

THE HISTORY

Honors Symposium
2024



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Interim Department Chair
Professor of History

Ian S. Mayer

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Associate Professor of History

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2024 History Department Honors Students

Hal Putter Berdichesky

Decision-Making in Chicago's Transportation History and the 1834 Canal Debate: Contextual Foundation and Implications

Advisor: Perrin Selcer

In 1834, Illinois embarked upon a debate over direction of improvements to the growing state's transportation networks. This debate considered whether to utilize a canal or a railroad to connect Lake Michigan at Chicago to the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico via the Illinois River. My research suggests that, even excluding private interests and political factors, the canal held significant advantages over railroads in terms of its broad feasibility in the context of the technological knowledge available at the time and promoted Chicago's growth as a metropolis. The debate may offer valuable insights for design decision-makers even today.

Isabella Amelia Blanton

Hellenism and the High Priest: Local Administration and Cultural Change in Strabo's World, c. 6th Century BCE-2nd Century CE

Advisor: Ian S. Moyer

The end of the Achaemenid period in eastern Anatolia was marked by the reinvigoration of ancient cult centers and by the rise of a new bureaucratic elite, the High Priests. Priests controlled large, agricultural estates ("temple-states"). My thesis offers an analysis of Central Anatolia's priesthoods. It is an inquiry on a micro scale into the Achaemenid and Anatolian background of Hellenistic institutions and alternative civic forms, and ultimately argues the High Priest was a key cultural and political intermediary in Cappadocia and Pontus. By telling the story of the High Priest, my project aims to shed light on an understudied region, and to contribute to understandings of borderlands in Mediterranean antiquity.

Carlos G. Castillo

Pashtunwali: A Revitalization of Afghan Tribalism and Its Place with Modernity

Advisor: Ronald G. Suny

Pashtunwali is a value-based system used by the largest ethnic tribe in Afghanistan. It is practiced among forty million Pashtuns in Afghanistan and twenty-five million Pashtuns in Pakistan. This thesis contains several interpretations of how Pashtunwali works within Pashtun society in multiple spaces—ranging from pastoral clans to academics in urban cities. Ethically, this thesis revitalizes how tribalism exist by including the Pashtun voice in my research. My approach was collaborating with fellow Pashtun colleagues to create a more comprehensive view of how Pashtunwali coexists with modernity. The implications of not including the Pashtun voice when historicizing Pashtunwali is a common theme within the history of Afghanistan, and this research interweaves the Pashtun voice with scholarly literature.

Jiajun Chi

Empire, Europe, and the Atlantic Alliance: Charles de Gaulle and the Challenges to French Sovereignty

Advisor: Joshua H. Cole

During his presidency, when the Cold War rearranged the world's geopolitical situation, Charles de Gaulle's foreign policy moves in Algeria, Europe, and NATO made a priority to promote French soereignty. In Algeria, de Gaulle chose to advance the modern republic ideal, but lost the old empire grandeur; in Europe, he walked away from his own plan in order to make a statement against supranationalism; and in NATO, the general withdrew France from the alliance to reject a second-best role under American dominance. Ultimately, this thesis emphasizes de Gaulle's relentless pursuit of French sovereignty even when all the odds were against him.

Devin Doyle Conaty

An Unlikely Candidate

Advisor: Stephen A. Berrey

“An Unlikely Candidate” seeks to understand the radicalization of white leftist activists by examining the story of Thomas Hayden, a prominent civil rights and anti-war activist of the 1960s. Involvement in politics is a conscious choice, so it’s worth considering how and why activists make this choice in the first place. The factors that led to Tom Hayden’s rise into politics include the mass alienation from authority that 1960s youth experienced, his exposure to real-world sociopolitical events outside of classrooms, and the found effectiveness of objectivity and working within institutions.

Nathan Thomas Coulter

The Price of Corn

Advisor: Dario Gaggio

Agriculture in Midwestern America has dramatically transformed in the direction of increased industrialization and conglomeration since World War II. These changes were, and continue to be, driven by a scientific revolution in botany, medicine, and other fields related to agriculture; advances in machinery and farming techniques available to farmers; and public policy favoring certain agricultural products and techniques over others. These massive changes in the landscape of agriculture have drastically altered rural communities economically, demographically, and socially. My thesis will attempt to record and account for some of these changes, with a focus on social and economic transformations caused by these changes. My paper will consult academic sources in connection with oral interviews of farmers, which I will conduct with members of the community I am studying, North Branch, Michigan.

Madison Marie Cutler

Constitution-Making in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Unique Approach to Codifying Antiracism

Advisor: Samuel Erman

This paper analyzes how South Africa, in replacing the Apartheid regime with a multi-racial democracy (1990-1996), was able to create a highly antiracist constitution through a peaceful process. The paper provides a survey of key constitutional principles debated by South Africans and details the decision-making process. Through navigating the principles of consociationalism, bills of rights, positive rights, and the horizontal application of rights, the final constitution contains extensive antiracist provisions. South Africa's constitution-making achievements serve as a remarkable example of how systems of white supremacy can be effectively dismantled.

Micah Joy Golan

At What Cost?: An Analysis of Early Paradigms in American Nutrition Science (1870-1910)

Advisor: Henry M. Cowles

Using the published works of notable figures in nutrition science including Wilbur Atwater and Russell Chittenden, this thesis attempts to name and analyze foundational paradigms in nutrition science during its American debut in the late-nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Building off fat studies literature, histories of science, and philosophies of science, this work reevaluates the timeline of modern anti-fatness, interrogates the relationship between "faddists" and "legitimate" science, and considers the political implications of early nutrition advice. With a deeper analysis of the rhetorical effects of nutritional paradigms, this study finds that early popularizations of nutrition science reinforced hierarchies of class, size, and gender.

Justin Junghoon Hyun

From Artisan to Foreman: The Effects of Industrialism Through the Eyes of a Shoemaker, 1894-1912

Advisor: Matthew Solomon

This project is an analysis of the life of Albert Hale, whose diaries are in the archives of the Clements Library. In 1894, Hale was a shoemaker, working in a countryside shop in West Newbury, Massachusetts. However, the relentless tide of industrialization swept him and many others in the shoe industry into the factories. This upheaval led to Hale's eventual relocation to the bustling city of Haverhill, Massachusetts, where he assumed the role of a foreman. I used Hale's life to demonstrate how industrialization could change one man's professional and personal life so drastically in a short period of time.

Russell Leivik Jacobs

Exchanges of Agency: An Analysis of Jewish Documentary Photographs and Nazi Propaganda Photographs, 1938-45

Advisors: Deborah Dash Moore, Jeffrey Veidlinger

This thesis reveals the detailed extent to which the Holocaust was captured on camera, both from the perspectives of Jewish victims and Nazi perpetrators. It centers the works of a number of Jewish ghetto prisoners, each of whom gains access to cameras differently and has varying experience with the photographic practice. By juxtaposing images that Jews took of their surroundings against images the Nazis captured of them, this thesis argues that Jewish prisoners' ability to recognize that their lives were worth depicting on camera become acts of resistance against their perpetrators. These Jews demonstrate how taking pictures enabled them to maintain agency through the act of self-narration, and to lend agency to those Jewish individuals whom they rendered in enduring declarations of existence.

Sydney Morgan Kaplan

The Ones That Got Away: The Role of Eugenicians in the Sustainment of Medical Atrocities in Nazi Germany

Advisor: Joel D. Howell, Jeffrey Veidlinger

Holocaust atrocities have been well-documented, and many prominent leaders of the Nazi Party were subsequently held accountable at the Nuremberg Trials. Nevertheless, many culpable individuals escaped scrutiny, including eugenicians whose well-accepted racial hygiene theories legitimized horrific Nazi medical experimentation and other transgressions of the Third Reich. These figures include German scientist Eugen Fischer and his American counterpart Charles Davenport, who closely collaborated in the early twentieth century, leading up to the Nazis' acquisition of power. Their communication facilitated the distortion of scientific principles, resulting in widespread complicity in scientific racism. Fischer and Davenport utilized their expertise to promote catastrophic eugenics.

Benjamin A. Leavitt

The Jones Bill: Coalition Building, Propaganda, and the Fight for Philippine Independence Legislation, 1909-1916

Advisor: Deirdre de la Cruz

Introduced to Congress in 1912, the Jones Bill offered the first legislative promise of Philippine independence since US occupation began in 1898. From Washington, DC, Filipino politician Manuel Quezon built a coalition of influential Filipinos and pro-independence Americans in opposition to American imperialists (known as Retentionists). Throughout the independence debate, Quezon maintained a pragmatic approach, even when Retentionists succeeded in diluting the bill's terms of independence. Drawing primarily from the Manuel Quezon papers at the Bentley Historical Library, this thesis provides a new behind-the-scenes analysis of the coalitions and propaganda strategies that manifested in the 1916 Jones Act.

McKenzie Olivia Liberi

Peace, Patriarchy, Propaganda: Exploring Masculinity in Augustan Rome

Advisor: Celia Schultz

Romans are a people defined by war, and thus military prowess equates to the value and masculinity that a man possesses. The more masculine—militarily proficient—one is determined social status as well as the likelihood of holding high political offices. However, when prevalent conflict was diminished, and martial ability was no longer the most valuable skill for a man to possess, the definition of masculinity needed to be updated to adhere to the new values of the population. This period of increasing peace occurred after decades of civil war when Augustus finally took control. With this newfound power, Augustus was in a unique position where he could shape public thought as he desired, molding masculinity into a concept that is no longer defined by physicality. This shift in masculine definition will be explored through the works that celebrate Augustus, including poetry such as the *Aeneid* and the *Metamorphoses*, public monuments, and legal reform. These sources revealed Augustus's public influence.

Maya Joan Morse

Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme: Gender, Anti-Cult Hysteria, and Media in *United States v. Fromme*

Advisor: Anthony P. Mora

Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, currently 74 years old, was a member of the Manson family, a cult led by the infamous Charles Manson. After his arrest in 1969, she continued to support him and his ideologies, leading to her attempt to assassinate President Gerald Ford on September 5, 1975. By examining news coverage, theatrical portrayals, and cinematic adaptations, I aim to situate Fromme's narrative within the context of gender dynamics, anti-cult hysteria, and the broader sociopolitical landscape of the 1970s. I will explore how Fromme's identity was constructed, sensationalized, and contested in the public sphere, offering insights into the cultural dynamics and media practices of the 1970s.

Noah William Payne

The Army of God: Papal Reform and Monastic Expression in the Letters and Charters of Flemish Crusaders, 1096-1098

Advisor: Paolo Squatriti

This thesis examines a set of epistolary and cartulary evidence derived from Flemish knights during the First Crusade alongside the history of papal and monastic reform that preceded the Council of Clermont in 1095. As part of preparations for their departure, aristocratic knights willingly disposed of landed assets to local monasteries, recording in their charters that they do this “for the health of [their] soul.” In the context of papal reform and the history of lay violence against the church and monasteries, the moment of the First Crusade brought about a spiritual awakening within these knights which they channeled through their monastic expression right before and during the Crusade.

José Ramos

To Die in the City: Mexico City and the 1968 Student Movement

Advisor: David Tamayo

During the 1968 Mexico City Summer Olympics, the government, led by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional, or PRI, demanded the nation put its best face forward to the world. Students at the largest universities in the country, however, had different goals: to show the world the immobility of the nation’s status quo and to bring democracy to Mexico. Culminating in the massacre at Tlatelolco Plaza, death symbolized the ever-present reality of brutality under the PRI government. As a part of the life cycle, death allows for the continuation of human experience; death, in the context of 1968 Mexico City, meant change.

Julia Reinach

“Other People’s Children”: Conditions of Confinement at the Wayne County Juvenile Detention Facility

Advisor: Heather Ann Thompson

This thesis examines periods of reform throughout the history of the juvenile justice system and probes an inherent paradox wherein the imperative to address public concerns often eclipses the foundational principles of justice and the protection of juvenile rights. Through an examination of conditions at Wayne County Juvenile Detention Facility after licensing investigations and years of allegations of inhumane conditions, this thesis highlights the punitive nature of juvenile justice institutions and reminds us that these youth are not just “other people’s children”—they are all our children, and their conditions of confinement affect the humanity of us all.

Connor James Zahler

“To Dream of Fighting Them”: Race and Ethnicity in New England Witchcraft

Advisor: Valerie A. Kivelson

This thesis examines the impact, or lack thereof, of race and ethnicity in cases of New England witchcraft. After establishing the racial ideology of English settlers in New England, I examine seven cases of Native Americans and Afrodescedant persons involved in witch trials, both as accusers and accused. Although both groups were seen as Satan’s subjects and as prone to Devil worship, this racial image did not have an impact on their treatment in the trials. They were treated very similarly to their English counterparts. I examine why this discrepancy might exist and what it means for historians.