

# Mary I. Unger

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(she/her/hers)

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## Education

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Ph.D.	English	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) Graduate Minor in Gender and Women's Studies	2012
		Dissertation: <i>Modernism and the American System: Ugliness, Standardization, Literature, 1900-1930</i>	
M.A.	English	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	2005
B.A.	English	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign High Distinction, English; Chemistry Minor	2002

## Academic Appointments and Professional Experience

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Ripon College			
	Associate Professor, Department of English		2018-present
	Assistant Professor, Department of English		2012-2018
<i>Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers</i> (U of Nebraska Press)	Managing Editor		2013-present
<i>American Literary History</i> (Oxford UP)	Assistant Editor		2011-2012
	Managing Editor		2010-2011
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign			2004-2012
	English Department: Instructor, Teaching Assistant, and Research Assistant		
	Gender and Women's Studies Program: Teaching Assistant		

## Publications

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<i>In Progress</i>	<i>Reading the Renaissance: Black Women's Literary Reception and Taste in Chicago, 1932-1953</i>	
	Under advance contract with University of Massachusetts Press for inclusion in its Studies in Print Culture and the History of the Book series, this book project uses extensive archival research to argue that Black women readers on Chicago's South Side fundamentally shaped Black literary texts and tastes during the middle decades of the twentieth century.	

Articles and  
Chapters

“Black Women Readers,” invited article for the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*, edited by Paula Rabinowitz, Oxford UP, April 2020, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.953>.

“The Book Circle: Black Women Readers and Middlebrow Taste in Chicago, 1943-1953,” *Reception*, vol. 11, 2019, pp. 4-20.

“Literary Justice in the Post-Ferguson Classroom.” *MELUS (Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States)*, vol. 42, no. 4, Winter 2017, pp. 92-112. Special issue, “Pedagogy in Anxious Times,” edited by Cristina Stanciu and Anastasia Lin.

“Mapping *The Quaker City*’s Queer Ecology.” *A Greene Country Towne: Philadelphia, Ecology, and the Material Imagination*, edited by Alan C. Braddock and Laura Turner Igoe, Penn State UP, 2016, pp. 50-64.

“‘Dropping Crooked into Rhyme’: Djuna Barnes’s Disabled Poetics in *The Book of Repulsive Women*.” *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2013, pp. 124-50. Special issue, “Women Writing Disability,” edited by Michael Davidson.

“‘Dens of Iniquity and Holes of Wickedness’: George Lippard and the Queer City.” *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 43, no. 2, Aug. 2009, pp. 319-39.

Digital  
Humanities  
Projects

“Letters from Era Bell Thompson to Stanley Pargellis, 1944, 1953.” *Making Modernism: Literature and Culture in 20th-Century Chicago*, a Newberry Library Digital Exhibit funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, edited by Liesl Olson, <https://publications.newberry.org/digital/making-modernism/letters-from-era-bell-thompson-to-stanley-pargellis-1944-1953>, 2014.

On Angelina Weld Grimké’s “Fragment.” *Modern American Poetry: An Online Journal and Multimedia Companion to the Anthology of Modern American Poetry*, edited by Cary Nelson, [english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/g\\_l/grimke/fragment.htm](http://english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/g_l/grimke/fragment.htm), 2006.

Reviews

Invited review of *Chicago Renaissance: Literature and Art in the Midwest Metropolis*, by Liesl Olson (Yale UP, 2017), *American Literary History*, Online Review Series XIX, <https://academic.oup.com/alh/pages/the-alh-online-review-series-xix>, 2019.

Other  
Publications

“Selling the Black Chicago Renaissance: Bronzeville’s Black-Owned Bookstores,” *Chicago Review of Books*, 14 April 2021, <https://chireviewofbooks.com/2021/04/14/selling-the-black-chicago-renaissance-bronzevilles-black-owned-bookstores/>.

Invited contribution, “A Tribute Forum for Nina Baym,” *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*, vol. 36, no. 1, June 2019, pp. 12-13.

### Selected Awards and Fellowships

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National

David D. Anderson Award for Outstanding Essay in Midwestern Literary Studies,

Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature, 2020

For “The Book Circle: Black Women Readers and Middlebrow Taste in Chicago, 1943-1953,” *Reception*, vol. 11, 2019, pp. 4-20.

Katharine Newman Best Essay Award, *MELUS*, 2018

For “Literary Justice in the Post-Ferguson Classroom,” *MELUS*, vol. 42, no. 4, Winter 2017, pp. 92-112.

National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend, 2017

Funding for current book project on the Black Chicago Renaissance

National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute, 2013

Newberry Library, Chicago: “Making Modernism: Literature and Culture in Twentieth-Century Chicago, 1893-1955,” led by Liesl Olson

*Ripon College*

Faculty Mentor Award, 2019

Presented by the Student Activities and Orientation Office to an individual who promotes in and out of classroom learning experiences.

Senior Class Award, 2017

Presented by members of the senior class to an outstanding faculty member who best exhibits a commitment to helping students realize their full potential by challenging them in and out of the classroom.

*UIUC*

Teaching Awards:

Campus Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, 2011

The University’s highest teaching honor for a graduate student, awarded to approx. five of nearly 6,000 teaching assistants annually.

Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, 2011

The result of a yearlong nomination and vetting process by students, faculty, and administrators, this and the above campus award are given to teachers who have demonstrated sustained excellence in undergraduate teaching; made a positive impact on undergraduate student learning; developed innovative approaches to undergraduate teaching; and have otherwise improved undergraduate instruction at the University.

Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Award, Department of English, 2008

Highest departmental teaching award given to graduate students who have demonstrated teaching excellence; nominated by undergraduates and selected by a board of faculty and students.

*List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent by Their Students*, 2005-2010

Honors faculty and teaching assistants whose student evaluations rank them as excellent, campus-wide. I was awarded for eleven classes, seven of which were rated *Outstanding* (top 10%).

Dissertation Fellowships:

Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities, Fellowship, 2010-2011

Declined to accept position at *American Literary History*.

Liberal Arts and Sciences Fellowship, 2010-2011  
 Declined to accept position at *American Literary History*.

English Department Summer Fellowship, 2010

Liberal Arts and Sciences Fellowship in the Humanities, 2009-2010

English Department Fellowship, 2009-2010

University Fellowship, fall 2008

### Academic Presentations

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#### *National*

Plenary talk, “Black Women Readers of the Midwest and the Shape of African American Literature,” Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature conference, Newberry Library, Chicago, May 2020 (postponed due to coronavirus pandemic).

“Bad Girl Brooks: Popular Poetry, Black Girlhood, and the Great Migration,” Society for the Study of American Women Writers triannual conference. Denver, November 2018.

“The Book Circle: Women Readers of the Black Chicago Renaissance,” Reception Study Society biannual conference. St. Paul, September 2017.

“Recovering Gwendolyn Brooks’s Early *Defender* Poems, 1934-38,” MELUS annual conference. MIT, April 2017.

“Bronzeville’s Bookstores and the Making of the Black Chicago Renaissance,” MELUS annual conference. Charleston (SC), March 2016.

“The Caring Labor of the Black Chicago Renaissance: The Case of *Chicago Girl*,” Society for the Study of American Women Writers triennial conference. Philadelphia, November 2015.

“*For My People*: Reception and Readership in the Black Chicago Renaissance.” Reception Study Society biannual conference. Fort Wayne (IN), September 2015.

“Recovering the Black Chicago Renaissance: The Case of *Chicago Girl*.” American Literature Association annual conference. Boston, May 2015.

“*Chicago Girl*: A Lost Novel of the Black Chicago Renaissance.” Center for the History of Print and Digital Culture biennial conference: “African American Expression in Print and Digital Culture.” University of Wisconsin-Madison, September 2014.

“Surviving Naturalism in *The Street*.” Society for the Study of American Women Writers triennial conference. Denver, October 2012.

“Women Writers, Classroom Citizens: A Roundtable on Pedagogy.” Society for the Study of American Women Writers triennial conference. Denver, October 2012.

“Nineteenth-Century Women Writing Disability,” a panel sponsored by *Legacy*. Society

for the Study of American Women Writers triennial conference. Denver, October 2012.

“‘Any Volunteers?’: Graduate Student Service Work Roundtable.” MLA annual convention. Seattle, January 2012.

“A New Philosophy of Normalcy: Negative Beauty in *Lummox*.” Space Between Society conference. McGill University (Montreal), June 2011.

“Fannie Hurst and the Standardization of Middle-Class Culture.” “Women Writers to Know II,” a panel sponsored by the Society for the Study of American Women Writers. American Literature Association annual convention. Boston, May 2011.

“‘Ugly and Undistinguished’: Democratic Taste in *The Blacker the Berry*.” MLA annual convention. Los Angeles, January 2011.

“Ugliness and the Limits of Sentimentalism in *The Jungle*.” The Futures of American Studies Institute. Dartmouth College, June 2009.

“‘Dropping Crooked into Rhyme’: The Space of Ugliness in *The Book of Repulsive Women*.” The Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture Since 1900. University of Louisville, February 2008. (Read by Robin Silbergleid.)

“‘This Strange Joy’: Abortion and Female Autonomy on the American Left.” Twentieth-Century Literature & Culture Conference. University of Louisville, February 2006.

*Ripon College*

“From Upstairs to Pulse: A History of Violence against the Queer Community.” Invited talk by the Queer/Straight Alliance (QSA) for LGBTQ Month, October 2016.

“Intersectionality with Unger.” Invited talk by the Ripon College Feminists for Women’s History Month, March 2016.

Invited guest, “Theory Thursday: The History of the Feminist Movement,” Ripon College Feminists, 2015.

“*For My People*: Reception and Readership in the Black Chicago Renaissance.” Faculty Brown Bag Presentation, October 2015.

“Summer in the Archives: Chicago Modernism at the Newberry Library.” Faculty Brown Bag Presentation, October 2013.

“‘Ugly and Undistinguished’: The Aesthetics of Racial Progress in the Harlem Renaissance.” Faculty Brown Bag Presentation, April 2013.

TED Talk & Tea, Ripon College Office of Community Engagement. Invited speaker and moderator of discussion about beauty and disability, February 2013.

*UIUC*

Invited respondent to Janet Halley’s *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism* (Princeton UP, 2006). “Where Are We? New Work in Critical Theory & Cultural Studies”: A Series of Debates Sponsored by the Unit for Criticism & Interpretive Theory, April 2007.

## Courses Taught

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*Ripon College*

English Department:

African American Literature  
 American Protest Literature  
 Chicago Renaissances  
 Early American Literature  
 The Harlem Renaissance  
 Literary Theory  
 Literature and Composition  
 The Lost Generation  
 Modernism  
 Senior Seminar: Disability Studies

Women's and Gender Studies Program (WGS):

Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies  
 Research in Women's and Gender Studies

English and WGS cross-listed courses:

Beyoncé and Black Women's Writing  
 Gender & Sexuality in 20<sup>th</sup>-c. American Literature  
 Major Author: Zora Neale Hurston

Catalyst General Curriculum:

Black Lives Matter in American Film  
 Beyoncé, Black Feminism, and Pop Culture

First Year Studies Seminars:

Freaks and Geeks in American Literature (co-taught with History course)

Interdisciplinary Studies:

Race and Diversity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (co-taught with faculty in Global Studies,  
 Politics and Government, Education, and Mathematics)

Mentored Undergraduate Research Projects:

Angele Bridges, African American Studies senior capstone, spring 2021  
 "Protest Rap: How Murder and Money Incentivized a Moment"

Rachel Stanley, Disability Justice Studies senior capstone, 2016-2017  
 "The Price of Passing: Autistic Adult's Stigma Management Strategies  
 and Their Consequences" (co-mentored with faculty in Sociology)

Katie Warczak, English Department independent research, spring 2016  
 "Disabling Tragedy: Responsibly Reading F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tycoon*"

Rachel Stanley, Center for Social Responsibility summer research, 2015  
 "Queer Portrayals in Popular Media"

Rachel Wedeward, Ethical Leadership Program senior capstone, 2014  
 "Internal Conflicts in Public Library Adult Literacy Programs"

*UIUC*

English Department:

Critical Approaches to Literature (teaching asst.)  
 Deviant and Dangerous Embodiments in Literature  
 Introduction to American Literature  
 Introduction to Fiction, advanced composition section  
 Survey of American Literature I: Beginning to 1870 (teaching asst.)  
 Survey of American Literature II: 1870-Present

Gender and Women's Studies Department:

Gender Studies in the Humanities (teaching asst.)

Rhetoric Program:

Principles of Composition

### **Professional Service**

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*National*

NEH Division of Research Programs, Fellowships Program peer reviewer, fall 2020  
 Evaluated application packets for Summer Stipends (American Literature)

*African American Review*, peer reviewer, fall 2020

Advisory Board, *Arkansas Literary Review*, 2009-2012

MLA Regional Delegate, 2008-2011

Elected graduate student representative of the Great Lakes Region

*Ripon College*

Administrative Positions:

English Department Chair, 2019-present  
 Women's and Gender Studies Program Coordinator, 2019-present  
 American Studies Program Coordinator, 2015-2018

Elected Faculty Governance:

Educational Policy Committee, 2019-2020  
 Faculty Advisory Council, 2015-2018  
 Board of Trustees Infrastructure Committee, faculty rep., 2015-2018

Diversity and Inclusion:

Safe Zone certified, spring 2016 and fall 2016  
 Campus Ally for Diversity and Inclusion, 2014-present  
 Women's History Month planning committee, 2013 and 2017

Faculty Hiring and Promotion:

Poet in Residence search committee, spring 2021  
 Peer reviewer for Rafael Salas (Art), promotion to full professor, 2018-2019  
 Vice President and Dean of Faculty search committee, 2014-2015  
 Assistant Professor of English search committee, 2013-2014

Appointed Committees:

Strategic Planning Working Group, summer 2019  
 Fringe Benefits Committee, 2017

President's Task Force for Prioritization, 2017  
 President's Re-Imagining Public Spaces at Ripon College focus group, 2016  
 Center for Politics and the People, faculty advisory board, 2015-2016

Student Groups and Programming:

DREAM (Disability Rights, Education, & Activism Movement), faculty advisor, 2016-2018  
 ACM India study abroad program, faculty advisor, 2014-2016  
 Alpha Chi Omega, faculty advisor, 2013-2016  
 Ripon Senior Showcase organizing committee, 2013-2016  
 ACM Botswana study abroad program, faculty advisor, fall 2013  
 Sigma Tau Delta (English Honors Society), faculty advisor, 2012-present

Faculty Scholarship Workshops and Reading Groups:

Ceresco Research Workshop, Ripon College, 2013-2015  
 American Studies Working Group, 2012-present  
 Collaboration between Ripon College, Lawrence University, St. Norbert College, and the UW system

*UIUC*

American Literary Studies at Illinois, co-organizer, 2011-2012

English Department Advisory Committee, elected graduate student rep., 2008-2009

### **Community Engagement**

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“Edgar Allan Poe: America’s First Mystery Writer,” public talk, Caestecker Public Library, Green Lake (WI), October 2018

“Ernest Hemingway and the Midwestern Response to WWI,” public talk, Caestecker Public Library, Green Lake (WI), November 2017

*The Vagina Monologues*, public performance, Ripon (WI), February 2017

Organized by the Ripon College Feminists, featuring RC faculty, staff, and students

Reading group, Green Lake County (WI) Correctional Facility, spring 2014

Read and discussed literature on the topic of “greatness” (*A Raisin in the Sun* and “The Open Boat”) with six male inmates and two undergraduate student assistants.

Certified Adult Education Tutor, Project READ Literacy Program, Champaign (IL), 2009-2012

Classroom tutor for Parkland Community College Adult Basic Education (Pre-GED) and ESL classes

Spectrum Summer Program, Northwestern University Center for Talent Development, 2007

Teaching Assistant for “Literary Analysis Honors: American Short Stories,” a class for gifted 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders

### **Professional Organizations**

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American Studies Association

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Modern Language Association  
Modernist Studies Association  
National Women's Studies Association  
Reception Study Society  
Society for Disability Studies  
Society for the Study of American Women Writers  
Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature  
The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States

**References**

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Available upon request.