

Graduate Education in the Age of LLM

Thoughts from the Front Lines

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Who Am I — and What Do I Know About Anything?

- 4th-year ABD
- Watched AI go from nonexistent to universal over the past three years
- Pushed me to the front lines of AI use in the social sciences and humanities
- Peer discussion, personal use

Workshops & Course Development

AI department workshops
AI course development

Publications

"The Environmental Humanities in the Age of AI"
Resistance (accepted)

"Teaching With AI, Teaching Against AI: A Case Study"
Journal of Geography in Higher Education
(under review)

On the Ground: Challenges

● Uneven Engagement

Broad lack of engagement across disciplines
— interest is surface-level and inconsistent

● Disdain, Discomfort, Ignorance

Active resistance and widespread unfamiliarity, especially in human and cultural geography

● Covert, Sporadic Use

AI use among grad students is hidden, irregular, and highly discipline-dependent

● No Institutional Guidance

A lack of clear policies or support structures from institutions

● Growing Concern, No Consensus

Discussion is increasing, but no one quite knows what to do about it

Unstable and Unsustainable

On the Ground: Navigating Forward

- Some AI competence sets me apart from most human and cultural geographers
- Paid access to AI models makes a big difference; many universities provide such access free or discounted to grad students; few seem to be using them
- AI levels the playing field — I am often more current than many faculty on these developments
- As a TA, my power is limited; as instructor of record, my scope expands considerably

*Many undergrad courses are already obsolete;
only some faculty acknowledge this or seem to care*

AI for Research: Current Toolkit

Google NotebookLM

- Data repository and source-grounded Q&A
- Quick answers with perfect, instant recall
- Ideal for working within a bounded document set

Claude

- Organizing and planning complex research tasks
- Citation and file management
- Coding

Claude Cowork

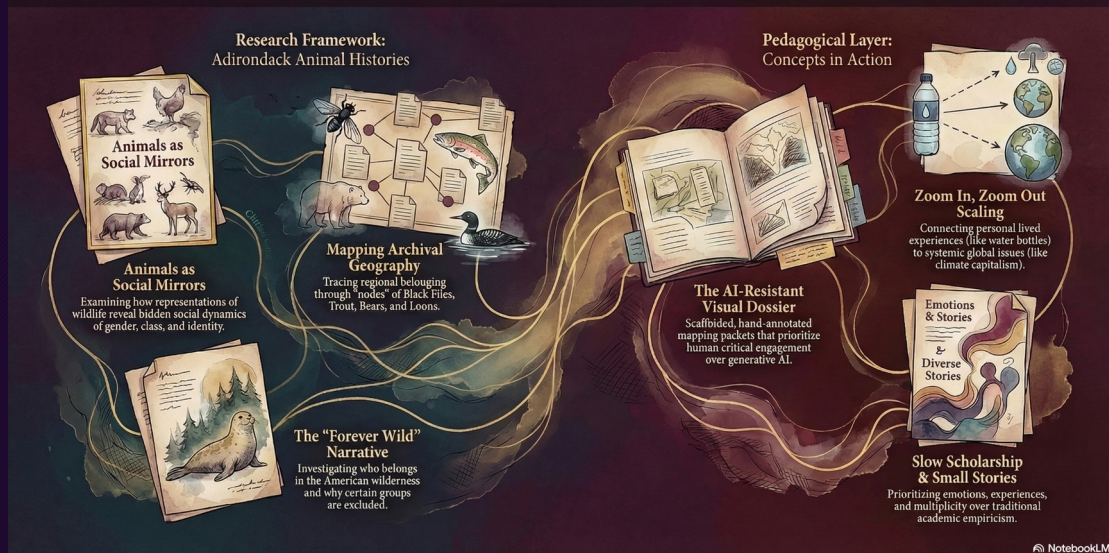
- Zotero library reorganization at scale
- Cleaning and merging raw archival data files
- Handling large batches across many sources

Perplexity

- Source searching with current, cited results
- Accuracy checks and fact verification

Efficiency, Scope, Style

Forever Wild & Critically Engaged: The Research and Teaching Workflow of Rachel Ameen



Rachel Ameen

Historical geographer studying how animal stories shape wild places.

I research animal narratives in the Adirondack Park—folklore, artwork, and journalism—and what they reveal about power, recreation, and the idea of wilderness. I'm also a contra dance caller bringing people together through movement and music.

[Research & Writing](#)[Contra Dance Calling](#)[Download CV \(PDF\)](#)

Research & Writing

My dissertation examines how animal narratives—folklore, artwork, and journalism—have shaped and been shaped by the cultural and environmental history of New York's Adirondack Park. I'm interested in what stories about black flies, trout, bears, and loons reveal about power, recreation, and the idea of "wilderness" in the American imagination. My work sits at the intersection of historical geography, environmental humanities, and animal studies.

Dissertation Chapters

Black Flies

How a tiny insect became a symbol of Adirondack identity—and a boundary marker between insiders and outsiders.

Trout

Book trout stocking, sportfishing culture, and the recreational economies that remade Adirondack waterways.

Bears

Black bear encounters in camps and garbage dumps as a lens on human-wildlife conflict and park management.

Loons

The common loon as conservation icon—how serend, nostalgia, and tourism shaped wildlife protection in the park.

Ongoing & Planned Projects

I'm developing the dissertation into a book manuscript and conducting additional fieldwork in the Adirondack Park in 2026. I'll be presenting at the American Society for Environmental History annual meeting in Kansas City and at the American Association of Geographers meeting in San Francisco, both in 2026.

Thank you!

