



James Braxton Peterson Ph.D.
Professor

Department of Languages & Literatures
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PROFILE

James Peterson, Ph.D. is a writer, educator, and media professional. He hosts Evening WURDS on WURD Radio in Philadelphia and serves as Professor and Chair of the Department of Languages & Literatures at Delaware State University. He is the author of *The Hip Hop Underground and African American Culture*, *Prison Industrial Complex for Beginners*, and *Hip Hop Headphones: A Scholar's Critical Playlist*. His public scholarship and commentary have appeared in outlets including The Philadelphia Citizen, Fortune, Newsweek, The Guardian, The Los Angeles Times, Reuters, The Huffington Post, The Daily Beast, and TheGrio.

OPINION EDITORIALS

<https://thephiladelphiacitizen.org/author/james-peterson/>

<https://url-media.com/author/dr-james-peterson/>

<https://www.theeducatedger.com/authors/contact/15676454/james-peterson>

EDUCATION

Ph.D.: English 2003 University of Pennsylvania - Philadelphia, PA
Dissertation: Concepts of the Underground in Black Culture

M.A.: English 1995 North Carolina State University - Raleigh, NC
Thesis: Style Variation in the Sociolinguistic Interview: An Empirical Study of Interviewer Adaptation

B.A.: English 1993 Duke University - Durham, NC
Concentrations: African American Literature; Linguistics

EMPLOYMENT

2023 - Current **Host, Evening WURDS**
WURD Radio – Philadelphia

2025 to Current **Professor & Chair, Department of Languages & Literatures**
Delaware State University – Dover, DE

2023 to 2025 **Adjunct Instructor**
Mercer County Community College – West Windsor, NJ

2019 to 2024 **Senior Talent Solutions Partner**
DiverseForce – Philadelphia, PA

2011 to 2017 **Associate/Full Professor of English**
Lehigh University – Bethlehem, PA
• Director of Africana Studies (2011–2017)

2007 to 2011 **Assistant/Associate Professor of English**
Bucknell University – Lewisburg, PA

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- College Language Association (CLA)
 - American Literature Association (ALA)
 - African American Literature and Culture Society (AALCS)
 - Modern Language Association (MLA)
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SELECTED COURSES TAUGHT (REPRESENTATIVE)

- Autobiography and Hip-Hop Culture
 - Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Graphic Novels
 - Black Prison Narratives
 - Afrofuturism & Black Visual Culture
 - Superheroes, Race, and Social Justice
 - Contemporary African American Literature
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SERVICE & ADVISORY ROLES

- Member, Toni Morrison Lab Advisory Council, University of Pennsylvania (Fall 2025 - Present)
 - Board of Directors, Delaware Humanities (Fall 2026 – Present)
 - Board Member, The Elevation Project, a reentry and justice reform organization in Philadelphia, PA (2026 – Present)
 - Megascope Advisory Board (Megascope is a graphic novel publishing imprint of Abrams Comic Arts/Abrams Books, 2026 – Present)
 - President, African American Literature and Culture Society (AALCS), affiliated with the American Literature Association (2011–2013)
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MEDIA & PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP (SELECTED)

- Host, Evening WURDS (WURD Radio, Philadelphia)
 - Former on-air contributor, MSNBC (2015-2018)
 - Major essays and commentary in national outlets including The Guardian, Fortune, Newsweek, LA Times, Reuters, The Huffington Post, The Daily Beast, and TheGrio
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BOOKS AND SELECT PUBLICATIONS

Published Books

- *The Hip Hop Underground and African American Culture: Beneath the Surface*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- *Hip Hop Headphones: A Scholar's Critical Playlist*. Bloomsbury, 2016.
- *Prison Industrial Complex for Beginners*. Illus. John Jennings & Stacey Robinson. For Beginners, 2016.
- *In Media Res: Race, Identity, and Popular Culture in the Twenty-first Century* (Introduction and editor). Bucknell University Press, 2014.

Select Articles and Book Chapters

- “The Revenge of Emmett Till: Impudent Aesthetics and the Swagger Narratives of Hip Hop Culture.” *African American Review* 44.4 (2012): 617–631.
- “The Depth of the Hole: Intertextuality and Tom Waits's ‘Way Down in the Hole’.” *Criticism* 52.3–4 (2011): 461–485.
- “Broad Day in the USA: Mosaicism in the Poetic Narratives of Hip Hop Culture.” *International Journal of Africana Studies* (2011).
- “Hip Hop is (Not) Post-Modern.” In *The Cambridge History of Postmodern Literature*. Cambridge UP, 2016.
- “My President is Black: Speech Act Theory and Presidential Allusions in the Lyrics of Rap Music” (with Cynthia Estremera). In *The Hip Hop and Obama Reader*. Oxford UP, 2015.
- “The Return to Remus Orthography: The Voices of African American Language in African American Literature.” In *The Oxford Handbook of African American Language*. Oxford UP, 2015.
- “A PARTICULAR PAC: Ontological Ruptures and the Posthumous Presence of Tupac Shakur.” In *Religion in Hip Hop: Mapping the New Terrain in the US*. Bloomsbury, 2015.
- “Voices of the Gods: Definition, Diegesis, and Discourse in Ice-T's Art of Rap.” In *Rapper, Writer, Pop-Cultural Player: Ice T and the Politics of Black Cultural Production*. Ashgate, 2014.

GRANTS

National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Challenge Grant — Principal Investigator/Recipient, “Black Publics/Lived Experiences” (2015–2017)

HONORS

NAACP Image Award nominee (as host), “Exonerated: The Cost of Wrongful Convictions” (WURD, 2025)

WEBBY Award nominee (as host), “Exonerated: The Cost of Wrongful Convictions” (WURD)