

RACHEL E. WALKER

Department of History and Philosophy
University of Hartford
racwalker@hartford.edu
(603) 546-8843

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- 2026–29 Chair, Department of History and Philosophy
- 2025–28 Belle K. Ribicoff Endowed Professorship, University of Hartford
- 2024– Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Hartford
- 2025 Interim Associate Dean for Academic Planning & Curriculum, University of Hartford
- 2018–24 Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Hartford

EDUCATION

- 2018 Ph.D. in American History, University of Maryland, College Park
- 2015 M.A. in American History, University of Maryland, College Park
- 2010 B.A. in History, Minors in French and Music, Ithaca College, *summa cum laude*

PUBLICATIONS

Books:

Free Radicals: Fringe Thinkers and the Fight for Liberty in Nineteenth Century America. In progress.

Beauty and the Brain: The Science of Human Nature in Early America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, December 2022). *

* Winner of the Mary Kelley Book Prize, Society for Historians of the Early American Republic

* Honorable Mention, Frederick Jackson Turner Award, Organization of American Historians

* Finalist, Cheiron Book Prize, International Society for the History of Behavioral and Social Sciences

Reviewed in: *American Historical Review*, *British Journal for the History of Science*, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, *English Historical Review*, *H-Net Reviews*, *Isis*, *Journal of American History*, *Journal of the Early Republic*, *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*, *New England Quarterly*, *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, *Reviews in American History*, *Social History of Medicine*, and *William and Mary Quarterly*

Articles & Book Chapters:

“Frederick Douglass and the ‘Age of Science,’” invited essay for *The Oxford Handbook of Frederick Douglass*, ed. Philip Gould and Ivy Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

“Reading the Gendered Body in Early America,” in *The Gendered Republic: Reimagining Identity in the New Nation*, ed. Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2025).

“Facing Race: Popular Science and Black Intellectual Thought in Antebellum America,” *Early American Studies* 19, no. 3 (Summer 2021): 601-640. *

* Winner of the John M. Murrin Prize for the best article published in *Early American Studies* in 2021.

Book Reviews:

Sarah Gold McBride’s *Whiskerology: The Culture of Hair in Nineteenth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2025), for *The Journal of the Early Republic* 46, no. 1 (Spring 2026): 138-142.

Sharrona Pearl’s *Do I Know You? From Face Blindness to Super Recognition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2023), for *Isis* 117, no. 2 (June 2026): 422–423.

William Max Nelson’s *Enlightenment Biopolitics: A History of Race, Eugenics, and the Making of Citizens* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), for *Early American Literature* 60, no. 2 (July 2025): 330-225.

Nadine Weidman’s *Killer Instinct: The Popular Science of Human Nature in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021), for *Isis* 115, no. 1 (March 2024): 209-211.

Katie Hemphill’s *Bawdy City: Commercial Sex and Regulation in Baltimore, 1790–1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), for *Labor: Studies in Working Class History* 19, no. 2 (Summer 2022): 108-109.

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

National and International Awards and Fellowships:

2025–26 Norton Strange Townshend Long-Term Fellowship, William Clements Library, University of Michigan

2025–26 New England Regional Fellowship Consortium Fellowship (postponed to 2026–27)

2026	Charles E. Rosenberg Fellowship in the History of Health and Medicine, Library Company of Philadelphia
2025	Dr. Richard S. Newman Short-Term Fellowship, Program in African American History, Library Company of Philadelphia
2025	Barra Foundation Short-Term Research Fellowship, American Philosophical Society
2024	Finalist, Cheiron Book Prize, International Society for History of Behavioral & Social Sciences
2023	Mary Kelley Book Prize, Society for Historians of the Early American Republic
2023	Honorable Mention, Frederick Jackson Turner Award, Organization of American Historians
2022	John M. Murrin Prize for the best article published in <i>Early American Studies</i> in 2021
2020-21	American Antiquarian Society—National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship
2020-21	Long-Term Research Fellowship, The Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon
2020-21	Dibner Research Fellowship in the History of Science and Technology, Huntington Library
2020-21	Research Fellowship, Consortium for History of Science, Technology and Medicine
2020	Finalist, Zuckerman Prize in American Studies
2019	Finalist, SHEAR Dissertation Prize, Society for Historians of the Early American Republic
2019	Jay and Deborah Last Short-Term Fellowship, American Antiquarian Society
2018	Short-Term Research Fellowship, Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library
2017-18	Smithsonian Institution Pre-Doctoral Fellowship, Sponsored by the National Portrait Gallery and the Archives of American Art
2015-16	Consortium Dissertation Fellowship, McNeil Center for Early American Studies
2015	Jay and Deborah Last Fellowship, American Antiquarian Society
2015	William T. Golden Fellowship, American Philosophical Society
2015	Mary Catherine Mooney Fellowship, Boston Athenaeum
2015	Wood Institute Travel Grant, The College of Physicians of Philadelphia
2014-15	Albert M. Greenfield Foundation Dissertation Fellowship, Library Company of Philadelphia

- 2014 Ruth R. & Alyson R. Miller Fellowship, Massachusetts Historical Society
- 2014 Frances Lewis Fellowship in Gender and Women's Studies, Virginia Historical Society

University Awards:

- 2025–28 Belle K. Ribicoff Endowed Professorship
- 2026–27 Humanities Center Seminar Leader: “Gender Trouble: Thinking Beyond the Binary”
- 2024 Richard J. Cardin Research Grant, University of Hartford
- 2023-24 Belle K. Ribicoff Junior Faculty Prize, University of Hartford
- 2023 Richard J. Cardin Research Grant, University of Hartford
- 2022-23 University Interdisciplinary Studies (UIS) Faculty Fellowship, University of Hartford
- 2022-23 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) Grant, University of Hartford
- 2022-23 Ethnic Studies Fellowship, Humanities Center, University of Hartford
- 2022 Richard J. Cardin Research Grant, University of Hartford
- 2020-21 Greenberg Junior Faculty Award, University of Hartford
- 2020-21 Teaching and Learning Grant, Center for Teaching Excellence and Innovation (CTEI), University of Hartford
- 2020-21 Vincent Coffin Grant (course release), University of Hartford
- 2021 Richard J. Cardin Research Grant, University of Hartford
- 2019-20 Humanities Center Fellowship, University of Hartford
- 2020 Richard J. Cardin Research Grant, University of Hartford
- 2019 Richard J. Cardin Research Grant, University of Hartford
- 2019 Critical Thinking “Micro-Skills” Grant, University of Hartford
- 2019 Davis Fellowship, Faculty Learning Community for Writing, University of Hartford
- 2016-17 Mary Savage Snouffer Dissertation Fellowship, University of Maryland, College Park
- 2016 Arts & Humanities Graduate Student Travel Award, University of Maryland, College Park
- 2015-16 Mabel S. Spencer Award for Excellence in Graduate Achievement, University of Maryland, College Park

- 2015 Jacob K. Goldhaber Travel Grant, University of Maryland, College Park
- 2015 International Conference Student Support Award, University of Maryland, College Park
- 2014 Graduate Student Summer Research Fellowship, University of Maryland, College Park
- 2012-14 Dean's Fellowship, University of Maryland, College Park
- 2012 Distinguished Teaching Assistant Award, Center for Teaching Excellence, University of Maryland, College Park
- 2014-15 Hearst Writing Fellowship, Department of History, University of Maryland, College Park
- 2014 Early American Dissertation Research Grant, Department of History, University of Maryland, College Park
- 2013-14 Dissertation Fellowship for Excellence in United States History, Department of History, University of Maryland, College Park
- 2013 Prospectus Development Award, Department of History, University of Maryland, College Park

CONFERENCES AND SCHOLARLY SEMINARS

- 2025 "Queer Spirits: Rethinking the Gender Binary in Early America," Annual Meeting of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic (SHEAR), Providence, Rhode Island, July 17-20
- 2024 Commentator, "New Histories of the Body in Early America," Annual Meeting of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic (SHEAR), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 18-21
- 2024 "Cranial Nonconformity: The Queer Reader of Popular Science," Biennial Meeting of C19: The Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists, Pasadena, California, March 14-16
- 2023 "Phrenology on the Underground Railroad," Annual Meeting of the History of Science Society (HSS), Portland, Oregon, November 9-12
- 2023 "Race, Gender, and Science in U.S. History," Roundtable at the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association (AHA), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, January 6-9
- 2022 Commentator and Chair, "Race, Creativity and Personhood in the Early Republic," Annual Meeting of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic (SHEAR), New Orleans, Louisiana, July 21-24

- 2021 "Female Beauty, Popular Science, and the Women's Rights Movement," Organization of American Historians (OAH) Annual Meeting (Virtual), April 15-18
- 2021 "High Brow, Low Brow: Popular Science and the Politics of Female Intelligence in Antebellum America," Boston Seminar on the History of Women, Gender, and Sexuality, Massachusetts Historical Society, January 19
- 2020 "No One Self-Identifies as A Pseudoscientist: Skepticism, Sincerity, and the Rhetoric of Rational Enlightenment," Biennial Conference of C19: The Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists (Virtual), October 15-18, 22-25
- 2019 "The Curious Case of the Female Forehead: The Visual Politics of Intellectual Equality," Annual Meeting of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic (SHEAR), Cambridge, Massachusetts July 18-21
- 2019 "The Power of Portraits: Visualizing Female Intelligence in Nineteenth-Century America," International Conference on Gender Studies: "Gender and Power," Birkbeck College, University of London, March 2
- 2018 Comment, Sarah Pearsall, "Polygamy and Power in Early America," Washington Area Early American Seminar Series (WEAS), March 9
- 2017 "Fighting Over Phillis Wheatley's Face: Race, Gender, and Imagery in Antebellum America," Seventeenth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, Genders, and Sexualities, Hofstra University, June 1-4
- 2017 "'The Mind Molds the Features': Environmentalism, Essentialism, and the Science of Beauty in Early America," McNeil Center for Early American Studies, Friday Seminar, March 24
- 2016 Comment, John Wood Sweet, "Rape, Recourse, and the Law of Seduction in the Early Republic," Washington Area Early American Seminar Series, October 21
- 2016 "The 'Faces of the Sexes': Physiognomy and the Science of Sexual Difference," Annual Meeting of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic (SHEAR), New Haven, July 21-24
- 2016 "Finding Women in the History of Science: Female Physiognomists in Early America," Conference on "Rethinking Women's History: New Perspectives on the History of Women in the Early American Republic," sponsored by the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3 and Université Paris-Diderot, June 17
- 2016 "'There Is a Sex of Brain': Reading Minds and Bodies in the Early American Republic," NEHA Affiliate Session at the 130th Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association (AHA), Atlanta, January 7-10

- 2015 “Faces, Beauty, and Brains: Physiognomy and Female Education in Post-Revolutionary America,” Boston Area Early American Seminar at the Massachusetts Historical Society, December 1
- 2015 “The Face of Freedom: Gender, Abolition, and the Politics of Beauty,” Upstate Early American History Workshop, Binghamton University, November 6
- 2015 “The Casket and the Jewel: The Body, the Brain, and the Politics of Female Intelligence,” Annual Meeting of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic (SHEAR), Raleigh, July 16-19
- 2015 “Reading Books to Read Faces: Analyzing Appearances in Early America,” Annual Meeting of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing (SHARP): “The Generation and Regeneration of Books,” Montreal, July 7-10
- 2015 “The Science of Sexual Difference in the Nineteenth Century,” Pennsylvania Hospital History of Women’s Health Conference, Philadelphia, April 29
- 2015 “‘There is a Sex of Brain’: Reading Minds and Bodies in the Early American Republic,” Spring Conference, New England Historical Association (NEHA), Worcester, April 18
- 2015 “Consent and the Construction of Gendered Hierarchies in the Early American Republic,” Conference on Consent in Early America, 1600-1900, Rothermere American Institute at the University of Oxford, England, March 10
- 2015 “Character Detectives: Female Physiognomists in the Early American Republic,” Working Group in the History of the Human Sciences, Consortium for the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine, Philadelphia, January 21
- 2014 “A Beautiful Mind: Physiognomy and Female Intellect, 1750-1850,” Dissertation Workshop at the Colonial Society of Massachusetts Graduate Student Forum, June 6
- 2014 “Femininity, Physiognomy, and the Gendering of Intelligence, 1750-1850,” Washington Area Early American Seminar Series, April 18

INVITED TALKS

- 2026 “Sex, Science, and Seances: The Radical Politics of Nineteenth-Century Progressives,” Michigan State University, March 19
- 2026 “A Cultural History of Phobia: Don James McLaughlin and Rachel Walker Discuss Popular Science in Early America,” Oklahoma Center for the Humanities, University of Tulsa, January 29
- 2025 Invited Talk for Dr. Cameron Strang’s Graduate Seminar in Early American History, University of Nevada, Reno, October 14

- 2024 Commentator for Jareka Dellenbaugh-Dempsey's "Wasting pains, which best my body knows?: Anne Bradstreet's Cripistemology," Europe and Beyond Seminar, Emory University, April 8
- 2023 "Fighting Science with Science: Black Intellectuals and the Struggle for Equity in Antebellum America," History of Knowledge Colloquium at Universität Konstanz, Konstanz, Baden-Württemberg, Germany, December 14
- 2023 Commentator, Ayelet Brinn's Book Talk on *A Revolution in Type: Gender and the Making of the American Yiddish Press* (2023), Greenberg Center, University of Hartford, November 28
- 2023 Book Talk, *Beauty and the Brain*, Library Company of Philadelphia, September 21
- 2023 Book Talk, *Beauty and the Brain*, American Philosophical Society and the Consortium for the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine, September 6
- 2023 Book Talk, *Beauty and the Brain*, Fred W. Smith Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon, May 18
- 2023 Book Talk, *Beauty and the Brain*, American Antiquarian Society, May 4
- 2023 Guest Lecture, *Beauty and the Brain*, Saint Michael's College, April 4
- 2023 Guest Lecture, *Beauty and the Brain*, University of Southern Maine, March 8
- 2023 Book Talk, *Beauty and the Brain*, Institute for Thomas Paine Studies, Iona College, March 6
- 2023 Book Talk, *Beauty and the Brain*, University of Hartford, January 27
- 2022 "Black Americans and the Sciences in Nineteenth-Century America," Ethnic Studies Faculty Fellow Lecture Series, University of Hartford, November 7
- 2022 "Reading the Gendered Body in Early America," University of Southern Maine, March 8
- 2021 "The Historian's Comedy Hour: History, She Wrote," Revolutionary Spaces, Boston, September 13
- 2020 "Gender in the Early Republic," Invited Lecture for Dr. Manuel Covo's Graduate Seminar in Early American History, University of California, Santa Barbara, December 1
- 2020 "Face Value: Popular Science and the Politics of Female Beauty in Antebellum America," Helmerich Center for American Research at the University of Tulsa, Works-in-Progress Seminar, November 13
- 2020 "Hindsight Is 2020: Why the Future Needs the Past," Invited Alumni Speaker, Ithaca College History Department Year-End Celebration, May 26

- 2020 “Beauty, Intelligence, and Intersectionality: A Historical Approach,” Faculty Fellows Lecture Series, University of Hartford Humanities Center, March 3
- 2020 Panel on Women in Academia, 12th Annual Women’s Empowerment Leadership Conference, Sponsored by the Yale Women’s Leadership Initiative, February 23
- 2019 “‘The Pretty Feet’: Uncovering Absurdity in the Early American Archive,” Presentation for the American Antiquarian Society’s New Building Opening, May 4
- 2019 “The Problem with Pseudoscience: Certainty and Self-Delusion in the American Past,” University of Hartford Philosophy Club, April 18
- 2018 “Reading Women’s Bodies: Local Methods in a Transatlantic World,” New York University, Atlantic History Workshop, February 13
- 2015 “Getting to Graduate School: From Undergraduate Researcher to Academic Historian,” Mayrock Alumni Lecture, Department of History, Ithaca College, April 13
- 2014 “Heroines and Helpmeets: Women and Politics in the War of 1812,” Public Lecture at The Mainstay, Rock Hall, Maryland, September 21
- 2011-12 “Intoxicated Insurgents and the Politics of Public Houses,” Gadsby’s Tavern, Alexandria, Virginia, February 27, 2011 [reprised March 4, 2011; and September 30, 2012]

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of Hartford:

United States to the Civil War Era
 United States since the Civil War Era
 African American History
 History of Women in America
 History of Sexuality in America
 History of LGBTQ+ Americans
 Love, Sex, and Desire (First Year Seminar)
 Abortion in America (Interdisciplinary Studies Course)
 History as Detection (Research Methods Course)
 Making History (Senior Capstone Seminar)
 Gender Trouble (Honors Seminar)

Instructor, University of Maryland, College Park:

Race, Gender, and Science in American History
 Interpreting American History: Beginnings to 1877

Graduate Student Teaching Assistant, University of Maryland, College Park:

Interpreting American History: Beginnings to 1877

Interpreting American History: From 1865-Present

History of Sexuality in America

Love, Labor, and Citizenship: History of American Women to 1880

“Pursuits of Happiness”: Ordinary Lives in the American Revolution

PODCAST INTERVIEWS

2023 [Interview with Susan Liebell](#) on the *New Books in Political Science* podcast, *New Books Network*, June 19

2019 “[Faces, Beauty, and the Brain](#),” Interview with Michael Robinson on *Time to Eat the Dogs: A Podcast About Science, History, and Exploration*, May 21

LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

Service to the Profession

- 2026–27 Nominating Committee, Society for Historians of the Early American Republic (SHEAR)
- 2026–27 Graduate Student Mentorship Program, Society for Historians of the Early American Republic (SHEAR)
- 2023–27 Steering Committee, History of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Seminar at the Massachusetts Historical Society
- 2025–26 Program Committee, Society for Historians of the Early American Republic (SHEAR)
- 2026 Invited Commentator, Hench Post-Dissertation Colloquium for Jessie Vander Heide’s book project, *Schooling Intimacy: Love, Romance, and Sexuality at American Female Academies, 1780-1870*, April 10
- 2026 Invited Speaker, Grants and Fellowships Workshop for Graduate Students of the Department of English and English Literature, University of Tulsa, January 30
- 2024 Fellowship Selection Committee, Fred W. Smith Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon
- 2021–24 Development Committee, McNeil Center for Early American Studies (MCEAS)
- 2023–24 Graduate Student Mentorship Program, Society for Historians of the Early American Republic (SHEAR)
- 2023 Reviewer, National Science Foundation (NSF), Science and Technology Studies Program

- 2020 Invited Speaker, Grants and Fellowships Workshop for Graduate Students of the Department of English and English Literature, University of Tulsa, November 16
- 2019 Fellowship Selection Committee for the Jay and Deborah Last Fellowships, American Antiquarian Society

University of Hartford

- 2026–29 Chair, Department of History and Philosophy
- 2023– Member, Africana Studies Steering Committee
- 2025 Interim Associate Dean for Academic Planning & Curriculum (Spring)
- 2024 Chair, Curriculum Committee (Fall)
- 2021–24 Member, Curriculum Committee
- 2023 Poster Session, Teaching and Learning Collaborative, September 12
- 2023 Invited Panelist, “Creating a Sense of Belonging in Your Classroom,” Teaching and Learning Conference, August 23
- 2023 Invited Panelist, “Cultivating Student Success through Community,” Annual Teaching and Learning Collaborative, February 10
- 2022–23 Search Committee Member, Tenure-Track Hire in Music History
- 2021–22 Search Committee Member, Tenure-Track Hire in Judaic Studies
- 2019–20 Co-coordinator, Junior Faculty Research Group
- 2019 Faculty Advisory Board, Center for Student Success
- 2018–19 Faculty Fellow, Davis Project to Facilitate Student Writing
- 2018–19 Faculty Fellow, Critical Thinking Micro-Skills Initiative
- 2018–19 Search Committee Member, Tenure-Track Hire in Philosophy and Social Justice

FOREIGN LANGUAGE

French (moderate proficiency in reading and writing; basic oral proficiency)
 German (moderate proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking)