

Writing & Society Research Centre Seminar Program
'Writing by the River'

**Targeted by the State: On Being a Feminist Academic in South
Carolina**
Emily Stewart



The day after Charlie Kirk was murdered I published an op-ed in *Ms. Magazine*, lamenting the culture of toxic masculinity in the U.S. and Kirk's participation in it. Within days, federal and state elected officials began targeting me on social media, calling for my firing from the small, liberal arts college where I taught as full professor of English, specialising in Caribbean literature. South Carolina legislators copied the tactics of the Trump administration's attacks on other private schools like Harvard and Columbia, writing an official letter to the college threatening to cut their state funding if they didn't fire me for writing the article about Kirk. In December 2025, I resigned. In March, I filed a federal lawsuit with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU-SC) arguing these legislators violated my right to free speech by jawboning the college to take action against me. In the talk, I will discuss the attacks on teachers and professors in the U.S. by federal and state governments, and why these attacks against me offer a special case in far-right attempts to dismantle tenure protections at private colleges and universities (historically more insulated from direct governmental action).

Professor Taylor will be in conversation with Ben Etherington following her presentation.

DATE: Friday 7 August

TIME: 11:00am - 12:30pm

VENUE: Online on Zoom

Register for online attendance and the meeting link will be sent to you.

ALL WELCOME!

EMILY TAYLOR is an Adjunct Professor with the School of Arts, Western Sydney University and writer based in the Upstate of South Carolina. She earned her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Oregon and is a specialist in Caribbean literature, Latinx literature, and postcolonial and feminist theory. She has published academic essays in *Caribbean-Irish Connections*, *The Journal of West Indian Literature*, *The Routledge Companion to Anglophone Caribbean Literature*, *The Southern Quarterly*, and in the Cambridge series *Caribbean Literature in Transition*. She has published articles in *Ms. Magazine* and writes the newsletter [Hot Feminism: Letters from South Carolina](#).



BEN ETHERINGTON is Associate Professor in English at Western Sydney. He's currently completing a manuscript entitled *Creole Poetics: Anglophone Caribbean Vernacular Poetry from Emancipation to Decolonisation*. His first book, *Literary Primitivism* (Stanford, 2018), won the Australian University Heads of English prize for literary scholarship. From 2027, he will be an Australian Research Council Future Fellow working on a project called 'The Decolonisation of Literary Culture'.



Writing and Society Research Centre

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