

# DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

2018-2019 Newsletter

## Undergraduate Research Spotlight

### The Penn and Slavery Project

*Vanessa Gladney and Kathy Brown*

The Penn & Slavery Project (P&SP) was founded in the fall of 2017 when 5 undergraduate researchers, under the direction of Professor Kathleen Brown, began to look into Penn's history of complicity in slavery and the slave trade. One of P&SP's goals is to complicate the definition of institutional "complicity" in slavery. Although the students could not find evidence that the university itself owned an enslaved person, they were able to verify that 20 Trustees, and the first Provost of the University, owned slaves and thus benefited from the institution of slavery. In response, the Provost and President acknowledged the inadequacy of Penn's unexamined belief in its own institutional innocence and made a commitment to investigating Penn's history of benefiting from and supporting slavery.



*Participants in the Penn & Slavery Project prepare to present their findings to students and faculty.*

Since then, the numbers of undergraduate researchers participating in the project have increased and the project has expanded. The team has continued to study the connections between the University of Pennsylvania and slavery, identifying more slave-holding trustees, founders, and professors. Penn's trustees authorized at least two fundraising trips during the early 1770s, seeking donations from plantation owners in South Carolina and Jamaica. They have uncovered information about the role slavery played in the acquisition and construction of Penn's Old City campus and found connections between the original campus and the current campus. Most notably, the students have discovered the significant role of Penn's 19th century medical school in supporting slavery and recruiting students from the slaveholding South. P&SP has connected the medical school to the certification of race-based science, the epidemic of grave-robbing to supply dissection rooms, and the procurement of the cadavers of enslaved people for dissection and creating anatomical specimens. They have also identified a number of prominent graduates of the medical school who published on the topics of polygenesis and the biological basis of race, or otherwise defended slavery.

The student researchers have been presenting their findings regularly at Penn and in the Philadelphia area since the inception of the project. Their findings will be displayed on the Penn & Slavery Project's website, which will launch in 2019.

# DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

2018-2019 Newsletter

## The Penn History Review

Founded in 1991, the *Penn History Review* is a journal for undergraduate historical research. Published twice a year through the Department of History, the journal is a non-profit publication produced by and primarily for undergraduates. The Editorial Board of the PHR is dedicated to publishing the most original and scholarly research submitted for consideration every semester. The publication considers both submissions from Penn students as well as work by students from other colleges and universities in the United States. The Board, comprised of thirteen undergraduate students majoring in History, manages and executes the entire process. The first two months of each semester are devoted to reviewing submissions. The Board meets weekly to discuss and debate the merits of each submission, ultimately choosing the best 3-5 for publication. Following this selection process, the Board splits into teams to extensively edit each selection for content and form, polishing the articles into superior versions that are ready for publication.



In Fall 2018, the PHR published Volume 25, Issue 2 of its journal. This issue featured two articles written by Penn students; the first focused on the rule of law and its role in 20th century Chinese diplomatic relations, and the second discussed interactions between the Chinese in Shanghai and Jewish refugees during World War II. This issue also featured two articles submitted by students of other universities, which concerned Britain's utility fashion scheme during WWII and American human trophy collecting during WWII. Currently, the Editorial Board is working hard on selecting submissions for publication in Volume 26, Issue 1 (Spring 2019) of the *Penn History Review*. This semester has seen an exceptional number of high-quality submissions, and the selection process has been difficult, but stimulating, for all Board members. The Board is about to enter the editing phase of the process, in anticipation that this issue will be published mid-May.

To view the online editions of our *Penn History Review*, please [click here](#).

## Why Study History

*Sophia Rosenfeld recently contributed to a Washington Post article, "Historians: What kids should be learning in school right now." Dr. Rosenfeld discusses the ways in which an undergraduate education in history has immediate and urgent applications in contemporary society. Read her excerpt below, or find the full article [here](#).*

"Rather than highlight a specific moment in history looking for lessons for our crazy present, I would try to teach students something about the nature and history of truth. And I'd do so in such a way as to simultaneously highlight some basic principles of democracy.

First, students need to learn how historians establish factual knowledge about the past—whether that means the existence of the Crusades or the unemployment rate last year. Evidence collection, interpretation, verification: these are all vital skills (more so than ever in the age of the internet and social media) that students can only learn from doing themselves. So is distinguishing proven truths, or knowledge, from falsehoods or unproven beliefs. I would also make sure that students understand how essential agreement about basic facts is for determining effective policy and even for engaging in productive political debates with people holding different values, two key democratic activities...

History education matters right now, and one big reason is because it teaches citizens-in-training both how to establish truth and how to take a critical eye to much of what passes for it in the world today."



Mitchell Chan  
*on the Rule of Law and  
China's Unequal Treaties*

Qingyang Zhou  
*on Interactions between Chinese  
and Jewish refugees during WWII*

Amanda Durfee  
*on Britain's Wartime Utility  
Fashion Scheme*

Walker S. Schneider  
*on American Human  
Trophy Collecting*

# DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

---

2018-2019 Newsletter

## Undergraduate Honors Thesis Abstracts

*Each year, some of our most outstanding history majors spend a year conducting original research and writing a thesis based on their findings. Below are summaries of the honors theses produced by our students in 2019.*

### **Parker Abt**

*What They Can Do Themselves: Agency and Politics in South Texas Colonias, 1945-95*

Colonias are impoverished communities near the US-Mexico border outside the jurisdiction of cities. They lack basic services like potable water, drainage systems, indoor plumbing, or emergency services. The economic realities of the border region created the need for colonias in the Lower Rio Grande Valley around 1950. Despite their deficiencies, colonias were culturally acceptable, which allowed their numbers to grow until the 1980s when hundreds of thousands called them home. In that decade, colonia families rallied to bring \$500 million in state funding to build the basic infrastructure their communities lacked. Analyzing the history of community organizing in the colonias up to this victory demonstrates that even the poorest of Americans could make massive gains through engaging the political systems of the late twentieth century.

### **Julia Barr**

*"Nobody Roots for Goliath": The Blitz, the Bombing of Germany, and British National Identity*

The bombing of Germany in World War II remains a contentious subject in British history and memory. While celebrated during the War, Bomber Command's morality and contribution to defeating Germany were immediately called into question upon Allied victory. Criticism of Bomber Command was constructed upon notions of and challenges to British national identity. The Blitz provided the language for this: as British society was plunged into chaos and social norms disrupted, so too did the bombing of Germany represent a break with perceived standards of conduct; thus both experiences posed challenges to Britain's preconceived national identity. Following the War, Britain was forced to grapple with the reality that it too had conducted its war effort as a despotic power, problematizing Britain's diametric understanding of the War as one between good and evil. This crisis of identity was further exacerbated by the triumph of Clement Attlee and the Labour party in the 1945 elections, and the transition from wartime to peacetime government created a political rift that served to cultivate condemnation of Bomber Command. The rise of the Welfare State further shaped the trajectory of criticism of Bomber Command by setting new expectations of how a government should care for its citizens. This intensified outrage at the sacrifices that the government and military leadership had required from both its airmen and citizens during the War. Even amidst different sociopolitical contexts, resurgent criticism of Bomber Command continually harkened back to the language of national identity that developed during the War itself. exposed to the values underlying them.

# DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

---

2018-2019 Newsletter

## Undergraduate Honors Thesis Abstracts

### **Courtney Carpinello**

*Defining America; Noah Webster and Educational Discourse in New England's 19th Century Unitarian Controversy*

This project explores the impact of religious turmoil in nineteenth-century New England on the creation of public schools in the region. Puritans had settled in the area in the seventeenth century, and for generations, their descendants' had continued to practice Calvinist Congregationalism. By the first decades of the nineteenth century, however, the relative religious uniformity that New England had long benefited from began to erode. Tensions emerged as many elites in the region chose to reject the religious conservatism of their ancestors and instead, adopted a far more liberal, interpretative approach to Christianity under the name Unitarianism. At the same time, there was a growing sense of awareness that public schools were about to become widespread, and classrooms were going to offer an unprecedented opportunity to impress certain values onto the American public; thus, schools became one of the battlefields on which Unitarians and Congregationalists fought for control over the national consciousness. This thesis traces the ensuing conflict through the lexicographer Noah Webster, who after undergoing a spiritual re-awakening in his adult life committed himself to creating schoolbooks that would inculcate children with the values of conservative Congregationalism. Webster's religious motivations have been almost entirely ignored by historiography; Unitarians at the time, however, recognized these motives and dealt with him accordingly as an opponent. Despite their resistance, by the time Webster died in 1843, almost every American schoolchild had learned to read and write using his books, and therefore, they had also been exposed to the values underlying them.

### **Arjun Doshi**

*The Heart of Indian Pedagogy: Religion, Language, and the Anglicist-Orientalist Controversy (1770-1854)*

This project explores the impact of religious turmoil in nineteenth-century New England on the creation of public schools in the region. Puritans had settled in the area in the seventeenth century, and for generations, their descendants' had continued to practice Calvinist Congregationalism. By the first decades of the nineteenth century, however, the relative religious uniformity that New England had long benefited from began to erode. Tensions emerged as many elites in the region chose to reject the religious conservatism of their ancestors and instead, adopted a far more liberal, interpretative approach to Christianity under the name Unitarianism. At the same time, there was a growing sense of awareness that public schools were about to become widespread, and classrooms were going to offer an unprecedented opportunity to impress certain values onto the American public; thus, schools became one of the battlefields on which Unitarians and Congregationalists fought for control over the national consciousness. This thesis traces the ensuing conflict through the lexicographer Noah Webster, who after undergoing a spiritual re-awakening in his adult life committed himself to creating schoolbooks that would inculcate children with the values of conservative Congregationalism. Webster's religious motivations have been almost entirely ignored by historiography; Unitarians at the time, however, recognized these motives and dealt with him accordingly as an opponent. Despite their resistance, by the time Webster died in 1843, almost every American schoolchild had learned to read and write using his books, and therefore, they had also been exposed to the values underlying them.

# DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

---

2018-2019 Newsletter

## Undergraduate Honors Thesis Abstracts

### **Eric Eisner**

*“The Most Generous, Disinterested, and Philanthropic Motives”: Religion, Race, and the Maryland Jew Bill*

In 1826, after an eight-year debate, the Maryland legislature amended the state constitution to allow Jews to hold political office—a law known to supporters and opponents alike as the “Jew Bill.” Just sixteen years earlier, however, the state had disenfranchised free blacks. Whereas previously all men with property could vote, after 1810, the state restricted the franchise to white men. What can explain Maryland expanding political rights for Jews and reducing political rights for free blacks in the same generation? The experience of Jews and blacks in Maryland illustrates America’s Jacksonian turn in the early nineteenth century, as the eighteenth-century grounding of political rights in property and faith gave way to the nineteenth century emphasis on race and sex. The basis for political inclusion shifted from “exterior” qualities—what a person possessed—to “interior” ones—what a person was. At the same time as Maryland was disenfranchising its black population, it also eliminated the property requirement to vote. In a speech in favor of the Jew Bill, a Maryland legislator insisted that Thomas Kennedy, the law’s principal champion, had only “the most generous, disinterested, and philanthropic motives.” Kennedy supported slavery as a positive good, and the proponents of the Jew Bill, in fact, opposed black rights more vigorously than the critics of Jewish rights. There has not been a linear path to equal rights in the United States. In the early nineteenth century, Jews pressed ahead and African Americans fell back on the winding road to equal rights.

### **Justin Estreicher**

*Celebrating Conquest: Broken Treaties, World’s Fairs, and Constructions of Native American Savagery, 1875-1905*

Paradoxically, between 1875 and 1905, international audiences gathered in the United States for public celebrations of the “noble savage” at the very time that Native American cultures were actively being suppressed. A careful analysis of representations of native people at three World’s Fairs—those in Philadelphia (1876), Chicago (1893), and St. Louis (1904)—and in such other venues as Wild West shows is the key to reconciling this paradox. Official fair publications (guidebooks, promotional weeklies, and souvenir books) and the unpublished writings of academics involved in planning Indian displays for international expositions provide insights into the terms under which the public could celebrate Native Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Notions of “ignoble savagery” constructed to justify the violation of treaties with native peoples stood at the heart of a logic of conquest that World’s Fairs and Wild West shows extended by presenting a contrasting conception of “noble savagery,” based on either progress toward “civilization” or the disappearance of a fictionalized noble past. In light of the latter standard of “nobility,” the representation of an ostensibly vanished people became a right of conquest. The invocation of “savagery” in justifying duplicitous dealings with Indians in centuries past forces the modern observer to question whether a sense of the contemptible backwardness of indigenous people opposed to modern development persists in debates over such issues as the construction of oil pipelines under Lakota lands, a possible present-day analogue of gold mining in the Black Hills in the 1870s.



# DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

---

2018-2019 Newsletter

## Undergraduate Honors Thesis Abstracts

### **Meerabelle Jesuthasan**

*The Third World In Paris: Intercolonialisms and Internationalisms Between the Wars*

Paris of the 1920s and 1930s has many reputations; among them is the one penned by American author Roger Baldwin, who called it “the capital of the men without a country.” The Union Intercoloniale, founded in 1921 as a branch of the French Communist Party (PCF), was perhaps the most striking emblem of this sentiment. Originally conceived as a method of expanding the PCF’s reach with colonial subjects, the group soon became a center of activism for those with the common goal of overthrowing imperialism. Such solidarity might seem to mirror the emerging Third Worldist movement of the ’50s and ’60s. However, the UIC was not as successful as this later iteration. By the 1930s, many new groups had replaced the Union Intercoloniale, which was dissolved in 1928. Although some aimed to promote intercolonial alliance, many of these groups’ ideologies and goals tended to be more rooted in race or nationality-based conceptions of identity, which eventually supplanted the intercolonial ideal. How did this vision of internationalism evolve in this context of ever-changing alliances and ideologies? While many well-known nationalist movements were developed in the broader interwar period, the intercolonial solidarity represented by the UIC is an important instance of internationalism that provided opportunities for radical exchange across barriers of class and race, the latter of which was to become an important basis of later anti-colonial ideologies. The intellectual and social interactions between colonial and non-Western people in the context of the Parisian sociopolitical sphere offers an opportunity to explore how these interactions shaped the anti-imperialist ideologies that fueled conflicts and alliances well into the latter half of the twentieth century.

### **Bryce Klehm**

*Soldier-to Soldier Diplomacy: Joint U.S.-Russian Peacekeeping in Bosnia, 1995-1996*

The Dayton Accords of 1995 ended the Bosnian genocide and stipulated that a peacekeeping implementation force (IFOR) would occupy Bosnia for one year after the agreement. IFOR consisted of soldiers from European countries including Russian soldiers under American command, the result of an agreement negotiated months before the Dayton conference by Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott and Defense Secretary William Perry. It seems unusual that Russia would cooperate with Americans close to its border. This Honors History Thesis answers various questions about US-Russia relations while examining the narrative of Russia’s implementation into IFOR. Why did US-Russian cooperation occur when it did? Could this have been a sustainable partnership?

### **Madeleine Lamon**

*Study in Contradiction: Jewish Parisians in Pursuit of Emancipation in the French Revolution (1789)*

On 26 August 1789 the delegates of the Estates General issued the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen — a revolutionary document that extended civil rights to qualified men throughout France. This document was not, however, universal as it did not extend the rights of citizenship to women, racial minorities, or non-Catholics. At the same time, roughly 40,000 Jews lived in disparate communities in the French kingdom. Only 500 resided in two distinct and geographically separate communities within the walls of Paris. This group, though small, was politically significant as leaders from both the Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities of Paris called upon local and national political bodies to extend the rights of citizenship to all Jewish men living in France. This thesis examines the political maneuverings of Parisian Jews from the outbreak of Revolution in 1789 to the full civil emancipation of French Jews in September 1791 as well as the effects upon the members of the Jewish communities in the capital in the aftermath of emancipation.

# DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

---

2018-2019 Newsletter

## Undergraduate Honors Thesis Abstracts

### **Celeste Marcus**

*"The Voices of Jacob: Journalism and Jewish Consciousness in Nineteenth Century British Jewry"*

From 1841 to 1848, a community in transition created *The Voice of Jacob*, the first Jewish newspaper in Britain. Jacob Franklin, its founder and the editor in chief for five of the organization's seven years, established a publication whose pages were peppered with many different sorts of characters. Its authors had contradictory theories. They disagreed about the definitions of patriotism, Jewish loyalty, and religious and social progress. While it certainly promoted rigorous study and careful philosophical thought, not all of its readers were intellectuals, and not all of its intellectual articles were written by scholars or religious authorities. The community for and by which the paper was created is preserved in its pages. The characters, style and the many relationships its members had with Judaism, England and each other are explored in this thesis. Special focus is given to the history of the Jewish community in England, Jewish Christian relations, Jewish reform and the effects of the press on Modern Jewry.

### **Sarah Marron**

*"Una Lucha Fratricida: Violence and Repression in Seville During the Spanish Civil War"*

The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) was an extremely violent conflict that pitted citizens, neighbors, friends, and families against each other and transformed the country's political, social, and economic framework. Despite the overall failure of the right-wing, Nationalist military coup d'état on 18 July 1936, Nationalist General Gonzalo Queipo de Llano triumphed in the south; quickly and forcefully occupied Seville, which had remained loyal to the legitimate government of the Republic; and initiated a ferocious repression meant to subjugate all potential resistance. Within the past ten years, there has been considerable academic and popular debate in Spain about the origins, objectives, execution, and consequences of this repression: most contemporary scholarship either condemns or praises the right (Franco and his allies) or the left (parties that supported the Republic). Seville, a majority Republican city under complete Nationalist control since the start of the war, presents a historically unique environment in which to study repression from various contemporary perspectives. Stripping away years of partisan scholarship and layers of historiographic debate surrounding repression in Seville during the Spanish Civil War exposes its fundamental nature. Irrespective of nationality, political disposition, place or time, the repression at its core was rampant, reckless, and ruthless.