

Dr. Annie Rose O'Brien

CB: 3419 Hedrick Admin | Catawba College | Salisbury, NC

arobrien23@catawba.edu | annieroseobrien.com | she/her

Education

PhD in Religious Studies; Religion in the Americas

November 2025

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Dissertation Title: "From Stone to Soil: The Erosion of the white American Sacred"

Committee: Brandon Bayne (Advisor), Jes Boon, Julianne Hammer, William Sturkey, Joseph Winters

PhD Certificate in Women's and Gender Studies

November 2025

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Certificate Advisor: Barbara G. Friedman

MA in Religion; Concentration in Religion & Public Engagement

May 2015

Wake Forest University

Thesis: "'In the Souls of All of Us': The Discourse of Lynching in American Culture"

Advisor: Ronald B. Neal

BA in Religion; minors in Sociology, Studio Art

May 2013

Teaching Experience

Assistant Professor of Religion

Catawba College (Salisbury, NC)

Department of Philosophy and Religion

- REL 1577: Religion & Popular Culture (Fall 2026, Spring 2025)
- REL 1400: Religion, Nature, and the Environment (Spring 2026, Spring 2024, Fall 2025)
- REL 1030: Introduction to Religion (Fall 2023, Spring 2024)

First Year Seminar

- FYS 1200: Behind The Scenes: Film, Fandom, and Popular Culture (Fall 2026)
- FYS 1200: Have I Got a Story For You! Storytelling and Vocation (Fall 2024, Fall 2025)
 - Co-taught with Lilly Center Director, Kendra Joyner-Miller
 - Fall 2025 acted as a pilot for initiating new center-specific FYS learning outcomes tied to vocational discernment and the Lilly Center (part of Catawba's new CORE curriculum)

Honors College

- HONS 4300: Honors Thesis Hours (Fall 2026, Spring 2027)
 - Thesis Committee Chair: HBB, "I Don't Wanna See You In Heaven: Ostracism and Strife for People with Disabilities in their Formative Years"
- HONS 2501: Serving Holy Realness: Gender, Sexuality, and Religion (Spring 2026)

The Pursuit Program

- HUM 2200: Humanities & The Environment: Becoming-with in Times of Crisis (Spring 2025)

Interdisciplinary Courses:

- SOC/WGST 1110: Introduction to Women's & Gender Studies (Spring 2026, Spring 2027)
 - Collaborated with faculty to create and propose this interdisciplinary minor
 - Co-taught with Dr. Diana Riser (Psychology); designed to always be co-taught by two faculty members from different disciplines.
- SOC 4302: Social and Humanistic Dimensions of Disability (Independent Study)
 - Developed course and syllabus; co-taught with Dr. Tim Clark (Sociology, IOR)

Teaching Fellow/Instructor of Record

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Department of Religious Studies

- RELI 438: Religion, Nature, and Environment (Fall 2022)
- RELI 240: Religion, Literature, and the Arts in America (Fall 2021, Spring 2023)
- RELI 424: Gender Theory and the Study of Religion (Spring 2022)
- RELI 180: Introduction to Islamic Civilizations (online, Summer 2023)

North Carolina Governor's School

- Area III (Self & Society) Instructor (Summer 2013, Summer 2014)

Instructional Assistant

Catawba College, SACSCOC Quality Enhancement Plan

- GEN 1102: Data Literacy Lab (Spring 2025)

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Department of Women's & Gender Studies

- WGST 202: Introduction to Feminist Thought (Spring 2023)

Teaching Assistant (* denotes acting as lead TA)

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Department of Religious Studies

- RELI 106: Intro to Early Judaism (Fall 2018, Fall 2019*)
- RELI 140: Religion in America (Spring 2019, Spring 2020*)
- RELI 226: Human Animals in Religion & Ethics (Fall 2020*)
- RELI 181: Modern Muslim Societies (Spring 2021*)

North Carolina Governor's School

- Social Sciences TA (Summer 2013, Summer 2014)

Graduate Research Consultant

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Department of Religious Studies

- RELI 140: Religion in America (Maymester 2020)
- RELI 162: Catholicism Today (Summer 2020)

Professional Experience & Academic Service

Interdisciplinary Innovation Institute Coordinator, Catawba College
2026-Present

Fall

- Conduct research on interdisciplinary programming models at peer and aspirant institutions to identify best practices and emerging trends that may inform institutional strategy.
- Identify and analyze areas of opportunity for expanding interdisciplinary programming at Catawba College, with attention to gaps in current curricular offerings and student needs.
- Collaborate with faculty and academic leadership to develop proposals for integrating interdisciplinary programming into the Catawba curriculum, including the creation of new minors and co-teaching arrangements that build upon existing courses and programs.
- Provide logistical support for minor recruitment initiatives within Women's and Gender Studies and work to ensure that course registration systems and academic calendars are aligned to sustain WGS course offerings .
- Support and facilitate the planning, coordination, and implementation of interdisciplinary programming initiatives across the college.
- Serve as a knowledgeable resource and point of contact for students, faculty, and staff engaged with existing interdisciplinary minors, providing guidance on requirements, pathways, and opportunities.
- Offer administrative support to i3 and CETLL including the creation and distribution of digital newsletters, promotional materials (flyers, bookmarks), grant evaluation rubrics and forms, digital surveys (Qualtrics and Microsoft Forms).

Student Retention Coordinator, Catawba College

Fall 2024-Spring 2026

- Supported efforts in the EVP/Provost's Office to increase student retention rates.
- Supported the development and implementation of Catawba's Thrive Initiative.
 - Created application processes for internal grants that support the implementation of high-impact practices and the development of open educational resources at Catawba. Collaborated with the Instructional Support Committee to read and evaluate grant proposals during the Fall and Spring application cycles.
- Collaborated with the SACSCOC Quality Enhancement Plan Committee on the implementation of the college's data literacy pilot course, including instructional design.
 - Created and developed lesson plans, instructional examples in ThingLink, and met weekly with committee members and instructors to debrief and adapt expectations as needed.
- Deeply involved in Catawba's revisions to its curricular and co-curricular programming and learning outcomes.
 - Met weekly with stakeholders across the campus to discuss student experiences, identifying gaps and re-imagining the experiences each Catawba student should leave with.
 - Participated in the discussion and development of new learning outcomes around ideas of wellbeing, equity, and belonging.
- Offer administrative support including creating flyers, slide decks, executive summaries, interactive activities (Day of Culture, Board of Trustees), resource guides, promotional materials (stickers, buttons), and website design support.
- Served as a member of the CARES team, helping to ensure awareness of student concerns across campus and make sure that students received adequate care and support from Student Success, Student Affairs, and the Provost's Office.
 - Created and, with team support, expanded a community resource guide for students living in Salisbury/Rowan County.

International Student Support & Interim PDSO, Catawba College

Spring-Summer 2025

- Acted as Primary Designated School Officer for the Student & Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) and

International Student Advisor, managing international student records and federal visa compliance.

- Kept students and administration informed of policy shifts and their potential impact on the international students and the college.
- Generated and maintained up-to-date I-20s for admitted international students while helping students understand and maintain their nonimmigrant status in the US.
- Assisted students with enrollment, transfers, program extensions, and employment authorization (OPT and CPT).
- Worked with the EVP/Provost's Office and donors to provide financial resources and summer support (on-campus housing, groceries, work study opportunities) to international students that chose to remain in the United States over the summer.
- Worked with staff in the Center for the Environment, Student Success, and the Lilly Center to ensure international students have rides to and from Charlotte-Douglas and Piedmont Triad International Airports at the beginning and end of each semester; this included coordinating different individuals who volunteered to be available to drive students on particular days to maximize coverage and help students with planning their travel times.
- Conducted research on International Studies at peer and aspirant institutions, presenting suggestions for staffing, center budget, institutional policies to the EVP/Provost's Office.
- Led job search to find and then onboarded our new International Studies Director in Summer 2025.

Designated School Official (DSO), Catawba College

Fall 2024-Spring 2026

- Provided I-20 travel signatures and international student support as needed.

Graduate Studies Committee, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

2019-2021

- 2019 Junior Student Representative & 2020 Senior Student Representative
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Campus Involvement

Honors Thesis Committees, Catawba College

AY 2026-2027

- MC, "Yōkai Romance: Traditional Japanese Culture Meets Modern Female Desire"
 - Committee Member
- HBB, "I Don't Wanna See You In Heaven: Ostracism and Strife for People with Disabilities in their Formative Years"
 - Committee Chair

QEP "Level Up Literacy" Faculty Development Cohort, Catawba College

Spring 2026-Fall 2026

- Participated in the inaugural cohort for Catawba's SACSCOC Quality Enhancement Plan Project, expanding data literacy across campus by enhancing existing courses, majors, and programs.
- In conversation with QEP Director, developed scaffolded assignment and in-class activities for FYS that fulfill 2 of the Data Literacy Learning Outcomes.
 - Hyperfixation Station: a multi-step research project that requires each student to research, develop, design, record, and create a podcast episode on their current pop culture fixation.

Lilly Center First Year Orientations, Catawba College

Summers 2024, 2025, 2026

- Coordinated with Lilly Center staff and Director Kendra Joyner-Miller to participate in multiple annual student sessions for incoming first years at various retreat centers in North Carolina.

- Hosted small-group sessions and narrative therapy workshops geared towards self-reflection and secular vocational discernment.

Academic Policy Committee, Catawba College 2025-2026

AY

- Worked as part of a committee to review the college's academic policies.
- Voted on students appeals for exceptions to current academic policies.
- Took minutes for the committee.

Search Committees, Catawba College

- Director of Retention, Persistence and Student Success Position (Spring 2025)
- Director of International Studies (Spring 2025)
 - Organized application materials, created rubrics and interview questions, and collocated the evaluations of members of the search committee at various stages.
- CENV Cluster Hire - Assistant Professor of Philosophy (Spring 2025)

Theatre Arts Invited Talkbacks, Catawba College

- Invited faculty respondent to student production of *No Exit* (Fall 2024)
- Invited faculty respondent to student production of *Hand to God* (Spring 2026)

Publications

“Wandering the Wasteland: Material Religion in *Mad Max: Fury Road*,” *Theology, Religion, and Mad Max: Rising from the Ashes*, Eds. Yael Thomas Cameron, Vernon W. Cisney. Jon Hoskin, Bloomsbury Press, TBD (final edits submitted April 2026).

“Mike Douglas and Annie Rose O’Brien: Why the elevators at Crystal Towers should be a city priority,” *Winston-Salem Journal* | October 1, 2023,

https://journalnow.com/opinion/column/mike-douglas-and-annie-rose-o-brien-why-the-elevators-at-crystal-towers-should-be/article_19d60c7a-5fd5-11ee-904d-377d8161e7e8.html

“And Whitey’s On The Moon,” *Fabricating Authenticity*, Eds. Jason W.M. Ellsworth & Andie Alexander, Equinox Publishing, 2024, <https://api.equinoxpub.com/books/2963>.

“Material Religion,” *Religion in North America: A Bloomsbury Academic Digital Resource*, Eds. James Bielo, William S. Green, Anthony B. Pinn, Susan Ridgely, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022, DOI:10.5040/9781350915824.004

“Monuments, Memorials, and the Resacralization of Space” *Sightings* | February 2021

- <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/sightings/articles/monuments-memorials-and-resacralization-space>
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Honors & Awards

\$20,000 McColl Dissertation Completion Fellowship, The Center for the Study of the American South
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2023-2024 Academic Year)

\$975 Tuition Grant for National Humanities Center's Podcasting for Humanities Workshop, The Department of Women's & Gender Studies, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (January 2024)

\$2,000 Summer Research Grant, The Department of Religious Studies, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Summer 2022)

\$2,500 Graduate and Research Travel Grant, The Carolina Center for Jewish Studies, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Summer 2021)

\$3,000 Summer Research Grant, The Center for the Study of the American South, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Summer 2020)

Recent Conference Presentations

"From Stone to Soil: The Contested Erosion of the white American Sacred," *The American Academy of Religion's Annual Meeting*, San Antonio (November 2023)

"Dirty Metaphors: Soil, Waste, and the American Sacred," *The American Academy of Religion's Southeastern Regions Annual Meeting*, Remote Conference due to COVID-19 (March 2022)

"Everywhere Under Our Feet: Rituals and Relationships of Race in Southern Soils," *The American Academy of Religion's Annual Meeting*, San Antonio (November 2021)

"Southern Soils and the American Sacred," *The British Society for Phenomenology & Irish Philosophical Society's The Future as a Present Concern International Conference*, Remote Conference due to COVID-19 (September 2021)

Guest Lectures, Workshops, & Invited Talks

"Sociology of a Congregation" Student Workshop, The Lilly Center Congregational Leadership Initiative, Catawba College, NC (October 2026)

"Gender Identity: Fact v. Fiction" Panel Discussion, PFLAG Salisbury/Rowan, Rowan County Library, Salisbury, NC (April 2026)

"Exploring 'The Testament of Ann Lee': Art, Dance, and Religion in Film" Talkback Panel Discussion, The Independent Picture House Theater, Charlotte, NC (February 2026)

“Discover: Caring for Diverse Peoples, Engaging with Diverse Peoples,” The Lilly Center Catawba Youth Theology Institute (DISCOVER), Catawba College, NC (March 2025, 2026)

““But have you tried doing yoga?” Introduction to Critical Disability Studies,” Sarah Bloesch’s WGST 202: Introduction to Feminist Thought, UNC-CH, NC (March 2023)

“American Monuments, Memories, and Metaphors,” Ryne Beddard’s RELI 235: Space, Place, and Religion, UNC-CH, NC (March 2022)

“Toilet Crimes & Secular Defilement: An Introduction to Mary Douglas,” Samah Chodhury’s RLST 210: Religion, Race, and Social Justice, Ithaca College, NY (February 2022)

“Southern Soils and the American Sacred,” Amy Woodson-Boulton’s HIST 1060: Modern Global Environmental History, Loyola Marymount University, CA (November 2021)

“Everywhere Under Our Feet: Memory, Monuments, and Archives of Violence in the Southern US,” Ryne Beddard’s RELI 438: Religion, Nature, and the Environment, UNC-CH, NC (November 2021)

“Religion, Race, and the Sacralization of Space,” Israel Domínguez’s RELI 101: Introduction to Religious Studies, UNC-CH, NC (September 2021)

“Theories of Dirt, Memory, and Devaluing,” Ryne Beddard’s RELI 438: Religion, Nature, and the Environment, UNC-CH, NC (April 2021)

“Rituals & Memories of White Violence along the US-Mexico Border,” Israel Dominguez’s RELI 245: Latina/o Religions in the United States-Mexico Borderlands, UNC-CH, NC (April 2021)

“Race and Animality in Benédicte Boisseron’s *Afro-Dog: Blackness and the Animal Question*,” Dr. Andrea Cooper’s RELI 226: Human Animals in Religion and Ethics, UNC-CH, NC (September 2020)

Recent Seminar/Workshop Participation

Fall 2026 Perusall Academy: Activate, Innovate, Elevate Sessions

USC FYE Improving Student Disconnection and Enhancing Effective Instruction in the First Year (Spring 2026)

USC FYE Structuring and Strengthening the Transfer-Year Experience (Spring 2026)

ACUE Online Course & Microcredential: Fostering a Culture of Belonging (Spring 2025)

Humanities for the Anthropocene Research Incubator (July 2021)

Spatial Justice Studio’s Exploring Spatial Justice Workshop (April 2019)

Teaching Against Islamophobia & Antisemitism Workshop (March 2019)

Languages

Reading proficiency in Spanish and French (Fall 2020)

Teaching Areas

Religious studies, lived religion, material religion, digital religion, popular culture, mass media, environmental humanities, “Anthro”pocene studies, decolonizing studies, discard studies, material culture, new materialisms, disability/crip studies, fat studies, gender and sexuality, feminist studies, intersectional feminist theories, US and Southern US history, documentary histories, race and whiteness, ecopoetics, film and television, public history and memory, storytelling, CRT.