

MELISSA MAY BORJA

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RESEARCH INTERESTS

Asian/Pacific Islander American studies • immigration and refugee studies
oral history • political development • religious studies • United States history

PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Professor **University of Michigan, Ann Arbor**
2017 – Present Department of American Culture
Core Faculty in Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies

Assistant Professor **College of Staten Island, City University of New York**
2013 – 2017 Department of History

EDUCATION

Ph.D., 2014 **Columbia University**
Department of History
Dissertation: “‘To Follow the New Rule or Way’: Hmong Refugee Resettlement and the Practice of American Religious Pluralism”

M.Phil., 2009 **Columbia University**
Department of History
Oral examination fields: colonial America, nineteenth-century and twentieth-century United States, American religion

M.A., 2006 **The University of Chicago**
Department of History
Master’s thesis: “Da’wa and ‘the Voodoo Cult’: American Sunni Missions to the Nation of Islam, 1950-1970”

A.B., 2004 **Harvard University**
Department of History
magna cum laude

PUBLICATIONS

Under contract *“Follow the New Way”: Hmong Refugee Resettlement and the Practice of American Religious Pluralism, 1976-2000*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Forthcoming “The Government Alone Cannot Do the Total Job: Church-State Cooperation in International Refugee Crises.” In *Political History Unbound*, edited by Brent Cebul, Lily Geismer, and Mason Williams. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

- Forthcoming "Migrations and Modern American Religious Pluralism." In *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Race in American History*, edited by Paul Harvey and Kathryn Gin. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- 2017 "Speaking of Spirits: Oral History, Religious Change, and the Seen and Unseen Worlds of Hmong Americans." *Oral History Review* 44, no. 1.

OTHER WRITING

- 2015 "Refugee Resettlement Is a Church-State Enterprise." Op-ed in *Public Seminar*. December 30, 2015. <http://www.publicseminar.org/2015/12/refugee-resettlement-is-a-church-state-enterprise/#.V2nLXJMrKR>.
- 2015 "When Welcoming the Stranger Was Not Just a Religious Value." Op-ed in *Religion Dispatches*. November 25, 2015. <http://religiondispatches.org/when-welcoming-the-stranger-was-not-just-a-religious-value/>.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- 2018 "Sacred Staten Island: A Digital Archive Documenting Staten Island's Religious Diversity." Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association.
- 2018 "'Missions Has Come Home': Hmong Religion and the Impact of Overseas Missionaries on Domestic Refugee Care." Annual Meeting of the American Society for Church History.
- 2017 "I'm Going to Be Your Big Sister, Big Brother": Notions of Family in Faith-Based Refugee Care." Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion.
- 2017 "Teaching and Scholarship as Resistance in the Post-Truth Age." Roundtable Discussion, Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion.
- 2017 "'How Will These New Immigrants Be Accepted?': Southeast Asian Refugee Resettlement and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism." Annual Meeting of the Organization of American Historians.
- 2016 "Welcoming the (Religious) Stranger: Christian Refugee Resettlement and the "Problem" of Non-Christian Refugees." Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion.
- 2016 "Context and Social Characteristics of Religious Hmong Refugees in Minnesota: Analysis of the International Institute of Minnesota Refugee Case Files." Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian American Studies.
- 2015 "Resettling Religion: Government Approaches to Refugee Religion in Australia and the United States." Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion.
- 2015 "Church-State Governance in Transnational Frame." "Beyond the Partisan Divide" Symposium at the Miller Center, University of Virginia.
- 2015 "Following the New Way – Hmong Refugee Encounters with Christianity." Columbia Seminar on Religion in America.
- 2015 "There's a Chicken in the I.C.U." Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian American Studies.
- 2014 "Animal Sacrifice and Religious Change in Hmong America." Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion.
- 2014 "Restructuring, Still." Winter Meeting of the American Society of Church History.
- 2013 "American Refugee Resettlement Policy and the Transformation of Indigenous Hmong Religion." Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion.

- 2013 "American Missions, Hmong Refugee Migration, and the Shaping of Hmong American Religious Life." Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian American Studies.
- 2013 "Speaking of Spirits: Practicing Oral History and Narrating Hmong Religious Change." Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association.
- 2012 "The Politics of Defining Hmong Religion." Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion.
- 2012 "Private Voluntary Agencies and the Religious Dimensions of Southeast Asian Refugee Resettlement." Annual Meeting of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations.
- 2012 "Refugee Resettlement as Public-Private Governance: A Case Study of Hmong Refugee Resettlement in Minnesota." Fourth International Conference on Hmong Studies, Concordia University.
- 2010 "'To Follow the New Rule or Way': Religious Change and Hmong Refugee Resettlement, 1975-1990." Shawn Research Symposium, Columbia University.
- 2008 "Hmong Religious Change in Stockton, California, 1975-1990." Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- 2007 "Da'wa and 'the Voodoo Cult': Arab American Sunni Missions to the Nation of Islam, 1950-1970." Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian American Studies.

EXTERNAL FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS, AND AWARDS

- 2018-2020 Young Scholars in American Religion Program
- 2017 The American Studies Foundation International Forum for Early Career Scholars
- 2015 Association for Asian American Studies Junior Faculty Workshop
- 2014 American Academy of Religion Mentorship Program
- 2012 Mellon/American Council of Learned Societies Dissertation Completion Fellowship
- 2012 Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship (Declined)
- 2011 University of Minnesota Immigration History Research Center Grant-In-Aid

INTERNAL FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS, AND AWARDS

- 2016 PSC-CUNY Research Award Program
- 2016 College of Staten Island DigiHSS Program
- 2015 College of Staten Island Technology Grant
- 2015 Frederick Binder Award
- 2015 City University of New York Faculty Fellowship Publication Program
- 2014 Columbia University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Convocation Speaker
- 2012 Brebner Travel Grant
- 2011 Evelyn Walker Fellowship
- 2011 Institute for Religion, Culture, and Public Life Research Fellowship
- 2011 Columbia University History Department Summer Research Fellowship
- 2010 Shawn Family Research Fellowship
- 2008 Southeast Asian Summer Institute, Foreign Language and Area Studies Grant (Hmong)
- 2006 Columbia University Richard Hofstadter Five-Year Fellowship
- 2004 University of Chicago Four-Year Research Fellowship
- 2004 Thomas Temple Hoopes Prize
- 2004 Harvard University Ethnic Studies Prize
- 2004 Harvard University History Department Coulton Prize

- 2003 Charles Warren Center for American Studies Research Fellowship
- 2003 Center for the Study of World Religions Research Fellowship
- 2003 Harvard College Research Program Grant
- 2003 Harvard College Dean's Summer Research Award
- 2003 Harvard University Department of History Junior Essay Prize

INVITED TALKS

- 2017 "Refugee Care in Middle Tennessee in Historical Context." Symposium on Religious Literacy and Government, Harvard University Divinity School Religious Literacy and the Professions Initiative.
- 2017 "The Government Alone Cannot Do the Total Job": The Possibilities and Perils of Religious Organizations in Public-Private Refugee Care. American Studies Foundation, Tokyo, Japan.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 2018 "Immigration, Faith, and Justice." All Souls Adult Education Lecture Series.
- 2017 "In Every Generation: Descendants Carry on the Work." Seeking Refugee: Faith-Based Approaches to Forced Migration, Princeton University.
- 2017 "Mental Health, Refugee Resilience, and the Role of Religion." Interfaith Policy Forum on Refugee Integration and Religious Life, Princeton University.
- 2017 "Refugees in Historical Context." Jewish Community Center of Staten Island.
- 2015 "Refugees After the Vietnam War: Looking Back, 40 Years Later." College of Staten Island History Department Lecture Series.
- 2015 "Asian Pacific Americans: Fighting for Inclusion and Equality for All." Veterans Administration Asian Pacific American Awareness Month Lecture.
- 2014 "Exploring the World in Our Neighborhood." World on Wednesday Program, College of Staten Island.
- 2014 "Neither Black Nor White: Minority Identity and Coalition Building." Asian Pacific American Law Students Association Conference, Columbia Law School.
- 2011 "Exploring Immigration." Unitarian Universalist Church of Davis Adult Education Program.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- 2004-2005 **The University of Chicago**
Faculty Aide to Salim Yaqub, Department of History
- 2003-2004 **Radcliffe Institute**
Faculty Aide to Mae Ngai, Department of History
- 2001-2002 **Harvard University**
Faculty Aide to Jason Kaufman, Department of Sociology
Faculty Aide to Lisa McGirr, Department of History

TEACHING

University of Michigan

Courses

AMCULT 214: Introduction to Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies (Fall 2017)

AMCULT 314: History of Asian Americans (Winter 2018)

AMCULT 611: The Literature of American History (Winter 2018)

AMCULT 899: Independent Study – Readings in Hmong Studies (Winter 2018)

Student Mentoring

Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (2017-2018)

Emily Bloom

Nicholas Colucci

Jacob Gibson

Macaulay Honors College, City University of New York

Courses

HON 122: The People of New York City (2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017)

Student Mentoring

Macaulay Honors College Capstone Project

Edward O'Shea, Spring 2016

College of Staten Island, City University of New York

Courses

HST 257: United States Immigration History (Fall 2013, Fall 2015, and Fall 2016)

HST 260: United States History from First Encounters to the Present (Fall 2013, Fall and Spring 2014, Fall 2015, Fall and Spring 2016, and Spring 2017)

HST 594: Independent Study (Spring 2015)

HST 798: Preparing the MA Thesis Proposal (Spring 2014)

HST 799: MA Thesis Tutorial (Fall 2015)

Student Mentoring

HST 594: Independent Study for M.A. Portfolio

Michael Loock, Spring 2015

HST 798: M.A. Preparation of Thesis Proposal

Anthony Randazzo, Spring 2014

HST 799: M.A. Thesis Tutorial Seminar

Anthony Randazzo, Fall 2014

Independent Student Research Mentoring

Christina Dellaventura, Summer 2014

Julie Mizrahi, Fall 2015-2016

Alzina Fok, Summer 2016

Monnique Johnson, Summer 2016

Columbia University

Courses

History of New York City (Fall 2009)
United States Immigration History (Spring 2009)
History Lab (Fall 2008)
History of Slavery (Spring 2008)
Asian American History (Fall 2007)

Legal Outreach College Bound Program – Harlem Site

College Preparatory Writing (2006-2009)

Casablanca American School

Middle School Social Studies (2005-2006)
International Baccalaureate History (2005-2006)

SERVICE TO PROFESSION

- 2013-present **American Academy of Religion**
Asian North American Religion, Culture, and Society Steering Committee, member and co-chair
- 2016-present ***Journal of American Ethnic History***
Reviewer

DEPARTMENTAL AND UNIVERSITY SERVICE

University of Michigan

Departmental Service

Graduate Admissions Committee (2017 – 2018)

College of Staten Island, City University of New York

College-Wide Committees

Honors Advisory Committee (2014 – 2016)
Committee on Course and Standing (2013 – 2014)

Departmental Service

History Department Outreach Coordinator (2014 – 2017)
History Department Lecture Series, Coordinator (2014 – 2017)
British Empire Faculty Search Committee, Member (2014 – 2015)
Phi Alpha Theta, Co-advisor (2013 – 2015)

Additional Service

Meet Your Majors Fair (Fall 2014 and Fall 2015)
Humanities Defenders Panel (Spring 2015 and Spring 2016)
New Student Orientation Panel (Fall 2015)
History Department Graduation Marshall (Spring 2016)

Columbia University

Departmental Service

Graduate History Association, Co-Chair (2008-2009)
Department of History Graduate Education Committee, Student Representative (2008-2009)

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

American Academy of Religion
American Historical Association
American Society of Church History
Asian Pacific Americans Religions Research Initiative
Association for Asian American Studies
Organization of American Historians
Religion in America Seminar, Columbia University

LANGUAGES

French: reading, writing, some skill in oral communication; five years of study
Arabic: reading, writing, some skill in oral communication; five years of study
Hmong (Hmoob Dawb): reading, some skill in oral communication; one year of study
Spanish: reading; one year of study