

Isaac James Richards

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SUMMARY

I study the history and theory of writing, rhetoric, media, and communication, with particular attention to the intersection of memory, religion, and democracy. Related subfields include space, place, materiality, archaeology, and museum studies. Intellectual affinities are to pluralism, pragmatism, postsecularism, and postcritical reading.

ACADEMIC POSITIONS

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION ARTS AND SCIENCES

- Graduate Teaching Assistant August 2024 – Present

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

HONORS PROGRAM

- Graduate Instructor December 2023 – May 2024

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

- Graduate Instructor August 2022 – May 2024

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATIONS

- Adjunct Professor January 2023 – May 2023

EDUCATION

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Ph.D.—Communication Arts and Sciences Anticipated April 2028

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

M.A.—English, Rhetoric and Composition June 2024

B.A.—Communications August 2022

PUBLICATIONS

EDITED VOLUMES

Crosby, Richard Benjamin and RICHARDS, ISAAC J. Co-editors. *Latter-day Eloquence: Two Centuries of Mormon Oratory*. University of Illinois Press, 2026, <https://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/?id=p089329>.

PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES

“Aura, Objects, and Originality: One Answer to the Question of Marginalized Materiality.” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* vol. 56, no. 2, (2026), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02773945.2026.2626576>.

“‘Your Spirit Fires My Breast’: Maria Stewart and the Political Potential of the Feminine Rhetorical Sublime.” *Western Journal of Communication* vol. 89, no. 3, (2025), pp. 1-20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10570314.2025.2493851>.

“‘We Fly Forgotten as A Dream’: A Theology of American Memory in Contemporary Postsecular Literature.” *Religion and the Arts* vol. 29, no. 1-2, 2025, pp. 144–156, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685292-02901004>.

Co-authored with Richard Benjamin Crosby. “‘Anarchy in the U.S.A: Win McNamee’s Capitol Riot Photos and the Rhetoric of Desecration.’” *The Journal for the History of Rhetoric*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2023, pp. 217–229, <https://doi.org/10.5325/jhistrhetoric.26.2.0217>.

“The Rhetoric of Unreasonable Optimism: Toni Morrison’s Novel *Jazz* and the Jazz Age.” *The Journal of American Culture* vol. 45, no. 3, 2022, pp. 359–372, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jacc.13411>. *Lead article.

Co-authored with Richard Benjamin Crosby. “The American Religion and the Rhetoric of Theophany.” *The Journal for the History of Rhetoric* vol. 26, no. 2, 2022, pp. 152–174, <https://doi.org/10.5325/jhistrhetoric.25.2.0152>.

BOOK CHAPTERS

- “Restoration Rhetoric and the Ruins of Nauvoo: Creation, Memory, Destruction, and Modernity.” In *Relics of Modernity: Theorizing Rhetorics and Performances of Ruins* edited by Andrew F. Wood, Bloomsbury Academic, 2025, pp. 93–122.
- “The Atonement as Eloquent Oration: Chronos, Kairos, and ‘The Times of Reckoning.’” In *The Demands of Justice: Reading Alma 34* edited by Adam S. Miller and Joseph M. Spencer, *Proceedings of the Latter-day Saint Theology Seminar*, 2023, forthcoming.

BOOK REVIEWS

- The Sound of Mormonism: A Media History of Latter-day Saints* by Jared Farmer. *Religious Studies Review*, forthcoming.
- “Within Sight and Sound: Recent Monographs on Mormonism and Media.” *The Journal of Media and Religion* vol. 24, no. 4 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348423.2025.2556090>.
 *Review essay on *Eternity in the Ether: A Mormon Media History* (2023) by Gavin Feller; *Seeing Things: Technologies of Vision and the Making of Mormonism* (2023) by Mason Kamana Allred; *Mediated Mormons: Shifting Religious Identities in the Digital Age* (2025) by Rosemary Avance.
- The Ethics of Oneness: Emerson, Whitman, and the Bhagavad Gita* by Jeremy David Engels. *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, vol. 111, no. 1, 2025, pp. 137–141, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630.2024.2404124>.
- Approaching the Tree: Interpreting 1 Nephi 8* edited by Benjamin Keough, Joseph M. Spencer, and Jennifer Champoux. *Journal of Mormon History* vol. 51, no. 1, 2025, pp. 135–138, <https://doi.org/10.5406/24736031.51.1.08>.
- The Evolution of Pragmatism in India: Dewey, Ambedkar, and the Rhetoric of Reconstruction* by Scott R. Stroud. *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2024, pp. 155–159, <https://muse-jhu-edu.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/article/956072>.
- The Voice of the People: Political Rhetoric in the Book of Mormon* by David Charles Gore. *The Journal of Communication and Religion* vol. 47, no. 1, 2024, pp. 97–101, ISSN: 0894-2838.
- Engaging Museums: Rhetorical Education and Social Justice* by Lauren E. Obermark. *Rhetoric Review* vol. 42, no. 4, 2023, pp. 319–321, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07350198.2023.2268452>.

SHORT ESSAYS IN PEER REVIEWED JOURNALS

- “The Labyrinth: A Platonic Dialogue on What’s Next, Featuring ChatGPT as Phaedrus.” *Explorations in Media Ecology*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2023, pp. 235–239, https://doi.org/10.1386/eme_00164_7.
- “A Third Biblical Foundation for ‘Sonny’s Blues.’” *The Explicator* vol. 81, no. 1, 2023, pp. 6–8, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00144940.2023.2214674>.

SUBMITTED MANUSCRIPTS

- “A Media Archaeology of Archaeological Media.” *Critical Inquiry*, under review.

SELECTED PERSONAL CREATIVE NONFICTION ESSAYS

- “Notes on Going Viral.” *Guernica*, forthcoming.
- “Jerusalem Ostraca.” *LIT Magazine*, vol. 37, (Summer 2024), <https://www.litmagazine.org/jerusalem-ostraca/>.
- “Leap.” *Oxford Magazine*, no. 52, (Spring 2024), <https://sites.miamioh.edu/oxmag/leap-by-isaac-richards/>.
- “Through a Glass Darkly.” *Wayfare* no. 2, Summer 2023, pp. 109–114, <https://www.wayfaremagazine.org/p/through-a-glass-darkly>.
- “The Parable of the Cane.” *Y-Magazine*, vol. 77, no. 1, Winter 2023, (Burlington, Vermont): Lane Press, p. 14.

SELECTED POETRY

- “Einsteinian Afternoon.” *The Threepenny Review*, forthcoming.

- “Lot.” *Christianity & Literature* vol. 74, no. 3 (Fall 2025): p. 408.
“Three Poems.” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* vol. 58, no. 2 (Summer 2025): pp. 151-1533.
“Far West.” *BYU Studies Quarterly* vol. 64, no. 2 (Summer 2025): p. 24.
“Six Poems.” *The Pennsylvania Literary Journal* vol. 16, no. 3 (Fall 2024): pp. 352-360.
“A Splash of Meaning.” *Aethlon: The Journal of Sports Literature* vol. 41, no. 2 (Summer 2024): p. 121.

FICTION

- “Abraham (Lincoln).” *EcoTheo Review* March 28, 2025, <https://www.ecotheo.org/etreview/abelinc?rq=Richards>.

RESEARCH AND TRAVEL GRANTS

EXTERNAL

- \$1,000 Charles Redd Center for Western Studies Research Grant, 2025
- \$400 Mormon History Association Student Travel Grant, 2025
- \$1,250 Latter-day Saint Theology Seminar Grant, 2023
- \$450 American Society for the History of Rhetoric Travel Grant, 2022

INTERNAL

- \$1,500 Penn State Graduate Student International Travel Grant, 2025
- \$1,000 BYU College of Fine Arts and Communications Experiential Learning Grant, 2022
- \$500 BYU College of Humanities Undergraduate Mentoring Grant for Teaching Assistants, 2022
- \$500 BYU Graduate Student Society Professional Presentation Grant, 2022

FELLOWSHIPS

- University Graduate Fellowship, The Pennsylvania State University, 2024
- Student Fellowship, David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies, Brigham Young University, 2022

AWARDS AND HONORS

NATIONAL

- James L. Golden Outstanding Student Essay in Rhetoric Award, National Communication Association, 2022

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

- Kenneth Burke Prize in Rhetoric, Center for Democratic Deliberation, 2025

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY (SELECTED)

- Three Minute Thesis Competition Award, 2024
- Rowe Award for Excellence in Teaching (Finalist), 2024
- Parley A. and Ruth J. Christensen Memorial Award, 2022
- Phi Kappa Phi Outstanding Student Award, College of Fine Arts and Communications, 2022
- Stephen W. Gibson Entrepreneurial Communications Scholarship, 2021
- Beverly Zimmerman Professional Writing and Rhetoric Scholarship, 2021

INVITED TALKS

“Spotlight Panel: Reflections on Rhetorical History’s Past, Present, and Future.” *American Society for the History of Rhetoric Symposium*, May 22, 2026, Portland OR. *With Richard Leo Enos, Susan Jarratt, Michele Kennerly, Kundai Chirindo, José G. Izaguirre, and Ariel Seay-Howard. Chair: Allison Prash.

SELECTED CONFERENCE AND SYMPOSIUM PRESENTATIONS

- “Toward Dravidian Rhetorics: Caste, Christianity, and Civil Rights in Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy’s 2019 Speech to the North American Telugu Association in Dallas, Texas.” *Rhetoric Society of America*, Portland OR, May 22, 2026.
- “The Rhetoric of Archaeology in Israel and Palestine.” *International Society for the History of Rhetoric*, Copenhagen, Denmark, July 23, 2025. ***Winner of the 2025 Kenneth Burke Prize in Rhetoric from the Penn State Center for Democratic Deliberation**
- “The Vine and the Fig Tree: A Pacifist Polarity in Sidney Rigdon’s Fourth of July Oration.” *Mormon History Association*, Ogden UT, June 6, 2025.
- “Mormon Poetry in the Cosmological Garden: Poets Read Creative Work.” *Association for Mormon Letters/Mormon Scholars in the Humanities Joint Conference*, Ephraim UT, May 29, 2025.
- “Epistemological Pedagogy: Truth and Rhetoric in the Private Religious University Writing Classroom.” *Conference on College Composition and Communication*, Baltimore MD, April 11, 2025. ***First Place Winner of the 2024 Locutorium Journal Award.**
- “Aura, Objects, and Museal Rhetoric: The Question of Marginalized Materiality.” *National Communication Association Convention*, Visual Communication Division, New Orleans LA, November 23, 2024. ***Top Paper Panel Award in Visual Communication.**
- “How Outsiders Rhetorically Become Insiders: Identification and Memory in University President Inaugural Addresses.” *National Communication Association Convention*, Public Address Division, New Orleans LA, November 23, 2024.
- With Richard Benjamin Crosby. “On the Mysterious Origins of Speech: Triangulating Greek, Mayan, and Vedic Glottogonic Myths.” *National Communication Association Convention*, Rhetorical and Communication Theory Division, New Orleans LA, November 22, 2024.
- “Words and The Word: Alma and Amulek on the Language-Truth Paradox.” *BYU Religious Education Student Symposium*, Provo UT, February 16, 2024. ***Top Paper Award and Winner of the Scripture Central Outstanding Paper in Book of Mormon Scholarship Award.**
- “Atonement as Eloquent Oration: Chronos, Kairos, and the ‘Times of Reckoning.’” *The Latter-day Saint Theology Symposium*, Boston MA: Harvard Divinity School, June 16, 2023.
- With Richard Benjamin Crosby, Gideon O. Burton, and Jim Richards (panelists) and Jarron Slater (moderator). “Speeches by Writers: Towards an Anthology.” *The Association for Mormon Letters Conference*, April 28, 2023.
- “Wilford Woodruff and the Ballads of English Romanticism: The Ballad of 1841.” *The Wilford Woodruff Papers Foundation Conference*, Provo UT, March 4, 2023.
- “A Memory Turn in Mormon Studies: Exceptional and Persuasive Remembrance in the Latter-day Saint Tradition.” *BYU Religious Education Student Symposium*, Provo UT, February 17, 2023. ***Top Paper Award.**
- “Indian Names as Signifiers: Communicating/Combating Caste Through Etymological Constructs and Naming Conventions.” *National Communication Association Convention*, Critical/Cultural Studies Division, New Orleans LA, November 18, 2022.
- “Zitkala-Ša as Rhetor: Native American Memory in Public Address.” *National Communication Association Convention*, Public Address Division, New Orleans LA, November 19, 2022.
- “‘Your Spirit Fires My Breast’: Maria Stewart and the Political Potential of the Feminine Rhetorical Sublime.” *National Communication Association Convention*, Rhetorical and Communication Theory Division, New Orleans LA, November 19, 2022. ***Winner of the James L. Golden Outstanding Student Essay in Rhetoric Award.**
- “Rhetoric, Memory, and Global Monotheistic Experience: The Repurposing of Ancient Synagogues for Contemporary Concerns.” *David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies Lecture Series*, (Re)presentations of the Divine Encounter in the Ancient World, Provo UT, September 14, 2022.
- With Richard Benjamin Crosby. “The American Religion and the Rhetoric of Theophany.” *American Society for the History of Rhetoric 2022 Symposium*, Baltimore MD, May 25, 2022.

“Radical Jesus in Modern Memory: Identification in Angel Studio’s *The Chosen*.” *Popular Culture Association National Conference*, April 16, 2022.

AFFILIATIONS AND MEMBERSHIPS

National Communication Association
 Religious Communication Association
 International Society for the History of Rhetoric
 American Society for the History of Rhetoric
 Rhetoric Society of America

SERVICE

Secretary | Arnold-Ebbitt Interdisciplinary Rhetoricians

May 2025 to Present

REVIEWING

April 2026 | Paper Reviewer for the 2026 Religious Communication Association Conference
 August 2025 | Proposal reviewer for the 2026 Rhetoric Society of America Conference
 April 2025 | Application Screener for the 2025 Residency at the Center for Latter-day Saint Arts in New York City, Literature and Theatre Category
 October 2023 | Ad hoc reviewer for *The Journal of American Culture*
 April 2023 | Paper reviewer for the 2023 NCA Convention, Public Address Division
 April 2023 | Proposal reviewer for the 2023 NCA Convention, ASHR Interest Group
 2022-2023 | Reader for *Fourth Genre: Explorations in Creative Nonfiction*
 September 2022 | Proposal reviewer for *The Journal for the History of Rhetoric* special issue on rhetoric *in motu*
 March 2022 | Volunteer judge for Utah State Speech and Debate Tournament
 November 2021 | Proposal reviewer for the 2022 *American Society for the History of Rhetoric Symposium*

PANELS ORGANIZED AND/OR CHAIRED

“Latter-day Eloquence: Two Centuries of Mormon Oratory in Pursuit of Dignity.” Rhetoric Society of America, Portland OR, May 24, 2026, **chair: Isaac Richards**, panelists: Jonathan Stone, Ben Crosby, Michael-John DePalma, David Stock, Nathan Wood, Meredith Reed.

“Appraising Latter-day Eloquence: Author-Meets-Critic Roundtable.” Mormon History Association, Las Vegas NV, June 6, 2026, chair: Alison Syring, panelists: John Turner, Philip Barlow, Jennifer Reeder.

“Celebrating the Publication of Latter-day Eloquence: A Panel Showcase.” Mormon History Association, Las Vegas NV, June 5, 2026, chair: Ben Crosby, panelists: Patrick Mason, Taylor Petrey, Kristine Haglund, Amy Williams, William Victor Smith, Will Perez.

“Latter-day Eloquence Part 1: The Junction of Mormon Oratory and Mormon History.” Mormon History Association, Ogden UT, June 6, 2025, **chair: Isaac Richards**, panelists: Steven C. Harper, Brittany Romanello, Isaac Richards, and Mallory Hutchings-Tryon.

“Latter-day Eloquence Part 2: Orating Mormon Identity in an Incredulous World.” Mormon History Association, Ogden UT, June 7, 2025, **chair: Isaac Richards**, panelists: David Charles Gore, Joseph M. Spencer, Catie Nielson, and El Call.

“Latter-day Eloquence: Oratory and Other Airborne Seeds of Mormon Literature.” Mormon Scholars in the Humanities/Association for Mormon Letters Joint Conference, Ephraim UT, May 28, 2025, **chair: Isaac Richards**, panelists: Rosalynde Welch, Benjamin Peters, Bob Rees, and Tyler Anderson.

“Latter-day Eloquence: Oratory and the Creation/Contestation of Alienation.” Global Mormon Studies Conference, Spring 2025, chair: Ben Crosby, panelists: Mallory Hutchings-Tryon, Kyle Bond, Michael Hamilton, and Jaclyn Foster.

RESIDENCIES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Residency at the Center for Latter-day Saint Arts: New York City NY. Hosted by Stanley Hainsworth. Fall 2024.
Plough Young Writers Weekend: Esopus NY. Hosted by *Plough Quarterly*. Summer 2024.
Meditation Retreat: “At-One-Ment: Embodying the Fullness of Human Divinity.” Lower Lights School of Wisdom.
Facilitated by Thomas Wirthlin McConkie. Salt Lake City UT. Winter 2024.
The Rhetoric Society of America Summer Institute: Penn State University, State College PA. Summer 2023.
Seminar: “Decolonizing Global Comparative Rhetorics” with LuMing Mao, Romeo Garcia, and Hua Zhu.
Workshop: “Rhetoric and Mindfulness” with Jeremy David Engels.
The Latter-day Saint Theology Seminar: Harvard Divinity School, Boston MA. Directed by Adam S. Miller and
Joseph M. Spencer. Summer 2023.
Archaeological Excavation: Huqoq, Israel. Directed by Jodi Magness. Summer 2022.
Semester Abroad: BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies. Directed by Frank Judd. Winter 2020.

OTHER EXPERIENCE AND LEADERSHIP

Contributing Editor <i>Wayfare Magazine</i> – Faith Matters Foundation	April 2023 – Present
Program Assistant Brigham Young University Writing Program	May 2023 – May 2024
Freelance Editor Broadview Press Anthologies of British Literature	May 2023 – August 2023
Humanities Center Intern BYU Humanities Center	August 2022 – June 2023
Writing Tutor and Student Administrator BYU Research and Writing Center	June 2020 – April 2022

UNIVERSITY COURSES TAUGHT

WRTG 150 – Introduction to Writing and Rhetoric
WRTG 316 – Technical Communication
HONORS 320 – Honors Writing
COMMS 302 – Popular Culture and Media
CAS 100 – Effective Speech

Updated March 5, 2025