

MÉLENA “MAE” JOY LAUDIG

she/her

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EDUCATION

- 2025 Princeton University, Ph.D., Religion
- Subfield: Religion in the Americas
 Dissertation: “*Her Country’s Children*”: *Black Childhood, Religion, and Slavery*
 Committee: Drs. Judith Weisenfeld, Wallace Best, Seth Perry, and Nicole Myers Turner
 Graduate Certificates: African American Studies and Gender and Sexuality Studies
- 2022 Princeton University, M.A., Religion
- 2019 Yale University, B.A., Religious Studies with distinction

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- 2025- Assistant Professor of African American Christianity, History and Ecumenics Department,
 Princeton Theological Seminary

PUBLICATIONS

Journal Articles

- 2025 Corwin Malcolm, Jathan Martin, and Mélena Laudig, “Scenes of Oblation: Black Childhood and Religio-Politics in Historical Perspective,” *Political Theology* (forthcoming)

Book Chapters

- 2025 “‘The Miracle of Mather’: African American Religion and the Archive of Twentieth-Century Black Girlhood,” [African American Religious History](#), edited by Vaughn A. Booker, Ahmad Greene-Hayes, Judith Weisenfeld, and Alexis Wells-Oghoghomeh (forthcoming)
- 2025 Josef Sorett and Mélena Laudig, “Religion” in *Oxford Handbook of African American History*, edited by Alexander X. Byrd and Celia Naylor (New York: Oxford University Press) (forthcoming)

Public Scholarly Engagement

- 2023 “Black Childhood and Religio-Politics in Historical Perspective,” *Political Theology Network*, October 3, 2023, <https://politicaltheology.com/black-childhood-and-religio-politics-in-historical-perspective/>.

Reviews

- 2025 Review of *Claiming the Call to Preach: Four Female Pioneers of Preaching in Nineteenth-Century*

America by Donna Giver-Johnston in the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (forthcoming)

- 2024 Review of *The Righteous Gemstones* in the *Religious Studies Review*, July 31, 2024, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.princeton.edu/10.1111/rsr.17159>
- 2023 Review of *Black Indians and Freedmen: The African Methodist Episcopal Church and Indigenous Americans, 1816-1916* by Christina Dickerson-Cousin in the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, October 4, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046923000969>
- 2022 Review of *The Purpose of Power: How We Come Together When We Fall Apart* by Alicia Garza in the *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Spring/Summer 2022, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/852062>
- 2022 Review of *Father James Page: An Enslaved Preacher's Climb to Freedom* by Larry Eugene Rivers for *Reading Religion: A Publication of the American Academy of Religion*, January 10, 2022, <https://readingreligion.org/books/father-james-page>
- 2021 Review of Quincy D. Newell, *Your Sister in the Gospel: The Life of Jane Manning James, a Nineteenth-Century Black Mormon* in the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 72, no. 2 (April 6, 2021): 445-446, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046920002924>

FELLOWSHIPS & GRANTS

- 2024 Lake Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship, Lake Institute on Faith and Giving, Indiana University
- 2024 Richard S. Dunn Fellowship, McNeil Center for Early American Studies, University of Pennsylvania
- 2024 Thurgood Marshall Provost's Fellowship, Department of African and African American Studies, Dartmouth College, *declined*
- 2024 African American Studies Department Discretionary Gifts Funding, Princeton University
- 2024 Dissertation Research Award, Effron Center for the Study of America, Princeton University
- 2023 Albert M. Greenfield Foundation Dissertation Fellowship, Library Company of Philadelphia
- 2023 Margaret W. Moore and John M. Moore Research Fellowship, Swarthmore College, Friends Historical Library
- 2023 Dissertation Research Award, Effron Center for the Study of America, Princeton University
- 2023 Graduate Fellowship, Center for Culture, Society, and Religion, Princeton University
- 2023 Corrente Discourse Research Fund, African American Studies Department, Princeton University
- 2022 Graduate Fellowship, Center for Culture, Society, and Religion, Princeton University
- 2022 Pre-Dissertation Research Award, Effron Center for the Study of America, Princeton University
- 2021 Religion and Public Life Fellowship, Center for the Study of Religion, Princeton University
- 2021 Ford Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Alternate Distinction & Honorable Mention

2020	Graham '83 Student Research Award, African American Studies Department, Princeton University
2019–21	President's Fellowship, The Graduate School, Princeton University
2017	Edward A. Bouchet Undergraduate Research Fellowship, Yale University

PRESENTATIONS

Panels, Workshops, and Lectures

2026	Panelist, "Schoolgirl Stitches: Black Girls, Religious Education, and Fabric Pedagogy in the Nineteenth-Century United States," Organization of American Historians Conference on American History, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, April 16-April 19, 2026
2025	Presider, "Black Religion and Narratives of Race," North American Religions Unit, American Academy of Religion, Boston, Massachusetts, November 25, 2025
2025	Invited Presenter, <i>Journal of Civil War Era History</i> Workshop, George and Ann Richards Civil War Era Center, August and September 2025
2025	Panelist, "Carolina Crossroads: Black Childhood and the Spirit Worlds of Antebellum South Carolina," Currents and Exchanges in Vast Early America, 28 th Annual Omohundro Institute Conference, College of Charleston, June 14, 2025
2025	Guest Presenter, "Black Children's Shelter: White Quaker Benevolence, Caretaking, and African American Children's Vulnerability in Early Antebellum Philadelphia," North American Religions Workshop, Columbia University, March 3, 2025
2025	Panelist, "The Black Son of Christ: Christopher McPherson and the Racial Politics of Apocalypticism in the Early Nineteenth Century," American Society of Church History, Chicago, Illinois, January 5, 2025
2024	Presider, "Religion Across the Americas," North American Religions Unit, American Academy of Religion, San Diego, California, November 24, 2024
2011	Moderator, "Narrating African American Religion," SPIRIT HOUSE Sessions, The Crossroads Project, November 11, 2024
2024	Presenter, "Black Girlhood, Education, and Religion in the Jim Crow South," Southern Historical Association Conference, Kansas City, Missouri, October 26, 2024
2024	Presenter, "The Mundanity of Black Girlhood Religion: Building Routine, Building Mather Girls," Girlhood Studies Collective, April 4, 2024
2024	Presenter, "The Role of Black Childhood in Nineteenth-Century Enslaved Religious Cultures," C19 – The Society of Nineteenth Century Americanists, Pasadena, California, March 15, 2024

- 2024 Panelist, “The Black Son of Christ: Christopher McPherson’s Nineteenth-Century Apocalypticism,” C19 – The Society of Nineteenth Century Americanists, Pasadena, California, March 15, 2024
- 2024 Guest Lecturer, “African American Religion and Childhood in Slavery and Freedom,” National Trust for Scotland, Facing Our Past Research Colloquium, January 16, 2024 (*virtual*)
- 2023 Presenter, “‘Little wild things untamed and undeveloped’: Black Childhood and Religious Education,” American Academy of Religion, San Antonio, Texas, November 19, 2023
- 2023 Panelist, “African American Childhood, Memories of Racial Violence, and the Spectral,” 10:23 Conference, Yale University, September 15-16, 2023
- 2023 Presider, “*Lift Every Voice and Swing: Black Musicians and Religious Culture in the Jazz Century* Book Panel,” Art and Devotion: New Accounts of Religious Culture, Race, and Gender in the United States Symposium, Princeton University, March 25, 2023
- 2022 Presenter, “Black Girl Ecologies and W.E.B. Du Bois’s *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* as Literary Case Study,” African American Intellectual History Society, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Friday, March 10, 2023
- 2022 Presider, “Children and the Carceral,” Childhood Studies and Religion Unit and Law, Religion, and Culture Unit American Academy of Religion, American Academy of Religion, November 20, 2023
- 2022 Guest Lecturer, “Reading Charles W. Chesnutt in the Context of African American Religion,” African American Literature: Origins to 1910, December 5, 2022
- 2022 Presenter, “W.E.B. Du Bois’s *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* and Black Girl Ecology,” Standing Flat Footed: Black Femmes, Girls and Women’s Reclamation of Health and Healing, Black Women & Girls Symposium, Wake Forest University, September 10, 2022
- 2022 Guest Lecturer, “Spiritual but Not Religious,” “Cult” Controversies in America, Princeton University, April 11, 2022
- 2021 Panelist, “Elastic Performances: Reverend Thomas Lewis Johnson and the Staging of Race, Religion, and the Afterlives of Slavery,” 19th Century African American Literature: Texts and Contexts, Rutgers x Princeton Graduate Student Spring Symposium, May 4-5, 2021
- 2020 Panelist, “Third World Spiritualities: Liberation Theologies and the Troubling of Asian American Studies’ Secular Normativities,” Association for Asian American Studies Annual Conference, June 11, 2020 (*virtual due to COVID-19*)
- 2020 Presider, “Epistemologies of Space and Time,” Space, Time and Religion in Early America Conference, Princeton University, February 8, 2020

2018 Presider, “The Spiritual Significance of Crossings: Theology and Borders in a U.S. Context,” Mellon Mays Fellowship Northeast Regional Conference, Religion & Philosophy Lightning Round, Smith College, September 28-29, 2018

Campus Talks

2023 Moderator, “Getting Unstuck with Your Writing Practice,” Inclusive Academy Symposium, Access, Diversity, and Inclusion Office, Princeton University, May 18, 2023

2022 Panelist, “Navigating Graduate School as First-Generation, Low-Income, and BIPOC Students,” Princeton Prospective Ph.D. Preview Program, Access, Diversity, and Inclusion Office, Princeton University, October 6, 2022

2022 Presenter, “Applying to and Thriving in Graduate School as an YMMB Alumna,” Mellon Mays and Edward A. Bouchet Fellowships (YMBB) Seminar, Yale University, September 16, 2022

2021 Panelist, “Success in Graduate School,” The Graduate School Orientation, Princeton University, August 26, 2021

2020 Presenter, “Unpack Your Money Mindset and Create a Budget,” Financial Wellness Series for Low-Income and First-Generation Students, Princeton Financial Literacy Initiative, September 2020

EXPERIENCE

2025 2024-2025 Podcast Host and Producer of “Early American Conversations,” McNeil Center for Early American Studies and the University of Pennsylvania Press, University of Pennsylvania

2024 Summer Resident Graduate Student, Freshman Scholars Institute, Emma Bloomberg Center for Access and Opportunity, Princeton University

2020-2024 Graduate Student Diversity Fellow, Access, Diversity & Inclusion Office, The Graduate School, Princeton University

2020-2024 Resident Graduate Student, Rockefeller Residential College, Princeton University

2023-2024 Committee Member, TigerWell Grant Selection Committee, Princeton University

2023 Graduate Student Representative, Search Committee for Assistant Dean for Sciences, Access, Diversity, & Inclusion Office, The Graduate School, Princeton University

2023- Independent Writing Advisor, Department of African American Studies, Princeton University

2023 Graduate Student Representative, Search Committee for Assistant Dean for Humanities

and Social Sciences, Access, Diversity, & Inclusion Office, The Graduate School, Princeton University

- 2023 Graduate Student Representative, Search Committee for Director of the Carl A. Fields Center, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Princeton University
- 2022-2025 Graduate Fellow, [The Crossroads Project for Black Histories, Communities, and Cultures](#), Center for Culture, Society, and Religion, Princeton University
- 2020-2023 Graduate Student Liaison, Religion Department, Princeton University
- 2019-2022 Events Coordinator, Religion Department, Princeton University
- 2020-2023 Co-Host, [African American Studies Podcast](#), African American Studies Department, Princeton University
- 2022 Graduate Student Representative, Search Committee for Assistant Dean for the Humanities Search Committee, Access, Diversity & Inclusion Office, The Graduate School, Princeton University
- 2022 Graduate Student Representative, Search Committee for Assistant Director of Diversity Initiatives, Access, Diversity & Inclusion Office, The Graduate School, Princeton University
- 2021 Co-Organizer, [“Race, Citizenship and the State” Reading Group](#), Humanities Council, Princeton University
- 2020 Committee Member, Graduate School Anti-Racism Task Force, Princeton University

AWARDS

- 2024 Outstanding Advocacy Award, Access, Diversity, and Inclusion Office, The Graduate School, Princeton University
- 2024 Outstanding Programming Award, Access, Diversity, and Inclusion Office, The Graduate School, Princeton University
- 2023-2026 TigerWell Partnership Grant Recipient, [BLOOM: A Graduate Wellness Collective](#)
- 2023 Outstanding Programming Award, Access, Diversity, and Inclusion Office, The Graduate School, Princeton University
- 2019 Richard B. Sewall Head of College Cup Award, Ezra Stiles College, Yale University

CERTIFICATES

Department of African American Studies Graduate Certificate
Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies Graduate Certificate

TRAINING

- 2023 National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Summer Institute for Higher Education Faculty, “Reconstructing the Black Archive: South Carolina as Case Study, 1739-1895,” Clemson University, College of Charleston, and Furman University, South Carolina, June 18-July 8, 2023
- 2023 National Humanities Center (NHC) Graduate Student Summer Residency, “Creating an Accessible Classroom and Inclusive Curriculum,” Research Triangle Park, NC, July 17-21, 2023

MEMBERSHIPS & AFFILIATIONS

American Academy of Religion (North American Religions Steering Committee, 2023-2026)
Crossroads Project for Black Religious Histories, Communities and Cultures
Organization of American Historians
The Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists

LANGUAGES

English (native), Spanish (intermediate)