Welcome to the 2021-2022 academic year! We are still here and pushing forward with our teaching and research missions in this strange pandemic moment. We have been joined by new colleagues recently. Ms. Carol Aikels is our new Business Administrator and Drs. Adela Cedillo and Kelly Hopkins have joined us as tenure track assistant professors in Modern Mexico and Early American history respectively.

If you had ever wondered what it is like to “live through history,” well now you know, for certainly future historians will have much to say about the major challenges that our country and the world has faced over the past twenty months! If your interest is in medical and social history, then the pandemic will be at the center of this history. If you lean more to questions about politics and the state, then there is much to fascinate (and worry about) regarding the crisis of democracy. If you are interested in the history of race and ethnicity then the Black Lives Matter movement juxtaposed against the horrific, unresolved problem of seemingly state-sanctioned murder of Black people by the police will dominate your history of 2020 and 2021. Finally, if you gravitate toward environmental history then the unending deluge of environmental crisis in the form of floods, storms, and fires combined with the anemic response by nation-states will be at the center of your history of our current moment.

The research and the teaching we do in our department address the historical context for all of these problems and more. Our faculty remains tremendously productive, even in the face of a once-in-a-century global pandemic. Colleagues in the department have published five new books in the past twelve months and have researched and drafted portions of many more books that will appear in the coming years! Kudos to those who have found new ways to work when archives have been closed and travel restricted. Faculty continue to receive prizes for their books. Among the most recent honorees are Professors Gerald Horne and Natalia Milanesio.

Faculty have been awarded major grants to pursue their digital humanities research. We are especially proud of Dr. Kristina Neumann who along with colleagues in the College of Technology won an NEH Digital Projects for the Public award, which funds SYRIOS: Studying Urban Relationships and Identity over Ancient Syria. Additionally, Dr. Leandra Zarrow along with yours truly and colleagues in the College of Technology and from University of California Irvine received an NEH Collaborative Research Grant for Sharing Stories from 1977: Putting the National Women’s Conference on the Map.

We teach thousands and thousands of undergraduates each semester in courses ranging from the US Survey all the way through senior capstone classes for History majors. Our undergraduate major is thriving, and students have enjoyed the many benefits of a UH education including experiential learning outside the classroom: internships on real world history research projects and participation in the Mellon Research Scholars Program. Many of our recent BA graduates are on their way to law school and graduate school. We salute them and wish them well on their journeys.

Our graduate students continue to amaze. Six graduate students successfully defended dissertations this year. Many congratulations to our newly minted Drs. Quentin Adams, Ramiro Contreras, Matthew Finnie, Gary Girod, Francesca Guerri, and Alberto Wilson III. Recent graduates have also fared well on the job market, and we are very proud of their success. Our current graduate students are winning external fellowships and research grants, receiving prestigious internships, and dabbling in podcasting. Instead of saying the future is theirs, I will conclude by saying the past is theirs because they will be the ones writing the history of our world.
New Faculty Books

Alexey Golubev

The Things of Life: Materiality in Late Soviet Russia (Cornell University Press, 2020). This book offers a social and cultural history of material objects and spaces during the late socialist era. It traces the biographies of Soviet things, examining how the material world of the late Soviet period influenced people’s gender roles, habitual choices, social trajectories, and imaginary aspirations. It explores how Soviet people used objects and spaces to substantiate their individual and collective selves. In doing so, it rediscovers what helped Soviet citizens make sense of the world around them and even subvert the efforts of the Communist regime to transform them into a rationally organized, disciplined, and easily controllable community. For more, see Golubev’s interviews with the New Books Network and reviews in the Times Literary Supplement and H-Soz-Kult.

Frank Holt

When Money Talks: A History of Coins and Numismatics (Oxford University Press, 2021). For 2600 years, poets, economists, philosophers, historians, and theologians have pondered the mysteries of money. This book answers many of their questions. Who invented coins, and why? Does coinage function beyond our control as if it had a mind of its own? How has it changed world history and culture? What does numismatics reveal about our past that could never be discovered from any other source? How has numismatics advanced using modern science? Does it still suffer from racist ideas about physiognomy and phrenology? What does its future hold? This book is an NEH-sponsored Public Scholars monograph. For more, see The New Yorker, Thinking Historically, Coin World, Radio New Zealand, and The Page 99 Test.

Gerald Horne

The Bittersweet Science: Racism, Racketeering, and the Political Economy of Boxing (International Publishers, 2021). This pioneering work tells the untold story of the grimy intersection of racism and racketeering in boxing. It traces the story of Black dominance in the sport, from fighting enslavers in Africa, through the brutal battles royal of slavery when enslaved men were placed in a ring blindfolded and forced to fight until one man was left standing. At the same time, it exposes the gross exploitation of fighters and the gargantuan profits garnered by the likes of Don King and Bob Arum.
Natalia Milanesio

*El destape. La cultura sexual en la Argentina después de la dictadura* (Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2021). Under dictatorship in Argentina, sex and sexuality were regulated, censured, and repressed. With the return to democracy in 1983, Argentines experienced new freedoms, including sexual freedoms that led to a deep process of change in sexual ideologies and practices. By exploring the boom of sex therapy; the fight for the implementation of sex education in schools; the expansion of family planning services; and the centrality of sexuality in feminist and gay organizations, the book shows that the *destape* was a profound transformation of the way Argentines talked, understood, and experienced sexuality, a change in manners, morals, and personal freedoms. For more, check out Milanesio’s interviews with *New Books Network en Español Podcast*, *Télam*, and *Clarín*. She was also invited to present her book to Departamento de Ciencias Políticas, Facultad de Humanidades, Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata, Argentina (July 22, 2021) and the Institute of Historical Research, University of London’s School of Advanced Study (February 2, 2021).

Kristina Neumann

*Antioch in Syria: A History from Coins (300 BCE-450 CE)* (Cambridge University Press, 2021). This book critically reassesses ancient Antioch in Syria by using coins and coin finds to expose the gradations of imperial power and local agency mediated within the city’s famous walls. Patterns revealed by digital mapping and Exploratory Data Analysis serve as a significant index of spatial politics and the policies of the different authorities making use of Antioch. As imperial governments capitalized upon the city’s location and amenities, the citizens developed in their own distinct identities and agency. Antioch of the Antiochians must therefore be elevated from static narratives, being studied for the dynamic polis it was.

Norah L.A. Gharala held a postdoctoral fellowship at the *International Institute for Asian Studies* in Leiden during Spring 2021. This four-month stay supported her current research project connecting New Spain with Mozambique, India, and the Philippines in the seventeenth century.

José Angel Hernández, a three-time Fulbright U.S. Scholar, will spend the next two years serving as an *Alumni Ambassador* of the program. He will share his experience with varied audiences in order to encourage Fulbright applications.

BOOK AWARDS

American Book Award (2021)

CLAH Bolton-Johnson Prize:
Best Book in English on Latin American History (2020)

Foundation of Landscape Studies: John Brinckerhoff Jackson Prize (2021)
New Faculty Publications


Guadalupe San Miguel. 2020. “Nationalism, the Chicano Movement and Mexican American Music in the US Southwest during the 1960s and 1970s.” The Journal of South Texas. 8-19. San Miguel’s 1983 article, “The Struggle Against Separate and Unequal Schools: Middle class Mexican Americans and the Desegregation Campaign in Texas, 1929-1957” (History of Education Quarterly) was recently selected as one of the “Top Ten Articles in the Last 60 Years” by the History of Education Quarterly.


Faculty Speak: Academic Conferences and University Presentations

Adela Cedillo presented "A New Methodological Approach on Female Revolutionary Intellectuals from the 1960’s and 1970s in Mexico" for the International Conference on "Historia de las mujeres e historia intelectual en México y América Latina: metodología, debates y aproximaciones."

Xiaoping Cong gave two papers: "Restructuring the Ping Opera Liu Qiao'er: Reforming Popular Arts and Revolutionizing Intellectuals in the 1950s" for the International Conference on Socialism, Gender and Culture in Twentieth-Century China and "Law and Gender: A New Approach to the History of Chinese Revolution" at the Conference on Rethinking of the Chinese Revolution in Northwestern Base Area in the Mid-Twentieth-Century.


Norah L.A. Gharala gave two papers: "Connecting the Lives of East Africans in Iberian Worlds" for the Conference on Latin American History and "Enslaved people from Asia in Mexican merchant networks" at the International Institute for Asian Studies. Additionally, she was interviewed about her book, Taxing Blackness. Free Afromexican Tribute in Bourbon New Spain.

Mark Goldberg presented "Miami Jews think of us only as Cubans ... they don’t think of us as Jews": Cuban Jewish Exiles and Race in a Jim Crow City" at the 52nd Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies.

Alexey Golubev gave four talks: "How Soviet was the First Soviet Tabloid? The Genealogy of Argumenty i Fakty" (10th World Congress of the International Council for Central and East European Studies); "Late Socialism as a

Historical Experience of Global Modernity" (Constructing the Soviet, a graduate conference at the European University of St. Petersburg, Russia); "Academic Mobility and Production of Knowledge" (NYU Jordan Center); and "The Popularization of Doubt: Scientific Literacy and Alternative Forms of Knowledge in the Soviet Union after World War II" (Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University). Additionally, he was interviewed in the series, Reimagining Russia, for the Havighurst Center for Russian and Post-Soviet Studies (Miami University).

Debbie Harwell spoke with the Texas Oral History Association on "Resilient Houston: Documenting Hurricane Harvey."

Kelly Hopkins spoke on how to redesign introductory college history courses for both the Annual Meeting of the Organization of American Historians and the 114th Annual Meeting of the Pacific Coast Branch-American Historical Association.

Gerald Horne gave the plenary address for the Midwestern History Association. His speech was titled, "St. Louis as Paradigm." Horne also spoke to George Mason University on "The Backstory of January 6, 2021."

Natalia Milanesio provided an extensive number of talks and interviews, especially related to the topic of her new book. This included an invited talk at the Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento ("Sexo y Democracia. Lecciones de la historia de la sexualidad"); "Sexuality and Nation in Argentina’s Transition to Democracy" at the Latin American Studies Association; "Argentine Sexploitation in the Transition to Democracy" for the Rocky Mountain Council for Latin American Studies; and "Con discriminación y represión no hay democracia: Protests y Activismos Sexo-Genéricos en el proceso de democratización en Argentina" as part of the panel, "MemoRights-Cultural Memory in LGBT Activism" (sponsored by the European Research Council, ReAct, Instituto Gino Germani and Utrecht University).

Ivan Pus spoke on the "Message of the Moravian Germans to the Paris Peace Conference" at the 2nd International Conference, "Treaties of the Paris Peace Conference (1919–1920)" (co-organized by the University of Alba Iulia and the National Museum of Union Alba Iulia, Romania).

Todd Romero acted as moderator for two talks sponsored by Humanities Texas and Foodways Texas. The first talk was "A Conversation on Texas Taceaux," which featured Texas Monthly Taco Editor José R. Ralat in dialogue with Jason and Starr Harry, owners of EaDeaux’s Cajun Cocina, a Houston-based Cajun/Tex-Mex taco truck. The second talk was "Recipe for a Good Life: A Conversation with Toni Tipton-Martin and Chris Williams."

Tara Sewell-Lasater (Adjunct) presented "The Disregarded Cause: Popular Unrest and the Civil War of Ptolemy VIII and Cleopatra II" at the Association of Ancient Historians’ 2021 Annual Meeting, and "The Damnatio Memoriae of Arsinóe IIII at the 117th Annual Meeting of the Classical Association of the Middle West and South.

Abdel Razzaq Takriti gave a series of talks at the University of London, including "The Right of Return as Anti-Colonial Liberation," "Kurdistan, Palestine, and the Politics and Poetics of Solidarity," and "On Edward Said: Remembrance of Things Past." He also spoke on "Archiving the Struggle: Towards a New Political Imaginary for Palestine" for the Institute for Palestine Studies and "Liberated Students in a Colonised Campus: Reflections on the Palestinian Experience at the University of Toronto" at the University of Toronto. Finally, he spoke as part of the panel "Arab Marxism and National Liberation: Selected Writings of Mahdi Amel" at the University of Houston.
Despite the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Arab-American Educational Foundation Center for Arab Studies (CAS) has had an incredible year. The only academic center in Texas, and one of two in the country that solely focuses on the Arab world, CAS operated virtually for the past year, hosting many leading academics, artists, activists, and audiences from across the globe.

Last spring, CAS achieved a major milestone as an academic center following the appointment of Dr. Hosam Aboul-Ela (English) to the AAEF Dr. Burhan and Mrs. Misako Ajouz Endowed Professorship in Arab Studies. Together with the AAEF Chair in Modern Arab History, which is held by CAS Director Abdel Razzaq Takriti, CAS now holds two major endowed chairs. The growth of CAS is also reflected in its graduate recruitment, with five PhD students joining the Center. Erica Augenstein and Said Al Hashmi are both incoming doctoral students in History, while Rand Khalil and Ibrahim Badshah are majoring in English Literature, and Maha Abdelwahab is majoring in Creative Writing. Erica joins the Department of History having completed her master’s degree in Middle East Studies from the University of Chicago, while Said, a critically acclaimed writer, novelist, and activist from Oman, joins the program with a master’s degree in Strategic Studies from the University of Aberdeen.

Last fall, CAS launched a series of international book symposia to discuss new texts in the field. The inaugural symposium was held on December 9, 2020, and featured Dr. Omar Al-Shehabi’s Contested Modernity, Sectarianism, Nationalism, and Colonialism in Bahrain. The event was a huge success with 145 attending the opening virtual session, featuring the author along with Prof. Adam Hanieh (SOAS, University of London), Dean Amal Ghazal (Doha Institute for Graduate Studies), Dr. Wafa Al-Sayed (GSUT, Kuwait), Sultan Alamer (George Washington University), and Sara Musafer (UMN-Twin Cities). A few days later on December 12, CAS co-sponsored its first major international conference when it partnered with the Centre for Palestine Studies, SOAS University of London, and The Institute of Law, Birzeit University, to launch “The Palestinian Right of Return” conference. This daylong conference occurred on the 72nd anniversary of United Nations Resolution 194, which called for the right of return of Palestinian refugees and was attended by around 900 audience members throughout the day.

The spring semester of 2021 was packed with virtual events. The second installment of the book symposia series featured Dr. Ussama Makdisi’s Age of Coexistence: The Ecumenical Frame and the Making of the Modern Arab World, which was discussed by preeminent scholars in the field, including Professors Judith Tucker (Georgetown University), Ilan Pappe (University of Exeter), Cemil Aydin (UNC Chapel Hill), Dean Amal Ghazal, and the author himself to a virtual audience of 148. On April 29, CAS partnered with the Staff Council’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee to organize “Arab Americans and the Struggle Against Racism in the United States” as a Workplace Conversations Event at the University of Houston in observance of National Arab American Heritage Month. This event, which drew in 185 attendees, marked the first time that the university formally includes the rich Arab-American community as part of the city and the institution’s social fabric.

One of the Center’s major forums was “Palestine in Resistance: Voices of Anticolonial Mobilization,” which discussed the Palestinian May uprising to a virtual audience on May 16. The event was co-sponsored with the University of California Santa Barbara Center for Middle Eastern Studies, the AAEF Chair in Arab Studies at Rice University, and the Jerusalem Fund in Washington DC. It included a dozen major Palestinian scholars, political organizers and activists, and cultural figures in Palestine and abroad who addressed a global audience about the recent events. Given the traditional marginalization of such voices, this offered much needed balance to the prevailing national discourse on this subject. The webinar drew 275 guests and was livestreamed by over 1,000 people on our Facebook page.

CAS wrapped up a successful Spring 2021 semester with a book symposium on May 18, which was co-sponsored by the Middle East Institute at Columbia University. Dr. Angela Giordani’s and Dr. Hicham Safieddine’s translated and edited volume, Arab Marxism and National Liberation: Selected Writings of Mahdi Amel, was discussed with the authors, and extensive engagements were provided by CAS Director Abdel Razzaq Takriti and CAS affiliated faculty member Prof. David McNally (NEH Cullen Distinguished Professor of History & Business). A total of 137 guests attended this book symposium. Overall, CAS has amassed over 1,300 followers on all our social media pages (all @ArabStudiesUH) and has reached a viewership of over 6,500 for our event recordings over the past year.

The AAEF-CAS is based at the University of Houston’s College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. Learn more about AAEF-CAS.

Dr. Hosam Aboul-Ela (English) was appointed to the AAEF Dr. Burhan and Mrs. Misako Ajouz Endowed Professorship in Arab Studies.
Center for Public History
Monica Perales (Director of CPH and Co-director of the Gulf Coast Food Project)

Even with the challenges of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020-2021 academic year was busy at the Center for Public History. In response to COVID-19 closures, we took our CPH Lecture Series into an entirely online format. Following the wave of global protests against racial injustice in 2020, our programming focused on the roots of systemic racism in our society and explored ways to use history and the humanities to engage in meaningful dialogue. We produced seven live-streamed events on topics including policing, voting rights, environmental justice, and health disparities. We also hosted discussions on the power grid following Winter Storm Uri and collaborated with the Hobby School and Foodways Texas on fascinating virtual events. Recordings and additional materials from our archives and can be found here.

We also launched our first podcast – Public Historians at Work! Executive produced by Dr. Kristina Neumann, this podcast features interviews with academics, artists, and community members about what it means to do history and humanities work with the public.

Our first season also features the work of our students, who created several episodes about the history of Houston’s Third Ward.

Our work continues on 100 Years of Stories: Documenting a Century of the University of Houston, sponsored by a generous gift from Carey C. Shuart. CPH is collaborating with Houston Public Media and MD Anderson Library Special Collections to uncover, preserve, and share the untold stories that illuminate the University of Houston’s impact on the city over the past century ahead of the University’s centennial celebration. The first article written by PhD student Caitlyn Jones on Judge Phyllis Frye appeared in the spring issue of Houston History magazine, and a team of talented students including undergraduates Grace Conroy and Amane Numata, PhD student David Guzman, and incoming public history MA student Samantha de León spent the summer conducting oral histories and archival research. This research is the inspiration for Houston Public Media’s new series, 100 Years of Houston, which premiered in late September 2021. We are excited to be a part of this effort to commemorate the university’s achievements, share those stories with the public, and highlight the great work our students and faculty do every day.

One of our highest priorities is providing hands-on training opportunities for students on public facing research projects and activities. MA student Jovan Slaughter and Caitlyn Jones have been extraordinary as the CPH Research Assistant and the Welcome Wilson Graduate Assistant, respectively. PhD student Shine Trabucco began the process of migrating To Bear Fruit for Our Race: A History of African American Physicians in Houston to a stable digital home through Special Collections at MD Anderson Library, and incoming graduate student Nancy Katz also worked with us this summer processing key oral histories as part of Resilient Houston: Documenting Hurricane Harvey. Our affiliated faculty offered several public history courses that train students in archival research, digital humanities, oral history collection, podcasting, and historical writing and editing. And students worked on a variety of exciting faculty-led projects in the Center including Houston History magazine, Resilient Houston, and the newly NEH-supported

Sharing Stories from 1977.

We are very proud of our recent public history grads! Bryan Salazar (MA, 2020) started work as an archivist at the Holocaust Museum Houston in Spring 2020. In December 2020, Laura Bernal (MA, 2020) began a full-time position as a circulation assistant at the Neumann Library at the University of Houston-Clear Lake. Jennifer Southerland (MA, 2021) was recently hired at the Houston Metropolitan Research Center.

We look forward to great things in the coming year: our new cohort of public history students, more insightful CPH Lecture Series programming and podcasts on health and public history, and laying the groundwork for a new Public Humanities Lab being developed in Dr. Leandra Zarnow’s and Dr. Josiah Rector’s Fall 2021 class. As we inch closer to our 40th anniversary in 2024, we are proud of all we accomplished and are excited to explore new opportunities to do history for and with the community.

Since 1984, the Center for Public History (CPH) at the University of Houston has been a national leader in the field of public history. Our vision is to ignite an understanding of our diverse pasts by collaborating with and training historically minded students, practitioners, and the public through community-driven programming and scholarship. Learn more about CPH.
Beyond the Academy

Undeterred by the pandemic, our faculty engaged with public audiences far beyond the university about their research and the importance of historical study.

Several professors published op-eds and/or were interviewed by popular media outlets. Richard Mizelle advocated for “Getting Into Good Medical Trouble” with the Los Angeles Review of Books. Frank Holt served as the cited expert on the history of military campaigns in Afghanistan in Esquire, the National Post (Canada), and other international outlets. Holt also continued his “I Witness History” series for Aramco World. For the Washington Post, Nancy Beck Young leveraged history for “Getting Rid of the Filibuster” while Leandra Zarnow engaged with the nomination of “Kamala Harris” as Vice President and the persistence of a “Sexist Political Culture” in the 2020 election. Zarnow also contextualized “Women’s Equality Day” for TIME. Alexey Golubev offered “Cold War-era insight” on current misinformation campaigns for Radcliffe Magazine.

In radio and television, Adela Cedillo analyzed “Operation Condor” for the Mexican news channel, La Octava TV. Both Matthew Clavin and Abdel Razaq Takriti were interviewed by Fox 26 Houston. Clavin spoke on the Capitol Riot on January 6th, while Takriti discussed the recent violence between Israel and Palestine. Clavin was also interviewed by KHOU about a Civil War cannonball recently discovered by a construction crew in downtown Houston. Tshepo Masango Chéry assessed the “Humanitarian Crisis in Southern Madagascar” and the “Tigray Crisis” for KPFT Houston.

Podcasts provided a particularly welcome public outlet. Natalia Milanesio examined the transition from dictatorship to democracy in Argentina for Historias: Southeastern Council of Latin American Studies (SECOLAS) Podcast and Tramas Podcast. Takriti detailed the history of the Kurdish-Palestinian relationship for The Kurdish Edition. Zarnow spoke on Bella Abzug with the hosts of Dash of Life and on her co-edited volume, Suffrage at 100, with New Books in Political Science. Mizelle explained how to cultivate public memory during disaster and disaster for Public Historians at Work; additional interviews for this podcast were conducted by Mark Goldberg (with Frank Guridy), Josiah Rector (with Maggie Rivas-Rodriquez), Kairn Klieman (with Carla Ulrich), Monica Perales (with Amy C. Evans and Brian D. Behnken), and Zarnow (Martha S. Jones).

History faculty also led community organizations in historical conversations. Goldberg spoke on Jewish food, identity, and community with the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and with the Beth Isaiah Congregation (Canada). Ivan Puš provided a lecture on the history of Czech Texans for the Czech Center Museum Houston. Masango Chéry helped members of the UH African Student Union and Students of East Africa understand their place in the field of African Studies. Kristina Neumann guided members of the Italian Cultural and Community Center of Houston in “Making ‘Cents’ of the Roman Empire,” while Tara Sewell-Lasater (adjunct) unpacked Roman narratives of Cleopatra. Raúl Ramos re-wrote the history of the Alamo with Houston Public Library and the Bullock Texas State History Museum. Takriti co-hosted a public talk on “Anti-Colonial Curation” for the Palestinian Museum.

The History Department has even reached into Hollywood once again! Zarnow’s prize-winning article, “Braving Jim Crow to Save Willie McGee: Bella Abzug, the Legal Left, and Civil Rights Innovation, 1948-1953,” has been optioned for a TV pilot featuring Bella Abzug as a young lawyer. Zarnow will also serve as a consultant for the project.

Science Cafés

Science Cafés are a movement by scientific institutions to provide free talks, open to the public and available on the Internet, about current topics in science and medicine. On March 8, 2022, James Schafer delivered a Science Café talk titled “A Historian’s Perspective on the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic” for the Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory, a research institute blending cutting-edge cell biology, genetics, and field biology. Schafer worked at MDIBL one summer, while he was studying for his BS in Cellular and Molecular Biology. On June 16, 2021, Ivan Puš also hosted a Science Café talk titled “Moravian Germans according to Ivan Puš” for the Czech Center (New York). Puš is our 2021 Fulbright Scholar-In Residence.

 Suffrage Centennial Book Club

To commemorate and reflect on the 100-year anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment’s ratification, Leandra Zarnow and other WGSS faculty organized a 2020 community book club with the sponsorship of the League of Women Voters of Houston and Houston Public Library to host. Each month of the whole year featured a book by a female author and a film as a way of encouraging “conversation about women in politics and voting rights.”

Hot Off the Press: Houston History Magazine

Check out the latest issues: “Resilient Houston: Documenting Hurricane Harvey” and “LGBTQ+ HOU: Bayou City Proud.” This magazine is edited by Debbie Harwell in collaboration with UH students. It is published by the Center for Public History.
Digital Humanities and Public-Facing Scholarship

History Department faculty continue to explore innovative methodologies for disseminating their scholarship and reaching the public with stories from the past.

This Lead is Killing Us

Richard Mizelle collaborated with the National Library of Medicine Historical Collections in order to produce the traveling exhibition, This Lead is Killing Us: A History of Citizens Fighting Lead Poisoning in Their Communities. Mizelle conducted background research and culled images from the National Library of Medicine Historical Collections. He also helped to craft the final public exhibition, which narrates the long and contentious history of lead poisoning and activism. The exhibition’s digital companion features additional images, documents, and teaching resources to guide the public through this history.

Mizelle found this opportunity to reach audiences beyond the academy exciting: “This was a unique opportunity for me to expand my work and interests in race, medicine, environmentalism, and public health to the public. This was a very different kind of project for me, well beyond the norm of academic writing. Putting together an exhibition for the public requires you to synthesize complicated ideas from the past in a few sentences to be easily digested.”

The exhibition begins circulation in Fall 2021. It will appear at the University of Florida Health Science Center Library; University of Cincinnati Library; University of Buffalo Health Sciences Library; University of Massachusetts Medical School Library; and the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine. After the first round, the NLM will begin accepting applications from institutions for a second circulation of the exhibition. Mizelle hopes this project “will lead to other opportunities to present outward facing research and teaching around medical humanities and social activism.”

Sharing Stories from 1977

Nancy Beck Young and Leandra Zarnow co-direct Sharing Stories from 1977, an open-source public history website and archive-building project which captures the history of the 1977 National Women’s Conference (NWC) held in Houston. A recipient of a 2022 NEH Collaborative Research Grant of almost $250,000, Sharing Stories will be the first to collect, interpret, and visualize searchable demographical data, biographies, digitized texts, and oral histories of thousands of NWC delegates, reporters, staff, and domestic and international dignitaries. The site will also evaluate the NWC’s legacy, including policy outcomes, networks created, careers launched, and institutions developed.

UH serves as the flagship of this project, which manages the national crowdsourcing effort with educators, archivists, former NWC participants, researchers, and interested members of the public. During Summer 2021, Sharing Stories launched its annual internship program with ten student interns from across the UH campus and country. Their research on delegates from New Mexico adds to the individual contributions of over 600 undergraduates from the Spring 2021 US Survey course.

The SYRIOS Project

In December 2020, SYRIOS: Studying Urban Relationships and Identity over Ancient Syria (co-directed by Kristina Neumann alongside Peggy Lindner and Elizabeth Rodwell of the UH College of Technology) received an NEH Digital Projects for the Public Award totaling $98,095. This competitive grant supports the creation of a digital prototype for the online exhibit, which will guide academic and public audiences through exploration of the vastly different coins and histories of Syrian cities within the Greco-Roman Period. Additionally in Spring 2021, SYRIOS was awarded a Loeb Classical Library Foundation Fellowship through Harvard University to fund the creation of an interactive timeline for the project. For Neumann, this award is a significant step forward in the project’s goals “to preserve knowledge of and encourage wide engagement with the diversity of the ancient Middle East.”

Generating Data for Slavery in Early Colonial Mexico

With co-investigator Guillermo de los Reyes (Hispanic Studies), Norah L.A. Gharala received a 2020 Grant to Enhance Research on Racism at University of Houston. Their project traces the origins of enslaved African and Native people in sixteenth-century Mexico. With the help of a classical Nahua language consultant and two undergraduate interns, they created a dataset describing more than three hundred adults and children who were enslaved on the properties of Hernando Cortés. Both this dataset and its codebook will be submitted to the Journal of Slavery and Data Preservation.

Moving forward, Gharala and her team have commissioned a public artwork from a muralist based in Third Ward. Gharala comments, “By reimagining a small part of the quantitative data as portraits, our project aims to focus on the enslaved as people with diverse African and Native American origins whose lives intersected in Mexico.”

DH@UH: Building Connections

On April 19-21, History Department faculty and graduate students participated in the UH Libraries Digital Research Commons’ program DH@UH, a new series aimed at convening humanists, data scientists, librarians, and DH practitioners at every level at UH. The inaugural program, “Building Connections,” showcased digital humanities collaborations by research teams across UH.
After considerable preparatory work, the *Project on Race and Capitalism* (PRC) was launched in May 2021. The PRC’s first major event was held on June 19, 2021, in Galveston, Texas, when it co-hosted, with the *Juneteenth Legacy Project*, a public event, “History, Slavery and Emancipation: A Conversation on Juneteenth.” This event featured Mr. Sam Collins III, president of the *Juneteenth Legacy Project* and Mr. Joseph McGill, director of the *Slave Dwelling Project* in conversation with Dr. David McNally. Held at the Grand Opera House in Galveston, the forum was livestreamed on i45 radio. Half a dozen faculty members and graduate students from the UH Department of History were in attendance, as well as scholars from Barbados and Canada, along with many members of the general public. Following the forum, members of the *Juneteenth Legacy Project* joined faculty members and graduate students from the UH Department of History for a Juneteenth dinner celebration hosted by the *Project on Race and Capitalism*.

On May 11 and 12, 2022, the PRC will host an International Workshop on Racial Capitalism at the University of Houston. Some of this event may be conducted online in light of public health conditions.

In concert with the workshop the PRC will sponsor the inaugural George Floyd Memorial Lecture to be delivered on May 12 by Dr. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Director of the *Center for Place, Culture, and Politics* at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. This memorial lecture will be co-hosted with the *Institute for Social Equality*.

Reginald C. Adam’s new mural in Galveston to commemorate Juneteenth.

**Historians Working for Racial and Social Justice**

Many members of the Department of History have been engaged in teaching, writing, and organizing for racial justice on campus and beyond. Tshepo Masango Chéry, Richard Mizelle, and Monica Perales served on the CLASS Special Committee on Racial and Social Justice, which organized a series of seven lectures in 2020-21 dedicated to confronting racism in the United States in the aftermath of the police killing of George Floyd.

These commitments are also explored in the classroom. *Josiah Rector*’s course, “Race and Segregation in American Cities” was featured as part of Fox 26 Houston’s “*eRace the Hate*” series. Other significant classes include “Race and Racism in American Science and Medicine” (Richard Mizelle); “Mexican American Civil Rights Movement in the 20th Century” (Guadalupe San Miguel); and “African-American Women in Slavery and Freedom” (Linda Reed).

Our faculty’s expertise in these critical areas extends into the wider public realm. Advocating for an inclusive investigation of race in American history. Raul Ramos was featured in the *New York Times*, *TIME*, *Texas Standard*, and *Newsweek* in regard to the Texas public school curriculum and the state’s 1836 Project. Matthew Clavin contributed to a panel discussion about slavery at Baylor University, while highlighting the *Rockville Rebellion* and the *Battle of Negro Fort* online.

In a similar vein, Season 1 of the Center for Public History’s new podcast series, *Public Historians at Work* explores the role of public historians in exposing and challenging systemic racism in our city, state, and nation.
Social Justice Spotlight: Linda Reed & Tshepo Masango Chéry

At a crucial moment, Linda Reed (Associate Professor) assumed the role of Interim Chair of the African American Studies Program and in March 2021 guided its promotion into a full-fledged department.

During the summer of 2020, Dr. Reed gave news interviews on the murder of George Floyd and the resurgence of Black Lives Matter. In August 2021, she also spoke with Julian Gill from the Houston Chronicle about Houston civil rights attorney, Benjamin Crum. Dr. Reed’s comments decisively framed Gill’s report.

In February 2021, a former UH undergrad student, Leeza Erfesoglou, who is now the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice Manager with the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, invited Dr. Reed to deliver a Zoom presentation on the topic of Black History Month’s Historical Significance.

Professor Reed also serves on the Advisory Board to the Project on Race and Capitalism at UH.

Asked about her multi-faceted commitments to racial and social justice, Dr. Reed explains, “I continue to work earnestly as a teacher, researcher, and engager with various communities because of the historical figures who were family members as well as intellectual activists. My grandparents were sharecroppers, and I will never forget the day that my grandfather grew angry enough to take another person’s life because the landowner had wronged him another time while ‘settling’ from the cotton crop of that year. Gratefully, my grandfather’s adult sons prevented the tragedy, but to witness that kind of wrong motivates activity for a better world. One of my favorite historians, John Hope Franklin, advised that scholars must be propelled to be activists. He marched with MLK, Jr., from Selma to Montgomery, and he also worked closely with President William Clinton to encourage Clinton’s 1990s apology for America’s role in the institution of slavery and for the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment with the remaining survivors in the 1990s. In brief, I’m an activist by personal and professional choice.”

Tshepo Masango Chéry (Assistant Professor) facilitated a series of lectures/workshops for administrators at UH Sugarland on racism, prejudice, bias, privilege, and microaggressions. These training sessions were sponsored by Intentional Inclusion, which she co-founded.

This organizational labor connects to Dr. Chéry’s scholarly work, which included a lecture via Howard University and McCormick Theological Seminary entitled “The Dust Never Settled: The African Orthodox Church & Religious Activism in Segregationist South Africa” at The Centenary of African Orthodox Church: Exploring Its Global Legacy. Professor Chéry also completed “The Black Manifesto of Our Time” for Critical Times: Interventions in Global Theory, which will be published this year. She is also serving on the Advisory Board to the Project on Race and Capitalism at UH.

Through KPFT Houston Community Radio, Dr. Chery broadcasts a monthly segment that analyzes and historicizes breaking news on Africa, and she is the treasurer for the African Studies Association Women’s Caucus. This year, she contributed to their statement on “The Ongoing Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Gender and Equity in Academia.”

Other panels and interviews on related themes include: “Anti-Asian Racism and Sexism Panel” (Moderator, WGSS); “Progress of Equity Impaired by the Pandemic” (Town Square, Houston Public Media); and “The State of Racial Equity in the United States” (Town Square, Houston Public Media).

Reflecting on her ongoing scholarship, teaching, and activism related to racial and social justice, Dr. Chéry observes, “In 1986, I fled South Africa alone at the age of six. Apartheid, a government sanctioned system of racial hierarchy and oppression, defined life in South Africa. The nation was engulfed in violence. My home in Soweto, a bastion of anti-apartheid activity was occupied by the military whose repressive strategy targeted civilians like myself. At six-years-old, I saw African people respond to state-sanctioned violence by imagining, defining, and fighting for a freedom they had never experienced. My parents were among many ordinary people who joined the anti-apartheid movement; they protested, organized political meetings, participated in anti-apartheid organizations, and both wrote and circulated subversive documents. I did the same from afar by turning to the study of history as a tool for my own liberation while in exile.”
The Professional Historian

“The Professional Historian” has long been a staple of our graduate program, helping prepare students for their future careers as educators and historians. A standout feature of this course is the opportunity to hear from a range of faculty about how they have approached their research, navigated the publishing world, built their professional networks, and developed their pedagogy. In Spring 2021, we took this feature of the course to the next level as the “Professional Historian Presents Zoom Series.” Our first conversation brought faculty and students together to discuss how we might foster an inclusive community of practice and augment our commitment as a department to equity and diversity. The highlight of the five-part series was our alumni night featuring recent graduates, Dr. John Huntington, Dr. Julie Sarpy, Dr. Alex LaRotta, and Dr. Debbie Harwell. Other topics included the joys and trials of researching and writing, and how to “tool-up” for teaching in a digital world. We ended the series with an introspective dialogue about the role of humanists going forward. All in all, these generative conversations were a stimulating reminder that the practice of history is ever evolving.

The Graduate Program

James A. Schafer, Jr. (Director of Graduate Studies)

I am excited to begin my tenure as the Director of Graduate Studies! I thank my predecessors, Professors Richard Mizelle (DGS) and Kelly Hopkins (Associate DGS), for their hard work. They continue their service to the Graduate Program as members of the Graduate Committee. Thanks to their recruitment efforts, we had one of the largest incoming graduate classes in recent years, with eight doctoral students and six master’s students entering the program in fall 2021. Our incoming class is also intellectually diverse, a reflection of our expanding faculty research interests. I look forward to working closely with graduate students to improve our program to meet their needs. I also look forward to working closely with the Graduate Committee, the faculty, and the staff to enhance and adjust our curriculum to the changing interests of our graduate students. I will continue efforts to advocate for more resources and benefits for teaching assistants, and to adapt our teaching assistant program to best prepare our graduate students for careers in education. This is an exciting time in our graduate program, as we build on what we have established and adapt for the future. Go Team!
Congratulations to Our PhD Graduates!

In 2021, six of our PhD graduate candidates successfully defended their dissertations. Please join us in celebrating:

Dr. Quentin Adams
Advisor: Catherine Patterson
Dissertation: “Laudianism in the North: The Impact of Laudianism in the Archdeaconry of Nottingham.”

Adams is a private high school teacher for AP History at Second Baptist School of Houston.

Dr. Ramiro Contreras
Advisor: Guadalupe San Miguel
Dissertation: “Mexican Inclusion and Exclusion in Houston from 1900-1940.”

Dr. Matthew Finnie
Advisor: Frank Holt

Dr. Francesca Guerri
Advisor: Sally Vaughn

In Fall 2021, Dr. Guerri began her new position of Assistant Professor of European History at the University of St. Thomas (Houston, TX).

Dr. Gary Girod
Advisor: Sarah Fishman

Dr. Girod continues to produce The French History Podcast.

Dr. Alberto Wilson III
Advisor: Monica Perales

Dr. Wilson received an honorable mention for the Outstanding Dissertation Award, Humanities and Fine Arts, from the University of Houston Graduate School. The award, given in the four broad fields in rotating years, recognizes an outstanding dissertation representing “original work that makes an unusually significant contribution to the discipline.” Each department can nominate only one dissertation in a given year for this honor. Dr. Wilson is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor in Latinx History at Wichita State University.

For more information on graduate degrees offered through the UH Department of History, please find us online.

Congratulations to our recent MA in Public History graduates, who secured jobs within the public sector:

Dr. Daniel Mendiola
Congratulations to Dr. Daniel Mendiola (PhD, 2018), who in 2021 was appointed to Assistant Professor of History in the Department of History at Vassar.

Dr. Alex LaRotta
Congratulations to Dr. Alex LaRotta (PhD, 2019), who after a two-year postdoctoral at Columbia became a Professor of History at Houston Community College in 2021.

Laura Bernal (2020)
Library Circulation Assistant, Neumann Library, UH Clear Lake

Bryan Salazar (2020)
Archivist, Holocaust Museum Houston

Jennifer Southerland (2021)
Houston Metropolitan Research Center
Celebrating the Success of Our Graduate Students

Our current graduate students had a very productive past year, remaining engaged within the academy and the wider community.

Publications

Grants/Fellowships and Awards
PhD student Heather Butina-Sutton was awarded an honorable mention in the Black Women’s Studies Association’s inaugural Cheryl A. Wall Graduate Student Paper Prize for her essay, “Yoruba Market Women in the Atlantic World: Tracing Profits and Practices from 1600 to 1970.”


PhD candidate Alex Paul received a travel grant through the Larry J. Hackman Research Residency Program to support dissertation research at the New York State Archives during Summer 2021. Paul’s dissertation examines the mobilization of immigrant soldiers in the United States during World War I, especially government efforts to draft and “Americanize” immigrant soldiers and resistance by immigrant communities to the draft.

Conferences and Presentations
Dmitrii Blyshko presented two papers at the 23rd Meeting of the Scientific and Methodic Seminar at Tver State United Museum (Russia): “Reverse Archaeology: How Extraction of Raw Data from Archaeological Writings Looks from a Theoretical Point of View?” and “What was Added to the Ceramics? Natural Deposits of Asbestos Available for the Stone Age Population of the Eastern Fennoscandia.”

PhD student Caitlyn Jones was a panelist at the DH@UH Virtual Symposium, where she presented work on Sharing Stories from 1977 and her own co-directed project, Building The Past, with fellow graduate student David Guzman.


University Presidential Awardees

Congratulations to incoming PhD student, Stephon Boykin, for his receipt of a UH Presidential Award to support his graduate study. Boykin received his BA in History and African American Studies from Claflin University in 2020. Under the guidance of Dr. Linda Reed, he will pursue a PhD in US History since 1877 with a minor in public history. Boykin plans to study African American history in the US during the 20th century with a focus on Black social and cultural institutions, civil rights, and Black radical movements in the American South. Congratulations to Olabode Shadare as well, who also received a UH Presidential Award to support his graduate study.
PhD candidate Karla Lira presented “Latinx and Black Basketball Players at the University of Houston, 1950-1960” as part of the larger discussion on how Texas changed the culture of American athletics for the Center for Public History Lecture Series.

Alex Paul presented “Americanization Policy by Other Means: U.S. Army Ethnic Soldiers and Singing during WWI” at the 2020 Society for Military History Annual Conference: Policy (And Conference) by Other Means.

PhD candidate Timothy Vale delivered two papers at virtual conferences in the 2020-2021 academic year. He presented his paper, “Battlegrounds and Battle Lines: The War on HIV from the 1990s to the Present,” at the virtual annual meeting of the Texas State Historical Association. He presented his paper “Alternative Medicine, Lifestyle Regimens and Patient Empowerment during the U.S. HIV/AIDS Crisis, 1981-1996” at the virtual annual meeting of the American Association of the History of Medicine.

Digital Projects and Podcasts

During Summer 2021, PhD student Allison Anderson worked as the Digital Projects Intern for the Historical Resources Center at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center Research Library. She created the “Race, Gender, & Work @ The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center: Triumphs of Houston’s Leading Hospital” online exhibit and collection, conducted an oral interview with Dr. Elizabeth Travis, Director of the MD Anderson Office of Faculty Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, and processed oral history interviews for publication on MD Anderson’s OpenWorks website.

PhD student Shine Trabucco worked on two digital projects. For the Center for Public History, Trabucco preserved content and developed a new site for the To Bear Fruit for Our Race project, which documents the history of African-American physicians in Houston. Trabucco also worked for Arte Público Press in the Recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage Digital Collections on an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) project for the book, La Patria Perdida.

PhD students Caitlyn Jones and David Guzman were awarded a seed grant from the UH Digital Research Commons to develop their project, Building the Past: Memorialization at the University of Houston. This project began in Summer 2020 in the midst of protests over police brutality and ongoing conversations surrounding Confederate monuments. Guzman and Jones looked inward at their own campus and began researching the history of the University of Houston’s commemorative landscape. With the aid of a research assistant, undergraduate Anna Mayzenberg, the team gathered information about UH building namesakes from the university archives with the help of archivist Mary Manning. They are now creating a digital product that analyzes campus buildings through a critical lens and advocates for more diversity in the university’s commemorative practices. Building the Past recently welcomed a new team member, Shine Trabucco, to assist in digital visualization and research.

Jones additionally completed summer internships with two digital projects. Among her other research and community responsibilities for the City of Houston Preservation Office, Jones led a data collection team for the creation of historic district GIS maps. Jones was also a research assistant for the Sharing Stories from 1977 digital humanities project, for which she helped to collect, curate, edit, and create content for the main website.

In Spring 2021, three graduate students wrote, recorded, and produced their own episodes for the series “Stories from the Third Ward” as a supplement to CPH’s Public Historians at Work podcast. Listen now to Caitlyn Jones’ “Looking Out from Emancipation Park” and Allison Anderson’s “Female Physicians of Houston Negro Hospital: Riverside General.” Stay tuned for Jovan Slaughter’s “Cream Burger: Feeding the Third Ward.”

Community Engagement

Dmitrii Blyshko continued to volunteer with the Peter the Great’s Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Russia), where he analyzed pottery traditions for Stone Age populations in cooperation with scholars from the Museum of Geology of Karelian Research Centre (RAS).

From August 2020 through July 2021, Caitlyn Jones was the Welcome Wilson Graduate Assistant and Associate Editor for Houston History magazine. She helped direct the biannual print magazine and organize panel discussions for the Center for Public History.
Karla Lira gave a community talk titled “Solidarity” on Instagram Live for Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church Young Adult Ministry. Her talk highlighted the intersectionality between Brown and Black communities through history, urban space, and the church.

Shine Trabucco was a Derven Scholar for the Historic New Orleans Collection, which serves as a museum, research center, and publisher dedicated to preserving the history and culture of New Orleans and the Gulf South.

Three graduate students – Caitlyn Jones, David Guzman, and Samantha de León – worked as interns on the 100 Years of Stories: Documenting a Century at the University of Houston project. They conducted oral histories, did archival research, and created outlines for Houston Public Media presentations and magazine articles.

Graduate Spaces Receive Renovation

The History Department now has a Research Lounge on the fifth floor of Agnes Arnold! Formerly the “fishbowl,” the space now hosts a comfortable discussion area, a laptop bar, a professional development library, and snacks to support graduate research and community. Teaching Assistant Offices on the fourth floor were cleaned and provided with new paint, wallpaper, and wall art. Thank you to everyone who helped make this possible, including Kristina Neumann, Leandra Zarnow, Nancy Beck Young, Mark Goldberg, Jimmy Schafer, Fadi Kafeety, and Caitlyn Jones. If you would like to donate to the continuing effort to improve these spaces, please contact Zarnow (lrzarnow@central.uh.edu) or Neumann (kmneuma2@central.uh.edu).

ACLS Fellowship

Congratulations to Lindsay Amaral (PhD, 2020), who received a Leading Edge Fellowship through the American Council of Learned Societies. This program identifies scholars who will lead “substantive projects that draw on the skills and capacities honed in the course of earning the humanities PhD.” Amaral was appointed to Hunger Free America, a “nonpartisan, national nonprofit group working to enact the policies and programs needed to end domestic hunger and ensure that all Americans have sufficient access to nutritious food.” Amaral will work as a research manager for the project, “SNAP Outcomes: How Public Benefits Impact Recipients’ Lives.” She will investigate “the long-term impacts of SNAP on past and current recipients” and “will collaboratively produce a report outlining the benefits of the SNAP program for individuals, families, and communities, using a variety of sources, to be used by Hunger Free America and affiliates to advocate for maintaining and expanding policy to end hunger in America.” Follow Amaral’s project on Twitter @lindsaydamaral.
The Undergraduate Program
Leandra Zarnow
(Director of Undergraduate Studies)

As the new Director of Undergraduate Studies, I am very excited about the future horizons of our history majors and minors as we enhance our degree programs.

In 2022, stay tuned for our new professional track, which will allow students to concentrate their studies in: law and policy; energy and environment; science, medicine and technology; and public history. We have added this degree enhancement because we know that our students have wide-ranging interests, and this will help prepare them for the future, just as majoring in history provides strong critical thinking, research, and writing skills foundational to many careers. (For more on these skills and career outcomes, check out the YouTube video, “Why Study History,” created by UH faculty.)

During Covid-19, many of our professors went digital in innovative ways that included assignments augmenting digital research skills, student-powered Twitter and Instagram projects, and multimedia lectures on YouTube. Bringing the best of these practices into the fold, we are exploring lasting ways to reform curriculum to meet the needs of digital-born students.

This year, we are also boosting connections between alumni and current students at events such as our new alumni roundtable in the fall and the ever-popular Career Day in the spring. We hope to foster greater networking among students on and off campus, too, by lightening the mood with events like our finals study break watch party.

The bottom line—it’s a great time to be a history major at UH.

Meet Ms. Aarti Sharma

My name is Aarti Sharma, and I am the undergraduate major advisor for history and history-related minors. My mission is to educate the history majors about their degree requirements. I get that the language for advising can be hard to understand. So, I try my best to explain things in a student-centered way. I firmly believe there is no such thing as a stupid question. While I am fluent in English, I can understand Hindi. My hobbies include working out, watching Korean dramas, and learning about other cultures.

Visit the department’s website for information on program requirements, advising hours, and contact information.

History Students Accepted into Graduate School
- Kelli Anderson, Oxford University, MA program in Medieval Studies
- Eva Bernal, Texas Women’s University, Master of Library Science program
- John Dodds, South Texas College of Law
- Aaron Goffney, University of Texas at Arlington, PhD program in History
- John Huynh, Texas Tech University Health Science Center at Dallas, Pharmacy Residency
- Nancy Katz, University of Houston, PhD program in History
- Stefan Loos, University of Colorado Boulder, MA program in Classics
- Juan Pablo Ochoa, University of North Texas, graduate program
- Amy Rowles, University of Edinburgh, MA in Scottish history

AHA History Gateways Initiative

In 2018, the American Historical Association (AHA) invited our department to join in a Mellon Foundation funded initiative to collaboratively redesign Introductory American History courses. The following year, a cohort of faculty gathered to participate in the Gardner Institute’s Gateways to Completion G2C process to redesign traditionally high-enrollment introductory courses with low completion rates. Drs. Hopkins and Ramos attended the G2C Teaching and Learning Institute and joined with Drs. Goldberg, Schafer, Young and Zarnow (and later Dr. Rector) to innovate in the classroom space. Although the process was delayed a bit by the pandemic, the initial questions asked in the group resonated with the quick change of teaching necessary to continue learning in the quarantine. The department continues to work together with our local collaborators at UH-D, TSU and HCC as well as the other nodes in Chicago and New York. The History Gateways collaborative will meet again this January at the AHA in New Orleans. For more information on the project, see the AHA site.
History Undergrads Seize Research Opportunities

Student Internships/Grants
Grants created expanded internship opportunities for several of our students to work on faculty-led research projects.

Grace Conroy and Amane Numata worked with Dr. Debbie Harwell as interns on the 300 Years of Stories: Documenting a Century at the University of Houston Project, conducting oral histories, doing archival research, and creating outlines for Houston Public Media presentations and Houston History magazine articles. The project is supported by a grant from Carey C. Shuart.

Miles Bednorz and Grace Conroy received the Provost’s Undergraduate Research Scholarship (PURS) to work with Dr. Debbie Harwell and Dr. Todd Romero on the Resilient Houston: Documenting Hurricane Harvey Project. They are writing abstracts for approximately ninety interviews and preparing all components for inclusion in the archives.

Jaden Urdiales interned with Dr. Norah Gharala as part of her project on slavery in early Colonial Mexico, supported by the UH Grant to Enhance Research on Racism.

Mellon Research Scholars Program
The Mellon Research Scholars Program supports students from underrepresented backgrounds (Hispanic, African American, Pacific Islander) and other undergraduates, with a demonstrated commitment to the goal of building a diverse academy in the humanities. Each participant receives a total of $5,000 for conducting a summer research project and participating in developmental academic and mentorship activities from spring of their junior year through spring of their senior year.

2020 Cohort
Antonio Enríquez: “La Gran Chichimeca: Chichimecan Place in New Spanish Society” aimed to shed light on the lives of the Native Americans who fall under the blanket term of the Chichimeca. (Advisor: Norah Gharala).


Pishoi Rafaie: “Let Us Speak! South African Women as Activists and Revolutionaries in the Anti-Apartheid Movement” uncovered how South African women spread awareness on a variety of issues facing their communities, including apartheid, violence, and access to education. (Advisor: Tshepo Masango Chéry).

Jaden Urdiales: “Twitterstorians: An Examination of History as It Is Portrayed on Social Media” explored how the Internet has increased and has changed public perception of past eras. (Advisor: Andrew Pegoda).


Shout out to our History Minor participants: Kaleb Clark, Daniela Contreras, and Nicole Hart.

2021 Cohort
Ariel Durham: “How to Think About Civic Education in Our Modern America [Divided]” used documents from America’s founding to the present to explore the nation’s civic virtue and how our society’s civic virtue has been maintained and retained. (Advisor: Terry Hallmark).

Tara George son: “Conquering Tierra Firme: Labor Dependence and Conflict in Early Colonial Panama” examined the subjugation of the Indigenous peoples by the Spanish conquistadors and efforts by clergy to advocate for better treatment. (Advisor: Norah Gharala).

Morgan Thomas: “Creating the Spirit: Spirit of the Confederacy and the Robert E. Lee Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy” examined the history and meaning of Confederate monuments, and specifically the Spirit monument that was acquired by the Houston Museum of African American Culture. (Advisor: Debbie Harwell).

Sandra Tzul: “An Exchange between Latinxs and Houston” involved an oral history project with immigrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico to compare and contrast their immigration experiences, their lives in Houston, and ways in which they maintain their cultural identity. (Advisor: Debbie Harwell).

Please consider joining the Mellon Research Scholars Program either as a student researcher or a faculty mentor. This year’s applications are due Monday, November 15, 2021. For information, visit the program’s website.
2021 History Department Undergraduate Awards

Each year students in the department are recognized for their outstanding scholarship and writing. Several of these students have reflected on why history is important to them – which in turn gives us reason to think about how that is reflected in our classes.

**Murray Miller Scholarship**
The Murray Miller Scholarship awards $1,000 for an essay on a historical question. This year, the scholarship was awarded to three recipients, who responded to Theodore Roosevelt’s President Address to the American Historical Association in 1912: “History, taught for a directly and immediately useful purpose to pupils, is one of the necessary features of a sound education in democratic citizenship.”

**Jacob Lively**, who plans to go into secondary education, observed, “The study of history broadens our horizons by showcasing the diversity of the human experience, as well as allowing us to address current issues and injustices by going down to their roots in the past.”

**Jasmine Smith**, a junior completing a dual-degree program with a BA in history and a minor in education, and a BS in psychology with a minor in medicine and society, explains, “I like history because I enjoy seeing the trends and movements of society over time; I strongly believe that learning from our past allows us to strengthen our futures.” Upon graduation, she hopes to move to Austin and teach in a lower-income district.

**Grace Conroy** is a senior with a major in history and a double minor in art history and classical studies. She said, “I enjoy relating past events to current ones and tying connections between them. I believe history is important since it teaches modern-day individuals lessons on a broad scope. The past does not simply define history. History occurs the moment decisions occur and actions are taken.” She plans to pursue a master’s degree in public history.

**Del Barto Scholarship**
The Del Barto Scholarship also offers a $2,000 prize for the students with the highest GPA. Recipients this year were Noorali Habib, Morgan Thomas, and Angel Salas.

**Outstanding Achievement**
Outstanding Achievement awards went to Americo Avila, Jaime Chavez, Carmen Crandall, and Nancy Katz.

**Chavez**, who is teaching eighth grade history in Goose Creek ISD and attending grad school, humorously notes, “I love/chose history for many reasons. I’m an old soul, I’m bad at math, I believe it’s important to learn from the past, etc.” But he adds, “I love history because I love stories, and history is a story with some of the most interesting characters and dramatic plot lines.”

**Crandall**, now working with the Houston Museum of Natural Science, chose “to study history because I am fascinated by the causes and effects of historical events and their relevance to the present.”

**Foley** recalls, “I was first taken by my love of history when I was a small boy. I can even place the precise point in time, when I was in the fourth grade learning about World War Two for the first time.”

**Harmon**, who is working at First Baptist Academy as he waits to begin active duty as a Medical Service Officer in the Army, notes, “I love history because it is the study of everything.”

**Sanchez** is interning at the Bowen Law firm and plans to attend law school next year. She said, “I love history because it provides the context and information about how the world has reached its current position. Our present society is able to analyze and comprehend the beginnings and falls of various civilizations while having the ability to learn about the creation of new communities. Also, it allows us to review our past decisions, learn from them, and have the chance to do better.”

Now enrolled in the Ph.D. program at UH, **Katz** says, “I love history because I have always loved a good story. By delving into history, I find that I learn about big and small stories that interconnect in fascinating ways. History offers us a mirror to look into and strive to do better.”
Chair’s Recognition
Lastly the Chair’s Recognition was given to Nadia Abouzir, Eva Bernal, Ezekiel Castelleno, and Sarah Montero.

Abouzir, who plans to pursue a master’s degree, chose history as her major, “because I find that the many perspectives of our past are fascinating and important. The way history is viewed has an effect on the social, political, and cultural components of our lives.”

Now enrolled in the master’s in library services program at Texas Women’s University, Bernal says, “History has always been an appealing subject to me. I chose to major in history because it allowed me to learn about our past while challenging my writing and critical-thinking skills.”

Castelleno recalls, “I always had excellent history teachers that were passionate about their subject. Seeing their passion drove me to study [history] in college, and strive to become an educator.” He is now a museum educator at the Holocaust Museum Houston, presenting lessons at no cost to schools in English and Spanish on the Holocaust, human rights, and upstanding behavior.

Alumni News

Andrew Gustafson (MA, 2012) now serves as Curator of Interpretation at the Johnson County Museum in Overland Park (Kansas City), Kansas. Gustafson is responsible for developing museum exhibits, leading special tours, managing social media, and planning adult programming. Read more about Gustafson in this wonderful write-up by the Shawnee Mission Post.


Livia Garza (BA, 2019) completed a Master of Library Science degree at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

MacArthur “Genius Grant”
Heartiest congratulations to Dr. Cristina Rivera Garza, Distinguished Professor in Hispanic Studies at UH, who is a 2020 recipient of the MacArthur Foundation “Genius Grant.” Dr. Rivera Garza is an award-winning and prolific author, who received her PhD in Latin American history from our department in 1995.

Have alumni news?
We would love to hear from you! Please contact Kristina Neumann at kmneuma2@central.uh.edu.

Want to learn more about the UH History Department?
Follow us on Facebook & Instagram @UHHistoryDept and YouTube @UHHistory Department.

Photo courtesy John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation