

# DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

2021 NEWSLETTER

## Greetings from the Department of History!

Jim Grossman, executive director of the American Historical Association, shares my admiration for [Molly Worthen's article on "The Trouble With Empathy,"](#) published in the *New York Times Sunday Review* in September 2020. Historians are unusually well-attuned to the importance of empathy, of trying to understand the distinctive cultures, contexts, and structures in which human choices make sense — or at least better sense than when I assume that everyone everywhere and at all times ought to think just like I do right now. If I am feeling especially daring in the classroom I sometimes call this “humility” or even “historical humility.” This is not a slogan that will double our enrollments overnight but I’m convinced that it matters now more than ever. It also gets us closer to what Worthen calls “the trouble” with empathy, to wit, its limits. The best kind of history reminds us that our understanding is always incomplete, and that I will never know exactly “what it was like” to be Cicero or a Phoenician or Martha Ballard or George Floyd. But it is possible to get closer, and it matters enormously that we do. (This makes me think about another recent book I like very much, [Amanda Ripley's High Conflict](#), but it's time to return to the news.)

It's harder to be humble when you're the chair of a department whose faculty and students continue to produce outstanding history and to serve the profession in the remarkably diverse ways you'll read about in the pages below. Books, articles, public history projects, Fulbrights, interviews in some of the most prominent venues in the world — and redesigning our teaching from the ground up to meet the needs of our brave new hybrid-flexible world. (To be clear, my use of that last term is apotropaic. I write it here, once, in the semi-confident hope that it will never again appear in a history newsletter.)

As it happens, I'm also writing these words about four hours after the momentous approval of a consent agenda by CMU's Board of Trustees, establishing the merger of the Department of History with the Department of World Languages and Cultures. After many discussions and a close look at the many areas of research and teaching we have in common, History and WLC faculty voted in March to move forward with plans for a merged department, to take effect in fall 2022. Depending on enrollment, retirements, and new hires between now and then, the new department of History, World Languages, and Cultures will feature 25–30 full-time faculty, almost all of them tenured or tenure-track. It will also be CMU's most important department for international scholarship and education, combining WLC's core expertise with our longstanding programs in transnational and comparative history.

As always (but now even more so), special thanks are due to Annette Davis and Katelyn Maylee for helping the department flourish during one of the most challenging years in its history, and to Dave Macleod for his assistance with copyediting the newsletter.

Gregory Smith  
Department of History Chair

# FACULTY NEWS

**Lane Demas** drew from the events of 2020 to try to highlight the importance of African American history and advocate for expanded CMU academic programs in African and African American Studies. The flare of racial protest in sport around the country prompted him to be interviewed for several publications, including the *New York Times*, *ESPN.com*, *Boston Globe*, and *msn.com*. He was featured in two podcasts on the history of race and golf, produced a segment for National Public Radio's *Academic Minute*, and published a book review on the history of football in historically Black colleges and universities in the *American Historical Review*. Lane also reviewed manuscripts for the *Journal of African American History* and *Journal of Black Studies*. He was particularly happy that the *Michigan Historical Review* was able to keep publishing issues despite the pandemic. He continues to serve on the state's historic preservation review board. In spring 2021, Lane joined Jennifer as a Fulbright scholar in Taiwan, where he taught a course in African American history at National Chengchi University, delivered a research presentation, and participated in a panel on American democracy "in crisis" at National Taiwan University. He is currently working on two projects: one related to race and playground basketball in American history, the other a brief history of the 1980 "Miracle on Ice."

In the fall of 2020, **Carrie Euler** taught a new (for her) class, "Women in European History," which she enjoyed very much. This past winter, her latest publication came out, a chapter in the new five-volume set, *A History of Western Philosophy of Education* (Bloomsbury, 2021). The chapter, titled "Religious Reformers and Education in the Sixteenth Century," is in volume 2, *The Medieval and Renaissance Period*. For the spring semester, she was on research sabbatical reading lots of interesting things about schools in England from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries.

With changes to work-life routines over the past year, **Brittany Fremion** worked tirelessly to revamp her courses for bimodal hybrid delivery and shifted her service work and community-based research to online platforms. In fall 2020, she participated in the remote roundtable "Memories of a Forever Chemical: Collaborating to Collect, Preserve, and Interpret Community Voices in the Aftermath of Michigan's PBB Mix-up" for the Society of American Archivists annual conference. This spring she maintained her work on the Michigan PBB Oral History Project and involvement with community partners, (*continued next column*)

and wrote two posts for the department blog about a digital history project her Public History class collaborated on with the Pine River Superfund Citizen Task Force and the Multigenerational Pine River Superfund Voluntary Health Map. In addition, she began working on a new oral history project funded by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and focused on documenting memories of the Lake Huron Chinook salmon fishery collapse in collaboration with biology faculty member Dr. Kevin Pangle and former student Dr. Carson Prichard. In May 2021 Brittany served as a discussant for a flipped workshop, "Digital Tools, Multilingual Sources, and Oral History," hosted by the University of Michigan-Dearborn. This summer she will finish work on an article she's co-authoring with Clarke Historical Library archivist Marian Matyn and continue to develop a chapter titled "Rewilding a *Silent Spring*: The Pine River, Community Health, and Urban Renewal in St. Louis, Michigan" for the volume *Rewilding the Urban Frontier: River Conservation in the Anthropocene* (University of Nebraska Press, 2022).

**Mitchell Hall's** book review of Amy Rutenberg's *Rough Draft: Cold War Military Manpower Policy and the Origins of Vietnam-Era Draft Resistance* appeared in the *American Historical Review* 126 (March 2021): 347-348. He spent most of the past academic year working on his distance learning skills and presentations, conducting as much research as possible almost entirely online, and dreaming of a better future.

**Doina Harsanyi** presented a paper titled "Collaboration, Resistance and Performative Flattery in Napoleonic Italy" at the symposium *Napoleon and His Legacy: Warfare, Politics, and Society* organized by the Massena Society and Louisiana State University (on Zoom, alas!) 18 - 21 March 2021. The French National Library's exhibition [France in the Americas](#) where she contributed the article on French travelers to the US and translated the introductory essay is now open to the public. She also published an article, "The Voice of Duty: Collaboration and Ideology in Napoleonic Italy," in *Napoleonic Scholarship* No. 10 (2019 - 2020).

**Jennifer Liu Demas** spent January to July 2021 in Taipei as a Fulbright scholar conducting research. In addition to working on book proposals and starting research on a new project, she also gave a guest lecture at National Chengchi University and a talk at the Center for Chinese Studies at the National Central Library (the latter her host institution).

# FACULTY NEWS



Jennifer Liu with sakura (cherry blossom) trees in Hsinchu, Taiwan.

**Jay Martin** was busy with public history projects during the 2020-21 academic year. A new collaboration was initiated with the Michigan History Center, Department of Natural Resources and the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance that resulted in a contract supporting the creation of the “Forest Heritage Trail,” connecting Higgins Lake Nursery and the Civilian Conservation Corps Museum at North Higgins Lake State Park with Hartwick Pines State Park. In his other roles, Dr. Martin led the virtual 50th anniversary celebration for the CMU Museum, recognizing many distinguished alumni and announcing that the Museum Studies Program set a new record for the number of signed minors. Funding was achieved for the Gerald L. Poor Museum Free Busing Initiative Endowment, supporting transportation reimbursement for eligible Michigan K-12 school groups that visit the museum.

It has been a busy year for **Tara McCarthy**, and she is looking forward to a sabbatical next fall. In preparation for writing on a new project, she presented “NY City Teachers’ Rising: the Fight for Equal Pay” at the Gender, Women’s Suffrage, and Political Power: Past, Present, and Future (GWSP) Conference (Michigan State University) in November. In March, she gave a talk on Irish American women (based on her book) for the Irish American Heritage Museum (*continued next column*)

which was accessible on Zoom and Facebook. She is also revising an article entitled, “A Monumental Mission: AOH Women and the Construction of History, 1894-1918,” which is forthcoming from the *American Journal of Irish Studies*. Finally, Tara is participating in a podcast and webinar for National Park Service employees, which focuses on women’s activism and the suffrage movement.

**Jonathan Truitt** has a book chapter, “Games, Sacrality, and the Formation of Colonial Society in Mexico,” coming out in July in the edited volume *The Franciscans in Colonial Mexico*. This past September he and *Mexico in Revolution* co-author Stephany Slaughter appeared on “Reacting to the Podcast” to discuss the game and how it changed from its initial inception to final publication. Jon ended the academic year in a similar fashion with a double interview by Liz Davidson on the “Beyond Solitaire” podcast where he discusses his current research on the place of board games within the formation of colonial Mexican society and the new scholarly board game press just launched at CMU. Also, of note this year has been CMU’s involvement with the Zenobia Award, a competition focused on supporting underrepresented game designers with an interest in developing historically researched board games. Of special note is the ongoing success of CMU alumna Hannah Gulick in the competition.

**Andrew Wehrman**’s book *The Contagion of Liberty*, which chronicles how Americans demanded public solutions for smallpox epidemics during the American Revolution, will be published by Johns Hopkins University Press in spring 2022. He should be finishing up revisions to the book instead of writing this blurb! He recently discussed his research on two episodes ([part 1](#) and [part 2](#)) of the Ben Franklin’s World podcast entitled “From Inoculation to Vaccination” and the [Mainely History podcast](#). Wehrman published an article comparing debates over public health in early America with Covid-19 in the *Washington Post*, and was twice interviewed for articles in *Voice of America*. He encourages all readers to do as Founders did and not only get your vaccine but encourage others to do so as well.

## EMERITUS FACULTY NEWS

**John Robertson**’s article, “Modern Iraq,” was recently published in the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*.

# ALUMNI NEWS

**J. Rob Handley** (BS, 2001) graduated with a Doctorate in Business Administration from Jacksonville University in October of 2020. He'll transition into careers within management consulting and management adjunct professorships. The curiosity he gained as an undergraduate in History at CMU led him to constantly challenge himself and never stop learning. "With a history major, your options are endless!" he says.

After five years of successful teaching at Metropolitan Community College-Blue River outside Kansas City, Missouri, **Patrick Kirkwood** (PhD, 2016) has had his status confirmed as "Non-Probationary Faculty." His latest article, "A War Time Love Affair: *The Round Table* and *The New Republic*, c. 1914-1919," appeared in *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 20 (January 2021): 44-65.

**Shannon Kirkwood** (PhD, 2019) recently completed a report, "Suffrage Activity in the Keweenaw," for the Keweenaw National Historical Park funded by the National Park Service. She was also an invited speaker at Michigan State's "Our Daily Work, Our Daily Lives" Brown Bag series (April 2021) discussing her research on early twentieth century working class family dynamics.

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# DISSERTATIONS DEFENDED

During the 2020-2021 academic year, two graduate students successfully defended their dissertations:

**Scarlet Muñoz Ramirez**

Advisor: Jonathan Truitt

Title: Afro-Indigenous Connections in the Puebla-Atlixco Valley, 1575-1650

**Gillian Macdonald**

Advisor: Carrie Euler

Title: Challenging Borders: The Revolutionary Scottish Administration and the Coast, 1688-1691



Gillian Macdonald is congratulated by CMU President Robert Davies at the University seal outside Warriner Hall.

Keep in touch! We'd love to include news about you in our next newsletter. Send us the following information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Graduation Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Degree: \_\_\_\_\_

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 News can be mailed to:

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Or emailed to:

*history@cmich.edu*

# GRADUATE PROGRAM NOTES

The pandemic presented the History Graduate Program with some real challenges. The university made the difficult decision to suspend the Joint Doctoral Program for a second year. Study Abroad was cancelled, preventing several of our students from studying at our partner universities in Bochum, Jena, and Toulouse. International travel restrictions meant that the Joint MA students from our partner universities were not able to make it over for fall semester, although two did manage to enter the country in time for the spring semester. And because of limitations on face-to-face activities, we had to cancel the International Graduate Historical Studies Conference once again and put almost all guest-speaker events on hold.

Despite these setbacks, there were some bright spots. Gillian Macdonald and Scarlet Muñoz Ramirez—both of whom first came to CMU as Joint MA students—successfully defended their dissertations. For the third year in a row, a JMA from the Ruhr University was awarded a College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences Best Graduate Essay Award. And one of our MA students was accepted into several doctoral programs in what turned out to be an exceedingly competitive year, underscoring yet again the impressive talents of our graduate students.

This last year also provided the department with an opportunity to reflect on how best to maximize opportunities that will help our graduate students prepare for what is a rapidly changing professional environment. Our Semester Abroad Track continues to offer a way for students to internationalize their degree, and many of our students continue to take advantage of our strong offerings in public history. This summer the Department is launching the Summer Intensive, our MA track for teaching professionals. After soliciting feedback from teachers across the Midwest, we decided to make the SI an online program and we are partnering with the College of Education and Human Services (CEHS), so that our Summer Intensive students can include courses in the CEHS toward their degree, while graduate students in the CEHS can now opt for a track in history.

We are also excited to announce the creation of our newest track in the History MA, the History Documentary Track. Graduate students will be able to take production courses in Broadcast and Cinematic Arts along with their history courses and then create a historical documentary for their thesis.

As I come to the end of my second and final term as History Graduate Director, I want to thank our graduate students—both past and present—as well as my colleagues across the university for what has been an immensely rewarding experience. I am so pleased to be leaving the program in the very capable hands of Dr. Lane Demas. And I wish everyone great success in all your future endeavors.

Kathleen G. Donohue

Director of History Graduate Studies

## IN MEMORIAM: SUSAN P. CONNER

We mourn the passing of Susan P. Conner on November 28, 2020 in Albion, Michigan. Dr. Conner was a member of the CMU History Department from 1987 to 2001. An outstanding teacher, she earned both a CMU Teaching Excellence award and a Distinguished Professor award from the Michigan Association of Governing Boards. Her lively intelligence and personal warmth won the admiration and friendship of a multitude of her students and colleagues. As a teacher, scholar, administrator, and a member of the CMU community, Susan did much to advance women's studies and was a valuable mentor. Dr. Conner reached the rank of professor in 1993, was elected chair of the department in 1994, and served until 1997, when she became Associate Dean of the College of Humanities and Social and Behavioral Sciences (1997-2001.)

Her scholarly articles in the *Journal of Women's History*, the *Journal of Social History*, and *Eighteenth-Century Studies* and several book chapters centered on women in eighteenth-century politics, women in revolutionary Paris in the 1790s, and revolutionary-era control of prostitution, while many coauthored contributions to the *Proceedings* of the Consortium on Revolutionary Europe ranged from the naval career of Jerome Bonaparte to Napoleon's relations with Iran. Her book, *The Age of Napoleon*, was published by Greenwood Press in 2004.



Professor Conner left CMU in 2001 to become Vice President for Academic Affairs and Professor of History at Florida Southern College in Lakeland, Florida. She returned to Michigan in 2008 as Provost and Professor of History at Albion College until her retirement in 2014.

# SUPPORTING TOMORROW'S LEADERS

Please consider supporting and encouraging our current CMU students as they prepare for their future. Your financial assistance will help provide scholarships for study at CMU and abroad, essay competition prizes, the opportunity for students to hear guest lecturers, and money for student research and conference attendance. The following are some of the opportunities available:

## STUDY ABROAD SCHOLARSHIPS

Albert Thomas & Brenda Jones Quick Graduate Study Abroad Award  
Dennis Thavenet Study Abroad History Department Scholarship  
Howard Evans Study Abroad Scholarship

## SCHOLARSHIPS

J.D. Smith Award (graduate)  
The Mae Teeter History Prize (undergraduate)  
Duane Mark Bouliew History Prize (undergraduate)

## STUDENT SCHOLARLY RESEARCH AND WRITING AWARDS

Gabriel Chien Memorial Fund Essay Prize

## ENDOWMENTS

Dennis Thavenet Study Abroad Endowment  
George M. Blackburn Endowment (lecture on American Civil War and Reconstruction)  
William T. Bulger Endowment (lecture series in American Biography)

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