

Vaughn Joy

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Boston, MA

Education

University of London – University College London, London, United Kingdom

Ph.D. History

Awarded November 2024

Dissertation Title: “A Cold War Christmas: Reflections of American Politics and Culture in Hollywood Christmas Films, 1946-1961”

Supervisors: Melvyn Stokes and Alex Goodall

Committee: Thomas Doherty (Brandeis University) and Nick Witham (UCL)

University of London – University College London, London, United Kingdom

M.A. History

Merit, 2018

Thesis Title: “Venus in Manhattan: A Study of Gender Relations in Post-WWII New York Through Comics”

University of Dublin – Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland

M.Phil. Classics

65, 2017

Thesis Title: “Reproductive Demonesses: Mental Escapism from Reproductive Failures in the Ancient World”

La Salle University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States of America

B. A. History

B.A. Classical Languages

Maxima Cum Laude, 2016

PhD Thesis

My research uses a case study on Christmas films released by major studios and directors between 1946 and 1961 to identify and analyse changes within the genre as they relate to and reflect changes in the wider cultural and political moment both within and outside of the motion picture industry as a result of those federal pressures. Ultimately, my thesis argues that seemingly innocuous media – particularly such that is viewed annually by many as a rote tradition – is not apolitical. The thesis also then functions as a media literacy guide to deconstructing those political messages buried within such ostensibly apolitical films.

Professional Appointments

Freelance Public Scholar, 2021 – Present

Senior Post-Graduate Teaching Assistant (SPGTA), 2020 – 2024

Fellowships and Awards

HarvardX Computer Science 50 Certificate, 2025
HarvardX Introduction to Digital Humanities Certificate, 2025
Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, 2024
Open Access Funding – UCL, 2023
UCL Travel Grant, 2022, 2023

Pedagogical Training and Development

UCL Collaborative Approaches to Teaching and Learning – DEI, June 2024
UCL Teaching Associate Programme – DEI, April – May 2024
NeMLA CV Clinic, March 2024
UCL Arena IDEAs Workshop, March 2024
UCL History Writing Retreat, June 2022
UCL History Assessment and Feedback Training, November 2020, 2021
UCL History Inclusivity Training, October 2020
UCL Arena One Gateway Workshop, November 2019

Courses Taught

“Making History,” SPGTA, University College London, Spring 2022, 2023, 2024
Module on spatial, material, and public history theories and methods,
assessed by two creative and collaborative public scholarship outputs

“Writing History,” SPGTA, University College London, Autumn 2020, 2021
Module on how to write an academic history essay for first-year students
with introductions to structure, research, and historiographical
engagement

Curriculum Development

Designed a new project track for the module “Making History” on the changing
concept of the “home” in Britain between 1800 and the present day

Designed a new project track for “Making History” on the gendered relationship
between modern London and the ancient Egyptian monuments in the city

Peer-Reviewed Publications

Books

Selling Out Santa: Hollywood Christmas Films in the Age of McCarthy, De
Gruyter [Forthcoming, November 2025].

Working Title: *Review Roulette: From Silent to Streaming* [In development with
De Gruyter]

Articles

“Selling Santa: How *Miracle on 34th Street* (1947) Stole and Rebranded
Christmas.” *Comparative American Studies An International Journal*,

Taylor & Francis, October 2023,
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14775700.2023.2267337>.

“Jokes and Mirrors: Using Cartoons as Primary Sources for Historical Research.”
Adam Matthew Digital, SAGE Research Methods, December 2021.
https://doi.org/10.47594/RMPS_0065.

Chapters

“Cosmic Microcosms: Story Structure Across the Cinematic Universe” in
Collection on *Andor*, edited by Samuel Thomas and Arin Keeble
[Manchester UP, forthcoming, 2026].

(Co-Authored) Vaughn Joy and Kassie Jo Baron. “Merry Mill Girls: Christmas and
Industrialization in 19th Century New England” in *Dreaming of Christmas:
Rediscovering the Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Christmas Story*,
edited by Monika Elbert and Thomas Ruys Smith [Forthcoming, 2025].

“Love, Marriage, and a Snow-Covered Carriage: Foundations of the Romantic
Christmas Genre in Post-HUAC Hollywood, 1949-1954” in *Under the
Mistletoe: Holiday Romance Films*, edited by Liz W. Faber (Jefferson, NC:
McFarland, 2024).

(Co-Authored) Vaughn Joy and A. Stuart-Thompson. “O Ornitólogo, João Pedro
Rodrigues (2016)” in *Natureza e Cinema Português Contemporâneo*,
edited by Filipa Rosário and José Duarte (Lisbon: Editora
Documenta/Sistema Solar, 2024).

Book Review

“Review: *The Metropolitan Police and the British Film Industry, 1919-1956* by
Alex Rock (BFI Collection).” *Twentieth Century British History*, Oxford
University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwae001>.

Invited Lectures

Keynote Address. ‘Tis the Season: Christmas in Popular Culture, 1900-2000
Conference. Shasta College, November 2025.

“Introduction to Film Theory, Analysis, and Hollywood History.” 90-minute
lecture at University of Texas at Austin for Dr. Michael Webber’s
interdisciplinary engineering course “Energy at the Movies”, August 2023.

Panels Organised and Chaired

Chair: “‘But your kids are gonna love it’: Nostalgic Extremism in Depictions of the
1950s” at Northeast Modern Language Association, Boston, MA, March
2024.

Panels, Papers, and Talks

International

“Bird’s Eye View: The Ecological Queering and Eroticisation of the Holy Trinity in *O Ornitólogo* (2016)” at Imagining Queer Ecologies Symposium, British Society for Literature and Science, University of Oxford, December 2023.

“Capra-Vision: The Cinematography and Authorial Gaze of Frank Capra’s *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946)” at Experiencing Visual Images, University College London, November 2022.

“Dressing Up New York: Meeting Cosmopolitan Standards in *Pocketful of Miracles* (1961)” at Cosmopolitan Aspirations in English-Speaking Cinema and Television, Société pour l’Enseignement et la Recherche du Cinéma Anglophone, Universidad de Zaragoza, September 2021.

“Starry-Eyed Dreamers: Capitalistic Idealism in *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946)” at Historical Fiction, Fictional History, and Historical Reality International Conference, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, March 2020.

“The Common Man’s Capitalist: George Bailey and the Question of Communist Subversion in *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946)” at Trinity History Con, Trinity College Dublin, November 2019.

National

“Sexual Acts of Resistance: Euphemism and Subversion in Hollywood Cinema Under the Hays Code” at Northeast Modern Language Association, Boston, MA, March 2024.

“Heart-Shaped Hot Tubs and Coin-Operated Beds: Hollywood’s Honeymoon Destination, 1940-1980” at Northeast Modern Language Association, Niagara Falls, NY, March 2023.

“‘Satisfying Fundamental Urges’: Competing Small-Town Philosophies in *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946)” at Northeast Modern Language Association, Baltimore, MD, March 2022.

“‘You’ll Be Living Rent Free’: Disney’s Villainous Marriage Proposal in *Babes in Toyland* (1961)” at Archival Kismet Conference, Mississippi State University, April 2021.

Public Scholarship

[*Black & White & Red All Over*](#). September 2025 – Present

Creator, designer, and administrator of a public scholarly website that hosts multiple American Studies publications, as well as a space for the academic and public communities to come together for announcements, achievements, and shared interests.

[Review Roulette](#). September 2023 – Present

A weekly film review with the goal of encouraging media literacy among the public and breaking down barriers between academic film criticism and non-specialist viewer responses. Having begun with an introductory methodology post on 13 approaches to film analysis with definitions and examples of questions for consideration, I watch a film from the 20th century and randomly select an approach from that list with which to review it.

Forthcoming untitled article on film adaptations of *Frankenstein*, from silents to Guillermo del Toro's 2025 film. [Contingent magazine](#), November 2025.

“[Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Tom Hanks fan club?: Modern McCarthyism in America](#).” *Clio and the Contemporary*, September 2025.

“[How Monopolies are Making TV Worse](#).” *ProMarket* – University of Chicago School of Business, November 2023.

“[The WGA Strike Is Part of a Recurring Pattern When Technology Changes](#).” *Made by History* – *The Washington Post*, May 2023.

“[The Retail World at the Heart of *Miracle on 34th Street* No Longer Exists](#).” *Made by History* – *The Washington Post*, December 2022.

“[The Paramount Decrees and the Deregulation of Hollywood Studios](#).” *ProMarket* – University of Chicago School of Business, December 2022.

“[Monopolywood: Why the Paramount Accords Should Not Be Repealed](#).” *Red Pepper Magazine*, December 2022.

“[Christmas Films as Reflections of American History, Part III: Perfecting the Paradigm from the 1990s to the Present](#).” *Clio and the Contemporary*, December 2021.

“[Christmas Films as Reflections of American History, Part II: Stop-Motion, Action, and Horror in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s](#).” *Clio and the Contemporary*, December 2021.

“[Christmas Films as Reflections of American History, Part I: Dickens, Romance, and the US Military in the 1940s and 50s](#).” *Clio and the Contemporary*, December 2021.

Digital Humanities Projects

Researcher and Host, *Impressions of America* Podcast, 2020 – 2023

Bi-weekly podcast dedicated to 20th and 21st century US history, focusing on politics past and present, culture, social histories, economics, and perceptions of “Americanism” throughout the century, occasionally spotlighting journalists, historians, economists, and Pulitzer Prize winning

authors as guest hosts and interviewees such as Ellen Schrecker and Louis Menand

Researcher and Host, *Hollywood in Focus* Podcast, [unreleased, in production], 2022 – Present

Serialised podcast dedicated to a chronological history of Hollywood through each era with macro- and micro-histories

Researcher and Host, *The Joy of Star Wars* Podcast, 2022 –2023

Podcast dedicated to 20th and 21st century US history through the lens of *Star Wars*, exploring topics and themes such as justice, indoctrination, political corruption, and the concept of “joy”

Selected Broadcast Appearances

Interviewee, *The Social Academic Podcast*, 29 September 2025
“Public Scholarship”

Interviewee, *America: A History Podcast*, 10 December 2024
“What Do Christmas Films Tell Us About America?”

Interviewee, *America: A History Podcast*, 22 August 2024
“How is Barbie Still Relevant?”

Interviewee, *Historians at the Movies* Podcast, 20 December 2023
Film Review: “*A Christmas Story*”

Interviewee, *The Show* – NPR Broadcast, 22 December 2022
“Holiday Joy and Cold War Ideology”

Interviewee, *Braaaains* Podcast, 13 December 2022
“Holidays on Film”

Interviewee, *A Larger View of the Force* Podcast, 3 October 2022
“The StarWarstorian’s Craft with Chris Kempshall and Vaughn Joy”

Interviewee, *Uncorked History* Webcast, 21 April 2022
“Vaughn Joy & Dr. Reba Wissner”

Interviewee, *Unsung History* Podcast, 24 December 2021
“LIVE Christmas Eve Show with Vaughn Joy”

Guest Host, *Struggle Session* Podcast, 16 November 2020
Film Review: “*The Trial of the Chicago 7* with Katie Halper and *Impressions of America*”

Services

Students and Department

Course advisement

Letters of recommendation

Co-Convenor of Weekly Theory & Methods Reading Group, UCL History, 2020 – 2022

Seminars included conversations around black feminist literature and pedagogy (bell hooks), anthropological discussions of Western terminologies (Emmerson), and hegemony and state-apparatuses (Marx, Gramsci, Althusser)

University and Profession

University & College Union Departmental PGTA Representative, UCL, 2021 – 2024

Post-Graduate Research Academic Representative, UCL History, 2021 – 2022

Student Experience Panel – Post-Graduate Panellist, UCL 2018

Graduate Student Union – Representative, Trinity College Dublin, 2016 – 2017