

James Risk, Ph.D.
225 Riverbirch Road
Lexington, SC 29072
Campus e-mail: risk@mailbox.sc.edu

EDUCATION:

University of South Carolina , Columbia. Ph.D. in History with emphasis on History of Science & Technology, May 2017. Dissertation Title: *Lamps, Maps, Mud-Machines, & Signal Flags: Science, Technology, and Commerce in the Early United States*. Dissertation Committee: Ann Johnson, Cornell University, Co-Chair (deceased), Allison C. Marsh, University of South Carolina, Co-Chair, Joseph A. November, University of South Carolina, Carol E. Harrison, University of South Carolina, Cary J. Mock, University of South Carolina.

University of Maryland Baltimore County, Baltimore, Maryland. MA in Historical Studies, May 2011.

Fairmont State University, Fairmont, West Virginia. BA in History with Summa Cum Laude Honors, December 2008.

APPOINTMENTS:

University of South Carolina. South Carolina Honor College Pearce Faculty Teaching Fellow, July 2026 – June 2028.

University of South Carolina. Senior Instructor, August 2024 – Present.

University of South Carolina. Founding Documents Faculty Associate, July 2021 – June 2025.

University of South Carolina. Instructor, May 2017 – August 2024.

University of South Carolina. Bridge Humanities Fellow, August 2016 – May 2017.

CURRENT RESEARCH:

Promoting the Fresnel Lens in America – During the first half of the 19th century, American engineers promoted the universal adoption of the French manufactured Fresnel lighthouse lens as part of their efforts to gain recognition for their expertise. At the time, formally trained engineers were still looked up with suspicion. By promoting the adoption of the Fresnel lens, the engineers hoped to establish their expertise and, thus eliminate the suspicion. This research delves into the debate over who should perform science and technology and the de-democratization of science in the United States.

PUBLICATIONS:

Books

America's Founding Documents: A Documentary Reader (edited collection with Drs. Andrew Berns, Kendall Deas, Tameka Howard, Madeline Steiner, Rodney Taylor, and Jeffery Williams – Press Date January 2027).

Working title: *The Fresnel Affair: Science and Technology in the United States Light-House Establishment, 1789 – 1852* (Work in Progress)

Refereed Articles & Essays

"Rewriting the Rules: Game-based Learning for Affective and Cognitive Student Engagement in an Undergraduate History Course," *International Journal of Role-Playing* 17 (March 2026): 22-41. Secondary author with Rachel Hoke, University of Pennsylvania.

"Shattered!: The Macbeth-Evans Glass Company and the American Flint Glass Workers Strike of 1904," *The Journal of Glass Studies* 62, no 1 (2020): 289-91.

"The Fresnel Affair: Manufacturing, Technology Transfer, Republicanism, and the Adoption of the Fresnel Lighthouse Lens, 1819 – 1852," *The Northern Mariner / Le marin du nord* XXVIII, no. 4 (Autumn 2018): 363-84.

"Seven Flags over Charleston Harbor: James M. Elford and the Quest for a Universal Maritime Signal Code," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 118, no. 2 (April 2017): 132-54.

"Garitee vs. Mayor and City Council of Baltimore: A Gilded Age Debate on the Role and Limits of Local Government," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 109, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 453-72. Lead author with Kevin L. Attridge.

Book Chapters and Sections

The American Yawp!: A Free and Online, Collaboratively Built American History Textbook, edited by Joseph Locke and Ben Wright, e-book, <http://www.americanyawp.com>, Fall 2014. Contributed to section on the Naval War of 1812 of Chapter 7, "The Early Republic."

Reviews

Book Review, *Where Light in Darkness Lies: The History of the Lighthouse* by Veronica della Dora, *The Northern Mariner / Le marin du nord* vol. 33, no. 1 (Winter 2023): 98-100.

Book Review, *The Free Sea: The American Fight for Freedom of Navigation* by James Kraska and

Raul Pedrozo. *Strategy Bridge* (October 15, 2018). <https://www.strategybridge.org/the-bridge/2018/10/15/reviewing-the-free-sea>

Book Review, *Congress Buys a Navy: Politics, Economics, and the Rise of American Naval Power, 1881 – 1921* by Paul E. Pedisich. *H-Net: War* (January 20, 2018).

Book Review, *Brilliant Beacons: A History of the American Lighthouse* by Eric Jay Dolin. *The Northern Mariner / Le marin du nord*, vol. 26, no. 3 (July 2016): 322-4.

Book Review, *The Telegraph in America, 1832 – 1920* by David Hochfelder. *Maryland Historical Magazine*, vol. 109, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 121-23.

Book Review, *A Short Bright Flash: Augustin Fresnel and the Birth of the Modern Lighthouse* by Theresa Levitt. *Sea History: The Art, Literature, Adventure, Lore and Learning of the Sea*, (Winter 2013-14): 60.

Book Review, *Measure of the Earth: The Enlightenment Expedition that Shaped the World* by Larry D. Ferriero. *The Northern Mariner / Le marin du nord*, vol. 23, no. 1 (January 2013): 61.

Book Review, *Darwin's Sacred Cause: How a Hatred of Slavery Shaped Darwin's Views on Evolution* by Adrian Desmond and James Moore. *Tuckasegee Valley Historical Review*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2012): 142-45.

Other Publications

"A Fate Worse than Famine: The Tragedy of the Brig *St. John*," *Wreck & Rescue* 24 no. 3 (Fall 2023): 23-27. (Due to an editorial error, the article appears under the name Risk Wand with a correction printed in the Winter 2024 issue.)

"Captain Winslow Lewis of Wellfleet: The Crown Prince of American Lighthouses," *Wreck & Rescue* 23 no. 4 (Winter 2023): 21-24.

"Marine Observatories and Lighthouses," *Mainely History Podcast*, <https://www.podbean.com/ew/pb-mxg72-12d2c9e>. (September 26, 2022)

"Captured in Film: The Civil War Seen Through a Camera's Eyes," *MdHS News* (Fall 2010): 10-14.

"The Pacific Theater of Naval Warfare in the Mexican-American War," *California Military History*, <http://www.californiamilitaryhistory.org/NavyMexWar.html>, (Feb 21, 2009).

INVITED PAPERS:

"The Fresnel Affair: Stephen Pleasonton and the Adoption of the Fresnel Lighthouse Lens," *New Jersey Parks Department*, Navesink Twins Lights, Highlands, NJ, May 2022.

"The Introduction of the Fresnel Lens into the United States Light-House Establishment," *National Lighthouse Museum*, Staten Island, NY, July 2017.

"Lemuel Moody and the Portland Observatory: A Case Study in the Transmission of Lay Knowledge in the Early American Republic," *Greater Portland Landmarks, Inc.*, Portland, ME, October 2013.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS, POSTERS, AND ACADEMIC PAPERS:

"Playing the Past: Board Games, Role-Play, and Student-Centered Experiential Learning in Undergraduate History Classrooms," *Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education Conference*, Honolulu, HI, January 2027. **(Proposal Accepted)**

"Missing Voices: African-Americans, Keepers, and Women in the United States Light-House Establishment, *National Maritime Historical Society (NMHS) – North American Society for Oceanic History (NASOH) Joint Annual Conference*, New Haven, CT, May 2026.

"New Orleans' Distinct Architecture and Urban Planning: Barthélémy Lafon's Fusion of Classical Greek and Creole Designs," *Nineteen Century Studies Association*, New Orleans, LA, March 28, 2025.

"Increasing Student Engagement: Role Playing the Constitutional Convention of 1787," Co-Presenter with Dr. Madeline Steiner, *REACH Act Teaching Symposium*, Columbia, SC, October 28, 2024.

"Double-Dipping: Abraham Skinner, the Grand River Harbour Company, and the Corrupt Scheme to Defraud the United States Government," *Canadian Nautical Research Society (CNRS) – North American Society for Oceanic History (NASOH) Joint Annual Conference*, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, June 2024

"Contested Freedoms and the Public University Classroom," *For 2026: Contested Freedoms Five Part Conference Series*, Omohundro Institute, Williamsburg, VA, October 2023

"The Adoption of the Fresnel Lens: Shedding Light on Movements in a Dynamic Nineteenth Century," *Movement(s) in a Dynamic World: Interdisciplinary Perspectives Conference*, Winthrop University, Rock Hill, SC, February 2023.

"Assuming the Role: Using Role-Playing Games in the Classroom," Co-presenter with Dr. Madeline Steiner, *Oktoberfest Teaching Symposium*, USC Center for Teaching Excellence, Columbia, SC, October 21, 2022.

“Radicalism and Reform: The Paradigm Shift of the Fresnel Lighthouse Lens,” *North American Society for Oceanic History (NASOH)*, Wilmington, NC, June 22 – 25, 2022.

“The Fresnel Lens in America and the Radicalism of a 19th Century Technology,” *Nineteenth Century Studies Association*, Rochester, NY, March 16-19, 2022.

“Shattered! American Flint Glass Workers Union and the Fight Against Automation in Manufacturing,” *Society for the History of Technology, Virtual Conference*, November 18 – 21, 2021.

“Innovating Maintenance or Maintaining Innovation?: Policy and Practice in the United States Light-House Establishment, 1789 – 1852,” *Maintainers III Conference*, Washington DC, October 2019.

“Seven Flags over the Cooper: James Maude Elford and the Quest for a Universal Maritime Signal Code,” *Southern Association for the History of Medicine and Science (SAHMS)*, Augusta, GA, February 2018.

“Promoting Fresnel in America: The Army Corps of Engineers and the De-democratization of Science in the Nineteenth Century United States.” *Society for the History of Technology (SHOT)*, Philadelphia, PA, October 2017.

“Delaying Fresnel: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Maritime Technology Transfer,” *North American Society for Oceanic History (NASOH)*, Charleston, SC, May 2017.

“Importing the Fresnel Lens: A Reinterpretation of Stephen Pleasanton, the United States Treasury and the Adoption of the Fresnel Lighthouse Lens in America,” *10th Maritime Heritage Conference*, Norfolk, VA, September 2014.

“Lemuel Moody and the Portland Observatory: A Case Study in Knowledge Transfer in the Early American Republic” *Society for the History of Technology (SHOT) Annual Conference*, Portland, ME, October 2013.

“Marine Observatories: Maritime Communications in the Antebellum Era,” *Public History of Science and Technology Conference* Columbia, SC, September 2011.

“Ship to Shore: Infrastructure and the Growth of American Seaports, 1790 - 1850,” *North American Society for Oceanic History (NASOH)*, Norfolk, VA, May 2011.

MEDIA PRESENTATIONS:

“Presentation Illuminates Most Historic Development in Lighthouse Technology.” *NY1 News*, July 24, 2017.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC. Senior Instructor, August 2025 – Present

- *HIST 108 Science and Technology in World History* – undergraduate introductory survey
- *HIST 108 Science and Technology in World History* (online) – undergraduate introductory survey
- *HIST 201 America's Founding Documents* – undergraduate survey
- *HIST 216 History of Crime and Punishment* – undergraduate survey
- *HIST 217 History of Sport* – undergraduate survey
- *HIST 300 The Historian's Craft* – undergraduate upper division methodology seminar
- *HIST 394 History of the Automobile* – undergraduate upper division seminar
- *SCHC Gaming History: A Game-Based Learning Lab & Practicum* – Honors College seminar

University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC. Instructor, May 2017 – August 2025

- *HIST 108 Science and Technology in World History* – undergraduate introductory survey
- *HIST 108 Science and Technology in World History* (online) – undergraduate introductory survey
- *HIST 111 United States History to 1865* – undergraduate introductory survey
- *HIST 112 United States History since 1865* – undergraduate introductory survey
- *HIST 201 America's Founding Documents* – undergraduate survey
- *HIST 214 Practice of Public History* – undergraduate introductory survey
- *HIST 216 History of Crime and Punishment* – undergraduate survey
- *HIST 217 History of Sport* – undergraduate survey
- *HIST 300 The Historian's Craft* – undergraduate upper division methodology seminar
- *HIST 300 The Historian's Craft* (online) – undergraduate upper division methodology seminar
- *HIST 394 History of the Automobile* – undergraduate upper division seminar (previously taught as *HIST 492 Special Topics: History of the Automobile*)
- *HIST 712 Selected Topics in the History of Ports* – independent graduate study
- *SCHC 326 History of Crime and Punishment* – Honors College seminar

University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC. Bridge Humanities Fellow, August 2016 – May 2017.

- *SAEL 200 Social Advocacy and Ethical Life* – interdisciplinary undergraduate course on rhetoric, moral philosophy, and social advocacy

ADVISEES:

Grant Tally, "Title TBD," University of South Carolina Honor's College Thesis, 2026 -2027 – Director

Natalie Rabil, "Title TBD," University of South Carolina Honor's College Thesis, 2026-2027 – Director

Eleanor Brumgardt, "Hysteria: A Powerful Force Throughout History," University of South Carolina Honor's College Thesis, 2025-2026 – Director

Brian Walker Lima – "Pioneers to Powerhouses: The Chicago Times-Herald Race," University of South Carolina History Senior Thesis, Fall 2025 – Director

Emily Rabon, "The Right to Keep and Bear Arms: Analyzing the Original Intent of the Second Amendment, University of South Carolina, Thomas Cooper Library Research Award, 3rd Place, 2025

Emily Rabon, "The Right to Keep and Bear Arms: Analyzing the Original Intent of the Second Amendment," University of South Carolina Honor's College Thesis, 2024-2025 – Director

Mary Gorham, "The Future of Bail Reform in the United States," University of South Carolina Honor's College Thesis, Spring 2023 – Second Reader

William Thompson, "The Automobile and Black Americans," Society of Automotive Historians Richard P. Scharchburg Undergraduate Student Award, 2022 - Advisor

SERVICE TO UNIVERSITY:

University of South Carolina, Department of History, Chair - Online Assessment Committee, 2026-2027

University of South Carolina, Department of History, Professional Track Search Committee, 2026 (two searches)

University of South Carolina, First Generation Center, Faculty Advisor, 2025 -

University of South Carolina, Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Analytics, Carolina Core Assessment, 2025

University of South Carolina, Department of History, Professional Track Search Committee, 2024 (two searches)

University of South Carolina, College of Arts and Sciences, Professional Track Teaching Award Committee, 2022 - 2023

University of South Carolina, Department of History, Warwick Exchange Committee, 2022 - 2026

University of South Carolina, College of Arts and Sciences, Founding Documents Faculty Associate, 2021 – 2025

- Liaison between the Dean's Office and the interdisciplinary Founding Documents faculty
- Facilitator / mentor to post-docs teaching the Founding Documents curriculum

University of South Carolina, Carolina Judicial Council, 2019 – Present

University of South Carolina, Judge for undergraduate research presented at Discover USC Day, 2017

PUBLIC HISTORY EXPERIENCE:

Archives and Manuscripts

"Richard Lemay Papers, 1962 – 2004," MS 2004:9, Irvin Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Ernest F. Hollings Special Collections Library, University of South Carolina Libraries, Columbia, SC. Collection of research papers relating to medieval and Arabic philosophy and science.

"Robert B. Ariail Papers, 1803 – 2011," MS 2011:1, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Ernest F. Hollings Special Collections Library, University of South Carolina Libraries, Columbia, SC. Collection of personal papers of a local amateur astronomer primarily concerned with the author's astronomical observations and his restoration of a historic telescope.

"Boyd Family Civil War Photograph Collection, 1861 – 1935," PP230, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland. Updated collection of photographs from the American Civil War and the collection originator's personal travel to Civil War sites in the early 20th century.

Museums Exhibits and Collections

Navesink Twin Lights, Highlands, NJ. Summer 2022. Consultant on exhibit relating to the Navesink Twin Lights as the site of the first Fresnel lighthouse lenses in the United States.

Sandy Spring Museum, Sandy Spring, MD. Fall 2009. Built a database for the museum which was used by a collaborative team to document the museum's large collection of farm implements and agricultural related artifacts. As part of the team, I also advised the museum staff on the proper storage and care of the artifacts.

Snodgrass One-Room Schoolhouse Museum, Fairmont, WV. Spring 2007. Worked on a collaborative exhibit highlighting various aspects of education in rural America in the early 20th century and of attending a one-room school.

Public History Outreach

National History Day is a program for high school students to engage in historical research and present their findings on a pre-selected historical topic. Presentations may be in the form of essays, posters, or websites.

- Local Regional Judge, Columbia, South Carolina, 2015-2016, 2019
- Local Regional Judge, Rock Hill, South Carolina, 2019
- State Level Judge, Baltimore, Maryland, 2011.

Historic Columbia Foundation, Columbia, SC. Historic Columbia Foundation is the steward of several historic house museums in Columbia, SC.

- Assisted with the Historic Earlewood District Survey for consideration for the National Register of Historic Places, 2014 - 2015. (Project Lead: Kimberly Campbell).
- Assisted with staff preparation for special occasion exhibits, annual care and inspection of artifacts on permanent display, and holiday preparations, 2014 – 2015. (Project Lead: Ellen Robinson, 2014 and Janie Campbell, 2015).

FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS:

USC Center for Integrated and Experiential Learning Rolling Beyond the Classroom Grant, July 2025

USC College of Arts and Sciences, Faculty Research and Creative Scholarship Grant, November 2022

USC College of Arts and Sciences, 2023 Themed Semester Course Enrichment Grant, October 2022

USC College of Arts and Sciences, McCausland Innovation Grant, May 2022

USC Center for Teaching Excellence Founding Documents Teaching Grant, March 2021

Linda Hall Library Travel Fellowship, March 2019

Rakow Research Grant, March 2019

Hayek Fund for Scholars, March 2017

Bridge Humanities Fellowship, 2016

Clyde Ferrell Summer Dissertation Research Fellowship, 2015

Richard A. Bacas Scholarship, August 2015

Pam Laird Research Grant (Mercurians Special Interest Group of SHOT), October 2015

Consortium for the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine Research Fellow, 2015

HONORS AND AWARDS:

Michael J. Mungo Undergraduate Teaching Award (**Nominee**), Univ. of South Carolina College of Arts and Sciences, 2023
Garnet Apple Award for Teaching Innovation, Univ. of South Carolina Center for Teaching Excellence, 2023
Undergraduate Teaching Award, Univ. of South Carolina College of Arts and Sciences, 2021
Two Thumbs Up Award, Univ. of South Carolina Office of Student Disability Services, 2019
(For significantly impacting the academic career of a student with a disability.)
John A. & Annie Rice Excellence in Teaching Award, Univ. of South Carolina Department of History, 2015
Guest Coach, Univ. of South Carolina Equestrian Team, 2015
(Student nominated award.)
Phi Alpha Theta, Fairmont State University, 2008
Pi Gamma Mu, Fairmont State University, 2007
President's List, Fairmont State University, 2005
Phi Theta Kappa, Fairmont State University, 2004
Eagle Scout, Boy Scouts of America, 1984

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS:

History of Science Society (HSS)
Maryland Historical Society (MdHS)
Maintainers
Mercurians, SIGIS
National Maritime Historical Society (NMHS)
Nineteenth Century Studies Association (NCSA)
North American Society for Oceanic History (NASOH)
Society for the History of Technology (SHOT)

OTHER ACADEMIC RELATED EXPERIENCE:

AP US History Tutor, Columbia, SC, 2022. Student: Jack Lamey.

Troop 507, Boy Scouts of America, Lexington, SC. Merit Badge Counselor, 2019. Taught Citizenship in the Community Merit Badge.

Educational Testing Service (ETS), Princeton, NJ. AP Reader, 2014-2019. Read and score AP essays in U. S. History for high school students applying for college credit

University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), Baltimore, MD. Orientation Advisor, 2010-2011. Assisted new students with scheduling of classes and provided said students with information on campus resources.