

NIC HELMS

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PROFILE

Nic Helms's (they/them) work centers care, access, and the vitality of humanist methods in our contemporary moment. Their recent scholarship and teaching emerge from the fields of critical disability studies, early modern neurodiversity studies, and early modern trans studies.

EDUCATION

The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa

The Hudson Strobe Program in Renaissance Studies

Ph.D. English (2015); M.A. English (2009)

Outstanding Dissertation for The University of Alabama, the College of Arts and Sciences and the Department of English (2015-16)

Buford Boone Memorial Fellowship for Teaching Composition, (2012-2013)

Mercer University

B.A. English (2006)

TEACHING POSITIONS

- Associate Professor, Plymouth State University, English Department (2024-2025)
- Assistant Professor, Plymouth State University, English Department (2020-2024)
 - *Finalist for the PSU Transformative Teaching Award (2024)*
- Instructor, The University of Alabama (2015-20)
Excellence in Service for a Full-Time Instructor, Department of English (2018-2019)

SELECTED SERVICE

Co-Director, Humanities, Cultures, and Communication Academic Unit, Plymouth State University (2022-2025)

Chair, English Department, Plymouth State University (2024-2025)

- English received the 2025 *Department Excellence in Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access* from PSU's IDEA Center

Executive Committee member, Plymouth State University Union Chapter of AFT/AAUP (2021-2025)

- President, PSU-AAUP/AFT (2022-2023)
- Vice President, PSU-AAUP/AFT (2021-2022)
- Co-Organizer and Member of the Plymouth Union Caucus (2020-25)

Chair, Disability Studies Council, Plymouth State University (2021-2025)

BOOKS

- *Water and Cognition in Early Modern English Literature*, co-edited with Steve Mentz. Amsterdam University Press, 2024. Part of the series Environmental Humanities in Pre-modern Cultures. DOI: [10.1017/9789048557608](https://doi.org/10.1017/9789048557608).
- *Cognition, Mindreading, and Shakespeare's Characters*. Springer, 2019. Part of the series Cognitive Studies in Literature and Performance. DOI: [10.1007/978-3-030-03565-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-03565-5).

ESSAYS

- “Disability Design and Neurodivergent Friction.” *Practical Pedagogy for the Early Modern Classroom: An Instructor's Guide to Teaching English Renaissance Literature*. Ed. Jess Hamlet, Courtney Parker, and Eileen Sperry. (Work in Progress)
- “Neuroqueering Empathy in Middleton.” *Early Theatre*, Issue in Review ed. by Eric Dunnum. (Under Review).
- “Shared Friction: Lines and Neurodivergence in Shakespeare.” *Shakespearean Neurodiversity*. Ed. Nathan Pensky and Bradley J. Irish. New York: Palgrave. (Under contract, expected 2027).
- “Neuroqueering the Macbeths: Gender, Neurodivergence, and (Hyper)Ability in the Scottish Play,” co-written with Bellee Jones-Pierce. *Neurodiversity in Early Modern English Literature*. Ed. Bridget M. Bartlett, Bradley J. Irish, and Laura Seymour. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. (Under contract, expected 2026).
- Review of *A Community Telling of Pawâkan Macbeth: A Cree Takeover*, by Akpik Theatre Company. *Shakespeare Bulletin*, vol. 42 no. 2, 2024, p. 303-307. DOI: [10.1353/shb.2024.a935862](https://doi.org/10.1353/shb.2024.a935862).
- “Seeing Brains: Shakespeare, Autism, and Self-Identification.” *Redefining Disability*. Ed. By Paul D.C. Bones and Jessica Smartt Gullion. Brill 2022. 152-159. DOI: [10.1163/9789004512702](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004512702).
- “Designing for Fatigue.” Co-written with Cait Kirby and Asia Merrill. *Hybrid Pedagogy*. 27 Jan 2022. <https://hybridpedagogy.org/designing-for-fatigue/>.
- “To Knit the Knot: Embodied Mind in John Donne’s *The Ecstasy*.” *The Seventeenth Century*, 23 Aug 2018. DOI: [10.1080/0268117X.2018.1485593](https://doi.org/10.1080/0268117X.2018.1485593).
- “Conceiving Ambiguity: Dynamic Mindreading in Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*.” *Philosophy and Literature*, 36.1 (2012): 122-35. DOI: [10.1353/phl.2012.0001](https://doi.org/10.1353/phl.2012.0001).
- “‘Upon Such Sacrifices’: An Ethic of Spectator Risk.” *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, 27.1 (2012): 91-107. DOI: [10.1353/dtc.2012.0031](https://doi.org/10.1353/dtc.2012.0031).
- “‘Where She Comes From’: Mindreading in Leving’s *The King is Alive*.” *symplokē* 19.1-2 (2011): 289-304. DOI: [10.5250/symploke.19.1-2.0289](https://doi.org/10.5250/symploke.19.1-2.0289).

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

- “Roaring (Neuro)Trans.” Invited talk for ROAR! working group, Kinney Center for Interdisciplinary Renaissance Studies, University of Massachusetts Amherst (2025).
- “Shared Friction: Lines and Neurodivergence in Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*.” Shakespeare Association of America (2025).
- “How many pronouns had Lady Gloriana’s skull? Neuroqueering Empathy in Middleton’s *The Revenger’s Tragedy*.” Renaissance Society of America (2025).
- “Bleeding Bodyminds: Landscapes and Protest in Adaptations of Shakespeare.” Part of “Protest and Resistance in the (Early) Modern Era,” a seminar at the Shakespeare Association of America Conference in Portland (2024).
- “Caring for Lady Macbeth: Failures of Work, Failures of Affect.” Medieval and Renaissance Forum. Keene State University (2023).

- “Making the Red One Blue: Bloodshed, Watersheds, and Disabled Identity in Shakespeare’s Macbeth.” Watersheds. The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, The University of Delaware (2022).
- “Making the Blue One Red: Watersheds, Bloodshed, and Disabled Identity in Shakespeare’s Macbeth.” Shakespeare Association of America Conference 2022, Jacksonville, FL.
- “Not for an Age, but for Autistics.” Shakespeare’s “Other Disability Plays,” a seminar at the Shakespeare Association of America (2021).
- “Watery Thinking: Cognitive and Ecocritical Perspectives on Water in Early Modern Literature.” Seminar co-organizer. Shakespeare Association of America (2020).
- “Horrible Conceits: The Discomfort of Reading Shakespeare’s Characters.” Shakespeare Association of America (2019).
- “Cognition and Othering: Shakespeare’s Characters in Othello and The Tempest.” Invited talk, Kennesaw State University, GA (2018).
- “Still Monarchs: Cognition and Decay as the Character of Shakespearean Monarchy.” South Atlantic Modern Language Association (2018).
- “‘The Mind’s Construction’: Cognition, Mindreading, and Shakespeare’s Characters.” Plenary, Ohio Valley Shakespeare Conference (2018).
- [Presentations earlier than 2018 available upon request (nichelms@pm.me)]

References

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