

WILLIAM G. THOMAS III

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SUMMARY PROFILE

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2005-present

Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Education
College of Arts and Sciences, Jan. 2021-present
Angle Chair in the Humanities, 2005-present
Professor of History, 2005-present
Big Ten Academic Leadership Program Fellow, 2019-2020
Chair, Department of History, 2010-2016
McClymont Distinguished Teaching Fellow, College of Arts and Sciences
Center for Digital Research in the Humanities (CDRH) Fellow

University of Virginia, 1997-2005

Associate Professor (tenured), Corcoran Department of History
Director, Virginia Center for Digital History, College of Arts and Sciences, 1998-2005
Mead Honored Faculty Member, College of Arts and Sciences, 2004-2005
Assistant Professor (tenure-track), 2001-2004
Research Assistant Professor, 1997-2001

Major Awards, Fellowships, and Grants

2023 Mellon Foundation Award, U.S. Law and Race Initiative, \$1,049,000
2021 Lukas Prizes / Mark A. Lynton Prize in History, Columbia University School of Journalism and the Nieman Foundation (Harvard University) for *A Question of Freedom: The Families Who Challenged Slavery from the Nation's Founding to the Civil War* (Yale University Press, 2020)
2016 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellow
National Endowment for the Humanities recent grants:
Division of Public Programs, Media Production, \$200,000, 2019-2021
Division of Research, Collaborative Research, \$200,000, 2014-2016
2008 American Council of Learned Societies Digital Innovation Fellow

EDUCATION

University of Virginia	Ph.D. in History, <i>May 1995</i>
University of Virginia	M.A. in History, <i>May 1991</i>
Trinity College (CT)	B.A. in History, <i>May 1986, with honors in History</i>

RESEARCH AND TEACHING AREAS

Digital Humanities, Digital History, U.S. History, Legal and Constitutional History

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS, DIGITAL SCHOLARSHIP, AND AWARDS

A Question of Freedom: The Families Who Challenged American Slavery from the Nation's Founding to the Civil War (Yale University Press, 2020)

2021 Lukas Prizes Winner/Mark A. Lynton Prize in History, Columbia University School of Journalism and the Nieman Foundation (Harvard University)
2021 SHEAR Best Book Prize, Society for Historians of the Early American Republic
2021 Washington Prize Finalist, Gilder-Lehrman Institute of American History, Mount Vernon, and Washington College
2021 PROSE Finalist, Association of American Publishers
2021 CHOICE Outstanding Academic Title
2023 St. George's Day Award, Prince George's County Historical Society

[Animating History](#): co-producer, documentary films with Kwakiutl Dreher and Michael Burton

The Diary of Michael Shiner (12 min., 2024)
Laurels: Omaha Film Festival, Phoenix Film Festival.

The Bell Affair (90 min., 2022)
Laurels: Freedom Festival International Selection; Silk Road Film Awards; Oniros Film Awards, Prince George's County Film Festival.
2022 Best Animation, Prince George's County Film Festival
2022 NuTech Ventures Innovator Awards, Creative Work of the Year
2024 Random Media, LLC national release on streaming platforms (Amazon Prime)

[Anna](#) (11 min., 2018)
Laurels: BronzeLens Film Festival (Atlanta), New Media Film Festival (Los Angeles), The Virginia Film Festival (Charlottesville), At A Glance Film Festival (Philadelphia), Dumbo Film Festival (Brooklyn, New York), Utopian Film Festival (Maryland), The Hip Hop Film Festival (New York), *The Atlantic Selects*, the Hampton University Film Festival (Virginia), FirstGlance Film Festival (It's a Short Contest), and Dumbo Film Festival (New York).
2019 New Media Film Festival (Los Angeles), Best Animation

[O Say Can You See: Early Washington, D.C., Law and Family](#)
2019 Mary L. Dudziak Prize in Digital Legal History, Am. Society for Legal History

The Iron Way: Railroads, The Civil War, and the Making of Modern America (Yale University Press, 2011)
2012 Lincoln Prize Finalist

[*The Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities in the American Civil War*](#), co-editor with Edward L. Ayers, Anne Sarah Rubin, Amy Murrell, and Andrew Torget
2001 Lincoln Prize Laureate, Gilder-Lehrman Institute of American History and Gettysburg College
2003 James Harvey Robinson Prize, American Historical Association

"The Differences Slavery Made: A Close Analysis of Two American Communities," co-author with Edward L. Ayers, *American Historical Review*, December 2003.

RECENT GRANTS

- "U.S. Law and Race Initiative," The Mellon Foundation, PI and Co-Director with Katrina Jagodinsky (Co-PI) and Jeannette E. Jones (Co-PI), 2023-2026 (\$1,049,000)
"Freedom Stories Digital Legal Research Lab," National Science Foundation, REU, Co-PI with Katrina Jagodinsky, 2022-2025 (\$340,000).
"*The Bell Affair: A Film Reframing American Slavery and Freedom*," National Endowment for the Humanities, Division of Public Programs, Media Production Grant (\$200,000), 2019-2021.
"New Storytellers: The Research Institute in Digital Ethnic Studies," American Council of Learned Societies, Co-PI with Joy Castro, Jeannette E. Jones, and Kenneth Price (\$125,000), 2019-2021.
"O Say Can You See: Early Washington, D.C. Law and Family Project," National Endowment for the Humanities, Collaborative Research Award (\$200,000), 2014-2016.

CURRENT RESEARCH

Dred Scott's America (in progress)

This narrative history tells the story of the Dred Scott case by following its principal actors from the 1790s, when Scott was born in Southampton Co, Virginia, to the Upper Mississippi River, through the Civil War and beyond. Historians and legal scholars have analyzed the Dred Scott case extensively as a matter of law and politics, but there is no account yet written of those whose lives came together in the case and the worlds they inhabited, encountered, and experienced.

MEDIA APPEARANCES

- [WYPR Baltimore, On the Record with Sheilah Kast](#), "The Bell Family's Fight for Freedom," May 19, 2022 (rebroadcast July 4, 2022).
Moderator, Governor's Lecture in the Humanities with Henry Louis Gates, Jr., live-stream from Omaha (October 12, 2021).
[Unsung History Podcast](#) with Kelly Therese Pollock (September 27, 2021).

Christian Science Monitor, Q & A "A Question of Freedom," with Randy Dotinga (January 4, 2021).

[WYPR Baltimore, On the Record](#) with Sheilah Kast, "A Question of Freedom," (November 24, 2020).

U.S. National Archives and Records Administration Foundation Lecture (November 30, 2020).
C-span American History TV, "[American Constitutional History: The Freedom Suits](#)" (taped September 26, 2019, at the Univ. of Nebraska in HIST 341; aired December 14, 2019).

Big Ten Network, LiveBig, "[Stories of Innovation, Impact & Inspiration--A Nebraska Collaboration Animates Anna](#)" (aired on BTN 2019-2021).

REVIEWS AND ESSAYS

"Blurred Lines: The Uneasy Alliance between Frederick Douglass and White Abolitionists,"
New York Times, March 12, 2022.

"When Enslaved People Sued Georgetown's Founders for Freedom," *Washington Post*, August 19, 2016.

"The Other End of the Scale: Rethinking the Digital Experience in Higher Education," with Elizabeth Lorang, *EDUCAUSE Review*, September/October 2014.

"My Home, The House of the Dead," *The New York Times*, Sunday Review, September 8, 2013.

RECENT INVITED LECTURES

"Dred Scott's America: Law and Freedom from Virginia to the Upper Mississippi," Warren F. Chauncey Lecture in American History, Jefferson Scholars Foundation, University of Virginia (February 2024).

"Families, Freedom Suits, and Reckoning with Slavery in American History," The Tracy W. and Katherine W. McGregor Distinguished Lecture in American History, University of Virginia (October 25, 2022).

"*A Question of Freedom* in Conversation," with Dr. Kimberly Moffitt, Maryland Humanities, Leadership Circle Lecture (July 2022).

"Freedom Suits, Families, and Reckoning with the History of Slavery in U.S. History," University of Kansas & Lawrence Public Library, Organization of American Historians Distinguished Lecture (May 2022).

"*A Question of Freedom* in Conversation," with Melisande Short Colomb, The Library Company of Philadelphia (February 2022).

"Teaching with Technology from the Survey to the Seminar with Digital History," Northern Arizona University, Organization of American Historians Distinguished Lecture (January 2022).

"Race and Reconciliation: A Conversation about *A Question of Freedom*" Movement in Omaha for Racial Equity (January 2022).

"Moments of Reckoning: Global Calls for Racial Equity and Action," E. N. Thompson Forum Lecture, Faculty Panel, University of Nebraska-Lincoln (September 2021).

"Challenging Slavery in the Courtroom: *A Question of Freedom*," Virginia Festival of the Book and Maryland Humanities (May 2021).

Hard Histories Lecture Series, Johns Hopkins University (March 2021)

Authors For Truth Series, Prince George's County Memorial Library (December 9, 2020)
"A Question of Freedom," U.S. National Archives and Records Administration Foundation
Lecture (November 2020).
Chancellor's Distinguished Lecture, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, (October 2020).

RECENT PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES AND CHAPTERS

"Fanny Jackson and the Long History of Freedom Suits in Washington, D.C.," Special Issue,
Washington History (Summer 2020).
"Reconstructing African American Mobility after Emancipation, 1865-1867," with Richard G.
Healey and Ian Cottingham, *Social Science History* Vol. 41, No. 4 (October 2017).
"Places of Exchange: An Analysis of Human and Material Flows in Civil War Alexandria,
Virginia," with Kaci Nash and Robert Shepard, *Civil War History* Vol. 62, No. 4
(December 2016)--Winner of the 2017 John T. Hubbell Prize for best article in *Civil War
History*.
"The Promise of the Digital Humanities and the Contested Nature of Digital Scholarship," in *A
Companion to Digital Humanities*, edited by Susan Schriebman, Ray Siemens, and John
Unsworth (Blackwell Publishing, 2014).

SELECTED PAPERS AND PANELS AT PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCES

Chair, Roundtable on " Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and the Future of History,"
American Historical Association, San Francisco, Ca. (Jan. 2024).
President's Panel "Judicial Review: Law, Gender, and the Early Republic," Society for
Historians of the Early American Republic, Philadelphia, Pa. (July 2023).
Roundtable: "Writing Family History: Subjects, Sources, and Significance," Society for
Historians of the Early American Republic, New Orleans, La. (July 2022).
Roundtable on Tamika Nunley's *At the Threshold of Liberty*, African American Intellectual
History Society Conference (March 2022) virtual.
"Digital History and the Writing of Minority (Global) Histories," Panel Chair, ENIUGH
Congress (June 2021) virtual.
"Slavery, Freedom, and Family Networks: New Approaches and Methods," Panel Chair,
Organization of American Historians (July 2020) virtual.
"Beyond the Valley of the Shadow, Exploring the limits of Historical Narration," German
Historical Institute Conference, Washington, D.C. (October 2019).
"Repairing History with Digital Media," National Council on Public History, Hartford (March
2019).
"Reckoning with Slavery using New Media," National Humanities Conference, New Orleans
(November 2018).
"The Consequences of Digital Technologies for History: A Roundtable Discussion on the Digital
Future of the Historian's Craft," Organization of American Historians, Sacramento, panel
chair (April 2018).
"From Ancestry to History: Understanding Descendant Communities," Organization of
American Historians, Sacramento, panel chair (April 2018).

RESEARCH SEMINARS AND GUEST LECTURES

- "Freedom Suits, Race, and American Law," Harvard Law School guest lecture in *Race and the Law: America's Ongoing Struggle with Changing Conceptions of Race* with Prof. Stephanie Robinson (September 2021 and September 2022).
- "Freedom Suits, Hearsay, and Reckoning with History," Georgetown University guest lecture in *Facing Georgetown's History* with Prof. Adam Rothman (February 2021 and 2022).
- "Maryland Freedom Suits: The African American Families Who Challenged Slavery," Washington, D.C. Early American Seminar, University of Maryland, College-Park (February 2020).
- "Freedom Suits and the Fate of American Slavery," U. S. History Seminar, Georgetown University (March 2019).
- "Freedom Suits and Legal Jeopardy of American Slavery," College of Law Faculty Research Seminar, University of Nebraska (March 2019).
- "Animating History Workshop," Organization of American Historians Pre-Conference Seminar, Sacramento (April 2018).

TEACHING, MENTORING, AND ADVISING

Undergraduate Courses at the University of Nebraska--standard course load in Dept. of History is a 2-2; have taught U.S. survey more than 20 times; only most recent offering in parentheses.

HIST 111/111Honors:	History of U.S. Since 1877 (Fall '20 and Spring '21)
HIST 341:	American Constitutional History (Fall '22, Spring '24)
HIST 364:	Slavery and Emancipation in U.S. History (Fall '17)
HIST 365:	History of the U. S. South (Spring '20)
HIST 396:	Special Projects: The History Harvest (Spring '14)
HIST 445:	Civil War and Reconstruction (Fall '17)
HIST 450:	Capstone Seminar (Spring '18 and Spring '20)

Graduate Courses at the University of Nebraska

HIST 845:	Civil War and Reconstruction (Fall '17)
HIST 919:	Interdisciplinary in 19th century Studies (Fall '18)
HIST 941:	American History Core Readings (Fall '20)
HIST 946:	Interdisciplinary Readings Seminar in Digital Humanities (Fall '14)
HIST 953:	Comparative Legal History Seminar (Spring '22)
HIST 970:	Digital History Seminar (Fall '17)

Graduate Advising Summary

Current Ph.D. students:	3
Current Ph.D. committee member:	6
Current M.A. students:	1
Total current students:	10

Dissertations directed:	7
Dissertation committee member:	10
Master's theses directed:	7
Master's thesis committee member:	4
Total past students:	28

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE: LECTURES, GRANTS, AND FELLOWSHIPS

Member, Scientific Committee (Advisory Committee), Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C2DH), Université du Luxembourg, 2016-present.
"Digital History as Historical Imagination," Inaugural Lecture, Digital History Lab/Digital Society Initiative, University of Zurich, Switzerland (November 2018).
CO-Investigator, PRIDE DTU, "Digital History and Hermeneutics," Université du Luxembourg, 2015-present.
"The Practice of Digital History," The British Library 21st Century Curators' Seminar, London (October 2008).
Visiting Professor of North American Studies, Essex Centre for North American Studies, British Library, London, UK (in residence Fall 2008).

PROFESSIONAL AND UNIVERSITY SERVICE

Vice President, American Historical Association (elected), 2024-present
Lukas Prizes/Lynton Prize Chair, Columbia University, 2023-2024
Lukas Prizes/Lynton Prize Jury, Columbia University, 2022-2023
Board of Editors, *Journal of Digital History*, 2019-present
Board of Editors, *Southern Spaces*, Emory University, 2001-present

Chancellor's Commission on the Status of People of Color, 2021-present
Grand Challenges Steering Committee (\$40 m. funding program for strategic investment in research), Office of Research and Economic Development, 2021
Search Committee, Executive Director, Holland Computing Center Core Facility, 2021-2022
Presidential Transition Committee, 2019-2020
N2025 Strategic Planning Committee, 2019-2020
Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development Search Committee, University of Nebraska, 2017
Faculty Advisor, University of Nebraska Sailing Team, 2016 to present

Tenure and Promotion External Reviewer for: George Mason University (2023), University of Tennessee Knoxville (2022), University of Virginia (2021), Brown University (2021), Creighton University (2020), Indiana University (2020), University of Georgia (2019), University of Oklahoma (2019), University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee (2018), University of Victoria (2017), University of Maine (2016).

Manuscript Reviewer: *William & Mary Quarterly*, 2021, *Oxford University Press*, 2021 and 2020, *University of North Carolina Press*, 2019, *University of Illinois Press*, 2018, *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 2015 and 2014, *University of Virginia Press* 2016.

Membership: American Historical Association, Organization of American Historians, American Society for Legal History, Society for Historians of the Early American Republic, Southern Historical Association.