

# Passings: Philip L. Nicoloff

## Emeritus English professor remembered

Wednesday, August 17, 2022

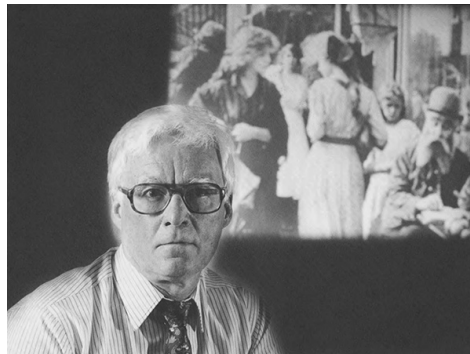


Philip L. Nicoloff, professor emeritus of English at UNH, passed away on May 17, 2022. He was 95 years old.

In his formative years, Nicoloff thought he might become a minister. He eventually discovered the depth contained in literary works – how the best wrestled with the spiritual mysteries – and he chose the path of literary study instead.

Nicoloff earned a B.A. at the University of California at Los Angeles, and an M.A. and Ph.D. at Barnard College. He joined the faculty of UNH in 1954 where he remained until his retirement in 1995.

Nicoloff specialized in Emerson and the history of ideas in nineteenth century America. Among his publications was “Emerson on Race and History: An Examination of English Traits.” Later, he would explore the power of cinema, which, he found, was a medium that could expertly tackle profound questions. He



PROFESSOR PHILIP NICOLOFF IN 1991 ON THE OCCASION OF HIS TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD. PHOTO BY GARY SAMSON.

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established the film studies program within the English Department and developed a specialization in the history of film.

Nicoloff was enormously effective in the classroom, for which he won a UNH teaching excellence award in 1991.

“An early representative of U.S. film studies, Prof. Nicoloff promoted the aesthetic qualities of film that reach beyond the medium’s commercial aspects,” says Delia Konzett, professor of English and film studies in the English Department. And he did so at a time when it was technically cumbersome, well before streaming and DVDs.

“I remember the film reels we had inherited from his early film classes, and I can only imagine how challenging it must have been to coordinate a film program when that required organizing public showings using projectors and actual celluloid prints,” says Douglas Lanier, professor of English and film scholar.

English Department colleagues who had the pleasure of working with him recall how eclectic his interests were, including the novels of Dashiell Hammett, the built environment and professional sumo wrestling. He had a particular interest in Japanese Buddhism, and he researched and taught in Japan several times. In 2007, he published “Sacred Koyasan: A Pilgrimage to the Mountain Temple of Saint Kobo Daishi and the Great Sun Buddha.”

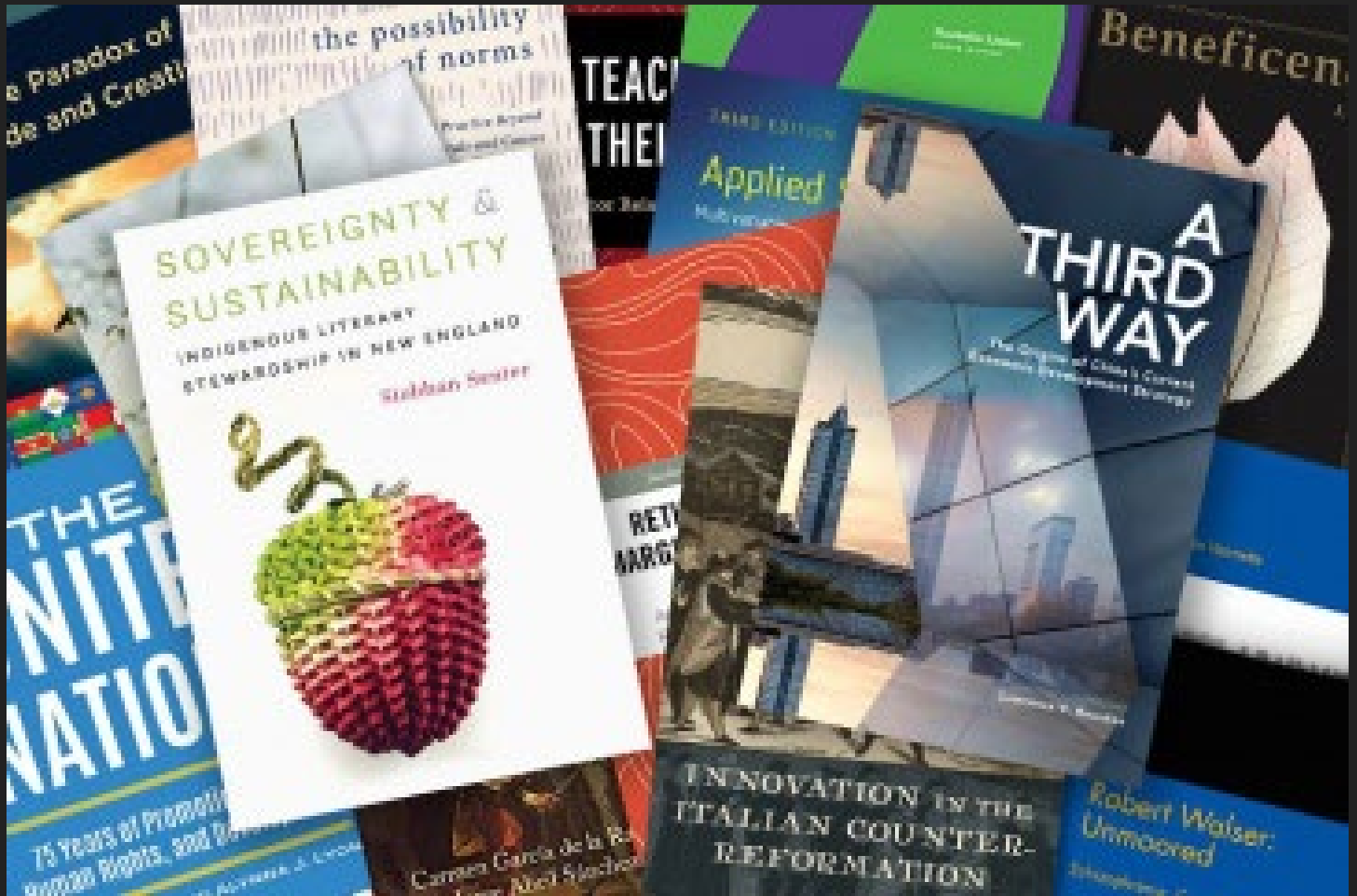
Interdisciplinary, deeply curious, inventive and generous are how those who knew Nicoloff describe him. And, they say, he had quite a wry sense of humor.

WRITTEN [Susan Dumais '88 '02G](#) | College of Liberal Arts

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