

SARAH NILSEN

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EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Ph.D., December 2000. School of Cinema-Television, Critical Studies.
M.A., 1995. School of Cinema-Television, Critical Studies.

AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE

M.F.A., 1992. Screenwriting.

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

B.A., 1989. English Literature and Environmental Studies.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT, BURLINGTON, VT

Full Professor of Film and Television Studies (2025-present)
Associate Professor of Film and Television Studies (2011-2025)
Director, Film and Television Studies Program (2015-2018)
Assistant Professor of Film and Television Studies (2003-2010)

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-OSHKOSH, OSHKOSH, WI

Assistant Professor of Communication Studies (1999-2003)

HONORS AND AWARDS

University of Vermont, Humanities Center Summer Research Award, Summer 2025, for research at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library.

University of Vermont Faculty Development Grant for the Arts, Summer 2022, for the collection of illustrations and photographs by Lois Crisler for the poetry collection, *Arctic Emeralds* (2026).

University of Vermont, Humanities Center and OVPR Summer Research Award, Summer 2018, for research at the University of Washington and the University of Alaska-Fairbanks.

University of Vermont, Small Grant Research Award, Summer 2017, for research at the Walt Disney Archive, Burbank, CA.

University of Vermont, Small Grant Research Award, Spring 2015, for research at The Strong National Museum of Play, Rochester, NY.

University of Vermont, Lattie Coors Research Assistantship Award, Spring 2013, for research on the Disney Princess franchise.

University of Vermont, Faculty Research Support Award, Fall and Spring 2011/12.

University of Vermont, Faculty Development Grant, Fall 2005, research on the plans by the U.S. State Department for the American Pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair of 1958.

Fulbright Scholarship, 1998/9, The Canada-U.S. Fulbright Program, research on American pavilions at Canadian international expositions.

Vander Putten International Fund, Fall 2002, funding to meet with British media organizations and institutions to develop a summer media studies program.

University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Faculty Development Grant, Summer 2001, research on the introduction of film technologies at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893.

University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Faculty/Student Collaborative Grant, 2000 and 2001, research on Pare Lorentz's Nuremberg Trial film and Vera Caspary's filmic adaptation of *Laura*.

Bernard Kantor Scholarship, 1998/9, University of Southern California.

Cinema Circulus Scholarship, 1997/8, University of Southern California.

PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS

Peer Reviewed

Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Animals: Animal Ethics and Hollywood Animation (book manuscript, in progress).

2026, *Arctic Emeralds: Lois Crisler in Wild Alaska*. Co-written with Lynn Parrish Sutton (Fernwood Press).

2025, *Critical Race Theory and the American Media*. eds. Sarah Nilsen and Sarah Turner (Routledge).

2022, *White Supremacy and the American Media*. eds. Sarah Nilsen and Sarah Turner (Routledge).

2019, *The Myth of Colorblindness: Race and Ethnicity in American Cinema*. eds. Sarah Nilsen and Sarah Turner (Palgrave).

2014, *The Colorblind Screen: Television in Post-Racial America*. eds. Sarah Nilsen and Sarah Turner (New York University Press).

2011, *Projecting America: Film and Cultural Diplomacy at the Brussels World's Fair of 1958* (McFarland & Company).

Non-Peer Reviewed

Walt's Whistle Stop. Co-written with Lynn Parrish Sutton (children's book, under review).

2019, *Walt Disney World (Iconic America)*. Content Consultant (ABDO Publishing).

Monkey Love. Screenplay for a biographical feature-length film about Dr. Harry Harlow, the father of attachment parenting.

Shelter. Screenplay for a television sitcom about an animal shelter in Vermont.

ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS

Peer Reviewed

2025, "When Interests Don't Converge: The Long History of Racism in Hollywood." *Critical Race Theory and American Media*, ed. Sarah Nilsen and Sarah Turner (Routledge).

2025, "True-Life Adventures: Walt Disney and the Modern Environmental Movement." *Why the Magic Matters: Discovering Disney as a Laboratory for Learning*, ed. Alexis Franzese and Jill Peterfeso (Bloomsbury).

2025, "Dead is Better: *Pet Sematary* and Animal Studies." *Theorizing Stephen King*, ed. Michael Blouin (Amsterdam University Press).

2022, "American Sniper: Constructing a White Nationalist Hero," *White Supremacy and the American Media*, eds. Sarah Nilsen and Sarah Turner (Routledge).

2021, "Cujo, the Black Man, and the Story of Patty Hearst," *Violence in the Films of Stephen King*, eds. Tony Magistrale and Michael Blouin (Rowman & Littlefield).

2019, "Living in Zootopia: Tracking the Neoliberal Subject in a Colorblind World," *The Myth of Colorblindness: Race and Ethnicity in American Cinema*. eds. Sarah E. Turner and Sarah Nilsen (Palgrave).

2014, "Some People Just Hide in Plain Sight": Historicizing Racism in *Mad Men*," *The Colorblind Screen: Television in Post-Racial America*. eds. Sarah Nilsen and Sarah Turner (New York University Press).

2011, "All-American Girl?: Annette Funicello and Suburban Ethnicity in the Mickey Mouse Club," *Mediated Girlhoods: New Explorations of Girls' Media Culture* ed. Mary Celeste Kearney (Peter Lang).

2011, "America's Salesman: Walt Disney's USA in Circarama" *Beyond the Mouse: Disney's Documentaries and Docudramas*, ed. A. Bowdoin Van Riper (McFarland, 2011). Recipient of the PCA/ACA Ray and Pat Browne Award for "Best Edited Collection in Popular and American Culture" for 2011.

2011, “Be Sure You’re Right, Then Go Ahead”: The Davy Crockett Gun Craze” *Journal of Children in Popular Culture* 1:1 (Spring 2010). Reprint in *A Walt Disney Reader*, University Press of Mississippi.

2008, “White Soul: The ‘Magical Negro’ in the Films of Stephen King,” *The Films of Stephen King: From Carrie to Secret Window*, ed. Tony Magistrale (New York: Palgrave, 2008).

PRESENTATIONS

Media Appearances and Interviews:

2024, Vermont Public. *Vermont Edition* radio show (November 21). Film buffs explore why local movie theaters are shutting down, 45-minute live interview.

2024, *Dwell Magazine*. Stassa Edwards, “We’ll Never Climb Down From the Tree House” (May/June), content consultant.

2024, Reelz. *Walt Disney: Behind the Magic* (June), principle scholar interview.

2024, History Channel. *How Disney Made America*. A&E Network 5-episode television series (April), scholar interview.

2024, *Today.com*. Elise Sole. “These Moms say Disney makes them better parents. Who are we to judge?” (April 3), scholar interview.

Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story, NEH-funded and 2024 winner of the Library of Congress Lavine / Ken Burns Prize for Film, documentary, scholar interview and production advisor.

2024, *Le Nouvel Observateur* (weekly French News magazine). Sarah Halifa-Legrand, US correspondent. “Disney and DeSantis—Don’t Say Gay Law” (2024), scholar interview.

2023, Vermont Public. *Vermont Edition* radio show (April 14). Vermont Popular Culture: The Good, the Bad, and the Maple, 60-minute live interview.

2023, NPR. *1A* radio show, (January 30, 2023), What a 100 years of Disney means for American entertainment, 40-minute live interview.

2023, Disney +. *Mickey: The Story of a Mouse* directed by Jeff Malmberg, feature-length documentary, scholar interview.

2020, Channel 5/Reelz. *Autopsy: The Last Hours of...*, documentary series episode about Walt Disney, scholar interview.

2015, ABC. *Behind the Magic: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, national premiere (December 13), scholar interview.

2015, PBS. *American Experience: Walt Disney*, national premiere (September 14-15), scholar interview.

2014, Pacifica Radio. *Against the Grain* radio show, San Francisco, (July), hour-long radio interview, "The Colorblind Screen," chosen as one of the "most interesting interviews aired in 2014."

Expert Witness: Woodall v. The Walt Disney Company copyright case (2024-2025)

Conferences:

2019, Popular Culture Association, Washington, D.C., Spring, paper presentation, "Living in *Zootopia*: Tracking the Neoliberal Subject in a Colorblind World."

2019, Society for Cinema and Media Studies, Seattle, Spring, paper presentation, "Virtual Voyages: Memories of Expo 70."

2017, University Film and Video Association, Los Angeles, Summer, scriptwriting presentation, "Shelter."

2016, Vermont Humanities Council, Ideas on Tap Lecture Series, Winter, "Growing Up Disney: A History of Childhood in the Twentieth Century."

2016, Popular Culture/American Culture Association, Seattle, Spring, paper presentation, "Animating *Snow White*."

2014, The World's Fair Since '64, Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., Fall, invited workshop and paper presentation, "Put You in the Picture: A History of Films at World's Fairs."

2014, Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference, Seattle, Spring, paper presentation, "The House of Science: A Kuhnian Revolution at the Century 21 Exposition."

2013, Illustration, Comics, and Animation Conference, Dartmouth College, Spring, paper presentation, "Animating the Disney Princess."

2012, American Historical Society Conference, New Orleans, Fall, paper presentation, "*USA in Circarama*: Walt Disney at the Brussels World's Fair of 1958."

2012, Popular Culture/American Culture Conference, Boston, Spring, paper presentation, "I Don't See Any Difference: Historicizing Racism in *Mad Men*."

2012, Console-ing Passions Conference: Feminism, Television and Video, Suffolk University, Boston, Spring, paper presentation, "I Don't See Any Difference: Historicizing Racism in *Mad Men*."

2011, TV in the Academy Conference, University of Vermont, Fall, paper presentation, "The History of Television Studies in the Academy"

2010, Reimagining Girlhood: Communities, Identities, Self-Portrayals conference, SUNY-Cortland, Fall, paper presentation, "All-American Girl?: Annette Funicello and Suburban Ethnicity."

2010, Popular Culture/American Cultural Studies Conference, St. Louis, Spring, paper presentation, "Selling Good Design: IBM and the Films of Charles and Ray Eames."

2009, African Literature Association Conference, UVM, Spring, paper presentation, "Don't Stop 'til We Get Enough: Michael Jackson and the Enjoyment of the Other."

2008, APCS Conference for Psychoanalysis and Social Change, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, Fall, paper presentation, "Don't Stop 'til We Get Enough: Michael Jackson and the Enjoyment of the Other."

2008, Popular Culture/American Cultural Studies Conference, San Francisco, Spring, paper presentation, "All American Girl: Annette Funicello and the Question of Ethnicity" and roundtable member on Race and the Films of Stephen King.

2006, Console-ing Passions: Feminism, Television and Video, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Spring, paper on Annette Funicello.

2005, Visible Evidence Conference, Concordia University, Montreal, Summer, paper presentation, "Anything Can Happen Day: *The Mickey Mouse Club* Newsreels."

2005, MIT4: Media in Transition Conference, MIT, Cambridge, Spring, paper presentation, "Everyone Neat and Pretty: Mickey Mouse Mediocrity."

2004, Console-ing Passions: Feminism, Television and Video, Tulane University, New Orleans, Spring, paper presentation, "Six Gun Galahads: Masculinity and the Television Western."

2003, Society for Cinema Studies Conference, Spring, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Spring 2003, paper presentation, "Be Sure You're Right": The Davy Crockett Gun Craze."

2003, Society for Cinema Studies Conference, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Spring, workshop on the films of Claire Denis.

2002, Film and History Conference, Kansas City, Fall, paper presentation, "'Be sure you're right, then go ahead': Race and the Davy Crockett Television Craze."

2002, Wisconsin Political Science Association Conference, Oshkosh, Fall, The Media and the Bush Presidency panel.

2001, APCS Conference for Psychoanalysis and Social Change, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, Fall, "*Do the Right Thing?*: Transference in the Classroom."

2001, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Dean's Symposium, Oshkosh, Spring, "Popular Culture and the Cold War."

2001, Society for Cinema Studies Conference, Washington, DC, Spring, "Violence is Desire: Claire Denis' *Beau Travail*."

2000, Console-ing Passions Conference: Feminism, Television and Video, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Spring, "Shirley Clarke's Visual Jazz."

1999, Film and Literature Conference, University of Florida, Fall, "Bug-Eye in *South Pacific*: The Atomic Sublime at the Brussels World's Fair."

1999, Cold War Conference, Indiana University, Bloomington, "America's Salesman: Disney at the Brussels World's Fair."

1998, Western Association of Women Historians Conference, Huntington Gardens, Pasadena, "Gendered Spheres: The World's Fairs of the 1930s."

1998, Society for Cinema Studies Conference, San Diego, Media Literacy workshop.

1997, Society for Cinema Studies Conference, Ottawa, "It Happened at the Fair: Film and the Paris Expositions," French Cinema in the 1930s and Its Intertexts panel.

1997, UCLA Southland Conference, Westwood, "Disneyland Goes to the World's Fair," Imagined Communities panel.

1996, Society for Cinema Studies Conference, "The Total Art of Stalin," Avant Garde Film panel.