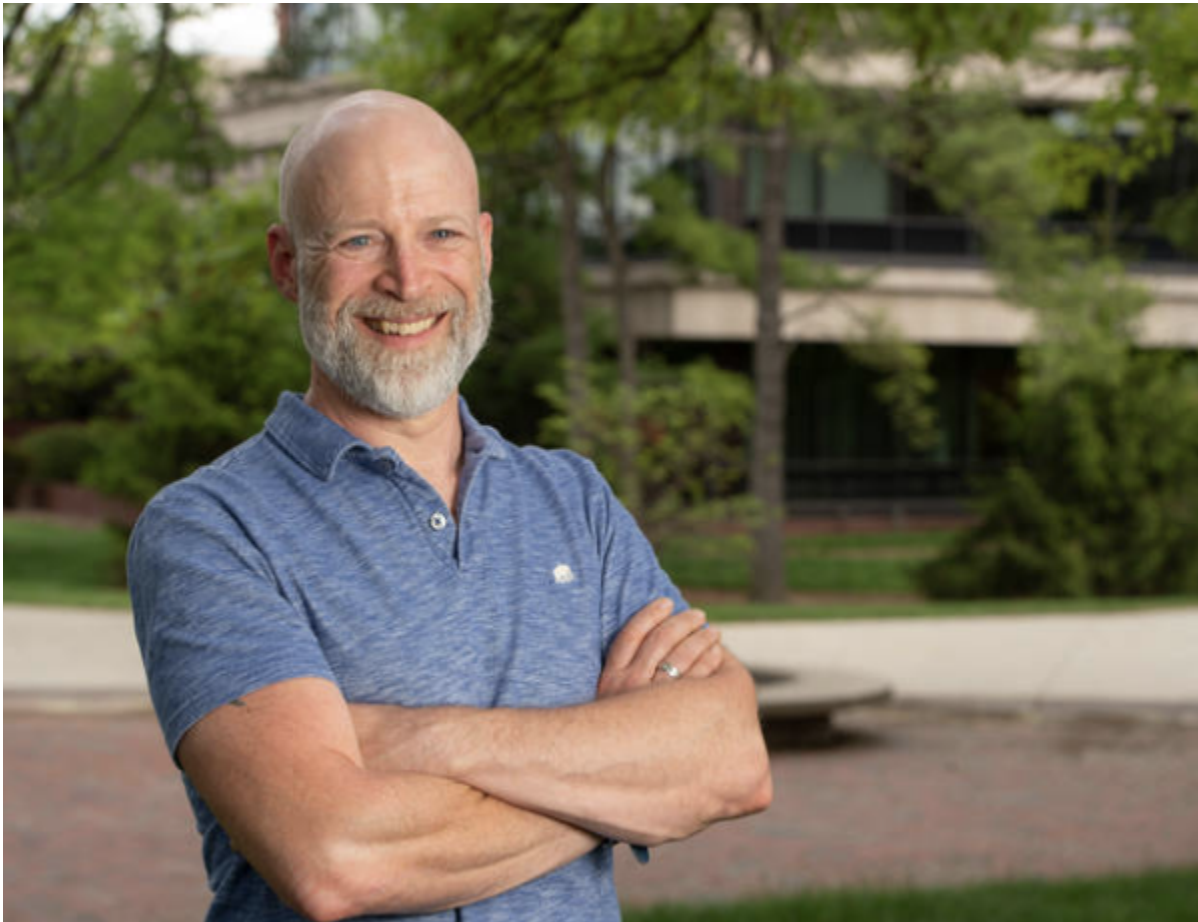


# Walt Whitman Historian earns SIUE Distinguished Research Professor Award

by Submitted by SIUE

December 13 2023 1:25 PM



EDWARDSVILLE - Southern Illinois University Edwardsville congratulates its newest Distinguished Research Professor, Jason Stacy, PhD, a professor of history and social science pedagogy in the College of Arts and Sciences. The promotion to Distinguished Research Professor of History comes on the heels of being a co-director on a \$250,000 National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant. Stacy's new SIUE appointment

is a result of a selection by a committee of his peers along with the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

“I am extremely honored to receive the Distinguished Research Professor award,” said Stacy. “The support that the University has provided has been essential for my work. But I’m especially grateful for the colleagues and students with whom I’ve worked for nearly twenty years; they inspire me every day.”

Stacy has authored several books, numerous articles and published chapters, examining the literature of famed poets Walt Whitman and Edgar Lee Masters, the latter of whom hails from Illinois. With Masters, Stacy wrote a history of the poet’s best-selling collection titled "Spoon River Anthology" (1915).

“In my book, 'Spoon River America: Edgar Lee Masters and the Myth of the American Small Town' (2021), I trace the origins of Masters’s portrayal of the fictional small town of Spoon River to early settlement patterns in Illinois, and follow the book’s legacy in popular media into the 21st century.”

Stacy has also published work with his students as well as he is a co-author of a US history textbook entitled "Fabric of a Nation" (2020) for Bedford/Freeman/Worth, a subsidiary of Macmillan Publishers. The text is used widely in course curricula as required primary-source research. "Fabric of a Nation" was reviewed by more than thirty peer reviewers before publication.

“'Fabric of a Nation' includes a complete survey of US history, with 200+ historical documents threaded throughout the 900-page text,” said Stacy.

Walt Whitman is a favorite subject of Stacy’s as he has been a contributing editor and publisher of more than 100 Whitman editorials for the online repository, *The Walt Whitman Archive*. His role as co-director of his recent NEH grant (2021 – 2023) offers Stacy the opportunity to find anonymously published Walt Whitman editorials, encode them, and publish them as part of the *Archive*.

“During this three-year grant, we identified 700+ anonymously-published articles by Whitman. Our model of computational attribution ultimately settles questions as to when Walt Whitman began and ended his work for the Brooklyn Daily Times, and has methodological implications for the identification of other anonymous authors in 19th-century newspapers.”

Stacy spent 20 years studying Walt Whitman the journalist "with an eye to thinking about how his work as a newspaper writer shaped his remarkable poetry in 'Leaves of Grass' (1855).” Fans of Stacy may look forward to an upcoming collaborative work

titled "Walt Whitman Between Leaves: Tracing Paths Untrodden 1856-1860" under contract with Edinburgh University Press.

“Though people still read Walt Whitman today, they have little idea of the historical context in which his poetry was created. Yet knowing Whitman’s era reveals unexpected attributes of his poetry, and illuminates the ways in which we read him today through our era’s interests and concerns.”

When asked if after years of consuming United States history through literature he sees the US evolving, Stacy said the following: “It’s difficult for me to summarize the evolution of the United States in any meaningful way. I’m not entirely sure if I’d say it has evolved, so much as it has changed over time. But these changes fascinate me, especially the ways literature captures poignant attributes of an era, and then lives an often long life transformed by historical eras very different from those in which it was created.”

“For me, history lives within literature, shaping its creation, its reception, and its legacy.”

Upon being considered for the Distinguished Research Professor award, Stacy’s SIUE colleagues made note of his “sustained commitment to scholarship” and his ability to offer a fresh approach to history by combining methodologies in history, historiography, and literary studies.

“This recommendation for promotion recognizes your outstanding and sustained contribution to research and creative activities and that your achievements serve as an example for the entire SIUE community,” stated Jerry B. Weinberg, PhD, in a letter of congratulations. Weinberg is the associate provost for research and dean of the SIUE Graduate School.

Denise Cobb, PhD, provost and vice chancellor of Academic Affairs, will host a Provost’s Celebration of Research Reception in April, 2024 to present Stacy with a medallion, and place a plaque outside the Graduate School.