

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

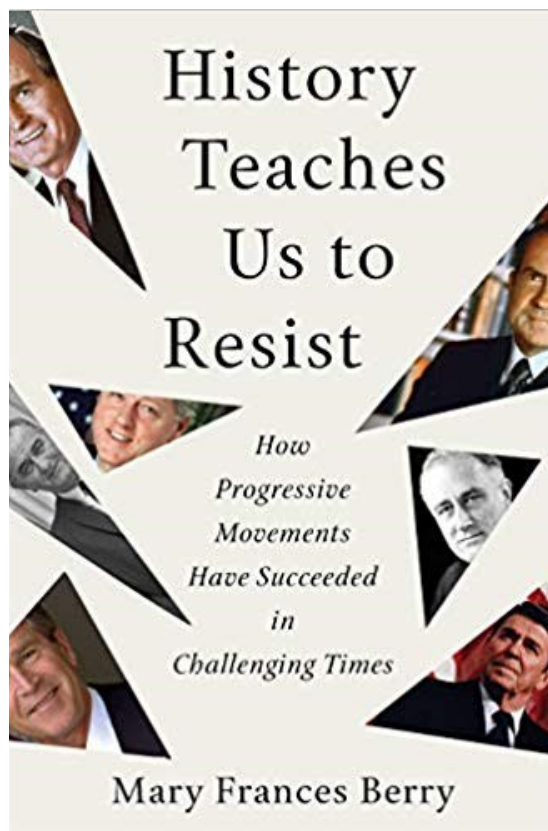
2018-2019 Newsletter

Recent Faculty Books

Our faculty members are constantly producing new scholarship. Below is a glimpse of the books that Penn historians have published in the past few years.

History Teaches Us to Resist: How Progressive Movements Have Succeeded in Challenging Times (Beacon Press, 2018)

Mary Frances Berry



Despair and mourning after the election of an antagonistic or polarizing president, such as Donald Trump, is part of the push-pull of American politics. But in this incisive book, historian Mary Frances Berry shows that resistance to presidential administrations has led to positive change and the defeat of outrageous proposals, even in challenging times. Noting that all presidents, including ones considered progressive, sometimes require massive organization to affect policy decisions, Berry cites Indigenous peoples' protests against the Dakota pipeline during Barack Obama's administration as a modern example of successful resistance built on earlier actions.

Beginning with Franklin D. Roosevelt, Berry discusses that president's re-

refusal to prevent race discrimination in the defense industry during World War II and the subsequent March on Washington movement. She analyzes Lyndon Johnson, the war in Vietnam, and the antiwar movement and then examines Ronald Reagan's two terms, which offer stories of opposition to reactionary policies, such as ignoring the AIDS crisis and retreating on racial progress, to show how resistance can succeed.

The prochoice protests during the George H. W. Bush administration and the opposition to Bill Clinton's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, as well as his budget cuts and welfare reform, are also discussed, as are protests against the war in Iraq and the Patriot Act during George W. Bush's presidency. Throughout these varied examples, Berry underscores that even when resistance doesn't achieve all the goals of a particular movement, it often plants a seed that comes to fruition later.

Berry also shares experiences from her six decades as an activist in various movements, including protesting the Vietnam War and advocating for the Free South Africa and civil rights movements, which provides an additional layer of insight from someone who was there. And as a result of having served in five presidential administrations, Berry brings an insider's knowledge of government.

History Teaches Us to Resist is an essential book for our times which attests to the power of resistance. It proves to us through myriad historical examples that protest is an essential ingredient of politics, and that progressive movements can and will flourish, even in perilous times.

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Shaped by the State: Toward a New Political History of the Twentieth Century (University of Chicago Press, 2018)

Edited by Brent Cebul, Lily Geismer, and Mason B. Williams



American political history has been built around narratives of crisis, in which what “counts” are the moments when seemingly stable political orders collapse and new ones rise from the ashes. But while crisis-centered frameworks can make sense of certain dimensions of political culture, partisan change, and governance, they also often steal attention from the production of categories like race, gender, and citizenship status that transcend the usual break points in American history.

Brent Cebul, Lily Geismer, and Mason B. Williams have brought together first-rate scholars from a wide range of subfields who are

making structures of state power—not moments of crisis or partisan realignment—integral to their analyses. All of the contributors see political history as defined less by elite subjects than by tensions between state and economy, state and society, and state and subject—tensions that reveal continuities as much as disjunctures. This broader definition incorporates investigations of the crosscurrents of power, race, and identity; the recent turns toward the history of capitalism and transnational history; and an evolving understanding of American political development that cuts across eras of seeming liberal, conservative, or neoliberal ascendance. The result is a rich revelation of what political history is today.

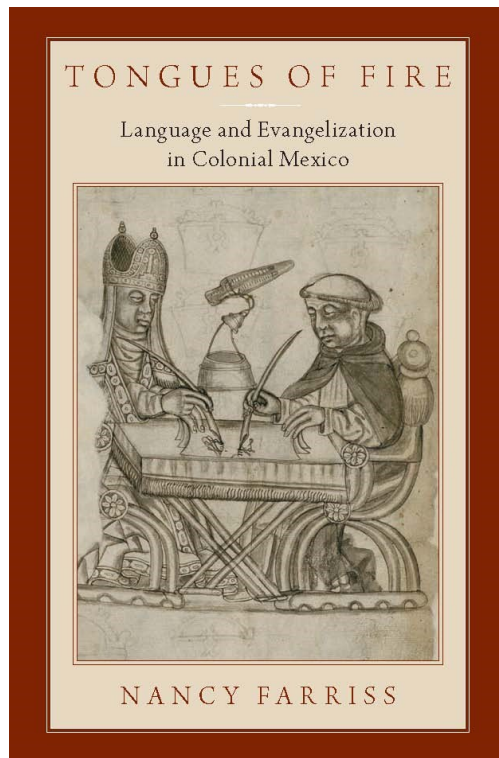
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Tongues of Fire: Language and Evangelization in Colonial Mexico (Oxford University Press, 2018)

Nancy Farriss



In *Tongues of Fire*, Nancy Farriss investigates the role of language and translation in the creation of Mexican Christianity during the first centuries of colonial rule. Spanish missionaries collaborated with indigenous intellectuals to communicate the gospel in dozens of unfamiliar local languages that had previously lacked grammars, dictionaries, or alphabetic script. The major challenge to translators, more serious than the absence of written aids or the great diversity of languages and their phonetic and syntactical complexity, was the vast cultural difference between the two worlds. The lexical gaps that frustrated the search for equivalence in conveying fundamental Christian

doctrines derived from cultural gaps that separated European experiences and concepts from those of the Indians. Farriss shows that the dialogue arising from these efforts produced a new, culturally hybrid form of Christianity that had become firmly established by the end of the 17th century.

The study focuses on the Otomangue languages of Oaxaca in southern Mexico, especially Zapotec, and relates their role within the Dominican program of evangelization to the larger context of cultural contact in post-conquest Mesoamerica. Fine-grained analysis of translated texts reveals the rhetorical strategies of missionary discourse. Spotlighting the importance of the native elites in shaping what emerged as a new form of Christianity, Farriss shows how their participation as translators and parish administrators helped to make evangelization an indigenous enterprise, and the new Mexican church an indigenous one.

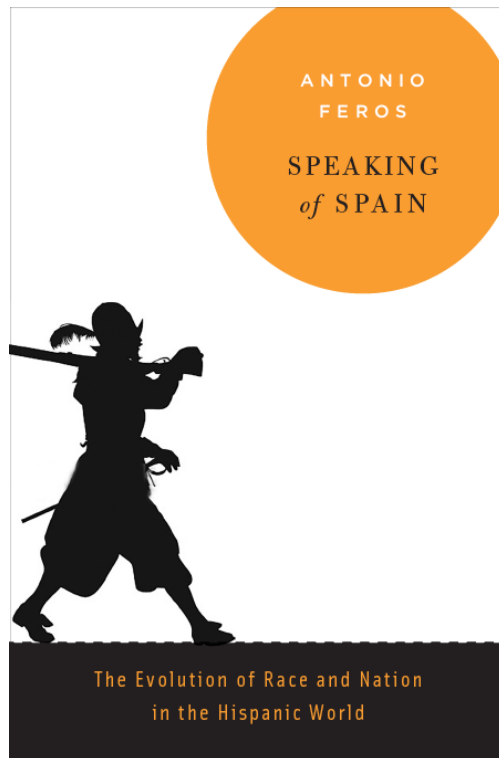
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Speaking of Spain: The Evolution of Race and Nation in The Hispanic World (Harvard University Press, 2017)

Antonio Feros



Momentous changes swept Spain in the fifteenth century. A royal marriage united Castile and Aragon, its two largest kingdoms. The last Muslim emirate on the Iberian Peninsula fell to Spanish Catholic armies. And conquests in the Americas were turning Spain into a great empire. Yet few in this period of flourishing Spanish power could define “Spain” concretely, or say with any confidence who were Spaniards and who were not. *Speaking of Spain* offers an analysis of the cultural and political forces that transformed Spain’s diverse peoples and polities into a unified nation.

Antonio Feros traces evolving ideas of Spanish nationhood and Spanishness in the discourses of educated elites, who debated whether the union of Spain’s kingdoms created a single fatherland (*patria*) or whether Spain remained a dynastic monarchy comprised of separate nations. If a unified Spain was emerging, was it a pluralistic nation, or did “Spain” represent the imposition of the dominant Castilian culture over the rest? The presence of large communities of individuals with Muslim and Jewish ancestors and the colonization of the New World brought issues of race to the fore as well. A nascent civic concept of Spanish identity clashed with a racist understanding that Spaniards were necessarily of pure blood and “white,” unlike converted Jews and Muslims, Amerindians, and Africans.

Gradually Spaniards settled the most intractable of these disputes. By the time the liberal Constitution of Cádiz (1812) was ratified, consensus held that almost all people born in Spain’s territories, whatever their ethnicity, were Spanish.

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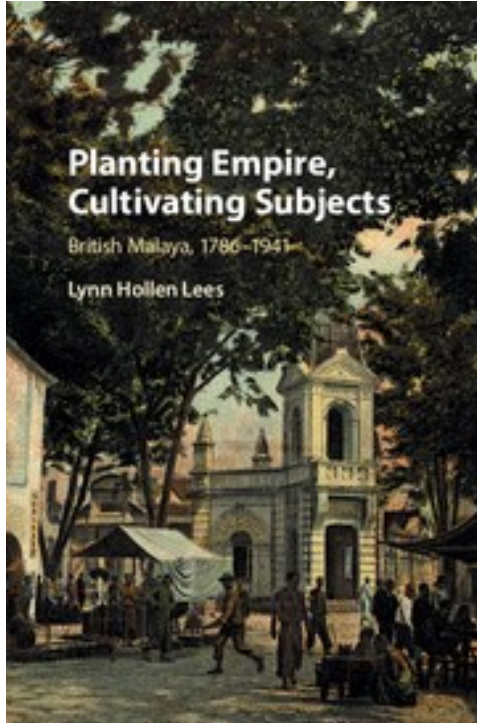
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Planting Empire, Cultivating Subjects: British Malaya, 1786-1941 (Cambridge University Press, 2017)

Lynn Hollen Lees

Planting Empire, Cultivating Subjects: British Malaya, 1786-



1941 (Cambridge University Press, 2017) uses the stories of ordinary people to explore the internal workings of colonial rule, which operated differently in different spaces. Chinese, Indians, and Malays learned about being British through the plantations, towns, schools, and newspapers of a modernizing colony. Yet they got mixed messages from the harsh, racial hierarchies of sugar and rubber estates and from the much more cosmopolitan cities and towns. Malaya had a long history of cultural hybridity and ethnic mixing, which persisted into the modern period. The British Empire brought additional mobility, fluidity, and hybridity, along with the

enactment of racial privilege and the articulation of “essential” ethnic differences. Using sources ranging from administrative files, court transcripts, memoirs, and oral interviews to periodicals and material culture, Lynn Hollen Lees explores the nature and development of colonial governance in a culturally mixed society, where sovereignty was layered and, to some extent, shared. Identities could be flexible and changed according to context. This innovative study demonstrates how empire brought with it both oppression and transnational opportunities, shedding new light on the meaning of colonial subjecthood, as well as the memory and afterlife of empire.

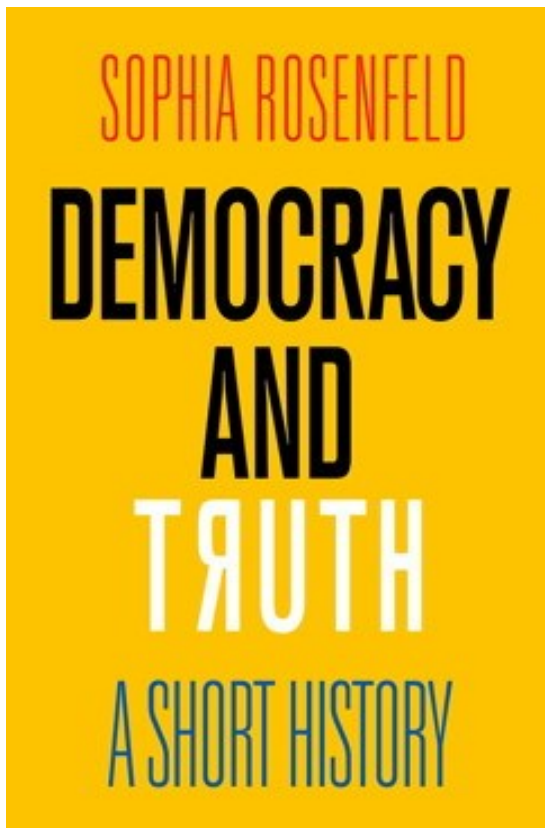
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Democracy and Truth: A Short History (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018)

Sophia Rosenfeld



"Fake news," wild conspiracy theories, misleading claims, doctored photos, lies peddled as facts, facts dismissed as lies—citizens of democracies increasingly inhabit a public sphere teeming with competing claims and counterclaims, with no institution or person possessing the authority to settle basic disputes in a definitive way.

The problem may be novel in some of its details—including the role of today's political leaders, along with broadcast and digital media, in intensifying the epistemic anarchy—but the challenge of determining truth in a democratic world has a backstory. In this lively and illuminating book, historian Sophia Rosenfeld explores a

longstanding and largely unspoken tension at the heart of democracy between the supposed wisdom of the crowd and the need for information to be vetted and evaluated by a learned elite made up of trusted experts. What we are witnessing now is the unraveling of the *détente* between these competing aspects of democratic culture.

In four bracing chapters, Rosenfeld substantiates her claim by tracing the history of the vexed relationship between democracy and truth. She begins with an examination of the period prior to the eighteenth-century Age of Revolutions, where she uncovers the political and epistemological foundations of our democratic world. Subsequent chapters move from the Enlightenment to the rise of both populist and technocratic notions of democracy between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the troubling trends—including the collapse of social trust—that have led to the rise of our "post-truth" public life. Rosenfeld concludes by offering suggestions for how to defend the idea of truth against the forces that would undermine it.