

CHRISTINE HEDLIN

FELLOW 2018-2020

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The Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts seeks to strengthen the quality and shape the character of church-related institutions of higher learning. Three closely related initiatives have been designed to accomplish this mission: a National Network of Church-Related Colleges and Universities that sponsors a wide variety of activities and publications that explore the Christian character of the academic vocation; a Graduate Fellowship Program that supports graduate students who are exploring vocations in church-related higher education, and the two-year, residential Postdoctoral Teaching Fellowship. As of 2019-2020 the Program has awarded eighty two-year postdoctoral fellowships to teacher-scholars who seek to renew and enrich their intellectual and spiritual lives while preparing for teaching and leadership roles at institutions of church-related higher education. Fellows teach in the honors college (Christ College) and departments of the College of Arts and Sciences at Valparaiso University. In addition, Fellows conduct scholarship or creative work, participate in a two-year colloquium, and interact with representatives from a national network of 100 church-related colleges and universities.



Christine Hedlin earned her PhD in English from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in August 2018. At the University of Illinois she held six competitive fellowships, including a two-year Network for Neuro-Cultures fellowship and an interdisciplinary Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities fellowship.

Hedlin's primary field is U.S. literature of the long nineteenth century, with specific interests in women's religious fiction, literary-religious histories, African American religion, theories of secularity, and the novel form. She also teaches and researches at the intersection of literature, religion, and mind-science, a juncture that informs an article she has published in the *Journal of American Studies*, "'Was There Not Reason to Doubt?': *Wieland* and Its Secular Age."

Hedlin's current book project, *Novel Faiths: Religion and Realism in Late Nineteenth-Century America* tells a literary history of the late nineteenth century with religious fiction at its center.

Hedlin argues that, in the aftermath of events like the Civil War and the rise of Darwinian evolution, religious novels pushed Protestants to see faith as less a matter of doctrine, more a matter of social and political action. The novels' key formal features—their plots and multiple points-of-view—made them particularly suited to guide readers through such a theological shift. *Novel Faiths* at once traces this story of Protestantism's evolution and shows how it augments accounts of late-century faiths and fiction traditionally derived from work on literary realism. In many canonical realist novels, faith is old-fashioned—a precursor to "modern" skepticism or spirituality. *Novel Faiths* contrasts this story of American secularization with late-century Protestant fiction's calls for faiths that are pragmatic, communal, and political. To recognize these calls is, the manuscript suggests, also to recognize Protestantism's claims on the American public sphere, both across the nineteenth century and beyond it.

Hedlin has designed and taught courses in Valparaiso's English Department and interdisciplinary Honors College, including "The Rise of the Novel" and "Texts and Contexts," a philosophical traditions or Great Books course. During the 2019–2020 academic year, she looks forward to teaching seminars on the American short story and the environmental humanities and a course, "Traditions of Giving and Serving in America," made possible by a grant from the Learning by Giving Foundation. At the University of Illinois, she taught courses in Rhetoric and Writing and also served as a semester-long mentor to new instructors in the Rhetoric program.

As a teacher, Hedlin is committed to aiding her students' own diverse learning processes. To do that, she designs lessons and assignments with variety in mind. Students in her courses draw mindmaps on chalkboards, type arguments into shared Google docs, and have class-wide debates. They design board games, go on field trips, make Spotify playlists, and edit Wikipedia pages. They write academic essays alongside *New York Times*-style book reviews, open letters to local officials, and blog posts on live websites. By varying form and content together, Hedlin encourages students to think flexibly, to recalibrate old beliefs and revisit new ideas from multiple perspectives.