

KIMBERLY CHABOT DAVIS

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EDUCATION

University of Virginia

Ph.D. in English, 2001

Dissertation: "Sentimental Postmodernism and the Politics of Identification"

Oral Exams: 20th-century American and British literature (period); the novel (genre);
postmodern theory, sentimentality, and film melodrama (special topic)

M.A. in English, 1995

Oral Exam: American women's literature, 1850-present

Harvard University

A.B. 1990, *magna cum laude* in History and Literature (England and France, 1789-present)

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Bridgewater State University, Assistant Professor of English, 2007-present

Harvard University, Lecturer and Co-Chair of the Committee on Instruction, History and Literature Program,

2004-2007

Bentley College, Adjunct Assistant Professor, English Department, 2003-2004

Cornell University, Visiting Assistant Professor of English and Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, 2001-2003

Teaching appointment and research fellowship involving weekly participation in Humanities faculty seminar on Race in American Studies (2001-2002) and Visual Studies (2002-2003)

American University, Lecturer, Literature Department, 2000-2001

Georgetown University, Lecturer, English Department, 1997-98

George Washington University, Adjunct Instructor, English Department, 1996-97

University of Virginia, Graduate Instructor, English Department, 1993-96

TEACHING INTERESTS

20th-century American literature and culture, film studies, multi-ethnic and African-American literature, gender and sexuality studies, and cultural theory.

BOOKS

Beyond the White Negro: Cross-Racial Empathy, White Audiences, and Contemporary African-American Culture (completed book manuscript)

This interdisciplinary project offers an ethnographic study of white audiences responding to contemporary African-American literature, film, and hip-hop culture. Challenging the predominantly negative scholarly evaluation of cross-racial sympathy and empathy, I argue that encounters with black-authored texts can be instrumental in the formation of anti-racist political identities. Examining both the failures and the promise of empathy, the book highlights the potential of black cultural consumption to move white audiences to a self-reflexive examination of white privilege and institutional racism.

Postmodern Texts and Emotional Audiences, Purdue University Press, 2007 (Series in Comparative Cultural Studies)

This cultural study analyzes a seemingly oxymoronic cultural formation—sentimental postmodernism—and offers an ethnographic study of its audiences. By examining popular postmodern texts (from film,

television, and literature) that foster cross-group sympathy and utopian political desires, I counter the predominant critical vision of postmodernism as nihilist and antithetical to melodrama. While identification is often treated by film and literary theorists as a retrograde tool of emotional manipulation, I argue for its potential to unmoor people from fixed and limiting identities.

ARTICLES

- “Beyond the White Negro: Eminem, Danny Hoch, and Race Treason in Contemporary America.” *At Home and Abroad: Historicizing Twentieth-Century Whiteness in Literature and Performance*. Ed. LaVinia Jennings. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2009.
- “Audience, Sentimental Postmodernism, and *Kiss of the Spider Woman*.” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 10.3 (2008). <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol10/iss3/6>>
- “White Book Clubs and African American Literature: The Promise and Limitations of Cross-Racial Empathy.” *LIT: Literature, Interpretation, Theory*. 19.2 (April-June 2008): 155-186.
- Review of *Oprah Winfrey and the Glamour of Misery* by Eva Illouz. *Feminist Theory*. 8.1 (2007): 117-118.
- “Oprah’s Book Club and the Politics of Cross-Racial Empathy.” *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 7.4 (2004): 395-415. Reprinted in the essay collection *The Oprah Affect: Critical Essays on Oprah’s Book Club*. Eds. Cecilia Farr and Jaime Harker. SUNY Press, 2008.
- “White Hip-Hop: Keepin’ It Real or Keepin’ It Political?” *Politics and Culture*. 3 (2003). <<http://aspen.conncoll.edu/politicsandculture/page.cfm?key=249>>
- “An Ethnography of Political Identification: The Birmingham School Meets Psychoanalytic Theory.” *JPCS: Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society*. 8.1 (2003): 3-11.
- “Generational Hauntings: The Family Romance in Contemporary Fictions of Raced History” (commissioned review essay). *Modern Fiction Studies*. 48.3 (2002): 726-735.
- “White Filmmakers and Minority Subjects: *Cinema Vérité* and the Politics of Irony in *Hoop Dreams* and *Paris Is Burning*.” *South Atlantic Review*. 64.1 (1999): 1-22.
- “‘Postmodern Blackness’: Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and the End of History.” *Twentieth Century Literature*. 44.2 (1998): 242-60. Reprinted in the essay collection *Productive Postmodernism: Consuming Histories and Cultural Studies*. Ed. John Duvall. SUNY Press, 2001.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- “Deconstructing White Ways of Seeing: Teaching Spike Lee’s *Do the Right Thing* in the Ethnic Literature and Film Classroom,” panel of the Reception Studies Society, American Literature Association conference, Boston, May 2011.
- “Reading Race in Boston: Bookclubs, Danzy Senna’s *Caucasia*, and the Public Sphere,” New England American Studies Association, Boston, October 2010.
- “Deconstructing White Ways of Seeing: Teaching *Crash* and *Do the Right Thing* to White Students,” CART Celebration (faculty conference), Bridgewater State College, May 2010.
- “Adam Mansbach’s ‘Lit-Hop’ and the White Descendants of African American Culture,” MELUS (Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the United States) Conference, University of Scranton, April 2010.
- “Reading Race in Boston: Book Clubs, African-American Fiction, and Cross-Racial Empathy,” Mid-West Modern Language Association, Minneapolis, November 2008.
- “Democracy in the Television Wilderness: Multicultural Utopia, *Northern Exposure*, and Cross-Group Identification,” New England American Studies Association, Yale University, September 2008.
- “Reading Race in Boston: *The Known World* and Contemporary Readers of Slavery Fiction,” CART Celebration (faculty conference), Bridgewater State College, May 2008.
- “White Book Clubs, African-American Fiction, and Cross-Racial Empathy,” English Department Faculty Colloquium, Bridgewater State College, November 2007.
- “Edward P. Jones’ *The Known World*, Cross-Racial Empathy, and Contemporary Readers of ‘Post-Soul’

- Fiction,” American Literature Association, Boston, May 2007.
- “Teaching Outside Your Comfort Zone,” Pedagogy Symposium, History and Literature Program, Harvard University, September 2006.
- “White Bookclubs Reading African-American Fiction,” American Reception Studies Conference, University of Delaware, September 2005.
- “Slippery Images: Ideological Ambiguity in Elia Kazan’s *A Face in the Crowd*,” *Screen Studies Conference*, Glasgow, Scotland, July 2005.
- Chair, “Reframing Black-Jewish Relations,” American Literature Association, Boston, May 2005.
- “Bookclubs, African-American Literature, and Cross-Racial Empathy,” American Literature Association, Boston, May 2005, and Northeast Modern Language Association, Cambridge, March 2005.
- “Race as Place in Danzy Senna’s *Caucasia*: Contesting the Utopian Trope of Borderlands,” American Literature Association Conference, San Francisco, May 2004. Delivered early version of this paper at “Color, Hair, and Bone: Conference on the Persistence of Race into the 21st Century,” Bucknell U., Sept. 2002.
- “Oprah’s Book Club and the Politics of Cross-Racial Empathy,” Humanities Colloquium, Bentley College, Feb. 2004; also delivered at the Cultural Studies Association Conference, Boston, May 2004.
- “Beyond the White Negro: Danny Hoch’s Disidentification with White Privilege,” Modern Language Association, San Diego, December 2003.
- “White Hip-Hop: Keepin’ It Real or Keepin’ It Political?” Cultural Studies Association Conference, Pittsburgh, June 2003.
- “Recalcitrant Hierarchies of Race and Gender in the Contemporary Interracial Romance Film,” Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference, Minneapolis, March 2003.
- “Psychoanalytic Identification Theory and Ethnographic Audience Studies: Strange Bedfellows or Productive Methodological Symbiosis?” Conference on “Understanding Subjectivity in Culture: Psychoanalysis/Ethnography/Cultural Studies,” George Washington University, April 2002.
- “Color-Blind vs. Color-Struck: Contemporary Slave Narratives and the Raced Body,” Central New York Conference on Language and Literature, SUNY—Cortland, October 2001.
- “White Viewers and Readers Encounter the ‘Other’: Oprah and the Politics of Cross-Racial Sympathy,” Conference on the Emotions in Literature and Film, Florida State University, February 2001.
- Chair, “Film Reception: Audiences and Spectatorship” (panel title), South Atlantic MLA, Nov. 1999.
- “From Sulphurous Pits to Obsidian Shards: Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres* as Feminist ‘Eversion’ of *King Lear*,” Mid-Atlantic Popular/American Culture Association, October 1998.
- “Identity Conflicts and Hybrid Politics in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*,” Gay Contemporary Literature Panel, Northeast Modern Language Association, April 1998.
- “White Filmmakers and Black Subjects: The Politics of Irony in *Hoop Dreams* and *Paris Is Burning*,” South Atlantic Modern Language Association, November 1997.
- “Sentimental Postmodernism?: *Northern Exposure* and its Internet Fanclub, alt.tv.northern-exp,” Popular Culture Association in the South, Richmond, October 1995.
- “Mixed Reviews of a Hybrid Film: *The Piano* as Postmodern Melodrama,” Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference, University of Virginia, April 1995.

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- Faculty/Librarian Research Grant, \$8,000, Bridgewater State University, 2009-10
- Harvard University Certificate of Distinction in Teaching, Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, 2007
- Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship, Cornell University English Department, 2001-2003
- Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Dissertation Fellowship, \$12,000, University of Virginia, 1999-2000
- 1998 Best Graduate Student Essay Prize, for paper presented at 1997 SAMLA convention
- Dupont Fellowship, University of Virginia, 1993-96
- Academic Enhancement Program Fellowship, University of Virginia, 1992-93
- Harvard College Scholarship for Academic Distinction (dean’s list), 1986-90
- National Merit Scholarship, 1986-87

COURSES TAUGHT AT BRIDGEWATER

ENGL 570: Graduate Seminar—Ethnic American Literature
ENGL 570: Graduate Seminar—Gender, Race, and American Modernism
ENGL 570: Graduate Seminar—Encountering Whiteness in Ethnic American Literature and Film
ENGL 496: Senior Seminar—Gender, Race, and American Modernism
ENGL 496: Senior Seminar—Encountering Whiteness in Ethnic American Literature and Film
ENGL 330: Recent American Fiction
ENGL 315: Ethnic American Literature
ENGL 318: African American Literature II
ENGL 299: Race in American Film
ENGL 262: Literature and Film—From Page to Screen
ENGL 261: Introduction to Film
ENGL 254: Lit for Elementary Ed Majors—Banned Books
ENGL 203: Writing about Literature
ENGL 102H: Honors Freshman Writing II—Fiction Reading and the Public Sphere
ENGL 101: Freshman Writing I

COURSES TAUGHT AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Representing Whiteness: Ethnic American Writers and Filmmakers Return the Gaze (Harvard, Spring 2007)
Freshman seminar on the social construction of whiteness, examined through the lens of literature and film produced by African-Americans, Native Americans, and Asian-Americans whose works depict whites as the “other” and the “stranger.”

Ethnicity, Authenticity, and Autobiography (Harvard, Fall 2006)
Junior tutorial on autobiography and realist fiction produced by Native Americans, African Americans, and white “ethnic impersonators” (from fake slave narratives to *The Education of Little Tree*). Explores the political nature of these texts, the burden of authenticity, and the problem of essentialism.

Sophomore Seminar in American History and Literature (Harvard University, Fall and Spring 2005-6)
Year-long seminar taught with a historian, emphasizing methods of interdisciplinary scholarship. First semester focused on modernism (1890-1930), while the second semester included units on captivity and slave narratives, American religious history, and postmodern literature and culture.

American Popular Culture and the Post-War Era, 1940-1970 (Harvard University, Spring 2005)
Junior tutorial; topics included Samuel Fuller’s B-movies, Sirk’s melodramas, racial “problem pictures,” White negro hipsters, and film and literature concerning the Cold War and McCarthyism.

The Mythic American West, 1850-present (Harvard University, Spring 2005)
Junior tutorial on the West as mythic space. Part I explored the railroad as representation and historical reality, by examining literature, film, art, photography, labor history, and urban history. Part II focused on masculinity and representations of Native Americans in the late 19th-century popular press.

The Great Divide: Modernism, Postmodernism, and Mass Culture (Harvard University, Fall 2004)
Junior tutorial on the cultural shift from modernism to postmodernism, emphasizing the contested relationship between high art and mass culture. Topics included high modernism and imagism, kitsch and the middlebrow, Pop Art, postmodern fiction, and theories about mass-mediated societies.

Sexuality and Gender in 20th-Century American Culture (Harvard University, Fall 2005)
Junior tutorial, tracing shifting discourses concerning gender and sexual identity from the 1920s to the 1980s, with a focus on the development of a gay counter-culture.

African-Americans in Film (Bentley College, Spring 2004)
Upper-level course tracing the depiction of African-Americans in Hollywood and independent film. Topics included stereotypes, black stars, “racial problem” films produced by white liberals,

“blaxploitation” and ghetto films, and the black independent film movement.

The Films of Spike Lee (Bentley College, Spring 2004)

Upper-level course examining Lee’s films through various critical lenses: auteurism, the history of the film industry, ideological approaches to film texts, and reception analysis.

Modern and Contemporary American Literature (Bentley College, Fall 2003)

Survey course on 20th-century American fiction. Topics included urbanity, commodification, regionalism, the impact of world war, shifting gender roles, racial strife, and multiculturalism.

Asian-American Literature and Film (Cornell University, Spring 2003)

Freshman writing seminar exploring the possibility of a pan-Asian-American sensibility. Topics included transnationalism, generational conflict, language, sexuality and gender, assimilation, the myth of the model minority, and Japanese-American Internment during World War 2.

American Literature and Culture: Encountering the Other (Cornell University, Spring 2002)

Freshman writing seminar on 19th- and 20th-century multi-ethnic American literature, with a thematic focus on how racial and ethnic outsiders have been used to solidify the boundaries of “American-ness.” In addition to studying canonical writers’ depictions of otherness, we examined how immigrant and minority writers both critique and re-envision American national identity.

Racial Mixing and the Myth of the Melting Pot (Cornell University, Fall 2001 and Fall 2002)

Freshman writing seminar focused on miscegenation, multiracial identity, and cross-racial identification in 20th-century American culture. Topics included literature and film about racial passing, films concerning interracial sex, “white Negro” musicians, contemporary autobiographies by multiracial Americans, and debates about racial categorization in the 2000 census.

Critical Approach to the Cinema (American University, Fall 2000, Spring 2001)

Lecture course, introducing students to film style, genres, and film history. Units on silent film, Welles and Hitchcock, gender and Hollywood genres (women’s melodrama, film noir, and the Western), Italian neo-realism and the French New Wave, and postmodern film.

The Politics of Sentimentality and Melodrama (Georgetown University, Fall 1997 and Summer 1998)

Upper-level course addressing 19th-century fiction and 20th-century film, fiction and television. Focused on historical contexts, genre theory, and representations of race, class, gender, and sexuality.

Sexuality, Gender, and Power (George Washington University; Fall 1996, Spring 1997)

Interdisciplinary writing course exploring constructions of sexuality and gender in fiction, advertising, film, popular advice books, and academic writing. Topics included pornography, gay marriage, the “invention” of heterosexuality and homosexuality, reproduction control, and the nature/nurture debates.

From Novel to Film: 20th-Century Narratives (University of Virginia, Spring 1996)

Intro-to-lit seminar, pairing novels with their film adaptations to discuss issues of genre, point of view, narrative and aesthetic technique, and modernism and postmodernism. Emphasized connections between form and ideology and introduced students to feminist film theory.

20th-Century African-American Women Writers (University of Virginia, Fall 1994)

Intro-to-lit seminar questioning unitary notions of a “black female aesthetic” and covering literature and criticism written by black women from the Harlem Renaissance to the present.

Intermediate Composition--Cultural Studies (University of Virginia, Fall 1994)

Discussion and writing topics included free speech and hate speech, cultural trends and contemporary icons, advertising, and constructions of race in the media and in fiction. Focused on the revision process.

Freshman Composition (University of Virginia; Fall 1993, Spring 1994, Spring 1996)

Focused on revision, argumentation, critical thinking, writing for different audiences and disciplines, and peer workshopping of essays. Papers on advertisements, short stories, current events, and film.

M.A. THESIS DIRECTED

Heather Carreiro, “Engaging Post 9-11 America through South Asian Literature and Film,” Bridgewater State University

SENIOR THESES DIRECTED

Elise Eggart, “‘It’s the Truth, it’s Actch’ll, Everything Is Satisfatch’ll’: Disney’s *Song of the South* and the Marketing of a Mythic Southern Past,” Harvard University

Micah Fitzerman-Blue, “Individualized Justice for Colonial American Jews: The Story of an Uncle-Niece Incest Law,” Harvard University (summa cum laude, won Hoopes thesis prize), co-directed with Werner Sollors

Daniel Jacobs, “Drives Like a Dream: Post-War Automobile Advertising and Suburban Domesticity,” Harvard

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE EXPERIENCE

Search Committee for Creative Writing (Fiction) position, English Department, BSU, 2010-11

Chair, Film Faculty Committee, Film Minor, BSU, 2010-present

Adrian Tinsley Program, Advisory Board for Undergraduate Research, BSU, 2009-2011

Served on advisory subcommittee for the *Undergraduate Review*

Member, Honors Committee, English Department, BSU, 2010-11

Chair, Curriculum Committee, English Department, BSC, 2009-10

Council Board Member, New England American Studies Association, 2009-2011

Elected to Council and served on program committee to organize annual conference.

Faculty Advisor, English Society, BSC, 2008-2010

Member, Curriculum Committee, English Department, BSC, 2008-09

Search Committee for 19th-century American literature position, English Department, BSC, 2008-9

Reviewer of student submissions, *Undergraduate Review*, BSC, 2008-present

Organizer, English Department Faculty Colloquium, BSC, 2007-present

Co-Chair, Committee on Instruction, History and Literature Program, Harvard University, 2005-2007

Served as one of four administrative faculty overseeing interdisciplinary honors-only concentration with 160 students. Duties included advising 60 undergraduate majors in American studies, co-chairing faculty committee that oversees requirements and rules on student petitions, administering and chairing oral exams, awarding prizes to student theses and essays, training new lecturers and teaching fellows, and leading large meetings for students and faculty in the program.

Course Leader, Cultural Studies Freshman Seminar, Cornell University, 2002-2003

Designed, along with Assistant Chair of the English Department, a course to be taught by graduate students. Supervised five graduate student teachers via class visits and review of syllabi, assignments, and comments on papers.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Modern Language Association (MLA)

New England American Studies Association (NEASA)

American Literature Association (ALA)

Reception Studies Society (RSS)

Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS)