

The newsmagazine of the American Historical Association

PERSPECTIVES ON HISTORY

Volume 61: 3
March 2023

LIVING GHOSTS



CAREERS FOR HISTORY MAJORS

A publication from the American Historical Association

We must “uphold at every possible turn the inherent value of studying history.”

Elizabeth Lehfelddt, former Vice President, AHA Teaching Division, *Perspectives*

Careers for History Majors conveys the value of the undergraduate study of history through clear graphs and informal prose. Readers will find hard data, practical advice, and answers to common questions for students and their parents.

Contributors explore the breadth of career options available to history majors and provide tools to help students get the most out of their degree.

The booklet also includes the personal stories of history majors who work in a range of occupations, including data analysis, finance, and the law. You'll find out what employers want and learn about the personal transformations that many history majors experience.

Contributors

Loren Collins • John Fea • Anne Hyde • Sarah Olzawski • Johann Neem • Claire Potter • John Rowe • Sarah Shurts • Paul Sturtevant • Frank Valadez

Reinforcing the value and utility of a history BA, *Careers for History Majors* is perfect for directors of undergraduate studies, career center advisers, prospective majors, and their parents.

To order copies, visit historians.org/booklets.
For additional resources, visit historians.org/whystudyhistory.

AMERICAN
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION

FEATURES

WHEN MEMORIALS COME DOWN, GHOSTS REMAIN 16

Berlin after Reunification

JAMES J. WARD

HOPE IN THE DARK 20

History and Ghost Stories

SCOTT G. BRUCE

PHANTOM ENCOUNTERS 23

Building a Course around Ghosts

LUCY BARNHOUSE



ON THE COVER

With the right light, walls cast long shadows. The wounds which the Wall gouged through Berlin from 1961 to 1989 linger in the social fabric, haunting residents long after the physical structure disappeared from the landscape. If objects have lives – at least metaphorically speaking – they just as surely have afterlives, living on after the destruction of their original physical form in memory and memorials. The Berlin Wall lives through remnants and memorials; in the forgetful memory of the city it once divided, and in the divide between Russia and the West that has not even begun to heal after three decades. How much longer will its shade linger?

Photo: Hubert Gajewski/Flickr/CC BY-NC 2.0

3 | FROM THE EDITOR

Townhouse Notes

L. RENATO GRIGOLI

5 | FROM THE PRESIDENT

When Ghosts Come Knocking

EDWARD MUIR

7 | FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Integrity of History Education

JAMES GROSSMAN AND JEREMY C. YOUNG

11 | NEWS

An Uncertain Trend

JULIA BROOKINS

Advocacy Briefs

REBECCA L. WEST

26 | AHA ACTIVITIES

Trading on Justice

MARK PHILIP BRADLEY

28 | IN MEMORIAM

29 | LONG OVERDUE

31 | AHA CAREER CENTER

32 | EVERYTHING HAS A HISTORY

The Ghost of Ash Lawn

MARIAELENA DIBENIGNO

News magazine of the
**AMERICAN
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION**

400 A Street, SE
Washington, DC 20003-3889

PHONE: 202.544.2422

FAX: 202.544.8307

EMAIL: perspectives@historians.org

WEB PAGE: historians.org/perspectives



**PERSPECTIVES
ON HISTORY**

Editor

L. RENATO GRIGOLI

Managing Editor

LAURA ANSLEY

*Research and Publications
Assistant*

LIZZY MEGGYESY

Communications Manager

ALEXANDRA F. LEVY

*Manager, Data Administration
and Integrity*

LIZ TOWNSEND

**RESEARCH AND
PUBLICATIONS**

*Director of Research and
Publications*

SARAH JONES WEICKSEL

AHR Managing Editor

SARAH MUNCY

AHR Deputy Managing Editor

ALANA VENABLE

**AHA
STAFF**

Executive Director

JAMES R. GROSSMAN

Deputy Director

DANA L. SCHAFER

Special Projects Coordinator

JULIA BROOKINS

Meetings Manager

DEBBIE ANN DOYLE

Manager of Teaching and Learning

BRENDAN GILLIS

Assistant Membership Manager

MICHELLE HEWITT

Archives and Facilities

Administrator

MATTHEW KEOUGH

Meetings and Events Associate

JAKE PURCELL

Membership Manager

PAMELA SCOTT-PINKNEY

Marketing and Engagement

Manager

HOPE J. SHANNON

*Operations and Communications
Assistant*

REBECCA L. WEST

Program Assistant

RACHEL WHEATLEY

Research Coordinators

NICHOLAS KRYCZKA

MELANIE A. PEINADO

Researchers

WHITNEY E. BARRINGER

LAUREN BRAND

Resource Developers

KRISTA GRENSAVITCH

CORINNE KANNENBERG

BRANDON SCHECHTER

Perspectives on History (ISSN 1940-8048) is published nine times a year, monthly September through May, by the American Historical Association, 400 A St., SE, Washington, DC 20003-3889. 202.544.2422. Fax 202.544.8307. World Wide Web: www.historians.org/perspectives. Email: perspectives@historians.org (editorial issues) or ppinkney@historians.org (membership and subscription issues). *Perspectives on History* is distributed to members of the Association. Individual membership subscriptions include an amount of \$7.04 to cover the cost of *Perspectives on History*. Institutional subscriptions are also available. For details, contact the membership department of the AHA. Single copies of *Perspectives on History*—if available—can be obtained for \$8 each. Material from *Perspectives on History* may be published in *Perspectives Daily* (ISSN: 1556-8563), published by the American Historical Association at www.historians.org/perspectives. For information about institutional subscriptions, see www.historians.org/members/subscriptions.

Articles, letters to the editor, and other items intended for publication should preferably be submitted online at www.historians.org/perspectives/upload. They may also be sent as attachments to email messages addressed to perspectives@historians.org, or by regular mail (in which case, the hard copy text should be double-spaced). Manuscripts accepted for publication will be edited to conform to *Perspectives on History* style, space limitations, and other requirements. Prospective authors should consult the guidelines available at <https://www.historians.org/perspectives/submit>. Accuracy in editorial material is the responsibility of the author(s) and contributor(s). *Perspectives on History* and the American Historical Association disclaim responsibility for statements made by contributors.

Individual articles in *Perspectives on History* for which the American Historical Association holds the copyright may be reproduced for noncommercial use under Creative Commons license CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0. Attribution must include author name, article title, *Perspectives on History*, issue date, and a link to the online version of the article (which can be found at www.historians.org/perspectives). For more on the Creative Commons license, please visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>. This license does not apply to text or images reproduced here for which the AHA does not hold the copyright.

Periodicals class postage paid at Washington, DC, and at additional mailing offices.

©2023 American Historical Association.

Postmaster: Send change of address to *Perspectives on History*, Membership Department, AHA, 400 A St., SE, Washington, DC 20003-3889.

PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

The American Historical Association is a nonprofit membership corporation founded in 1884 for the promotion of historical research, study, and education. The Association reserves the right to reject editorial material sent in for publication that is not consonant with the goals and purposes of the organization. The Association also assumes the right to judge the acceptability of all advertising copy and illustrations in advertisements published in *Perspectives on History*. Advertisers and advertising agencies assume all liability for advertising content and representation and will also be responsible for all claims against said publisher.



L. RENATO GRIGOLI

TOWNHOUSE NOTES

Ghosts in the Machine

Those who keep abreast of social media, and particularly those who have been preparing courses for the spring term, have probably heard about ChatGPT, the newest assault on academic integrity. With a few clicks, panicked commentators breathlessly tell us, your students can have an artificial intelligence (AI) generate an essay that will pass any plagiarism checker. Long-form written evaluations are now useless, and we should all revert to oral examinations. Machines can think, automation has come for the humanities, and now all is well and truly lost. Probably.

But concerns over AI software like ChatGPT are misplaced. The software doesn't do what people are saying it does, and it certainly can't write a strong analytical essay. When I entered essay prompts I have used, it returned a banal set of generalities with no synthetic analysis. For example, when asked a question from a course I TA'd on the history of captivity—"During the 12 years he spent in the South, did Solomon Northup think of himself as a slave or as a captive?"—ChatGPT returned

In his book, "Twelve Years a Slave," Solomon Northup writes about his experiences as a slave and describes himself as a slave throughout the book. He writes about the dehumanizing treatment he faced and the ways in which he was treated as property. He also describes the constant fear of punishment and the lack of control he had over his own life.

This response appears competent but is not an answer to the question. It does not show a mastery of any of the learning outcomes the question is designed to test. The AI does not craft and argue for a distinction between captivity and slavery, nor can it grasp the nuance between the legal reality of Northup's enslavement and his own internal self-conception. The final two sentences, while factually true, are not evidence for Northup's self-conception as either captive or slave, and could, with the right structure, be made to argue either

position. It is, in short, not an argument but a series of facts assembled in a way that encourages the reader to create an analytic argument from them. It tricks the reader into believing there is intelligence by having the reader do all the analytical work.

The AI's response reads like the essay of a student who has not yet been taught the difference between lining up facts and making an argument, a student who has been taught to repeat but not to think. ChatGPT is quite good at summarizing information into an easily readable form. If asked a question to which the answer is a sequence of facts, or to which the answer might be lifted from Wikipedia with only a little effort, it delivers solid copy. The AI simply does the arduous but formulaic task of turning Google search results into a paper.

It reads like the essay of a student
who has not yet been taught the
difference between lining up facts
and making an argument.

And herein lies the issue: AI writing bots cannot write good essays, but they can reveal weaknesses in our teaching and in how we evaluate student work. If ChatGPT or a similar AI can provide a passing answer to a question, the standards of evaluation are such that fact repetition is sufficient, the question itself requires no critical thinking skills, or both. Learning to repeat information is not the same as learning to think, and the latter is what humanists claim to provide. Nevertheless, many evaluations of learning outcomes across both the humanities and STEM instruction instead look only for information retention—criteria that, to be fair, are at least partially the result of an instructor's exhaustion, overwork, and a university's need to retain students.



This is why students can make use of AIs, why there is so much fodder for panicked think pieces. Of course ChatGPT can provide functioning code to answer a question on a computer science test. Ask someone who writes computer code, and they'll tell you that most of their work is searching the web for similar code and figuring out how to implement it for the specific problem they have. In fact, for this reason, AI is probably a greater threat to engineering than it is to the humanities. And of course ChatGPT, if given the chance, can pass parts of the bar or medical licensing exams; they are tests of how much information one can retain and recall, not intelligence. But writing a cogent, engaged essay requires much, much more than the ability to search for an answer or three and then assemble them into a pleasing shape.

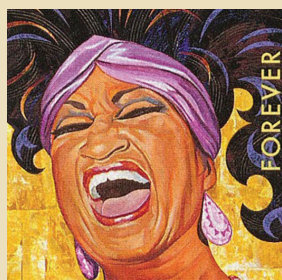
As my father, a computer engineer, says, the problem with computers is that they can only do exactly what we tell them to do. AI is a tool like any other, and if we choose to see the development of AI writing as yet another pedagogical approach rather than an existential threat, we can harness its ability to deliver clean prose and focus on teaching our students how to think and argue as historians. Already, some teachers have begun to create assignments where students leverage the benefits of AIs like ChatGPT on a final project,

leaving the writing in the hands of the machine and the argument in the mind of the students. Such an assignment forces students to be both more deliberate in the questions they pose to the AI and more thoughtful in their editing. It does this by placing students in the position usually reserved for the teacher, one from which they can note the AI's errors and logical leaps—as I have done with the AI's response to the above question about Solomon Northup—and then edit and expand it to create something better. This kind of assignment can allow us to evaluate how well a student has learned to ask questions and analyze the information given in response—key skills of critical thinking.

But if the development of artificial intelligence results in the death of the humanities, then it will be because it will have shown that the emperor has no clothes—that we were not, contrary to the claims of our most strident defenders, teaching students how to think, and that we were unwilling to do so. This demise would be self-inflicted, but it won't be because of a machine. As humanists know, humans, not their tools, are the root cause of humanity's problems. **P**

L. Renato Grigoli is editor of Perspectives on History. He tweets @mapper_mundi.

Recently Published Online in *Perspectives Daily*



US Postal Service

The Uncertain Future of Social Studies in Virginia

Brendan Gillis

An update on the AHA's recent K–12 advocacy in Virginia.

Yo Regresaré

Daniel J. Fernández-Guevara

Musician Celia Cruz had a complicated relationship with Cuba—and with the other exiles who left.

Sonoran Soundscapes

Alyssa Kreikemeier

The clash between public lands held for conservation and used by the US military often comes down to one thing: noise.

Plus Member Spotlights, Grants of the Week, and more!

historians.org/PerspectivesDaily

EDWARD MUIR

WHEN GHOSTS COME KNOCKING

Hauntings in History

In May 1519, the Venetian Senate received reports of a ghost in the lagoon town of Chioggia, which had disturbed sleeping priests by knocking under their beds. The prolific diarist and senator Marin Sanudo was at first doubtful. “For several days the news of this has already been bruited about the city,” he wrote. “But I did not want to record it until I better understood the matter.” The priests reported that the ghost warned about a coming flood, news that threw Chioggia into such a panic that, according to the rumors, pregnant women miscarried. The frightened bishop, in whose palace the ghost had appeared, abandoned his flock for the safety of Venice and refused to return even after Venetian authorities ordered him back. An investigation soon revealed the whole story to have been a hoax, which Sanudo termed “a very ridiculous affair”—but tell that to the frightened women who were said to have lost pregnancies.

My own secondhand experience with ghosts seemed equally ridiculous. As a boy, I attended church meetings during which some congregants bore their testimonies, a standard practice among radical denominations on the fringes of the Protestant tradition. One Sunday, a strangely disheveled woman, who I had never seen before, arose holding a crying baby in her arms. With tears flowing and nose running, she testified to seeing three figures walk across a nearby lake. To me she seemed crazy, especially since her speaking was so agitated. The congregation sat in embarrassed silence. No one rose to comfort her, and she ran out of the meeting before it was over, never to be seen again. She was an anomaly in a 1950s church meeting, but her reported vision of the three Nephites, as they were known locally, fit into a mythology kept alive by expectations of the uncanny. In the mythology, these figures were not ghosts but a version of the undead. That distinction, however, did not make any sense to my young mind.

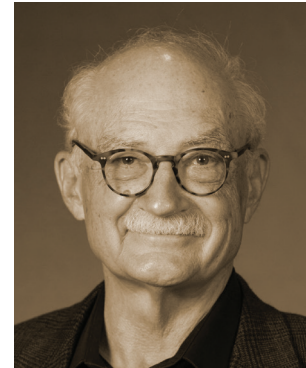
Historical ghosts come in different forms: there are those who suffered injustices in the past, there are our reputed ancestors, and then there are the metaphorical ghosts. Ghosts

are, of course, invented. The historical problem is to discern who invented them, why they did so, and what interests ghosts defend or defy. However fictional, ghosts have led historians into many strange dark passages of the past, because such specters infest the spirit of our craft by personifying invented traditions. The scary moments come not because they creep into our bedrooms, offices, or thoughts unbidden but because our research invites them to tell what they have to say. Ghosts always have a message. The historian’s persistent fear is that the ghosts of the past will remain unknowable and untranslatable and therefore cannot be brought down to earth. The problem is to employ a method to interpret their message without falling under their spell.

Ghosts have led historians into
many strange dark passages
of the past.

There have always been some for whom ghosts are neither invented nor a fantasy but quite real, more real than what the mere physical makes evident to our eyes and ears. Think of the religious ghosts, especially the Holy Ghost (or Holy Spirit, to the more fastidious). Christians are to think of the Holy Ghost as a very real if disembodied being, and theology offers a sophisticated theory, distinguishing among kinds of ghosts and their differences from demons, delusions, apparitions, holy visions, and communications from the divine. Even literature plays on the widespread belief in the reality of—or at least persistent significance of—ghosts, as in Shakespeare (Banquo, Hamlet’s father, King Richard III’s victims) or Dickens (*A Christmas Carol*). These ghosts were all once known to the living but return from the dead with something to remind, reveal, or warn.

Even among educated sophisticates, belief in ghosts has faded slowly. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Britain and the United States, spiritualists communed with



the dead through the intervention of a medium, who, as Alex Owen has shown, was usually a woman whose reputed abilities gave her exceptional authority and independence. The spiritualists thrived in high intellectual circles as an avant-garde imbued with the new Freudian theories of the unconscious, which posited hidden forces abroad in the mind. What was the difference between, on the one hand, the dead knocking under a bed in the night or at a table in a séance and, on the other, the suppressed memories of patients whose dreams or dialogues with a therapist bring back past traumas? Are these not all ghosts?

As we learn from Richard White's recent book, *Who Killed Jane Stanford?*, a ghost founded Stanford University. After Leland Stanford Jr. died from typhoid at age 15, he reappeared to one or both of his parents instructing, "Father, I want you to build a university for the benefit of poor young men, so they can have the same advantages the rich have." When Leland Sr. died too, his widow, Jane, relied on communications with the spirits of her son and husband to interfere in the running of the university. Whether attempting to have a faculty member fired or to keep out dangerously sexual female students, who were not included in Leland Jr.'s original ghostly command, only Jane's spiritual connection to both Lelands could keep the university on its true and proper path.

As we learn from Richard White, a ghost founded Stanford University.

Metaphorical ghosts, however, remain the most troublesome sort, especially those ghosts of invented traditions. None have inflicted as much misery as those that serve nationalisms and lost causes. The ghost of Prince Lazar, who died at the Battle of Kosovo, has haunted Serbian history ever since that day in 1389. On the battle's anniversary in 1914, the Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and set off World War I. On the 600th anniversary of Lazar's death, Slobodan Milošević gave a speech on the site of the battle that initiated the breakup of Yugoslavia and its bloody aftermath.

In the United States, the ghosts of the Confederacy continue to prowl dark corners. Their original message, which spoke to the rhetoric of southern defeat, no longer has "much to do with the memory of the Civil War," as my former colleague Gaines Foster argued in *Ghosts of the Confederacy* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1987). During the late 19th century, a sugarcoated version of the Confederacy had greater power for white elites in the South than did scratching at old scars. Nevertheless, "the

New South of the twentieth century remained a land haunted by the ghosts of the Confederacy," Foster wrote. Those ghosts "were not ancestral spirits who exercise constant or crucial influence, however. Rather, they were phantoms called forth from time to time by various people for differing purposes," often in the service of white supremacy. Such hauntings, as Tony Horwitz's *Confederates in the Attic* (Vintage, 1998) showed, had still not been put to rest by the end of the 20th century. And now in the 21st, the Confederacy's newest acolytes resurfaced in 2017 in Charlottesville to assault the truth with deadly violence as they once had under Jim Crow. These heathen ghosts no longer chorused about the supposed graciousness and independent spirit of the Old South but ironically proved that the Civil War was about the institution of slavery itself.

Lest historians feel too smug, ghosts continued to haunt education and public memory, in the South where the United Daughters of the Confederacy poisoned history teaching for much of the 20th century, but also in northern, midwestern, and western states where Lost Cause mythology also took hold. Lest Yankees feel too smug, Columbia University's William A. Dunning, whose AHA presidential address in 1913 was boldly titled "Truth in History," indoctrinated generations of students with a racist interpretation of Reconstruction. Through its Racist Histories and the AHA initiative, the Association is endeavoring to come to terms with its own ghosts. Moreover, as recent legislation in Florida and Texas proves, the ghosts are still with us, challenging all historical professionals to become ghostbusters. Five hundred years ago, Marin Sanudo managed to see ghost stories as ridiculous, but far too many of our fellow citizens continue to hear them knocking under the bed. **P**

Edward Muir is president of the AHA.

JAMES GROSSMAN AND JEREMY C. YOUNG

THE INTEGRITY OF HISTORY EDUCATION

Bills Censoring K–12 Classrooms Censor Higher Education as Well

Over the past two years, legislation that would ban so-called divisive concepts concerning race, gender, sexuality, and US history in classrooms and class assignments has spread rapidly across the nation. Legislators have introduced nearly 200 such “educational gag order” bills in 42 states. In 18 states, with a population of 118 million—about a third of all Americans—one or more such provisions are now in force. This radical legislation denies divisions that undeniably exist in US society and presumes that if we sugarcoat or hide from young people the challenges we continue to confront, such divisions will miraculously disappear.

We have news for these legislators. Everything has a history, including race, gender, and sexuality. If our students do not understand these histories, including the conflicts and divisions relating to these and other social categories, they will not understand the complex world in which they live. Educators prohibited from teaching history with professional integrity cannot provide students the resources they need to become responsible citizens in a democratic society.

Most of these straitjackets are tailored for educators in elementary and secondary schools. In seven states, however, divisive concepts bans also explicitly apply to colleges and universities: Idaho, Iowa, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Florida, where the higher education portion of the Stop WOKE Act has been stayed temporarily by a federal judge. But even the more common strategy of focusing on supposedly impressionable younger students, often with references to “indoctrination” and age-appropriate boundaries (which are not in and of themselves illegitimate), does not spare higher education from the bludgeon.

As the Florida Department of Education’s (DOE) decision to ban a new Advanced Placement course on African American studies from the state’s high schools makes clear, laws and policies that censor high school classrooms affect colleges too, albeit often indirectly. Consider concurrent-enrollment



Photo: Sophia Gerner



Photo: Eve Ettlinger

(also known as “dual enrollment”) courses. In the 2010–11 school year, US high schools reported about 1.4 million enrollments in courses offering dual high school and college credit in academic subjects including history. These courses are typically delivered in a high school by an instructor who is credentialed and monitored by a local college and who in many cases holds an appointment as a college faculty member.

Educators prohibited from teaching history with professional integrity cannot provide resources students need to become responsible citizens in a democratic society.

Procedures vary widely by state and institution, but in every case, these are college courses, taught by college-certified instructors, that are restricted by applicable K–12 divisive concepts laws because they are also offered for high school credit. In Texas, for instance, it’s illegal for concurrent-enrollment instructors whose courses are curriculum requirements to “require an understanding” of the *New York Times Magazine*’s 1619 Project in a US history course—even if a teacher is merely asking students to compare the material with readings offering different perspectives.

In Kentucky, dual-credit US history instructors are required to teach their students “that defining racial disparities solely on the legacy of [slavery] is destructive to the unification of our nation.” Defining the scope of the “legacy of slavery” is challenging indeed, but one wonders what else the legislators have in mind as foundations of racial inequality in a state whose history reflects not only the importance of slavery as an institution but also its legacies: white supremacist terrorism, segregation, and the unequal distribution of public resources.

K–12 teacher training programs in colleges of education are another area where divisive concepts provisions supposedly focused on K–12 classrooms can reach into the college setting. It is not always clear whether a law with a K–12 scope would extend to direct censorship of the professional preparation of teachers in college classrooms.

In South Dakota, however, the enforcers of divisive concepts policies are taking no chances: Executive Order 2022-02, issued by Governor Kristi Noem in April 2022, implemented a ban on divisive concepts in K–12 schools and directed the state DOE to review its policies and content standards. That review, in turn, led to changes in teacher preparation at the college level. In its June report, the DOE deleted from the curriculum of an Indian studies course—a three-credit class required by law of all preservice teacher—a directive that the course “establish a fundamental awareness” of “race and gender bias, stereotyping, assumptions, etc.” To remove all doubt regarding their intentions, the report authors actually crossed out the requirement with a pen. The next step for the DOE, according to the report, is to “engage the Board of Regents, private colleges, and tribal colleges, encouraging them to undertake a similar review [of teacher preparation programs] to ensure alignment with the EO.”

Laws and policies that censor high school classrooms affect colleges too.

Yes, you read that right: the South Dakota Department of Education wants tribal colleges to remove information about “bias, stereotyping, assumptions, etc.” from their Indian studies curricula for future educators. And they want public and even private colleges and universities to do the same—all because of an executive order that supposedly applies this absurd prohibition only to K–12 classrooms. This cannot, and must not, stand. No teacher with any professional historical expertise or integrity can in good conscience even imply to students that American history is not rife with “bias, stereotyping, [and] assumptions” in the treatment of Native Americans. To prohibit such content is wrong no matter where the school is located; to prohibit it in a state where one out of 12 residents is Native American is particularly egregious.

Perhaps South Dakota represents an extreme case of how radical activists are trying to twist American education into a reactionary and procrustean version of patriotism. But it is only a short step from laws that censor teachers in K–12 schools to those that censor them in colleges and universities.

Lawmakers sometimes copy legislative text from one context to another. In Tennessee, almost the entire text of the 2021 K–12 ban found its way into the higher education legislation that passed the following year. And perhaps the greatest long-term consequence of K–12 censorship legislation is just beginning to reach higher education. As students leave high school classes restricted by divisive concepts laws and enter college, they are likely to be less acquainted with accurate histories of their nation and communities. History professors already lament the gaps in students’ knowledge of US history; now that will be worse.

If higher education leaders and faculty hope to maintain the independence and educational quality of their institutions and to protect the democracy such institutions serve, they cannot afford to keep silent about legislation that censors their K–12 colleagues. Many have increasingly spoken out against divisive concepts legislation, even when it seems focused on the K–12 space—but more solidarity is needed. Historians can no longer sit by and lament the historical illiteracy of the students who walk into our college classrooms. Submit comments when your state seeks feedback on social studies standards. Participate in the committees that write such standards. Testify at public hearings when history education is on the agenda. Run for local or state school board. Use your expertise as a historian and make your voice heard. The independence and educational excellence of all American education is at stake.

And with that, the quality of democracy itself. Thomas Jefferson had it right when he insisted that public education should enable every citizen “to read, to judge and to vote understandingly on what is passing.” Laws that restrict public education about American history are laws that should not be passing at all. **P**

James Grossman is executive director of the AHA; he tweets @JimGrossmanAHA. Jeremy C. Young is senior manager of free expression and education at PEN America; he tweets @jeremycyoung.

A version of this article was published previously at Inside Higher Ed on January 24, 2023.



Powered by
PerfectIt

The Chicago Manual of Style® is now in PerfectIt™ Proofreading Software



bit.ly/CMOSforPerfectIt

Check Word documents for “Chicago Style” spelling, capitalization, hyphenation, punctuation, italics, numbers in sentences, and more.

AHA Member Promo Codes:

Use **AHA20** for 20% off CMOS Online.

Use **AHAMember** for 30% off PerfectIt.

For Your Ever Changing, Ever Evolving World of Work.



- Save up to 75% on the Best Value List of preferred products.
- Free next-business-day delivery on qualifying orders of \$50 or more.*
- Print and copy services where and when you need them.

Start saving on your office supplies,
visit officediscounts.org/historians!

*Free Delivery: Orders outside our local delivery area and most furniture, oversized, bulk items, cases of bottled water and other beverages and special-order items do not qualify. Non-qualifying orders incur a delivery charge (minimum charge of \$9.99). Many orders can be delivered next business day (between 8:30 AM and 5:00 PM) if placed online or via phone by 3:00 PM or via fax by 1:00 PM, local time (in most locations). Other restrictions apply. Curbside pickup is available in most stores, subject to state and local regulations. Orders must be placed 1 hour before store closing. See odpbusiness.com, call 888.2.OFFICE or ask your Account Manager for details.



AMERICAN
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION

SPECIAL OFFER for AHA MEMBERS

History lives at JSTOR

AHA members save 50% on JPASS

Explore the JSTOR digital library of 2,000 journals
spanning more than 300 years with JPASS.

[Historians.org/MyAHA](https://historians.org/MyAHA)



JSTOR

JULIA BROOKINS

AN UNCERTAIN TREND

The AHA's 2022 Survey of History Undergraduate Enrollments

In 2022, the AHA conducted its seventh annual survey of undergraduate enrollment in history courses.

The survey is one part of a suite of AHA efforts to support history departments and programs as they seek to maintain and expand history education at their institutions. Each year from May until September, representatives from history departments and multidisciplinary programs that include history provide quantitative information about the total undergraduate student enrollment in all history courses for each of the past four academic years. History departments are asked to give basic information about their institution, and provide quantitative data on history enrollments, which includes students who take multiple courses multiple times, and counts only the history portion of cross-listed courses. The questionnaire also asks for optional information about a few of the variables that the AHA hypothesized might be influencing history enrollment trends at the macro level: these include dual credit and dual enrollment programs, faculty roles in actively recruiting students, and alumni engagement with the program or department. Respondents are also given space to offer comments, explanations, or questions of their own that help to illuminate what might be happening at the local level in each institution.

This process requires a department chair or other administrator or assistant to fill out a form, which, if they have the data at hand, takes approximately 20 minutes. This expenditure of time and effort is easier for those departments with more resources, and if too few institutions—or only well-funded institutions—participate, the resulting picture will necessarily be partial and incomplete. This year, we received only 79 complete responses, representing fewer than 250,000 students, compared to last year, where we received 138 complete responses representing more than 400,000 students. The quality of the responses was also less robust: in

2021, we received 54 optional final comments on the survey; this year, we received just 20 final comments. This comparatively low response rate and the fact that responding institutions are not broadly representative of the roughly 3,900 US colleges and universities (approximately 2,600 four-year and 1,300 two-year institutions) make it difficult to draw firm conclusions about recent changes in history enrollment.

With this substantial caveat, we observe that undergraduate enrollments have resumed their slow and steady decline. Over the late 2010s, undergraduate

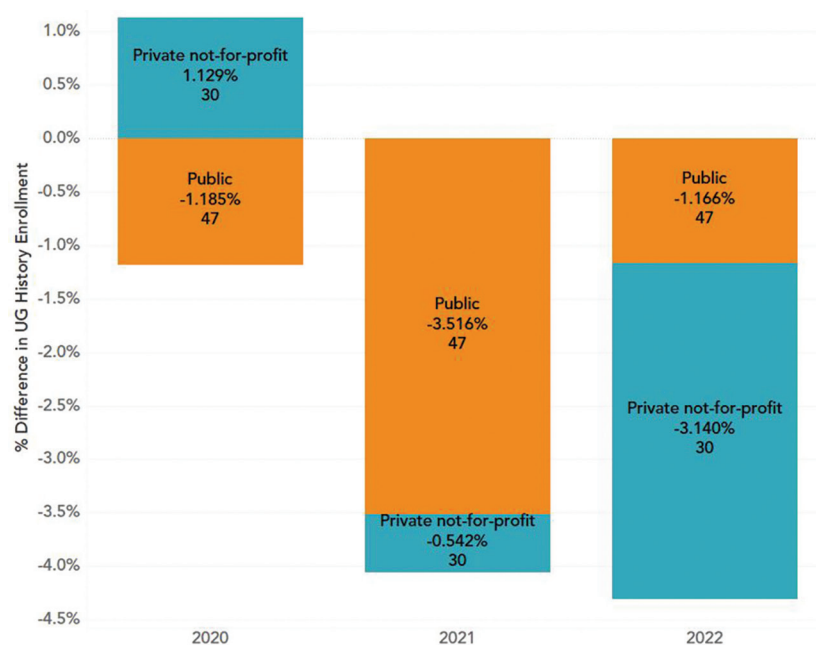


Fig. 1. Change in undergraduate history enrollment from prior year.

enrollment declined 2 percent per year on average. During the pandemic, however, undergraduate enrollments in history courses stabilized, at least when the steep decline in overall undergraduate student enrollment was taken into account. However, over the past year, this broader trend appears to have resumed. Undergraduate history enrollments at the 78 four-year colleges and universities in the United States and one institution in Canada that responded to the AHA's survey declined 2.2 percent from the 2020–21 academic year to 2021–22 (Fig. 1). This decline occurred within a fairly stable overall undergraduate population, which decreased by only 0.6 percent from fall 2021 to fall 2022, according to data from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center and

reported in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

The limited reach and representativeness of the 2022 survey means that this decline should be read with caution. Because the AHA received a relatively small set of responses to our most recent survey, the results are especially sensitive to year-to-year variability at large institutions. Conversely, they tend to obscure changes at small institutions that involve fewer students, relatively speaking, but have a larger impact on the department.

Using the categories developed by the Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education—which provide a framework for comparing diverse places of learning in the United States—

we know more about what is going on at research-focused, doctoral universities than about the thousands of smaller, four-year institutions. Forty-two doctoral universities in the “high” and “very high” research activity categories provided data for this year’s survey; only 16 baccalaureate colleges and 20 institutions in the other Carnegie categories responded (Fig. 2). Sixty-one percent of responses came from programs that offered graduate-level courses in history, although those institutions are in the minority across higher education overall. There were no responses from two-year colleges, and only one from a Canadian institution.

This smaller yield is likely due to a combination of factors that include lean staffing levels, difficulty accessing institutional data (especially at smaller departments), the perennial challenges of outreach to contacts at many two-year colleges, and other barriers to marketing the AHA’s survey to those individuals who could provide the most specific and illuminating answers. These limitations suggest that the AHA needs to do a better job recruiting responses from a wider range of institutions, even in the current environment of labor shortages and staff overwork. Broadening the survey’s reach could illuminate patterns that would assist history departments and history faculty across higher education.

Going forward, we are working to modify the enrollment questionnaire to increase the amount of basic data it collects, hoping to make it easier for overworked faculty and staff to respond. We will aim for a survey that takes respondents under 10 minutes to complete if they have the numerical data available. We will look for other approaches to gathering the in-depth, qualitative information from departments and historians that help

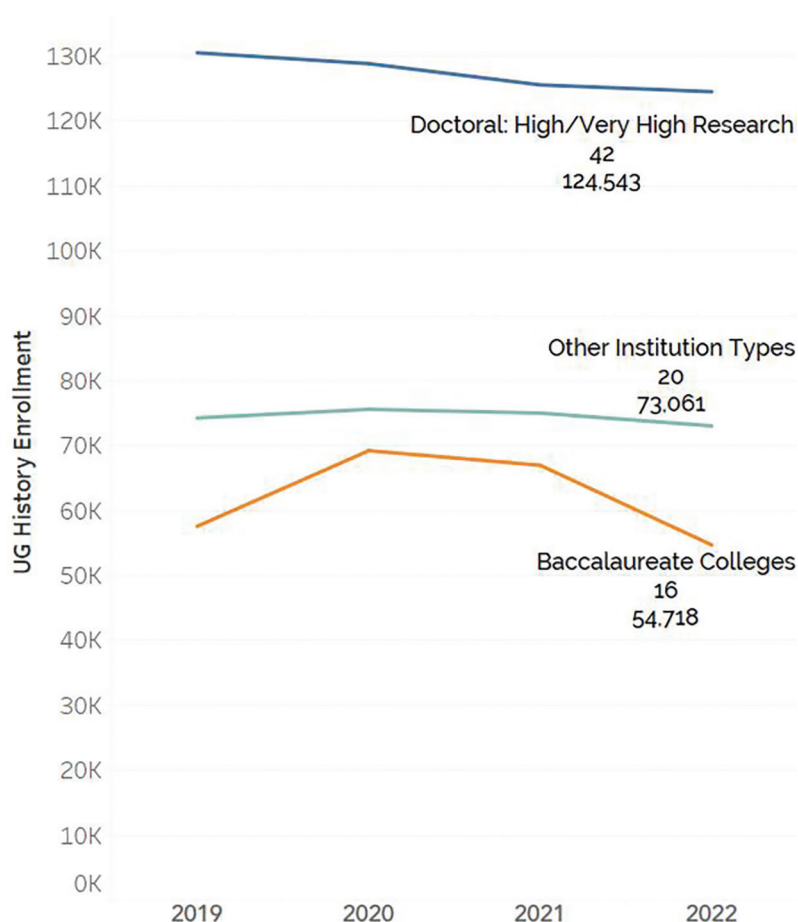


Fig. 2. Undergraduate history enrollment, 2019–22.

to give texture and meaning to the raw numbers. The new survey will be available in May, as usual. If you are based at an institution that serves college undergraduates, please encourage your academic unit to provide accurate data that we can share with the history community.

The utility of our data depends on the quantity of responses. More complete data will enable us to do the analytical work necessary to engage the essential question, Why are enrollments declining, and how can we think creatively about reversing the trend? We hope to improve our understanding of the dynamics of change in higher education that are reshaping opportunities across our discipline. **P**

Julia Brookins is special projects coordinator at the AHA.

== EZPAY ==

Do you want to keep your inbox free of renewal notices and avoid a lapse in membership benefits?

Sign up for EZPay when you renew your membership online!

The AHA will automatically charge your credit card, which is securely stored by euclidPay (not in the AHA's records).

Questions?
Email members@historians.org.

Gift Membership

Share the benefits of AHA membership with the historian in your life.

AHA membership supports historians in all fields, all professions, and all stages.

Contact

members@historians.org to learn how you can give the gift of AHA membership.

ADVOCACY BRIEFS

AHA Collaborates on Learning Standards and Advocates for Academic Freedom and Funding

Over the winter, the AHA wrote a letter to Marymount University opposing the proposed elimination of its history major, as well as a letter urging the US State Department to assist in the safe return of an abducted prominent Haitian historian. The Association signed on to letters urging Congress to fund foundational Title IV programs and opposing the nomination of appointees to the New College of Florida governing board who would threaten the institution's academic freedom. After expressing concern in October about the revisions process for the Virginia Board of Education's proposed history and social science standards, the AHA collaborated with Virginia education organizations on a new draft.

AHA Collaborates on Proposed Virginia History and Social Science Draft Standards

In December 2022, the AHA, the Virginia Social Studies Leaders Consortium, and the Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development "collaborated to share their collective knowledge, experience, and expertise" to draft proposed history and social science standards for K–12 schools. This draft responds to the Virginia Board of Education's determination at its November meeting that neither of the two documents on the table

was satisfactory; a new draft was needed that would combine the two proposals with reference to the existing standards, adopted in 2015.

On February 2, AHA manager of teaching and learning Brendan Gillis testified in support of the collaborative standards at the Virginia Department of Education's hearing on the history and social studies standards revisions process. The AHA also submitted comments on the draft standards and shared action alerts with Virginia members encouraging testimony.

AHA Signs On to Letter Urging Title VI Funding for 2023

On January 11, the AHA signed on to a letter from the Coalition for International Education asking leaders in the US Senate and House of Representatives for "robust funding for HEA-Title VI, International Education, and Fulbright-Hays programs." In addition to "strengthen[ing] the key Title VI foundational programs that address the nation's critical and expanding needs for deep expertise in foreign languages, world regions and international business," the letter states, this funding "will incentivize research and innovation in US international education capacity, organization and delivery to meet 21st century challenges, as well as expand international and foreign language education to traditionally underserved students and institutions."

AHA Signs On to AAA Letter Opposing Appointees to New College of Florida Governing Board

On January 23, the AHA signed on to a letter from the American Anthropological Association (AAA) opposing Florida governor Ron DeSantis's appointment of six new members to the New College of Florida governing board. These appointees, the letter states, "are ideologically motivated and their only apparent interest in the institution is political. The brazen aspiration of transforming a nationally ranked public honors college into a college along the lines of the private evangelical Christian Hillsdale College is especially alarming and appears to be nothing more than an orchestrated attack on academic integrity."

AHA Sends Letters Opposing Proposed Elimination of History Major at Marymount University

On January 24, the AHA sent letters to Marymount University president Irma Becerra, provost Hesham El-Rewini, Faculty Council president Sarah Ficke, and Board of Trustees chair Edward Bersoff opposing the proposed elimination of the history major at the university. "The AHA has seen this approach to prioritization and restructuring before, and the results have been detrimental to students. . . . Overwhelming evidence shows that employers seek the kind of skills a history degree can provide,"

the AHA wrote. “This elimination is an especially wrongheaded shift at a time when civic leaders from all corners of the political landscape have lamented the lack of historical knowledge of American citizens. Offering a history major is standard at comprehensive universities, and the elimination of the history major would place Marymount far outside the mainstream of its peer institutions.”

AHA Sends Letter to US Secretary of State Urging Assistance with Safe Return of Pierre Buteau

On January 27, the AHA sent a letter to US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken regarding the January 24 abduction of Professor Pierre Buteau, president of the Société Haïtienne d'Histoire, de

Géographie et de Géologie. “We recognize that the crisis of domestic insecurity in Haiti goes well beyond the fate of a single individual,” the AHA wrote. “Understanding Haiti’s history is an essential element of any viable long-term response to this crisis, and Professor Buteau has devoted his professional life to bringing such understanding to bear on the challenge of re-founding a democratic state in his native land. On behalf of the American historical community, we appeal to you to use your good offices at this difficult time in Haiti’s history to do whatever is possible to help secure the safe release of Professor Buteau.” Buteau was freed on February 1. **P**

Rebecca L. West is operations and communications assistant at the AHA. She tweets @rebeckawest.

Donate Today

Support the AHA as a trusted voice for history education, the professional work of historians, and the critical role of historical thinking in public life.

Visit
historians.org/donate

Or email info@historians.org to learn how your gift, pledge, or bequest can make a difference.

The American Historical Association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All or part of your gift may be tax deductible as a charitable contribution.

JAMES J. WARD

WHEN MEMORIALS COME DOWN, GHOSTS REMAIN

Berlin after Reunification



Commemorative marker for wall guard Peter Göring, Scharnhorst Strasse, August 1991.
James J. Ward

IN THE SUMMER of 1991, I visited East Berlin, intent on photographing as much as I could of what remained of the German Democratic Republic's (GDR) physical iconography. As anyone who spent time in the eastern half of the city in the first year or two after reunification remembers, it was akin to a wilderness experience. The former Communist state was gone, while the new Federal Republic was only fitfully making its presence felt. Whole neighborhoods seemed absent of authority of any kind. I felt suspended in time, a condition that was curiously exhilarating (if sometimes threatening) while reminders of the bitter and recent past were everywhere. This was particularly so in the off-the-beaten-path locations where Communist authorities had installed memorials to border guards killed while on duty. The streets were empty, the buildings were desolate and still showed the marks of the fighting in 1945, and the few patrons I encountered in local taverns wanted nothing to do with a foreign interloper.

Here was the detritus of a failed state, a discredited ideology, and an unwanted history.

But it was the memorials I managed to locate that made the greatest impression on me. Here was the detritus of a failed state, a discredited ideology, and an unwanted history. The most telling monument of all, the Berlin Wall itself, survives at several locations and in various configurations. Little reference is now made to its official GDR designation as the “anti-fascist protective barrier.” Antifascism was the legitimizing ideology of the East German state, and nowhere was it more in evidence than in the eastern half of Berlin. In its memorial program, priority of place went to members of the Communist resistance against the Nazi dictatorship, best materialized by the enormous bronze bust of Communist Party leader Ernst Thälmann that stands in the Prenzlauer Berg district. Well into the 1990s, on every August 18, Socialist Unity Party (SED) pensioners, GDR loyalists, and neighborhood residents gathered at the statue to commemorate the anniversary of Thälmann’s 1944 death in Buchenwald. Derelict for years, periodically cleaned of graffiti by local authorities, Thälmann’s statue remains an object of contestation, too large and too expensive to remove.

Other icons of the workers’ and peasants’ state were more rudely treated – none more so than the designated “hero-victims of the socialist frontier,” the eight border guards who died along the Wall between 1961 and 1989. These men died on duty, in some cases shot by those trying to escape and in at

least one case in an exchange of gunfire with West Berlin police. The markers erected to honor them were among the first to be toppled once the Wall was opened. Because they looked like gravestones, when pried off their bases, these stone slabs formed an eloquent testimony not to the individuals they named but to the visceral hatred that the GDR regime had generated among its citizens, even as it sought to mobilize emotional support for its fallen heroes. Or the evidence I found may have been the result of random acts of vandalism, apolitical or not.

In contrast, the fate of the GDR’s central memorial to the guards was clearer. Erected in 1973 at Jerusalemer Strasse just across the sector boundary from the towering Springer Verlag building, this site was a favorite ceremonial destination for SED leaders. As such, it was an early target when the Wall came down. Parts of its inscription were chiseled away, what remained of the text was defaced with anti-GDR slogans, and the brazier meant to honor the fallen guards became, literally, a trash container. The entire ensemble was removed in the



The SED memorial to fallen border guards, Jerusalemer Strasse and Reinhold-Huhn Strasse, August 1991.

James J. Ward

mid-1990s. Reinhold-Huhn Strasse, the street the Communists had renamed for one of the fallen guards, reverted to its previous name, Schützenstrasse. Superstar architect Aldo Rossi constructed a multicolor building complex nearby, and a once important GDR site was absorbed into the rapidly gentrifying district around what had been Checkpoint Charlie.

Through the 1990s, those who died trying to cross from East Berlin into West Berlin remained in the spotlight, as new memorials were erected, the border guards implicated in their deaths were put on trial, and the GDR leaders whose orders the guards had followed were similarly brought to justice. These trials usually resulted in convictions, but with shortened sentences due to health considerations or—in the case of the border guards—brief or suspended sentences. Few Berliners at the time, on either side of the former divide, found the verdicts satisfactory.

At the same time, the lengthy deliberations that preceded the construction of the official Berlin Wall memorial site were complicated by the question of whether the East

German guards who died in their efforts to interdict attempted escapes should be included among the Wall's victims. Ultimately, a compromise was reached: when the memorial was completed at Bernauer Strasse, north of the city center, a single separate marker acknowledged the GDR guards. Anyone looking for evidence of their commemoration by the GDR regime before the Wall came down will find nothing at the original locations, now long ceded to post-unification construction, reclamation by nature, and the erosion of memory even among those who might be invested in remembering.

For pragmatic rather than political reasons, the built legacy of the GDR cannot be entirely erased from the Berlin cityscape. Not for lack of trying, as the demolition of the GDR Foreign Ministry building in 1996 and the East German parliament house, the so-called Palast der Republik, in the mid-2000s can attest. Lost in the underbrush, so to speak, are the once visible traces of a political culture that was assiduously promoted for 40 years, even if it began to show signs of exhaustion toward the end. Only a footnote—if that—to the history of a failed regime and discredited ideology, the photographs I took in Berlin in 1991 might recall a brief period when, to recycle the timeless reference from Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, "the old is dying, and the new cannot be born."

Inconsequential when compared to more famous examples of "monument cleansing"—the removal of Stalin's statue from Heroes' Square in Budapest in 1956, the dismantling of the Lenin monument in Berlin in 1992, the toppling of the Saddam Hussein statue in Baghdad in 2003, to name only a few—the consignment to the dustbin of history of the GDR guards who perished at the Berlin Wall should remind us of the fickleness of memory.

Reading the service records of the eight border guards who died at the Berlin Wall reinforces the belief that they too were victims, compelled by a governing system to accept roles whose alternatives were even less attractive. Testimony from former guards confirms their moral and psychological discomfort with contemplating, let alone executing, the "shoot to kill" order imposed on them, perhaps especially when the target was a fellow East German. The suspended sentences on those who were brought to trial reflect, even if subconsciously, the ambivalence their countrymen feel toward those they themselves may have been but for the vagaries of birth and geography.

Twenty-five years since the publication of Brian Ladd's *The Ghosts of Berlin* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1997), scholarship on monuments and memorials in the German capital has



Trash in the ceremonial brazier at the SED memorial, August 1991.
James J. Ward

become a minor industry. While small in comparison with the discussions of how the Holocaust is remembered, the memorial culture of the former Communist state has not been neglected, even as scores of street names, dozens of monuments, and almost all ideologically encumbered locations have been repurposed or simply effaced. Reflecting not only a continuing dissatisfaction with the social and economic consequences of reunification, a view of the past (*Ostalgie*) that is at least partly illusionary, and an alienation from the colorless politicians who today command the fortunes of the Federal Republic, the aspirational claims – however unrealized in practice – of the East German state exert an attraction that engages the attention of activists and academics alike.

Almost lost in these debates are the concrete objects—literally—that gave form to this contested memory.

The GDR's memorial culture, like so many other aspects of East German history, remains an active subject for scholarly interpretation. Whether closely focused like Pertti Aho-nen's *Death at the Berlin Wall* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2011) or

more expansively intended like Hope Harrison's *After the Berlin Wall: Memory and the Making of the New Germany, 1989 to the Present* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2019), the recent post-Wall scholarship reifies in print what has largely ceased to exist in fact. Almost lost in the increasing abstractions that shape these debates are the concrete objects – literally – that gave form to this contested memory.

Berlin today is much changed from the city I visited more than 30 years ago. Locations I photographed then are virtually unrecognizable, like the “death zone” between Potsdamer Platz and the Brandenburg Gate, at whose northern end the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe now stands, and the onetime Marx-Engels Platz, now dominated by the reconstructed facades of the Hohenzollern Royal Palace. The transformation is most striking in the east, as even those memorials that have survived – such as the former Soviet cemetery in Treptower Park with its acres of graves and its colossal triumphant Red Army soldier – have fallen off most tourists' itinerary. The practiced eye can still identify many markers from the past, although the ghosts that haunt them become ever more evanescent. Berlin is not alone in this characterization, but some of its ghosts are more fleeting than others. **P**

James J. Ward is professor of history emeritus at Cedar Crest College.



Site of the Peter Göring marker, August 1994.

James J. Ward

SCOTT G. BRUCE

HOPE IN THE DARK

History and Ghost Stories



Ghost stories provide a rich literary and cultural tapestry for historical examination.
Stowe MS 17, f. 200r. British Library. Public domain.

THE UBIQUITY of the undead as protagonists in modern entertainment media—from novels to movies to video games—has exponentially increased student interest in the history of ghosts and zombies. Every age and culture has its stories about the returning dead, but teachers of premodern Europe are particularly well served by the abundance of accounts in English translation.

Ancient and medieval European ghost stories do not meet the expectations of modern tales of supernatural horror. They do not rely on shock tactics to frighten the reader, the ghosts themselves are typically not malformed in appearance or malevolent in intent, and the purpose of these stories is didactic rather than entertaining. Yet these tales are rewarding resources for teaching students about classical antiquity and the Western Middle Ages because they provide us with the opportunity to ask probing questions about how people in the past imagined the relationship between the living and the dead. From what otherworldly abode do the spirits of the departed return? What form do ghosts take, and how do they communicate? Why are they deprived of eternal rest, and what do they require from the living in order to obtain it? As rich and vivid cultural constructions, ancient and medieval specters give up valuable secrets about the worldviews of the authors who told stories about their return.

Ghost stories provide us with the opportunity to ask probing questions about how people in the past imagined the relationship between the living and the dead.

Most premodern hauntings followed narrative conventions. An unquiet spirit appears in a certain locale or to a specific individual, reveals the reason for its unrest, and receives help from the living to find repose in the afterlife. Ancient ghosts often reminded the living to observe proper funerary rites and thereby provide them with an easy passage to the otherworld. Such was the case with the hapless sailor Elpenor in Homer's *The Odyssey*, whose ghost implored Odysseus to bury him according to custom after he died in an accident. Likewise, as recounted by Pliny the Younger, a nameless wraith seeking a respectable burial haunted a rental property in Roman Athens.

As centuries passed, the details of these stories changed to accommodate new belief systems. The meteoric success of Christianity in the fourth century triggered a groundswell of

concern for the fate of Christian souls after death and modulated the urgency of their petitions from beyond the grave. While the teachings of the early church were clear that the soul lay in repose as though asleep until the resurrection of the dead and their judgment by God at the end of time, apocryphal writings like the *Vision of Paul* (composed ca. 400) depicted an afterlife immediately after death but preceding the final judgment, where human souls persisted in recognizable bodies that were vulnerable to physical punishments commensurate with their sins. In her eloquent book *Moment of Reckoning* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2019), Ellen Muehlberger has dubbed this alarming new phase of human existence the “postmortal.” It is from this liminal place between heaven and hell that the shades of the Christian dead return to our world, fretful of their eternal fate.

The dead remained stubbornly social in premodern ghost stories. As the notion of the temporary residence of souls in a punitive afterlife took hold in the Western imagination, so, too, did the idea that these spirits could benefit from the help of the living. Beginning in the late sixth century with anecdotes recounted in the *Dialogues* of Pope Gregory the Great (590–604), Christian apparitions returned to petition listeners to pray for their release from punishment in the hereafter. Pithy and memorable, these stories were primarily pastoral in purpose. The identity of the suffering spirits and the nature of their pleas provide us with a barometer of the kinds of people to whom Christian bishops and priests directed moral exhortation as well as the kinds of behavior that they sought to control. Pope Gregory's audience was mostly monastic, and so, too, were his ghosts and their sins. Take, for example, the unfortunate Justus, a monk who hid three gold coins and suffered in fire after his death because of his greed until 30 days of consecutive Masses offered on his behalf by his brethren released him from his torment. Later imitators of Pope Gregory, such as Abbot Peter the Venerable (1122–56) and Caesarius of Heisterbach (ca. 1180–1240), tailored the details of these traditions to address new audiences, particularly laypeople, but they did little to alter the overall pattern of the narratives.

In the later Middle Ages, however, new experiences with the undead challenged the expectations of the ghost story genre. In the 12th century, for example, authors struggled to explain reports of animated corpses terrorizing villages in northern England. These were not the spirits of the dead returning to seek the aid of the living, but rather the bloated and bloodied bodies of notorious men, who rose from their graves at night to torment their neighbors with violence and pestilence. One was an infamous churchman known as the Hundeprest (Houndpriest), owing to his inordinate love of

hunting, who terrified his wife by lurking in her bedroom before crushing her nearly to death with the immense weight of his dead body. Unable to find precedent for this phenomenon in “the books of ancient authors,” the monastic chronicler William of Newburgh was at a loss to explain how the dead were rising. His stories of rampaging revenants departed from time-honored literary models and anticipated a genre that would not find prominence until the early 21st century: the zombie survival guide. William’s breathless narrative related how a band of monks armed with axes and shovels waited in a graveyard by night for the dead man to rise and then, after a pitched battle, harried him back to his tomb. Once the monks had excavated his monstrous corpse, they destroyed it with fire, but only after they had completed the grisly work of extracting his “cursed heart.”

In Buddhist and Taoist traditions, the neglect of ancestors or misdeeds in life could give rise to “hungry ghosts.”

While ancient and medieval poets from Homer to Dante told stories about heroes and visionaries who visited the underworld to witness the fate of the fallen, the spirits of the deceased themselves have not played a starring role in the history of spectral literature until recently. A thought-provoking example is George Saunders’s experimental novel *Lincoln in the Bardo* (Random House, 2017). Set in the Civil War era, it features a cast of dead souls trapped in the “bardo,” a term for a liminal postmortal state borrowed from Buddhism. While the characters have been disfigured by the frustrated desires of their mortal lives, most do not even realize that they are dead. Their attention focuses on the newly arrived soul of a boy named Willie Lincoln, who tarrys in this antechamber of eternity because the grief of his father, the famous president, tethers him unnaturally to the mortal world. In a reversal of a centuries-old tradition, the mourning of the living disturbs the repose of the dead.

Underlying this rich literary tradition are fundamental questions of universal interest about the fate of the dead, the porousness of the boundary separating their world from ours, and the social obligations that the living had to provide for the deceased in their need. This attention to the memory of the dead and the responsibility of the living for their care was not unique to ancient polytheism or medieval Christianity. In fact, Western ghost stories shine most brightly as tools for teaching when they are read in tandem with tales of the

returning dead from other religious cultures. In Buddhist and Taoist traditions, for example, the neglect of ancestors or misdeeds in life could give rise to “hungry ghosts.” These fearful spirits abided in the underworld, but they walked the earth during the seventh month of the Chinese calendar. In anticipation of their arrival, communities celebrated the Hungry Ghost Festival to provide symbolic sustenance not only to honor their own ghostly ancestors but also to ward off the ill will of the unknown phantoms in their midst. Like their Western analogues, the practice of the care of the hungry ghosts in Chinese culture is grounded on the hope that when we die, we, too, can rely on the living for help as we face the consequences of our mortal actions in the world to come.

The trappings of premodern ghost stories have been remarkably consistent in the Western tradition — Pliny the Younger’s chain-rattling Roman apparition could be mistaken for the ghost of Jacob Marley in Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol* (1843). The genre has also retained its didactic function down to the present day, but 20th-century authors have repurposed it in creative and instructive ways worth exploring in the classroom. Some modern tales about hauntings have doubled as narratives about the lingering trauma of slavery (Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*) and as warning about the injustice of cultural appropriation (Hari Kunzru’s *White Tears*). Others aspire only to entertain with no higher purpose than to conjure the thrill of fear. A classic example is M. R. James’s 1904 short story “Oh, Whistle, and I’ll Come to You, My Lad,” concerning a man who inadvertently summoned “a figure in pale, fluttering draperies, ill-defined” by blowing a metal whistle found in a ruined church. Read it by candlelight if you dare. **P**

Scott G. Bruce is professor of history at Fordham University.

LUCY BARNHOUSE

PHANTOM ENCOUNTERS

Building a Course around Ghosts



Ghosts captivate the attentions of learners while providing a fertile source base for comparative teaching.
Four Bricks Tall/Flickr/CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

IN THE 16TH century, a Capuchin monk confidently wrote, “There are some men who have never seen, or perhaps could never see a ghost; there are others to whose lot it falls to have many such supernatural experiences.” Almost 500 years after the appearance of this *Treatise on Ghosts*, otherworldly spirits are welcome apparitions in course catalogs and syllabi. The distant past can often appear to students as unknowable because of its strangeness, and the mysteries of ghosts offer an accessible way into this strangeness. Their ubiquity in pop culture means that, frightening as they may be in context, the undead are refreshingly free of intimidation for students. These otherworldly apparitions provide a case study in learning about and through unfamiliar cultural beliefs.

Ghosts and revenants and spectral visions have appeared in conversations not only about the living and the dead but also about identity, gender, sexuality, and more. And for the period I teach, from late antiquity to early modernity, I have found that these unquiet dead can, like the spirit who took Ebenezer Scrooge by the hand in *A Christmas Carol*, serve as helpful guides in both literature and history courses. Studying ghosts requires constant engagement with a question central to the study of history itself: How do the living relate to the dead? Discovering how texts from different times and places answer this question allows students to explore complex realities.

Through ghosts, students can see the diversity of thought and belief in the Middle Ages and begin to unpick myths of a monolithic medieval period.

Looking at the living and the dead is a convenient—and, in my experience, attractive—way of sharpening the focus of an introductory course. Moreover, this approach showcases a wide range of beliefs about what the underworld was like and how it was accessed, as well as what it might mean for the dead to speak to the living. To structure one of my courses on the history of medieval European literature, I used *The Penguin Book of the Undead: Fifteen Hundred Years of Supernatural Encounters* (2016), edited by Scott G. Bruce. This volume contains a variety of texts from Homer to *Hamlet*, via revenants in French abbeys and on Viking farmsteads, introducing students to the wide diversity of traditions in medieval Europe. Through ghosts, students can see the diversity of thought and belief in the Middle Ages and begin to unpick myths of a monolithic medieval period.

My course begins with the diversity of traditions circulating in medieval Europe and influencing medieval Christian authors in order to debunk the stereotype of medieval Europe as a stagnant and isolated time and place, inheriting and adapting nothing. Moreover, having students read biblical passages about Saul and the witch of Endor, the Homeric story of Odysseus and Elphenor, and the autobiographical text of the third-century North African martyr Perpetua offers them ways into thinking about what the dead—and the undead—can tell us about the lives of historical actors.

When Saul, incognito, seeks insight from the witch (or, less pejoratively, prophetess) of Endor, he is terrified both by the apparition of the dead prophet Samuel, who foretells his death, and by the woman’s recognition of him as the king of Israel despite his disguise. In such stories, the dead often have the power to tell the future; this particular episode also raises the question of how morality affects death, life, and the afterlife. Does Samuel respond to the power of the woman who calls him? Or does he appear in order to admonish the king, ignoring the woman of Endor as an alternate source of spiritual authority? Similarly, in Homer’s epic, Odysseus’s encounter with Elphenor shows us ancient spaces devoted to the afterlife, and the difficulty of communication between the living and the dead. And in third-century Carthage, Perpetua’s vision of her dead brother Dinocrates and her conviction that her prayers could relieve his suffering provide one of the earliest testimonies to developing Christian beliefs about the afterlife and prayers for the dead. These vivid visions, including that of her brother, offer insight into the developing conceptual lexicon of Christianity. Further, Perpetua had a strong sense of her own identity as part of a community of Christians, and of the challenges this posed to her identity as a Roman matron, all of which are accentuated by the fact that the text is autobiographical. To consider the implications of her authorship is also to consider the social history of religion.

Beyond these ancient precedents, the discernment of saints and the uncertainty of churchmen and theologians with regard to the undead in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages allows students to see medieval Christianity as something evolving, dynamic, and hybrid: it was neither Monty Python’s Inquisition nor Protestantism’s memory of an Orwellian superstructure designed to monitor thought and control belief. By the time we reach Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* at the end of the course, students are prepared to see how Horatio’s scholarship equips him to speak to the ghost of Hamlet’s father, and why the frightened courtiers and soldiers expect that the royal Dane might have foreknowledge of the future.

When using ghost stories, I’ve taken a variety of approaches in the classroom. A class period that falls on Halloween is an

opportunity for “ghost day.” Toward the end of the fall semester, an excuse to engage goodwill and humor is always welcome. And pairing translations of ghost stories from Byland Abbey’s chronicle by M. R. James, an early 20th-century medievalist, with one of James’s own stories (I’m particularly fond of “The Treasure of Abbot Thomas”) can be a great way of talking about popular reception of the Middle Ages in Victorian England and beyond. Ghost stories are flexible: these same medieval sources can be deployed in discussions of monastic culture and identity, and monasteries’ many social functions. Their theological sophistication allows my class to talk about the implications of how many of the surviving texts from medieval Europe were created inside monasteries. The documentary culture that we look at is more male, more Christian, and more educated than many members of the societies from which those texts came. Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg’s (d. 1018) priest-burning revenants, for example, illustrate doctrinal debate, dissent, and religious hybridity. Particularly if paired with a relevant podcast episode, these graphic and engaging stories can be used to model practices of close reading and analysis. What does it mean for an 11th-century German bishop to include such violent stories in his political chronicle? What does it mean for him to present these stories as, if not definitely substantiated, at least plausible? Class discussion can also be kick-started by a lively debate on whether or not we can call these revenants zombies.

Medieval ghost stories like those in the *Book of the Undead* can also be paired with non-European primary sources in global history courses, with productive comparisons being drawn among narrative conventions of ghost stories. Mysterious dreams experienced by Carolingian emperors can be paired with the prophetic dreams experienced by government officials in Song China and chronicled in Hong Mai’s *Tales of the Listener*. The porous boundaries between this world and others in early medieval Europe are also found in the stories collected in *African Myths of Origin*. And discussing the use of ghosts to deal with collective trauma can be done with a discussion of violence in high medieval France and late Heian Japan. “The Story of Mimi-Nashi-Hōichi,” collected by Lafcadio and Setsu Hearn, recounts the travails of a blind biwa player whose skill results in ghosts demanding that he tell them their own story. Mimi-Nashi-Hōichi’s ability to evoke the desperation and pathos of the Genpei War was, readers are told, unequalled. The ghosts, weeping over their own fates, are assured of the compassion of the living but are – like many of the undead – violent and unpredictable in their desires.

One of my favorite selections to teach with is an anecdote recounted by the 11th-century monk and theologian Peter

Damian with the sensational title of “A Lesbian Ghost.” I confess that when I first saw the title in the table of contents, I momentarily suspected editorial simplification, if not exaggeration, for dramatic effect. But no: in this story, a deceased nun appears to her goddaughter, both to foretell the future and to admonish the girl about the desirability of frequent and conscientious confession. The latter is illustrated through the fact that the nun herself forgot, before dying, to be shriven of “wanton lust with girls of her own age.” She has the power to appear from heaven, nevertheless, because of the mercy of the Virgin Mary, who reminded her of this forgotten sin.

Exploring the richer and more nuanced realities of what the story demonstrates provides a way of exploring the complexity of the medieval past.

On a first reading, students are usually convinced that this story demonstrates that the Medieval Church (capital letters definitely implied) disapproved strongly of nonheteronormative sexual behaviors and identities. Exploring, then, the richer and more nuanced realities of what it does demonstrate provides a way of exploring the complexity of the medieval past. Reading about a lesbian ghost emphasizing the importance of confession, devotion to the Virgin Mary, and the reach of divine grace is a far easier entry point into the reform movement of the 11th-century church of which Damian was part than theological treatises or a discussion of the investiture controversy. When we read *The Divine Comedy*, students can see how other readers responded to the same author when they find Peter Damian welcoming Dante to the seventh circle of paradise.

I’ve focused on primarily medieval examples, but ghostly apparitions do similar work across multiple time periods and geographies. One of their most important roles is to help students see that history includes what past societies believed, as well as the verifiable facts of what happened. Letting ghosts do the talking, as suggested by Robertson Davies, can be an effective way of eliciting student curiosity and building students’ knowledge. As the living encounter the undead, so do we encounter the otherness and the immediacy of historical authors and actors. **P**

Lucy Barnhouse is an assistant professor at Arkansas State University.

TRADING ON JUSTICE

In the March Issue of the American Historical Review

The March 2023 issue of the *AHR* opens with **James H. Sweet's** (Univ. of Wisconsin–Madison) presidential address, “Slave Trading as a Corporate Criminal Conspiracy, from the Calabar Massacre to BLM, 1767–2022.” Sweet traces Liverpool’s Lace family from their enthusiastic participation in the Atlantic slave trade in the 18th century, through their curation of historical memory of that participation in the 19th and 20th centuries, to the rebranding of the family law firm as “BLM” in 2014. He uses this narrative of the “politics of everyday life” to call for a new framework for reparations to the descendants of enslaved Africans. Reparations, Sweet concludes, require “dismantling the systems that raised the need for repair in the first place.”

What happens when people don't pay their debts?

Like Sweet’s address, much of the March issue coalesces around issues of slavery, trade, and justice over the long 19th century. In “Everyday Economic Justice,” **Louise Walker** (Northeastern Univ.) looks at a classic problem with contemporary resonance: What happens when people don’t pay their debts? Focusing on new forms of juridical arbitration in Mexico under the 1812 Cádiz Constitution, she uses microeconomic history—the study of the economic relationships, decisions, and actions of people, households, and small enterprise—to examine the cases of tens of thousands of Mexico City residents from 1813 to 1863. Walker shows that this system was relatively effective for ordinary people and operated across gender lines in surprisingly fair-minded ways, giving it a broad popular legitimacy.

Ariel Ron's (Southern Methodist Univ.) “When Hay Was King” urges historians to pay more attention to the trade patterns, developmental state policies, and nationalist economic ideologies that generated distinctly national, as opposed to global, economic spaces. Hay was the linchpin of the 19th-century US

industrial energy regime, he argues, but it was largely ignored by contemporaries. The magnitude and importance of hay production only became clear with a detailed federal agricultural census in 1850, when hay was drafted into a wide-ranging debate on economic development, with “King Hay” in the North emerging as a foil for “King Cotton” in the South.

Lauren R. Clay's (Vanderbilt Univ.) “Liberty, Equality, Slavery” examines a dispute in Paris during the winter of 1789–90 over the future of the slave trade. Countering a historiographical consensus that French revolutionaries never confronted the issue, Clay looks beyond the the National Constituent Assembly to reveal debates that played out in correspondence, legislative committees, and private meetings, all largely shielded from public view. These became engines for political innovation and engaged nonelected political actors in the lawmaking process. Faced with bankruptcy, Clay argues, revolutionaries voted overwhelmingly to reconcile liberty, equality, and slavery, establishing precedents for future regimes.

In “Becoming Elizabeth,” **Megan Robb** (Univ. of Pennsylvania) traces the life of a late 18th-century Mughal woman who lived with and bore children by a British East India Company supervisor and later followed him to Britain, changing her name and converting to Christianity. Although these kinds of cohabitations and travels were common in this period, scholars have often used the East India Company archives to compensate for the notorious dearth of information about these native women’s lives. In this article, Robb offers a textual-material analysis of a more diverse range of sources from a family archive, including 18th- and early 19th-century private correspondence in English and Persian as well as a material analysis of paintings, jewelry, textiles, and a penmanship book to offer new insight into the complex and embodied processes of Anglicization under British empire.

In “Writing to Undo,” **Giora Sternberg** (Univ. of Oxford) examines protestations, a genre of early modern documents intended to counter the consequences of coercive forces. He

The return of the Elgin Marbles now housed in London's British Museum has been the fraught subject of diplomatic negotiation between the Greek and British governments for decades. Recovering the complex histories of cultural repatriation are among the subjects that have more recently pushed international and transnational historians to develop novel conceptual and methodological approaches in their research and scholarship. The March *AHR* History Lab features a forum that brings together reflections by 12 historians on their own work in this field. Image courtesy Tony French/Alamy Stock Photo.



draws on a variety of French case studies to examine them as material objects and verbal texts, following them throughout their life cycle and exploring their producers, protagonists, and functions. Sternberg focuses on both the micro and macro levels, exploring cases of public protestation in the struggle of children against the abuses of patriarchal and familial authority and the subversive uses of protestation in constitutional crises of absolute monarchy.

The two final articles of the issue focus on transnational histories of humanitarianism and rights questions in the 20th century. **Rotem Kowner's** (Univ. of Haifa) "A Holocaust Paragon of Virtue's Rise to Fame" examines how Sugihara Chiune, a Japanese consul in Lithuania who issued transit visas to mostly Jewish Polish refugees on the eve of World War II, was transformed from a completely unknown figure into a world-famous symbol of Holocaust-era heroism. Kowner focuses on the transnational mechanisms that facilitated this transformation as well as on the motives in three countries most involved in the commemoration—Japan, Israel, and Lithuania. In doing so, he seeks to uncover the crosscultural theoretical underpinnings of heroism and its memory.

Finally, in "'Tunisian Islam,' Women's Rights, and the Limits of French Empire in Twentieth-Century North Africa," **Julian Weideman** (Univ. of British Columbia) shows that geographies of Muslim scholarship in colonial Tunisia exceeded both the national boundaries and the territory of the French empire, with Muslim intellectuals in Tunisia under French rule actively pursuing multidirectional exchange with their colleagues in Egypt and the wider Middle East. This context reveals the French idea of a singular "Tunisian Islam" to be specious and far from durable; after independence in 1956, the Tunisian state fused national Islam with the promotion of women's rights. And yet, Weideman argues, the intellectual life evident under the French protectorate persisted after independence, raising questions about the tenability of the independent Tunisian state's version of national Islam.

Transnational histories also shape the *AHR* History Lab. It opens with "On Transnational and International History," a forum organized by **Paul Thomas Chamberlin** (Columbia Univ.) that brings together the reflections of 12 historians. In 2006, the *AHR* published "On Transnational History," a conversation that remains one of the journal's top downloaded articles. Almost 20 years later, this forum asks what we should make of the transnational turn and how it has informed historical practice. The contributors capture the challenges and satisfactions of working on a transnational canvas drawing on their own scholarship that spans the globe from the Middle Ages to the 20th century.

The **Odeuropa** team returns with their third contribution. In "More than the Name of the Rose," they explore how to make computers read, see, and organize smells. Focusing on their efforts to design AI strategies to capture references to historical smells from digital heritage collections, the team provides a step-by-step guide for extracting smell-related information from text and images and encode them in visual graphs that can allow historians to follow olfactory practices over time and space. Their discussion is easy to follow and revelatory, especially for historians who do not typically use quantitative methods. Also in the March lab are two History Unclassified articles. **Arie M. Dubnov** (George Washington Univ.) and **Basma Fahoum's** (Stanford Univ.) "Agnotology and Reckoning with the Past in Palestine/Israel" revisits the so-called "Teddy Katz affair," a heated debate that first erupted in 2000 about a master's thesis that relied heavily on oral testimonies and concluded that war crimes against Palestinians were committed during the 1948 War. In her "Frustration, Joy, and Shards of Fact," **Mary Klann** (Univ. of California, San Diego) explores the connections between archival research and teaching as an adjunct faculty member and mother that takes the form of an "I-Search Paper," a first-person account of the research process. **P**

Mark Philip Bradley is editor of the American Historical Review.



Robert L. Tignor

1933–2022

Historian of Africa

A pathbreaking historian of modern Africa, the Middle East, and the world, and beloved mentor to generations of students, Robert L. Tignor died on December 9, 2022.

Born in Philadelphia in 1933, Bob earned his BA from the College of Wooster and PhD from Yale. He joined the history department at Princeton University in 1960 and taught there for 46 years, eventually as Rosengarten Professor of Modern and Contemporary History. He spent sabbaticals at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria; the University of Nairobi, Kenya; and the American University in Cairo (AUC), Egypt. In 2004, he helped establish AUC's Economic and Business History Research Centre.

Tignor introduced African history courses to Princeton, and from 1970 to 1979, he directed the university's Program in African Studies. He became chair of the history department in 1977, when its curriculum focused almost completely on the United States and Europe. During his 14 years leading the department (1977–88, 2001–04), he transformed the faculty and curriculum. He expanded the department's scope geographically to cover Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and also topically to include, for example, the history of gender.

A prolific scholar, Tignor drew on meticulous research and conveyed his ideas in lucid, jargon-free prose. He evinced an upbeat, can-do approach, for example, learning Arabic to access sources that he wanted to read. He called himself a “workaday historian” and modeled pragmatism, productivity, and excellence. “Keep your eyes on the prize” was advice he gave to graduate students striving to finish their dissertations. He showed us how, by persisting and getting things done.

In groundbreaking books, Tignor investigated the history of colonialism and the economy in Egypt and the broader Nile Valley. His first book was *Modernization and British Rule in Egypt, 1882–1914* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1966). He wrote his second, *Egypt and the Sudan* (Prentice-Hall, 1967), with the late Robert

O. Collins (Univ. of California, Santa Barbara). One of Tignor's greatest books emerged from the year he spent with his family in Nairobi, *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya: The Kamba, Kikuyu, and Maasai from 1900 to 1939* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1976). He later published other books such as *State, Private Enterprise, and Economic Change in Egypt, 1918–1952* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1984). His research also moved in comparative global directions, with *Capitalism and Nationalism at the End of Empire: State and Business in Decolonizing Egypt, Nigeria, and Kenya, 1945–1963* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1998). After retirement, he wrote *Egypt: A Short History* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2012) and *Anwar Al-Sadat: Transforming the Middle East* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2016). Pursuing deep interests in colonial and postcolonial development policies, he wrote *W. Arthur Lewis and the Birth of Development Economics* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2006), about the career and thought of the 1979 Nobel laureate in economics, who advised postcolonial governments in the Caribbean and Africa and who also taught at Princeton for 20 years.

One of Tignor's proudest and most ambitious accomplishments was the textbook that he co-wrote with colleagues Jeremy Adelman, Stephen Kotkin, Gyan Prakash, and others titled *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart: A History of the Modern World from the Mongol Empire to the Present* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2002). Bob served as lead editor for five editions, and his face lit up whenever he spoke about it.

Although Tignor loved economic history, not many of his PhD advisees shared this passion—a point that he cheerfully acknowledged. No matter: he fiercely supported *all* those he mentored, even those who studied cultural or intellectual history or who focused on, say, Sudan, Zambia, or Iraq. Reviewers of his books noted how he treated his subjects with affection, respect, and admiration; his students use these same words to express how they felt about him. “Dedicated,” “going above and beyond the call of duty,” “humble,” and “always open to new ideas” are also words that have come up. Perhaps one former advisee captured it best by observing that for those of us who were lucky to learn from Bob Tignor, “new worlds opened” in history and gave us wide spaces to explore.

Heather J. Sharkey
University of Pennsylvania

Photo: Jacqui Hall-Handelman, courtesy Princeton University



Marion Thompson Wright

1902–62

Historian of Education and Law

Marion Thompson Wright's sudden death at the age of 60 on October 26, 1962, marked the close of her long career at Howard University, where Wright's zeal for education began early.

A native of Newark, New Jersey, she was born Marion Manola Thompson on September 13, 1902, the first of four children of Moses B. Thompson, a laborer, and Minnie B. Holmes Thompson, a domestic. She excelled at Newark High School, but she dropped out in her junior year to marry William Henry Moss, a laborer. The marriage resulted in two children, Thelma Mae Moss and James Allen Moss. The couple divorced in 1922 with Moss gaining full custody of their children. Wright would marry again in 1931, to Arthur Wright, a postal clerk; they divorced in 1953.

Wright elided her family background when she enrolled in Howard University in 1923, a deception that haunted her student life and that, if revealed, threatened her career at the school. Wright completed a BA in 1927 and an MA in 1928. After teaching at Howard for several years, she returned to Newark to work as a caseworker for New Jersey's Relief Association in the 1930s. She earned a certificate at the New York School for Social Work in 1938. Fulfilling a long-cherished dream, Wright earned a PhD in history, mentored by the eminent social historian Merle Curti, at Columbia University–Teachers College in 1940. Her dissertation, *The Education of Negroes in New Jersey*, marked the first earned doctorate by a Black woman in the United States. Wright resumed teaching at Howard's School of Education in 1939, securing tenure in 1946 and promotion to full professor in 1950.

Published by Columbia University Press in 1941, Wright's study on Black education in New Jersey combined the histories of education and religion with slavery and Black-earned freedom. Her connections of abolitionism and the emergence of Black leadership anticipated the works of Benjamin Quarles, Ira Berlin, and innumerable others, and her synthetic history of Black New Jersey inspired scholars including Clement Price, Gilles Wright, and me. A fervent activist for school

desegregation, Wright demonstrated in her historical research how much Jim Crow education hampered the growth of young Blacks, and she served in 1953 as a key researcher for the *Brown v. Board of Education* lawsuit that overturned school segregation in the United States

In 1943, the *Journal of Negro History* published "New Jersey Laws and the Negro," Wright's study of state legislation affecting Blacks in slavery and freedom from 1664 to 1943. Her focus on law as an instrumental force in American social freedom predated other scholarship by decades. The Association for Negro Life and History awarded her the prize for best article published in the *Journal of Negro History* that year, besting such future luminaries as John Hope Franklin and Kenneth Stampp.

Wright went on to publish numerous articles on student guidance, women's rights, juvenile delinquency, and educational theory, and was active in Black women's and professional historical associations. She was book review editor for the *Journal of Negro Education* for 20 years, writing several lengthy review essays each year in addition to her sizable teaching and service load at Howard, where she also established the student counseling service in 1946.

Wright's 1948 essay in the *Journal of Negro History* on Black suffrage in New Jersey, 1776–1865, reflected the aftermath of the enactment of the pathbreaking 1947 New Jersey Constitution that specifically barred discrimination by religious principles, race, color, ancestry, or national origins. Wright's article revealed the extent of Black and women's voting in New Jersey from the American Revolution until 1807. Her careful readings of convention notes, newspaper accounts, and political records were models for similar efforts regarding other states. Later, she completed an unpublished biography of Lucy Diggs Slowe, Howard's pioneering dean of women.

Wright's successful academic career masked personal tragedy. She remained estranged from her children until halting reconciliations occurred in the 1950s. Depression over her abandonment of her children in favor of an academic career preceded Wright's suicide in 1962. Her son, James Allen Moss, earned a doctorate at Columbia University in 1953 and became a prominent scholar of Black Power. Today, the annual Marion Thompson Wright Lecture Series, established in 1981 at Rutgers University–Newark, honors her memory.

Graham Hodges
Colgate University

Photo courtesy Moorland-Spingarn Research Center,
Howard University Archives, Howard University, Washington, DC

AHA MEMBER?

Take advantage of all the benefits offered through Oxford University Press:

AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW

All members will receive access to all of AHA's publications including ***American Historical Review***, the journal of record for the discipline of history, published four times per year. Now available for mobile or on the web.

OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY

AHA members receive free online access to the **OED**, widely regarded as the accepted authority on the English language. It is an unsurpassed guide to the meaning, history, and pronunciation of 600,000 words—past and present—from across the English-speaking world.

DISCOUNTS ON SCHOLARLY DATABASES

Grove Art Online — the unsurpassed authority on all aspects of art from prehistory to the present day, now available through Oxford Art Online.

Grove Music Online — an invaluable research tool bringing together 50,000 articles on all aspects of music. Now accessible through Oxford Music Online.

The Oxford African American Studies Center — the most comprehensive collection of scholarship available online to focus on the lives and events which have shaped African American and African history and culture.

Electronic Enlightenment — the most wide-ranging online collection of edited correspondence of the early modern period, linking people across Europe, the Americas, and Asia from the early 17th to the mid-19th century.

The American National Biography — a 24-volume biographical encyclopedia set containing approximately 17,400 entries and 20 million words.

DISCOUNTS ON BOOKS

AHA members can save **30%** on books from Oxford University Press.

**CHECK OUT OTHER BENEFITS OF AHA MEMBERSHIP
BY VISITING: HISTORIANS.ORG/MEMBER-BENEFITS**

AHA CAREER CENTER

Positions are listed alphabetically: first by country, then state/province, city, institution, and field.

Find more job ads at careers.historians.org.



OBERLIN COLLEGE AND CONSERVATORY

Oberlin, OH

Visiting Assistant Professor of Latin American History. The History Department at Oberlin College invites applications for a full-time, noncontinuing faculty position in the College of Arts and Sciences. Appointment to this position will be for a term of two years beginning fall 2023 and will carry the rank of visiting assistant professor. Founded in 1833, Oberlin is a private four-year, selective liberal arts college near Cleveland, Ohio, and is also home to an outstanding conservatory of music. Together, the two divisions enroll approximately 2,900 students. Oberlin College was the first college in the US to make interracial education and co-education central to its mission. The college continues to view a diverse, equitable, and inclusive educational environment as essential to the excellence of its academic program. Among liberal arts colleges, Oberlin is a national leader in successfully placing graduates into PhD programs. The incumbent will teach a total of five courses in the general area of Latin American history, including a two-semester survey sequence, one or two intermediate-level classes, and at least one advanced class in her/his

area of specialization. We are particularly interested in hiring a specialist in the history of slavery and the African diaspora. Apply at <https://jobs.oberlin.edu/postings/13469>. Review of applications will begin on March 1, 2023, and will continue until the position is filled. Completed applications received by the March 1, 2023, deadline will receive full consideration. Questions about the position can be addressed to asammart@oberlin.edu or Annemarie Sammartino, Chair of History, at 440-775-6572. Among the qualifications required for appointment is the PhD (in hand or expected by August 2023). Candidates must demonstrate interest and potential excellence in undergraduate teaching. Successful teaching experience at the college level is desirable. Oberlin College is committed to student and faculty diversity, equity, and inclusion. The incumbent will bring understanding of or experience working with underrepresented and diverse academic populations. Oberlin is especially interested in candidates who can contribute to the excellence and diversity of the academic community through their research, teaching, and service. Oberlin recruits, employs, trains, compensates, and promotes regardless of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, veteran's status, and/or other protected status as required by applicable law.



Welcome your students
into the historical
community—
for just \$30.

AHA member departments can buy
discounted memberships for
graduate and undergraduate students.

More information at
historians.org/student-membership

AD POLICY STATEMENT

Most job discrimination is illegal, and open hiring on the basis of merit depends on fair practice in recruitment, thereby ensuring that all professionally qualified persons may obtain appropriate opportunities. The AHA will not accept a job listing that (1) contains wording that either directly or indirectly links race, color, national origin, sex, gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, ideology, political affiliation, age, or disability to a specific job offer; or (2) contains wording requiring applicants to submit special materials for the sole purpose of identifying the applicant's race, color, national origin, sex, gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, ideology, political affiliation, veteran status, age, or disability.

The AHA does make an exception to these criteria in three unique cases: (1) open listings for minority vita banks that are clearly not linked with specific jobs, fields, or specializations; (2) ads that require religious identification or affiliation for consideration for the position, a preference that is allowed to religious institutions under federal law; and (3) fellowship advertisements.

The AHA retains the right to refuse or edit all discriminatory statements from copy submitted to the Association that is not consistent with these guidelines or with the principles of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The AHA accepts advertisements from academic institutions whose administrations are under censure by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), but requires that this fact be clearly stated. Refer to www.aaup.org/our-programs/academic-freedom/censure-list for more information.

For further details on best practices in hiring and academic employment, see the AHA's Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct, www.historians.org/standards; Guidelines for the Hiring Process, www.historians.org/hiring; and Policy on Advertisements, www.historians.org/adpolicy.

MARIAELENA DIBENIGNO

THE GHOST OF ASH LAWN



Visitors to James Monroe's Highland, a historic site located in Charlottesville, Virginia, often ask me if the house is haunted. Highland is haunted, but not as the public imagines it. Instead of a spectral figure that wanders the grounds, the property is haunted by a lost building, known for decades by a different name. In one photograph from the 1940s, a small cottage is captioned as "Monroe's 'Cabin Castle'—Ash Lawn, Charlottesville, Va." This building does date to the Monroe era, but it was never his home, and he never called his home "Ash Lawn."

At Highland, Ash Lawn's traces are deeply embedded in the collection materials. One handwritten ghost story hangs near my office, titled "The Ghost of Ash Lawn":

'Tis said that when the twilight falls,
And birds have gone to nest
There hovers at Ash Lawn
A gentle spirit of unrest.

And through the hall, in breathless haste
An eerie presence moves,
There gently rocks, a chair, or crib,
As though a child to soothe

Melodramatic and vague, this poem could be set at nearby Monticello or Montpelier. However, there are specific site connections. The final line might evoke Monroe's son, James Spence, who died tragically as a toddler, but I do not read this poem as meditation on child loss. For me, the title tells all. It's not "The Ghost at Ash Lawn." It is "The Ghost of Ash Lawn."

Here in central Virginia, the ghost of Ash Lawn is a mighty specter. In 2016, "Ash Lawn—Highland" was renamed "Highland" to reflect what the site's most notable occupant, James Monroe, called his house during its first decades on the built environment. Despite deliberate efforts by staff, visitors still stand in our exhibit spaces and exclaim, "Oh, is this

Ash Lawn?" What further mystifies some visitors is the fact that Monroe's 1799 home is not one of the buildings they see today. Monroe's home burned down in the first half of the 19th century, but the remaining and later structures were interpreted as the presidential home. Visitors may have previously toured small rooms displayed as Monroe's dining room, office, and bedchamber. Now, the site's public interpretation centers a house without much physical presence. Visitors must imagine the Monroe residence, its foundations outlined by flagstone. Yet they still see the building called Ash Lawn in the extant farmhouse and in surviving tourist materials. While the absence of the 1799 house provides space to tell more expansive histories about the enslaved individuals who may have spent more time at Highland than Monroe ever did, the new interpretation can also confuse visitors with earlier memories of the site.

I do not fear visitor inquiry into ghost stories about Highland. A site's lore can help us understand how visitors process the multiple iterations and institutional histories of a historic site. Ash Lawn's lingering shows how people remember old places, like the multiple houses at Highland. Public historians and museum professionals often have little power over such strong public memory. But can we work with it? How do we encourage visitors to interrogate ghostliness as a charged metaphor, especially when there are very real histories of enslavement, trauma, and violence haunting plantation spaces? Though ghosts can be dangerous entities that trivialize and obfuscate, they can provide accessible language to explore who and what remains—like the name of a house. **P**

Mariaelena DiBenigno is the Mellon Postdoctoral Research Fellow at James Monroe's Highland. She tweets @mxdibe.

Photo: "Monroe Exterior/Gardens," ca. 1940, Highland Collections.

Want the best of *Perspectives on History*
delivered to your inbox?

Sign up for our monthly email newsletter
at historians.org/POHnewsletter.





AHA Awards



Know a great historian who deserves to be recognized?

Every year the AHA honors distinguished historical work with dozens of awards and prizes for books, articles, teaching, mentoring, public history, digital history, and more.

Nominations are due May 15

Learn more about past winners, how to submit a nomination, and how you can support prize endowments at historians.org/prizes.