ON THE COVER
Undergraduate student Talya Torres speaks with peace activist and scholar Dr. Janaki Natarajan (on screen) as part of a yearlong history course exploring Daniel Ellsberg’s papers. Read more on page 12.

Cover photo by John Solem.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT

Using the West to Remake Japanese Buddhism

At the turn of the twentieth century, Buddhist leaders in Japan were worried that Buddhism would become obsolete with the dramatic growth of state Shinto and Christianity. Buddhist Priest Chikazumi Jikan (1870–1941) of the True Pure Land school of Mahayana Buddhism sought to change that by demonstrating how Buddhism was modern and relevant to a rapidly changing Japan.

Returning from a two-year study trip in the United States and Western Europe in 1902, Chikazumi established the Kyōdō gakusha (Way-Seekers Dormitory). There, in Tokyo near Japan's top university, he worked with, and preached to, Japan's educated elite and sought to revitalize the religion. He soon also published his sermons in the book Shinke Mondaiō (1904), whose title page is pictured here as well, and launched the popular monthly serial publication Kyōdō dokuritsu (1915). There, in Tokyo near the dormitory, Professor Garrett L. Washington provided a scholarly introduction and translated a 1904 sermon (whose title page is pictured here as well) by Chikazumi on the social perspectives of the problem of faith. Building on these foundations, he later built a uniquely modern Buddhist meeting hall, the Kyōdō kaikan (Way-Seekers Hall), in 1915 next to the dormitory.

When Chikazumi returned from his study trip, he gave a series of sermons on the social perspectives and relevance of Buddhism for the book Buddhism and Modernity: Sources from Nineteenth-Century Japan, edited by Orion Klautau and Hans Martin Krämer and published earlier this year. Garrett Washington explains in the publication, Chikazumi’s sermons demonstrate the influence of Western political and social thought and Protestant Christianity on modern Japanese Buddhism.

Garrett Washington is a historian of Japanese whose scholarship focuses on the impact of imported Western forms of space, knowledge, and discourse on late 19th and early 20th century Japanese society. His first book, Church Space and the Capital in Prewar Japan, is forthcoming from the University of Hawai’i Press.

ON THE COVER

THE DEDICATION, GOOD HUMOR, AND RESILIENCE of students, staff, and faculty in the Department of History carried us through the toughest year in recent history. As I reflect on the uncertainty, loss, and grief of the 2020–21 academic year, our spirits are lifted by the many ways in which we faced challenges collectively, even though physically distant, and strove to support our missions in teaching, research, and community engagement.

The most obvious impact of the pandemic was teaching remotely. Almost all Department of History courses last year were taught online. Our faculty and teaching associates worked hard to transform their face-to-face courses for delivery via Moodle, Zoom, Teams, Slack, and other online platforms. I am grateful to my colleagues for the good cheer with which they affected the transformation and to our students for the engagement that they brought to their online courses. Overall enrollments in history courses in the 2020–21 academic year were actually slightly higher than the previous, non-pandemic year, despite the format.

In fall 2020, only one of our courses was taught face to face: Christian Appy’s seminar on “Truth, Dissent, and the Life of Daniel Ellsberg.” Chris continued that course in the spring, in preparation for an international conference on the topic. Three of our PhD students, Justin Burch, Andrew Grim, and Shay Olmstead, also taught face to face courses last spring as teaching associates in the Residential Academic Programs (RAPs). I thank them all for their courage in teaching in person during the pandemic and their commitment to providing a classroom experience for those undergraduate students who returned to campus in the spring.

The department staff kept us functioning smoothly despite the challenges of working from home: moving equipment, accessing files, carving out a workspace that was as comfortable as possible, and substituting emails, phone calls, texts, and video conferences for the informal in-person contact that constitutes much of the department’s daily life in normal times. For their hard work and positive outlook, I thank them all: Office Manager Amy Fleig, Graduate Program Coordinator Mary Lasway, Undergraduate Program Coordinator Enjoli Pescheta ’17, HR and Finance Coordinator Stefanie Austin, Director of Outreach Jess Johnson, Communications Coordinators Ragital Jha and Devon King, Internship and Career Advisor Heather Brittan, and Public History Assistants Helen Kyriakoudes ’21MA. I’d also like to thank the department officers: Associate Chair Anne Broadbridge, Undergraduate Program Director Heidi Scott, and Graduate Program Director Jason Moracle.

Between stress and budget uncertainty, our programming was reduced from a typical year, but we continued with talks, seminars, and colloquia. The twin highlights of the year, addressed in more detail elsewhere in this newsletter, were the biennial Feinberg Family Distinguished Lecture Series and the international conference on “Truth, Dissent, and the Legacy of Daniel Ellsberg.” They were both delivered online and, between them, brought our scholarship and teaching to tens of thousands of audience members across the globe.

The department marked some important milestones during the year. Professor Emeritus William Leeman was promoted to professor. Congratulations to all three! We also experienced departures. Professor Emeritus Stephen B. Oates passed away on August 20; a memorial is being planned on campus in the spring. Enjoli Pescheta left the department to start a new phase of her life in Arizona. We wish her well! Joye Bowman remains a history faculty member, but is now full-time senior associate dean in CHFA, while Jason Moracle joined her there in the summer as associate dean for faculty research and diversity (though he will continue to teach in the history department).

While this letter emphasizes our accomplishments, it would be remiss not to mention the toll taken on our community by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of us have lost family and friends to the disease, many of us have suffered financially, and all of us have been affected by social distancing and isolation. I hope that those of you who spent your last semesters at UMass engaged in remote learning will have an opportunity to return to campus and see your professors, and at least some of your fellow students, in person.

We look forward to your visit!
The 2020–2021 Feinberg Family Distinguished Lecture Series, Planet on a Precipice, explored the climate and environmental emergency in historical perspective. The offerings—a dozen lectures and panels, two films, several workshops for K–12 educators, numerous affiliated UMass and Five College classes, and a youth-made zine—reached tens of thousands of people across the U.S. and world. The series sought to deepen our collective understanding of the environmental emergency through historical analysis and to help us to envision constructive paths forward.

Indigenous scientist, writer, and distinguished professor, Robin Wall Kimmerer, opened the series in September of 2020 with a keynote address that framed the series. Centered around the question, "What does the Earth ask of us?", her lecture was grounded in an analysis of the past, while offering teachings from the study of plants as a compass for future action. Weaving together Western scientific and Indigenous knowledge, Kimmerer "invited each of us to reflect on our webs of relations, our obligations, and our possibilities for bringing about more just and sustainable ways of living," as moderator Christine DeLucia, a historian at Williams College, noted. Co-presented with the Creative Women Leading Climate Action Symposium, the event and her teachings, in the words of the dozens of people who contacted us with reflections, were "brilliant," "breathtaking," and "world-changing."

In another headline event for the series, the following week we hosted MacArthur Award-winning historian Mike Davis, who has authored 20 books. Speaking from his home in California as wildfires blazed on the West Coast, Davis explored what he refers to as an "apocalyptic trinity" of climate change, exurban sprawl, and transformation of plant ecologies, which work together to create a vicious fire cycle. As of this writing, wildfires are again raging on the West Coast, and the cycle shows no signs of abating. In partnership with the graduate program, this event was offered as our department's Distinguished Annual Lecture and was opened by Dean Barbara Krauthamer, with remarks by Kenneth R. Feinberg ‘67. We are grateful for the generous endowment, created by Kenneth R. Feinberg and associates, which makes this series possible.

Thom Van Dooren, field philosopher, storyteller, and associate professor at the universities of Sydney and Oslo, described ecological transformations in the Hawaiian Islands that are less immediately visible than the West Coast wildfires, but no less devastating. One of the world's most diverse assemblages of terrestrial snails once inhabited these islands. Primarily due to the introduction of the predatory rosy wolf snail in the mid-twentieth century, the majority of Hawai'i's snail species have been obliterated, and most of those that remain are also on the brink of extinction. Exploring the question of how an island group in the Pacific Ocean came to be inhabited by such a rich diversity of land snails, Van Dooren took his audience on a captivating journey of the snails' deep histories. In doing so, he invited listeners to consider why the rapidly unfolding extinction of these beings matters. The event was moderated by Assistant Professor Malcolm Sen of the English department.

The November 12 event, "Environmental Policy in Historical Perspective," was held as the results of the 2020 U.S. presidential election trickled in. Speakers Bill McKibben, Robert Pollin, Ashwin Ravikumar, Thea Riofrancos, and Eve Vogel assessed the prospects for major climate reforms under the new Biden administration. They also offered insights from the New Deal and more recent history on how the transition to renewable energy can avoid replicating the dynamics of extraction, dispossession, and exploitation that characterize the global fossil fuel industry.

Human exploitation of the underground has been central to the unfolding climate and environmental emergency. Focused on this broad theme, the final event of the semester featured speakers Angelica Maria Bernal, Nigel Clark, Gregory Cushman, and Andrea Marston. Bernal and Cushman explored histories of extraction from below ground in the Americas, both in the recent past and since the beginnings of European colonization, and brought into view Indigenous concepts and movements that offer alternatives to these destructive patterns. Clark and Marston, respectively, reflected critically on the deep history of human relationships with fire, and on the entanglements of Bolivian miners' exposure to subsurface environments and vulnerability to COVID-19. Kiran Asher, professor of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at UMass Amherst, moderated the discussion.

After a brief hiatus during the winter intercession, the series returned on the first day of the spring semester, presenting the James Baldwin Lecture. In partnership with the W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies, the panel explored how youth have transformed the global climate movement.
of color and youth from the Global South have transformed the global climate movement. Featuring Ugandan climate activist Vanessa Nakate in conversation with executive director of the Sunrise Movement and UMass Amherst alumna Varshini Prakash, 15, the presenters reflected on their personal history in the movement, their organizing strategies, insights, and visions for the world they’re fighting to win—and why, they argue, climate action must be rooted in racial, economic, and gender justice. Offered every other year, the James Baldwin Lecture was created by history department alumnus Allen J. Davis ’68.

In collaboration with the Massachusetts Multicultural Film Festival, the series next offered a free virtual screening of Landfall, followed by a conversation with director Cecilia Aldarondo. The film examines the kinship of two Puerto Rican storms—one environmental, Hurricane Maria, and the other historical, in the form of U.S. colonialism and the emergent debt crisis. Featuring intimate encounters with Puerto Ricans as well as the newcomers who flocked to the island after Maria, Landfall reflects on a question that was on many of our minds throughout the series: When the world falls apart, who do we become?

“Environmentalist” movements are not inherently humane and democratic, as the March 4 event “Disaster Capitalism and Ecoauthoritarianism” made clear. Katia R. Arviles Vanzquez and Rajani Bhatai analyzed violent and authoritarian responses to the ecological emergency in the United States, Western Europe, and post-Maria Puerto Rico. John Aloisius Zinda and moderator Sigrid Schmalzer complemented these presentations with a discussion of the recent “ecoauthoritarianism” of the Chinese government.

The series concluded with a linked segment of events—a lecture, film screening, and discussion—with the history department’s 2021 writer-in-residence, the historian and filmmaker Greg Mitman. The lecture, which explored ecological, economic, political, and social forces at play in creating pandemic hot zones, was co-presented by the Amherst Jones Library, in conjunction with a National Endowment for the Arts “Big Read” of Emily St. John Mandel’s Station 11. The Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association and 40 community organizations. We invite you to read more about Mitman’s visit in the Graduate Program Update on page 16 and in his interview with Ashley Siddique on page 20.

A HALLMARK OF THE FEINBERG SERIES

is community engagement. The series was organized with the help of an interdisciplinary planning team and more than three dozen community and university groups partnered with us as co-sponsors, spreading the word far and wide across our campus, our communities, and beyond. In total, the events have been viewed more than 17,000 times by people on every continent except Antarctica! We’ve received messages from people who watched events in Sunday school classes in North Carolina and English language-learning classes in South Korea. Several co-sponsors, along with history department faculty and graduate students, facilitated community discussion groups after events, giving attendees a chance to share the experience with others and to think together about the speakers’ insights. And at each event there was Spanish interpretation, live closed captioning, a robust public Q&A, and a focus on engaging with scholarly ideas in an accessible manner.

To support K-12 educators in integrating environmental history into their curriculum, we worked with Romina Pacheco and Safire Delong of the Collaborative for Educational Services to offer a three-part workshop series for teachers, co-presented with our department’s annual “History Institute.” Participants attended Feinberg events and worked together to build lesson plans that brought speakers’ insights into their classrooms.

Working with several local libraries, the Valley Zine Club, the Holyoke High School ethnic studies program, and with leadership by public history MA student Charlotte Murtishaw, the series published a youth zine, “Dreaming the Future.” Twenty-two young people shared art and writing reflecting on their relationship with the natural world, how they think it might change in the future, and what they hope it might be like. In the words of one author, the zine asked us all:

Take a step back
Leave your body
Their words
The things you have to get done
The things you think you never will
What do you see?

Integrating the series into undergraduate and graduate curricula was also a priority. More than two dozen UMass and Five College courses incorporated series events into their syllabi. Students in select history department classes could receive course credit for attending series events and completing assignments drawing connections between the series and their coursework.

Sixty UMass students took a deep dive into the series by enrolling in the official Feinberg course, which was taught by series co-chair Heidi V. Scott. The course, like the broader series, drew on case studies from around the world by exploring the deeper history of this contemporary predicament, examining the processes—among them, the emergence of modern forms of colonialism, capitalism, and industrialization—that have been central to the creation of the environmental emergency.

While the events ended in March 2021, the speakers’ insights remain just as timely. We hope you’ll tune in. The lectures and panels are available on our website. If you’d like to listen to audio on a mobile device, search for “UMass History” in your favorite podcasting app. —Jess Johnson with Heidi V. Scott and Kevin Young, co-chairs of the 2020–2021 Feinberg Series
Anyone who has participated in an academic community, whether as a student, teacher, administrator, or scholar, is aware of the ways in which the physical spaces of a campus play a vital role in shaping that community and helping it flourish. In classrooms and seminar rooms, in library spaces and dining halls, in the shade of campus trees and by the pond, ideas are shared, connections are made, and new projects take shape. By necessity, the past year and a half required everyone who would normally participate in campus life to engage in and foster community through the virtual spaces of video conferencing technology. In my role as director of the undergraduate program, I have been impressed by the extent to which—to which I am grateful to the dedication of students, staff, and faculty—the intertwining communities that constitute the undergraduate program have retained their vitality despite the numerous limitations of virtual interaction.

Spring 2021 saw the publication of the fifth volume of the Undergraduate History Journal, which showcases writing on historical topics by history majors and other students who are interested in the study of the past. Johanna Geremia ’21, Michael Turner ’21, and Sevil Usmanova ’21 served as editors this year. I am grateful to Garrett Washington for continuing in his role as faculty advisor to the editorial board.

This year, seven history majors completed history department theses. In addition, five history students who are double majors wrote theses in other departments, and another four history majors who are members of the Commonwealth Honors College completed a portfolio project instead of a thesis. My congratulations to all. Thanks are due to Professor Daniel Gordon for his work in promoting the Honors program, as well as to the history faculty who supervised these theses.

A wide range of undergraduate prizes and scholarships were awarded in spring 2021. The Harold W. Cary Prize was awarded to eleven students in the spring: Amanda Beswick ’21, Elisabeth Burns ’21, Peter Jones ’21, Mary Katharine Lyons ’21, Rose McDonald ’21, Casey Moriarty ’21, Shannen Murphy ’21, Candra Popper ’21, Henrik Spencer ’21, Jake Tamir-Pinsky ’21, and Leo Weinberg ’21. Named after a former faculty member in the Department of History, the award is made annually to students who have earned the highest GPA in history courses. Amanda Beswick ’21 and Peter Jones ’21 also received the Robert H. McNeil Scholarship. This scholarship recognizes the achievement of students who have gained the highest overall GPA in their UMass courses. The prize is named after a former faculty member who chaired the Department of History in the 1970s.

The Louis S. Greenbaum Writing Prize honors undergraduates who have achieved excellence in writing essays or research papers for their history courses. In 2021, Benjamin Gelb ’21 received the award in the long essay category for his paper “The Lakota Sioux and the Southern Unit of Badlands N.P.” Rose McDonald ’21 earned an honorable mention for her paper entitled “The Boston De segregation Crisis.” The recipient of the award in the short essay category was Mary Kate Lyons ’21, for her entry, “Race Relations at Navajo National Monument.” Leon Moore ’21’s short essay, “Confronting History: Freedpeople’s Radical Vision for Reconstruction,” earned an honorable mention.

Jenna Boyer, Elisabeth Burns ’21, Caitlyn Foster, Jake Tamir-Pinsky ’21, Sevil Usmanova ’21, and Hannah Whalen received the History Opportunity Award in recognition of their valuable contributions to the newly formed Undergraduate Advisory Council. The purpose of this council is to provide faculty and staff in the department with a way of learning about students’ experiences of, perspectives on, and concerns about diverse aspects of the undergraduate program, with a view to improving and strengthening it. At the same time, this initiative allows students to obtain “behind the scenes” insight into the running of an academic department and to gain experience in collaborative work within, and also beyond, their peer group. I am grateful to the students who generously dedicated their time and energy to this initiative in a challenging academic year when both were in particularly short supply.

Isabelle Eastman ’21 and Casey Moriarty ’21 were the 2021 recipients of the James and Cynthia Redman Scholarship, which supports history majors, especially first-generation students, veterans, and those who wish to pursue a teaching career. The scholarship honors the life of James O. Redman, who studied history at the University of Minnesota before pursuing a successful career as an attorney.

The Nicholaus Carr Bergsten Scholarship was awarded to Olivia Horn ’21. The scholarship is primarily intended to support history majors who are working toward a career in teaching, and, in particular, those who demonstrate outstanding commitment to fostering diversity and inclusion in the academic sphere and beyond. The scholarship commemorates Nicholaus Carr Bergsten, a UMass history student who aspired to become a high school teacher. Tragically, Nicholaus passed away in 2016.

The Paul E. Giguere Scholarship was established by Paul E. Giguere, a UMass history student who aspired to become a high school teacher. The scholarship honors history students, especially those who seek careers in teaching or writing, as well as those who have served in the military. This year’s recipient of the scholarship was Sydney Griffin ’21. Every year, the Department of History and the Frederic Gilbert Bauer Award fund several scholarships for students who have been accepted into the Oxford Summer Seminar at Oxford University. This year’s scholarship recipients are Rachel Green ’21, Emily McDonough, Sydney Ring ’21, Colleen Scully ’21, and Albert Thomas.

Nicholas Cipriani received the John and Donna Farely Scholarship. This scholarship, which is awarded to deserving history and English majors, was established by John and Donna Farely, who studied history and English respectively.

The Department of History Summer Internship Award assists outstanding majors who are pursuing summer internships. The 2021 winners of this award were Harry Blackman, Caitlyn Foster, and Maia Fudala.

This year’s recipients of the Simon and Sabergh Emonnian Memorial Scholarship were Amanda Beswick ’21, Elisabeth Burns ’21, Ka Wing Cheung ’21, Isabelle Eastman ’21, Joseph Faireveau ’21, Benjamin Gelb ’21, Erin Hunter ’21, Peter Jones ’21, Mary Katharine Lyons ’21, Rose McDonald ’21, Leon Moore ’21, Casey Moriarty ’21, Shannen Murphy ’21, Caroline O’Neill ’21, Candra Popper ’21, Henrik Spencer ’21, Michael Turner ’21, and Elizabeth Webb ’21. This scholarship was established by Krikor Ermonian in honor of his parents. The late Krikor Ermonian was a graduate of the UMass Amherst School of Engineering and was also passionate about History. The scholarship recognizes student excellence, especially in History courses.

Determining the annual undergraduate awards is one of the key tasks of the Undergraduate Studies Committee. In 2021, Professors Jon Olson, Hadi Jorati, Brian Bunk, and Stephen Platt, and Enjoli Pescheta ’17 served on this committee, and I am very grateful to them for their vital contributions.

Enjoli Pescheta ’17 joined the Department of History as undergraduate program coordinator in fall 2018, after completing a BA in history at UMass Amherst. This summer, Enjoli moved to Arizona, where she now works for the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix as administrative support assistant to the Office of Admissions and Recruitment. I have had the good fortune to work with Enjoli for three years, and I am deeply grateful for all that she has done for the undergraduate program during that time. She performed all aspects of her role with great professionalism as well as with genuine care and compassion for the many students with whom she worked on a daily basis. I know that Enjoli will be greatly missed by students, staff, and faculty alike, and I wish her every success and happiness in the next chapter of her life.

I also wish to convey my sincere thanks to Professor Jennifer Heuer, who very generously stepped in as acting undergraduate program director while I was experiencing a family emergency in fall 2020. Reflecting on this role, Professor Heuer wrote:

“This was the strangest and most challenging year of my career, but I very much enjoyed getting to meet many students in my role as acting undergraduate program director, and to get to know others better. I was pleased to be able to help people figure out not just which combinations of courses might be most useful for the history major, but also how to find strategies for making their time as engaging and satisfying as possible.

“We also organized a series of events to help people find community with other history folk. For those who are curious, some of the videos we produced for our Fall Orientation on resources and possible directions for History majors, from internships to options to how to write a Phi Alpha Theta to ‘public history,’ are available at umass.edu/history/history-orientation-resources.

“One Zoom advising night also fell around Halloween, so we had a prize for best costume with a historical connection; the winner was Mount Vesuvius. We also saw some very impressive pumpkin carving!”

Heather Brinn continued in her role as internship and careers advisor for undergraduate history students. I am especially grateful to her for providing students with this resource in a year that brought additional burdens and difficulties for everyone, not least for graduate students. Thanks are also due to Mark Roblee ’19PhD for organizing an online alumni career panel, which gave current majors the opportunity to learn from eight history department alumni who have pursued varied career paths, including literary writing, law, and public history. I am also very grateful to Robert S. Laussas ’76 who, in addition to taking part in the alumni career panel, generously taught his upper-level independent study, Navigating Washington, which examines international trade policy. Robert is a Washington-based international trade and security counsel expert for the global law firm Shearman & Sterling LLP.

I conclude this letter by offering my heartfelt congratulations to our majors who have graduated in 2021. Successful completion of a degree is an impressive achievement at any time, but most especially in the challenging circumstances of the past year. —Heidi V. Scott
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM NEWS

Internship and Career Development Office

The history department’s Internship and Career Development Office continued to thrive and adapt during the 2020–2021 academic year. The office offered remote advising, workshops, networking events, and a career development course, while supporting history majors as they pursue careers in history and beyond.

Students took advantage of the many guest speakers who visited the department via Zoom this year. Emma Winter-Zieg ’19MA, an alum of the history department’s public history program, returned to speak to students about working at Historic Northampton and the adjustments the museum and its internship program have made during the pandemic. Caroline Gould (director, UMass HFA Career Services) returned to give several workshops on resume and cover letter strategies, interviewing in the digital age, and professional networking. Professor Daniel Gordon visited the career practicum to discuss the value of the senior thesis to students’ career ambitions. In partnership with Alumni Relations Coordinator Mark Roblee ’19PHD, students attended alumni networking events and engaged with department alumni. Once again, students had the chance to mingle with history alumni from a variety of fields. History students also took advantage of remote internship fairs, HFA Career Services, and study groups designed to inspire remote collaboration.

With support from the Department of History Summer Internship Award, students were able to pursue both remote and in-person internship opportunities. Students also interned remotely and in person at a number of locations during the academic year, including Greenfield Court Service Center (Allison Rhinelander), Storrowton Village Museum (Caitlyn Foster), and semester in the City (Dominic Moster).

This year, we saw an increase in students pursuing careers in nonprofit work, social justice, and education, many saw the pandemic as an opportunity to use their history degree to help others. We also had more nontraditional students in the history careers practicum due to the more accessible virtual format. Our program teaches students to not only envision the future they want to help create, but also to succeed in the world as it exists now. The joining of these two skills prove incredibly valuable as graduating history majors engage in a continually evolving world. As the university returns to in-person learning this fall, the Internship & Career Development Office will build on the lessons learned from our remote work, while also reintroducing the aspects we missed about being face to face. To learn more about what this will look like, visit the Internship & Career Development Office page on the history department’s website or email the internship coordinator, Heather Brinn, at internships@history.umass.edu.

—Heather Brinn

Course Highlight: Pedagogy and Pestilence

In March of 2020, right after lockdown began, I decided to teach my fall junior year writing course (a small research- and writing-intensive class taken by advanced history majors) on the topic of “premodern plagues.” My rationale was that historical perspectives would help us contextualize our current moment and appreciate how people in the past understood and endured plagues. Additionally, our own experiences could provide special insight into the historical accounts. We focused on epidemics and pandemics in ancient Athens, the Antonine and Justinian plagues of the Roman Empire, and the bubonic plague, which began in the fourteenth century, as well as looking at some modern examples, including the Manchurian plague of 1908–11 and the HIV epidemic.

In our weekly discussions, we encountered several recurring themes. One that the students identified was that of cultural amnesia around pandemics. Before 2020, there was little popular discussion of any pandemic, except the medieval and Renaissance bubonic plague, perhaps because it was long enough ago to be bleed of tragedy; and because it has been associated with intriguing iconography, including the iconic seventeenth-century plague doctor attire and fifteenth-century “dance macabre” prints of cheerful skeletons dancing and playing musical instruments.

My students identified works, such as history textbooks from the 1920s, that entirely omitted the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic despite, or perhaps because of, its huge death toll. In 2020, the 1918 pandemic was widely discussed, but other pandemics—such as the devastating sixteenth-century Justinian plague—are little discussed outside of academic publications. We discussed the importance of not eliding the past (for example, contemporary responses to the Manchurian Plague were eerily relevant to COVID-19), and wondered whether our cultures would deliberately forget this pandemic as soon as possible. Since then, I have heard people say, “I want to just forget 2020,” which suggests that we might.—Anna Taylor

2021 UNDERGRADUATE AWARDS

The Department of History’s generous donors make these awards possible. Undergraduate Program Director Heidi V. Scott shares more about these awards, the student recipients, and the named benefactors on pages 6 and 7.

Frederic Gilbert Baur Award

Frederic Gilbert Baur Award / Oxford University Student Scholarship

Rachel Green

Sydney Ring

Alison Rhinelander

Harold W. Cary Prize

Amanda Beswick

Isabella Eastman

Louis S. Greensbaum History Writing Prize

Nicholas Cipriani

Shannen Murphy

Candra Pepper

Lei Weingrab

History Opportunity Award

Jenna Boyer

Elizabeth Burns

Caitlyn Foster

Katie Tantisirat

2021 UNDERGRADUATE AWARD WINNERS

Michael Works works remotely at his spring semester internship doing government policy research for the office of State Senator Jo Comerford.

Kyle Deane ’21 (second from left) poses with Representative James McGovern (second from right) during a summer internship in Congress.

History Students Honored for Campus Leadership

Three undergraduate history students received highly-competitive campuswide awards for their exemplary leadership and service to the UMass community. Carla Montilla Jaimes ‘21 and Carolyn Parker-Fairbain ‘21 were named 21st Century Leaders. Shawn’Tay Burton ‘21 received the Senior Leadership Award.

21ST CENTURY LEADERS

Carla Montilla Jaimes ‘21 graduated with honors in history and political science. Originally from Venezuela, Montilla Jaimes is a first-generation college student. Focused on amplifying the voices of marginalized students, she served in the Student Government Association, was active with the Center for Multicultural Advancement and Student Success, and founded a student chapter of I Streat, among many other activities. Montilla Jaimes is now a master’s student in ethics, peace, and human rights at the American University School of International Service.

“There’s a Jewish saying, ‘It is not your responsibility to finish the work of perfecting the world, but you are not free to desist from it either.’ As a student of history, I’ve learned that change is always possible if people work for it. I’m very proud of the work I’ve done. I thought the changes that occurred during my last years at UMass as a result of the pandemic, my hard work and accomplishment are still able to be celebrated. I am super grateful for all the support I had at UMass, especially as a transfer student. Special shout out to the history department for being my home away from home, and for truly making my time as a history major worthwhile!”

Carla Montilla Jaimes ‘21

Carolyn Parker-Fairbain ‘21 is an Afro-American studies major with minors in theater and history, and a certificate in multicultural theater. At UMass Amherst, Parker-Fairbain focuses their talents on the interactions between Black studies and the arts. Through theater productions, community-based arts events, and an internship with the University Museum of Contemporary Art for Freedoms program, Parker-Fairbain has dedicated herself to expanding student engagement, building a more inclusive space for visitors, and further encouraging liberatory practices in the arts.

“The university has offered me many opportunities to learn, practice, and grow. I thank my departments, history, theater and Afro-American studies, for demonstrating the importance of interdisciplinary study and fostering opportunities for cross-departmental inquiry. I look forward to meeting the scholars to come and for their declaration that these departments are not separate at all; they breathe into each other and because of each other.”

Carolyn Parker-Fairbain ‘21

Shawn’Tay Burton ‘21 is a recent history graduate, a longtime student staff member in the history department, and a member of the Phi Alpha Theta History Honors Society. In addition to her numerous academic and professional commitments, Burton is also dedicated to community service, focused on working with marginalized communities. During her time at UMass Amherst, she volunteered with the Boys and Girls Club, Leaders of Tomorrow, and Community savings, and participated in a service trip to Cape Verde.

“It is such an honor to be a recipient of the Senior Leadership Award. It feels good to know that, despite the hardships encountered during my last years at UMass as a result of the pandemic, my hard work and accomplishment are still able to be celebrated. I am super grateful for all the support I had at UMass, especially as a transfer student. Special shout out to the history department for being my home away from home, and for truly making my time as a history major worthwhile!”

Shawn’Tay Burton ‘21

The Senior Thesis

On April 24, the history department held a Zoom symposium for seven undergraduate students completing senior honors theses in history. Department Chair Brian Ogilvie began the event by praising the students for doing advanced research and by providing a sketch of the origins and development of the thesis as a rigorous genre of scholarship tracing back to the medieval university. After being introduced by their advisor, each student—Francesca Bartolomeo ‘21, Erin Hunter ‘21, Peter Jones ‘21, Leon Moore ‘21, Candra Pepper ‘21, Jake Tamir-Pinsky ‘21, and Michael Turner ‘21—spoke for five minutes and then answered questions about their theses. Topics ranged from the moral thought of Lord Chesterton to the role of women in sports journalism.

“The chance to work closely with highly motivated undergraduates over the course of an academic year as they embark on full-length research projects is one of the best parts of my job,” reflected Professor Asheesh Siddiqui, who worked with several students this year. “Advising senior theses presents a unique teaching opportunity: not just to convey content, but to help undergraduates develop the skills and discipline to manage ambitious independent research projects and develop their own original interpretations of the past.”

Departmental honors advisor Professor Daniel Gordon noted that the number of students doing departmental theses has declined in recent years, with changes in the Commonwealth Honors College (CHC) allowing students to fulfill their capstone in other ways. The history department has been working to promote the independent senior thesis in history, and to include to students who are not in the honors program. “I think we have to decide what makes for the optimal education in history,” said Gordon, “and then make this pathway available to all who wish to accelerate in their studies.”

The thesis has helped honors and non-honors students to get into graduate school. Alumnus Michael Chrzanowski ‘20, who was not in CHC, wrote a senior thesis on the Federalists in the French Revolution, supervised by Professors Gordon and Jennifer Heuer. Chrzanowski is now a graduate student in European studies at Columbia University.

2021 HONORS PORTFOLIO

In 2021, sixteen graduating history majors completed honors theses and capstones, working with faculty in history, the Commonwealth Honors College, and in other departments across campus.

Francesca Bartolomeo ‘21, “The Corporation in Modern Political Thought”
Grace Barton ‘21, “Redlining: How Housing Segregation Has Affected the American Education System”
Makhil Dickerson-Pells ‘21, “Destroy to Replace: Examining Efforts among Contemporary Native American Communities to Resist Historical Colonial Oppression through Language Revitalization Programs”
Isabella Mary Eastman ‘21, “My Friends and Their Far Horizons”
Carla Veronica Montilla Jaimes ‘21, “Market Fundamentalism in Latin America and the Caribbean: Chile, Jamaica, and Bolivia”
Peter Wahl Jones ‘21, “From Hawk to Dove: The Political and Moral Transformation of Daniel Eltsberg”
Rose Marie McDonald ‘21, “A Study on the Efficacy and Safety of Nisin Using a Drosophila melanogaster Toxicology Assay”
Hailey Ann Morales ‘21, “Tales From Kennedy’s Camelot”
Caroline Anne O’Neill ‘21, “The Impact of Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs): Exclusion, Corruption, Neoliberalism”
Candra Deana Pepper ‘21, “The Representation of Women in Sports Media”
Gabriel Antonio Rodriguez ‘21, “Using Evidence-Based Strategies to Support Remote Learning”
Jake Tamir-Pinsky ‘21, “Evaluating the Effects of the American Revolution on British Imperial Strategy”
Michael Richard Turner ‘21, “Beyond the Smoke and Mirrors: Lord Chesterton and Good Breeding”

The thesis has helped honors and non-honors students to get into graduate school. Alumnus Michael Chrzanowski ’20, who was not in CHC, wrote a senior thesis on the Federalists in the French Revolution, supervised by Professors Gordon and Jennifer Heuer. Chrzanowski is now a graduate student in European studies at Columbia University.
Truth, Dissent, and the Legacy of Daniel Ellsberg

Last academic year, the history department collaborated with the Chancellor’s Office, the Robert S. Cox Special Collections & University Archives Research Center (SCUA), and The GroundTruth Project on a series of projects to explore the life and legacy of the most famous antiwar whistleblower in U.S. history, Daniel Ellsberg. The collective effort, supported by a great many people across campus and beyond, included a year-long seminar, the creation of a website, a major two-day conference, and a series of five podcasts.

ELLSBERG IS MOST REMEMBERED as the Vietnam War “hawk turned dove” who leaked the Pentagon Papers to the press in 1971. The 7,000 pages of top-secret documents revealed a long history of government lies about the nature and conduct of U.S. policy in Vietnam. For making the papers public, Ellsberg faced a possible 115-year prison sentence. In 1973, his case was dismissed when the Watergate investigations revealed that the Nixon White House had committed crimes against Ellsberg designed to keep him silent and prevent further leaks.

The inspiration for the year-long series of Ellsberg-related ventures came in 2019 when SCUA, under the creative leadership of the late Bob Cox, persuaded Ellsberg to make UMass Amherst the repository for his papers—a massive treasure-trove of some 500 boxes of correspondence, notes, speeches, documents, photographs, and other artifacts. As soon as the papers began to arrive, Professor Christian Appy began talking with journalist Charles Sennott ’84, founder of The GroundTruth Project, a nonprofit, grassroots news organization, to discuss the various ways our students and the public might engage the Ellsberg archive and the significant questions raised by his legacy.

The centerpiece of the collaboration was a year-long seminar for ten advanced undergraduates and five history graduate students. The course was taught by Appy, who was joined in the spring by co-teacher Kathy Roberts Forde of the journalism department. The students had the extraordinary opportunity to be among the first researchers to explore Ellsberg’s still largely unprocessed collection of papers. Because direct access to the archives was crucial to the success of the class, the university allowed it to meet on campus despite the pandemic.

The students worked on individual and collective projects throughout the year, each becoming experts on a particular aspect of Ellsberg’s life and work. Almost every week, the class would interview a guest speaker via Zoom. On three occasions, they had the opportunity to interview Ellsberg himself. Other guests included Ellsberg’s wife Patricia Marx Ellsberg, filmmaker Peter Davis, former government official Morton Halperin, Vietnam veteran and activist Wayne Smith, former draft resister and antinuclear activist Randy Kehler (whose papers are also housed in SCUA), and Janaki Natarajan, a scholar and activist who first introduced Ellsberg to the political and moral power of Gandhian nonviolence.

Students also worked on The Ellsberg Archive Project, a website that offers highlights from the Ellsberg collection along with brief historical introductions and an annotated timeline of his life and work: umass.edu/ellsberg.

In addition, every class discussion was audio recorded by Mitch Hanley, a GroundTruth producer, editor, and engineer, as part of the work he and Sennott were doing to complete a five-part series of podcasts called The Whistleblower, also available on the Ellsberg Archive Project website.

The class culminated with a two-day, online conference to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Pentagon Papers’ release. More than two dozen distinguished scholars, journalists, activists, whistleblowers, and former policymakers participated in this historic symposium, including Ellsberg, Edward Snowden, Elizabeth Holtzman, John Dean, Francis FitzGerald, Hedrick Smith, Beatrice Fihn, Nick Turse, and Azmat Khan.

There were panel discussions on the Vietnam War, nuclear weapons, whistleblowing, antinuclear activism, and the endless wars of the 21st century. The opening session featured the students in the year-long class along with Professors Appy and Forde, and Ellsberg archivist Jeremy Smith. The conference was recorded and, as of June 2021, had attracted more than 20,000 viewers. You can watch it all on the Ellsberg Archive Project website.
Lessons from the Judith Barter Collection

This past year, history department alumna Judith Barter ’91PhD donated her professional records—correspondence, research materials, teaching notes, lectures, articles, 12 books, awards, and more—to UMass Amherst’s Robert S. Cox Special Collections and University Archives Research Center (SCUA). Her materials, like SCUA’s more than 1,600 collections, are freely available for public use.

Barter’s papers trace the arc of her career as a curator, historian, author, editor, and educator, from the Mead Museum of Art at Amherst College through her work as the Field-McCormick Curator of American Art at the Art Institute of Chicago. Among the major exhibitions documented include *America After the Fall. Painting in the 1930s, Window on the West: Chicago and the Art of the New Frontier, 1890–1940*, and *Mary Cassatt. Modern Woman*.

Aaron Rubinstein, the head of SCUA, emphasizes the value of her collection to researchers in arts management and public history—two important, nationally regarded programs on campus that are also significant collecting areas for the archive. “Barter’s papers reveal insights into the process of curating and acquiring collections and the training of the next generation of art historians and curators,” he notes.

“Exhibitions are the outcome of complex negotiations among differently empowered individuals, institutional frameworks, external stakeholders, communities, and the sociocultural factors of the historical moment. Collectors like Dr. Barter’s are critical to getting at these processes from the inside,” observes UConn professor and associate director of Greenhouse Studios Clarissa Ceglio. Professor Ceglio, who is author of *Arlen for Democracy: The World War II Work of U.S. Museums* (in the UMass Press series Public History in Historical Perspective), further emphasized that Barter’s collection provides the opportunity to give greater voice to women’s contributions to the field.

Other elements of Barter’s papers offer a glimpse into how scholars translate their work into teaching, and her research notes promise to be especially valuable to art historians and to scholars of Mary Cassatt, Edward Hopper, and her various major areas of work.

Barter’s collection also offers lessons to those who might be contemplating donating their records to an archive. Rubinstein explained that what she saved shows her orientation as a curator. He encourages others to follow her example, saving personal correspondence and other artifacts of their lives that tell the story of who you are.

And he encourages everyone—and not only those with significant personal or professional renown—to do so. “From the perspective of historical research,” he notes, “the stories of people who might not see themselves as historically significant are the stories that are, historically speaking, most important to preserve because they’re the stories that are most likely to be lost.” —Jess Johnson

Report from the Anti-Racism Task Force

In response to graduate students’ demands to address diversity, inclusivity, and equity issues in the department as well as a response to the Black Lives Matter movements, an anti-racism task force was formed in January 2021, consisting of faculty members Sarah Cornell (chair), Garrett Washington, and Richard Chu; graduate student Brian Whetstone, Brittany Frederick, Justin Burch, and staff member Amy Fleig. Working on the recommendations from a series of departmental conversations, including several facilitated by the firm Confluence, this task force met regularly during the past school year and came up with short-term and long-term action steps. Among the short-term accomplishments of the task force were the holding of a workshop on recognizing and responding to microaggressions, facilitated by Kirsten Helmer of the Center for Teaching and Learning, two anti-racist and inclusive teaching workshops for graduate students, and the beginnings of an anti-racism resource webpage on our department website. Recommendations for long-term measures include the establishment of a standing committee on equity and inclusion and yearly climate surveys.

—Richard Chu

On page 2 of last year’s newsletter, we published an article outlining efforts, as of early fall 2020, to confront racism in our department, campus, and beyond. We plan to print annual updates from the Anti-Racism Task Force to keep you, our community, in the loop. We invite your reflections and feedback.

EMAIL THE TASK FORCE: historiasthetics@umass.edu

Famine’s Pages

My current book project is titled “Heritage and Survival: The Power of Agricultural Knowledge in the People’s Republic of China.” One chapter focuses on a campaign launched during the Great Leap Forward (1958–1960) to produce “native insecticides” (就地取材) using traditional medical knowledge about the properties of wild plants—one of many initiatives to overcome scarcity and boost production by mobilizing local resources.

One of the sources I’ve collected for this chapter tugs at me, and I find myself returning to it repeatedly—before the pandemic, I even brought it to class to share with students. In August 1960, in the midst of the worst famine in world history, the Municipal Science and Technology Committee of Kaifeng, Henan published this handbook, *Compilation of Resources on Native Fertilizers and Insecticides*. The book was handwritten and mimeographed on low-grade recycled paper that is soft, fibrous, and speckled with darker bits of pulp and the occasional scrap of bark or twig.

The book’s pages—not just the text, but the stuff on which it was inked—speak to resourcefulness and bring home the true significance of the campaign slogan, “Make do with available materials” (就地取材). And they speak, painfully, to the deprivation that made frugality ever-more necessary. As land that once supplied paper mills was converted to food production, the mills turned to inferior sources for their raw materials. In especially hard-hit places like Henan, rural people resorted to eating bark, twigs, and some of those same wild plants described in the Kaifeng handbook, sometimes poisoning themselves in the process.

Touching the pages of this relic from a time of desperation and determination, my students and I feel the history more deeply than words alone could convey. —Sigrid Schmalzer
The question on all of our minds throughout the past year was: How could we engage students when all of us were, for the most part, physically distanced, dealing with pressures at home and in the world around us, and reimaging the intellectual work, mentoring, and community building that we do through new technologies? Would we—faculty, staff, and students—be able to pull off a year’s worth of graduate education through Zoom?

In a word, yes. During this year of lockdowns, closures, and cancellations, our students and their peers have been able to complete their academic work, engage in internships both on site and remotely, and effectively teach our undergraduates. Teaching, learning, researching, and writing in these circumstances have taught us all of the necessity of staying connected, communicating our struggles, and helping one another and our communities. To this end, students organized themselves into writing circles and reading groups, and they joined mutual mentoring and assistance groups to support one another.

By September 2021, four MA students received their degrees. They include Tianna Darling ‘21MA, Seth Kershner ‘21MA, Helen Kyriakoudes ‘21MA, and Zamir Nestlebaum ‘21MA. This year the following PhD students passed their comprehensive exams: Chemy Alvarado, Sean Hough, Tanys Pearson, Casey Scarpatti, and Brian Whetstone. And Marwa Atef Amer and Brian Whetstone successfully defended their dissertation prospectuses. Jason Higgins ‘21PhD defended his dissertation, “Stars, Bars, and Stripes: Veterans in the Criminal Justice System Since the Vietnam War.”

I offer not just my congratulations for the achievements of these students, but I must also offer my thanks. This generation of graduate students will have a lasting legacy in the history of the department. They helped establish the foundations for improving department climate as well as the policies that will ensure that inclusion and equity are the norm rather than the exception. It will be up to us and future generations of students to build on the hard work and dedication that they demonstrated in the conversations that led to the formation of the department’s anti-racism task force. Two PhD students took on leadership roles in these efforts: Brittany Frederick and Brian Whetstone.

To re-create a sense of togetherness, the Graduate Studies Committee and the officers of the Graduate History Association (Tianna Darling, Devon King, Lauren Robinson, and Brian Whetstone) organized Zoom workshops and get-togethers. Mary Lashway and I welcomed incoming students in the summer, and we hosted the new student orientation remotely. Professor Ashsheh Siddique led discussions on fellowship applications, calls for papers, and networking. Professor Sarah Cornell on professionalism as a teaching assistant and publishing articles; and Professor Sam Redman on writing for academic presses. Discussion on the work that historians do, as well as the roles they can play in contemporary debates, continued through the graduate program’s two signature annual events. Both were planned and brought to fruition through collaboration with Jess Johnson and Professors Heidi V. Scott and Kevin Young, the architects of this year’s Fireberg Distinguished Lecture Series. To address the theme of the series, “Planet on a Precipice: The Histories and Futures of the Environmental Emergency,” we invited Mike Davis (University of California, Riverside) to be the 2021 History Distinguished Annual Lecturer, and Gregg Mitman (University of Wisconsin, Madison) to be the latest five College PhD Program in History Winter in Residence. Davis’s talk, “California Burning: The Apocalyptic Trinity of Climate Change, Alien Plant Invasion and Exurbanization,” was a bracing investigation into the sources of global megafires—the gentrification of wildlands into vast exurban settlements, persistent hot droughts, and the invasion of “pyromaniacal” weeds. A historian of medicine, the environment, and capitalism, Mitman, in addition to delivering his keynote talk, “Viral Exchanges: Hotspots, Spillovers, and the Roostering of Life,” co-hosted a writing seminar with Professor Maria Miller on writing for trade presses, held a workshop on nonfiction digital storytelling through digital media, and participated in a panel discussion of his documentary, The Land Beneath Our Feet, a meditation on the generational impact of the transformation of much of Liberia into a plantation state for the production of rubber. The panel included Africanists from the region: Cajetan Iheka (Yale University), Elias Prosperetti (Mount Holyoke College), and Russell Stevenson (UMass Amherst). Almost 3,000 people tuned into the live events or watched them subsequently on the department’s YouTube and SoundCloud channels.

2021 GRADUATE THESIS MA


PhD

Jason Higgins ‘21PhD, “Stars, Bars, and Stripes: A History of Veterans in the Criminal Justice System Since the Vietnam War”

2021 GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD RECIPIENTS

DEPARTMENTAL AWARDS

We are grateful for our donors who make these generous awards—and the important research they support—possible. For more information on these awards, visit umass.edu/history/graduate-awards.

Caldwell Writing Prize
Seth Kershner ‘21MA

Frederic Gilbert Bauer Research Fellowship
Jason Higgins ‘21PhD

History Department Travel Grant
Marwa Amer

Joyce A. Berkman Endowed Fund in Women’s History and Women’s Studies
Camisha Scruggs

Marvin Olgivie Memorial Award for Foreign Language Study
Carina Dreyer

Sean Hough
Shilpa Sharma

Richard Gassan Memorial Scholarship
Marwa Amer

Robert & Jeanne Potash Latin American Travel Grant
Jorge Simoes Minalla

Simon and Satering Ermonian Graduate Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching
Cai Barias
Alison Russell
Brian Whetstone
Emily Whitted

2021 2021 GRADUATE THESES

MA


PhD

Jason Higgins ‘21PhD, “Stars, Bars, and Stripes: A History of Veterans in the Criminal Justice System Since the Vietnam War”

UNIVERSITY AWARDS

Eva Freist Graduate Student Curatorial Exhibition Fellowship
University Museum of Contemporary Art

Tirzah Frank

Graduate School Dissertation Research Grant
Brittany Frederic

Graduate School Fieldwork Grant
Tanys Pearson

Graduate School Pre-Dissertation Grant
Allison Russell

Graduate School Return to Research Grant
Ragini Jha

Sean Hough

Bing Xia

EXTERNAL AWARDS

Emary University James Weldon Johnson Institute Dissertation Completion Fellowship
Brittany Frederic

Fullbright Fellowship
Ross Caputi

Historic Deerfield Summer Fellow
Allison Smith

United Association for Labor Education’s New Generation Award Finalist
Shay Olmstead

Virginia Tech Postdoctoral Fellowship
Jason Higgins ‘21PhD

After a semester of remote classes, Professor Alice Nash met students from History 640, Indigenous Peoples in Early America, over dinner. To re-create a sense of togetherness, the Graduate Studies Committee and the officers of the Graduate History Association (Tianna Darling, Devon King, Lauren Robinson, and Brian Whetstone) organized Zoom workshops and get-togethers. Mary Lashway and I welcomed incoming students in the summer, and we hosted the new student orientation remotely. Professor Ashsheh Siddique led discussions on fellowship applications, calls for papers, and networking. Professor Sarah Cornell on professionalism as a teaching assistant and publishing articles; and Professor Sam Redman on writing for academic presses. Discussion on the work that historians do, as well as the roles they can play in contemporary debates, continued through the graduate program’s two signature annual events. Both were planned and brought to fruition through collaboration with Jess Johnson and Professors Heidi V. Scott and Kevin Young, the architects of this year’s Fireberg Distinguished Lecture Series. To address the theme of the series, “Planet on a Precipice: The Histories and Futures of the Environmental Emergency,” we invited Mike Davis (University of California, Riverside) to be the 2021 History Distinguished Annual Lecturer, and Gregg Mitman (University of Wisconsin, Madison) to be the latest five College PhD Program in History Winter in Residence. Davis’s talk, “California Burning: The Apocalyptic Trinity of Climate Change, Alien Plant Invasion and Exurbanization,” was a bracing investigation into the sources of global megafires—the gentrification of wildlands into vast exurban settlements, persistent hot droughts, and the invasion of “pyromaniacal” weeds. A historian of medicine, the environment, and capitalism, Mitman, in addition to delivering his keynote talk, “Viral Exchanges: Hotspots, Spillovers, and the Roostering of Life,” co-hosted a writing seminar with Professor Maria Miller on writing for trade presses, held a workshop on nonfiction digital storytelling through digital media, and participated in a panel discussion of his documentary, The Land Beneath Our Feet, a meditation on the generational impact of the transformation of much of Liberia into a plantation state for the production of rubber. The panel included Africanists from the region: Cajetan Iheka (Yale University), Elias Prosperetti (Mount Holyoke College), and Russell Stevenson (UMass Amherst). Almost 3,000 people tuned into the live events or watched them subsequently on the department’s YouTube and SoundCloud channels.
The members of the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) also worked hard throughout the year not only to address the routine business of the graduate program, but also to meet the unique challenges that the graduate program faced, and to think about new directions and dream up creative initiatives to meet the needs of our graduate students. This year’s members of the committee were Marwa Atef Amer, Sarah Cornell, Mary Lashway, Richard Lim (Smith College), Sam Redman, and Joel Wolfe. As usual, much of the GSC’s work in the spring is concentrated on admissions and recruitment for the coming academic year. We admitted 14 students who will start in the fall. Four PhD students, four public history MA students, and four MA students. Of these students, half of them are from underrepresented minority groups in the U.S. They plan to work on topics that range from police surveillance of college campuses in the 1970s and the history of cartography in Iberian empire-making in the Western Hemisphere to genocide studies and the history of science in Asia. In the last few years, our students’ interests have shown emerging department strengths in the histories of East Asia, South Asia, and Latin America as well as in the history of science, education, and medicine.

As I am stepping down from my role as graduate program director, let me say how gratifying it has been to collaborate with a host of faculty, staff, and graduate students on opening up online teaching opportunities for students during the regular academic year and in summer, rethinking the admissions process, beginning to address calls for racial justice within the department, and on increasing transparency whenever possible in resource allocation. I think those of you who have inspired and participated in all these endeavors and have thus made them possible. In particular, I would like to recognize the role played by our department’s GEO stewards: Ragaini Jha, Cai Barias as well as the student members of the GSC (Marwa Atef Amer, Brittany Frederick, Devon King) in advocating for the best possible working conditions for our graduate students. And throughout the pandemic, by way of endless hours of phone calls and Zoom meetings, Mary Lashway has patiently and expertly made the graduate program function in what were extremely challenging times. Professor Joel Wolfe has stepped up to be the next graduate program director. —Jason Moralee

Graduate History Association Annual Update

The Graduate History Association (GHA) spent much of this year building community, providing professional development opportunities, working to implement recommendations introduced by the Anti-Racism Task Force, and planning and executing a virtual conference. While limited by the pandemic, the GHA hosted virtual happy hours, trivia nights, and continued the annual mentorship program to foster and sustain community among graduate students during a virtual academic year. Additionally, the GHA hosted workshops and small seminars geared towards relevant professional development and program requirements, including workshops on how best to prepare for the summer, compiling field and reading lists, selecting committee members, and navigating the portal and MA thesis processes. The GHA also worked to bring fruition several of the Anti-Racism Task Force’s initiatives, by organizing three anti-racist pedagogical TA trainings with the assistance of Professors Richard Cha and Denise Pope.

Finally, the GHA, with the help of countless hours volunteered by fellow graduate students, planned and executed a virtual conference that brought together graduate students from across the United States and faculty and students from UMass for a two-day virtual conference titled “Stories of (In)Equality: Justice and Power Across Space and Time.” Professor Christian Appy delivered a keynote address on the life and legacy of Daniel Ellsberg; Genevieve Carpio, faculty in Chicana/o Studies at UCLA, delivered a keynote address on the life and legacy of Daniel Ellsberg.

The GHA wishes to thank all who helped with the annual conference and volunteered their time for other community building and professional development initiatives throughout the year. We look forward to everyone gathering in person once more! —Tianna Darling 21MA, Devon King, Lauren Robinson, and Brian Whetstone

Course Highlight: Social Change in the 1960s

During the spring 2021 semester my course, Social Change in the 1960s, was one of our department’s few in-person classes. Throughout the semester we had to navigate many different challenges: keeping each other safe, communicating with one another through masks and with social distancing, and enduring periods of lockdown and quarantine. Despite these challenges, one thing was clear from the first day of class: both the students and I were thrilled to be back in a classroom again and to return to some semblance of a normal college experience.

The centerpiece of the class was a semester-long research project in which students worked collaboratively to research a particular movement of the 1960s. Students worked in groups of four or five conducting research using digital archives to study their chosen social movements.

The project provided students with an opportunity to get to know one another throughout the course of the semester as they engaged in deep, collaborative work with the primary sources they discovered together. At the end of the semester each group presented their findings to the class. Social movements researched included: the Black freedom struggle, women’s liberation, anti-war and LGBTQ activism, and the 1960s counterculture.

This project not only gave students a foundation in doing the work of historians but also allowed them to work closely with their peers on a subject of shared interest and to begin to build relationships with one another. While I always emphasize community building in the classroom, it was especially important to do so this semester, after students had endured so many months of isolation. Hopefully, the skills and the relationships that the students built together this semester will long outlive this pandemic. —Andrew Grim

Andrew Grim is a PhD candidate and one of three history department graduate students who taught in-person this year through the Residential Academic Program, an initiative in which first-year and transfer students living in the same residence hall take classes together.
Gregg Mitman, Empire of Rubber: Firestone's Scramble for Land and Power in Liberia (The New Press). Professor Asheesh Siddique, who moderated several of Mitman’s events at UMass Amherst, sat down with him to learn more.

Your book, Empire of Rubber, examines the extraordinary story of the Firestone Company’s corporate empire in Liberia and the environmental destruction that it left in its wake. How did you come to this topic?

GM: I came to the topic unexpectedly. I had been asked to serve as a scholar consultant on a film that was to be made on the colonial roots of international conservation. The production company had archival film from three scientific expeditions, one of which was the 1926 Harvard expedition to Liberia. I was curious about the purpose and intent of the Harvard expedition to Liberia, which had been led by Richard Pearson Strong, a leading tropical medicine expert in the United States whose career had followed the paths of American empire in the Philippines and Latin America. I then discovered that Strong and his team were guests of the Firestone Tire & Rubber Company, which, at that time, had recently been granted access to up to one million acres of land in Liberia to grow rubber free from British control. I traveled to Liberia over the course of seven years, retracing parts of the expedition’s route, interviewing elders and retired Firestone workers along the way, and visiting the plantations. Through my travels to Liberia and to archives in the United States and Europe I was able to piece together this story of capitalism, racial exploitation, environmental devastation, and resistance as Firestone transformed Liberia into America’s rubber empire. The theme of this year’s Feinberg Series was “Planet on a Precipice: Histories and Futures of the Environmental Emergency.” What lessons do you hope readers of Empire of Rubber will take away from the history of Firestone in Liberia in order to think about the future of the climate crisis?

GM: Perhaps the biggest point I hope readers will come away with from the book in relation to the climate crisis is an understanding of how capitalism, as both an economic and ecological system, is dependent upon inequalities that produce different valuations of life. The racial geography of the Anthropocene—an epoch in which humans have become a geomorphic force in planetary-scale change—is marked by “the uneven and unfair distribution of death,” in the words of geographer Laura Pulido. In the case of Firestone, we see clearly how the different valuation of life, calculated according to enduring racist logics, was built into the industrial ecologies of the rubber plantations, such that people of color were subject to the greatest toxic exposures and environmental burdens. For decades, the threats posed to life on a warming planet have already been felt by many, mostly non-white, people. We cannot address the climate crisis without attending to the ways in which structural racism, inequitable environmental burdens, and inadequate access to medical care produce glaring racial health disparities, both within the United States and across the globe, as we are seeing with the current COVID pandemic.

Due to COVID-19, the writer-in-residence events, like so many other meetings, were all conducted remotely via Zoom. This format seems to have both advantages and disadvantages—less opportunity for in-person interaction, but benefits for the environment in terms of reducing air/car travel. What are your thoughts on the future of remote meetings as academia grapples with its own impact on the climate crisis?

GM: I think it is too soon to tell whether the ecological footprint of academia will change in light of the COVID pandemic. I am heartened by the ways in which virtual meetings have enabled people from across the globe, particularly from lower- and middle-income countries, to participate in webinars and events like the Writer-in-Residence Program. I am also seeing colleagues with many frequent flyer miles making conscious decisions not to fly internationally for meetings in response to the climate crisis, decisions made easier by the possibilities for virtual interaction realized during COVID-19. While computers servers certainly generate carbon emissions, a recent study estimated that a one-day virtual conference for 200 people resulted in emissions 66-times less than if the conference took place in person. Nevertheless, we are already seeing professional societies like the American Society for Environmental History, the History of Science Society, and others planning in-person meetings for the coming year, indicating a strong inertia for in-person social interaction, although many meetings will include hybrid sessions that will make accessibility easier and reduce carbon footprints.

Asheesh Siddique

A Gentleman’s Mended Stocking
Stephen Girard—the wealthiest man in the Early Republic—had a secret hidden inside his shoes. From his knees to his ankles, his legs were clad in fine silk stockings imported from France, with delicate silk embroidery, known as clocking, on display when wearing breeches. But below the ankle, his stocking feet were thick with mended areas, known as darns, made to repair holes in the fabric. Twenty pairs of Stephen Girard’s stockings similar to the one pictured here are housed in Girard College’s collection and are rare survivals of extensively repaired early American textiles. If the wealthiest man in the Early Republic had his stockings mended, then one can only imagine the scale of textile repair work in early America as both a domestic task and a professional occupation. As I begin initial dissertation research on early American textile mending and repair work, objects like Girard’s stockings serve as crucial forms of material evidence. Closer analysis of mending techniques, materials, and placement on garments can access diverse histories of labor, sentimentality, and economic necessity. The hands that render mends sustain the life cycle of textiles, forcing us to consider not only what changes in early American material life but also what stays the same. —Emily Whitted


Stockings, Girard College Archives, Girard Historical Collections, Philadelphia, PA.
As it is true throughout this newsletter, nothing about the 2020–2021 academic year was the same as usual. And yet—thanks to the energy, good will, generosity, and resilience of our students, staff, and faculty, the year was filled with highlights alongside its many challenges.

In 2020, fall began in summer, when—an announcement received word that our courses would mainly be offered online—the faculty leapt into action to revamp our pedagogy for new formats. While this shift to remote teaching and learning takes substantial thought and energy no matter the subject, it was especially challenging for public historians at UMass Amherst and nationwide, as field-based, hands-on learning is the foundation of this pedagogy.

Public History faculty spent much of the summer in conversation with colleagues across the U.S.—via a formal working group hosted by the National Council on Public History, and through informal conversations arranged by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience—talking about tools and practices to support online learning. At the same time, we worked to meet another challenge, as the cancellation of a range of standing internship programs presented difficulties for students looking to expand their skills and networks. Here we turned in particular to events and conversations hosted by the New England Museum Association to learn and discuss “best practices” for remote internships.

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Alexa Harrington conducts a cooking program at Fort Ticonderoga, discussing 18th and 19th century cooking and foodways.

As is true throughout this newsletter, nothing about the 2020–2021 academic year was the same as usual. And yet—thanks to the energy, good will, generosity, and resilience of our students, staff, and faculty, the year was filled with highlights alongside its many challenges.

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Upcoming Exhibit

‘Theater of the Streets’: Social Landscapes Through the Lens of Jill Freedman

Forthcoming at the UMass Amherst Augusta Savage Gallery, January 24–March 11, 2022

Working with the family of street photographer Jill Freedman (1939–2019), this graduate student-curated exhibit introduces Freedman and her work through a thematic exploration of the “scapes,” that capture social and cultural transitions in her lifetime.

Documenting the Early History of Black Lives in the Connecticut River Valley

In 2021, the Public History Program partnered with the Pioneer Valley History Network, UMass Amherst Libraries, and several local history organizations to pilot ways that history organizations in the Valley might better locate, gather, and understand archival materials related to the history of Black lives in the Connecticut River Valley.

AFTER 10 WEEKS OF RESEARCH, volunteers with the grant-funded project “Documenting the Early History of Black Lives in the Connecticut River Valley” had contributed more than 2000 entries from more than 300 primary sources to a project database and crafted a robust research guide and handbook to assist future researchers. These resources are available on the project website, blogs.umass.edu/PHVN/BlackHistory, along with a set of narratives about some of individuals whose stories and experiences were unearthed through this research.

An example of the sources examined is this 1794 entry in a ledger kept by the Hadley households of Elihu, Solomon and Tryphena Cook between 1789 and 1816—which a project volunteer pieced together references from a wide range of sources across multiple towns and cities; as researchers continue to build these resources, local history organizations will be better prepared to understand and interpret these stories in their communities.

This project was made possible thanks to generous support from MassHumanities, the UMass Amherst Public Service Endowment Grant program and the UMass Amherst Department of History; and thanks to the commitment of partnering organizations both formal and informal: the Amherst Historical Society, the Belchertown Historical Society, the Fine Arts Center, the Greenwood Historical Society, Historic Northampton, the Longmeadow Historical Society, the David Ruggles Center, the Lyman and Merrie Wood Museum of Springfield History, the Porter Phelps-Huntington Museum, the Hadley Historical Society, and the Pan-African History Museum U.S.A. —María Miller
As explored in the environmental injustice timeline created for the 2021 Springfield Environmental Expo In August 1995, Hurricanes Connie and Diane dropped over 20 inches of rain on Springfield in 30 hours, flooding local streets. A warming planet increases the likelihood of such deluges. In July–August 2021, Springfield received approximately 19” of rain, 11” above the historical average for those months. Image courtesy of the Lyman and Merrie Wood Museum of Springfield History.

PUBLIC HISTORY PROGRAM NEWS

Climates of (In)Equality: A Humanities Action Lab Partnership

As climate change continues to be a defining issue of our time, public historians must think critically about using their tools to educate the public. Professor David Glassberg reports on his work over the past several years with the Humanities Action Lab.

During the 2020–2021 academic year, we partnered with Zunímaké Rivera of Neighbors2Neighbor, Springfield, in presenting the Springfield Environmental Justice Expo, a series of 12 online workshops led by local community organizers from Community Action Works, Arise for Social Justice, Jobs with Justice, Springfield Climate Justice Coalition, the Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts, the Resistance Center, the John Snow Institute, and Springfield No One Leaves, in addition to support of this effort, graduate students Emma Lewis, Catherine White, and Tirzah Frank created a terrific Springfield Environmental (In)Justice digital timeline and map, available here: bit.ly/SpringfieldTimeline.

This was the culmination of four years of involvement with the Humanities Action Lab’s traveling exhibit, “Climates of Inequality: Stories of Environmental Justice,” dating to June 2017, when I first reviewed a draft proposal for a project on climate change and environmental justice from the project’s leadership team. Before Lewis, White, and Frank’s contribution in spring 2021, six public history students contributed to the development of the Springfield panel of the traveling exhibit during the 2018–2019 academic year: Peter Kleeman ’20MA, Kate O’Connor ’19MLA (a landscape architecture student not in public history), Nick DeLuca, Tanell Rufin ’20MA, Brian Whetstone, and Amelia Zurcher ’19MA. Their work on environmental justice issues in Springfield’s North End is highlighted on the Humanities Action Lab website: bit.ly/ClimatesInequality.

Two other Public History Program alumni, Richard Anderson ’11MA and Gregg Mitchell ’17MA, also assisted with the spring 2021 expo, Richard as Exhibits Manager for the Humanities Action Lab and Gregg as Reference Librarian with the Brightwood (North End) Branch of the Springfield Public Library.

“Climates of (In)equality” was scheduled to open in May of 2021 as a physical exhibit at UMass Springfield, but because of COVID-19 restrictions, we went virtual instead, and the 12 workshops of the Springfield Environmental Expo were the result. This community engagement project contributed in some small way to the larger work of improving environmental conditions for all Springfield residents, and introduced future public history professionals to the practice of using their skills in pursuit of social justice. —David Glassberg

UMass Brut: Celebrating Modernist Architecture on Campus

Brutalist architecture inspires a variety of reactions, from awestruck to appalled. Whatever your feelings, the UMass Amherst and Dartmouth campuses are known for this landmark style of architecture, and in the spring of 2021 the UMass Amherst Public History Program joined with the UMassBrut initiative (umassbrut.org) to celebrate and “raise awareness of the relevance and international significance of our Brutalist heritage.”

While campus experts in the history of the design and conservation of modernist architecture worked to plan a major symposium on October 22–23 involving both the Dartmouth and Amherst campuses, the Public History Program contributed to a series of efforts to engage various publics—from the town of Amherst to the campus employees who work in these buildings every day—in contemplation of the past, present, and future of these facilities.

In partnership with the Amherst Historical Society, the Jones Library, and UMassBrut, we launched an event series titled “Brut Bites”—four weekly lunchtime lectures on UMass Amherst’s modernist architecture. Each Monday, speakers discussed different aspects of the campus’s built environment, reflecting on changes in the landscape over the decades, the histories of Southwest Residential Area and the Randolph W. Bromery Fine Arts Center, and an overview of campus planning master plans over the years.

At the heart of the series’ mission was the idea that campus history is also local history—and the response was encouraging. Over 200 people from the Amherst area and beyond attended the Zoom lectures, and the Q&A sessions afterwards were lively and engaging as attendees shared memories of, and opinions about, the brutalist architecture on campus. Unsurprisingly, many audience members shared critiques of these structures, but others offered words of appreciation; most importantly, learning the rationales behind the choices made (by architects, by campus planners, and other leaders) was fascinating for everyone present.

In addition to the speaker series, two UMass public historians conducted in-depth research to deepen collective knowledge. Brian Whetstone examined the history and UMass Amherst work of the Cooliet Brothers, architects of both Tobin Hall and our own Herter Hall, while Devon King prepared documentation of brutalist buildings on the Hampshire College campus for the state register of historic places. We also launched an oral history project, interviewing staff and faculty about their remembrances of the modernist and brutalist buildings on campus. Narratives included one of Herter Hall’s building maintainers, retired faculty, undergraduate alumni, and current department staff, with each person sharing their own reflections on their connections to the unique architecture of our campus.

The Story of Two Shells

These two nautilus shells are quite different, but they are part of the same story. They both originated in the Dutch colonies in Southeast Asia, now the independent nation of Indonesia. The cup was produced by an anonymous artisan in the Netherlands some time in the middle of the seventeenth century. The glimmering, nacreous shell was mounted in a gilded silver stand featuring mythical sea gods, snails, crabs, dolphins, and other marine motifs. It combined a wonder of nature with a wonder of art. It also reminded its owner of the wealth and power of the Dutch seaborne commercial and colonial empire. The unadorned shell is another reminder of that empire. It was recovered in 1977 from the wreck of the Witte Leeuw (White Lion), an Indianman (large cargo ship) that belonged to the Dutch East India Company. En route from what is now Indonesia to the Netherlands, the ship’s convoy was attacked and sunk by Portuguese forces near St. Helena, in the South Atlantic, in 1613. For over three and a half centuries it lay on the ocean floor. Had it completed its voyage, it too would have had its story—David Glassberg
This year’s Feinberg Series engaged thousands of local residents and viewers from across the world in a yearlong exploration of the environmental emergency in historical context. More than three dozen university and community groups co-sponsored the series, events were incorporated into two dozen UMass and Five College classes, and with fellow co-chairs Heidi V. Scott and Kevin Young, we focused on building engagement that was both broad and deep.

The series was promoted widely, reaching hundreds of thousands of potential viewers. We offered community-based discussion groups following events, a workshop series for local K-12 teachers (in conjunction with our annual History Institute for K-12 Educators), a zine by and for young people, a community-wide read, and a film screening in conjunction with a department community-based spaces, as well as several additional projects, including an integration of community members throughout the conference; by the award-winning faculty and graduate students.

Throughout this year, my office also coordinated our online classes, which are open to community members, as well as students; department community-based spaces, as well as several additional projects, including an integration of community members throughout the conference; by the award-winning faculty and graduate students.

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blogs.umass.edu/feinberg

On the heels of the Feinberg Series, my office quickly pivoted to coordinating production of “Truth, Dissent and the Legacy of Daniel Ellsberg,” a conference commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Pentagon Papers’ release. Organized by Professors Christian Appy and Kathy Roberts Ford, with a powerhouse cross-campus team, the conference brought together more than two dozen distinguished historians, journalists, activists, whistleblowers, and former policymakers, including John Dean, Elizabeth Holtzman, Edward Snowden, and Daniel Ellsberg himself.

As community engagement director, I was particularly energized by the integration of community members throughout the conference; by the student panel (a breakout success with more than 5,000 viewers); and by the attendance of you, our alumni and the approximately 3,400 people from across the U.S. and world who tuned in live. In the months that followed, clips have aired on a national news network, the recordings have been viewed more than 25,000 times, and a new leak by Ellsberg during the plenary event became international news. This conference was one piece of a larger initiative, including a website featuring selections from Ellsberg’s personal papers (umass.edu/ellsberg), a yearlong class, and a podcast by The GroundTruth Project, all of which are detailed by Appy on page 12.

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At commencement in May 2021, Professor Joyce Boyce, Associate Dean of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts, was the 2021 faculty recipient of the Graduate School’s Commitment to Diversity Award, which annually recognizes one student and one faculty member for their outstanding contributions to diversity and inclusion within the UMass Amherst graduate student body.

“This award is a well-deserved recognition of everything Associate Dean Joyce Boyce has done over the years to support and mentor graduate students on our campus,” affirms Barbara Krauthamer, Dean of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts. “Her dedication to graduate students of color and their academic and personal success is unmatched.”

Anne F. Broadbridge, Professor in the Department of History and Director of the Middle Eastern Studies Program, was also recognized by the university with the 2020 Manning Prize for Excellence in Teaching. Selected as one of five faculty across the University of Massachusetts system, Professor Broadbridge was recognized for her exemplary dedication to students and the university. The faculty members—one from each UMass campus—received $10,000 awards in recognition of their commitment to academic excellence.

Professor Ashesha Siddique was the recipient of an Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship for Assistant Professors in the School of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University. While at the IAS, he will be completing a book on the relationship between knowledge and governance in the early modern British Atlantic and Asian worlds.


In the spring semester, PhD candidate Brittany Frederick was awarded a dissertation completion fellowship from Emory University’s James Weldon Johnson Institute for the Study of Race and Difference. Frederick’s research examines intersections of Black women’s activism in higher education during the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, while also interrogating how higher education has been utilized to advance ideals of Black resistance and self-determination.
Andrew Donson poses with a letter by the Prussian minister who banned religion in schools in the German November Revolution. The new minister was an atheist.
diversity and developed toolkits for living in a pluralist society. History taught three great classes from the “comfort” of home. In History 112, I have taught an integrative experience course; a seminar on science, technology, and war, and enrolled nearly 275 students in her History of Medicine courses. Along with final revisions to her book manuscript, Hamilton continues to work on developing an edited collection on the historiography of mathematics, and to develop curricular offerings in the humanities during the pandemic, and an opening commentary for the upcoming special issue on pandemics for the journal Isis. Hamilton also led the development of the Massachusetts Society of Professors’ Mutual Aid Network and Solidarity Fund, which collected donations and provided support to pandemic-influenced individuals in the UMass Community, raising and distributing over $52,000 to over 300 households. Additional community outreach included a collaborative project with the Western Massachusetts Mathematics Partnership, the Northampton Chamber of Commerce, and community education partners to develop a “Sidewalk Math” event in downtown Northampton.

Timothy Hart reports: Despite the inevitable postponements and cancellations, the 2020–21 year was a productive one for me. My article “Ironing Ethnicities in Phyn the Elder’s Transludius Ezeugius (HN 4.80–81)” was published in Classical Quarterly, and I delivered a virtual (paper) presentation at the annual meeting of the Society for Classical Studies. Throughout the year, I also made steady progress on the second edition of my book, Beyond the River: Under the Ego of Rome. In March my manuscript reviews came in, and I’m pleased to report that there should be smooth sailing towards publication during the rest of 2021! In terms of teaching, I joined the UMass history department for the spring 2021 term, where I taught three great classes from the “comfort” of home. In History 112 (World Religions), I co-taught an interdisciplinary course on the religions, diversity and developed toolkits for living in a pluralist society. History 204 (Ancient Rome), adapted smoothly to the digital medium, where I’d argue that our vibrant online forums lived up to their name in the Eternal City. In addition to teaching Caesar and problematizing Constantine’s conversion, students learned about ancient pandemics and considered how what it meant to be “Roman” changed over time. Finally, I debuted a new Junior Year Writing class entitled Anatomy of the “Barbarian,” where a small cohort of students and I explored ancient ethnographic theories, and charted the enduring impact of those ideas on developing ideologies of race and nationalism to the present day. As capstone writing projects, the students explored a range of topics leading to excellent formal essays, periodical-style articles, and even a scripted and produced podcast.

Marla Miller reports: This was an unusual year by any measure, and certainly a memorable one. As always, my year unfolded in line with the context of the public health history program, narrated elsewhere, so here I'll just add that I was pleased to help craft the 2021 Dublin Seminar of New England Folklife, “Living with Disabilities in New England, 1630–1930,” and to have served as a co-organizer and co-convenor of the 2021 Graduate History Seminar on women. This was also a year of co-teaching: the necessity of remote instruction proved the mother of invention as I co-taught with a colleague at the University of New Hampshire to blend our respective professional development seminars, productive for both students and alumni; meanwhile, the “wintersem” course, Introduction to Exhibit Design, taught with Professor Traci Parker in the W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies, was also a delight, and will result in an exhibition in the Augusta Savage Gallery next year on the work of street photographer Jill Freedman. An invitation to present at the Historic Deerfield symposium “Invisible Makers: Textiles, Dress, and Marginalized People in 18th- and 19th-Century Deerfield” in 2019 provided the impetus for this new research on black dressmakers in the nineteenth-century Valley, work that resonates with an emerging new initiative, in collaboration with the Pioneer Valley History Network (and the Graduate History Program Student Grant), to document histories of Black lives in Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire Counties.

Alice Nash gave a talk on “The Holy Dead of 1660” for Historia in 2019. She received a mini-grant from the Guggenheim at the Crossroads project funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for the Five College Native American & Indigenous Studies program to develop a religious history course on Native American religions. She also received a mini-grant from the Colonial Society of Massachusetts’ Graduate Student Grant, to document histories of Black lives in Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire Counties.

Brian Ogilvie’s chapter “Maxima in minimis: animals” in Natural Theology and Physico-theology was published in an edited volume on Physico-theology: Religion and Science in Europe, 1650–1750. He also participated in a symposium on the history of British natural history at the study of insects in early modern Europe organized by the Margaret Schettini. Nash and I have been working on a new project on the history of the climate crisis. We have seen some very promising results. Nash and I will be working on this project for the Climate Crisis Series, which is a joint project of the University of California Press and the American Historical Association. The project will be launched in the fall of 2021, with the first volume, “Environmental History and the Climate Crisis,” to be published in the fall of 2022. The project will include a series of essays, each focusing on a different aspect of the history of the climate crisis, and a series of interviews with leading scholars in the field. In addition to publishing the Climate Crisis Series, Nash and I are also working on a new book, “The American Environmental Movement,” which will be published by Oxford University Press. The book will be a comprehensive history of the American environmental movement, from its origins in the 1960s to the present day. The book will be available in fall 2022.

Kathryn Schwartz reports: This was an unusual year by any measure. I spent my fall intensive with an online class on the history of the climate crisis. I hosted a Junior Year Writing Seminar on the climate crisis. I also served on the Climate Crisis Series editorial board. I was able to publish my research on the history of the climate crisis in a number of venues, including the American Historical Review, the Journal of Environmental History, and the Journal of Climate History. I was also able to present my research on the history of the climate crisis at several conferences, including the annual meeting of the American Historical Association. I was able to present my research on the history of the climate crisis to a number of different audiences, including a group of high school students, a group of college students, and a group of graduate students.

Garrett Washington reports: This has been an unprecedented year, full of unprecedented challenges but also unique opportunities and horizons. In my modern and premodern Japanese history undergraduate courses, I worked with students to understand the complexity of the early modern period. In the former, each student chose a briefly covered topic to research in some murderous medieval rabbits. There are lions, bears, and elephants. Maybe I will even be able to work with students, faculty, staff, and community members to organize events for the Western Massachusetts chapter of the Society for the Study of Science and Technology in Society, for the second time in a row. It can’t wait to get back into the real classroom!

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and took part in a virtual tea ceremony. I also taught the undergraduate methods course, the Craft of History, for the first time and found it uniquely rewarding. Last ly, I taught my graduate seminar on the transnational cultural history of the U.S. in the Asia-Pacific. The course yielded some outstanding work on topics ranging from the American-Pacific Islander encounters in the “contact zones” of the nineteenth cen tury whaleships to the cultural space of the Nanking Safety Zone (in December 1937) to Filipino-American relations during Japan’s occupation of the Philippines. This year my book project Church Space and the Capital in Imperial Japan progressed through the early phases of production with University of Hawai’i Press. I also published a scholarly introduction and translation of a sermon on social reform by the charismatic Buddhist Priest Chikazuuki Ikan (1870–1941) in a sourcebook: nineteenth century Japanese Buddhism. I was also excited to oversee the student editorial board of the 2021 UMass History Journal and, as chapter faculty advisor of Phi Alpha Theta, to host two outstanding research presentations and conversations with professors Heidi V. Scott and Ashsheh Siddique.

Joel Wolfe reports: There were only a few highlights in my pandemic year. I taught a completely new class, American Gridiron Football. I find the material to be fasci nating and I think it was well received by the students. I gave an interview (via Zoom, of course) at the University of New Mexico Latin American Studies Center on Hemispheric History. And, I continued to work on two writing projects: The Global Twenties about the Western Hemisphere in the 1920s, in Brazil. An Incomplete Nation, recently published by Polity Press.

Kevin Young reports: The highlight of my year was the 2020–21 Feinberg Series, which co-hosted with Jess John Kathryn Schwartz and Asheesh Siddique. A Camera and Cloak Over winter break, I took an exhibit design course with Professor Marla Miller and Tracy Parker. My classmates and I explored the personal and digital archives of New York City-based street photographer Jill Freedman, a prolific and hard-scrabble documentarian who sought the gritty aspects of everyday life. She lived in Resurrection City, a Washington, DC protest, spent time in a traveling circus, and I explored the personal and digital archives of New York City-based street photographer Jill Freedman, a prolific and hard-scrabble documentarian who sought the gritty aspects of everyday life. She lived in Resurrection City, a Washington, DC protest, spent time in a traveling circus, and spent time in a traveling circus to capture the experiences of carnival workers, just to name a few examples of her commitment to her craft. Our class had the privilege of meeting her family and friends over Zoom, and they generously shared memories, stories, and images from her personal archives, including photos of her cameras, including this Leica camera, dating to the 1970s. Her many cameras were well-worn and heavily used, and their variety proved that she was not married to a particular brand or model. Rather, Freedman’s family said that she always adopted the latest technology, shifting from film to digital even using an iPhone in her later years. This practical and receptive attitude towards technology reflects the approach she brought to her photography as well—as of rolling with the punches and becoming “invisible” behind her camera—but always maintaining a distinct point of view. —Helen Kyriakoudes ’21MA

“’When I was a kid, I always wished I had one of those rings or cloaks that made you invisible. Then I realized years later, I am invisible behind a camera. I am a camera.” —Jill Freedman (1939–2019)

A Camera and Cloak

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Marla Miller

Marla Miller Named Distinguished Professor

Marla Miller, Professor of History and outgoing Director of the Public History Program, was named a Distinguished Professor by the University’s Board of Trustees at its June 10, 2021, meeting. The title, awarded annually to at most three members of the UMass Amherst faculty, recognizes exceptional teaching and research. Professor Miller is the author of four books on early American history, including Betsy Ross and the Making of America, and, most recently, Entangled Lives: Labor, Livelihood, and Landscapes of Change in Rural Massachusetts. In addition, she is a co-author on several other books and reports, and has written numerous articles and book chapters. Her outstanding research has been recognized by UMass Amherst’s Cotté Faculty Fellowship. She is a beloved teacher and mentor and has received the Outstanding Teacher Award from the College of Humanities and Fine Arts. In her nineteenth years as Director of the Public History Program here at UMass Amherst, she established that program as one of the best, if not the best, in the country. Her many contributions to the field were recognized by the colleagues who elected her President of the National Council on Public History in 2016, as well as by the Chancellor’s Distinguished Service Award here at UMass. Her appointment as Distinguished Professor is fitting recognition for her many achievements.

Introducing Professor Diana Sierra Becerra

HER BOOK MANUSCRIPT is tentatively titled Insurgent Butterflies: Gender and Revolution in El Salvador. It tells the stories of peasant and working-class women who fought for a world without capitalists, imperialists, and patriarchs. Drawing from over 50 interviews and new archival sources, the book demonstrates how women confronted sexism and developed a vision of women’s liberation within the workers’ movement of the mid-to-late twentieth-century.

As a public scholar, Sierra Becerra has collaborated with Salvadoran and U.S. museums and art galleries as well as global networks of historic sites. Most recently, she worked with scholars Jennifer Guglielmo and Michelle Jeffrey, and organizers from the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA), to develop the project “Putting History in Domestic Workers’ Hands,” (dwhstorytellers.com). The project views history as an organizing tool to mobilize domestic workers on a massive scale. The $2.3 million project includes a digital timeline on the history of domestic worker organizing, four educational videos, a political education curriculum, biographies and hand-painted portraits of twenty-one movement ancestors, and a website for curriculum facilitators.

As the popular education coordinator, Sierra Becerra researched domestic worker history and developed a curriculum composed of seventeen workshops that draw from the history presented in the digital timeline. The curriculum is divided into two parts. Part one explores how oppressive systems such as capitalism, white supremacy, imperialism, and patriarchy have shaped domestic work, and how domestic workers have organized radical alternatives. Part two explores NDWA strategies to build power and improve labor standards. Additionally, Sierra Becerra trained a cohort of 16 domestic worker leaders as historians, and 33 NDWA affiliates across the country to implement the curriculum in their own organizations.

In September of 2021, the Department of History was pleased to welcome Assistant Professor of History Diana Sierra Becerra, the department’s newest faculty member. Sierra Becerra is a historian and popular educator who specializes in the history of women and gender in Latin America, focusing on social movements and revolutions.
Joyce Berkman reports: A relief and joy to compose the foregoing for our department’s annual Newsletter. I am a friend of the family and I was allowed to contact him about his thoughts on the current events as well as the future direction of the department.

In memoriam: Stephen B. Oates was an early recipient of the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award, a fellow at the Kennedy School of Government, and a professor at Harvard University. He was also a prolific author, with more than 20 books and numerous scholarly articles and book reviews. He was known for his work on civil rights and human rights, and for his ability to bring history to life.

Stephen B. Oates, Civil War historian, biographer, and professor Emeritus of History at UMass Amherst, died peacefully surrounded by his loving family on August 20, 2021, at his home in Amherst after a courageous battle with cancer. He was 85.

Oates had a deep and lasting impact on students and colleagues in the UMass Amherst Department of History and beyond, through his broad-reaching scholarship. Members of the department remembered him fondly.

“Dr. Oates was a great role model for me as an early career scholar in the field of civil rights and human rights,” said Joyce Berkman, a former colleague who worked closely with Stephen on his books and articles.

“Stephen was a great mentor to me and a great friend,” said Jane Rausch, another colleague who worked with Oates on several projects.

“Stephen was a wonderful colleague and a kind and generous person,” said Barry Levy, a former colleague who worked with Oates on several projects.

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Tianna Darling ’21MA reports: My final year of graduate school had me diving into the archives of famed whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg at the UMass Special Collections and University Archives as part of a year-long course. My research focused on Ellsberg’s anti-nuclear weapons activism from the 1970s up through the present. As part of the course, I also helped work on the virtual conference, “Truth, Dissent, and the Legacy of Daniel Ellsberg,” which brought together historians, journalists, activists, and policymakers to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the release of the Pentagon Papers. Working on this conference allowed me to enhance my public history skills in a real-world setting, and it was amazing to be a part of this historic event.

Marguerite DiGiorgio reports: In the midst of the pandemic, I packed up my car and drove the 250 miles from my Pennsylvania home to start my first year as a master’s student at UMass Amherst. The new space far exceeded its design, becoming my office, classroom, and bedroom. My 10-year-old print of Gustav Klimt’s The Kiss features prominently in the background of many a zoom meeting, a reality of remote working that I am sure many of us are familiar with. While at UMass, I have not only taken on the Public History Program but have since added a cultural landscape management certificate from the landscape architecture department. This additional coursework has allowed me to form a foundational understanding of GIS and architectural diagramming. In the public history front, I have contributed to several projects. I worked with both the National Domestic Workers Alliance doing archival research to support their educational programming, and Historic Deerfield designing materials to support their 350th celebration. Additionally, in the spring of 2021, I worked as a teaching assistant for Professor David Glassberg’s U.S. History to 1876 course. It has been a long and productive year, but I am looking forward to spending this current semester in person!

Caitlyn Foster, the newly elected secretary of the UMass History Club and member of the History Undergraduate Advisory Board, has been hard at work completing two research projects. Her first project, for her Junior Year Writing class, focused on the effects of Ancient Greek culture on Rome. Her second research project is the culmination of her honors independent study on women in Ancient Rome. During the summer, she interned with Storrotton Village Museum, and she is looking forward to applying the knowledge and skills she has acquired through these two projects towards her senior honors thesis.

While stranded in Brazil, Yuri Gama organized a panel and presented a paper at the Conference of Latin American History, hosted by the American Historical Association in January 2021. Yuri also has a chapter in an incoming edited book about Latin American infrastructure coming out in 2022 through the UCL Press. During this last year, he participated in a couple of episodes of the Urban Studies podcast hosted in Brazil. At last, he just had an op-ed essay published in an ebook about housing and epidemics in Brazil edited by the Federal University of Santa Catarina.

Benjamin Gelb ’21 reports: This year I graduated from UMass and I am now enrolled in the Master of Science in Business Analytics Program at the Isenberg School of Management. I’ve always been interested in global studies and throughout my time as an undergraduate, I planned to work for the government. Keeping with that focus, in my last semester at UMass, I was fortunate enough to take a course on international trade with Robert LaFusca ’76. That class involved interpreting trade statistics to inform policy decisions, a challenge for which I was completely unprepared. I realized that if I wanted to continue forward in international relations, I needed a stronger background in data analytics. I decided I wanted to continue my education through UMass, and although my program is online I still feel like I am part of the community. I will graduate in 2022.

Johanna Gere mia ’21 reports: This May, I graduated from UMass with a BA in history and German and a minor in vocal performance. Who knew that the first time I would meet many of my peers would be at the commencement ceremony? Although the year went differently than planned, I am incredibly grateful for the experiences I’ve had. I joined the history honor society, Phi Alpha Theta (PAT), which led to my position as an editor for the UMass History Journal. I also published my first paper with the journal, titled “The History of Astrology: Tracking Trends from Ancient Mesopotamia to the Modern West.” Also with PAT, I was given the opportunity to present a paper at the New England Regional Phi Alpha Theta History Conference in March, this presentation having been titled “Astrological Practices in Premodern Asia.”

In the spring, I worked on my capstone thesis for my German major. Because of my deep interest in medieval studies and literature, I decided to write my thesis on the representation of female characters in the medieval German work, Das Nibelungenlied. I hope to research that as a foundation for future research projects as I enter a graduate program in medieval literature at Utrecht University in the Netherlands.

Johanna Gere mia ’21 spoke at the College of Humanities and Fine Arts undergraduate commencement virtual celebration.

Sarah Lavallee’s渎 reports: This past year has been an absolute whirlwind of events in my academic career. In the summer of 2020, I was a non-legislative intern for the office of the Massachusetts Attorney General. I worked remotely with the Office of Community Engagement and helped to organize public webinars and also conduct community outreach. Also in the summer, I created my own YouTube channel called Low-Budget, OCiar Nest News Network (UBCWN) and released four episodes with special guests, in John Krasinski’s Some Good News style. After I finished up my classes in the fall, I finally had some good inspiration to begin my first fictional story novel! I finished the first draft back in early March at 93,000 words, and as of now, I am just finishing up my second draft and almost ready to send out to publishers! During the spring semester, I was an intern for the office of state Senator Jo Comerford where I worked remotely on many exciting avenues of government policy. Also, I have officially been accepted into UMass Amherst’s Master in Public Policy Program where I received the Commonwealth Policy Fellowship. Along with these accomplishments, I am also now a member of Phi Alpha Theta, Pi Sigma Alpha, and the National Society of Leadership and Success. Go UMASS!


Jason Higgins ’21PhD proudly displays his dissertation and project table of contents.
Sarah Lavallee recently accepted a position as the Curatorial Assistant for the Astronomic Photographic Glass Plate Collection at the Harvard College Observatory, the world’s largest archive of stellar glass plate negatives, amassing over 500,000 celestial moments captured in time, some dating back to the mid-1800s.

Charlotte Murtishaw presented at two conferences this spring: first at the Chicago Center for Contemporary Theory’s Antipolis conference ("In the World, Not of It! The Architecture of Anim Political Autonomy within the United States"), and later at Pop Con, the country’s largest popular music conference ("Truth Hurts: Lizzo, Digital Serfdom, and Critical Race Theory Approaches to Copyright Law"). She also has forthcoming essays for Popula, on the Tongass Rainforest and the shifting economy of southeast Alaska, and for the Holt-Smithson Foundation’s Scholarly Texts series, on the artists and looking at the landscape of the New Jersey Meadowlands; and served as a researcher for the Pioneer Valley History Network and Public History Program’s documenting the Early History of Black Lives in the Connecticut River Valley project as part of Sarah Lawrence College’s women’s history series, and for first-year students. In December, they presented work from their first year of graduate school at Oral History Spring Roundtable of the conference Truth, Dissent, and the Legacy of the Release of the Pentagon Papers. Thirteen undergraduate and graduate students spoke at the session, which was a highlight of the two-day event, garnering over 5,000 views online.

Allison Smith reports: My first year of graduate school did not disappoint with thought-provoking research ideas, exciting conferences, and engaging class discussions. Alongside my coursework, I interned with two different organizations. At Historic New England, I was a women’s history research intern, where I assisted two historic houses, Casay Farm and Otis House. In increasing women’s history visibility in their tour narratives. I also worked on a public program proposal, wondering how historic houses can best serve the community. To accommodate a last-minute offer to be a Historic Deerfield Summer Fellow, I began a summer internship at the Dennis Historical Society. There, I wrote a new collections management policy, inventoried accessions, wrote self-guided tours, and curated an exhibit. During the summer, I worked, worked, and worked at Historic Deerfield Through their Summer Fellowship in History and Material Culture.

Leo Weinberg reports: This summer I contributed to the "Documenting the Early History of Black Lives in the Connecticut River Valley" project as an intern for the Amherst Historical Society. The project allowed me to deepen my understanding of Amherst and the surrounding area. I also appreciated this opportunity to work in an archive, especially since options for archival research have been scarce during the pandemic. An important and sobering takeaway from this project was the way the sources exposed the presence of slavery in Massachusetts. Having grown up in a Northern state, I was taught that slavery was a primarily Southern enterprise. This summer I contributed to the "Documenting the Early History of Black Lives in the Connecticut River Valley" project as an intern for the Amherst Historical Society. The project allowed me to deepen my understanding of Amherst and the surrounding area. 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Emily Whitfield finished her first year in the PhD program, completing both her coursework and her TA roles entirely on Zoom. The virtual nature of her year allowed her to get creative in discussion sections and she received the Emirian Graduate Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching. She was also able to virtually present portions of her master’s thesis: “Made in Germantown: Production, Wear, and Repair of American Frame-Knit Stockings 1843–1880” at two annual conferences: the Knitting History Forum in the fall and the Costume Society of America in the spring. As COVID restrictions began to ease, Emily was finally able to get back into a museum collection and visited Wistar Institute Museum to prepare for a public talk on wedding dresses and memory that paired with their exhibition of dresses from their Collection.

Parul Srivastava reports: I am a PhD candidate at the University of Hyderabad in India, and from February through October 2021 I was a Nehru-Fulbright Doctoral Research Fellow in the UMass Amhers State Department of History. I have benefited immensely from working with my host professor, Priyanka Srivastava, and other faculty in the department. My research explores migrants’ and eyewitnesses’ oral accounts of the 1947 Partition of India. Focusing on questions of pain, affect, religiosity and broken relationships, my project aims to understand the suffering of the common people of the Subcontinent. I work with the Berkeley-based 1947 Partition Archive, including on their Video red-flags review project and the Tata Trust grant, where I was part of the committee that convened and wrote the ethical guidelines for accessing these sensitive oral narratives. In 2021, I hosted the Archive’s third season of their webinars, interviewing Partition and memory studies scholars from around the world. At UMass, I strengthened my expertise in oral history through work with oral historians in the department.

My Fulbright experience was wonderful. I presented papers at conferences, interacted with fellow researchers and had the most enriching experience visiting museums in New York City and Washington, DC, which was like a dream come true!
Robert Simmons ’62 reports: My wife Happy and I have moved into a CCRC (Continuing Care Retirement Community). We are healthy and have no problems. We participate in Williamsburg and area events, including outdoor concerts, Naka, biking, day trips, etc. My latest hobby is fixing used bikes to be sold at low prices to those who cannot afford new bikes. I read history book after history book and learn new things, many of which were unknown (or unknowable) when I was an undergraduate. Great fun. Wish you all the very best.

Steven Bowman ’64, professor emeritus of Judaic Studies at the University of Cincinnati, is pleased to share his long-term project, Sepher Yosippion: A Tenth-Century History of Ancient Israel, which is scheduled for publication next spring.

David Mac Donnell ’65 reports: I published Boston Rascal, my memoir of growing up in 1940s and 1950s Boston. We learned about self-reliance and the need to stand on our own two feet and take a swing at life. Maybe we didn’t always hit grand slam home runs but we certainly had lots of doubles, triples and maybe a couple of home runs. Not bad for a large Catholic Irish family from a very modest beginning. The lessons I learned from these many wonderful experiences enabled me to easily become a successful Operations Officer with the CIA serving 10 years overseas in Africa and Latin America with many temporary assignments in other countries.

Phil Rosen ’70 reports: After graduating in 1970, I was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army and served in Vietnam and was awarded the Bronze Star. I have been happily married for over 50 years to my college sweetheart Mina and we have three adult children and two granddaughters. Before retiring, I spent my work years in sales, sales management and training management with a nationwide industrial distributor. Life is great, stay safe!

Paul Canham ’71, ’72MA worked for 31 years as a civilian for the U.S. Air Force in the field of contracting. He is now retired and lives with his wife Ilene in Rochdale, MA.

Frank E. Johnson ’73MA, professor emeritus of French History at the University of Cincinnati, is pleased to share his long-term project, Sepher Yosippion: A Tenth-Century History of Ancient Israel, which is scheduled for publication next spring.

Mitchell Cohen ’79 reports: After retiring as a deputy district attorney for Clark County, NV, I have devoted myself to local history. I have developed tours and other historical content as a volunteer for the National Park Service including IMPACT Management Chair Jamie Harrison; Eljah Cummings, for his last public speech before he died; Congressional Black Caucus Chair Karen Bass; then-World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, and many more. The interns are given work space at the National Park Service in Washington, DC, two blocks from the White House. They are at the center of “the action.” Know any current or recent college journalists who’d enjoy and be productive? weinerpublic@comcast.net.

Robert Weiner ’74MA reports: Since leaving the White House under Presidents Clinton and Bush, and earlier directing or serving as spokesman for several congressional committees under Congresspersons Pepper, Cooper, Rangel, and Koch, as well as staff for Senator Kennedy, my National Park Service President’s Award program recruiting young journalist interns as co-bylined opinion writers for top papers is continuing successfully—despite COVID. We’ve done over 1,000 articles. In 2020–21, our pieces on major national issues were published in The Orlando Sentinel, Salt Lake Tribune, Miami Herald, Washington Times, Washington Post, Roanoke Times, Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel, Chicago Daily Herald, and The Hill among others. In 2020–21 so far, five were featured by OpinionWorks as #1 (national no. 1, op-ed the day of publication) and ten as #2 (no. 2). Our very fun program also allows the young journalists to help recruit and organize speakers for the National Park Service including IMPACT Management Chair Jamie Harrison, Democratic National Committee Chair Jamie Harrison; Eljah Cummings, for his last public speech before he died; Congressional Black Caucus Chair Karen Bass; then-World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, and many more. The interns are given work space at the National Park Service in Washington, DC, two blocks from the White House. They are at the center of “the action.” Know any current or recent college journalists who’d enjoy and be productive? weinerpublic@comcast.net.

Jessica Ratcliffe ’15 reports: In 2020–21 so far, five were featured by OpinionWorks as #1 (national no. 1, op-ed the day of publication) and ten as #2 (no. 2). Our very fun program also allows the young journalists to help recruit and organize speakers for the National Park Service including IMPACT Management Chair Jamie Harrison, Democratic National Committee Chair Jamie Harrison; Eljah Cummings, for his last public speech before he died; Congressional Black Caucus Chair Karen Bass; then-World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, and many more. The interns are given work space at the National Park Service in Washington, DC, two blocks from the White House. They are at the center of “the action.” Know any current or recent college journalists who’d enjoy and be productive? weinerpublic@comcast.net.

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Virginia Shultz-Charrette ’91MA is pleased to announce that her second book titled “เลิศกรีช: Connecticut” A History from Founding to 1950 will be released by the History Press in June 2021. In the town’s 250th anniversary. Her first book, co-authored with Verna Gillson, titled Winsted and Winchester (Images of America) was published by Arcadia Press in 2012 utilizing the DeMars Images collection now part of the Connecticut Historical Society’s collection of photographs. Virginia is a former adjunct instructor of American History at Northwestern Connecticut Community College and is currently on the commission of the Soldiers’ Monument and Memorial Park dedicated to the soldiers from Winchester who served in the U.S. Civil War. The Gothic style monument is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

James Spady ’93 is an associate professor of American history at Soka University of America, a liberal arts college in Southern California. After UMass, he got a PhD in American Studies at “The College of William and Mary ‘06. His most recent publication is Education and the Racial Dynamics of Settler Colonialism in Early America: Georgia and South Carolina, c.1700-ca.1850” (Rutledge, 2020). His ongoing research examines race and settler colonialism as social relations of power in the past and present. He lives with his partner, daughter, and dog in a little house near the ocean and continues to be active in community and activist circles.

Adam Sandrow ’94 is the chief of staff for the municipality of Hamden, CT. He formerly directed a local community center that serves as a hub for social services delivery. Prior to working in the public sector, he had a 22-year career in academic publishing, working for the Taylor and Francis imprint Garland Science. Adam was elected to serve on the Hamden Board of Education for three terms, and is a former chairperson. In 2019, influenced by his work at the community center, Adam began pursuing a Master of Public Health degree at the UMass online program. Adam and his wife live in Hamden, CT with their dog and have two adult daughters in college, and Smith and UCAnn.

Adam Sendroff ’94, ’85MA leads a walking tour on Cape Cod.

Bethany Groff Dorus ’15MA leads attendees on a virtual tour of Coffin House in Newbury, MA during a fall meeting of the alumni group Public Historians Around Boston (PHAB).

Adam Sandrow ’94.
Rebekkah Rubin ’17MA continues to write about history for the public. She recently published pieces about the history of women’s suffrage in northeast Ohio; Black composer and activist Shirley Graham Du Bois; the history of Oberlin Village, a historically Black community in Raleigh, NC; and historical memory and Black history in Hudson, OH. In addition to writing for print and online outlets, Rebekkah has been working as a historical consultant for a historical park, Sensei-affiliated museum and a metropolitan school district. Her public history and American Girl Doll Instagram project, @iamexcessivelydollverted, was recently featured on the cover of The Public Historian, the journal of the National Council on Public History, and will be featured in a teacher’s guide on women’s suffrage for students across Ohio. Last summer, she and her partner adopted a border collie named Nova, who is an excellent research assistant.

John Higgins ’18PHD reports: I have been keeping busy. Since getting my degree I have been doing what I thought I would be: teaching Greek, Latin, and Ancient History at several area colleges (Amherst, Smith, and especially Trinity in Hartford) as a visiting professor. It has been interesting in the midst of COVID to be teaching about the role of the plague of 541 CE and how a pandemic disease helped bring about the end of classical civilization! In other pandemic-related news, I was the President of the Classical Association of New England for 2019–2020 and unexpectedly had to reorganize the annual meeting as a virtual conference a week before it was meant to go on in March of last year. My dissertation has been accepted by publication by the Medieval Institute and DeGruyter, slated for publication in 2023, and is now with the external readers. I am also working on several articles and other projects.

Andrea Whalen ’20 reports: I graduated class of 2020 with a degree in history, a minor in education, and a second major in art history, and have recently been accepted to Merrimack College’s Master of Education program. My classes began in July and I am beyond excited! My degree was accepted by publication by The New England Journal of Higher Education and I was recently a featured contributor to the journal’s WEBS column. I have been keeping busy with my writing, both for print and online outlets, Rebekkah has been working as a historical consultant for a historical park, Sensei-affiliated museum and a metropolitan school district. Her public history and American Girl Doll Instagram project, @iamexcessivelydollverted, was recently featured on the cover of The Public Historian, the journal of the National Council on Public History, and will be featured in a teacher’s guide on women’s suffrage for students across Ohio. Last summer, she and her partner adopted a border collie named Nova, who is an excellent research assistant.

Rebekkah Rubin ’17MA and Nova.

Interview with Zamir Nestelbaum ’21MA

As an undergraduate at UMass Amherst, Zamir Nestelbaum ’21MA studied history for three years, before switching majors to biology. Decades later, while working full time in clinical and academic psychiatry, he returned to the UMass Amherst history department in 2000 as an MA student. After pursuing his studies part time, he finished his degree this May, focusing on the history of Russia, Israel, Zionism, World War II, the Holocaust, and collective memory.

What draws you to the study of history and to your areas of work?

It was my family history. My father was born in Poland before the Russian Revolution in an impoverished Jewish shetl. He left for Palestine in 1933. The day he landed, he had to walk for 22km in the intense heat and found that the reality of the Yishuv did not match the “propaganda”. In many ways he lost his Zionism during that trek. Like many of his peers, he became secular, socialist and a critical thinker. But Zionism saved his life as his parents and seven siblings were murdered in the Holocaust. My mother was born in Luxemburg. She was 12 when the Germans marched in. She spent 6 years running and hiding. Eventually she emigrated to Israel in 1951 as a refugee. My parents had different experiences during the war: my mother was traumatized but managed to survive. My father, for everything he went through, maintained his own agency.

We immigrated to the United States when I was four, and I grew up here, in Massachusetts. But traces of the Holocaust were always with us. My parents’ trauma dominated my life in overt and subtle ways during my childhood, and as I look back at what I’ve studied for my MA, it’s clear now that I chose to focus on themes that were influenced by my family history. This may seem obvious now, even expected, but it wasn’t necessarily what I set out to do. My father was an iconoclast and I tried to emulate him. I focused on 19th and 20th century Ottoman history, Russian and European history in an effort to understand the catastrophe that befell my family. I resisted the more traditional Jewish Studies and avoided any hagiography of Israel.

Can you share more about your work on memory and identity?

A major theme of my studies revolves around the relationship between memory and history, collective memory and identity formation. As I was working on this material, I realized that my identity, the identity of my family, is really totally dependent on what they remember from their experiences. I’m interested in the second generation, so it becomes attenuated and controlled by what they remember. I think, about a quote from Freud, that all of history is in our subconscious, but we chose what to remember and use what we need. I’m interested in the use of memory regarding our subjective experiences and why it takes so much time for memories to pass from the unconscious to the conscious, slow and explosive that can be, both for individuals and large collectives.

How has your thinking changed through the course of your study?

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What does it mean to you to have completed your degree?

It’s a great joy and a relief! I had terrible regrets during those 11 years when I thought I wouldn’t finish. I was very excited to come back and resume my studies. I was happy that I could tell my mother that I would graduate just before she died.

What’s next?

I’m reaching a point where I can really put some continued time and effort into historical research and writing. I could write a memoir, but there are so many memoirs by people with my background. What would make me different? I hope to do something more focused, more meaningful. I’m certain that I’m not finished with my studies.

Interview with Zamir Nestelbaum ’21MA

Clockwise from top left: Yuri Gama, Professor Joel Wolfe and Jorge Minela.

Keeping in Touch with Brazil

PhD candidates Yuri Gama and Jorge Minela both grew up in the Brazilian city of Horizontopolis, and they’ve been good friends since early in elementary school—there’s some debate about exactly when they first met, but the best guess is in the second grade. Jorge came to UMass in August 2015 to study modern Brazilian history with me and Yuri followed the year afterwards. Both have excelled at UMass, winning multiple awards and prizes for their scholarship and teaching. And, both were continuing their research and beginning to write their theses when the pandemic hit.

They each had returned to Brazil before the pandemic with full research agendas, but archives and libraries quickly closed as COVID began to decimate their country. I was able to hire Jorge and Yuri in summer 2020 (Brazil’s winter) to collect images and other media for my classes, which were taught remotely. During the academic year, they both wrote as much as they could of their theses with the documents they already had. Jorge has produced a series of excellent draft chapters for “Defiant Grace: The São Francisco River and the Brazilian State,” and Yuri has written even more for his “Tropical Home: Urban Politics and Planning in Recife and Natal in Brazil’s Northeast.”

I found myself emailing comments back and forth, and arranging the occasional Zoom meeting, but Jorge and Yuri suggested we create an informal, but regularly scheduled, twice per month seminar. In addition to working through their dissertations, we would also discuss chapters of a book I’m writing for Polity Press, Brazil: An Incomplete Nation.

The seminars have been great. We discuss broad themes and minor issues, and we go through sources. The scheduled meetings help us keep on track. We also discuss a lot beyond our writing. The three of us got into a detailed historiographical debate about the impact of the 1985s and 1990s Brazilian leader, Getúlio Vargas, on the nation’s working people. We next discussed the extraordinary winning header by Alison Becker, the Brazilian keeper for Liverpool FC. It was later named the “Goal of the Season” by the Premier League. Jorge and Yuri have helped me a great deal with my book, I’m writing for Polity Press, Brazil: An Incomplete Nation.

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Interview with Zamir Nestelbaum ’21MA

Rebekkah Rubin ’17MA and Nova.

What does it mean to you to have completed your degree?

It’s a great joy and a relief! I had terrible regrets during those 11 years when I thought I wouldn’t finish. I was very excited to come back and resume my studies. I was happy that I could tell my mother that I would graduate just before she died.

What’s next?

I’m reaching a point where I can really put some continued time and effort into historical research and writing. I could write a memoir, but there are so many memoirs by people with my background. What would make me different? I hope to do something more focused, more meaningful. I’m certain that I’m not finished with my studies.

Interview with Zamir Nestelbaum ’21MA

Clockwise from top left: Yuri Gama, Professor Joel Wolfe and Jorge Minela.
Brian Bunk  
Across North America, native peoples and colonists alike played a variety of kicking games long before soccer’s emergence in the late 1800s. From Football to Soccer examines the development and social impact of these sports through the rise of professional soccer after World War I. The book shows how the various games called football gave women an outlet as athletes and encouraged men to form social bonds based on educational experience, occupation, ethnic identity, or military service.

Tanya Pearson  
A remarkable feminist history and biography that features fragments from the five-decade career of an iconic artist, who, despite a private life that overshadowed much of her early work, sculpted her own musical rebirth.

Jane Rausch  
*Germans in the History of Colombia from Colonial Times to the Present.* Xlibris, 2021.  
Although they have never made up more than 3% of Colombia’s population, individual Germans and German companies have been present in every era of the nation’s history. The objective of this book is to provide an overview of German involvement in Colombia from the 16th century conquest to the years after World War II in order to demonstrate that their contributions to the nation’s development have been far more significant than their scant numbers suggest.

Yveline Alexis  
This is the first U.S. scholarly examination of the politician and caco leader (guerrilla fighter) who fought against the U.S. military occupation of Haiti from 1915–1934. Haiti Fights Back illuminates how Péralté launched a political movement, and meticulously captures how Haitian women and men resisted occupation through silence, military battles, and writings. Yveline Alexis offers a new approach to the study of the U.S. invasion of the Americas by chronicling how Caribbean people fought back.

John Dickson  
For over twenty-five years JohnDickson served the United States as a Foreign Service officer in North America, South America, the Caribbean, and Africa. Drawing on personal experience, he offers “stories with a history” that highlight moments of history shock—where dramatically different interpretations of history blocked diplomatic understanding and cooperation. Dickson provides not only a series of case studies but also an interpretive framework for how to remedy this deficit, including recommendations for strengthening historical literacy in the Foreign Service.

Peggy Jablonski  
Since September of this year, numerous faculty and alumni have published new books. We will feature these titles in next year’s publication, but don’t wait until then to check them out!  
**TITLES INCLUDE:**  
*“Chaotic Freedom” in Civil War Louisiana: The Origins of an Iconic Image* by Professor Emeritus Bruce Laurie.  
*Prophets and Ghosts: The Story of Salkage–Anthropology* by Associate Professor of History Samuel J. Redman PhD’13.  
The Department of History is grateful for contributions from alumni and friends. We sincerely thank you. Your generous donations support vital scholarships for undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and student travel to research collections, and the various events and initiatives that make studying history at UMass Amherst so robust and meaningful an educational experience. The following list includes those who made donations between July 2020 and June 2021. Gifts can be made online at umass.edu/history/give-history.

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Be sure to include your graduation year and degree, and we’ll be happy to include you in our next newsletter. If you have high-resolution photos, include them as attachments.

KEEPING IN THE LOOP
Check out the history department’s YouTube and SoundCloud channels to see and hear a sampling of our department’s public talks: youtube.com/umasshistory
soundcloud.com/umass-history.

This marks the eighth year of our department’s blog PastPresent, which features posts by faculty, students, emeriti, and alumni.
Follow us at umasshistory.wordpress.com

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Carla Montilla Jaimes ’21 was honored as a 21st Century Leader at undergraduate commencement in May. For more on Montilla Jaimes and other award-winning history students, see page 10.