

Robin K. Crigler

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References are listed on page 8

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Michigan State University, History, August 2021

Dissertation: “Laughter and Identity: A Social and Cultural History of South African Humor, 1910-1961”

Dissertation Committee: Peter Alegi (Chair), Sekibakiba Peter Lekgoathi, Edward Murphy, Michael Stamm

Major Field: African History

Minor Fields: U.S. History, Anthrohistory

B.A. The College of William and Mary, History and Religious Studies, May 2014

Thesis: “When George Washington’s Ghost Turned Handsprings: South African Conflict and American Identity, 1895-1905” (Highest Honors)

Advisor: Robert Trent Vinson

EMPLOYMENT

Assistant Professor of World History, Glenville State University, 2025-Present

- Design and teach upper- and lower-level history courses, including general education and major requirements
- Course themes include Introduction to World Cultures I and II, Fields and Careers in History and Political Science, and Historiography (for full details see “Teaching Experience” section below).
- Plan and participate in meetings and initiatives of the Social Sciences Department such as annual Constitution Day festivities and National Humanities Alliance workshops

Visiting Assistant Professor, Valparaiso University Department of History, 2024-2025

- Design and teach both upper- and lower-level African and world history courses totaling 12 credits per semester.
- Course themes include The World in the Twentieth Century, Colonialism and Independence: Understanding Modern Africa, and Sport and Social Justice in South Africa
- Teach one section of Valparaiso’s first-year writing and leadership course, VUE-102 (Finding your Voice in Valpo Spaces).

Visiting Assistant Professor, Dickinson College Department of History, 2022-2024

- Design and teach five Africa-related history courses per year, including courses cross-listed with the Africana Studies and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies departments.
- Course themes include African Civilizations to 1850, Gender and Sexuality in Africa, African Ecological History, and Apartheid in South Africa
- Collaborate with other Dickinson units like the Waidner-Spahr Library, Trout Gallery of Art, and Office of Academic Technology on student projects and pedagogical design.

- Participate as a voting member in History Department and all-College faculty meetings.
- Increased enrollment in Africa-related History / Africana Studies courses 16% from Year 1 to Year 2 of my appointment.

Assistant Professor, Fixed Term, Michigan State University Department of History, 2021-2022

- Design and teach a variety of Africa-related offerings for the Michigan State University History Department and Integrative Arts and Humanities program, including large (100-150 student) introductory surveys and smaller (15-20 student) history methodology courses.

FELLOWSHIPS & GRANTS

University of Johannesburg African Biographies Project Fellowship, 2025-

- Supports two years of writing visits to the Institute affiliated with the University of Johannesburg, in order to conduct research for a biographical project on the apartheid-era satirist Casey Motsisi.

Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Study (J.I.A.S.) Visiting Research Fellowship, 2022-2024

- Supported research visits to the Institute affiliated with the University of Johannesburg, supporting postdoctoral research projects on R. R. R. Dhlomo and Casey Motsisi

Dickinson College Faculty Scholarly Project Grant, 2023

- Supplemented the first year of my J.I.A.S. Research Fellowship fieldwork in South Africa.

Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship, 2019

- Supported eight months of dissertation research in South Africa, based at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Michigan State University Department of History Summer Research Grant, 2016-2017

- Supported two summers of pre-dissertation fieldwork in South Africa

Michigan State University Graduate School Travel Grant, 2017

- Supported travel to the 2017 History in the Making Graduate Student Conference hosted by Concordia University, Montréal, Canada

Foreign Language and Area Studies Academic Year Fellowship, 2015-2017

- Supported two academic years of intensive Zulu study at Michigan State University

Foreign Language and Area Studies Summer Study Abroad Fellowship, 2016

- Supported a summer of intensive Zulu study offered by the University of Pennsylvania in Durban, South Africa

PUBLICATIONS

Anthologies

Crowd Work: Audience and Performance in Africa (co-edited with Tom Penfold, under contract with University College London Press for publication in 2026).

Chapters

“Laughing Against the Night: The Humor of R. R. R. Dhlomo and Msimbithi, Umfana weKhishi at *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 1943-1963,” in *Ulibambe Lingashoni! The Centenary History of Ilanga Lase Natal Newspaper*, ed. Bongani Ngqulunga (Johannesburg, South Africa: Jacana Media, 2025), 267-286.

“‘Guys, We Are Called for a Family Meeting’: Humor, Family Metaphor, and the COVID-19 Pandemic in South Africa,” in *Humor as Social Critique: Widening the African Perspective*, eds. Jennalee Donian and Andrea Hurst (London, U.K.: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2025).

“There’s No Such Thing As ‘Too Soon’ Here: Taking Stock of South Africa’s Comedy Boom,” in *Stand-Up Comedy in Africa: Humor in Popular Languages and Media*, ed. Izuu Nwankwo (Stuttgart, Germany: Ibidem Press, 2022), 235-251.

Journal Articles

“Afropolitan Influence: Gender, Comedy, and Social Media in Global Africa,” *Social Media and Society* 10.4 (2024), 1-11. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051241308330>.

“On the Beat: Black Humor in South Africa, 1943-1963,” *English in Africa* 50.1 (2023), 49-72. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/eia.v50i1.3>

“‘Then...Horror...Horror’: Laughter, Terror, and Rebellion in the Unpublished Plays of H. I. E. Dhlomo,” *African Studies* 81.2 (2022), 211-228. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00020184.2022.2142763>

“No Laughing Matter? Humor and the Performance of South Africa,” *South African Theatre Journal* 31.2-3 (2018), 155-171. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10137548.2018.1451360>

Journal Articles (Co-Authored, as Primary Author)

“Border Jumpers: Stand-Up Comedy and Afrophobia in South Africa,” *Comedy Studies* (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1080/2040610X.2024.2436747>. With Jennalee Donian.

Media Articles

“Afropocalypse Now! Doomscrolling at the National Arts Festival as Makhanda falls apart,” *Daily Maverick*, July 9th, 2025, < <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2025-07-09-national-arts-festival-afropocalypse-now/> >.

“Calm before the storm—an American reflects on the National Arts Festival and two countries in transition,” *Daily Maverick*, July 4th, 2024, < <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2024-07-04-an-american-reflects-on-national-arts-fest-2-countries-in-transition/> >.

“The second coming—comedians rush to respond to SA’s new political reality,” *Daily Maverick*, June 4th, 2024, < <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2024-06-04-sa-comedians-rush-to-respond-to-new-political-reality/> >.

“Revisiting Bloke Modisane, from Sophiatown to Gaza [3-part essay series],” *Litnet*, January 17th-30th, 2024. < <https://www.litnet.co.za/revisiting-bloke-modisane-from-sophiatown-to-gaza-1-on-pain/> >.

“The wonderful corniness of the Springboks: South African softness at its best,” *LitNet*, November 6th, 2023, <<https://www.litnet.co.za/the-wonderful-corniness-of-the-springboks-south-african-softness-at-its-best/>>.

“African-ish: Veteran comedian goes green—in more ways than one,” *Grocott’s Mail* (Makhanda, South Africa), July 1, 2023, <<https://grocotts.ru.ac.za/2023/07/01/african-ish-veteran-comedian-goes-green-in-more-ways-than-one/>>.

“A sterile vow: *Die Gelofte* and the transformation of myth,” *LitNet*, September 20, 2022, <<https://www.litnet.co.za/a-sterile-vow-die-gelofte-and-the-transformation-of-myth/>>.

“Remembering Stephen Gray,” *LitNet*, November 18, 2020, <<https://www.litnet.co.za/remembering-stephen-gray/>>.

Monographs

Inevitable Satirists: Histories of South African Humor, 1910-1965 (in contract discussions with University of Virginia Press).

Reviews

Alex La Guma: The Exile Years, 1966-1985, edited by Christopher J. Lee, *African Studies Review* 67.4 (2024), 1169-1170. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2024.150>.

William Kentridge: Process as Metaphor and Other Doubtful Enterprises by Leora Maltz-Leca, and ***Awakenings: The Art of Lionel Davis***, edited by Mario Pissarra, *African Arts* 52.3 (2019), 86-87. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1162/afar_r_00488.

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

International

“Irreverence, Ridicule and The Risqué: Humour in (De- / Pro-)moting Social Justice, in South Africa and Beyond,” 10th Annual Conference of the Wits Centre for Diversity Studies, October 15th, 2024 (Johannesburg, South Africa).

CONFERENCE PAPERS & PRESENTATIONS

International

“May We Never Lose That Sense of Humor: Casey Motsisi’s Soweto Years,” 29th Biennial Conference of the Southern African Historical Society, June 26th, 2024 (Johannesburg, South Africa)

“‘Necessary to a Balanced Attitude’: Humor, Power, and Education in Interwar South Africa,” Nelson Mandela University SARChI Identities and Social Cohesion in Africa 2023 Conference on the Power of Humor, June 19, 2023 (Gqeberha, South Africa)

“Inevitable Satirists: Laughter, Fear, and Censorship in Interwar South Africa,” Cambridge University African Studies Seminar, November 21, 2022 (virtual)

“‘Laughing All the While’: Humor and Horror in the Plays of H. I. E. Dhlomo,” 28th Biennial Conference of the Southern African Historical Society, June 29, 2022 (East London, South Africa)

“‘Kodwa Nama Breadwinner Angithi’: Family Metaphor and the COVID-19 Pandemic in South Africa,” Nelson Mandela University SARChI Identities and Social Cohesion in Africa Seminar Series, June 10, 2022 (virtual)

“There’s No Such Thing As ‘Too Soon’ Here: Taking Stock of South Africa’s Comedy Boom,” Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study Colloquium on African Stand-Up Comedy Practice, October 9, 2019 (Stellenbosch, South Africa)

- “Begin With the Girls, *Wetu*’: Gender in 1930s South Africa Through the Eyes of R. Roamer, Esq.,”** 27th Biennial Conference of the Southern African Historical Society, June 24, 2019 (Makhanda, South Africa)
- “Are South Africans a Race of Clowns?’: Stephen Black, Leon Schuster, and Humor in the New South Africa(s),”** Stellenbosch University History Seminar Series, July 18, 2017 (Stellenbosch, South Africa)
- “No Laughing Matter? Humor and the Performance of South Africa,”** Concordia University History in the Making Graduate Student Conference, April 1, 2017 (Montréal, Canada)

United States

- “Algorithmic Mysteries: African Women, Comedy and Influence,”** 49th Annual Conference of the African Literature Association, May 26, 2023 (Knoxville, Tenn.)
- “Endemic Laughter: A Provisional Review of COVID-19 Humor Studies in Africa,”** 65th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, November 18th, 2022 (Philadelphia, Pa.)
- “Wielding a Sjambok: H. D. Tyamzashe and the Development of Black South African Satire in English,”** 48th Annual Conference of the African Literature Association, May 21, 2022 (virtual)
- “From Oom Paul to Uncle Cyril: South Africa’s COVID-19 ‘Family Meetings’ in Historical Context,”** 64th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, November 18, 2021 (virtual)
- “A Joke is Like Heart Surgery’: Money and Mockery in South African Humor History,”** 47th Annual Conference of the African Literature Association, May 29, 2021 (virtual)
- “The Lucrative Art of Prostitution’: The Politics of Satire in White South Africa, 1908-1931,”** 20th Annual Africa Conference, University of Texas at Austin, April 3, 2021 (virtual)
- “Laughter on Lockdown: South African Stand-up Comedians and the COVID-19 Pandemic,”** 63rd Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, November 19, 2020 (virtual)

RESEARCH & TEACHING INTERESTS

African and African Diaspora History	History of Gender and Sexuality
African Popular Cultures	Humor Studies
Food Studies	Stand-up Comedy Studies
Global Colonial History	U.S.-South Africa Connective History

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Courses taught:

Glenville State University, Social Sciences Department

Fields and Careers in History and Political Science (HIST 293), Spring 2025

Historiography (HIST 450), Fall 2025

Introduction to World Civilizations I (HIST 201), Fall 2025

Valparaiso University, History Department

Colonialism and Independence: Understanding Modern Africa (HIST-350), Spring 2025

Sports and Social Justice in South Africa (HIST-290), Fall 2024 (online, asynchronous)

The World in the Twentieth Century (HIST-110), Fall 2024 and Spring 2025

Valparaiso University, VUE (first-year program)

Finding Your Voice in Valpo Spaces (VUE-102), Fall 2024 and Spring 2025

Dickinson College, History Department

African Civilizations to 1850 (HST 170 / AFST 170), Fall 2022 and 2023

African History since 1800 (HST 171 / AFST 171), Spring 2023 and 2024

Topics in African History: History of Gender and Sexuality in Africa (HST 216 / AFST 220 / WGSS 202), Spring 2023

Topics in Comparative History: Cape Town to Carlisle: U.S.A.-South Africa Historical Encounters (HIST 215 / AFST 220), Fall 2023

The Atlantic Slave Trade and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1850 (HIST 272 / AFST 220), Spring 2024

The Rise and Fall of Apartheid (HIST 274 / AFST 220), Fall 2022

Ecological History of Africa (HIST 284 / AFST 220), Spring 2023 and 2024

Michigan State University, History Department

Historical Methods and Skills (HST 201): Eat Well, Laugh Often, Play Hard?—A Cultural Approach to Historical Methods and Skills, Spring 2022

Historical Methods and Skills (HST 201): Trevor Noah Deconstructed, Fall 2021

Historical Methods and Skills (HST 201): Race, Gender, and Humor in South African History, Spring 2021

Michigan State University, Center for Integrative Studies in the Arts and Humanities

Africa and the World (IAH 205), Assistant Professor (Fixed-Term), Fall 2021 and Spring 2022

* Indicates Graduate Assistant (G.A.) roles

Independent studies supervised:

Livia Ball (Dickinson College, Africana Studies)

“L.G.B.T. Rights in South Africa and Uganda,” defending May 2024.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

J.I.A.S. Fieldwork, June-August 2023 and May-July 2024

- Conducted archival research and interviews for a new book project on Casey Motsisi supported by Dickinson College and the Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Study; based primarily in Johannesburg.

Post-Doctoral Fieldwork, South Africa, May-July 2022

- Followed up on dissertation research and developed new article projects; based primarily in Durban and Johannesburg.

Dissertation Fieldwork, South Africa, March-November 2019

- Conducted interviews and examined archives in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Durban, Pietermaritzburg, and Makhandla

Pre-Dissertation Fieldwork, South Africa and Austin, Texas, May-August 2017

- Conducted exploratory research for my dissertation in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town, and Makhandla, as well as at the Harry Ransom at the University of Texas, Austin

University of Pennsylvania Zulu Immersion Summer Study Abroad, June-August 2016

- Based in Durban, South Africa

INTERNSHIPS AND PART-TIME WORK

A.P. African American Studies Outside Item Writer and Sourcing Consultant, The College Board, 2022-Present

- Collaborate with a team of College Board staff and outside item writers to develop prompts and multiple-choice questions for ongoing A.P. African American Studies pilot project.
- Identify and catalogue a wide range of primary and secondary sources on African and African American history for the A.P. African American Studies source bank.

Intern, African Serial Indexing Pilot Project, Michigan State University Libraries, 2017-2018

- Assisted the Africana Librarian of the Michigan State University Libraries with designing a multi-institution pilot project to index rare journals from the African continent held by American institutions.
- Wrote and presented a report outlining the results of Phase I of the pilot study at the annual meeting of the Africana Librarians Council in November 2017.

Intern, The Children's Center of Winston-Salem, 2014-2015

- Assisted teachers with feeding, cleaning, and other classroom activities at the Children's Center of Winston-Salem, a public school for children between the ages of infancy and Grade 5 with significant long-term physical and cognitive health needs.

HONORS & AWARDS

Irene Steindler Award, 2021

- Recognizing work related to decolonizing African history and promoting equity with higher-education institutions on the African continent.

Jeff Rooney Paper Prize, 2017

- For the best history seminar paper of the academic year, "No Laughing Matter? Humor and the Performance of South Africa"

LANGUAGES

English	Native speaker; fluent
Afrikaans	Advanced research proficiency
Zulu	Advanced research proficiency
Portuguese	Intermediate research proficiency

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS & AFFILIATIONS

African Studies Association
African Literature Association
International Association for the Philosophy of Humor
Southern African Historical Society
Phi Beta Kappa

REFERENCES

Emily Pawley*

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** Ph.D. committee chair

*** Ph. D. committee member