senate secretary, helped set agenda, took and distributed notes for all senate and faculty assemblies. F20, SP21 as senate VP, met worked as a team with senate president to keep communication lines open regarding budget cuts in high-stakes meetings with faculty, deans, provost, VP of finance, president's cabinet, and board of trustees. F17 as senate VP, wrote the long FAQ document that explained to faculty what was happening, why, and what the process would be for making cuts to tenure-track positions. F17 	
Program Director, English and Writing Studies, Eastern Mennonite University	9/23–present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> manage program budgets supervise small administrative staff oversee changes to program curriculums coordinate and load faculty for teaching write up yearly assessments of student learning organize Writers Read series for visiting authors such as Kate Baer, Jocelyn Johnson, Jessica Care Moore, and Rachel Yoder 	
Faculty Status Committee	9/23–present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review and decide on faculty contract, tenure, and promotion cases 	
Trauma-Informed Pedagogy Working Group	8/20–5/22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> convened by Matt Tibbles, our group met every few weeks for more than a year during COVID I was the lead writer for the "Trauma-Informed Pedagogy" working paper that gathered our group's insights 	
Convocation Committee	9/20–5/21
Faculty Representative at EMU Student Government Association	1/21–5/21
University Structure Redesign Team	1/18–5/18
Arts and Sciences Curriculum Revision Working Group	1/18–5/18
Faculty Scholarship Committee	9/16–5/18
Intellectual Life Committee, Eastern Mennonite University	9/9–9/12
Faculty advisor for <i>The Phoenix</i> , a student-led literary journal	9/09–5/21, 9/23–present
The Scriptural Reasoning Network, Co-Founder and Chair of the Board of Directors	4/15–12/20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a non-profit organization aimed at connecting and supporting SR groups around the country, inside and outside the university 	

President, University of Virginia Graduate English Student Association	8/03–7/04
Graduate Student Caucus Coordinator, American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies	8/03–7/04
Conference Organizer, Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, “The Fate of the Arts”	3/04

PEER-REVIEWED, SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS

Book

Rethinking the Secular Origins of the Novel: The Bible in English Fiction, 1678–1767. Cambridge University Press, 2021. [Paperback: Feb. 2024]

Reviewed in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, *Studies in the Novel*, *Bunyan Studies*, and *The Shandean*.

Articles

“The Unfinished Religion and Secularity of Octavia Butler’s *Parable* Novels: Scripture, Fiction, and Movement Politics,” *Religion and Literature* 58.1 (2026) [forthcoming]

“The Disappointing, Parenthetical Providence of God in Daniel Defoe’s *Journal of the Plague Year*,” *Literature and Theology* 35.3 (2021), 247–265.

“A Secular for Literary Studies,” *Christianity and Literature* 67.3 (2018), 472–492.

“*Robinson Crusoe* as Defoe’s Theory of Fiction,” *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 44.2 (2011), 165–185.

“*Pilgrim’s Progress* and the Book,” *English Literary History* 77.2 (2010), 509–534.

“Beyond the Religious and the Secular in the History of the Novel,” *New Literary History* 38.4 (2007).

POEMS

“Home Game, Peniel Park,” *The Twin Bill*, Issue 13, October 2023.

CONFERENCE PAPERS

“Religion and Literature: Exit, Border, Gap, Ecotone,” invited paper presented at Inventing the Secular: Literature and Religion from Medieval to Modern, a conference at New College, University of Edinburgh, organized by the “Literature and Religion” research group (University of Bergen), the Scottish Network for Religion and Literature (University of Edinburgh), and the Centre for Theology and Public Issues (University of Edinburgh), April 2022.

“This Is Secular,” paper presented at the Modern Language Association conference, New York, NY, January 2018.

“Illustrating Toleration: The 1719 Frontispiece of *Robinson Crusoe* and Defoe’s Fictional Method,” paper presented at the Defoe Society conference, New Haven, CT, September 2017.

“Reading Wadman’s Bible, or Making Failed Love Sacred in *Tristram Shandy*,” paper presented at the Northeast Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies conference, Amherst, MA, October 2016.

“Scriptural Reasoning’s Trouble with Context,” paper presented at the Mid-Atlantic Region American Academy of Religion conference, New Brunswick, NJ, March 2016. as senate VP “Scriptural Reasoning, Internal Libraries, and Reader-Response Theory,” paper presented at the Mid-Atlantic regional conference of the American Academy of Religion, Baltimore, MD, March 2015.

- “Scriptural Reasoning and Close Reading,” paper presented at the Scriptural Reasoning Academic Network gathering before the American Academy of Religion conference, San Diego, CA, November 2014.
- “Two Visions of the Secular: Orhan Pamuk’s *Snow* and Marilynne Robinson’s *Gilead*,” paper presented at the Christianity and Literature conference: “The Religious Turn: Secular and Sacred Engagements in Literature and Theory,” Westmont College, Santa Barbara, CA, May 2014.
- “The Bible, the Book of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and the Book of Culture,” paper presented at “The King James Bible and Its Cultural Afterlife,” a conference at The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, May 2011.
- “Reading Novels, Reading Bibles: The Rise of the English Novel and the Authority of Scripture,” paper presented at “The King James Bible and the World It Made, 1611–2011,” a conference at Baylor University, Waco, TX, April 2011.
- “How Defoe’s Fiction Works: A Better Secular,” paper presented at the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies conference, Albuquerque, NM, March 2010.
- “A Quantitative Analysis of the English Bible Trade: Comparing the Records of John Baskett to the ESTC,” paper presented at the British Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies conference, St. Hugh’s College, Oxford, UK, January 2008.
- “The *Pilgrim’s Progress* and the 1689 Toleration Act,” paper presented at the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies conference, Atlanta, GA, April 2007.
- “Provincializing Auerbach: Toward a Theory of Limited Novelistic Secularism,” paper presented at the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies conference, Las Vegas, NV, April 2005.
- “Sacred Objects, Social Theory, and the English Novel,” paper presented at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, March 2005.
- “The Couch, the Bible, and the Therapy of *Clarissa*,” paper presented at a panel entitled “Desire and Devotion: *Clarissa*, Secularism and Psychoanalysis,” at the Modern Language Association conference in Philadelphia, PA, December 2004.
- “Historicity Dispatched: The Moral Truth Claims of Defoe’s Fiction,” paper presented at the Midwest American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies conference, Springfield, MO, October 2002.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

- “Anglicanism” in *The Encyclopedia of British Literature 1660–1789*, Basil Blackwell, 2015.
- “Inhuman Sounds: On Israeli Composer Oded Zahavi’s ‘Psalm 42,’” with Randi Rashkover and Mark James, *The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* 12.1 (2013).
- “An Interview with Patricia Spacks,” *American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies News Circular*, no. 133 (Fall 2004).
- “An Interview with Paul Hunter,” *ASECS News Circular*, no. 132 (Spring/Summer 2004).
- “An Interview with Ralph Cohen,” *ASECS News Circular*, no. 131 (Winter 2004).
- “Studying Culture, Writing Literary History,” *ASECS News Circular*, no. 130 (Fall 2003).

RECENT CONFERENCES ATTENDED

- Furious Flower IV: The Worlds of Black Poetry*, James Madison University, September 2024.

Modern Language Association Academic Program Services (MAPS) Leadership Institute for new department chairs: *Humanities in the World, Humanities at Work*, co-sponsored by the Association of Departments of English (ADE) and Association of Language Departments (ALD), June 21–29, 2023.

PEER REVIEWER

I have been a peer reviewer for the following academic journals and presses:

Christianity and Literature
Eighteenth-Century Fiction
Eighteenth-Century Studies
Journal of Scriptural Reasoning
Literature and Theology
LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory
MLQ: Modern Language Quarterly
NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction
Philological Quarterly
PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association
Religion and Literature
The Scriblerian
University of Toronto Press

BOOK REVIEWS

“*Literature, Religion, and the Evolution of Culture, 1660–1780*, by Howard Weinbrot,” in *1650–1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era* 22 (2015), 327–330.

“*New Testaments: Cognition, Closure, and the Figural Logic of the Sequel, 1660–1740*, by Michael Austin,” in *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660–1700*, 37.2 (2013).

“Roger Lundin: *Beyond Belief*,” *The Cresset*, Michaelmas (2010).

“Plausible Worlds: Human Genetics in Fiction,” *Culture* 1.2 (2007).

“Talal Asad: *Genealogies of Religion and Formations of the Secular*,” *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* 7 (2005).

“Colin Painter’s *At Home with Art and Contemporary Art and the Home*,” *The Hedgehog Review* 6.2 (2004).

PRESENTATIONS

“A People of God’s Spirit,” a sermon at Daniel’s Run Peace Church on John 3:1-10, a painting by H. O. Tanner, and a poem by Gregory Pardlo, July 2024,

“Christ in New Worlds: The Poetry of Phillis Wheatley,” a public lecture for the Elder Exchange at Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, July 2023.

“Ecotones of Scripture and Literature,” a public lecture for EMU’s University Colloquium series, February 2020.

“The Light of Scripture,” a sermon on Psalm 119:105 at All Souls Church, Charlottesville, VA, June 2019.

“Coates, Hope, and the Bible,” a chapel address on Ta-Nehesi Coates’s *Between the World and Me*, Genesis 15, and Romans 4 at Eastern Mennonite University, November 2017.

“Leave Your Father’s House,” a baccalaureate address on the book of Genesis, the gospel of John, and a letter by John Keats, delivered to the graduating class of Eastern Mennonite University, April 2015.

“Learning to Live with Literature,” an evening lecture on *The Odyssey* given as part of the Pierson Curtis Lecture series at the Stony Brook School, Stony Brook, NY, April 2015.

“Why It’s Hard to Read the Scripture after the KJB,” public lecture for the NEH-sponsored library exhibit “Manifold Greatness: The Creation and Afterlife of the King James Bible” at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia, January 2013.

“Why It’s Hard to Read the Scripture after the KJB,” public lecture for the NEH-sponsored library exhibit “Manifold Greatness: The Creation and Afterlife of the King James Bible” at the Montrose Public Library, Montrose, CO, December 2012.

FELLOWSHIPS

National Endowment for the Humanities

Summer-seminar fellow at the University of Iowa for “Postsecular Studies and the Rise of the English Novel,” with Lori Branch and Mark Knight 7/16

Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, University of Virginia

Postdoctoral fellow 9/07–5/08

Dissertation fellow 9/04–5/07

Graduate fellow 10/02–8/04

American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA

Summer-seminar fellow for “Publishing God: Printing, Preaching, and Reading in Eighteenth-Century America,” with Michael Warner and Peter Stallybrass 6/05

RELATED EXPERIENCE

New Literary History

Senior Copy Editor 10/01–6/04

Copy Editor 1/01–10/01

Regent College, Vancouver, BC

Teaching and Research Assistant for Professor Loren Wilkinson 8/98–5/00

University of California at Berkeley, Agricultural and Resource Economics Department

Research Associate II for Professors Alain de Janvry and Elisabeth Sadoulet 10/96–8/97

Editorial Assistant II 7/95–10/96

University of California at Berkeley, College of Chemistry

Laboratory Research Assistant II 5/92–6/95

MEMBERSHIPS

Modern Language Association

American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies

American Academy of Religion

COMMUNITY

Member, Community Mennonite Church (CMC), Harrisonburg, VA 2019–present

Anti-Oppression and Equity Committee, CMC 2022–present

Member, All Souls Church, Charlottesville, VA 2014–2019

Co-leader, Scriptural Reasoning group in Harrisonburg, VA 2008–2021

President, McIntire Little League 2011