

# James S. Finley

Texas A&M University – San Antonio  
Department of Language, Literature, and Arts  
One University Way  
San Antonio, TX 78224  
(210) 784-2257  
james.finley@tamus.edu

## EDUCATION

PhD, English, University of New Hampshire, 2014  
MA, Literature, University of New Hampshire, 2009  
BA, English, Grinnell College, 2003

## ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Associate Professor of English (with tenure), Texas A&M University-San Antonio, 2020-present  
Assistant Professor of English, Texas A&M University-San Antonio, 2016-2020  
Assistant Professor of English, New Mexico State University, 2014-2016  
Instructor, American Studies Program, The University of Texas at San Antonio, 2013-2014

## PUBLICATIONS

### Books

*Henry David Thoreau in Context*, editor (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

- Reviewed in *Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries*; *American Literary Scholarship*; *Modern Intellectual History*; *Thoreau Society Bulletin*; *Nineteenth-Century Prose*

*Abolition and the Rise of US Environmentalism: The Literature and Politics of Free Soil* (under contract with University of North Carolina Press, expected publication date: 2026)

*The Oxford Handbook of Henry David Thoreau*, edited with Kristen Case (under contract with Oxford University Press, expected publication date: 2027)

### Refereed Journal Articles and Book Chapters

“Henry David Thoreau and the Creation of the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument,” in *Thoreau in an Age of Crisis: Uses and Abuses of An American Icon*, edited by Kristen Case, Rochelle Johnson, and Henrik Otterberg (Wilhem Fink, 2021), 107-24.

“Frederick Douglass in the United Kingdom: From the Free-Soil Principle to Free-Soil Abolition,” *The New North Star: A Journal of the Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* vol. 2 (2020): 45-60.

“Pilgrimages and Working Forests: Envisioning the Commons in *The Maine Woods*,” in *Rediscovering the Maine Woods: Thoreau’s Legacy in an Unsettled Land*, edited by John Kucich (University of Massachusetts Press, 2019), 141-67.

“A Free Soiler in his Own Broad Sense: Henry David Thoreau and the Free Soil Movement,” in *Thoreau at 200: Essays and Reassessments*, edited by K. P. Van Anglen and Kristen Case (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 31-44.

“‘The Land of Liberty’: Henry Bibb’s Free Soil Geographies,” *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* vol. 59, no. 2 (2013): 231-62.

“Justice in the Land’: Ecological Protest in Henry David Thoreau’s Antislavery Essays,” *The Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies* n.s. 21 (2013): 1-35.

“Who are we? where are we?: Contact and Literary Navigation in Thoreau’s *The Maine Woods*,” *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies and Literature and Environment* vol. 19, no. 2 (2012): 336-55.

### **Book Reviews and Other Essays**

Review of Jamie Sayen, *Children of the Northern Forest: Wild New England’s History from Glaciers to Global Warming* (Yale University Press, 2023), *H-Environment, H-Net Reviews* (April 2024).

“Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller, and Transcendentalism,” in *American Literary Scholarship: An Annual 2020* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022), 3-25.

“Fostering Education and Challenging Our Lives: The Thoreau Society in Action,” co-written with Sandra Harbert Petrulionis, *The Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies* n.s. 28 (2020): 214-22.

“Thoreau and Biography,” *The Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies* n.s. 27 (2019): 116-18.

Review of *Civilizing Thoreau: Human Ecology and the Emerging Sciences in the Major Works* by Richard J. Schneider (Camden House, 2016), *Nineteenth-Century Prose* vol. 44, no. 1 (2017): 208-12.

Preface, *Henry David Thoreau in Context* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), xvii-xxiv.

Review of *Bird Relics: Grief and Vitalism in Thoreau* by Branka Arsić (Harvard, 2016), *Thoreau Society Bulletin* 296 (Winter 2017): 8-9.

Teaching Reflection: “The Afric-American Picture Gallery,” “Just Teach One: Early African American Print,” *Common-Place: The Journal of Early American Life* (Fall 2016).

Review of *Black Atlas: Geography and Flow in Nineteenth-Century African American Literature* by Judith Madera (Duke, 2015), *Transfers: Interdisciplinary Journal of Mobility Studies* vol. 6 no. 1 (Spring 2016).

Review of *Abolitionist Geographies* by Martha Schoolman (Minnesota, 2014), *Emerson Society Papers* vol. 26, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 14.

“#ReclaimHDT,” *The Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies* n.s. 23 (2015): 112-23. (part of a cluster on “Civil Disobedience” in the era of Black Lives Matter; republished at <http://www.thoreausociety.org/news-article/reclaimhdt-james-finley>)

Review of *Walden Warming: Climate Change Comes to Thoreau’s Woods*, by Richard Primack (Chicago, 2014), *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* vol. 22, no. 1 (2015): 191-93.

“Measuring Thoreau.” Review essay of *Thoreau the Land Surveyor*, by Patrick Chura (Florida, 2010) and *Thoreauvian Modernities: Transatlantic Conversations on an American Icon*, edited by François Specq, Laura Dassow Walls, and Michel Granger (Georgia, 2013), *Nineteenth-Century Prose* vol. 42, no. 1 (2015): 122-35.

“Matter and Objects in *The Maine Woods*,” *The Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies* n.s. 22 (2014): 112-29. (Part of a cluster on Thoreau and the Material Turn)

Review of *Fallen Forests: Emotion, Embodiment, and Ethics in American Women’s Environmental Writing, 1781-1924*, by Karen L. Kilcup (Georgia, 2013), *Environment and Society: Advances in Research* 5 (2014): 151-53.

“An Interview with Scot Miller about his New Illustrated Edition of *The Maine Woods*,” *Thoreau Society Bulletin* 285 (Spring 2014): 5-7.

“Roundtable on Thoreau and Religion,” *Thoreau Society Bulletin* 283 (Fall 2013): 3.

“Race and Nature in Nineteenth-Century American Literature: A Conversation,” co-written with Lance Newman, *Journal of Ecocriticism* vol. 5, no. 2 (2013): 1-21.

Review of *Not Altogether Human: Pantheism and the Dark Nature of the American Renaissance*, by Richard Hardack (Massachusetts, 2012), *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* vol. 20, no. 2 (2013): 432-34.

Review of *Nature and the Environment*, edited by Scott Slovic (EBSCO, 2013), *Thoreau Society Bulletin* 281 (Spring 2013): 9-10.

“The Year in Conferences: American Literature Association Conference,” co-written with H. Marlowe Daly-Galeano, Luella Putnam D’Amico, Nels Olson, and Kelly Ross, *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* vol. 58, no. 1 (2012): 103-20.

## Public Media

“New UT Health Study Misses the Mark. Autism Should be Embraced, Not Feared,” opinion piece, *San Antonio Express-News*, April 18, 2024.

“Let Community Vote on SAISD School Closure Plan,” opinion piece co-written with Jennifer Tobias, *San Antonio Express-News*, July 10, 2023.

“Monument to Terror,” letter to the editor, *San Antonio Express-News*, August 21, 2017.

Quoted in “Canoe Tour Commemorates 150th Anniversary of Thoreau’s ‘The Maine Woods,’” *Bangor Daily News*, May 14, 2014.

Quoted in “Paddling with Penobscots: Revisiting the Unknown Chapter of Thoreau’s Maine Woods,” by Matthew Sturdevant, *Canoe and Kayak*, July 2014.

Quoted in “Henry David Thoreau would have Given ‘12 Years a Slave’ the Oscar for Best Picture, Too,” by Brentin Mock, *Grist*, March 4, 2014.

## HONORS, FELLOWSHIPS, AWARDS

National Endowment for the Humanities, Institute for College and University Teachers Faculty, “Transcendentalism and Social Reform: Activism and Community Engagement in the Age of Thoreau,” Concord, MA, 2022.

National Endowment for the Humanities, Landmarks of American History Faculty, “Living and Writing Deliberately: The Concord Landscapes and Legacy of Henry David Thoreau,” Concord, MA, 2017, 2019.

Frederick Douglass Institute, Postdoctoral Fellowship, University of Rochester, 2014-15.  
[Declined]

Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, Postgraduate Student Abstract Competition Winner, UK and Ireland, 2013.

American Antiquarian Society, Barbara L. Packer Fellowship, 2012.  
Thoreau Society, Short-Term Research Fellowship, 2012.

## CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

### Invited Lectures

“Frederick Douglass and the Prospect of Free Soil,” Colorado College, February 2019;  
University of New Hampshire, November 2018.

“Henry David Thoreau and the Commons: From *The Maine Woods* to the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument,” University of Maine at Farmington, September 2017.

“Looking West from Katahdin: *The Maine Woods* and the National Parks,” The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. April 2017.

### Papers Presented

“Thoreau Loses His Kin,” *The Commons Symposium*, Miami, FL. February 2024.

“Thoreau, Ableism, and Neurodivergent Expression,” with Kristen Case, *Modern Language Association*, Philadelphia, PA. January 2024.

“Frederick Douglass in Ireland: Free Soil and Famine,” *#DouglassWeek Symposium*, online. February 2021.

“Frederick Douglass and the Prospect of Free Soil,” *American Literature Association*, Boston, MA. May 2019.

“The Hemispheric Free Soil Movement,” *C19: Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists Fifth Biennial Conference*, Albuquerque, NM. March 2018.

“Slavery, Capitalism, and the Environment: The Question of Free Soil,” *Midwest Modern Language Association*, Cincinnati, OH. November 2017.

“The Thoreauvian Commons,” *Association for the Study of Literature and Environment Biennial Conference*, Detroit, MI. June 2017.

“Exodus and Ecology in the Antislavery Jeremiad,” *C19: The Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists Fourth Biennial Conference*, State College, PA. March 2016.

“The Environmental Antislavery Jeremiad,” *Association for the Study of Literature and Environment Biennial Conference*, Moscow, ID. June 2015.

“The Republican Landscapes of Lydia Maria Child’s ‘The Kansas Emigrants,’” *American Literature Association*, Boston, MA. May 2015.

“Working Forests: *The Maine Woods* at 150,” *American Literature Association*, Boston, MA. May 2015.

“Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Gorham Palfrey, and the Influence of Free Soil,” *Thoreau Society Annual Gathering*, Concord, MA. July 2014.

“Is *The Maine Woods* to Object Oriented Ontology what *Walden* is to Ecocriticism?” *Thoreau Society Annual Gathering*, Concord, MA. July 2014.

“Trees,” C19: *Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists Third Biennial Conference*, Chapel Hill, NC. March 2014.

“Pollution and Vital Materiality: Emerson and Thoreau Respond to the Fugitive Slave Act,” *Modern Language Association*, Chicago, IL. January 2014.

“A Free Soil Sense of Place: Frederick Law Olmsted and the Landscapes of the Antebellum South,” *Modern Language Association*, Chicago, IL. January 2014.

“Henry David Thoreau and Free Soil: the Intra-Activism of Nature,” *Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, UK & Ireland*, Guildford, UK. August 2013.

“Justice in the Land”: Environmental Protest in Thoreau’s Reform Essays,” *Thoreau Society Annual Gathering*, Concord, MA. July 2013.

“Ecocritique: Thoreau’s Philosophy of Reform,” *American Literature Association*, Boston, MA. May 2013.

“Slavery and Environment: John Greenleaf Whittier, John Pierpont, and the Poetics of Free Soil,” *Conference on Ecopoetics*, Berkeley, CA. February 2013.

“Slavery obscures the land”: Nathaniel Rogers, Henry David Thoreau, and Anti-Slavery Environmentalism,” *Thoreau Society Annual Gathering*, Concord, MA. July 2012.

“Thoreau’s Antislavery Writings: Environmental Justice Ecocriticism and the New Materialism,” *American Literature Association*, San Francisco, CA. May 2012.

“This Moral Earthquake”: The Fugitive Slave Law and Henry Thoreau’s Ecological and Topographical Consciousness,” *Thoreau Society Annual Gathering*, Concord, MA. July 2011.

“Agrarian Labor, Land Rights, and Environmental Destruction in David Walker’s Appeal,” *Association for the Study of Literature and Environment Biennial Conference*, Bloomington, IN. June 2011.

“The Final Ruin of this Happy Republic”: The Agrarian Poetics of David Walker’s Appeal,” *Black New England Conference*, Durham, NH. October 2010.

“The Land of Liberty”: The Egalitarian Agrarianism of Henry Bibb’s *Narrative*,” *American Literature Association*, San Francisco, CA. May 2010.

“Contact! Contact! Who are we? where are we?: Thoreau’s Construction of a Middle Consciousness in *The Maine Woods*,” *Conference on Northern New England Literature*, Northfield, VT. April 2009.

### **Papers presented in Seminars and Workshops**

“Free Soil is not a Noun” presented in the “Racial Colonialism and Environmentalism” seminar, C19: *Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists Sixth Biennial Conference*, online. October 2020.

“Soil,” presented in the “Material Affinities” seminar, *American Comparative Literature Association Conference*, Washington, DC. March 2019.

“Free Soil,” presented in the “C19 Environmental Humanities” seminar, C19: *Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists Fifth Biennial Conference*, Albuquerque, NM. March 2018.

“Eco-materialist Ethics in the Antebellum U.S.,” presented in the “Material Ecocriticism and Changing Natures” seminar, *Association for the Study of Literature and Environment Biennial Conference*, Lawrence, KS. May 2013.

“A Free Soil Jeremiad: James M. Whitfield’s Environmental Antislavery Poetics,” presented in the “Upstate New York and Early African American Expression” seminar, *Northeast Modern Language Association*, Rochester, NY. March 2012.

### **Panels Organized and Chaired**

“Multilingual Thoreau,” *Modern Language Association*, Washington, DC. January 2022. (Organized with John Kucich)

“Thoreau and the Limits of the Human,” *Modern Language Association*, Seattle, WA. January 2020. (Organized with John Kucich)

“Thoreau and Teaching,” *American Literature Association*, Boston, MA. May 2019. (Organized with John Kucich)

“Thoreau and Biography,” *Modern Language Association*, Chicago, IL. January 2019. (Organized with John Kucich)

“Putting Thoreau in Context,” *Thoreau Society Annual Gathering*, Concord, MA. July 2017.

“Digging in to the Rust Bin: 19th-Century U.S. Literature for 21st-Century Ecocriticism,” *Association for the Study of Literature and Environment Biennial Conference*, Detroit, MI. June 2017. (Organized with Michelle Neely)

“Thoreau, Science, and Science Studies: Twenty Years after *Seeing New Worlds*,” *Association for the Study of Literature and Environment Biennial Conference*, Moscow, ID. June 2015.

“The *solid* earth, the *actual* world!: Thoreau Studies and the Material Turn: A Roundtable Discussion,” *Thoreau Society Annual Gathering*, Concord, MA. July 2014. (Organized with Kathleen Coyne Kelly and Kristen Case)

“Thoreau and Ecocriticism,” *Thoreau Society Annual Gathering*, Concord, MA. July 2013. (Organized with Kurt Moellering)

“Race, Nature, and the New Materialism: A Roundtable,” *Association for the Study of Literature and Environment Biennial Conference*, Lawrence, KS. May 2013. (Organized with Lance Newman)

“Transformations: Thoreau and Changing Nature,” *Association for the Study of Literature and Environment Biennial Conference*, Lawrence, KS. May 2013.

### **Panels Chaired**

“Disability and Worlding,” *Thoreau Society Annual Gathering*, Concord, MA, July 2022.

‘Comparative Landscapes,’ *Thoreau Society Annual Gathering*, Concord, MA, July 2022.

“Remembering the Mass of Men,” *Thoreau Society Annual Gathering*, Concord, MA, July 2021.

“Principles of Justice,” *Thoreau Society Annual Gathering*, Concord, MA, July 2021.

### **COURSES TAUGHT**

#### **Texas A&M University – San Antonio**

ENGL 5370 Slavery and Freedom in Nineteenth-Century America (Graduate)

ENGL 5365 Teaching Literature (Graduate)

ENGL 5360 Disability in US Literature and Culture (Graduate)

ENGL 5360 US Environmental Literature and Ecocriticism (Graduate)  
ENGL 5340 Major Authors – Frederick Douglass (Graduate)  
ENGL 5315 Theory and Methods (Graduate)  
ENGL 5300 Introduction to Graduate Study (Graduate)  
ENGL 4398 Senior Seminar  
ENGL 4398 Senior Seminar: Henry David Thoreau at 200  
ENGL 4393 Teaching Literature and Writing  
ENGL 4392 Teaching English  
ENGL 4370 Special Topics: The Literature of Slavery  
ENGL 4365 Colonial Through Nineteenth-Century American Literature  
ENGL 3363 American Romanticism  
ENGL 3362 Early American Literature  
ENGL 2362 Literature of the Americas

### **New Mexico State University**

ENGL 569 Slavery and Race in the United States (Graduate)  
ENGL 538 Antebellum American Literature (Graduate)  
ENGL 469 Advanced Study in American Literature: Environmental Literature  
ENGL 469 Advanced Study in American Literature: The Literature of Slavery and Freedom  
ENGL 423 Advanced Study in a Major Author: Melville and Hawthorne  
ENGL 438 Antebellum American Literature: The Environmental Imagination  
ENGL 251 Survey of American Literature I  
ENGL 151 Perspectives on Literature

### **The University of Texas at San Antonio**

AMS 3123 Applications of American Studies  
AMS 3013 Early American Culture  
AMS 2043 Approaches to American Culture

### **University of New Hampshire**

ENGL 515 Survey of American Literature to 1865  
ENGL 419 Introduction to Literary Analysis  
ENGL 401 First Year Writing: Writing Sustainability  
ENGL 401 First Year Writing

### **ACADEMIC SERVICE (selected)**

#### **Profession**

Manuscript Reviewer: Oxford University Press, Princeton University Press, Routledge, *Arizona Quarterly*, *Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies*; *ESQ: A Journal of Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Culture*; *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*; *J19: Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists*; *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*  
Thoreau Society Board of Directors: 2020-2023; clerk, 2022-2023.

Reader for the Harriet Tubman Prize (Lapidus Center for the Historical Analysis of Transatlantic Slavery), 2020.

Thoreau Society Fellowship Committee: member, 2015-2018; chair, 2019-2024.

Editorial Advisory Committee, The Thoreau Society, 2012-2022.

Organizational Liaison between The Thoreau Society and the American Literature Association and the Modern Language Association, 2018-2022. (With John Kucich, I organized and chaired panels at ALA and MLA conventions)

Editor, *Thoreau Society Bulletin*, 2013-2014.

Organizational Liaison between The Thoreau Society and the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, 2012-2015. (Organized and chaired panels at the respective conferences)

Senior Advisor, *ESQ: "Year in Conferences,"* 2012. Published as "The Year in Conferences: American Literature Association Conference," *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 59.1 (2013): 162-181.

### **Texas A&M University – San Antonio**

English Teacher Certification Program Coordinator (2016-present)

English Graduate Coordinator (2023-present)

English Undergraduate Program Coordinator (2018-2020)

Faculty Senator (2018-2019, 2020-2023)

English Undergraduate Committee (2016-2023)

Diversity and Dialogue Working Group (2016-2019)

English Graduate Committee (2016-2018)

University Library Committee (2016-2018)

### **Community (San Antonio)**

Steering Committee, Our Schools San Antonio (2024-present)

Thriving Profiles Committee member, San Antonio Independent School District (2023)

Reading Group Coordinator, SATX4: Exposing Racial Injustice (2017-2018)

Professional Mentor, Communications Arts High School (2016-2017)

## **ADVISING**

### **Master's Thesis, as chair**

Yvonne Samuels, title tbd, expected defense: November 2025

Ruben Ramirez, title tbd, expected defense: April 2026

Amanda Muñoz, "Deconstructing Gendered Binaries: Sustainability and Environmental Justice in Margaret Fuller's *Summer on the Lakes*," May 2015.

### **Master's Thesis, as reader**

Yvette Chairez, "Off-Putting or Putting on a Show? Fashion as a Tool of Subversion and Agency at the 2017 Amber Rose Slutwalk," August 2018.

John W. Milam, "Tamburlaine's Imperial *Theoria*: Contemplations of Imperial Ambitions and (Neo)Platonic Wisdom in Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine Plays," April 2018.

Sara K. Torres, Creative Writing, "Everything Adjusts in Time," April 2016.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Certificate in Inclusive Instruction for Equitable Learning, Association of College and University Educators, 2022.

## **AFFILIATIONS**

C19: The Society for Nineteenth-Century Americanists

Modern Language Association

National Council of Teachers of English

Ralph Waldo Emerson Society

The Thoreau Society