

# Sarah Balakrishnan

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

### EMPLOYMENT

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#### **Duke University**

Assistant Professor of History 2022 – n.d.

#### **University of Minnesota, Twin Cities**

Presidential Postdoctoral Fellow 2021 – 2022

#### **University of Virginia**

Postdoctoral Fellow at the Carter G. Woodson Institute 2020 – 2021

### EDUCATION

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#### **Harvard University**

PhD in History, with a Certificate in Anthropology 2020

#### **McGill University**

B.A. Honors History, Minor in Political Science, *First Class Honours* 2014

### PUBLICATIONS

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#### **Journal Publications**

Balakrishnan, Sarah. “Prison of the Womb: Gender, Incarceration, and Capitalism on the Gold Coast of West Africa, c. 1500-1957,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (forthcoming) 2023

Balakrishnan, Sarah. “Building the Ancestral Public: Cemeteries and the Necropolitics of Property in Colonial Ghana,” *The Journal of Social History* 55.2 (2022), 1-25. 2022

Balakrishnan, Sarah. “The Jailhouse Divergence: Why Debtors’ Prisons Disappeared in Europe and Flourished in 19<sup>th</sup> Century West Africa,” *Punishment & Society* (2022), 1-17. 2022

Balakrishnan, Sarah. “Imperial Policing and the Antinomies of Power in Early Colonial Ghana,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 53.2 (2020), 173-192. 2020

Balakrishnan, Sarah. “Of Debt and Bondage: From Slavery to Prisons in the Gold Coast (Ghana), c. 1807-1957,” *The Journal of African History* 61.1 (2020), 3-21. 2020

Balakrishnan, Sarah. “Afrocentrism Revisited: Africa in the Philosophy of Black Nationalism,” *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society* 22.1 (2020), 71-88. 2020

Balakrishnan, Sarah. “The Afropolitan Idea: New Perspectives on Cosmopolitanism in African Studies,” *History Compass* 15.2 (2017). 2017

Mbembe, Achille and Sarah Balakrishnan. "Pan-African Legacies, Afropolitan Futures," *Transition: An International Review* 120.1 (2016), 28-37. 2016

### Book Chapters

Balakrishnan, Sarah. "Afropolitanism and the End of Black Nationalism," *The Routledge Handbook of Cosmopolitan Studies*, ed. Gerard Delanty (New York: Routledge 2018): 575-585. 2019

### Book Reviews

Balakrishnan, Sarah. Review of Paul Glen Grant's, *Healing and Power in Colonial Ghana: Early Indigenous Expressions of Christianity*, in the *African Studies Review* (2021). 2022

Balakrishnan, Sarah. Review of John Parker's, *In My Time of Dying: A History of Death and the Dead in West Africa*, in the *Journal of West African History* (2021). 2021

Balakrishnan, Sarah. Review of Lisa A. Lindsay's, *Atlantic Bonds: A Nineteenth-Century Odyssey from America to Africa*, in *Connections: A Journal for Historians and Area Specialists* (2020). 2020

## FELLOWSHIPS & GRANTS

**Academy of Global Humanities and Critical Theory** 2021 – 2022  
 - Grant for Collaborative Project on Capitalism, Confinement and Captivity (with Ashley Bohrer and Jishnu Guha-Majumdar) € 8,000

**University of Virginia, Carter G. Woodson Institute** 2020 – 2022  
 - Postdoctoral Fellowship in African & African American Studies \$100,000

**University of Minnesota, Twin Cities** 2021 – 2023  
 - Presidential Postdoctoral Fellowship \$110,000

**Yale University, MacMillan Center (declined)** 2020 – 2021  
 - Postdoctoral Fellowship in the Program for Agrarian Studies \$60,000

**Harvard University, Weatherhead Centre for International Affairs (declined)** 2020 – 2021  
 - Postdoctoral Fellowship in the Weatherhead Scholars Program \$60,000

**Harvard University Graduate School of Arts & Science (declined)** 2020 – 2021  
 - Dissertation Completion Fellowship \$39,000

**Philanthropic Educational Organization (PEO)** 2019 – 2020  
 - Women's National Scholar Award \$15,000

**Harvard University, Weatherhead Centre for International Affairs** 2018 – 2019  
 - Dissertation Writing Grant \$14,500

**University of Cambridge, Department of History** 2018 – 2019  
 - Visiting Fellow for 2018-19 Academic Year n.d.

**Harvard University, Weatherhead Centre for International Affairs** 2018 – 2019  
 - Mid-Dissertation Grant \$4,000

**Social Science Research Council (SSRC)** 2017 – 2018  
 - International Dissertation Research Fellowship (IDRF) \$25,000

**Harvard University Graduate School of Arts & Science** 2017 – 2018  
 - Frederick Sheldon Travelling Fellowship \$25,000

<b>Harvard University Graduate School of Arts &amp; Science (declined)</b>	2017 – 2018
- Merit/Graduate Society Term-Time Research Fellowship	\$14,000
<b>Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)</b>	2016 – 2019
- Doctoral Fellowship	\$60,000
<b>Harvard University, Weatherhead Centre for International Affairs</b>	2015 – 2016
- Samuels Family Research Fellowship	\$4,000

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS & TALKS

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### Invited Talks

“Cemeteries and the Necropolitics of Property in Colonial Ghana.” Africa Studies Workshop, Harvard University (11 April 2022).	2022
“Prison of the Womb: Gender, Captivity and Capitalism in West Africa.” Africa Studies Workshop, Johns Hopkins University (10 March 2022).	2022
“Slavery and Insurance.” With Michael Ralph, John Clegg, and Benjamin Wiggins. Lecture series at The New School (12 October 2021).	2021
“Ecologies of Slavery: Landscapes of Power and Protection in 19 <sup>th</sup> Century Gold Coast.” The Laboratory for the Economics of Africa’s Past (LEAP), the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa (1 September 2021).	2021
“Rethinking Black Internationalism.” Ghana Studies Association Virtual Forum in collaboration with Africa Is a Country (9 April 2021).	2021
“Black Lives in Global Contexts: Racial Capitalism.” Liberal Studies Global Lecture Series, New York University (20 November 2020).	2020
“The Taviefe Massacre: The Archive, the Event, and the Production of History in a West African Colony.” African Studies Colloquium, University of Virginia (28 October 2020).	2020

### Conference Presentations

“Taviefe Massacre, 1888: Mass Violence and the Genesis of the British Colonial State,” <i>Ghana Studies Association Conference</i> (Tamale, Ghana).	2022
“The Mortuary Politics of Space-Making in Early Colonial Ghana,” <i>Conference on the Study of Urban Ownership</i> (Berlin, German).	2022
“Martial Geographies: The Landscapes of Power in Eighteenth Century Gold Coast,” <i>Eighteenth Century Africa Conference</i> (University of Cambridge).	2021
“The Household and the Boundary in Precolonial Gold Coast,” <i>African Studies Association Conference</i> (Washington, DC).	2020
“Public Cemeteries Between Colonial Property Policies and Public Dissent in the Gold Coast (Ghana), c. 1807-1957,” <i>Conference on Studies of Urban Ownership</i> (Berlin, Germany).	2020
“The Taviefe Massacre: Violence, Colonialism and Memory on the British Gold Coast’s Volta Frontier,” <i>African Studies Association Conference</i> (Boston, MA).	2019

“Of Debt and Bondage: From Slavery to Prisons in the Gold Coast, c. 1807-1957,” <i>Annual Meeting of the African Economic History Network</i> (Universitat de Barcelona)	2019
“Death, Property and the ‘Ancestral Public’ in Colonial Gold Coast,” <i>Ghana Studies Association Bi-Annual Conference</i> (Accra; panel convened by Nate Plageman and Ato Quayson)	2019
“Committing Nuisance in Colonial Ghana: The Problem of ‘Waste’ as Unowned Property, 1870-1957,” <i>European Conference on African Studies</i> (panel convened by Ato Quayson)	2019
“A Riot in Two Acts: Notes on the Racial History of Police-Military Violence in Colonial Ghana,” <i>Situating Empire</i> (Harvard University)	2018
“Native Prisons, Foreign Crimes: The Evolution of an African Prison System in the British Gold Coast, 1800-1957,” <i>North American Conference on British Studies</i> (Providence, RI)	2018
“Colonialism and the Post-Slave Society: The Evolution of an African Prison System in the British Gold Coast, c. 1850-1957,” <i>World History Workshop</i> (University of Cambridge)	2018
“Bringing Up the Bodies: Death, Exhumation, and ‘Fungible’ Property in Early Colonial Ghana,” <i>Academy of Global Humanities and Critical Theory</i> (University of Bologna)	2018
“Colonizing Ghana: Land and the Concept of the Public Domain During Early Imperial Rule,” <i>Intellectual History Summer Program</i> (University of London)	2017
“Making Nuisance in Colonial Ghana: British Sanitation Policies and the Ethnic Politics of Urban Planning,” <i>Annual Africa Seminar</i> (Northwestern University)	2017
“Land and the Regionalist Imaginary: The Territorial Politics of the United West Africa Movement, 1914 – 1920,” <i>Africa Studies Association Conference</i> (Washington, DC)	2017
“The Many Centres of Afrocentrism: A New Concept History,” <i>African American Intellectual History Society Conference</i> (University of North Carolina)	2016
“Cosmopolitanism in the Global South and the Re-Making of Civilization: An Intellectual History,” <i>(Un)Making the Nation</i> (University of Cambridge, UK)	2015

## GRANTS & AWARDS

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### **Harvard University, Graduate School of Arts & Science**

- 2019 Certificate of Distinction in Teaching
- 2017 Graduate School of Arts & Science Merit Award
- 2017 Derek Bok Teaching Award

### **McGill University**

- 2013 Eve and Myron Echenberg Award for African Studies
- 2012 Margaret Pratt Scholarship for Top Student in English Literature

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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### **Instructor, Duke University**

#### *History of Modern Africa*

- Head instructor of an undergraduate lecture class studying themes in recent African history, including abolition, colonialism, anticolonialism, and the post-colony.

## **Instructor, University of Minnesota**

### *History of West Africa, 1800-Present*

- Head instructor of a lecture class, combining undergraduate and graduate students, studying themes in modern West African history, including abolition, colonialism, anticolonialism, and the post-colony.

## **Instructor, University of Virginia**

### *The Imperial Encounter in Africa*

- Head instructor for a mixed under/grad seminar on the imperial encounter in Africa, studying texts, paintings, maps, films, diaries, photographs, and other multimedia from c. 1440-1960.

## **Teaching Fellow, Harvard University**

### *Ancestry*

- Teaching Fellow for Prof. Maya Jasanoff's General Education lecture course.

### *Introduction to the British Empire*

- Teaching Fellow for Prof. Maya Jasanoff's lecture course.

### *Africa and Africans: The Making of a Continent in the Modern World*

- Teaching Fellow for Prof. Caroline Elkins's General Education lecture course.

### *The History of Sub-Saharan Africa Before 1860*

- Teaching Fellow for Prof. Emmanuel Akyeampong's lecture course on Africa, 10,000 BC to 1860.

### *Health, Disease and Ecology in African History*

- Teaching Fellow for Prof. Emmanuel Akyeampong's upper-year seminar.

## FIELD & WORK EXPERIENCE

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### **Makerere Institute for Social Research (MISR), Kampala, Uganda**

- As a research intern at the think tank, I conducted projects studying the functioning and funding of Kampala-based NGOs working towards women's equality and democracy. I also assisted in the production of publications concerning roundtables on the North African slave trade, land rights in postcolonial Uganda, and violence and civil action in postcolonial Africa. 2015

### **The Centre for Democratic Development (CDD), Accra, Ghana**

- As an intern at the democracy think tank, I conducted research projects studying the distribution of material aid to rural communities, party-based voting practices, and the technologies of having "free and fair" elections. I also acted as an electoral monitor for the 2012 presidential elections, which were delayed due to President John Evans Atta Mills' untimely demise. 2012

## SERVICE & ACTIVITIES

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### **Co-organizer, Sawyer Seminar on "Just Policing"**

- Co-writer, with Yalile Suriel and Will Jones, of a Mellon grant for a year-long Sawyer seminar on the concept of "just policing." Can the police ever be reformed to be ethical? Or should they just be abolished? This seminar is to take place at UMN in the 2024-2025 calendar year. 2022

**Co-Organizer, Workshop on “Capitalism and Confinement” (June 16-17, 2022)** 2022

- Co-organizer, with Ashley Bohrer and Jishnu Guha-Majumdar, of a three-day interdisciplinary workshop on capitalism and confinement. This workshop is funded by the Academy of Global Humanities and Critical Theory. The goal is to produce a special edition of a journal on how capitalism requires not only flows and movement of capital and people, but also confinement and enclosure.

**Editor, *Maple Tree Literary Supplement*** 2020-Present

- Since 2020, I have been a fiction editor for the Canadian literary magazine, *The Maple Tree Literary Supplement*. It is funded by the Canadian government, with the purpose of publishing diverse Canadian voices. It is the only Canadian literary magazine run entirely by people of colour.

**#DeeperThanWater & the Harvard Prison Abolition Collective** 2019-Present

- In 2019, members of the Harvard Prison Abolition Collective allied with the Massachusetts organization #DeeperThanWater to create a book club for students and confined persons in MCI-Norfolk in North Adams, MA. This work became urgent during the spread of COVID-19, turning the reading group into a channel for exposing the immediate need for decarceration. Alongside pen pal, William “Tufayl” Lane, currently incarcerated in MCI- Norfolk, I organized a series of write-ins, workshops and webinars to press for prisoner release and decarceration.

**Peer-Review (Journals)**

- Reviewer for *The Journal of Social History* 2022
- Reviewer for *African Identities* 2021
- Reviewer for *African Studies Review* 2021
- Reviewer for *Culture, Theory and Critique* 2020
- Reviewer for *African Identities* 2019
- Reviewer for *Souls* 2019

**Conference Organizing** 2018

*Situating Empire: The Great War Reconsidered*

- Co-organizer (with Hardeep Dhillon) of an international graduate student conference at Harvard University in November.

## FICTION WRITING

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### Publications

- Balakrishnan, Sarah. “Rouses Point,” *Narrative Magazine* (Fall 2022).
- Balakrishnan, Sarah. “Trump vs. Superman,” *Narrative Magazine* (Spring 2022).

### Awards

- First place winner of *Narrative Magazine’s* Best 30 and Under Contest
- Finalist for the Cecilia Joyce Johnson Award from the Key West Literary Seminar

### Fellowships

- Writing Fellowship with *American Short Fiction*, 2022
- Writer-in-Residence at Hedgebrook on Whidbey Island, 2022
- Artist-in-Residence at Craigardan, NY, 2020-2021

## OTHER PUBLICATIONS & MEDIA INTERVIEWS

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- “Placing and Spacing the Dead in Colonial Accra,” *The Metropole* (Urban History Association blog) 2019  
<https://themetropole.blog/2019/11/25/placing-and-spacing-the-dead-in-colonial-accra/>
- Interview in “Refined Rhetoric Expected in Thursday’s Election Debate,” *The Montreal Gazette* 2014  
<https://www.pressreader.com/canada/montreal-gazette/20140327/281663957967109>
- “Debating and Politics in Canada,” interview with David Gutnick, *CBC Radio* 2013
- “Is there Really a Gender Problem in CUSID Central? A Data Analysis of Female Participation and Competitive Success,” *Canadian University Society for Intercollegiate Debating* 2012  
<http://www.cusid.ca/files/official/CUSID%20Women.pdf>

## DEBATING & PUBLIC SPEAKING

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- North American University Debating Champion (2013)
- North American Women’s Debating Champion (2013)
- Canadian National Debating Champion (2013)
- Commonwealth Debating Champion (2013)
- World Debating Championship Semi-Finalist & Top 10 Speaker (2014)

## LANGUAGES

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- French (Advanced)
- Asante-Twi (Advanced/Intermediate)
- German (Intermediate-Writing)