

# Chronicles

NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY



Fall 2020

Volume XI

## From the Chair, Rebecca Manley



I write as the final sessions of fall term classes are wrapping up. In a normal year, campus would be bustling with activity. I am sure you can conjure the scene: students laden with heavy backpacks, waiting outside faculty offices, en route to the library, or gathering to study with friends and classmates. But this is not a normal year. Since mid-March, when the University made an emergency pivot to online teaching, all of our courses have been delivered remotely. The corridors of Watson Hall are empty and the campus feels eerily deserted. The library, where most of us have spent countless hours browsing the stacks, is now operating by reservation only. Books must be pre-ordered and can be retrieved only a few times a week, in designated time slots. The rhythms of student life have been completely upended.

This has been an unusually challenging year for all of us, and for none more than our students. Not only did classes move online, but the close-knit fabric of student life was torn asunder. Graduate students were compelled to abort research trips in progress and projected visits to archives and libraries have had to be postponed. The pandemic has strained mental health and prompted students at every level of our program to worry about their prospects for employment in a post-COVID economy. Even as our students confront a challenging present and an uncertain future, I am struck by the remarkable resilience they have displayed. Our students have tuned into virtual classes from their childhood bedrooms and their parents' basements, from coffee shops and student houses, in locations across Canada and indeed the globe; they have completed term papers, cognate essays, theses and dissertations; they have taken advantage of the expanded internship opportunities that the Department created even in the midst of the pandemic; they have organized virtual conferences; and they have found new ways to connect with one another and to share their passion for history in blog posts, movie nights, and more. Their commitment and energy is inspiring.

Another bright spot this year was provided by the accomplishments of our researchers. Buchanan Post-Doctoral Fellow Max Hamon's new book, *The Audacity of His Enterprise: Louis Riel and the Métis Nation that Canada Never Was* – published earlier this year and featured in this issue alongside our faculty publications – was awarded two major prizes. PhD candidate Sean Marrs won first place in an international three minute thesis competition. And two of our faculty members were recognized nationally for their research. Nancy van Deusen, whom we profiled in last year's newsletter as the recipient of the Queen's University Prize for Excellence in Research, was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. At the same time, Awet Weldemichael was inducted into the Royal Society's College of New Scholars, Artists, and Scientists. *Chronicles'* editors asked Nancy and Awet to reflect on how present concerns and past experiences have informed their scholarship.

The present shapes not only our research agendas but also the courses we teach and the subjects we choose to focus on. It will come as no surprise to our readers that epidemics have occupied a prominent place in our curriculum this year. In fact, Aditi Sen was just commencing her lecture class on the global history of pandemics in January 2020 when COVID began making headlines. In this issue, she shares the way she and her students sought to make sense of the developing pandemic through the lens of the past as the past, in her words, "became our present." This year was also marked by widespread protests against racism prompted by the brutal killing of George Floyd at the hands of police. This too has reverberated in our curriculum and our virtual classrooms. In our first year Canadian history course, Steven Maynard invited students to engage with the history of racial discrimination in Canada in a major research project entitled "18th-Century Black Lives Matter: Slavery, the Roots of Anti-Black Racism in Canada, and the Perils and Possibilities of the History of the Present." Upper year students had an opportunity to explore the roots of racism in the United States and the long struggle against it in Laila Haidarali's new course on the African American Experience. First taught last year, the course was a popular choice among students this fall.

The most significant adjustments to our teaching this year came not from the subject matter, however, but from the manner in which it was delivered. As this issue details, the History Department proved remarkably nimble adapting to the new modes of teaching. The extensive preparation by faculty and staff paid off. Our courses rolled out in September with surprisingly few technical glitches and by

Reporting and editing by Russell J. Arbic, Jeffrey L. McNairn, and David S. Parker.

the end of the semester, there had been very little student attrition. While our fall term was a success, the remote experience has cast the value of in-person instruction into sharp relief. As Rosanne Currarino put it in a reflection she shared this spring, “I miss the physical classroom. . . . Because what happens in that classroom can only happen in that shared space: the excitement of discussion, the sense that you can try out an idea, half-formed as it may be, and then watch someone else run with it. None of that happens in digital space.”

We all look forward to the moment when we can come together once again in the shared spaces of our classrooms. Until then, we are making the best of the opportunities that digital spaces afford. On that note, we are excited to announce the launch of our new Department website. With

our physical offices shuttered, our virtual front office — the Department website — has become more important than ever as a way to communicate with current and prospective students, our alumni, and other scholars. We are particularly excited about the new alumni podcast, which we hope will foster closer connections between students, past and present. In this year of isolation, community has never been more important. In closing, I would like to thank our students, faculty and staff for their tremendous work this year and our alumni and friends for their continued support. On behalf of the Department of History, I wish all of you good health and hope that wherever you find yourselves, the holidays provide some time for rest, relaxation, and connection. •

## Two History Faculty Join the Royal Society

In recognition of their November 2020 induction into the Royal Society of Canada, *Chronicles* decided to interview Nancy van Deusen and Awet Weldemichael, asking them about the experiences that inspired their award-winning scholarship. Dr. van Deusen, a historian of colonial Latin America and author of pathbreaking work on Indigenous slavery and female religious mysticism, was elected a Fellow of the RSC. Dr. Weldemichael, whose 2019 book *Piracy in Somalia* was a finalist for the African Studies Association Book Prize and winner of the Best Book Prize from the International Association for the Study of Organized Crime, was named to the College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists, which recognizes an emerging generation of multidisciplinary intellectual leaders. The interview that follows was lightly edited for length and clarity.

***Chronicles:*** *It is said that all history-writing is in some way autobiographical: we are drawn to questions about the past that reflect our concerns in the present, or particular subjects attract us for some other reason, deeply personal to us. Do you think this is true? Do you see common thematic or methodological threads that run through your scholarship, and can you reflect on the reasons why those concerns captured your imagination and continue to fuel your curiosity?*

***Nancy van Deusen:*** I believe that we are deeply entangled (to use the current popular term) in larger cultural and intellectual economies, whether local, national, or global. I think the concern with race in colonial Latin American studies is a product of recent trends in the United States and other parts of the globe to openly attack or blatantly ignore non-white people. Not that dehumanizing forms of discrimination haven’t been occurring for a long time, but there are spikes, and some moments are worse than others. How can we not think about these issues in our own work, when other people “cannot breathe”? How can

we not think about our positions of privilege, in my case as a white woman, when this is what encapsulates us? That being said, I eschew using models of racial colonialism, or defining people in terms of oppressors or oppressed. To me that is not only simplistic, but it obviates other expressions of power and relationality, whether gendered, racialized, or sexualized.

My work stems from two key formative experiences: my years in Peruvian and Spanish archives before I did my Ph.D., when I was able to read bundles (*legajos*) of documents at my leisure and listen closely to what the documents were saying; and my university training in archives (I have a library science degree), post-structuralism, black feminism, and theories from cultural anthropology, which helped me to develop my critical thinking skills and to question my own epistemological vantage. As a child I was a voracious reader, and I continue to read broadly. I read works in other disciplines and about other parts of the globe and outside my comfort zone to push my ways of thinking about a historical “problem” or to see documents differently. I read literature and poetry to think more creatively about narrativity, narration, and how to craft a good story. Above all, I place people at the centre of my work, thinking about the experiential on micro- and macro- levels simultaneously. I am a firm believer in the power of biography to tell bigger stories. These approaches are what drive my work on Indigenous slavery and female mysticism, and my current work on the power of Indigenous slavery’s archive.



**Awet Weldemichael:** Indeed history-writing has an autobiographical side to it—at least some of it does. Even when done in the context of typical ivory-tower intellectualism, where historians seek to distance themselves from the subject of their research in order to ensure objectivity, they nonetheless bring to their writing their attachment to, or concerns about, the topic at hand, reflecting their personal perspectives, experiences, values and preferences. That is perhaps the oft-overlooked aspect of the dynamics of power in knowledge production, and of knowledge in sustaining power.

When you come from the background that I do, the burden is significantly higher and scholarship and intellectual work are not just pursuits for their own sake. There is a real-life, tangible driving force and a desired outcome to ultimately reach—or at least inch toward—through one’s research.



I may not have articulated it as much as I have now (and at best it is still work in progress), but all along I was driven by a search for answers, answers that are typically found by amplifying the voices of the silenced or unheard, voices of the weakened, of the disempowered.

I was born in the midst of the Eritrean independence war and grew up in remote refugee camp in Sudan (and right now I am a stateless person). I returned to Eritrea in my mid-teens after the war ended and Eritrea became an independent country. While I was in grad school in the early 2000s, the victorious liberation movement’s top brass had a falling out with one another and a third of that leadership ended up jailing the other two thirds – they remain detained and incommunicado nearly two decades later.

I was pulling my hair out trying to understand why the Eritrean revolution had started to devour its children, when I came across a similar anticolonial struggle in East Timor, which like Eritrea was a former European colony, recolonized by a larger neighbour, from which it fought for and won independence. The difference was that the East Timorese saga had a more hopeful and uplifting ending. So I decided to carry out a comparative study of the two struggles (the East Timorese from Indonesia and the Eritreans from Ethiopia) in hopes of understanding where the Eritrean story had gone wrong. It took me a couple of extra years to build a sufficient knowledge base on Southeast Asia and to gain language proficiency in Bahasa Indonesia. Obviously, a dissertation cannot give answers or remedies to as complex a problem as how a hopeful country runs aground. But it was fascinating to see what comparative study could yield.

Even after my active research drifted elsewhere, I stayed on the Eritrean project and I continued to speak, write and publish on it out of a sense of responsibility to give back

and to help the cause of peaceful, constructive change in the country. Looking back at those few short years, it is interesting to note how far things have moved: it took time for the majority of people to appreciate the value of a historian whose own knowledge was based on interviewing them and re/reading their archives. But in organizing scattered pieces of information and giving coherence to disparate experiences, the historian proved the best qualified at meaningfully and constructively convincing everyone—activists, policymakers, the general public—to pause rather than rushing to act on everything.



My most recent project was not at all autobiographical, but was similarly driven by a concern to seek out and amplify the voices of the unheard or silenced, leveling the informational playing field. For years, I had read the limited available news and analysis on the problem of piracy off the coast of Somalia. I remember thinking to myself that there were voices and perspectives absent from what I was reading and listening to, though at the time my hands were too full with other projects. But at first opportunity I plunged into it, not knowing that I would be traveling to the field to research pirates for almost seven years.

My first two trips to Somalia were humbling, to put it mildly. Despite my near exhaustive secondary research, I realized once I arrived in the field how very little I knew. The lasting impression I got was that Somalis themselves carried the heaviest burden of piracy, that they were actively fighting it, and their work took time to gain traction but it ultimately succeeded.

Methodologically, I slowly learned to move seamlessly between archival, oral, and ethnographic data collection. Although I still carry out a lot of oral research—with all the inherent risks—I think I am partial toward the archives. •

## Teaching About Pandemics in a Pandemic



Written by Aditi Sen

In 2016, while teaching my first-year course on world history, I noticed a pin-drop silence during my lectures on the Black Death and smallpox. Not only was the attendance noticeably higher than usual, but many students stayed after class to ask questions. Their interest in the subject was more than evident. Consequently, in 2017, I proposed a second-year lecture course on global pandemics and associated historical processes, and I taught the course for the first time the following year in 2018-19.

The course started with the Bubonic plague. Even today it is considered to be the worst pandemic to have struck the world. After that, we studied cholera, tuberculosis, smallpox, the Spanish flu, and AIDS. The class also explored a brief history of nursing, medieval medical practices, Victorian marketing of medicines, and public health policies. The course received good feedback, and I decided to teach it again in 2020.

I added the impact of syphilis, the importance of almanacs and astrological medicine in Asia and Europe, and new material on the medical marketplace. A few months before the semester was scheduled to start, the curator from the Queen's Museum of Health Care contacted me. She gave me a tour of the museum and discussed possibilities for integrating a museum visit as a part of the course. Two things came out of the experience: first, the students learned about nursing in the context of the Spanish flu, and second, they were able to attend a workshop on Victorian trading cards that the museum supplied along with copyright permissions to use them.

While we were busy in early February discussing Alfred Crosby's book on the Spanish flu, *America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918*, news of COVID-19 became frequent and mainstream. None of us could have imagined that everything we had learned about the past would eventually become our present. I don't use the word "everything" casually here. Each day in class, we discussed current events that completely mirrored historical ones to the extent that it was often hard to isolate the past from the present.

The students made a list of current events and connected them to events and themes in the past; for example, the commonplace occurrence of scapegoating and racism. Asians were targeted everywhere as COVID spread, and this

echoed the experience of Jews during the Black Death. We witnessed resistance to quarantine, fearmongering, and fake cures. Even with all the contemporary scientific knowledge, human reaction to a pandemic has remained unchanged. The most unnerving part was reading about the Spanish flu: the overworked nurses, the strain on health care facilities, the deaths of young people, social distancing, the use of masks, and the bulk use of disinfectants and soaps as if the past rhymed in the present. Separating the past from the present became increasingly difficult. Then came rumormongering and blatant lies about the Spanish flu. COVID-19 saw the exact same kind of conspiracy theories and rumours. I am perhaps one of the very few instructors who could actually say a tentative goodbye to my students last winter. We watched the spread and anticipated the approximate timeline when the contagion would finally arrive, although no amount of knowledge could prepare for an actual pandemic. Like everyone, we did our best to finish the remaining classes online.

The pandemic continues, as we wait to get vaccinated. Alongside, we also witness anti-vaxxers resisting it, something that has remained unchanged since the inception of vaccines.

I think teaching the history of pandemics has become a greater challenge in this current situation, but also easier in many ways. Most of all, students will be able to comprehend the full extent of how pandemics can change the course of history.

The course will be taught remotely again in the winter. This will feel ironic in so many ways. While history has always

been pertinent, its relevance has never felt this raw. The uncanny feeling of reading about a current news event that mirrors an event from the 1340s should truly scare us. At the same time, it shows us how learning history can truly help us understand the full extent of present-day dynamics.

I hope my students will now appreciate and also develop a deeper understanding of how pandemics affect everything from religion, art, literature, pop culture, and food habits to public health policy and medicine. These are things we have always been aware of, but experiencing an actual pandemic will create renewed interest in the subject. •



Boston Store, October 1918

## How the History Department Went Online

Queen's, like other universities across Canada and around the world, prepared over the course of the summer of 2020 to teach its entire curriculum online. It is worth sitting back and reflecting on the magnitude of this task: it was one thing to cobble together emergency adaptations to COVID-19 for the last three weeks of Winter 2019-2020, but another thing altogether to plan 100% virtual courses from the ground up for the 2020-2021 academic year, with less than four months to prepare. Radical reform in higher education is never a simple matter. It's kind of like steering an ocean-liner.

We can say, without fear of contradiction, that the History Department was more successful than most at Queen's, and we owe that success to a combination of hard work and good fortune. The hard work came from everyone—staff, faculty, graduate teaching fellows, postdocs, everyone—with particularly well-deserved kudos to Undergraduate Chair Amitava Chowdhury. But the extraordinary good fortune came with the March 16 return to the department of Jennifer Lucas (*pictured above*) in the newly created position of Program Manager for Strategic and Curricular Initiatives.

Transitioning to online teaching was nowhere in the description of the job she had interviewed for, a portfolio that included a major planned expansion of the department's internship and exchange programs. But with COVID-19, in Jenn's words, "the job description went out the window." So, at a time when contradictory messaging from different corners of the university's bureaucracy brought more confusion than clarity, Jenn became that one indispensable person whose job it was to find technological and course design solutions that worked best for the teaching of history. Faculty in departments with no single go-to person like Jenn floundered—there are important lessons to be learned here about best management practices in complex organizations.

Jenn is proud of her accomplishments but also modest about them. "I wanted to cut down on all the research that was being asked of faculty, and to support teaching fellows in this transition to remote learning. It was actually a fun research project. I read a lot about online teaching, but none of the research was perfect; there was no roadmap to follow and there wasn't a lot of history-specific research, so it involved a bit of creative thinking, adapting methods used by other disciplines to fit our needs."

Timely communication was essential. At the beginning of the summer her "Teach Remotely" email newsletter focused

on big-picture goals and guiding principles. Then, as fall drew nearer, the advice got increasingly practical. What type and brand of microphone to buy? What software to use for capturing lectures or facilitating group analysis of a primary document? What were the advantages of Zoom versus Teams to recreate the dynamic we want in history seminars? These were the sorts of questions that no one in the central university administration was providing useful answers to, and perhaps no one at that level could, because the answers needed to be so discipline-specific.



On the philosophical side, Jenn taped a sticky-note to her computer screen with the words "compassionate course design," the principle that informed her advice on structuring assignments, setting deadlines, accommodating students with learning disabilities or in

distant time zones, providing information about wellness resources available to students, and in general keeping them engaged when their lives were already greatly disrupted.

On the technological side, Jenn immersed herself in everything the internet had to offer and, when the offerings weren't any good (which was far too often), she made her own instructional videos. "One funny story is the four hours I spent watching YouTube videos created by a 12-year-old teaching me how to html code so I could fix all the broken parts of OnQ and make it a better navigational experience for students and faculty." Several students, unprompted, have singled out for praise the new Timeline function embedded into the main OnQ toolbar—that was the product of Jenn, YouTube, and "lots of wine."

"Creating tutorials was also hilarious: my fifteen minutes of fame as a YouTuber explaining how to use Zoom, OnQ grade functions, etc. I still cringe whenever someone mentions those videos: they were essential for saving instructors time trying to research and figure out new software, but talk about impostor syndrome! Nevertheless, our video tutorials for Teams/Zoom were the first ones available at Queen's and I had faculty from other departments asking for access to them."

In order to get every last faculty member ready for the online transition, however, videos were not enough; additional advisors were needed to scale up direct support to instructors. Four of the department's graduate students were hired as Instructional Support Assistants (ISAs). They became Jenn's merry band of experts in online technologies and advocates for compassionate course design. Trained by the Center for Teaching and Learning, the ISAs worked

closely with instructors for incredibly long hours solving innumerable problems.

“Working as an ISA was an interesting challenge,” mused Katelyn Arac. “Trying to transition courses that had been taught in classrooms across campus to remote learning environments had many challenges, but when the courses started to come together it was amazing to see. The first thing that comes to mind when reflecting on this work is the sheer determination of professors to create the best possible experience for their students. Some professors had little experience with remote teaching and others were much more technologically adept, but they all worked to create a course that would meet their needs and those of their students.”

The first of two post-it notes on Jenn’s computer invoked compassionate course design. What did the other one say? “Today is only 7 hours long.” In the end, Jenn admits, “it probably should have said ‘Today is only 14 hours long,’ but I tried.” Like Jenn, instructors have spent an enormous amount of time preparing their courses for online delivery. They too echo Jenn’s thoughts after witnessing the success of their endeavours: “seeing these courses launch in September and hearing all the positive feedback, particularly from our 1st year courses, made the long hours of preparation worth it.” •



*The History Department’s Instructional Support Assistants. Clockwise from Top Left: Gabriela Castillo, Katie-Marie McNeill, Jessica Wilton, & Katelyn Arac.*

## HISTORY INTERNSHIPS

Fall 2020 was the most successful semester ever for the History Department’s undergraduate internship program. The department has one-semester placements, mostly with Kingston-area museums and non-profits, for which students receive credit as HIST 212: “Experiential Learning in Historical Practice.” Internships in academic journal publishing were offered for the first time in 2020, and will continue as year-long placements going forward.

As changing technology makes remote internships increasingly viable and rewarding educational experiences, we no longer need to rely just on Kingston-area partnerships. We are therefore sending out a call, particularly to alumni, for additional new intern placements. If your business or organization has research, writing, or editing tasks that an upper-year Queen’s history student could perform for you while learning valuable skills from you, we want you to get in touch with us to discuss the possibility of becoming one of our internship partners.

For further information, go to <https://experientiallearninginhistoricalpractice.wordpress.com/>.

## Studying an Ocean Away: A Remote Semester

**For the department's new international graduate students, not only were their courses offered remotely, but they were also starting new degrees far away from Kingston. To get a better grasp on what this has been like for them, we asked Justyna Szewczyk, Karen Lilja Loftsdottir, Alexander Peacock, and Ying Lu to share their experiences!**

**After four years of teaching English at Istanbul's MEF University, Justyna Szewczyk started her PhD this fall under the supervision of Dr. Ariel Salzmann while still living in Istanbul. When asked about the experience thus far, she said:**

At first, I was afraid that it would be difficult but it's been very easy from the Queen's side of things. With the regularity of email contact, it almost feels like I've been at Queen's for more than three months—I'm not really as disconnected as I thought I might be! Even the time difference has proven somewhat beneficial, as it means my deadlines happen later in the day here, which gives me more time to focus on my teaching in the morning before starting on my course work after lunch. Dr. Salzmann has been extremely helpful with helping me balance the demanding schedule of working and studying, and she even helped me find a place to stay (and quarantine) ahead of my move to Kingston in December. I'm very excited to come to North America for the first time and continue my research into public history and the politics of memory by examining the recent opening of several museums in Istanbul. Getting to know my cohort and finally completing the transition to a full-time student; these are the things that I'm looking forward to the most!

**Alexander Peacock, having just begun**

**a PhD while living with his parents in Brixworth, Northamptonshire, UK, states:** Starting a graduate degree remotely from the UK has certainly been a surreal experience. We are now halfway through November, and it still seems incredible to think that I am enrolled at a Canadian university and actively pursuing studies remotely. All told, however, I have thoroughly enjoyed my experience thus far. Working with Dr. Jane Errington, whose book, *The Lion, the Eagle, and Upper Canada*, greatly informed both my master's thesis and my decision to apply to Queen's for my PhD has been a highlight. Since starting at Queen's, Dr. Errington has been an immensely valuable advisor for my own research, which focuses on British North America and notions of loyalty and identity during the latter half of the eighteenth century. Virtual interactions over Zoom and Microsoft Teams also have in no way precluded some truly fascinating discussions from taking place in my classes, and the level of support offered by my supervisor and the department is greater than I ever could have asked for. Although separated by "the Pond", the Queen's community has truly made me feel welcome.

**Karen Lilja Loftsdottir, a first-year Master's student studying under Dr. Allan English from her home in Reykjavik, Iceland, writes:**

Living in Iceland this term has been quite a strange way to begin my MA studies at Queen's to say the least—imagine working towards a degree at a university you've never been to! My research interests concern contemporary war and military history in Western Europe and North America. For my cognate essay, I am researching Canada's role in the Allied occupation of Iceland during the Second World War. As I'm sure other students studying remotely can relate to, this experience has been quite challenging at points, particularly when it came to organizing study permits and other documentation, but overall, the remote semester has gone quite smoothly. I am fortunate to be a MA representative within the GHSA which ensures that voices like mine are being heard, and the faculty and students have just been so helpful and fun to interact with, with special thanks to Professor English! Best of all, I'll be moving to Kingston in December and am very excited to finally meet everyone (and to be rid of the time difference)!

**Currently pursuing her Master's remotely while living in Cixi City, China, Ying Lu adds:**

Unfortunately, due to travel restrictions and visa

application delays, I've had to begin my class remotely and, honestly, the experience has been difficult at points. When daylight savings ended around mid-term, the already large time difference became even larger and I had to stay up very late to attend my classes while missing other activities, including student meetings and seminar series, that I would have otherwise attended. Luckily, I took the fall break as a recovery period to adjust and have always found myself well supported by my parents, friends, and supervisor, Dr. Emily Hill. Though it has certainly been challenging, I am glad to be doing my Master's at Queen's University. My research interests cover the history of modern China and, by extension, East Asia with a particular focus on China's transition from socialism in the post-Mao era. I chose Queen's because of the overlap of my interests with Dr. Hill's, but also because the History Department provides valuable opportunities to connect with students from other institutions. Despite the fact that this hasn't been the semester I imagined it would be, I am confident that we can overcome the obstacles we face with determination, courage, and the love of those around us. ●



Clockwise from top left;  
Justyna Szewczyk, Karen Lilja Loftsdottir, Ying Lu & Alexander Peacock

## From the DSC Co-Presidents: Katie Larkin and Sam Nicholls

### **How has the DSC responded to this year's challenges?**

We see the most important role for us and all members of the DSC as advocating for student concerns during COVID-19. At the top of our agenda is to make sure that students know we are a resource for them, whether their concerns are academic or social. Throughout the summer and this academic year, the DSC has had an increased responsibility in advocating for the learning experiences of students and voicing any concerns regarding online learning. We have been working closely with faculty in the department to collect feedback from undergraduate students in the hope that some of the challenges students currently face can be overcome. Thus far, the biggest issue for many is how much the experience of learning history has changed. For example, we have seen a shift away from papers and seminar participation. Many students are missing these face-to-face, analytical discussions. As history students, many of us have had to adjust our learning styles and the way that we interact with our discipline in these strange times.

### **What has the DSC been up to this year? What's planned for the winter term?**

So far this year, the DSC has worked on an online Movie Night event. Students can join us on Teleparty (formerly Netflix Party) and watch a movie together! To appeal to those in different time zones, we encouraged students to watch the movie on their own time and submit answers to the trivia questions we've provided for a chance to win a Starbucks gift card. We also have a History-themed sticker sale and an academic "Ask Upper Years" event is planned. In winter term, we hope to host a virtual Speaker Series with graduate students and faculty on a theme yet to be determined. We're also exploring the possibility of a parallel Alumni Series, where former students can share with current students their experiences with the various paths one can take after graduating with a degree in History.



*Sam Nicholls*

### **How have plans changed from the past because of remote learning?**

Most years, the DSC has been able to provide students with interactive and engaging events and support, such as Drinks with Profs, Information Nights, Speaker Series and clothing sales. Due to COVID-19 and the shift to online learning, this year's DSC has had to be a little more creative in the ways that we offer "traditional" events. With the constraints of distance and a remote environment, the DSC faced a slower start this year, but we hope that by next term we will be able to provide students with events and platforms for advocacy that better respond to our current situation as online learners.

### **Has the virtual environment offered any new opportunities?**

The remote environment has definitely provided more challenges than opportunities. However, we are grateful for platforms such as Zoom, Teleparty, and social media to host and promote our resources. The increased emphasis on online resources presented an exciting new opportunity to upgrade the History Department Blog, The Watson. Throughout the summer, we worked on improving the design and aesthetics of the site and have refined its purpose to serve as a platform for student voices. We hope students (and alumni and faculty) will utilize our blog to ensure student perspectives on historical issues and topics are heard across campus and beyond. Check out The Watson at <https://histdsc.wixsite.com/quwatsonblog>! You can also find the DSC on Instagram: @quhistory and Facebook: @HistoryDSC. •



*Katie Larkin*

## The Ultimate Elevator Pitch: A PhD Thesis in 3 Minutes!

***In an age of contactless carry-out and ordering-in, PhD candidate Sean Marrs has perfected the art of delivering a whole lot more than you might expect in three minutes or less. Having placed second in Queen's University's own 3-Minute Thesis (3MT) competition last May, this summer Sean perfected his 180-second presentation about his current research on the surveillance state in eighteenth-century France, and was crowned 3MT Champion of the Matariki Network of Universities last month. When asked about his experience, Sean wrote:***

Under normal circumstances, doctoral students have 300 pages to present their research, or about 140,000 words. For this competition, you have 450 words, one PowerPoint slide, and just three minutes! It is, in short, the ultimate elevator pitch. My own research looks at surveillance and counter-espionage in 18th century France. I am exploring the work done by the Paris police and the French Foreign



*Sean's Powerpoint Slide*

Ministry to monitor foreigners who were staying in the city. Using material drawn principally from the Archive Diplomatique and the Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal, this project connects the surveillance of foreigners with the cultural and geopolitical concerns of the French government between 1774 and 1791.

Preparing for this kind of competition is not simple. It is not a matter of condensing your research into a few key points or reading out an abstract of your thesis. Preparing your 3MT presentation requires contending with the core of your

project and asking hard questions like “Why is my research important?” and “What will people find interesting about it?”

It can be hard to stand out in the competition when your competitors are curing cancer, solving climate change, or taking humanity to space. As historians, we recognize the intrinsic value of our work, but it can often be harder to explain it to a general audience. History is always relevant, whether what you're studying occurred 2000, or, in my case, 200 years ago.

For me, a good 3MT presentation comes down to finding the part of your research that really resonates with people. So, in my presentation, I connected my work on eighteenth-century France to modern ideas about state surveillance. I mentioned COVID-19 contact tracing, Facebook's use of our data records and older ideas of surveillance like George Orwell's *1984*. By doing so, I intended to connect the historical core of my project—eighteenth-century surveillance—with modern concepts that listeners would be familiar with. This process has helped me identify the broader historical context of my research and helped to historicize many of the modern surveillance systems we contend with today.

The competitions were fierce, but fun. Colette Steer, the graduate school guru, helped us all prepare by running workshops and giving us advice. Her suggestions really made the difference, and I would not have been as successful without her. Speaking of support, that of my supervisor Dr. Andrew Jainchill was critical to my success. The first competition was here at Queen's while the second, through the Matariki Network of Universities, brought together competitors from the US, the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

There's no denying that this whole process was a lot of work and quite the adventure, but my research is better for it. I strongly encourage my fellow historians to give it a try, if only to make tomorrow's elevator rides a lot more interesting. •

## Putting the “Global” in the Global History Workshop

***The Global History Initiative (GHI), a research network based at Queen's with connections around the world, recently hosted a workshop entitled “Global Histories of Colonialism.” Organized by a team of doctoral and masters students pursuing research on related topics, planning this event began with an interest in exploring the relationship between colonial, imperial, and global history. How do these fields and their approaches intersect, overlap, and diverge and how does studying them together do for our understanding of historical processes? The workshop's organizers – Elyse Bell, Mike Borsk, Alex Martinborough, Ksenia Podvoiskaia, Mike Ross, and Russell Arbic – had this to say about the event:***

Though we had initially intended this event to be an in-person conference, we had to transform it to a virtual workshop as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this virtual format actually allowed us to include papers from scholars at many different career stages from around the world, making for a fantastic experience. In the end, we were able to bring together scholars from around the world, including Canada, the US, the UK, Brazil, India, Germany, New Zealand, Kazakhstan, and Hong Kong.

Of course, organizing a workshop under these circumstances still posed the typical challenges one faces when planning any large events, such as last-minute changes to the program and communicating with panelists. On top of these, there were some unique hurdles, including the fact that, with



Dr. Tony Ballantyne delivers his keynote address

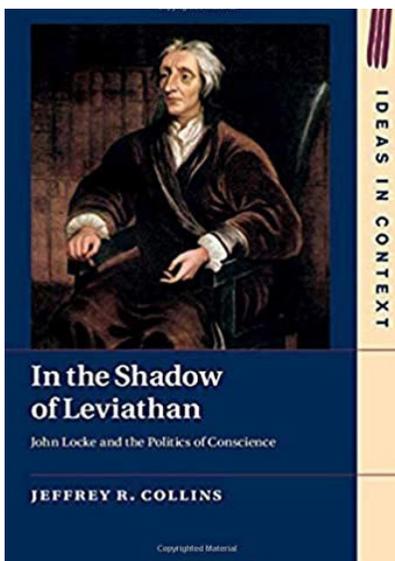
travel costs not being a problem and our workshop drawing global interest, we had to be sure to choose papers which fit thematically and that could be presented across time zones. Furthermore, the online conference and unfamiliar webinar-style Zoom sessions introduced some (but thankfully limited) technical issues. In all, the two-day workshop went far more smoothly than we could have hoped and the diverse range of topics enabled a wide-ranging and highly engaging conversation.

In addition to the workshop panels, our event boasted two fantastic keynote speakers: Dr. Tony Ballantyne, who connected from the University of Otago in New Zealand to talk about “Scale and Connection: Thinking about the Global History of Empires and Colonialism from the Pacific” (a talk which doubled as the Matariki Network Annual Lecture

for 2020) and Dr. Kris Manjappa, who joined us from Tufts University in Massachusetts to discuss his new book *Colonialism in Global Perspective*. Both lectures gave us a great deal to consider and be excited about! The conference concluded with an engaging roundtable on colonialism, migration, and the Anthropocene organized by Dr. Swen Steinberg. All three of these talks will be available to view soon on the Department’s YouTube channel.

We are very grateful to the GHI faculty co-conveners, Drs. Amitava Chowdhury and Ishita Pande, for their guidance and help in organizing the conference, and Dr. Sandra den Otter who is a member of the GHI steering committee, as well as to Drs. Nancy van Deusen, David Parker, Max Hamon and Swen Steinberg who chaired panels, provided commentary, and raised important and exciting questions during the discussion. We are also thankful for support from the Department of History and the Bernice Nugent Bequest. While we had set out to answer the big questions featured in our Call for Papers, it quickly became clear that our excellent participants and contributors had greater aspirations still, raising even more questions about the relationship between global, imperial, and colonial histories. The presentations and discussions which spanned two days in early November ignited many meaningful conversations; ones which we hope to incorporate into our own work in the coming years. Doing so will mean that the end of this event marks just the beginning of this experience. •

## Hot Off the Press: The Department’s Latest Publications



***In the Shadow of Leviathan: John Locke and the Politics of Conscience*** by Jeffrey R. Collins (Cambridge University Press, February 2020)

Thomas Hobbes and John Locke are the two most famed philosophers and political theorists in the English language tradition. Hobbes was born in 1588 and Locke died in 1704, and in that long span of time their two lives overlapped for nearly half a century.

For some years they lived virtually across the street from one another, on the Strand in London. Despite these connections, there have not been many studies of the influence of Hobbes’s writing and philosophy on the thinking of Locke. By the time Locke was an adult, Hobbes was already an infamous figure and

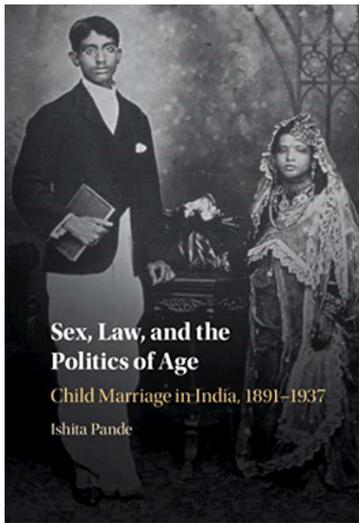
a rumoured atheist. For this reason, Locke, while clearly influenced by Hobbes, tended not to mention him explicitly in his own writings.

Jeffrey Collins’s new book is the most sustained effort to reconstruct Locke’s understanding of the philosophy and politics of Hobbes. The book narrates the careers of the two men throughout the 1650s, 1660s, and 1670s. Early on, Locke was a university student, encountering Hobbes’s famous masterpiece *Leviathan* (1651) as a freshly published work. Later, as he pursued a career as a university instructor, physician, and emerging political thinker, he continued to read Hobbes’s diverse writings. Collins excavates from the archives a series of manuscripts, letters, notebooks and reading notes in which Locke recorded his understanding of his famous contemporary. He unearths a series of new material on the subject, and also reconstructs how Hobbes and “Hobbism” appeared in books and tracts that Locke read and collected in his library.

*In the Shadow of Leviathan* argues that it was Hobbes’s religious thought – his account of the church, the clergy, heresy, toleration, and conscience – that most strongly influenced Locke’s own writing. Early on, Hobbes was a positive influence over Locke’s understanding of these subjects. Later, Locke began to develop his own views,

particularly on religious toleration, and Hobbes became more of a foil for him. Collins argues that John Locke's famous theory of free religious conscience and practice, immortalized in his Letter on Toleration (1689), emerged partly as a response to the religious views of Thomas Hobbes. *In the Shadow of Leviathan* offers a new perspective on two of the most significant figures in the philosophical canon.

***Sex, Law, and the Politics of Age: Child Marriage in India, 1891-1937*** by Ishita Pande (Cambridge University Press, July 2020)



In her recent book, *Sex, Law, and the Politics of Age: Child Marriage Law, 1891-1937*, Ishita Pande turns much of the existing scholarship on child marriage in India on its head. The book shows what has been hiding in plain sight until now; namely, that historical attempts to eradicate child marriages were not only about social reform, national regeneration and women's rights in India, but quite fundamentally about a revolution in the governance

of sex and in understandings of religious, familial and secular legal personhood in colonial India. While the book delves deep into the legal archives of colonial India, it also tells a much larger, and, if you will, global story. The "tagline" for the book, devised in conversation with Pande's friends over the years, describes it as a biography of a singular law regulating child marriages passed in India in 1929, as well as a critical reflection on "age" itself as a seemingly natural fact about all humans, and one deemed indispensable for securing rights, consent and justice in the modern world.

The book relocates the history of child marriage in India into a wider terrain by asking larger questions, such as: What makes a child legible to us as a child? At what ages has childhood been considered to end at various times in history, and why? Is age a suitable criterion for measuring consent, capacity, and responsibility? The legal archives surrounding child marriages in India are used to show how the logic of law, which presumes that age is a natural measure of capacity, makes possible – and also limits – our understandings of gender justice and human rights. The book also looks at the technologies of "age-keeping" that we rely on even today – the census, birth registration, forensic technologies such as x-rays used to estimate age – and considers the ways in which these technologies often fall short or can be used for dubious political agendas.

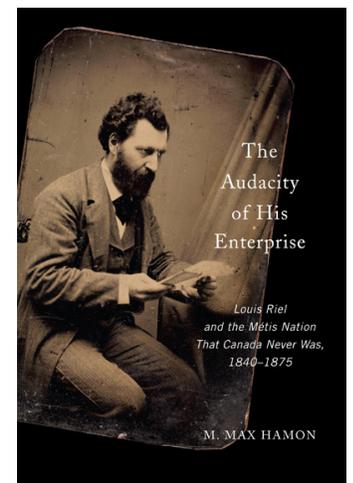
The subfields in which the book moves – legal history, history of sexuality, and the history of childhood – nicely showcase

the direction that Pande's teaching has taken recently. Her understanding of age as a scientific object draws on material she uses in her history of science and medicine courses, such as Lorraine Daston's *Biographies of Scientific Objects*, assigned to students in HIST 901 this term. *Sex, Law, and the Politics of Age* also reflects discussions with graduate students in HIST 809 on colonialism as a site for knowledge formation. Dr. Pande has been teaching the history of gender and sexuality in South Asia – and around the world – at the undergraduate level for the last few years. Her understanding of this history has been reshaped in dialogue with undergraduate students who sometimes ask the simplest (and hence the most perceptive) questions helping to reveal the many blind spots of "insiders" to any field of inquiry.

***The Audacity of His Enterprise: Louis Riel and the Métis Nation That Canada Never Was, 1840-1875*** by M. Max Hamon (McGill-Queen's University Press, January 2020)

Max Hamon, the Buchanan post-doctoral fellow in Canadian history, has won two prestigious awards this year for the book announced in last year's newsletter, *The Audacity of His Enterprise: Louis Riel and the Métis Nation that Canada Never Was, 1840-1875*. In May, the Wilson Institute of McMaster University awarded it the Wilson Prize, which recognizes the book that offers the best exploration of Canadian history and succeeds in making Canadian historical scholarship accessible to a wide and transnational audience. The Institute

d'histoire de l'Amérique Française then awarded it the Prix de l'Assemblée Nationale in October, with the jury citation noting the meticulous care that the author took with the topic and applauding the new horizons it delivers. By ending his narrative in 1875 as opposed to the date of Louis Riel's hanging in 1885, Hamon overturns, with a certain audacity of his own, long-standing portrayals of Riel, and shows that this pivotal figure was much more involved in the making of the Canadian state than historians have acknowledged to date. Hamon also gave a talk on the subject of his book as part of the department's Seminar Series in early December.



With 2020 marking the 150th anniversary of the Red River Resistance, the book's publication was timely. Though the pandemic prevented a comprehensive book tour, Hamon was generously hosted for a book launch at Kingston's own Novel Idea bookstore in February; a setting that provided ample opportunity to rub elbows with the local literati. "Actually," Hamon writes, "the move to online venues has delivered unexpected returns including a recent interview with the Champlain Society on the book's subject." The interview

was featured on the Society's podcast and can be found on their website. With the support of the Buchanan Fellowship, Hamon continues his work on the history of policing – the subject of his lecture course in 2020 which will be offered again in 2021. His post linking the history of Louis Riel to policing was recently published by Borealia, a blog on early Canadian history. Broadly, Hamon is interested in the

history of law and order along the 49th parallel and how that history complicated and reinforced the understandings of sovereignty and jurisdiction of Canadians, Americans, and Indigenous peoples on the border. •

## CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S PHD GRADUATES!

### Dr. Stefan Brown

• Stefan's thesis, "Enlightened Hobbism: Aspects of the Eighteenth-Century Reception of Hobbes in Britain," was completed under the supervision of Dr. Jeffrey Collins.

### Dr. Abdulkerim Kartal

• Kerim's thesis, "Crime and Punishment in the Patriarchal Court of Constantinople in Late Byzantium, 1261-1453," was completed under the supervision of Dr. Richard Greenfield.

### Dr. Aprajita Sarcar

• Aprajita's thesis, "Mythical Families: The Small Family Norm and Everyday Government of Population in India, 1954-1977," was completed under the supervision of Dr. Ishita Pande.

### Dr. Daniel Meister

• Daniel's thesis, "The Racial Mosaic: Race, Cultural Pluralism, and Canadian Multiculturalism," was completed under the supervision of Dr. Barrington Walker.

### Dr. Sanober Umar

• Sanober's thesis, "Racializing Subalternity: Space, Caste, and Gender in Muslim Mohallas of Lucknow (1947-1993)," was completed under the joint supervision of Dr. Barrington Walker and Dr. Saadia Toor at the City University of New York (CUNY). •



## Student / Alumni / Faculty News from the Past Year

• **Matthew Barrett** (PhD, 2019) received the Linda F. Dietz Prize for his article entitled "Conduct Unbecoming an Officer and a Doctor: Medical Attitudes toward Homosexuality and the Court Martial of Dr. Percy Ryberg."

• This summer, PhD candidate **Steven Barrow** received the award for "Leadership, Innovation, and Community Engagement" through the Society of Graduate Students at Queen's University.

• **Dr. James Carson**, former chair of the History Department, was appointed editor of the *Queen's Quarterly* in March.

• In January, former faculty member Ian McKay and **Oleksa Drachewych** (MA, 2010) published a co-edited volume entitled *Left Transnationalism: The Comintern and the National, Colonial and Racial Questions* with McGill-Queen's University Press.

• The Champlain Society awarded *Radical Ambition: The New Left in Toronto* (Between the Lines Press) by **Peter Graham** (PhD, 2016) with Ian McKay the Floyd S. Chalmers Award in Ontario History.

• *The Inconvenient Indian*, a documentary co-produced by History alumnus **Stuart Henderson** (PhD, 2008), won Best Canadian Feature Film and People's Choice at TIFF in September.

• The first book by **William Langford** (PhD, 2017), entitled *The Global Politics of Poverty in Canada: Development Programs and Democracy, 1964-1979*, will be published next month through McGill-Queen's University Press.

• The first book by **Joseph McQuade** (MA, 2013), *A Genealogy of Terrorism: Colonial Law and the Origins of an Idea*, was published by Cambridge University Press at the end of November.

• In June, **Dr. Lisa Pasolli** and two other Queen's professors received a multi-million dollar grant from Canada's Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) to research and design childcare policies for diverse Canadian families

• **Peter Price** (PhD, 2014) has his first book, *Questions of Order: Confederation and the Making of Modern Canada*, set for publication by the University of Toronto Press early in 2021.

• **Scott Rutherford's** (PhD, 2011) latest monograph, *Canada's Other Red Scare: Indigenous Protest and Colonial Encounters during the Global Sixties*, was published this December by McGill-Queen's University Press. Dr. Rutherford is a faculty member in Global Development Studies at Queen's.

- After successfully defending his PhD thesis at the University of Saskatchewan this past January, **Dr. Scott Berthelette** moderated Queen's 38th Annual Archives Lecture (which featured a presentation by current Queen's PhD candidate **Michael Borsk**) at the end of November.
- **Lara Campbell** (PhD, 2002), now a Professor at Simon Fraser University, published a monograph on the history of suffrage in British Columbia entitled *A Great Revolutionary Wave: Women and the Vote in British Columbia* with UBC Press this past June.
- **Dr. Sandra den Otter** was appointed to a two-year term as the Queen's Vice-Provost (International) which began this past August.
- **Patrizia Gentile** (PhD, 2006) explores the operation of colonial power in Canada's pageant circuit in her latest book, *Queen of the Maple Leaf: Beauty Contests and Settler Femininity*, published by UBC Press on October 15, 2020.
- **Casey Hurrell** (PhD, 2015) became Managing Editor of the *Canadian Association of Radiologists Journal* this past September.
- **Robert Leckey** (BAH, 1997), currently Dean of Law at McGill University, was elected a member of the Royal Society of Canada's College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists and also received the Principal's Change-Maker Prize this past year.
- **Toby Leon Moorsom** (PhD, 2016) was installed as Co-Investigator and Country Lead as part of Leeds University's Sustainability Research Institute at the University of Ghana, where he has been studying farmers' perspectives on the local food system.
- For the 2020-2021 academic year, **Zozan Pehlivan** (PhD, 2016), now a faculty member at the University of Minnesota, received a prestigious Harry Frank Guggenheim Fellowship for her research into environmental crises in the late Ottoman Empire.
- Having been adapted by two-time Oscar-winner Charlie Kaufman, the first novel by **Iain Reid** (BAH, 2004), *I'm Thinking of Ending Things*, debuted on Netflix in September.
- Having finished her dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Ishita Pande this past summer, **Aprajita Sarcar** (PhD, 2020) has begun a post-doctoral fellowship at the Centre de Sciences Humaines in Delhi.
- After becoming the first PhD candidate in the department's history to defend her thesis remotely, **Sanober Umar** (PhD, 2020) received the Department of History's 2019-20 Dissertation Prize for her thesis entitled "*Racializing Subalternity: Space, Caste, and Gender in Muslim Mohallas of Lucknow (1947-1993)*." Sanober is now at York University, where she is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Politics.

## Undergraduate Research Award

### Prishni Seyone to study Child Marriage in India

*The undergraduate committee awarded this year's Rivard-Prendergast Studentship to Prishni Seyone on the merits of her HIST515-thesis proposal, "The Indian Girl-Wife: Not Even a Woman, But Already a Wife."*

Prishni tells us that she's researching "the way this institution of early marriage stripped young, innocent girls of their education." She's very grateful to the donors for the opportunity "to better understand two issues very close to my heart: women's rights and equal access to education."

Her project supervisor, Dr. Ishita Pande, notes that the award was initially intended to fund Prishni's archival research in London, but it is now crucial "to help her acquire published and digitized sources for her project."

## New Staff Member: Alex Geris



**Alex** joined the History Department in December 2020 as the new Undergraduate Assistant. Having grown up in Kingston, she completed her undergraduate studies at Queen's in Classics with a minor in History. She also graduated from with a Master of Information specializing in Archives and Records Management from the University of Toronto. Alex just returned to Kingston from British Columbia, where she spent the last year as Manager of the Museum of the Cariboo Chilcotin in Williams Lake. Though Kingston feels a little different this year, Alex is thrilled to be back in town and working at Queen's. She looks forward to supporting History students in pursuing their academic goals in her new role.

## “The Alumni Archives”: A New Alumni Initiative

The History Department is thrilled to announce the launch of its new alumni podcast, *The Alumni Archives*! Each episode will feature former students of the Department, both undergraduate and graduate, who will reflect on their time at Queen’s and their life and career experiences. *The Alumni Archives* is a great listen for anyone associated with Queen’s History.

The podcast aims to both grow our alumni network by building a sense of community across graduating classes and offer current students unique insights into careers and experiences available to them as graduates of the Queen’s History Department. Our alumni know better than anyone how transferable a degree in History is and we want to provide our current and prospective students with examples of this transferability in action. We hope that these podcasts will strengthen the relationship between the Department and our extensive alumni network that will lead to opportunities like Career Nights for our alumni to return to Watson Hall. Initial interviews are now under way and will be available at [www.queens.ca/history/alumni](http://www.queens.ca/history/alumni) from January 1st, 2021. Make sure to subscribe to our channel at the website above so you don’t miss an episode. You can also find *The Alumni Archives* on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or anywhere you get your podcasts.

Are you interested in being a part of *The Alumni Archives*? Have you got a great story from your time as a student at Queen’s you want to share? Or a helpful piece of career advice to pass on to current students? Any undergraduate

and graduate alumni who would like to be featured on the podcast are encouraged to contact Jennifer Lucas, Program Manager: Strategic Planning and Curricular Initiatives (and an alumna from our program), to arrange an interview: [jennifer.lucas@queensu.ca](mailto:jennifer.lucas@queensu.ca). We look forward to hearing your stories and building our alumni network!



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