

## RENÉE ALEXANDER CRAFT

Department of Communication | Curriculum in Global Studies  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill | CB# 3285  
Chapel Hill, NC 27599

Personal Website: <http://reneealexandercraft.net/>

Project Website: <https://digitalportobelo.org/>

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### EDUCATION:

Ph.D.	Northwestern University Department of Performance Studies Dissertation: “Art as Survival: The Congo Tradition of Portobelo, Panama”	June 2005
M.A.	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Department of Communication Studies	June 1999
B.A.	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Department of English	May 1995

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES:

Professor, Department of Communication Curriculum in Global Studies University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	July1 2022-
Adjunct Professor, Department of African, African American, and African Diaspora Studies University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	July1 2022-
Interim Chair, Department of Communication University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	July 2021- June 2022
Associate Chair, Department of Communication University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Fall 2020- Spring 2021
Faculty Director of Research (IAAR-SLATE) Student Learning to Advance Truth and Equity Institute of African American Research University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Oct 2020-
Acting Director, Institute of African American Research University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Spring 2020
Interim Director, Faculty Fellows Program	Fall 2019-

Institute for the Arts and Humanities University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Spring 2020
Associate Professor, Department of Communication Studies and Curriculum in Global Studies University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	July 2015-
Acting Director, Southern Oral History Program University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Aug. 2015- Aug. 2016
Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Studies and Curriculum in Global Studies University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	2007-2015
Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Communication Studies University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	2005-2007
Instructor, Department of Performance Studies Northwestern University	Fall 2002

#### **HONORS:**

Tanner Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	2022
Schwab Academic Excellence Award Institute of the Arts and Humanities, UNC	2019
Errol Hill Award American Society for Theatre Research	2017
Inaugural Whiting Public Engagement Fellowship The Whiting Foundation	2016
Inaugural Digital Innovations Lab/ Institute for the Arts and Humanities Fellowship University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	2013
Junior Faculty Development Award University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	2009
Fulbright Fellowship Panama	2002-2003

#### **BIBLIOGRAPHY AND PRODUCTS OF SCHOLARSHIP:**

##### **Books:**

Kathy A. Perkins, Sandra L. Richards, Renée Alexander Craft, and Thomas F. DeFrantz, eds. 2018. *The Routledge Companion to African American Theatre and Performance*. London; New York: Routledge.

Alexander Craft, Renée. 2015. *When the Devil Knocks: The Congo Tradition and the Politics of Blackness in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Panama*. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press.

### **Book Chapters:**

Alexander Craft, Renée. 2018. "Afrofuturism and the 2018 Wakanda Diaspora Carnival." In *The Routledge Companion to African American Theatre and Performance*. Edited by Kathy A. Perkins, Sandra L. Richards, Renée Alexander Craft, and Thomas F. DeFrantz, 385-394. London; New York: Routledge.

Alexander Craft, Renée. 2014. "How does it feel to be a problem?": Edris Cooper-Anifowoshe's *Adventures of a Black Girl in Search of Academic Clarity and Inclusion*" in *Solo/Black/Woman: Performing Global Traditions and Local Interventions*, edited by E. Patrick Johnson and Ramon H Rivera-Servera, 167-184. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press.

### **Books & Chapters (In Process):**

Alexander Craft, Renée. *The Part of Me That's Mine*  
*The Part of Me That's Mine* is a women-centered transnational family saga inspired by my experiences growing up in a Black funeral home family in North Carolina and twenty years of ethnographic research in a community of Afro-Latin carnival devils in Panamá. The novel is complete at 124,000 words and is represented by [Beth Marshea](#), [Ladderbird Literary Agency](#)

Alexander Craft, Renée. *Patacones, Paint Brushes, and Power: Historicizing an African Diaspora Arts Collective at the Crossroads of the Americas*  
 "Patacones, Paint Brushes, and Power: Historicizing An African Diaspora Arts Collective at the Crossroads of the Americas" builds on twenty years of research within the Afro-Latin community of Portobelo, Panama and represents my third major project related to the area. Reliant on oral history, ethnographic research, archival research, and curated public conversations, "Patacones, Paint Brushes, and Power" traces the relationship between a Portobelo-based artist cooperative and the US-based African American artists that it has impacted from its founding in 1994-2014.

### **Refereed Articles:**

Alexander Craft, Renée. 2017. "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea." *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society*. 19 (1): 91-107.

Alexander Craft, Renée and Pam Lach. 2016. "Staging *Digital Portobelo*: Humanities Scholarship, Digital Tools, and Collaboration as Acts of Persistent Translation."

*Public: A Journal of Imagining America*. 3(2) <http://public.imaginingamerica.org>

Alexander Craft, Renée. 2008a. “‘¡Los gringos vienen!’ (‘The Gringos Are Coming!’): Female Respectability and the Politics of Congo Tourist Presentations in Portobelo, Panama.” *Transforming Anthropology: Journal of the Association of Black Anthropologists* 16 (1): 20–31.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2008b. “Una Raza, Dos Etnias’: The Politics of Be(com)ing/Performing Afropanameño.” *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 3 (2): 123–26.

Alexander Craft, Renée, Meida McNeal, Mshai S. Mwangola, and Queen Meccasia E. Zabriskie. 2007. “The Quilt: Towards a Twenty-First Century Black Feminist Ethnography.” *Performing Research* 12 (3): 55–73.

### **Products of Interdisciplinary, Engaged, Digital Scholarship:**

Digital Portobelo: Art + Scholarship + Cultural Preservation  
[digitalportobelo.org](http://digitalportobelo.org) | [portobelodigital.org](http://portobelodigital.org)

Initiated through an inaugural UNC Digital Innovations Lab/Institute for the Arts and Humanities Fellowship (2013-2014) and supported by an inaugural Whiting Public Engagement Fellowship (2016), “Digital Portobelo: Art + Scholarship + Cultural Preservation” is a collaborative, interdisciplinary, digital humanities initiative that focuses on the Afro-Latin community of Portobelo, Panama. It represents the second phase of Alexander Craft’s performance-centered critical ethnographic research that began in 2000.

### **Products of Creative Activity: Selected performances**

- |   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| <p>“Comm. 665: Performance, Politics, and Culture<br/>         UNC Process Series Performance (Virtual)”<br/>         Using <i>The Water Dancer</i> by Ta-Nehisi Coates as an anchoring text, Department of Communication Professors Renée A. Craft and Joseph Megel team-taught a spring 2020 course with Andrew W. Mellon Creative Futures Fellow Toshi Reagon, which culminated in a public Process Series performance. The performance, which they directed and curated, featured excerpts from students’ classroom performances, student-led inter-generational interviews that represented their reckonings with race and belonging, and music by Toshi Reagon.</p> | <p>May 2, 2020</p>  |
| <p>“Meet You At The Crossroads: A Call and Response Song Circle:”<br/>         Performance conceived and lead by Andrew W. Mellon Creative Futures Arts Fellow Toshi Reagon and Renée Alexander Craft featuring Howard L. Craft, Destiny Hemphill, Brentton Harrison, Mariah Monsanto, and Shana Tucker NorthStar Church of the Arts   Durham, NC</p>   | <p>June 7, 2019</p> |
| <p>“El Museo Congo”</p>   | <p>Summer 2003</p>  |

San Jeronimo Fort  
Portobelo, Panama

- “Ferias de Portobelo XXI:  
An Evening of Bilingual and Bicultural Poetry” Summer 2003  
Spelman College Summer Art Colony  
Casa Góngora  
Panama City, Panama
- “Mojonga: A Performative Altar to Former Congo Queens” Summer 2003  
Spelman College Summer Art Colony  
Taller Portobelo,  
Portobelo, Panama
- “Dancing with the devil at the crossroads:  
La historia de los Congos de Portobelo” Spring 2002  
Department of Performance Studies  
Northwestern University  
Evanston, IL
- “Making the Sign of the Cross” Taller Portobelo Summer 2001  
Portobelo, Panama in conjunction with Spelman College
- “La historia de los Congos de Portobelo:  
Translating History Through the Body” Spring 2001  
Northwestern University Department of Performance Studies

**Refereed Unpublished Oral Presentations and/or abstracts:**

- “Lovecraft Country and Black Imagination April 6, 2021  
as a Tool for Liberation”  
90-min Presentation and Workshop  
Student Diversity Programs  
Georgia Institute of Technology  
Atlanta, GA
- “A Performance Studies Approach to Meeting the Movement Feb. 19-20, 2021  
and Holding a space for light”  
The Patti Pace Performance Festival Presents:  
Meeting the Movement  
A Virtual Performance Festival  
University of Northern Iowa
- “Afrofuturism, Ethical World Traveling, and Nov. 5-6, 2020  
Holding a Space for Difference”  
Environmentalism, fantasy, and intersectionality:  
A comparison between US and the EU

Center for European Studies  
UNC-Chapel Hill | Chapel Hill, NC

- “Digital Portobelo Is Dead, Long Live Digital Portobelo: On Embracing Mourning, Loss, and Reinvention As Part of Digital Humanities Projects’ Life-Cycle” Aug. 23, 2019  
Keynote Address  
New England Humanities Consortium Digital Humanities  
Island Retreat | Shoals Marine Lab  
Appledore Island, Maine
- “Diversity and Social Justice in the Realm of Public Humanities: Lecture and Facilitated Talk by Renée Alexander Craft and Gabrielle Bendiner-Viani” June 3-7, 2019  
University of New Hampshire Summer Institute in Public Humanities  
Portsmouth, NH
- “Afro-Futurism and the 2018 Global Spontaneous #BlackJoy #WakandaForever Carnival” Nov 8-11, 2018  
National Communication Association Annual Convention  
Salt Lake City, Utah
- “What I Wish I’d Known: Public Engagement Beyond the Academy” Nov. 2-5, 2017  
Whiting Foundation Sponsored Panel  
National Humanities Conference, Boston
- “Congos, Carnival, and Critical Consciousness: Using Digital Portobelo in the Classroom [K-12]” Oct. 26-27, 2017  
World View’s Human Rights and Social Justice Symposium,  
UNC-Chapel Hill | Chapel Hill, NC
- “Digital Portobelo, The Black Fantastic, and Holding a Space for Light” Feb. 9-11, 2017  
Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference  
Washington, DC
- “Portobelo Digital: Arte + Investigación + Conservación Cultural” July 8, 2016  
A public presentation and demonstration of [portobelodigital.org](http://portobelodigital.org)  
With an inaugural local viewing of the documentaries  
“[When Devils Could Fly](#)” and “[Comparsa Barrio Fino](#)”  
Accompanied by music from Barrio Fino  
El rancho de la iglesia de San Felipe de Portobelo  
Portobelo, Panama
- “Digital Portobelo: Mapping Hemispheric Blackness” July 18-23, 2016  
Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics

Annual *Encuentro*  
Santiago, Chili

- “Playing with the devil and *winning*: Carnival and the Alchemy of Transmuting Misery Into Hope Through Performative Resistance” Oct 8-11, 2015  
American Studies Association Conference  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
- “The Devil is in the Details: Digital Humanities Scholarship, Cultural Preservation, and Radical Collaboration” May 27-30, 2015  
HASTAC 2015: The Art and Science of Digital Humanities  
Michigan State University
- “Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea:  
A “Sankofa” reflection on the Panama Canal’s relationship to  
20<sup>th</sup> Century Race and Ethnicity in the Republic” Jan 5-11, 2015  
Performance Studies (i)nternational:  
Interoceánico: Istmo | Zone | Canal  
Panama City, Panama
- “Digital Portobelo: On Critical/Performance Ethnography and a Decolonial Approach to the Digital Humanities” Nov. 20-23, 2014  
National Communication Association  
Chicago, IL
- “The Devil is in the Details:  
Engaged Qualitative Research and the Digital Humanities” Spring 2014  
Institute for the Arts and Humanities/Digital Innovations Lab  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- “Collaboration at & beyond the Digital Innovation Lab” Spring 2014  
Presented with Stephanie Barnwell, Carolina Digital Humanities Initiative and Sandra Davidson, MA  
Department of American Studies  
Collaborations in Humanities, Arts & Technology Festival  
North Carolina State University
- “The Portobelo Digital Oral History Project:  
Resistance as Intervention, Collaboration, Friction, and Dynamism” Oct. 30-  
Nov. 3, 2013  
7th Biennial Association for the Study of the  
Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD) Conference,  
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
- “The Portobelo Digital Oral History Project: Critical Ethnography, New Media, and the Unfinished Business of Co-performative Witnessing” Spring 2013

Department of Performance Studies  
Northwestern University

- “Zora's Daughters: Quilting Toward Power, Possibility, and Community ” May 16-19, 2012  
International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry,  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- “Blessing the Devil: Dualism, Parody, and Play in the Congo Tradition of Portobelo, Panama” May 23-26, 2012  
Thirtieth International Congress of Latin American Studies,  
San Francisco
- “Remember Celedonio: El Diablo Mayor de Portobelo, Panama” May 26-29, 2010  
Sixth International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry,  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- “‘Food for Thought’ A Legacy in Four Courses: Dwight Conquergood and the Politics of Radical Presence,” May 14-17, 2008  
Fourth International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry,  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- “El Dia de la Etnia Negra: The Politics of Be(com)ing/Performing “Afropanameño,” Oct 9-12, 2007  
Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora  
The University of the West Indies, Barbados
- “Adrian Piper: The Proper Etiquette of Black Rage and White Racism (A Survival Guide)” Oct 11-14, 2007  
American Studies Association, Philadelphia
- “The Quilt: Toward a Twenty-first Century Black Feminist Ethnography,” Collaboratively-presented with Meida McNeal, and Mshai S. Mwangola, Nov 15-19, 2006  
National Communication Association Conference  
San Antonio, Texas
- “Performing Race, Gender, and Operation Just Cause in Portobelo, Panama,” June 15-18, 2006  
Performance Studies International Conference  
London, England
- “When the Devil Rides the Bus: Toward a Black Diaspora Circum-Local Paradigm” Spring 2006  
Institute of African American Research  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



“Expressing black subjectivities: Mapping the politics of nation, culture and ethnic identity in Afro-diasporic performance practices,” June 15-18, 2006  
Performance Studies International Conference,  
London, England

“Between the Devil and the Deep Blues Sea: Twentieth Century Panamanian ‘Blackness,’ Identity and Belonging,” March 15-19, 2006  
Latin American Studies Association | San Juan, Puerto Rico

“¡Los gringos vienen!’/ ‘The gringos are coming!’: Female Respectability and the Politics of Congo Tourist Presentations in Portobelo, Panama,” Fall 2005  
Institute of Diaspora Studies | Northwestern, University

### Book Reviews

Alexander Craft, Renée. 2017. Review of *The Politics of Race in Panama: Afro-Hispanic and West Indian Literary Discourses of Contention*, by Sonja Stephenson Watson. *The West Indian Guide*. 91 (3-4): 364-366

Alexander Craft, Renée. 2015. Review of *Cultural Struggles: Performance, Ethnography, Praxis*, by Dwight Conquergood. Edited by E. Patrick Johnson. *TDR*. 59 (1): 181-183

### TEACHING ACTIVITIES:

Graduate Courses:

Critical/ Performance Ethnography  
Decolonizing Methodologies

Bridge Undergraduate/Graduate Courses:

Black/African Diaspora and Performance  
Performance, Politics, and Culture  
Race, Ethnicity and Performance  
Field Methods Practicum

Upper-Division Undergraduate Courses:

Performance of Women of Color (Honor’s Course)  
US Black Culture and Performance  
Performance, Politics, and Culture

Introductory Undergraduate Courses:

Introduction to the Performance Studies

First Year Seminar: Performance of African American Literature

**DIRECTED RESEARCH:**

## Graduate Theses and Dissertations:

## Director (Completed)

PhD Elizabeth Melton Title: <i>Stages Of (De)Segregation: Performing Stories of Public School Desegregation in Longview, Texas</i>	Defended Spring 2020
PhD Sonny Kelly Title: <i>Pipelines To Pathways: Reframing And Reclaiming Black Youth Identities Through Performance</i>	Defended Spring 2020
PhD Kashif Powell, Title: <i>Specters And Spooks: Developing A Hauntology Of The Black Body</i>	Defended Spring 2014
MA Ariel Gratch, Title: <i>Haunting Stories of Abuse: Revealing Ghosts Through Critical Performance Ethnography</i>	Defended Spring 2007

## Director (Matriculating)

PhD Jessica Noe Title: <i>Sticky Fingers and Flour Covered Aprons – Food as a Site of Female Embodied Memory</i>	Entered into Candidacy Spring 2021
PhD Kiara Childs Title: <i>Sticky Fingers and Flour Covered Aprons 2021</i>	Entered into Candidacy Fall 2021
PhD Chandler Classen	Entered into Candidacy Spring 2022

## Graduate Committee Member (Completed)

MA Shyra Peyton (Folklore)	Defended FA 2020
PhD Marie Garlock	Defended FA 2019
PhD Helen Orr (Religion)	Defended Spr. 2019
PhD Sarah Beth Nelson (SILS)	Defended Spr. 2019
PhD Pavithra Kathanadhi (Geography)	Defended Spr. 2018
PhD Wayne Rysavy	Defended Spr. 2018
PhD Daniel Chavez	Defended Spr. 2017
PhD Shannon Wong Lerner	Defended Spr. 2017
PhD Chis Courtheyn	Defended Spr. 2016
PhD Deb Royals-Mizerk	Defended Spr. 2016
PhD Jade Davis	Defended Summer 2015
PhD Armond Towns	Defended Spr. 2015
PhD Alison Neff,	Defended Fall 2013
PhD Billye Rhodes,	Defended Spr. 2012
PhD Sam Szczur,	Defended Fall 2010
PhD Billie Murray,	Defended Spr. 2010
PhD Elizabeth Nelson,	Defended Fall 2009
MA Marjorie Hazeltine,	Defended Spr. 2010

Graduate Committee Member (Matriculating)	
Kevin Pasbst	Entered into Candidacy Spr. 2022
Amrut Mishra	Entered into Candidacy Spr. 2022
Meli Kimathi	Entered into Candidacy Spring 2020
Dan Dilliplane	Entered into Candidacy Spring 2019
Undergraduate Honors Theses	
Director	
Rashmi Iyer,	Defended Spr. 2013
Title: <i>Homeboy Industries:</i>	
<i>Breaking Down the Barriers to Reentry</i>	
Undergraduate Honors Theses Committee Member	
Imani Williams	Defended Spr. 2022
Jessie Casimir	Defended Spr. 2020
Korde Tuttle	Defended Spr. 2013
Elizabeth Anderson	Defended Spr. 2010
Aja Barratto	Defended Spr. 2009
Marie Garlock	Defended Spr. 2007

**GRANTS:**

Whiting Public Engagement Grant	2016
Primary Researcher	
*This project grant accompanied the	
Whiting Public Engagement Fellowship	
Total Direct Grant Amount: \$10,000, Percentage of Effort:100	
University Research Council Research Grant	Fall 2014
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	
Grant to pay for indexing of <i>When the Devil Knocks</i>	
Total Direct Grant Amount: \$1,017, Percentage of Effort: 20	
Institute of African American Research Small Grant	2014
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	
Primary Researcher	
Total Direct Grant Amount: \$500, Percentage of Effort: 100	
Digital Innovations Lab/	2013
Institute for the Arts and Humanities Project Grant	
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	
Primary Researcher	
Total Direct Grant Amount: \$15,000, Percentage of Effort: 65	
*This project grant accompanied the DIL/IAH Fellowship	
University Research Council Research Grant	Fall 2013
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	

Primary Researcher  
 Total Direct Grant Amount: \$1,500, Percentage of Effort: 100

Ella Foundation Pratt Emerging Artists Grant 2013  
 Durham Arts Council,  
 Total Direct Grant Amount: \$1,500, Percentage of Effort: 70

**PROFESSIONAL SERVICE:**

Search Committee Chair, Fall 2020-Spring '21  
 Department of Communication  
 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Steering Committee, July 2019-  
 Humanities for the Public Good June 2020  
 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Board of Directors, May 2019-  
 ManBites Dog Theatre Feb 2020  
 Durham, NC

Search Committee Member, Fall 2018-  
 Institute for the Arts and Humanities, Director Search Spring 2019  
 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Advisory Board Member, Fall 2018-  
 Institute of African American Research  
 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Advisory Committee Member, Fall 2018-  
 Curriculum in Global Studies  
 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Editorial Board Member, Spring 2018-  
*Text and Performance Quarterly*

Executive Committee, Chair Fall 2017-  
 Department of Communication Spring 2020  
 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Graduate Admissions Committee Fall 2017-  
 Department of Communication Spring 2018  
 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Reviewer, Institute of African American Research Spring 2016  
 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Dean's Faculty Diversity Advisory Group College of Arts and Sciences University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Spring 2016-
Co-Creator and Co-Convener Carolina Seminar, "Racial Literacies" University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Fall 2016- Spring 2018
Chancellor's Task Force on the Arts University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Fall 2015
Selection Committee Member 2014-2015 Digital Innovation Lab/ Institute for the Arts & Humanities Faculty Fellowship University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Fall 2014
Board of Trustees Member (elected) North Carolina Humanities Council Charlotte, NC	Oct 2013- Oct 2019
Season Grant Selection Committee Durham Arts Council Durham, NC	Spring 2013
Faculty Steering Committee Carolina Digital Humanities Initiative University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Spring 2013
Search Committee Member Carolina Digital Humanities Initiative Programs Coordinator Sponsored by The Department of American Studies University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Spring 2013
Search Committee Member Institute for African American Research, Director Search University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Fall 2012- Spring 2013
Graduate Studies Committee Department of Communication Studies University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Fall 2011 -Spring 2016
Search Committee Member Department of Dramatic Arts University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Fall 2008
PhD Core Curriculum Committee (Ad-Hoc)	2007-2009

Department of Communication Studies University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	
Process Series Selection Committee Department of Communication Studies and Institute of Arts and Humanities University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	2007-
Undergraduate Studies Committee Department of Communication Studies University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	2007-2008
UNC- liaison/Program Director Creative Currents: Art + Culture + Collaboration: Arts organization dedicated to creating mutually beneficial, transcultural collaborations among artists and scholars focused on Africa and the Black Diaspora (Formerly "Taller Portobelo Norte") Portobelo, Panama/Atlanta, Georgia	Fall 2005-