

2014 Fellowship Recipient

Dr. Justine Murison

American Infidelity: Secularity, Slavery, and the Making of U.S. Fiction

"American Infidelity: Secularity, Slavery, and the Making of U.S. Fiction" will revise a common secularization narrative about the first half of the nineteenth century: that the devastation of the Civil War prompted a turn away from religious pieties of the previous era. Accusations of atheism had long organized controversies in the culture, most prominently in the debates over slavery and sectionalism, and it was thus a major cause rather than consequence of war. The transformation of fiction from a secret vice to a popular pastime played a pivotal role in the relation between unbelief and the slavery debates. In charting this relationship, this project contributes both a new cultural history of secularity and slavery and an expanded literary history that tackles the imbrications of fiction, belief and the causes of the Civil War.

Dr. Justine Murison is an Associate Professor at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.