

Maurice S. Lee
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Professional Positions

2014- Professor of English, Boston University
2014-2019 Chair of English Department, Boston University (on leave 2017-2018)
2009-2014 Associate Professor of English, Boston University
2005-2009 Assistant Professor of English, Boston University
2001-2005 Assistant Professor of English, University of Missouri, Columbia

Education

2000 Ph.D., English, University of California, Los Angeles
1990 B.A., American Studies, Stanford University

Fellowships and Major Grants

2017-2018 Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies Fellowship, Harvard University
2014 Boston University Center for the Humanities Senior Research Fellowship (spring)
2013 Hariri Institute Grant in the Digital Humanities
2009-2010 ACLS/Charles A. Ryskamp Research Fellowship
2007-2008 NEH Research Fellowship
2007 Boston University Center for the Humanities Junior Research Fellowship (spring)
2003 NEH Summer Fellowship

Prizes and Honors

2012 *Choice* Outstanding Academic Book (for *Uncertain Chances*)
2009 Neu Teaching Award, Boston University, College of Arts and Sciences
2003 James Gargano Prize, Poe Studies Association
2001 Hennig Cohen Prize, Melville Society
1999 Distinguished Teaching Award, UCLA English Department

Books

2025 *A Very Short Introduction to Herman Melville* (Oxford UP, 2025)
2019 *Overwhelmed: Literature, Aesthetics, and the Nineteenth-Century Information Revolution* (Princeton UP, 2019)
2012 *Uncertain Chances: Science, Skepticism, and Belief in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Oxford UP, 2012)
2005 *Slavery, Philosophy, and American Literature, 1830-1860* (Cambridge UP, 2005)

Book and Journal Editing

2016 “The End of the End of the Canon?” (forum with ten contributors), *J19* 4:1 (2016)
2009 *The Cambridge Companion to Frederick Douglass*, ed. Maurice S. Lee (Cambridge UP, 2009)

Articles and Chapters

- 2026 “Pivoting from Puritanism,” *Leviathan* (forthcoming 2026)
- 2026 “Feeling Science: Humboldt, Darwin, Poe,” *American Literary History* (forthcoming 2026)
- 2024 “Experimenting with Emerson: A Quantitative Approach” (with Brad Rittenhouse), *The Oxford Handbook of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Christopher Hanlon (Oxford UP, 2024), 351-71
- 2022 “The Coming Civil War,” *Nineteenth-Century American Literature in Transition, Volume III: 1851-1877*, ed. Cody Marrs (Cambridge UP, 2022), 273-88
- 2022 “Feeling Fallible, Being Wrong,” *American Literary History* 34:1 (2022), 199-211
- 2022 “Dickinson Uncut: Reading and Not Reading,” *Oxford Handbook of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Cristanne Miller and Karen Sanchez-Eppler (Oxford UP, 2022), 319-35
- 2022 “Numbers, Literature, Aesthetics,” *Beyond Narrative: Exploring Narrative Liminality and Its Cultural Work*, ed. Sebastian M. Herrmann, Katja Kanzler, and Stefan Schubert (Transcript Verlag, 2022), 31-46
- 2020 “The Office of Literature,” *Modern Language Studies* 50:1 (2020), 78-87
- 2020 “Globalism, Transparency, Comprehensiveness,” *Libraries and Archives in the Digital Age*, ed. Susan Mizruchi (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 171-78
- 2018 “Genre, Science, and ‘Hans Pfaall,’” *Oxford Handbook to Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. J. Gerald Kennedy and Scott Peeples (Oxford UP, 2018), 338-50
- 2017 “Melville’s Philosophy of the History of Science: ‘The Apple-Tree Table,’” *Melville’s Philosophies*, ed. Branka Arsic and K.L. Evans (Bloomsbury, 2017), 62-77
- 2016 “Necessary Chances” *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 60 (2016), 435-41
- 2016 “Afterword: Five Thoughts on the Canon,” *J19* 4:1 (2016), 174-80
- 2016 “The End of the End of the Canon?,” *J19* 4:1 (2016), 125-30
- 2014 “Deserted Islands and Overwhelmed Readers,” *American Literary History* 26:2 (2014), 1-27
- 2014 “Falsifiability, Confirmation Bias, and Textual Promiscuity,” *J19* 2:1 (2014), 162-71
- 2014 “Skepticism and *The Confidence-Man*,” *The New Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville*, ed. Robert S. Levine (Cambridge UP, 2014), 113-26
- 2013 “Poe by the Numbers: Odd Man Out?” *Remapping Antebellum Culture: Poe at 200*, ed. J. Gerald Kennedy and Jerome McGann (Louisiana State UP, 2013), 227-44
- 2012 “Searching the Archives with Dickens and Hawthorne: Databases and Aesthetic Judgment after the New Historicism,” *ELH* 79 (2012), 747-71
- 2012 “Skepticism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Philosophy,” *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, ed. Russ Castronovo (Oxford UP, 2012), 252-68
- 2011 “Evidence, Coincidence, and Superabundant Information,” *Victorian Studies* 54:1 (2011), 87-94
- 2010 “1850s: The First Renaissance of Black Letters,” *A Companion to African American Literature*, ed. Gene Jarrett (Blackwell, 2010), 103-18
- 2009 “Probably Poe,” *American Literature* 81:2 (2009), 225-52
- 2009 “Edgar Allan Poe,” *A Companion to Crime Fiction*, eds. Charles Rzepka and Lee Horsley (Blackwell, 2009), 369-80
- 2009 “Introduction,” *The Cambridge Companion to Frederick Douglass*, ed. Maurice S. Lee (Cambridge UP, 2009), 1-12
- 2008 “Dickinson’s Superb Surprise,” *Raritan* 28:1 (2008), 45-67
- 2008 “Melville, Douglass, the Civil War, Pragmatism,” *Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville: Essays in Relation*, ed. Robert S. Levine and Samuel Otter (U of

- North Carolina P, 2008), 396-415
- 2007 “Which World? Which Work? Which Melville?” *Modern Intellectual History* 4:2 (2007), 1-10
- 2006 “‘Read it if you can’: The Language of *Moby-Dick*,” *A Companion to Melville*, ed. Wyn Kelley (Blackwell, 2006), 393-407
- 2005 “‘The Old and the New’: Double Consciousness and the Literature of Slavery,” *ESQ*: 49:1-3 (2005), 95-105
- 2003 “Absolute Poe: His System of Transcendental Racism,” *American Literature* 75:4 (2003), 751-81
- 2000 “Writing Through the War: The Civil War Poetry of Melville and Dickinson after the Renaissance,” *PMLA* 115:5 (2000), 1124-28
- 2000 “Melville’s Subversive Political Philosophy: ‘Benito Cereno’ and the Fate of Speech,” *American Literature* 72:3 (2000), 495-519
- 1999 “Du Bois the Novelist: White Influence, Black Spirit, and *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*,” *African American Review* 33:3 (1999), 389-400
- 1995 “Melville’s ‘Mistakes’: Correcting the Politics of ‘Poor Man’s Pudding and Rich Man’s Crumbs,’” *ESQ* 41:2 (1995), 153-75

Reviews

- 2018 “Frederick Douglass is No Libertarian,” *PublicBooks* (2,000 words)
<http://www.publicbooks.org/author/maurice-s-lee/>
- 2012 Review of Ivy Wilson’s *Specters of Democracy: Blackness and the Aesthetics of Politics in the Antebellum U.S.*, in *Journal of American Studies* 46:3 (2012), 771-72
- 2011 Review of Michael Gilmore’s *The War on Words: Slavery, Race, and Free Speech in American Literature*, and Jeannine DeLombard’s *Slavery on Trial: Law, Abolitionism, and Print Culture*, in *American Literature* 83:3 (2011), 666-67
- 2010 Review of Branka Arsic’s *On Leaving: A Reading in Emerson*, in *New England Quarterly* 53:3 (2010), 559-62
- 2009 Review of Ezra Tawil’s *The Making of Racial Sentiment: Slavery and the Birth of the Frontier Romance*, in *Journal of American Studies* 43:1 (2009), 83-84
- 2008 “How American Universities Learned to Love American Literature,” *minnesota review* 70 (2008), 195-98
- 2008 Review of Roger Lundin’s *From Nature to Experience: The American Search for Cultural Authority*, in *Journal of American History* 95:1 (2008), 198-99
- 2007 Review of Deak Naber’s *A Victory of Law: The Fourteenth Amendment, the Civil War, and American Literature*, in *New England Quarterly* 80:1 (2007), 173-75
- 2006 “After the American Enlightenment,” *English Language Notes* 44:1 (2006), 267-70
- 2002 “Re-Canonizing Nineteenth-Century American Poetry,” in *minnesota review* 55-57 (2002), 327-30

Invited Talks

- 2026 “What, Me Worry?—Summary in the Age of AI,” Harvard University
- 2025 “Post-Righteous Douglass,” *American Quarterly* symposium, University of Arizona
- 2024 “Literature by the Numbers: An Interdisciplinary Collaboration,” Boston University, Computational Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences Colloquium
- 2023 “Emerson’s Entities,” Center for Spatial and Textual Analysis, Stanford University
- 2020 “The Office of Literature” (Opening Address), Northeast Modern Language Association Convention, Boston
- 2019 “Mass Print + Numbers = Information x (Enchantment ÷ Anxiety),” University of London, School of Advanced Studies
- 2019 “Stirring Enumerations” (Keynote Address), University of Leipzig, Borders of

Narrative Conference

- 2018 “Literature and the Nineteenth-Century Information Revolution,” Tufts University
 2018 “Standardized Literature Tests at the Bureau of Indian Affairs,” Brown University
 2017 “Testing Literature and Producing Knowledge in *Moby-Dick*,” Univ. of Rhode Island
 2017 “Literature, Aesthetics, and the Nineteenth-Century Information Revolution,”
 Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University
 2017 “Orders and Lists,” Brandeis Novel Symposium, Brandeis University
 2016 “‘When Found Make of Note of’: Literature as Information,” Interacting with Print
 Symposium, Montreal, Canada
 2015 “Cracking Codes and Managing Risk in Nineteenth-Century Literature,” John F.
 Kennedy Institute for North American Studies, Berlin, Germany
 2015 “Risking the Humanities” (Keynote Address), Perilous Passages Conference, Univ. of
 Bayreuth/Univ. of Erlanger-Nuremberg, Germany
 2015 “Accountability and the Canon: Survey Course Statistics,” Vanderbilt University,
 2015 “Enchantment, Numbers, and Textual Excess in Nineteenth-Century Adventure
 Novels (With Some DIY DH on the DL),” UC Berkeley, April, 2015
 2015 “Off the Grid: Escaping Information Networks in Nineteenth-Century Fiction,”
 Center for American Literary Studies, Pennsylvania State University
 2014 “Liberalism and Literary Values: Anglo-American Measurements,” Martin Luther
 University, Halle, Germany
 2014 “Carrying Out the Wealth of the Indies: Emerson’s Many Books,” Mahindra
 Institute Center, Harvard University
 2013 “Poe, Usher, and Race,” University of Valencia, Spain
 2012 “Melville and the Sword of Chance,” Columbia University
 2012 “Deserted Islands and Overwhelmed Readers: Textual Excess in Nineteenth-Century
 Literature,” *ELH* Colloquium, Johns Hopkins University
 2012 “Manning up in the Civil War: Slavery, Risk, and Frederick Douglass,” University of
 Richmond
 2009 “Poe by the Numbers: Odd Man Out?” Poe Symposium, University of Virginia
 2007 “Frederick Douglass as Philosopher,” San Francisco State University
 2006 “Modern Love, Modern Friends,” Figures of Friendship in Emerson and Thoreau
 Colloquium, University of Oregon
 2005 “Douglass’s Common Sense,” Princeton University
 2004 “Pragmatic Melville,” University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Conference Presentations

- 2025 “Racial Prejudice and Pre-Judgment in Darwin and Melville,” American Literature
 Association Conference, Boston
 2025 “Pivoting from Puritanism,” International Melville Society Conference, Mystic,
 Conn.
 2024 “Prediction and Originality: AI and Emerson,” C19 Conference, Pasadena
 2022 “Science, Emotion, and ‘The Gold-Bug,’” International Poe Society Conference, Boston
 2019 “Reckoning Melville,” Melville’s Measures Conference, Lille and Paris
 2018 “Conserving Douglass,” C19 Conference, Albuquerque
 2017 “Organizing Melville,” MLA Convention, Philadelphia
 2016 “‘Familiar Beauties’: Mass Culture as Information,” MLA Convention, Austin
 2013 “The End of the End of the Canon?” C19 Conference, Chapel Hill
 2013 “Literary Merit: Numbers, Tests, Aesthetics,” MLA Convention, Boston
 2013 “Thoreau’s Rough Ground,” MLA Convention, Boston
 2012 “Before Reading: Finding the Aesthetic Object,” C19 Conference, Berkeley
 2011 “The New New Historicism: Database Archives and Aesthetic Judgment,” MLA
 Convention, Los Angeles

- 2011 “‘Before the Pilgrims Landed, We Were Here’: Puritanism and the Early Black Press,”
MLA Convention, Los Angeles
- 2009 “Teaching Melville: A Roundtable,” American Lit. Association Conference, Boston
- 2008 “Probability and Pragmatism in Antebellum American Fiction,” MLA Convention,
San Francisco
- 2008 “Thoreau’s Empirical Aesthetic,” Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts
Convention, Charlotte
- 2008 “Franklin’s Moral Certainties,” Omohundro Institute Conference, Boston
- 2007 “‘There is no chance?’: Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Mourning, and the Civil War,”
American Literature Association Conference, Boston
- 2007 “Running the Risks: Slave Narratives and Chance,” Northeast MLA Conference,
Baltimore
- 2006 “‘But let others philosophize’: Anti-intellection and Antebellum Black Culture,”
Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy Conference, San Antonio
- 2005 “Placing Bets, Moving Spaces: Whist versus Chess in the Antebellum Era,” American
Studies Association Conference, Washington, D.C.
- 2005 “On the Way to Pragmatism: The Civil War Writings of Douglass and Melville,” The
Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville Sesquicentennial Conf., New Bedford
- 2004 “‘Not Altogether Human’: Hawthorne’s Civil War and Jon Stewart’s ‘Mess O’
Potamia,’” MLA Convention, Philadelphia
- 2004 “Dickinson’s Discovered Self: The Productive Unconscious,” American Literature
Association Conference, San Francisco
- 2003 “Double Consciousness in Antebellum Literature,” MLA Convention, San Diego
- 2003 “Emerson as Action Hero: This Time It’s Personal,” NEH Summer Institute, Santa Fe
- 2003 “The Sentimental Calvinism of Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe,”
American Literature Association Conference, Cambridge, Mass.
- 2003 “Poe’s Peculiar Transcendentalism,” American Comparative Literature Association
Convention, San Diego
- 2002 “Black and Black: Irish-Americans and the Slavery Debate,” MLA Convention,
New York
- 1999 “Writing Through the War: The Civil War Poetry of Melville and Dickinson after the
Renaissance,” MLA Convention, Chicago

Other Presentations (Scholarly)

- 2025 “Post-Righteous Douglass,” Philosophy Department, Arizona University (Zoom)
- 2024 Respondent to Ben Roth, Philosophy and Literature Symposium, Boston University
- 2018 Respondent and moderator, Interacting with Print Symposium, Montreal, Canada
- 2017 Panel commentator, “The Global Politics of Archives,” *Recording Lives: Libraries
and Archives in the Digital Age*, Boston University
- 2016 Response to Nathan Wolff, Mahindra Institute Center, Harvard University

Other Presentations (Public)

- 2025 “Poe and the Gothic,” Alumni Summer Seminar, Yale University
- 2024 “Teaching Literature in Difficult Times,” seminar leader, Teachers as Scholars
- 2019 “Information and Literature in the 19th and 21st Centuries,” Roxbury Public Library,
Roxbury, MA
- 2017 “The Value of the Humanities,” Alumni Webinar, Boston University
- 2017 “With Friends Like This” (a response to Philip Gould), Massachusetts Historical
Society, Early American History Seminar, Boston
- 2016 “Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Scarlet Data,” Alumni Talk, Boston University
- 2015 “The Five Best Years of American Literature,” Alumni Talk, Boston University

2015 Speaker, Writing Program Seminar on Transfer Learning

Service (selected)

National/International (Ongoing)

- 2024 - Editorial Board, *ALH*
 2011 - Editorial Board, *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance*
 2018 - Radcliffe Institute Fellowship Evaluator
 2010 - Tenure and Promotion Evaluator: Brown, NYU, Georgetown, Northeastern, Univ. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Arizona State, Richmond, Penn State-Lehigh Valley, Univ. of Pacific, SUNY-Buffalo, Colgate, Purdue, Ohio State (2), Univ. of Georgia
 2006 - Book Manuscript Evaluator: Cambridge UP (8), Oxford UP (10), Harvard UP (2), Stanford UP (3), U of Pennsylvania P (2), Princeton UP (2), Yale UP, Michigan UP, MLA Press, Broadview Press, Ohio State UP, U of Alabama P
 2005 - Essay Evaluator (not as editorial board member): *PMLA*, *American Literary History*, *American Quarterly*, *African American Review*, *J19*, *ESQ*, *Victorian Studies*, *Studies in Romanticism*, *MELUS*, *Configurations*, *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, *Poe Studies*, *Studies in the Novel*

National/International (Completed)

- 2018-2021 Editorial Board, *J19*
 2017-19 Paris Institute for Advanced Studies, Fellowship Reviewer
 2016 NEH-Mellon Digital Publishing Fellowship Selection Committee
 2015 APR External Evaluator, SUNY-Albany
 2015-17 Nominating Committee, Melville Society (chair 2017)
 2010 -19 Editorial Board, *Poe Studies*
 2010 NEH Research Fellowship Selection Committee
 2008-09 American Literature Association Program Chair, Melville Society
 2003-06 Hennig Cohen Prize committee, Melville Society (chair 2006)

College/University (Boston University)

- 2023- Hayden Scholar Mentor (second cohort)
 2020-2024 Executive Committee, Boston University Center for the Humanities
 2022-2023 Future of PhD Education Taskforce, Provost's Office
 2021-2022 Faculty Advisor and Member, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Team, CAS
 2020-2021 Co-Chair, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Team, CAS
 2020-2021 Dean's Search Committee—Wheelock College of Education
 2019-2020 Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion, Provost's Office
 2019 Steering Committee, "Can We Talk" forum, BU Center for the Humanities
 2018-2022 Hayden Scholar Mentor (first cohort)
 2018 Hariri Institute, Program Review Panelist
 2011-2013 Graduate Academic Affairs Committee
 2011-2013 Graduate Research Abroad Fellowship Selection Committee
 2007-2024 Guest Lecturer, Core Curriculum (with a few gap years)
 2010-2013 Boston Public Schools Scholars Mentor
 2006-2007 Writing Program Coordinator
 2006-2007 Writing Board
 2006-2007 Co-organizer of Humanities Foundation Junior Faculty Colloquium
 2005-2006 Graduate Student Office Travel Grant Committee

Departmental (Boston University)

- 2022- Director of Undergraduate Studies

2024 Tenure Committee
 2024 Merit Committee
 2023-2024 Tenure and Promotion Committee (Chair)
 2023 Merit Committee
 2020-2023 Chair of English Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee
 2021 Search Committee, VAP
 2020-2021 Director of Graduate Admissions
 2014-2019 Chair of Department (on leave 2017-2018)
 2011-2013 Director of Graduate Studies
 2011-2012 Director of Graduate Admissions
 2011 Department Chair Appointment Committee
 2011 Merit Committee
 2010-2013 Graduate Committee
 2009 Interim Director of Graduate Studies (spring)
 2008-2009 Director of Graduate Admissions
 2008-2009 Graduate Committee
 2008-2009 Hiring Committee
 2005-2006 Hiring Committee

Classes Taught

Lower Division

Rhetoric and Composition (various forms)
 Encounters Across Space and Time (co-taught with Profs. Amy Appleford and Erin Murphy)
 Introduction to Asian-American Literature
 Literature and Science
 Encountering Others
 Freedom and Slavery
 Social Activism and American Literature (service-learning course)
 Survey of American Literature, Beginnings to 1865

Upper Division

Resistance, Revolution, and Slavery in African American Literature
 Teaching American Literature (co-taught with Prof. Christina Dobbs, School of Education)
 Slavery and American Literature
 Asian-American Literature: Historical and Critical Perspectives
 Pragmatism and American Literature
 Transatlantic Romanticism
 Transcendental Poetics
 The Civil War in American Literature and Memory
 Poe and Hawthorne
 Women Rewriting the American Renaissance
 Crisis and Consensus in Nineteenth-Century America
 Nineteenth-Century American Poetry
 The Nineteenth-Century American Novel

Graduate Seminars

Being Wrong in Nineteenth-Century American Literature
 Information Revolutions in Transatlantic Nineteenth-Century Literature
 Accounting for Literature in the Nineteenth Century
 Skepticism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature
 Major Authors and Methods in Nineteenth-Century Literature
 Pluralism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature

Slavery and American Literature
Professional and Advanced Writing Seminar

Graduate Advising (Doctoral Students Only)

1st Reader: Michael Samblas

Nicholas Bloechl

J. Blackwood

Max Chapnick (PhD, 2023)

Kristin Lacy (PhD, 2022)

Eric Bjornson (PhD, 2022)

Rachel Ravina (PhD, 2021)

Reed Gochberg (PhD, 2016)

Mary Kuhn (PhD, 2014)

2nd Reader: Ken Alba (PhD, 2024)

Emily Gowen (PhD, 2021)

Heather Barrett (PhD, 2017)

Heather Holcombe (PhD, 2015)

John Barnard (PhD, 2013)

Emily Donaldson Field (PhD, 2012)

Alan Taylor (PhD, 2012)

Scott Cameron (PhD, 2011)

Ida Rothschild (PhD, 2011)

3rd Reader: Holly Wiegand (PhD, 2025)

Christopher Stokum (PhD, American Studies, 2021)

Cory Charpentier (PhD, 2021)

Kathryn Viens (PhD, American Studies, 2020)

Megan Dawley (PhD, American Studies, 2018)

Kristi Martin (PhD, American Studies, 2018)

Andrew Christensen (PhD, 2017)

Joyce Kim (PhD, 2016)

Karen Guendel (PhD, 2016)

Erin Salius (PhD, 2015)

Matthew Borusko (PhD, 2014)

Arielle Zibrak (PhD, 2013)

Francine Weiss (PhD, American Studies, 2012)

John Tessitore (PhD, American Studies, 2006)

External

Advisor: Aaron Green, Technological University Dublin (PhD, 2022)