November 2025

Nathaniel Mills
Associate Professor, Department of English, University of Minnesota

112 Pillsbury Hall
310 Pillsbury Drive SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
mills175@umn.edu

Academic Appointments

Department Chair, English, University of Minnesota, 2025-2028

Associate Professor, English, University of Minnesota, 2019-present

Affiliate Faculty in the following University of Minnesota units: African American and African Studies Department; American Studies Department; Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature Department; Center for Race, Indigeneity, Disability, Gender & Sexuality Studies (RIDGS)

Donald V. Hawkins Professor of English, 2020-2021

Assistant Professor, English, University of Minnesota, 2016-2019

Assistant Professor, English, California State University, Northridge, 2011-2016

Education

Ph.D., English Language and Literature, University of Michigan, 2011

M.A., English, Syracuse University, 2006

B.A., American Studies, English and Textual Studies, Syracuse University, 2004

Publications

Books

Workshopping Black Radicalism: The Left, Iowa, and Literary History. Under contract with University of North Carolina Press, anticipated publication in fall 2026.

Ragged Revolutionaries: The Lumpenproletariat and African American Marxism in Depression-Era Literature. University of Massachusetts Press, 2017.

Peer-Reviewed Articles and Book Chapters

"The Vital Depths: *Invisible Man* and Political Epistemology from Below." *The Cambridge Companion to the Twentieth-Century American Novel and Politics*. Ed. Bryan Santin. Cambridge University Press, 2023.

"John Berryman's Blackface Jokes: The Insights of Literary Failure." *Journal of Modern Literature* 45, no. 4 (Summer 2022).

"The Opportunity of a Crisis: Black Radical Thought and the Cataclysms of Racial Capitalism." Article-length review of *Thinking Through Crisis: Depression-Era Black Literature, Theory, and Politics*, by James Edward Ford III (Fordham UP, 2019). *Cultural Critique* 116 (Summer 2022).

"Black Cultural (Inter)nationalism: Communism and African American Writing in the Great Depression." *African American Literature in Transition: 1750-2015*. Volume 10: 1930-1940. Volume eds. Eve Dunbar and Ayesha Hardison. Cambridge University Press, 2022.

"Aggravated into Writing: Margaret Walker, Iowa, and the Workshopping of African American Literature." *American Quarterly* 73, no. 2 (June 2021): 233-259. Winner of the David D. Anderson Award for Outstanding Essay in Midwestern Literary Studies, Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature, 2022.

"Marxism, Communism, and Richard Wright's Depression-Era Work." *The Cambridge Companion to Richard Wright*. Ed. Glenda Carpio. Cambridge University Press, 2019.

"African American Historical Writing in the Depression Era." *The Cambridge Companion to American Literature of the 1930s*. Ed. William Solomon. Cambridge University Press, 2018.

"Writing Brotherhood: The Utopian Politics of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*." *Lineages of the Literary Left*. Ed. Robbie Lieberman, Paula Rabinowitz, and Howard Brick. University of Michigan Publishing, 2015.

"Playing the Dozens and Consuming the Cadillac: Ralph Ellison and Civil Rights Politics." *Twentieth-Century Literature* 61.2 (2015).

"Ralph Ellison's Marxism: The Lumpenproletariat, the Folk, and the Revolution." *African American Review* 47.4 (2014).

"Playing in the Dark, on the Left, and Out of Bounds: Nelson Algren, World War II, and the Cross-Racial Imagination of Blackness." *MELUS* 38.4 (2013).

"Cleaver/Baldwin Revisited: Naturalism and the Gendering of Black Revolution." *Studies in American Naturalism* 7.1 (2012).

"The Dialectic of Electricity: Kenneth Fearing, Walter Benjamin, and a Marxist Aesthetic." *Journal of Modern Literature* 30.2 (2007).

Academic Reviews

Review of *The House Where My Soul Lives: The Life of Margaret Walker*, by Maryemma Graham (Oxford University Press, 2022). *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers* 41, no. 1 (2024).

Review of *In the Shadow of Invisibility: Ralph Ellison and the Promise of American Democracy*, by Sterling Lecater Bland, Jr. (University of Louisiana Press, 2023). *American Literary History* 36, no. 1 (2024).

Review of *The Dangerous Class: The Concept of the Lumpenproletariat*, by Clyde W. Barrow (University of Michigan Press, 2020). *Contemporary Political Theory*, 6 April 2021: https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-021-00487-9

Essays and Reviews in National Publications

"Updates from Minnesota on the Raz Segal Affair." *Academe Blog*, February 18, 2025.

"Academic Freedom and the Raz Segal Affair at the University of Minnesota." *Academe Blog*, August 24, 2024.

"New Deal Writing and its Pains." Review of *Labor Pains: New Deal Fictions of Race, Work, and Sex in the South*, by Christin Marie Taylor (University Press of Mississippi, 2019). *Against the Current* 35.5 (2019).

"Louis Althusser and Academic Marxism." Review of *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, by Louis Althusser (Verso, 2014), and *Althusser and his Contemporaries: Philosophy's Perpetual War*, by Warren Montag (Duke University Press, 2013). *Against the Current* 29.5 (2014).

"Thinking Academic Resistance." Review of *Neoliberalism, Education, and Terrorism*, by Jeffrey R. Di Leo, Henry A. Giroux, Sophia A. McClennen, and Kenneth J. Saltman (Paradigm, 2013). *Academe* 100.3 (2014).

"History, Theory, Politics, and *Invisible Man*." *Against the Current* 26.5 (2011).

"Wrestling with Ralph Ellison." Review of *Wrestling with the Left: The Making of Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man*, by Barbara Foley (Duke University Press, 2010). *Against the Current* 26.2 (2011).

"On the Centenary of Nelson Algren: Writer on the Left, 1909-1981." *Against the Current* 24.5 (2009).

Encyclopedia Entries

"Lumpenproletariat." *Encyclopedia of the American Left.* Ed. Paul Buhle, et al. Verso. Forthcoming.

"Revolution." *Bloomsbury Handbook of Literary and Cultural Theory*. Ed. Jeffrey R. Di Leo. Bloomsbury, 2018.

Selected Conference Presentations and Talks

"Black Leftism and the Aesthetics of Opacity: Sarah Wright's *This Child's Gonna Live*." Panel: The Literature and Practice of Political Withdrawal. American Studies Association, San Juan, PR, November 2025.

"Richard Wright and the 'Special' Claim of Zionism." Panel: Richard Wright's Contributions to Postcolonial Studies. Panel sponsored by the Richard Wright Society. American Literature Association, Boston, MA, May 2025.

Panel speaker (invited), "Academic Freedom, Boycott, and Palestine." Macalester College, St. Paul, MN, September 2024.

"Margaret Walker, Paul Engle, and the Iowa Writers Workshop." Plenary Address (invited). Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature, East Lansing, MI, June 2022.

"Communist Lives and Communist Erasures." Panel: When the Old Left Was New: American Studies and the Making of a Marxian Archive. American Studies Association, Honolulu, HI, November 2019.

"Dictatorship and the Black Radical Tradition." Panel: Wake Work: Recovering the Legacies of the Black Radical Tradition in a Reactionary Moment. American Studies Association, Atlanta, GA, November 2018.

"A Feeling for History: African American Historical Representation during the Depression." Panel: Politics, Poetics, and Race in the 1930s. American Literature Association, San Francisco, CA, May 2018.

"Workshopping Blackness: The Materialism of the Encounter and African American Authorship." Panel: Race and Materialisms. American Comparative Literature Association, Los Angeles, CA, March-April 2018.

"'Write Some Negro Ballads': Margaret Walker, Paul Engle, and the Iowa Writers' Workshop." Panel: Race and Ethnicity in the Program Era. Northeast Modern Language Association, Baltimore, MD, March 2017.

"Blackness as Disinterestedness: Ralph Ellison's Radical Democratic Thought." Seminar: Big Bangs: Race and Radicalism in its Gaseous States. American Comparative Literature Association, Cambridge, MA, March 2016.

"Marxist Historical Form and the Black Reconstruction of the Southern Past." Seminar: Race, Form, and Resistance. American Comparative Literature Association, Seattle, WA, March 2015.

"Edward Bland in Retrospect: Politics and Universality in Black Literature." Panel: New Paradigms for African American Literary Study. Panel sponsored by the African American Literature and Culture Society. American Literature Association, Boston, MA, May 2013.

Selected Research Grants and Awards

Mid-Career Faculty Research Award, College of Liberal Arts, University of Minnesota, 2022-23. Substantial award granted to fund archival research and teaching releases for my second book project.

David D. Anderson Award for Outstanding Essay in Midwestern Literary Studies, 2022. Award granted by the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature for "Aggravated into Writing: Margaret Walker, Iowa, and the Workshopping of African American Literature," *American Quarterly* 73, no. 2 (June 2021): 233-259.

Donald V. Hawkins Professor of English, University of Minnesota, 2020-21. Departmental professorship providing financial support for faculty pursuing exceptional research projects.

Grant-in-Aid Award, Office of the Vice President for Research, University of Minnesota, 2019-2021. Substantial award granted to fund archival research for my second book project.

Annual Award, Imagine Fund, University of Minnesota, 2017. Award provides funds toward innovative research in the arts and humanities.

Clarence D. Thorpe Dissertation Prize, 2012. Award granted (on occasion) by University of Michigan English department for exceptional doctoral dissertations.

ProQuest Distinguished Dissertation Award, 2012. Award granted by Rackham Graduate School for exceptional scholarly dissertations produced by doctoral students at the University of Michigan.

Selected Teaching Experience

English Department, University of Minnesota

Undergraduate Courses
Modern Literature: What's Haunting Haunted Houses?
Modern Literature: Unreliable Narratives
Advanced Topics Course: Socialism and American Literature
Freshman Seminar in English: Alternate Histories
Capstone Seminar in English: Black Protest Fiction
Capstone Seminar in English: James Baldwin's America
The American Novel from 1900
Survey of American Literature and Cultures II
Multicultural Literature of the United States
Introduction to African American Literature and Culture II (cross-listed with African American & African Studies Department)

Graduate Courses
Experiments in Black Radical Internationalism (advanced Ph.D. seminar)
The Great Migration and Structuring Tropes of African American Literature and Theory (advanced Ph.D. seminar)
African American Writing in the Era of Black Power (advanced Ph.D. seminar)
African Americans in the Great Depression (advanced Ph.D. seminar)

Teaching Awards

Nominated for Outstanding Contributions to Graduate and Professional Education Award, University of Minnesota, 2023.

Nominated for Distinguished Teaching, Counseling or Librarianship Award, California State University, Northridge, 2014.

Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award, Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies, University of Michigan, 2010.

David and Linda Moscow Prize for Excellence in Teaching Composition, English Department Writing Program, University of Michigan, 2010.

Selected Professional Service

Member at Large, Executive Committee, American Association of University Professors, University of Minnesota–Twin Cities Chapter, 2020-2025.

Peer Reviewer for articles submitted to the following journals and collections: *MELUS, PMLA*, *Twentieth-Century Literature*, *American Literary History*, *African American Review*, *Soundings*, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature.*

Peer Reviewer for monographs submitted to the following presses: University Press of Mississippi, Rutgers University Press.

Selected Institutional Service

University of Minnesota

Chair, English Department, 2025-2028.

University Faculty Senator from College of Liberal Arts, 2024-2027.

Faculty Representative, Advisory Group on Faculty Behavior in Graduate Education, Graduate School, 2022-2023.

Graduate Education Goals Working Group, Graduate School, 2021.

Senate Committee on Student Affairs, University Senate, 2019-2025.

Graduate Education Advisory Committee, College of Liberal Arts, 2019-2022.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee, English Department, 2020-2022, 2023-2025.

Executive Committee, English Department, 2019-2023.

Director of Graduate Studies, English Department, 2019-2023.

Service Awards

Award for Excellence in Academic Unit Service, English Department, Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, University of Minnesota, 2023. Award recognizes exceptional service contributions to the functioning and climate of the recipient's academic unit.