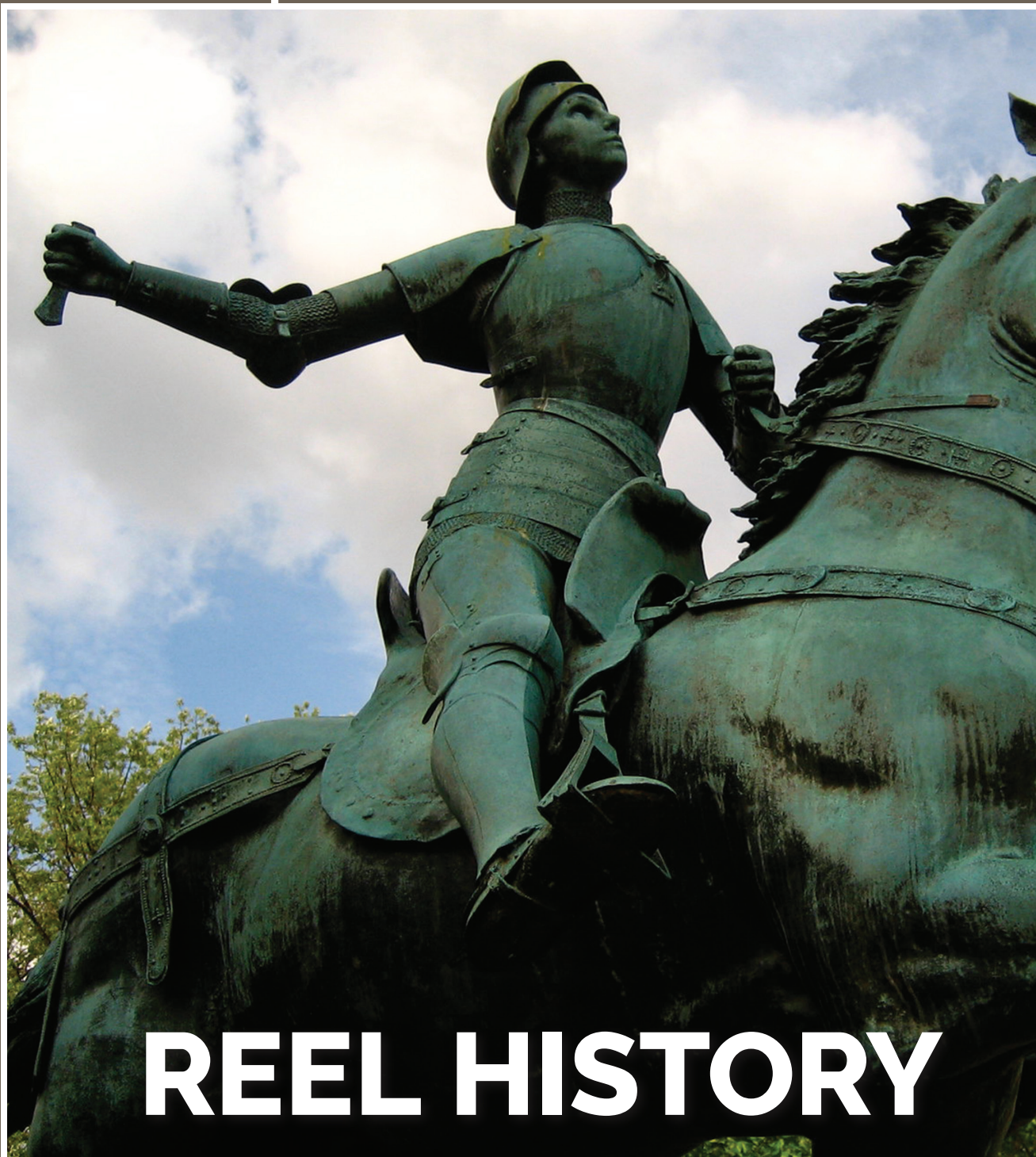


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PERSPECTIVES ON HISTORY

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Guittard Book Award for Historical Scholarship



The Department of History at Baylor University is pleased to announce the annual Guittard Book Award for a distinguished work of original scholarship in any area of history, written by a current or emeritus member of the faculty of the Baylor Department of History or by any graduate holding a degree in history from Baylor University.

The award was established in 2013 to accomplish a three-fold purpose. First, it recognizes the legacy of Dr. Francis Gevrier Guittard, who taught at Baylor University from 1902 until his death in 1950, serving as Department Chair from 1910 until 1948. Second, it seeks to recognize and celebrate the high quality of published scholarship in the field of history produced by faculty and graduates of the Department of History. Third, it acknowledges the ongoing support of the Guittard family to the Guittard History Fellowship Fund and to the Department of History at Baylor.

To be considered for the Guittard Book Award for Historical Scholarship:

- Books must be by written by a graduate holding a degree in history from Baylor University or by a current or emeritus faculty member of the Department of History at Baylor.
- Books published between January 1, 2019 and December 31, 2019 are eligible for the 2019 award.
- Three complimentary copies of the book must be submitted to the Department of History to be distributed to each of the award committee members. Please send the book copies to: Baylor University Department of History, One Bear Place #97306, Waco, TX, 76798. Submissions must be postmarked before or on April 1, 2020. Nominations for the award may be made by the author, publisher, or a third party.

A special committee of three credentialed historians will select the award recipient. No members of Baylor's History faculty shall serve as voting members on the committee, the intent being to ensure the impartiality of the committee and the integrity of the selection process. The Chair of History at Baylor University coordinates the special committee and serves as an ex officio, non-voting member.

The Guittard Book Award will be presented annually at a time determined by the Chair of History at Baylor. It will be accompanied by an award certificate and a prize of \$1,000. Award winners shall be honored by a plaque displayed in the office of the Department of History or other location as determined by the Chair of History.

For further details, visit:

www.baylor.edu/history/guittardbook

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ON THE COVER

Film has had a profound impact on historical memory. Whether watching the soldiers of 1917 running through exploding fields or seeing the Civil War through the eyes of the March sisters in *Little Women*, Hollywood sends history students into the classroom with understandings of the past with varied levels of accuracy. In the March cover story, Lucy Barnhouse discusses how she introduces students to medieval history through film, using historic figures like Joan of Arc and Ibn Fadlan and fictional characters like Robin Hood and King Arthur to teach students how to assess the reliability of their sources—even movies. This issue also includes an assessment of Greta Gerwig's adaptation of *Little Women*, which Christine Jacobson calls a “love letter” to the novel and its author. Together, these articles ask us to think more deeply about the history in the films we love.

Timothy Vollmer/Flickr/CC BY 2.0. Image cropped.

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LAURA ANSLEY

TOWNHOUSE NOTES

An AHA Life Membership Is Forever


After the Great Depression sent diamond sales plummeting, a simple advertising campaign put diamond rings at the center of a couple's engagement. In 1947, advertising copywriter Frances Gerety penned the iconic slogan "A diamond is forever" for De Beers, starting an enduring tradition. But do you know what else is forever? A life membership in the AHA.

While her peers may have hoped for that diamond ring from their sweethearts, Edith Proctor Young was different. Young has been an avid historian for her entire life. She studied Elizabethan England at Vassar College, graduating in 1944. After earning a master's degree in education from Boston University in 1946, she went on to spend 40 years as a history teacher and counselor in the Los Angeles City School District. When her beau Irwin Young proposed in 1947—the same year De Beers launched their famous campaign—Edith asked for a unique gift. Instead of a diamond solitaire, she wanted an AHA life membership. Irwin complied; Edith has been an AHA member for 72 years.

Young exemplifies the AHA membership's dedication to both history and teaching. She emphasized African American and women's history in her Los Angeles High School classrooms, attending AHA summer teachers' workshops at California universities to learn more about these growing fields. She planned to travel to China in 1948 to learn about Chinese history, before the revolution shut its borders. Soon after China reopened for tourism in the 1970s, Young finally took this trip and two others and brought these experiences to her classroom. She built a large personal archive, including documents on California history, China, and the Vietnam War, primary sources that she was able to use in her teaching. She worked full-time while raising two children, and always dreaming of pursuing a PhD. Young has remained an active member of the AHA, attending several annual meetings—most recently in San Diego in 2010, where she spent three full days attending sessions on her varied interests.



We hope that K–12 teachers today find as many benefits from being AHA members as Young has. In recent years, the AHA has placed a renewed emphasis on the importance of primary and secondary education to our mission, and the Teaching Division is working on bridging the K–16 divide. Through teaching resources on our website and sessions at our annual meetings, we hope that teachers find the support they need to teach history in exciting and innovative ways—and that they will let us know other ways we can support K–12 educators.

And as you approach big milestones in your life—whether personal or professional—maybe you will follow Edith Proctor Young's example and celebrate with an AHA membership. 

Laura Ansley is managing editor at the AHA. She tweets @lmansley.



Edith Proctor Young in her Vassar years.
Courtesy Edith Proctor Young

Introducing the
James G. Stofer Fund

for Community College and Public High School Teachers

Revenue from the fund, named in honor of James G. Stofer, who attended community college in Plattsburgh, New York and was the ship historian of the USS Portland, will be used for grants to support the participation of community college and public high school teachers in AHA activities and programs.

historians.org/donatenow

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MARY LINDEMANN

AN IMMODEST PROPOSAL

Reworking the Intro Course



Nearly 20 years ago, I somewhat unwillingly agreed to teach a course called *How Historians Think*. Quickly rebaptized by witty students *Do Historians Think?* it was defined as a methods course, but one built around particular historical issues that ranged over time and place. Students encountered central historical questions: how do we know what we know, how do we seek to understand it, and how do we employ documents (texts, archeological evidence, material objects, oral histories, and so on) in “doing” history. Somewhat to my surprise, I loved the course, and I loved the students. The experience reawakened when I was called upon to teach a graduate historiography course and was brought to mind once again as I considered the many institutions now repackaging their introductory courses as well as restructuring the major.

It will come as a surprise to no one that the number of history majors has declined precipitously, even catastrophically, over the last 20 years. Departments that once had hundreds of majors are lucky to have 50. In the face of STEM and “get a job” initiatives, history and the humanities more generally have lost out. And one answer to the question of how to get more students into history courses, especially at an early stage in their academic careers, is to offer more innovative introductory courses. Wherever we work, increasing the number of history majors matters to all of us as professional historians. It is also of concern to most educational administrations: salaries, positions, and perks are often allocated on the basis of how many majors a department attracts.

So for reasons practical, professional, and intellectual, we should all be involved in efforts to draw more students to the history major. Cognizant of this fact, and supported by a major grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the AHA is participating in the History Gateways initiative. While addressing introductory courses in ways that may well increase the number of history majors, what History

Gateways particularly seeks to create is a series of courses and programs that will benefit *all* students from diverse backgrounds, even those who will never major in history.

My immodest proposal is this: perhaps we have it all wrong in precisely how we think about these introductory courses. The problem starts with the word “introductory.” For decades, even generations, introductory courses were year-long, content-rich surveys such as US History, the venerable Western Civilization, the more recent World History, or surveys of other large, geographically and chronologically defined areas—Latin America, Asia, Europe, and so on (by no means an exhaustive list). Now I am going to say something shocking: I loved these courses when I took them, and—even more shocking—I really liked teaching them. I am not convinced that the standard introductory courses, even in the bad old days, were deadly dull and did more to drive students away from history than draw them toward it. I learned a great deal from professors whose methods were traditional but whose lectures were nothing less than mesmerizing. But there is no reason not to rethink introductory courses; we have nothing to lose.

In *How Historians Think*, students encountered central historical questions: how do we know what we know, how do we seek to understand it, and how do we employ documents (texts, archeological evidence, material objects, oral histories, and so on) in “doing” history.

Immodest? Perhaps. But I am slowly developing a rather different perspective on all this, and beginning to wonder if the introductory survey should be a wide-ranging overview, one that draws out broader themes over time, place, and culture. That realization snuck up on me and lay dormant somewhere in the back of my brain for quite a while. It dates back nearly 20 years, to that *How Historians Think* course that I initially dreaded and eventually prized, and came to the fore again when thinking about History Gateways. The large-scale survey, however it's taught, remains an important and valuable course, but *not* as the introductory course. Early college students should enroll in something resembling *How Historians Think*—not an old-fashioned methods course, but one specifically aimed at introducing students to what makes history so valuable: how historians construct interpretations and analyze historical events, movements, and circumstances. Methods should not be advanced material open only to (or imposed on!) students in the major; they are where the romance and importance of history lie, and students should learn them at the outset. To be effective, however, such a course must be content-based.

There is no reason not to rethink introductory courses; we have nothing to lose.

Perhaps two illustrations will suffice. I have often thought that Joan Scott's essay "A Statistical Representation of Work: *La statistique d'industrie à Paris, 1847–1848*" is excellent in this respect: it discusses gender, of course, but it also shows how statistics and "irrefutable numbers" need to be examined in context, and how "objective" statistical compilations can write people in, or out, of history. Another example: one could use the material taken from the Cloaca Maxima in Rome to show how specialized forms of technical analysis can reveal the diets of ordinary ancient Romans, or how archaeologists "read" ruins to show early patterns of settlement in societies with no written records. Both of these studies draw back the curtain, so to speak, on the *doing* of history; they teach skills in thinking about historical issues that will be of value to students no matter if they never take another history course—to say nothing of being inherently fascinating, often multidisciplinary, and sometimes archival.

To those who argue that all this is too complicated for incoming students, I say: bah, humbug. Most institutions no longer have an old-fashioned liberal arts curriculum and the once-ubiquitous distribution requirements that

funneled large numbers of students, willing or not, into introductory courses. Many universities, including mine, have no clear distribution requirements or prerequisites: students can easily graduate without ever taking a history course. And that's a shame. Not only because history majors do quite well on the job market—outperforming, in terms of salaries, even business majors in entry-level positions. But also because our courses introduce students more effectively, I believe, to what is intellectually stimulating about history: interpretations, controversy, and analysis of issues that concerned their fellow human beings, if perhaps those in other times and places, and continue to concern them today. **P**

Mary Lindemann is president of the AHA.

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JAMES GROSSMAN

EXHIBITING THE PAST

Correspondence with NARA



On January 19, 2020, the AHA sent a letter to David Ferriero, the Archivist of the United States, objecting to the alteration of a photograph on display from the 2017 Women’s March in Washington, DC, and praising the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) staff for acknowledging this serious lapse in judgment. Our comment was one of many that NARA received from organizations and individuals across the country expressing concern about that decision. Ferriero responded to the AHA’s letter on January 24, specifically referring to our concerns about the significance of faithfulness to the historical record. Because of the importance of this exchange, we publish both letters here.

January 19, 2020

The Honorable David S. Ferriero

Archivist of the United States

Dear Mr. Ferriero:

I write regarding the recent furor over the indefensible decision by NARA to substantively alter a photograph as part of the exhibition *Rightfully Hers: American Women and the Vote*. The American Historical Association acknowledges and applauds your apology and admission that it was “wrong to alter the image.” But the incident itself is disturbing: modifying a document on exhibition and thereby distorting the historical record. This lapse in professional ethics must be addressed as NARA reconsiders the policies and procedures that resulted in this serious error.

We recognize that exhibitions staff make choices about what historical artifacts to display and how to contextualize them. Once an object is chosen for presentation, however, the professional standards of historians, archivists, librarians, and other keepers of the public trust forbid its alteration, with occasional allowance for minor, non-substantive cropping for publicity purposes. Visitors must have confidence that what they are seeing is authentic. For

the National Archives, the custodian of the official public record of the United States, to make such a decision is as inexcusable as it is unthinkable.

We also note, as NARA has pointed out, that the original photograph at Getty Images is available and remains unaltered. While we appreciate that the integrity of the original source remains unaffected, however, it is contrary to standards of historical scholarship to present an altered document as if it were historically accurate. There was no explanatory note to indicate what had been changed and why.

Visitors must have confidence that
what they are seeing is authentic.

As historians we rely on the National Archives to adhere to—indeed to model—the highest standards for ensuring document preservation, provenance, integrity, and historical validity. Scholars, teachers, researchers, and genealogists trust the National Archives, and for good reason. But that trust crumbles if the documentary record appears to have been altered to sanitize or whitewash history. NARA has taken an admirable initial step in assuring this trust by admitting error and promising a reconsideration of policies. Such admission seems to be rare these days in so many environments, and affirms our confidence in the integrity of NARA staff.

The AHA stands ready to be helpful as NARA reconsiders its exhibition policies and procedures to make sure that its exhibitions maintain the standards of accuracy and integrity that we have come to expect from the agency.

Sincerely,

James Grossman

Executive Director

January 24, 2020
Dear Dr. Grossman,

Thank you for your letter of January 19, 2020 on behalf of the American Historical Association, in which you expressed concern and dismay that the National Archives had acted to sanitize the historical record, failed to uphold professional ethics, and presented an altered document as if it were unaltered, with no accompanying note to explain the changes that had been made.

As you know, on Saturday, January 18, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) issued a public apology for having displayed an altered photograph at the National Archives Museum in Washington, DC. The public apology reads in full:

We made a mistake. As the National Archives of the United States, we are and have always been completely committed to preserving our archival holdings, without alteration. In an elevator lobby promotional display for our current exhibit on the 19th Amendment, we obscured some words on protest signs in a photo of the 2017 Women's March. This photo is not an archival record held by the National Archives, but one we licensed to use as a promotional graphic. Nonetheless, we were wrong to alter the image. We have removed the current display and will replace it as soon as possible with one that uses the unaltered image. We apologize, and will immediately start a thorough review of our exhibit policies and procedures so that this does not happen again.

On Tuesday, January 21, I sent an apology to NARA staff members as well, and the next day I wrote a post on my blog, "Accepting Responsibility, Working to Rebuild Your Trust." I also owe you and the entire professional community of historians an apology. I realize that the integrity of the National Archives is essential for historians to do their research, and any reason for doubt about our independence and commitment to archival ethics is unacceptable.

We wanted to use the commercially licensed 2017 Women's March image to connect the suffrage exhibit with relevant issues today. We also wanted to avoid accusations of partisanship or complaints that we displayed inappropriate language in a family-friendly Federal museum. For this reason, NARA blurred words in four of the protest signs in the 2017 march photograph, including President Trump's

name and female anatomical references. To be clear, the decision to alter the photograph was made without any external direction whatsoever.

We wrongly missed the overall implications of the alteration. We lost sight of our unique charge: as an archives, we must present materials without alteration; as a museum proudly celebrating the accomplishments of women, we should accurately present, not silence, the voices of women; and as a Federal agency we must be completely and visibly nonpartisan.

We are now working to correct our actions as quickly and transparently as possible. We immediately removed the lenticular display and replaced it with our apology letter. On Wednesday, January 22, we added the unaltered image of the 2017 march, placing it side-by-side with one from the 1913 rally. We will reinstall the lenticular display as soon as a new one with the unaltered image can be delivered. We hope this will be the week of January 27.

NARA is now working to correct
our actions as quickly and
transparently as possible.

We have also begun to examine internal exhibit policies and processes and we will study external best practices to ensure something like this never happens again. I thank you and the entire AHA for your offer of assistance as we look for ways to strengthen our procedures to ensure that we live up to the highest standards in the future.

As I stated in my blog post and want to emphasize again here, I take full responsibility for this decision and the broader concerns it has raised. Together with NARA's employees, I am committed to working to rebuild your trust in the National Archives and Records Administration. By continuing to serve our mission and customers with pride, integrity, and a commitment to impartiality, I pledge to restore public confidence in this great institution. **P**

Sincerely,
David S. Ferriero
Archivist of the United States

SETH DENBO

A MORE INCLUSIVE DISCIPLINE

The Royal Historical Society Investigates Race in UK University History Departments

In higher education, professional associations play an important role in creating and reinforcing norms. Even as associations advocate for change, they must acknowledge their historic place in maintaining hierarchies, even when that involves pernicious and rightly vilified discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, and other identities. Professional membership organizations do not exist outside the structures of inequality that pertain within that profession.

That is the stance taken by the Royal Historical Society (RHS), an association with a membership of over 4,000 historians, as they work to address the lack of diversity and inclusion in university history departments in the United Kingdom. The RHS's major 2018 report on this issue acknowledges that the Society's own record on ethnic diversity is "poor," and recognizes that "the Society needs to direct its attention to its own practices as an integral part" of trying to lead

change in the discipline more broadly.

In October 2018, the RHS published "Race, Ethnicity and Equality in UK History: A Report and Resource for Change." This report—the work of their Race, Ethnicity, and Equality Working Group (REEWG)—makes for disturbing reading about the extent to which the "racial and ethnic profile of students and staff in UK university History departments has remained overwhelmingly White." Against a backdrop of intellectual change that has seen histories of race and ethnicity transform our understanding of the world, the extent of the problem of the whiteness of academic faculty and students looks even starker. And perhaps even more alarmingly, the report found that "racial and ethnic inequality affects History more acutely than most disciplines."

Tracing the problem from secondary through postgraduate education and into employment in history departments, the report presents data on the extent of the inequality. As of the report's publication,

nearly 94 percent of academic staff in history departments were white. White students make up 89 percent of students in Historical and Philosophical Studies (H&PS) as compared with 77 percent across all university students.¹ The proportion of nonwhite students drops even lower among postgraduate cohorts. As students move through university educational levels, fewer black and minority ethnic (BME) students at the master's and doctoral levels mean fewer in positions within departments. This in turn leads to "a lack of BME mentors, a lack of intellectual support for projects which do not fit a traditional research outlook, and a lack of doctoral supervisors."

Beyond these stark figures, the report draws qualitative and quantitative information from an RHS survey conducted in spring 2018 of 737 historians working in higher education in the UK to gauge the extent of workplace discrimination and bias. Responses to the survey document what the report calls "significant and disproportionate levels of discrimination, bias and harassment experienced by BME

postgraduate students and staff," with many respondents noting "discriminatory and exclusionary working environments" at their universities. Nearly a tenth of survey respondents reported that they had directly "experienced discrimination or abuse," with almost 30 percent of BME respondents reporting experiencing such intolerance. According to the survey results, "departmental colleagues (39.3 percent) and students (20.5 percent) were the most common initiators of this abuse."

Emphasizing diverse stories in the classroom could attract a wider range of students.

The changes needed to address these problems and make history more attractive and welcoming to BME students are daunting. As Margot Finn, president of the RHS, makes clear in her foreword to the report, the Society

is “cognizant of the scale of the task.” It is not enough just to address the problem in university departments, although that is an important focus of the report’s recommendations. Lack of BME representation is a pipeline problem that begins in secondary school, with the choices students make about what to study for two stages of national educational qualifications (the first usually around 15 or 16 years of age and the second at the completion of their secondary education). Attainment by BME students at the secondary level also

influences what they can and chose to study when they reach university.

Survey respondents also remarked on the pipeline problem, seeing the narrowness of the historical curriculum as a factor in limiting interest among BME students. “Many respondents highlighted calls to make the history we teach more diverse in order to widen the discipline into areas of History it has previously ignored, to ‘decolonise’ curriculums and to attract a more diverse range of students.” One respondent, identified in

the report as a white master’s student, wrote, “A more inclusive curriculum in regard to ethnic minority history at the secondary school and college level” would “draw a more diverse range of interest in the subject.”

The report argues that this interrelated nature of the set of problems is crucial to attempts to address it: “The narrow scope of the school and university History curriculum is an obstacle to racial and ethnic diversity in History as a discipline.” The lack of a diverse curriculum shows

minority students early on in their education that history is not a field for them. Instead, emphasizing diverse stories in the classroom could attract a wider range of students. Survey respondents also raised the issue of intersectionality, with qualitative responses indicating that many think the problems faced by ethnic minorities must be considered in conjunction with discrimination related to class, gender, sexual orientation, , and more.

The report provides wide-ranging, detailed, and



Minority students have studied in the UK for a long time. In 1928, a group of Punjabi students were photographed in London visiting Veeraswamy, now the oldest Indian restaurant in the UK.

British Library/Public Domain. Image cropped.

specific recommendations. In fact, there are multiple sets aimed at people with distinct roles, including teaching staff, department chairs, and editors. While it is necessary to read the report itself to gain a full sense of the change the working group calls for, recommendations can be summarized in four major areas: improved equality and inclusion training; better data collection; changing practices to improve diversity in student and staff recruitment and retention; and the broadening of history curricula in secondary and tertiary education.

History departments across the UK have devoted time and resources to exploring the issues, learning from the report, and making changes.

The RHS's work on these issues did not end with the first report. In December 2019, the Society released a follow-up report that charts how they are beginning to address the problem of race and ethnicity. As the initial report states, the RHS "accepts that its own thinking and practices need to change to promote and embed racial and ethnic equality in UK-based History." The

2019 report, "RHS Roadmap for Change Update," documents the Society's ongoing commitment to change. It also lists dozens of events and workshops and a range of publications including journal articles, reports, and blog posts that have happened in the 14 months since the initial report was published. And, of course, their work is ongoing.

It is clear from the 2019 report that history departments across the UK have devoted time and resources to exploring the issues, learning from the report, and making changes. The level of commitment to change varies greatly. Some departments reported actions as minor as changing photographs on their websites to reflect more diversity. But others have made major efforts, including auditing reading lists, revising curricula, creating academic positions, and other work to attract more BME students and faculty. While the update does not cover all history departments, there is clear evidence that the 2018 report has influenced both thought and action in departments across the UK.

But not everyone agrees with the RHS's approach; some critics don't believe that their recommendations go far enough. While she sees value in the work that the RHS is doing, Meleisa Ono-George, Director of Student Experience and Senior Teaching Fellow in Caribbean History at the University of Warwick, reflected on the RHS report in an

article in *Women's History Review*. She wrote, "Adding people of colour to the reading list, increasing the number of modules that include global histories or even hiring more people of colour, though commendable first steps, are just that, first steps and not enough to achieve positive change." For Ono-George, real and lasting change will only come from moving "beyond diversity to the adoption of a social-justice oriented anti-racist praxis: antiracism in the way we teach, research and operate in and beyond the university."

Ono-George and some of the survey respondents who call for decolonization of the curriculum remind us that concerns about race and historical education extend beyond the borders of the United Kingdom. Akin to the situation in the UK, history departments in US colleges and universities are overwhelmingly white, and with history in the United States near the bottom among humanities disciplines at attracting minorities, the report offers sobering reading here, too.

But the authors of the report see a "substantial appetite for change," and Finn argues that it "matters to our students and our colleagues that we confront and diminish racial and ethnic bias." The RHS recognizing its obligation to address its own place within a long history of discrimination and exclusion is one facet of the many changes that need to happen, with two reports and the activities they've

encouraged constituting early stages in a long process of . Beyond the RHS, the growing interest in the issues across the discipline in the UK and the actions of departments at least provide some cause for optimism about the future since "developing effective policies of diversity and inclusion constitutes an essential, integral component of our wider pursuit of excellence and innovation in the discipline." **P**

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NOTES

1. "Historical and Philosophical Studies" is a grouping used by the UK Department of Education that includes history, archeology, heritage studies, philosophy, and theology. Data on history enrollments specifically is scarce (which in itself poses problems for this kind of work at the department level), so this conglomeration is the basis for the report's information on enrollments.

HISTORY BY TEXT AND THING

For researchers, history is a thing we do. It is an activity, a handling of old books, a building seen from the vantage point of its past.

As working historians, we submerge ourselves in the cultural pools of an earlier time. Those who write about Isambard Kingdom Brunel know, too, the streets of Victorian London, “firebox” and “tender” and all the terminology of the steam train, the timeline of the Crimean War, what one might eat with tea (subdivided by social class), when tea might be taken (subdivided by social class), perhaps even the fashionable eccentricities of Beau Brummel in exile or the conduct of the first Opium War in China. In short, they know all the collected scientific, cultural, and political knowledge of the time and place inhabited by Brunel, their chief subject of study.

Scholars who work on Japan’s Tokugawa shogunate have seen Kabuki theater, visited Dejima Island and the Edo castle, perhaps purchased a print showing Ainu hunters in bearskins or a room screen depicting alternate attendance at the Tokugawa court. In their lives as in their work, they have surrounded themselves with the material things of a bygone past. We know our subjects well precisely because we have enough historical perspective to partially inhabit a foreign time and place in our mind’s eye—and, if we’re lucky, in the real world too.



Scholars who work on the Tokugawa shogunate have likely visited Dejima Island, illustrated here in a woodblock print.

Utagawa Hiroshige II/British Museum/CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Image cropped.

One way we come to know these detailed worlds is through the secondary literature, which we read for graduate qualifying exams, for professional development, and out of pure cussed interest. But studying the secondary literature is not really *doing history*. Our most substantive work is often the most intimate: watching newsreels, analyzing objects, handling documents. Historical discovery—in an archive, in a museum, or, for that matter, on the streets of London or Tokyo—is the primary job requirement and the greatest pleasure of the working historian.

This is rarely how we frame the “research process.” In writing conference abstracts and applying for funding—indeed, in structuring our own thought

processes about books and articles to come—we propose a project *before* we’ve drunk deeply at the well of primary source material. I will argue, we say, that internecine conflict brought down the Aztec empire; send me to find documentary evidence. There is more to be said about rickshaws in colonial Singapore; bring me to your institution to say it (and between now and then I shall figure out what it is that still needs saying).

Yet we are all familiar with the actual course of historical research. We may say we will work on “mass movements in Qing China,” but until we sift through the archival materials, this topic is nothing more than a broad suggestion. Research at its most effective

and delightful is a journey of unexpected discovery. We don’t really form our arguments—or even discover our true research subjects—until we’ve sat with our documents and found the interesting truths within them. That’s how Karl Jacoby could turn “a history of the National Parks” into *Crimes Against Nature*, a compelling account of the way that early American conservationism criminalized local land use so that outsiders might enjoy the land in the “right” way. It’s also how we got Philip A. Kuhn’s *Soulstealers*, a riveting work about haircutting, sorcery, and mass hysteria in 18th-century China. Both books are memorable, detailed, and thought-provoking. I would be immensely proud to have recommended either project to my students.



The actual course of historical research often relies more on luck and serendipity than we may like to admit.
Thomas Rolandson/Metropolitan Museum of Art/Public Domain. Image cropped.

But how could I have? Nobody knew there was such a culturally rich pigtail-cutting panic until Kuhn sat down and found it. I might have suggested looking at superstition in Qing China, but the only way to come up with Kuhn's specific project would have been to notice references to the panic in the source material. The only way to do *that* would have been to read a wide variety of sources from the relevant time and place.

What happens if the hoped-for evidence proves elusive or simply doesn't exist?

In fact, it turns out that “good research technique” is simply setting oneself up for serendipitous historical discovery. Practically, this requires finding the time and money to examine old objects and texts for as long as it takes to uncover a story that is shocking, important, unexpected, or just plain interesting. It means walking the streets of our chosen place and immersing ourselves in the artifacts of our chosen time. It also means giving our students the luxury to do something similar *before* they've settled on a narrow research topic.

This is rarely what we tell our students—or ourselves. Convinced that archival research is intimidating and hard, we instead write proposals, fine-tune arguments, and review the secondary literature, all before stepping foot in a relevant archive. We tell our protégés to hand in thesis statements and compose annotated bibliographies *first*, long before we ask them to look at any primary source material. We pronounce research projects “promising,” “too grand,” “unlikely,” or “compelling” before students have even begun to look for real evidence of their claims. We

routinely suggest theoretical frameworks for papers that are not yet written, based on documents that have not yet been found. And we ask graduate students for detailed prospectuses while pretending that they are anything more than well-informed fictions. In short, we ask our students and ourselves for thoughtful historical analyses before we've yet found anything of substance to analyze.

There is something deceitful in this. If a chemist determined the outcome of an experiment *first*, and only *then* looked at experimental data (massaging it as necessary to fit a preordained narrative), we would call that fraud, or at least incompetence. Yet in our own field this is practically the norm: we promote a project because it will “completely change our understanding of race relations in antebellum New Orleans”—and *then*, having received the necessary time and money to pursue research on the basis of this routine fabrication, we finally dig down into the source material that will prove our predetermined point. This mis-ordering of things is so institutionalized that we positively force the process onto our doctoral students, invariably requiring a complete outline of the dissertation before ever letting them loose to do the basic research that supports it.

What happens if the hoped-for evidence proves elusive or simply doesn't exist? What if the thesis is wrong and the theoretical framework inappropriate? Some historians fudge the project anyway and produce embarrassing work. But most of us *know* that our initial proposals were disingenuous, that our firm promises were really just malleable suggestions, that the sources never tell us exactly what we expect them to. In response, we breezily shift our narratives to match the existing documents. Good

history is still, in fact, grounded in the sources—and there is plenty of good history about.

But why not be a little more honest about the process, with ourselves and especially with our students? It's reasonable to have some idea of a broad topic to pursue through the primary source material (though it's also reasonable, sometimes, just to read anything that looks interesting), but let us stop pretending we know ahead of time what our book will argue or what our reading will turn up.

And let us candidly admit that the pleasures of a historian's work are intimately tied to quality research, that walking foreign streets, hanging around mosques (to study Sufism), or swimming the Dardanelles (to study Byron), snooping in outdated personal diaries and gawping at anachronistic (and horrifying) ads—“Is it always illegal to kill a woman?” asks one example from 1947, in an attempt to sell a postage meter—*this* is the very stuff of good historical writing. Interesting tidbits turn up when you let them, and they naturally become the basis for interesting books.

The funny thing about doing history in this way—history by text and by thing *first*, archive before argument—is that it is, in fact, so very easy. Doing research like this requires, perhaps, a shift in perspective; it requires time and receptivity to the serendipitous; but it makes history immersive, and it makes writing fun. For any curious soul, an aimless stint in the archives is the simplest, most satisfying way there is to make historical inquiry intellectually honest and enormously enjoyable. **P**

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CHRISTINE JACOBSON

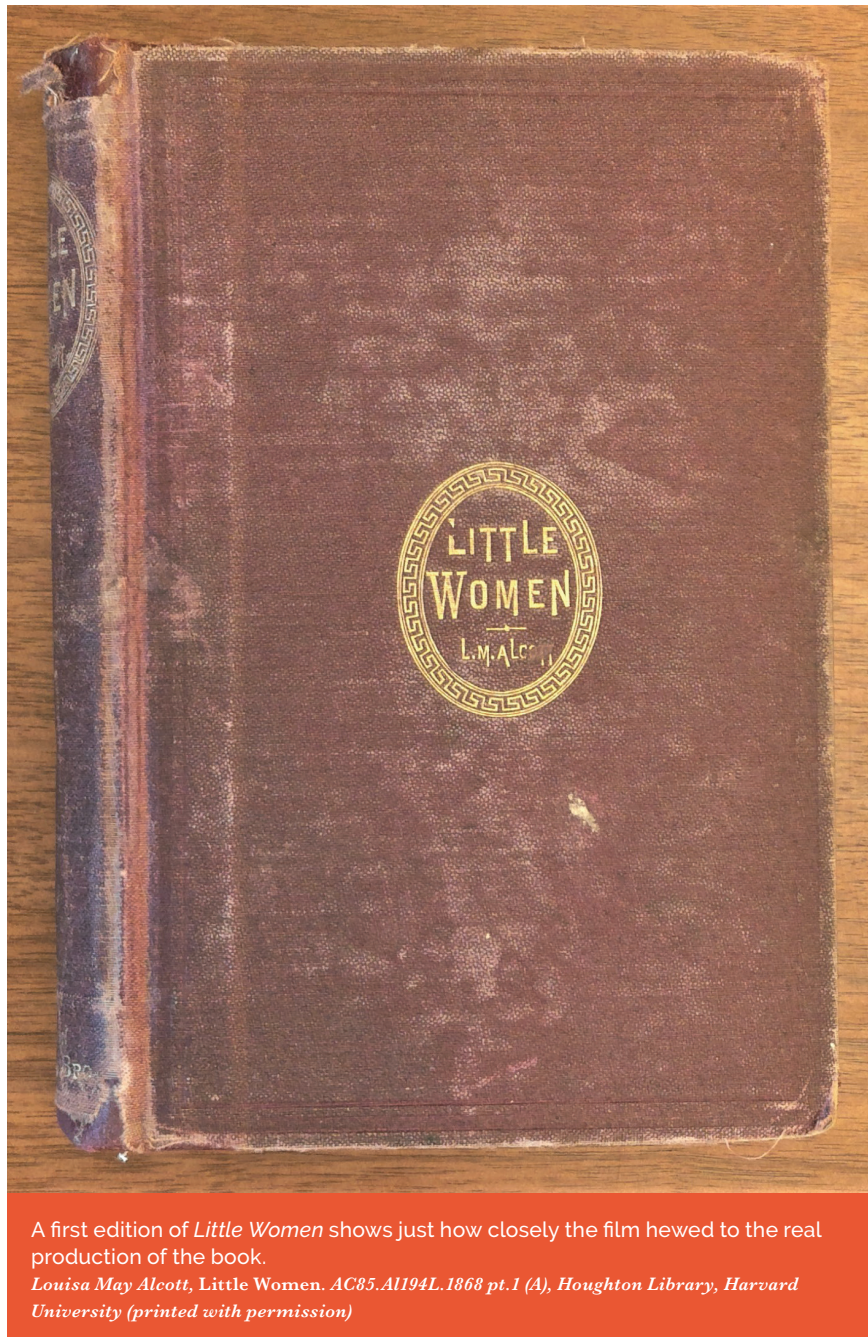
LITTLE WOMEN

Greta Gerwig's Love Letter to the 19th-Century Novel

Bibliophiles who see Greta Gerwig's 2019 film adaptation of *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott will have ample reason to drool. Aunt March's house is filled with books in period-appropriate bindings. Jo March (played by Saoirse Ronan) drafts her manuscripts in a marbled-cover journal identical to an original owned by Alcott. A first edition of the novel stands in for the title card.

Gerwig's love for the novel is evinced at the film's conclusion with a montage of the book's production. Jo watches from the sidelines as a printer sets her words in type and prints the novel on a beautiful iron handpress. A binder takes the freshly printed signatures and sews them into a text block, rounds and backs the spine with a hammer, and binds the text in red leather. In the final moments of the film, he lovingly stamps the title on the cover in gold: *Little Women* by Jo March. Brushing off the extra gilt shavings, he hands the first copy to the proud author. Book lovers swoon; the credits roll.

Gerwig's interest in the novel's creation extends beyond the physical book to the world of publishers, editors, and even copyright. Readers who haven't seen *Little Women* may wonder at a Hollywood film that would let such dry topics take up valuable screen time, but the results are surprisingly cinematic. It's thrilling to see the



A first edition of *Little Women* shows just how closely the film hewed to the real production of the book.

Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*. AC85.A1194L.1868 pt.1 (A), Houghton Library, Harvard University (printed with permission)

historic Roberts Brothers publishing house richly imagined in the film's first scene and to watch Jo spar with her editor over the rights to her novel and its ending. In these scenes, Gerwig references Alcott's own experience bringing out her novel in the competitive 19th-century American literary market. In fact, Gerwig has stated in multiple interviews that she drew inspiration from both the novel and Alcott's life, creating a meta-narrative of a novel that is already quite self-referential. In many ways, Alcott's road to publishing was more extraordinary than Jo's, and it's worth unpacking Gerwig's decisions, which draw from the literary experiences of the two women.

In 1867, Alcott wasn't an obvious choice for a marketable children's author.

In 1867, Thomas Niles of Roberts Brothers wrote to Alcott encouraging her to write a "girl's book." At the time, Alcott wasn't an obvious choice for a marketable children's author. Though she had recently assumed the role of children's magazine editor, she was best known for *Hospital Sketches*, an epistolary account of her experience as a volunteer nurse in the Civil War. (Mr. March goes off to war in *Little Women*, but Alcott was actually the veteran of her family.) The path from death and disease to popovers and petticoats can't have been readily apparent to anyone—least of all to Alcott herself; unlike Ronan's determined Jo, marching with bluster into her publisher's office, Alcott initially balked at Niles's suggestion.

Moreover, betting on a budding author like Alcott was especially risky

in this period of American publishing. Publishers in the 19th century were also booksellers, printers, and distributors, and as a result, they had considerable overhead costs. To generate capital, many American publishers churned out pirated editions of popular British novels, such as those by Charles Dickens or Wilkie Collins, to whom the firms did not have to pay any royalties. (The United States did not recognize the rights of foreign creators to their works until the shockingly late date of 1891.) Most successful publishing houses used these easily gained profits to subsidize risks on new American authors like Alcott.

However, Alcott's publisher, Roberts Brothers, forged a different path to solvency. Founded in Boston by book-binder Lewis A. Roberts and his two younger brothers in 1857, the firm made its profits selling photograph albums, which were wildly popular among soldiers and their families after the Civil War. After a few years stock-piling capital, the brothers waded into literary publications and brought Thomas Niles into the fold.

Niles's foil in the novel and in Gerwig's adaptation is Mr. Dashwood. Though played with spunk and a twinkle in his eye by Tracy Letts, Dashwood in the film is not half as encouraging and supportive an editor as Niles was to Alcott. Said to have been a "Bostonian by birth and by instinct," Niles could be found in his cozy rooms at the Roberts Brothers offices at all hours of the day or night, corresponding or chatting with his impressive roster of New England authors. Alcott and Niles wrote to one another often, and much of their correspondence is kept at Harvard University's Houghton Library. In a letter dated June 16, 1868, one learns that Niles supplied the novel's title after reading the first completed draft of part one. Niles

wrote, "What do you say to this for a title?"

Little Women
Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy
The story of their lives
By
Louisa May Alcott"

As a curator at Houghton Library, I love to show this letter to Alcott fans. It reveals a gifted literary publisher at work and also demonstrates Niles's dedication to Alcott's work.

In contrast, Gerwig's Jo must advocate for herself and for her novel before the incredulous and calculating Mr. Dashwood. In a pivotal scene, Jo quarrels with Mr. Dashwood for the copyright to her story and haggles over her percentage of the book's royalties. Mr. Dashwood insists she won't see a cent until his costs of producing the book are recouped. This system of payment was known as the "half-profits system," and many American authors suffered under it for the better part of the century. In reality, Niles was honest to a fault with his authors and paid them fairly for their work. In fact, Niles encouraged Louisa May Alcott to keep the copyright to *Little Women*. Writing in her journal, Alcott described the two of them as "an honest publisher and a lucky author, for the copyright made her fortune"—more than \$200,000 over the course of her life.

Considering the Roberts Brothers' partnership with Alcott and its contribution to the American literary canon, it is a *little* painful for this Bostonian to see Gerwig move the publisher to New York City. While audiences may be quicker to recognize New York as the literary capital of the United States, Boston was indisputably the center of American literary publishing in the second half of the 19th century.

(Curiously, Jo's publisher is also moved to New York in the 1994 film adaptation. Adding insult to injury, Jo's novel in that film is published by James T. Fields, a man who once told Alcott: "Stick to your teaching; you can't write.") Because Jo's publisher is never named in the novel, Gerwig's decision to grant Roberts Brothers a starring role in the film reads as a deliberate and affectionate homage. However, by making Jo fight for her story, her compensation, and the ownership of *Little Women's* copyright, Gerwig ensures that Jo's success belongs solely to her. If these elements eschew Alcott's experience, they do right by Jo March. To underscore Jo's pride in her success as an author, Gerwig ends the film not with a promise of marriage (over which a *lot* of ink has been spilled) or with the rosy family garden party at Plumfield, but with Jo holding the first printed copy of *Little Women* in her hands.

By making Jo fight for her story, her compensation, and her copyright, Gerwig ensures that Jo's success belongs solely to her.

This ending and the printing montage that precedes it are heart-stirring. However, despite the romance of the scene, it caused some consternation among librarians and book historians (mainly, benignly, on Twitter). The popularity of the novel in the second half of the 19th century is widely attributed to the industrialization of book production. Thanks to the advent of machine-made paper and stereotype printing (in which text could be reproduced from plates



Carte de visite of Louisa May Alcott.
Louisa May Alcott. Portrait File,
Houghton Library, Harvard University
(printed with permission)

rather than painstakingly typeset by hand), books became affordable goods. But this montage is notable for its emphasis on the parts of the book done by hand—there isn't a single machine in sight. But Gerwig did her homework. To ensure period accuracy, she enlisted the help of printer David Wolfe and binder Devon Eastland. They not only consulted on the film and sourced period-appropriate equipment, but appear as the printer and binder in the film (with Eastland costumed as a man).

In a recent encounter with Eastland on Twitter, I asked her about the dearth of machines in the sequence. She explained that though some rudimentary machines for binding had been invented by 1871, machine-trade binding was still in its infancy. Many books were still bound by hand, including *Little Women*. In fact, Eastland bought a defective copy of the novel's second edition and

disassembled it to learn precisely how it was bound. The only difference between the binding she creates on-screen and the original is the material—the first edition of *Little Women* was cased in cloth; Jo March's book is bound in leather. Content to imagine the machine-made paper and the stereoplate process that took place off-screen, I allowed myself to revel in the beauty of the craftsmanship in this scene on my second and third viewings.

It is these considered decisions that make Gerwig's *Little Women* much more than just the ninth film adaptation of this popular American novel. It is also a love letter to bibliophiles, Louisa May Alcott, her fans, her publisher, her book—and its binder. **P**

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LUCY BARNHOUSE

THE REALITY OF JOAN OF ARC

Teaching Movie Medievalism



Joan of Arc is depicted in statues around the world, like this one in Washington, DC. Yet students are not always aware that she was a historical, rather than fictional, figure.

Timothy Vollmer/Flickr/CC BY 2.0

LAST SPRING, I found myself in the surprising position of explaining to a student sitting in my office that Joan of Arc was real. At the small liberal arts college where I teach, *Hollywood History* is an intermediate course without prerequisites that fulfills a general education requirement. Unlike the upper-level medieval history elective, it fills reliably. For many students, the course is both their first contact with medieval history and the only engagement they will have with it in their college education. Teaching the course for the first time, I found that students struggled to discern the borders of fiction and reality in the medieval past. My students were easily able to picture a medieval past in which white men could do almost anything. They clung tenaciously to the belief in a real King Arthur who fought foreign invaders, and a real Robin Hood in Sherwood Forest. But they read Ibn Fadlan's account of his diplomatic travels from Baghdad's court to central Asia and northern Europe, and were still shocked to learn in class discussion, after watching *The 13th Warrior* (1999), that he really existed.

Students struggle to assess the reliability of sources everywhere. A course exploring history as imagined on film invites students to see history as a subject for interpretation and themselves as competent critics of historical claims. By using media in which students are interested already, this course draws a more engaged audience than many introductory surveys. The course needs to introduce students effectively to the basics of medieval history, film studies, and medievalism (popular interpretations and representations of the medieval past). From a pessimist's perspective, this might be something like a pedagogical nightmare. How, then, can I enable students to thrive in studying material that they find interesting but have not previously been given the tools to analyze? How can I teach students unfamiliar with historical content to engage intelligently with popular depictions of that history?

A decade ago, the work of medievalism was defined by Larry Scanlon as the attempt to bridge a chasm between a modernity imagined as axiomatic and a past assumed to be irrecoverably unknowable. In the vibrant literature on medievalism, comparatively little attention has been given to the undergraduate classroom. Thus, in writing and revising the class syllabus, I often found myself falling between the disciplines of history, literature, and film studies. The question of how to responsibly teach a past primarily familiar to students through seductive but misleading representations is, of course, not limited to medievalists. Moving forward, I'm revising assignment structure, changing the required texts, and categorically forbidding the use of the phrase "strong female character," while doing more with other tropes. I'm

also flipping almost all work on film analysis into the class itself, reducing the number of interpretative tasks that students are asked to perform on their own.

My first strategy for revising the course is adjusting the structure of assignments. The reading that generated the most discussion of the semester was the Charter of the Forest, as reissued in 1225 (available open-access through the UK National Archives). Paired with two of the earliest Robin Hood ballads, it proved more engaging than either of the other sources. Students asked good questions about economic and social relationships in 13th-century England, and about relationships between rulers and ruled. This productive experience, however, began with a misreading. The charter grants rights and resources to those who use the forest. Because this seemed to the students like the opposite of what medieval kings did, they read it as a centralization of royal power. In order to obviate such misreading, I have crafted short quizzes tailored to the primary sources, inviting students to do both close reading and comparison with the paired films. In the past, I have assigned responses to framing questions as reading accountability assignments, but the new assignment can be used as the basis for small group discussion and peer review in class.

A course exploring history as imagined on film invites students to see history as a subject for interpretation and themselves as competent critics of historical claims.

I'm also taking an alternate approach to providing background on the history portrayed in film. An English king giving privileges to his subjects, a Baghdadi diplomat traveling in the steppes and among Vikings, strange women lying in ponds distributing swords—all of these, I learned, carried roughly equal degrees of plausibility for my students. And, as I have discovered in teaching global history courses, this is not only true for the Middle Ages. For students entering college with minimal knowledge retained from high school history courses, blockbusters have shaped their visions of the past, from the gladiatorial arena to World War II battlefields and beyond. My original strategy for combating this in *Hollywood History* was to assign a brief introductory text on medieval history, a monograph on medievalism in film, and a collection of essays comparing portrayals of

the Middle Ages in international cinemas. The latter was resented from the beginning; its density made it unreadable to my undergraduate students (or at least made them unwilling to read it).


Selecting short essays directly confronting misconceptions about history, or about particular clichés in media, allows students the fun of myth-busting, and demonstrates connections that are difficult for them to find independently. As for background on the historical period itself, while I initially feared duplicating content from history electives, offering robust contextualization in mini-lectures is, I think, a necessity—as well as a recruitment strategy for potential history majors. It also can be done through adapting material already prepared for other courses. For film theory, a few introductory essays may prove more effective than attempting to build student competence in a largely unfamiliar field. Particularly here, I’m relying increasingly on in-class work, including student workshopping of primary sources. Such small group work not only allows students to compare interpretations, but also shows them that they’re not alone in grappling with the challenges of unfamiliar history.

Students typically used “strong female character” to mean “woman doing stereotypically masculine things,” not “complex character with meaningful agency.”

My third strategy for revamping the course involves framing. In the past, I gave students a set of framing questions to ask about Hollywood medievalism. Relying on students’ independent notetaking on films, however, proved to be a strategy with insufficient accountability. Using a mixture of questionnaires and trope bingo cards instead will, I hope, stimulate more discussion without sacrificing intellectual creativity. Playing “trope bingo” with banqueting scenes, oppressed peasants, and mysterious witches is surprisingly easy. It reinforces for students that tropes can be visual or plot-based, connected to characterization or script. It also introduces a competitive element that may be productive—at least in a course that, taught at night and promising knights in shining armor, attracts many student athletes.

One trope I have chosen to excise from classroom discussion is the “strong female character.” This may seem like an odd, even draconian, choice, but I found that the term hampered discussions of characterization and reception. Students

typically used it to mean “woman doing stereotypically masculine things,” not “complex character with meaningful agency.” They were far more ready, for instance, to read Keira Knightley’s leather-armor-wearing, longbow-shooting Guinevere (*King Arthur*, 2004) as a strong female character than Julia Ormond’s kingdom-administering, policy-making Guinevere (*First Knight*, 1995). Some of the term’s most productive discussions on gender centered on the figure of Olivia De Havilland’s Maid Marian (*The Adventures of Robin Hood*, 1938). Many students expressed strong views on her character in written responses. Some asserted that she was a mere damsel in distress; some that she subverted this trope; and some, yes, that she was a strong female character. I’m delighted to have such good justification for continuing to include one of my favorite films in the course.

Two framing elements remain unchanged from the original course. The first is the list of things to remember in the syllabus. This reminds students that questions are useful scholarly tools; that if something seems weird or confusing, it’s probably important; and that intellectual work can be, at its best, both rigorous and playful. The second is the opening quotation on the syllabus, from *The Court Jester* (1955): “Life couldn’t better be / on a medieval spree: / knights full of chivalry, / villains full of villainy!” By the time we get to *The Court Jester* at the end of the semester, students are prepared to appreciate the film’s Technicolor garishness, its trope spoofing, and its perfect casting of Basil Rathbone as the scheming minister and duelist. Ideally, they should also be ready to see history as a discipline of interpretation, rather than the march of facts they have been preconditioned to expect. Analyzing films and primary sources with both rigor and creativity offers students training in foundational historical skills. It not only helps students to distinguish fact from fiction but invites them to see history beyond Hollywood as containing more diverse possibilities, and more interesting truths, than previously imagined. 

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JOHN GARRISON MARKS

VISITORS WELCOME

Historic Site Visitation and Public Engagement with History



President Lincoln's Cottage in Washington, DC, is just one historic site that has been revising its programs to make contemporary connections to history more clear.

Payton Chung/Flickr/CC BY 2.0

AT THE LOWER EAST Side Tenement Museum in New York City, visitors experience a dynamic and challenging interpretation of immigration history in the United States. Through guided tours of historically renovated tenement buildings, neighborhood walking tours, and other programs, the Tenement Museum encourages visitors to consider the lives and experience of immigrants of the past and invites them to think about the relevance of that history to contemporary challenges. “At a time when issues surrounding migrants, refugees, and immigration have taken center stage,” their website states, “the Tenement Museum is a potent reminder that, as a nation shaped by immigration, our brightest hope for the future lies in the lessons of the past.”

Like the Tenement Museum, historical institutions throughout the country are working with their communities to make the past more relevant and engaging. New research suggests these efforts have had a positive effect, as visitation to history organizations has increased considerably over the past several years. The *National Visitation Report (NVR)* published in November 2019 by the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) is the first nationwide survey of visitation trends at historical organizations. It found that visits to history museums, historic sites, and other historical organizations increased nearly 6 percent between 2013 and 2018. This growth was evident for institutions of nearly every type, of different budget sizes, and in every region of the country. Although the report did not endeavor to answer why visitation trended upward, conversations with public history practitioners across the field reveal a strong consensus: efforts to make history more relevant, inclusive, and community-engaged have resulted in visitation growth.

Conversations with public history practitioners across the field reveal a strong consensus: efforts to make history more relevant, inclusive, and community-engaged have resulted in visitation growth.

“With lots of encouragement and support from both the public and the museum profession, historic sites have been working to tell fuller, more well-rounded stories of American history, and that’s having an effect,” says Michelle Moon, the Tenement Museum’s chief programs officer. “More and more, museums are connecting to audiences through their inherent interests, presenting creative twists on content, and providing opportunities to dive deeper and learn more about topics or skills.”

Efforts to reinvigorate historic interpretation and increases in visitation are evident beyond large institutions in major cities. The *NVR* reveals that some of the strongest visitation growth occurred at the small historical societies and museums that are ubiquitous in towns and counties across the US. Institutions with annual operating budgets of less than \$50,000, for example, saw their visitation grow 18 percent, the largest increase of any budget level. Those with budgets between \$50,000 and \$250,000 saw visitation increase nearly 13 percent. Institutions of this size, many of which are operated solely by volunteers, form the majority of the nation’s more than 20,000 historical organizations.

The report’s findings also align neatly with other recent investigations of visitation trends. AASLH’s research into National Park Service (NPS) sites with a primarily historical function, for example, reveals that the average number of annual visits to such parks and sites has increased considerably since 1979. After experiencing ebbs and flows during the 1980s and 1990s, the average number of annual visits to NPS history sites has steadily increased since the early 2000s. From 2014 to 2017, NPS history sites averaged more than 500,000 visitors each year. But visitation seems to have peaked in 2016, the year of the NPS centennial. Overall, the total number of annual visits to NPS history sites increased more than 95 percent between 1979 and 2018, far outpacing both US and global population growth.

Other data suggests growing engagement with history as well. The National Endowment for the Arts’ 2017 “Survey of Public Participation in the Arts” found that 28 percent of Americans had visited a historic site in the previous year, a 4 percent increase from 2012. A 2019 survey by Conner Prairie, a living history museum in Indiana, found that nearly 90 percent of Americans were likely to visit a history museum if it would connect them more meaningfully to their past and help them understand the world today.

These surveys point to a growing engagement with US history. A broad view of public history practice gleaned from the conference sessions at AASLH and the National Council on Public History, publications, leadership seminars, and conversations among practitioners suggest this visitation growth is likely a result of increased effort among organizations to employ new methods to advance more relevant and more inclusive interpretation and programming.

These approaches have taken hold across the country, with a growing number of institutions creating programs and exhibitions built on the concepts of shared authority and community-engaged practice. Public history institutions are

working more directly with their audiences, taking seriously their understandings of the past and their concerns in the present, integrating community knowledge and priorities into the work of the institution. President Lincoln's Cottage in Washington, DC, for example, connects Lincoln's efforts to end slavery with the contemporary fight to end human trafficking through their "Students Opposing Slavery" program. El Pueblo History Museum in Pueblo, Colorado, directly engages visitors in the interpretive process, asking them to contribute their personal stories of the community in order to shape the museum's exhibitions. And the Indiana Historical Society in Indianapolis collects artifacts and documents related to the state's LGBTQ history to ensure the institution reflects the community it serves.

The effect of this field-wide shift is especially noticeable among historic house museums. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, as waning interest in historic houses led to tough questions about sustainability, AASLH, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and others convened a major forum asking, among other things, "Are there too many historic house museums?" As Kenneth C. Turino and Max A. van Balgooy noted in their recent book, historic houses have been encouraged since that time to address sustainability challenges by "becoming more relevant to the surrounding community, working collaboratively with nearby museums, recognizing that interpretation should evolve, and taking advantage of modern planning and evaluation tools."

Many historic houses have proven themselves up to the task: their average annual visitation rose nearly 9 percent between 2013 and 2018, above the national average. According to Turino, manager of community partnerships and resource development at Historic New England, these increases come as a result of field-wide changes toward greater community engagement and relevance. "There really has been a shift in what people have been doing to engage their communities," noted Turino, "and it seems like that is having an effect." As historic homes and other institutions have prioritized connecting with and listening to the communities in which they operate, and have moved away from presenting roped-off rooms and a static narrative of the past, interpretation has become more relevant, more engaging, and as the *NVR* suggests, more attractive to visitors. That such growth has occurred among institutions that inspired field-wide concern less than 20 years ago is a very promising development.

Not everyone, however, has been receptive to the advancement of more inclusive histories. Some visitors are disappointed (or worse) when they are asked to consider historical narratives they find difficult to deal with. Some white visitors

to Monticello, Whitney Plantation, and other southern sites, for example, have rejected the effort to present more intellectually honest interpretations about American slavery, preferring a more comforting, sanitized version of the past. Yet the broader pattern of growing visitation suggests that audiences throughout the country are receptive to interpretive approaches that challenge conventional narratives.

As the nation approaches its 250th anniversary in 2026, these trends suggest the history enterprise has a strong foundation to build on.

Finally, recent success stories about student engagement with the humanities reveal emerging alignment between public history practice and pedagogical approaches. At colleges and universities, efforts to align introductory history course offerings with student interest and current events are leading to an increase or stabilization of majors and enrollments. Correlation between visitation growth and current trends in the public history community suggests the importance of connecting knowledge of the past with contemporary issues. Common efforts in postsecondary courses and at public history institutions to draw connections between past and present and to align offerings with the interests of their audiences could generate new opportunities for collaboration. Ongoing efforts by the AHA and by AASLH to better understand Americans' attitudes toward history and to effectively communicate history's value should only help.

As the nation approaches its 250th anniversary in 2026, these trends suggest that the history enterprise—from scholars and teachers to site directors, curators, and volunteers at historical organizations, and everyone else engaged in doing history work—has a strong foundation to build on. They also suggest ways public history institutions can continue to grow their audiences and expand opportunities to engage the public in discussions of American history: working directly with stakeholders, whether community members or students, to determine how history can help them better understand their world; sharing broad and inclusive stories about the past, even when they challenge long-established narratives; and emphasizing connections to contemporary concerns. **P**

John Garrison Marks is the senior manager, strategic initiatives for the American Association of State and Local History. He tweets @johnngmarks.



Stephen Philip Cohen

1936–2019

Scholar of South Asia

Stephen Philip Cohen, the doyen of South Asian security studies, died on October 27, 2019, after an illness. He was 83 years old.

Born and raised in Chicago, Steve spent several decades at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign nurturing students' interest in the South Asian subcontinent, pioneering scholarly studies on Pakistan's and India's militaries, and establishing a hub—the Program on Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security (ACDIS)—where students, scholars, and pundits from South Asia met to discuss the most pressing issues of the region.

Steve was a historically minded scholar-practitioner, whose towering influence remains indelible through not merely his supervision of generations of doctoral students at Urbana-Champaign, but also mentorship of those who passed through ACDIS and later through the Brookings Institution, where he spent 21 years in the Foreign Policy program. He was at the core of a community of experts on South Asia that he nurtured in the United States, at a time when it was not fashionable to do so. Philanthropic organizations like the MacArthur Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation played important roles in enabling Steve to craft this community, which today is spread across several countries.

Cohen's scholarly career was influenced by his time working in the US Department of State, where he served on the policy planning staff under Secretary George P. Schultz from 1985 to 1987. In the 1960s and '70s, South Asia was of little consequence to those looking to build a distinguished career inside the Beltway. The Cold War's hot wars were being fought elsewhere. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 made the region geopolitically significant to mainstream Cold Warriors. During the Reagan administration, the two US priorities in the subcontinent were to help the mujahideens to fight the Soviet military occupation of Afghanistan, and to prevent Pakistan from developing

nuclear weapons. Steve's stint at the State Department thus came at a time when the geopolitical relevance of South Asia to the United States was transforming definitively.

Steve published over a dozen books. Every student of international relations who focuses on South Asia reads *India: Emerging Power* (Brookings Institution Press, 2001), *The Idea of Pakistan* (Brookings Institution Press, 2004), and *Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization* (Brookings Institution Press, 2010), co-authored with former student Sunil Dasgupta. I first met him at Brookings when he was about to publish *Shooting for a Century: The India-Pakistan Comundrum* (Brookings Institution Press, 2013). Enthusiastically, he told me that I, as a historian, would enjoy the book because it was as historical as one could get in policy circles. Over the next years, I benefited from his lengthy notes on my dissertation chapters, comments on journal articles, and books generously loaned. An avid reader, Steve purposely read what he disagreed with, because at heart he was also a lifelong learner.

Through his work and his life, Steve endeavored to build bridges between two adversarial countries—India and Pakistan—that are intrinsically more similar than different. He did so very often with humor and food. His weekly “Adda” lunch on Massachusetts Avenue in Washington, DC, with current and former research assistants and those just passing through (including myself), was one of the many ways in which he drew people together. Upon asking him once to chair a conference panel at the last minute, I got back a humorous and good-natured response. Anyone else of his stature would have summarily refused such a request. Not Steve—he said, “Sure, happy to do it. I'm also available for weddings and bar mitzvahs.” That was Steve Cohen: magnanimous, jovial, and exceedingly generous.

He is survived by his wife Roberta Brosilow, his six children, and nine grandchildren.

Jayita Sarkar
Boston University

Photo courtesy Brookings Institution



Abbas Husayn Hamdani

1926–2019

Historian of the
Middle East

Abbas Hamdani, historian of the Middle East and Islam, died on December 23, 2019.

Hamdani was born on August 11, 1926, in Surat, India, into a family of religious scholars. He was educated in India, receiving his BA (1945) and LLB (1947) from Bombay University and his PhD (1950) from the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. After teaching in Pakistan from 1951 to 1962 and at the American University in Cairo from 1962 to 1969, he was invited to teach at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1969 and then appointed to the faculty in the history department at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (UWM) in 1970. He retired from UWM in 2001 and moved to Florida, where he enjoyed retirement with his wife until her passing. His last years were spent with his daughter and granddaughter in Bethesda, Maryland.

Abbas Hamdani taught Middle East and Islamic history at UWM and published widely in the fields of Islamic history and philosophy, Islamic perspectives on the voyages of New World discovery, and current events as they related to the Middle East and the Islamic world. His publications include *The Call to God: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 48* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2019), co-translated with Abdallah Soufan; a translation of *Tuhfat al-qulub: The Precious Gift of the Hearts and Good Cheer for Those in Distress* (Dar-al-Saqi, 2012); *The Fatimids: A Short History* (Pakistan Publishing House, 1962); and “Columbus and the Recovery of Jerusalem” (*Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1979), a foundational work in the field.

Hamdani was instrumental in developing programs in his field and related areas. At UWM he helped to establish and chair committees in Middle East and North African studies and in comparative religions. He also helped found the American Institute of Yemeni Studies and the Middle East Medievalists, and was active in the Middle East Studies Association. He received numerous grants from the

Fulbright Foundation, American Research Center in Egypt, and Institute of Ismaili Studies in London. Eager to connect with his home community, he worked to enhance coverage of Middle East history in Wisconsin high schools, participated in interfaith dialogues, and gave talks on Arab-American affairs. His service in all these areas was recognized with Distinguished Service and Teaching Awards at UWM; the Educator of the Year Award and service awards from the Indian Student Association at UWM and Pakistan Cultural Association of Milwaukee; the Distinguished Arab-American Award for Wisconsin by the National Association of Arab Americans; the Distinguished Service Award from the Middle East Medievalists; and the Distinguished Scholar of the Year Award from the Wisconsin Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies. His contribution to interfaith dialogue is addressed in the forthcoming *Interfaith Engagement in Milwaukee* (Marquette Univ. Press).

A man of charm and impressive erudition, Hamdani was beloved by family, students, colleagues, and fellow scholars, and the many friends he made over a long and eventful life. He was a devoted husband and father, an unflagging support for many family members, an inspiring teacher for legions of students, a willing and generous collaborator for many scholars. Throughout his life, he embraced the causes of justice and the oppressed, which he pursued through active civic engagement and community activism after becoming an American citizen. He was a poet and a lover of music, the beauties of which he imparted to his children. He was a generous and kind man, meticulous in corresponding with all he knew through letters and cards. He was, in short, a man of virtue, erudition, and service to others, and he will be greatly missed.

Hamdani was predeceased by his beloved wife, Zubeda, in 2015 and his daughter Amal in 1994. He is survived by his daughter Sumaiya and grandchildren Ali Hamdani-Shaw, Anisa Hamdani-Shaw Conde, and Zahra Hamdani.

Sumaiya Hamdani
George Mason University

Photo courtesy Sumaiya Hamdani



Henry Horwitz

1938–2019

Legal historian of England

Henry Horwitz died on January 19, 2019, leaving to mourn him family, friends, former students, and former colleagues, especially those in the University of Iowa History Department.

Henry Horwitz was born in New York City on August 8, 1938. He joined the University of Iowa history department in 1963, with degrees from Haverford College (1959) and Oxford University (DPhil, 1963). In 1982, he earned a JD from the University of Iowa College of Law and briefly practiced law in New York City. When he returned to Iowa, he held joint appointments in the College of Liberal Arts and the College of Law, where he taught courses in legal history.

At St. Antony's College, Oxford, Horwitz developed an interest in the then largely neglected field of early modern English political history, participating in the energizing of what one reviewer called "a minor renaissance in English historiography," offering "fresh perspectives on the impact of the Glorious Revolution of 1688," with "obvious relevance" for American colonial historians.

His major books—*Revolution Politicks: The Career of Daniel Finch, Second Earl of Nottingham 1647–1730* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1968); *Parliament, Policy and Politics in the Reign of William III* (Manchester Univ. Press, 1977); and an edited edition of *The Parliamentary Diary of Narcissus Luttrell, 1691–1693* (Clarendon Press, 1972)—offer painstaking narratives based on extensive and fresh archival research. Daniel Finch was the author of England's Toleration Act, which broke the monopoly of the Anglican Church, opening the way to dissent and non-observance. Horwitz's work contributed to a reevaluation of the origins and intentions of that epochal law. *Parliament, Policy and Politics* is a magisterial study of the larger context of English politics in which Daniel Finch made his career—an eloquent book about politics, legislation, and law in the era of the Glorious Revolution.

Horwitz's delight in archival research led him to spend some 25 years creating two Public Record Office Handbooks—*Chancery Equity Records and Proceedings, 1600–1800* (1995, 2nd ed. 1998) and *Exchequer Equity Records and Proceedings, 1649–1841* (2001). With Jessica Cooke, he prepared *London and Middlesex Exchequer Equity Pleadings, 1685–6 and 1784–5: A Calendar* (London Record Society, 2000). These are delicately nuanced, scholarly guides that open the way for other historians to work with records that would otherwise be impenetrable. Horwitz's principal achievement, wrote a reviewer in the *English Historical Review*, is to have "flung open the doors to a neglected treasure-trove and provided an Ariadne's thread through its complex labyrinths."

Horwitz pursued his research with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Folger Shakespeare Library, and major grants from the Leverhulme Trust (UK).

Colleagues recall that Horwitz's own passions were engaged by struggles for decency and toleration in his research and in our own community. Long before "interdisciplinary" became a catchword in higher education, he was a founding member of an interdepartmental seminar on legislative behavior, sharing his questions about the House of Commons in the 17th–19th centuries with political scientists focused on the present. He made it his mission to create an egalitarian and collegial department that maintained high standards of scholarship during a time of significant changes in higher education, serving as assistant chair for many years, embracing burdensome chores that others avoided, and counseling graduate students and junior faculty with kindness and wisdom. In 1971, Horwitz played a leading role in a new general education model for non-majors, in which graduate students offer small sections of Issues in Human History as an alternative to the large-lecture course format. The department awards the Henry Horwitz Prize annually for the best Issues syllabus created by a graduate student. Although he retired in 2004, Henry's legacy lives on.

Henry will be missed by his survivors: his wife Juliet Gardiner, his daughter Elizabeth Russell, his brother Tem Horwitz, his stepson Simon Cope, and former students and colleagues.

Jeffrey Cox
University of Iowa

Photo courtesy Department of History, University of Iowa



Joel H. Silbey

1933–2018

Historian of the
United States

Joel Henry Silbey, the President White Professor of History emeritus at Cornell University, died on August 7, 2018. He was 84 years old.

Silbey was a scholar of American history and political behavior in the 19th century. His expertise included the Jacksonian era, the formation of American political parties, the sectional controversies of the 1840s–50s, and the Civil War and Reconstruction. He was a pioneer in utilizing quantitative methods in history and was dubbed the “Dean of the New Political Historians” by his peers.

Silbey was born on August 16, 1933, in Brooklyn, New York. He received a BA from Brooklyn College in 1955 and earned his master’s degree in 1956 and PhD in 1963 from the University of Iowa.

Silbey taught at San Francisco State College, the University of Pittsburgh, and the University of Maryland before arriving at Cornell in 1966. Silbey’s classes were extremely popular with undergraduates; among his Cornell honors is the prestigious Clark Distinguished Teaching Award. From 1992–98, Silbey was the director of the Cornell in Washington program, which he helped establish in the late 1970s. And after his 2002 retirement, Silbey frequently led programs for Cornell’s Adult University, as well as often lecturing on campus at various forums and faculty events.

Silbey was the author of eight books, including *The Shrine of Party: Congressional Voting Behavior, 1841–1852* (Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1967), *The Partisan Imperative: The Dynamics of American Politics before the Civil War* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), *The American Political Nation, 1838–1893* (Stanford Univ. Press, 1991), and *Martin Van Buren and the Emergence of American Popular Politics* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002). He wrote scores of articles, among them the enormously influential “The Civil War Synthesis in American Political History,” (*Civil War History*, 1964). He also edited numerous books,

including the 10-volume series *The Congress of the United States, 1789–1989*.

Silbey was a visiting fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, a visiting scholar at the Russell Sage Foundation, and the Harold Vyvyan Harmsworth Visiting Professor of American History at Oxford University. He held fellowships at the American Philosophical Society, the National Science Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. In 1988, he was awarded a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship.

I met Professor Silbey at Cornell in 1971 and was immediately taken by his compelling command of a subject I wanted to know a lot about. Not discouraged by my extremely long hair and mustache, he took me on as his advisee, and I enrolled in every class he offered until I graduated. Professor Silbey played a central role in teaching me how to think critically about history, and he inspired in me a lifelong interest in historical scholarship.

Silbey introduced me to scholarly debate and inspired my own teaching. In 1972, Joel faced off with Arthur Schlesinger Jr. in Cornell Law School’s moot court room. They went back and forth over critiques of Silbey’s scholarship. I sat riveted, both intimidated and fascinated, and afraid a fight could break out at any moment. Afterward, an unaffected Joel reassured me that this is just what academics do! In 1995, when invited to teach as an adjunct law professor at Fordham University, I turned to my friend and mentor for tips on how to structure and teach a class for eager, smart students, which Joel graciously provided.

Silbey is survived by his wife of 58 years, Rosemary; his daughter Victoria; his son David; and three grandchildren. A memorial service celebrating his life was held before an overflow crowd of family members, colleagues, former students, and friends at Cornell on November 3, 2018.

C. Evan Stewart
Former Member, AHA Board of Trustees

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FLORIDA

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Miami, FL

History and Social Sciences. Ransom Everglades School invites applications for full time, Upper School faculty members in the Humanities, beginning in August 2020. The newly created Humanities Department (combining History & Social Sciences and English) represents the school's commitment to interdisciplinary thinking and to Humanities as a core element of the curriculum. The department offers a four-year curriculum in English, required courses in history, and electives in government, philosophy, religion, economics, and area studies courses, including most Advanced Placement courses. The skills of analysis and synthesis, as well as effective communication in writing and in speech, are essential aspects of the department's curriculum and pedagogy. The department encourages the development of new courses and curriculum that emphasizes area studies and global perspectives, interdisciplinary approaches, and creative

application of technology. The department is especially eager to hire a faculty member who can contribute an expertise in digital humanities, and perhaps even develop elective courses in digital humanities. Members of the humanities department are expected to contribute to the department's ongoing discussions about interdisciplinary and project-based learning, innovative assessments, and help create opportunities for student research and experiential learning. Faculty members in the Humanities department may also be called upon by students to serve as faculty mentors for independent study projects and Dan Leslie Bowden Fellowships in the Humanities. Candidates must be comfortable helping advance the school's value for inquiry-based, student-centered learning and the school's ongoing commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Ransom Everglades expects its faculty members to participate in department meetings, student activities, and otherwise be engaged in the life of the school. Based on education and experience, either World Civilizations or US History will likely comprise a part of the teaching assignment. Candidates with a background in digital humanities, non-Western cultures, and/or an interest in assisting with the Speech and Debate program will be

especially attractive. Applicants must have a master's degree in history, political science, area studies, economics, or a related field. Prior independent school teaching experience is preferred. Candidates should email a completed application (found on the school's website on the Employment page at <https://www.ransomeverglades.org/about/employment>), a cover letter, a CV, and unofficial transcript to careers@ransomeverglades.org. Finalists will be invited to campus for an in person interview and teaching demonstration, and will be asked to submit at least three references and/or letters of recommendation. For more information about Ransom Everglades School, see our web site at <http://www.ransomeverglades.org>.



NEW JERSEY

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY NEW BRUNSWICK

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Postdoctoral Fellowship/Race and Gender History. The Department of History at Rutgers University announces a postdoctoral fellowship

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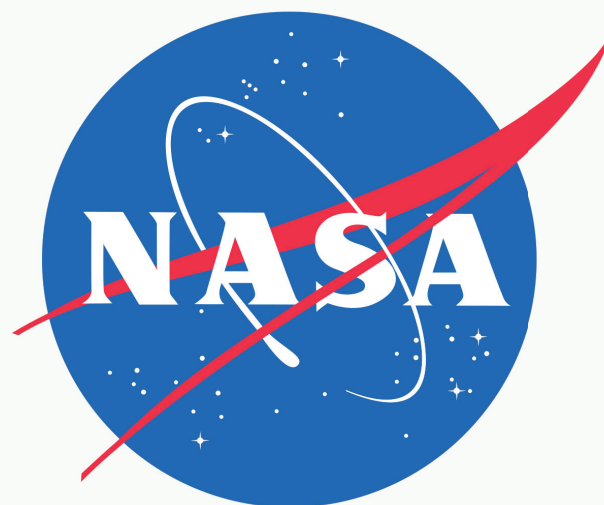
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