

Department of History Annual Newsletter 2025–2026



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NEWSLETTER DESIGNED & EDITED BY MEGAN BROWN
COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS

CHAIR’S REPORT

In my ten-year tenure as chair, the Department of History has excelled and led the University of Nebraska in highly distinguished awards, including two Guggenheim Fellowships. We have been through a lot: the pandemic; major budget cuts; and significant challenges to the profession itself. And, yet, through the past ten years, we have also won the top teaching and research awards and hosted significant conferences such as Prague Spring 50 (the largest and most important gathering in the world commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968), noteworthy Carol R. Pauley Lectures, several Pauley Symposia, as well as a dozen prominent Frank A. Belousek Lectures dedicated to Czech and Slovak history. It has been a magical ten years, and I leave the department healthy and vibrant, having hired 8 new faculty members (as well as one long-term lecturer, two DPAA post-docs, and two staff members), overseen the promotion of 6 faculty members to associate professor, and promoted 5 faculty members to full professor.



I’ve learned a lot about myself and academia, mostly good. I’m proud of the work that our faculty does in teaching, research, and service. I’m also very thankful of the staff we have, and it was a pleasure to work with my assistants Barb Bullington, Megan Brown, and Michele Kentfield over the years. Without our staff, the department simply wouldn’t function.

I’m delighted that Sorensen Professor of History Ken Winkle has agreed to lead the department as interim chair next year.

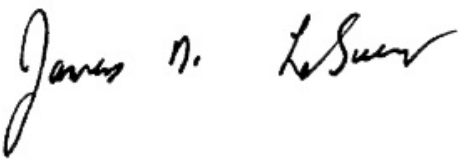
I’m ending my tenure and taking my first “sabbatical” in over a decade. During my leave, I will be working on my next feature documentary film, *Seasons of COVID*, which traces the deterioration of the public health debates and the rise of the anti-science movement during the pandemic. I am now co-editing *The Prison Writings Roger Casement*. Casement, having been knighted in 1911 for his humanitarian work exposing colonial crimes, was executed for high treason in London in 1916. I will also continue to work as PI on a \$1 million (and renewing) DoD oral history grant for which I will be filming at Pearl Harbor this fall.

Most importantly, I am finally writing the book on a history of decolonization that I set aside to take on the chair duties in 2016. As a twenty-five-year faculty member, I return to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln faculty knowing that my heart is in the scholarship and teaching that brought me into the profession and knowing I have done my part to keep the department moving upward.

It has been an honor to lead our department. As we move forward, the Department of History will do big things and continue to lead the university in teaching and research. We can do this work only because we have the extraordinary sponsorship and patronage of the best alumni on campus and the full support of senior leadership at the university. I leave especially grateful for the continued financial support from our committed alumni.

Thank you, faculty, for entrusting me as your leader for ten years. Thank you, alumni and senior administrators, for helping Team History thrive. We are most grateful.

With kind wishes to all,
James



Prof. James Le Sueur with Campbell’s Nursery gift from the Department



2025-2026 IN UNL HISTORY

2025 PAULEY LECTURE

Organized in memory of University of Nebraska-Lincoln alumnus Carroll R. Pauley (class of 1930), Pauley memorial lectures feature a wide variety of speakers addressing current research in history and other social sciences, engaging both academics and the general public in an open discussion of the relationship between the past and the present.

The 2025 Pauley Lecture, titled “Rwanda under Kagame: Assessing 25 Years of Welfare, Security and Reconciliation in Rwanda,” examined Rwanda’s paradoxical trajectory since Paul Kagame became President in 2000. While the country has attracted regular criticism for its crackdown on dissent at home and abroad and its involvement in conflict in the wider Great Lakes region, it has experienced a remarkable recovery since the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. This includes the peaceful return of hundreds of thousands of convicted genocide perpetrators to the same communities where they committed crimes in 1994. Meanwhile, Rwanda has built one of Africa’s most expansive social welfare systems, with heavy investment in healthcare and education. These policies have helped increase Rwandans’ average life expectancy from 47 to 69 years under Kagame’s presidency. How has a state often depicted as authoritarian, led by a President commonly described as a dictator, achieved these substantial social and economic gains? What does this mean for Rwanda’s long term social equilibrium? And how does the Rwandan case illuminate wider debates

about democracy and authoritarianism in the 21st century? This lecture tackled these pressing questions, drawing on the speaker’s more than 20 years of conducting field research in Rwanda.

Phil Clark is a Professor of International Politics at SOAS University of London. His research and teaching focus on conflict and post-conflict issues in Africa, with a particular interest in justice, reconciliation, peacebuilding, and welfare in the Great Lakes region.

His most recent books are *Distant Justice: The Impact of the International Criminal Court on African Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2018) – shortlisted for the Raphael Lemkin Award for best book on genocide and mass violence – and *The Gacaca Courts, Post-Genocide Justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda: Justice without Lawyers* (Cambridge University Press, 2010). He is currently completing a book on welfare, post-genocide inequality and reconciliation in Rwanda, to be published by Hurst and Co. Publishers and Oxford University Press.

His writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Foreign Affairs*, the *Washington Post*, the *Guardian*, *Dissent*, the *East African*, *Prospect*, the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, *The Australian* and the *BBC*, *CNN*, and *Al Jazeera* websites. He is a regular radio and TV

contributor on the *BBC*, *France 24*, *Al Jazeera*, *CNN*, *Deutsche Welle*, *TNT*, and *Monocle 24*.

Clark is a member of the United Nations expert group on



2025 CARROLL R. PAULEY LECTURE

Rwanda under Kagame: Assessing 25 Years of Welfare, Security and Reconciliation in Rwanda

Feat. Phil Clark, SOAS University of London



View the complete description:



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16TH, 2025

4:00 – 5:30 PM

Nebraska Union – Platte River Room South
1400 R St Lincoln, NE 68508



reconciliation and the Law and Peace Practice Group of the Institute for Integrated Transitions (IFIT). He holds a DPhil in Politics from the University of Oxford, where he studied as a Rhodes Scholar.

Sources: history.unl.edu/research-and-creative-activity/pauley-lecture-and-symposium/; Phil Clark; University Communication and Marketing, “[Pauley Lecture - Oct. 16th](#),” 23 September 2025

2025-2026 BELOUSEK EVENTS

The Frank A. Belousek Lecture supports speakers engaged with Czech History in the Department of History at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Frank A. Belousek (1902-1982) was a native Czechoslovakian, naturalized American

citizen, and University of Nebraska alumnus (1923). His generosity advances the study of the Czech heritage and perpetuates its legacy and contributions to the state of Nebraska and the region of the Great Plains. The Belousek



In the 2025-2026 academic year, the Department of History was very pleased to host two lectures – one in September 2025, the second in December 2025 – and support a conference at the end of April 2026 with Belousek funding and featuring speakers who have previously visited for Prague Spring 50 in April 2018.



Prof. Hana Waisserová listens as Daniela Spenser speaks with Prof. James Le Sueur in front of the September Belousek audience.



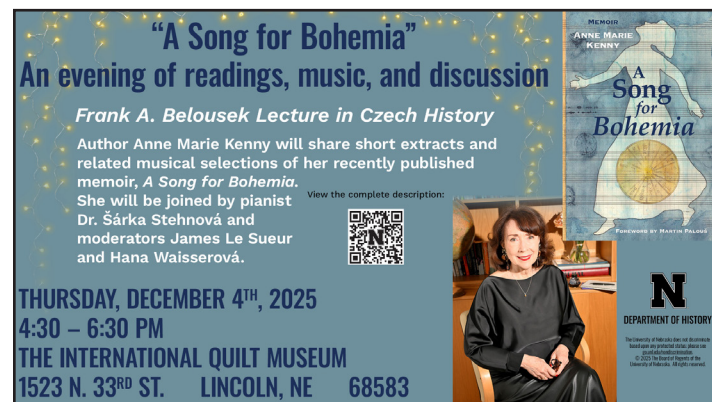
Echoes of Exile: A Family's Odyssey through the Holocaust and Cold War is a sweeping exploration of survival, resilience, and the fate of one family amid Europe's most turbulent century

Echoes of Exile reveals the seismic disruptions of twentieth-century European history through the intimate lens of one family's struggle to survive. Setting out to record the life of her mother, Ruth, Daniela Spenser unearthed personal facts and stories that additionally illuminate the shared traumas and experiences of millions of Czech, Polish, and German Jews who died in the Holocaust, as well as the stories of those who survived and lived under Communism and the Cold War. Her resulting work is a fascinating hybrid that combines family letters and interviews with deeply researched political history spanning from the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the fall of the

Spenser's fascinating work reveals the difficult choices her mother and family faced, the tests to their loves and loyalties, and the lingering scars of exile. More than a family history, it weaves personal and historical narratives with mundane and momentous threads to create a fresh, distinctive fabric. Spenser recovers fragments of the past that contribute to a map of the present

and possibilities for the future. An engrossing account of survival, resilience, and the enduring human spirit amid the maelstrom of Europe's savage twentieth century, *Echoes of Exile* will interest readers who value firsthand accounts of significant events, appreciate diverse cultural perspectives, and seek to understand the complexities of survival, identity, and political change through intimate, lived experiences.

Daniela Spenser is a fellow at CIESAS (Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social) in Mexico City. She is author of *The Impossible Triangle: Mexico, Soviet Russia, and the United States in the 1920s* and *Stumbling Its Way Through Mexico: The Early Years of the Communist International*.



In a wonderful warm up to the holiday season, members of the Lincoln populace were treated to performances by Anne Marie Kenny and Šárka Stehnová on 4 December 2025 when the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Department of History presented the second Belousek Lecture of the academic year: “‘A Song for Bohemia’: An evening of readings, music, and discussion.”

Prague in the 1990s, an extraordinary place and time. The Cold War had ended. The Berlin Wall had fallen. Soviet-bloc countries like Czechoslovakia had just liberated themselves. The atmosphere was intoxicating, the future unmapped. And Anne Marie Kenny was there – a singer-turned-entrepreneur.

In the decade following the Velvet Revolution, the author lived and worked alongside Czechs discovering their place in a new democratic society while coming to terms with their past under totalitarian rule – a past they rarely spoke about. Likewise, Kenny kept secret the inner turmoil beneath her outer success. In her raw telling, these vices often threatened to destroy her, until the hand of music, artistry, and love extended a reprieve. She and those around her moved forward with Havel's message as their driving force, building a civil society that is “humane, moral, intellectual, spiritual, and cultural.”



Prof. Hana Waisserová addresses the audience with a personal anecdote during a break in Anne Marie Kenny and Šárka Stehnová's performance at the International Quilt Museum.

In today's politically turbulent times, Anne Marie looked back at her Czech experience, seeking answers and finding encouragement in the moral leadership of Václav Havel and the resilience of the Czech people.

Anne Marie Kenny is an American singer, writer, and entrepreneur. She lived in France as a professional singer for 10 years before her 1990 performance at the famous Reduta nightclub in Prague at the invitation of Václav Havel. Anne Marie then moved to Czechoslovakia and started a staffing and training company that would be

Šárka Stehnová is a pianist, collaborator, and educator based in Lincoln, Nebraska, with roots in the Czech Republic and Vietnam. Her multicultural background and international training have deeply influenced her artistry. Šárka holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her earlier studies include an Artist Diploma from the Conservatory in Teplice (Czech Republic), a BMA from Northern State University



Anne Marie Kenny sings fervently during the December 2025 Belousek event.

in South Dakota, and a Master of Music in Piano Performance from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Since 2022, she has been on faculty at Marble Music, where she maintains a thriving studio of 40 students. She collaborates regularly with faculty at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as a sought-after collaborative pianist and frequently serves as a judge and clinician.

The 26th Annual Czech and Slovak Studies Workshop hosted by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln was 23-25 April 2026. Sessions were held mostly in Burnett Hall and the Nebraska Union.

A panel discussion with Jacques Rupnik and Veronika Tuckerová was 23 April 2026. The keynote speaker, Jindřich Toman, followed. Both took place in the Union Auditorium and were livestreamed via Zoom. The panel and keynote were free and open to the public.



Rupnik (pictured above, left) is a research professor of political science at Sciences Po in Paris, France, visiting professor at the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium, and a popular political commentator and publicist. His book, *The Fates of Central Europe Between Hitler and Stalin: Selected Writings of Josef Guttman*, will be published in October 2026 by [The University of Chicago Press](#).

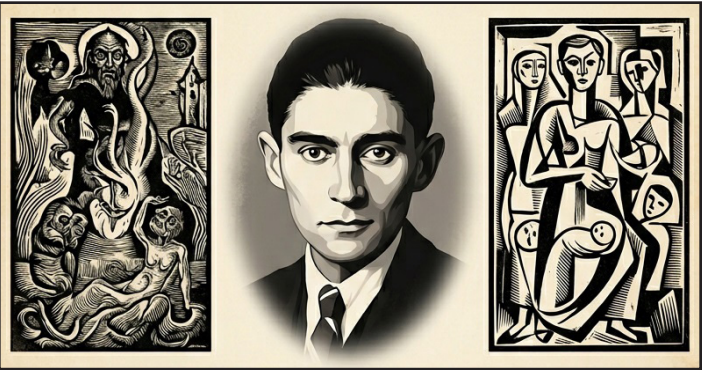
Tuckerová (pictured above, right) teaches Czech at Harvard University’s Slavic Department. Her writing has appeared in *The New German Critique*, *Journal of World Literature*, *brücken*, *Revolver Revue*, and *Roš chodeš*. Her book, *Reading Kafka in Prague: On Translation, Samizdat, Censorship, Export, and Dissent*, the first book-length study of the reception of Franz Kafka in his homeland of Czechoslovakia, was published by [Bloomsbury Academic](#) in 2025.

Toman’s keynote presentation was titled “Bohemia’s Jews and Their Nineteenth Century.” Trained in Czechoslovakia, Germany, and the United States, Toman follows an academic path defined by languages and cultures of Central Europe. His book on Jewish culture and literature, *Bohemia’s Jews and Their Nineteenth Century*:



Texts, Contexts, Reassessments ([University of Chicago Press](#), 2023), focuses on the scarcely written-about “quiet” decades of the nineteenth century, exploring Jewish expression, Jewish-Czech relations, and the changing attitudes toward Jews between the 1820s and 1880s.

The workshop was established in 2000 and is now sponsored by the Czechoslovak Studies Association and the Slovak Studies Association; the 2026 workshop was organized by Hana Waisserová (Modern Languages and Literatures), Ari Kohen (Political Science), Stephen Lahey (Classics and Religious Studies), James D. Le Sueur, Gerald Steinacher, and Alexander Vazansky. The Czech and Slovak Studies Workshop aims to bring together researchers, scientists, faculty members, and advanced graduate students to exchange their experiences, research results, and ideas.



See the full schedule and read more about featured speakers, events, and activities on the [workshop website](#).

Sources: [history.unl.edu/belousek-lecture/](#); University Communication and Marketing, “[Spenser to present lecture in Czech history Sept. 11](#),” 8 September 2025; University Communication and Marketing, “[Belousek Lecture - Sept. 11th](#),” 9 September 2025; Anne Marie Kenny; Šárka Stehnová; Kathleen Lacey | English, “[Czech, Slovak studies workshop will be April 23-25](#),” 21 April 2026; [judaic.unl.edu/schedule-czech-and-slovak-studies-workshop-2026/](#)

Event Photo Credit: Megan Brown

Humanities, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities (CDRH) with the theme “Digital Crossroads: Technology, Research, and Innovation in the Humanities.” The CDRH and the



Libraries provided us with many workshops for both digital humanities and professional development. Our keynote speaker, Dr. Kalani Craig, from the University of Illinois presented on the digital program she developed, net.create. Net.create is an open-source analysis tool designed to organize humanities research materials. We welcomed presenters from departments across the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Minnesota State-Mankato, Western Illinois University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the University of Florida.

The 2025 conference could not have happened without our generous sponsors in the Humanities in Medicine program, the CDRH, the Institute for Ethnic Studies, the Harris Center for Judaic Studies, Women’s and Gender Studies, Classics and Religious Studies, and the Department of Sociology. We also received grants from the Office of Research and Innovation, the Convocations Committee, and University Program Council. We are also grateful for support from Dr. James Le Sueur, Dr. Alexander Vazansky, Dr. Donna Anderson, and Megan Brown for their support and guidance throughout the organization of the conference.

2026 James A. Rawley Conference in the Humanities: Surveilling Movement and Regulating identity

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s History Graduate Students Association invites all graduate and advanced undergraduate students studying the humanities to participate in the Sixteenth Annual James A. Rawley Conference in the Humanities.

The Rawley Conference strives to enhance our collective understanding of the humanities. We welcome submissions from those studying the humanities and related fields, including but not limited to: History, Classical and Modern Languages, Classics and Religious Studies, English, Philosophy, Anthropology, Sociology, Environmental Studies, Ethnic Studies, Great Plains Studies, Latin American Studies, Medieval/Renaissance Studies, Women’s and Gender Studies, and Digital Humanities.

All proposals are welcome, preference will be given to those which address the 2026 theme of “Surveilling Movement and Regulating Identity”

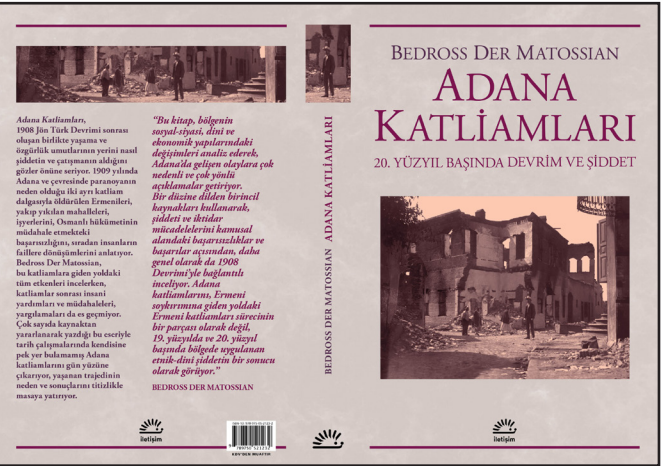
This year, we are looking for papers that cover issues where either free movement or free expression of identity is limited. Think about issues of race, gender, migration as possible topic areas for this conference.



This Year the Rawley Conference in the Humanities will also host our Keynote speaker: Edward E. Curtis IV. Dr. Curtis is William M. and Gail M. Plater Chair of the Liberal Arts and Professor of Religious Studies at the Indiana University School of Liberal Arts at Indiana University, Indianapolis. He is a publicly-engaged scholar of Black, Muslim, and Arab American history and life who translates his research into practice through film, popular writing, community archiving, K-12 teacher workshops, and public history projects such as “Arab Indianapolis.”

The [History Graduate Students’ Association](#) is planning the [18th annual Rawley conference](#) for November 5th and 6th, 2026. Our theme will be “Surveilling Movement and Regulating Identity.” We are pleased to welcome Dr. Edward Curtis IV as our keynote speaker.

BOOK TRANSLATION



In June 2025, Professor Bedross Der Matossian was happy to share that the Turkish translation of his book *The Horrors of Adana: Revolution and Violence in the Early Twentieth Century* ([Stanford University Press](#), 2022) had just been published by [İletişim Yayınları](#) (İletişim Press). He hopes this translation will make the book accessible to Turkish readers and offer a new perspective on the 1909 Adana Massacres.

You can find the book via [iletisim.com.tr/kitap/adana-katliamlari/10748](#).

The Horrors of Adana: Revolution and Violence in the Early Twentieth Century (Adana Katliamları: 20. Yüzyıl Başında Devrim ve Şiddet) adlı kitabımın Türkçe çevirisinin [İletişim Yayınları](#) tarafından yayımlandığını duyurmaktan mutluluk duyuyorum. Bu çevirinin, Türkiye’de İngilizce bilmeyen okurların 1909 Adana Katliamları hakkında yeni bir bakış

açısına ulaşmalarına katkı sağlayacağını umuyorum. Kitaba buradan ulaşabilirsiniz: iletisim.com.tr/kitap/adana-katliamlari/10748.

Source: Bedross Der Matossian, 16 June 2025

KEYNOTE AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

In June 2025, Prof. Gerald Steinacher of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln delivered the keynote lecture at the international conference “Flight, Adaptation and Resilience: Fascists, Collaborators and War Criminals in the Post-War Nordic Periphery,” organized by NORFAS (Network for Nordic Fascism Studies) together with the Department of History at Uppsala University, Sweden.

The conference brought together international scholars to examine the understudied history of fascists, collaborators, and war criminals in the Nordic region after the Second World War. NORFAS, as a research network of historians and senior scholars active in the field of fascism studies, sought to provide new impetus for research on this dimension of the history of the Nordic countries, as well as the migration history of Northern, Central, and Eastern Europe, postwar justice, and the historical roots of present-day far-right populism. The sessions and the keynote lecture were open to the public.

The conference was organized by Lars M Andersson, Olof Bortz, Nicola Karcher, and Oula Silvennoinen and took place at Uppsala University. Steinacher’s keynote address drew on his internationally recognized research on Nazi flight and postwar escape networks. Steinacher



is author of the ground-breaking monograph *Nazis on the Run* and the foremost expert on how German and Austrian National Socialists escaped legal prosecution and punishment after the Second World War.

The conference program is [available for download as a PDF](#).

The conference was organized jointly between NORFAS, SWEFAS (Swedish Research Network for Fascism, Far-Right Radicalism, Extremism and Populism Studies), and CIRCUS (Center for Integrated Research on Culture and Society, at Uppsala University), and financed by the Wenner-Gren Foundation.

NORFAS studies the entangled history of fascist thought, practices, and culture in the Nordic countries.

Sources: Gerald Steinacher; Network for Nordic Fascism Studies, “[International NORFAS Conference on Post-War Fascism 16-17 June](#)”

Photo Credit: NORFAS

A newly planted Indigenous garden at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is growing into a place to honor Native presence, traditional ecological knowledge, and

community gathering.

On 16 September 2025, students from ethnic studies

courses planted native species into dirt mounds within a circular bed northwest of Woods Hall, near the University Hall historical marker. The garden features a large sun circle that encompasses the planting area and a smaller outdoor classroom designed for both teaching and ceremony.

“This garden will allow us a space to teach, reflect, and gather in ways that were not possible before,” said Angel Hinzo, assistant professor of ethnic studies and history and a member of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. “It’s a commitment to presence, learning, and responsibility.”

The idea began as part of a broader visioning process within the Institute for Ethnic Studies. As the program marked its 50th anniversary in 2022, faculty reflected on the next 50 years and how to root that future physically on campus.

“This project came from a place of imagining what our future could look like,” said Laura Muñoz, associate professor of history and ethnic studies, who now leads the initiative. “We wanted something that embodies Indigenous studies and honors the lived experiences we center. This will help us realize that vision.”



Prof. Angel Hinzo talks with students and community members in the beautiful environment of the Indigenous garden planting event.

The team broke ground the summer of 2025 following extensive collaboration with university administration and operations, landscape services, Connor Griess (campus planner), and Eileen Bergt (landscape architect). More than \$63,000 has been raised to complete the first phase, with a long-term goal of building a \$50,000 endowment to support continued development and care.

“This is the first part of the campus grounds that has been truly shaped by Indigenous input,” said Gabriel Bruguier, assistant professor with University Libraries and

faculty adviser for the University of Nebraska Intertribal Exchange. “It’s a shared, living space – something we can all grow with.”

The garden is expected to serve as a hub for coursework, student events, and cultural practice. That focus began with a smudging and tobacco offering ceremony held earlier this year to bless the ground. Now, with plants in the ground, students will help maintain the space through watering and weeding, as part of their learning and stewardship.

“There’s a stewardship component that students are embracing,” said Bruguier, a member of the Yankton Sioux Tribe. “They’ll be learning not just how to care for the garden, but what that care means.”

The plantings include species native to Nebraska and the Great Plains – some with ceremonial significance, others that support pollinators or were traditionally used for food and medicine.

“I teach Native American history and studies, and now I can bring my classes here,” Hinzo said. “It gives us a hands-on opportunity to talk about pollinators, food plants, traditional uses, and cultural knowledge, all without having to leave City Campus.”

Project leaders hope to expand the garden in future growing seasons. Plans include the addition of fruit-bearing plants, native trees, and drought-tolerant species from across the region. The space is also expected to play a role in the Institute for Ethnic Studies’ annual spring celebrations.

“This garden is a start,” Muñoz said. “We want it to last, and we want it to grow – not just as a landscape, but as a way of being in relationship with this land, this university and each other.”

Sources: Troy Fedderson | University Communication and Marketing, “[Indigenous garden creates space for expanded teaching, learning](#),” 22 September 2025; [Students plant Indigenous garden. Video by Curt Bright | University Communication and Marketing](#)

Photo Credit: Liz McCue | University Communication and Marketing

INDIGENOUS GARDEN

HUMANITIES IN MEDICINE VIRTUAL TALK

Dr. Catherine Burns of the University of Johannesburg delivered a talk, “Faith, Hope and Science in the Time of AIDS: The Sinikethemba Centre and McCord Zulu Hospital, Durban, South Africa,” on 6 October 2025 via Zoom.

This presentation explored how the imperatives of U.S. mission work in an African setting from the late 1800s to the WWII era, and then the development of medical science in South Africa after the 1920s, led to the growth of the McCord Zulu Hospital. At the end of the Apartheid era, U.S. philanthropy re-emerged as a key factor during the HIV/AIDS crisis, and the consequent development of one of the world’s largest HIV treatment centers – the Sinikithemba program.

Reflecting on this 110-year history is deeply relevant for current debates about the role of medicine in society, the history of the U.S.’s complex history of medical philanthropy globally, and the responses and agency of people in Southern Africa to epidemics. Burns analyzed a key idiom used by people at McCord throughout this history: “Sinikithemba,” or hope.

Burns is a leading scholar in medical history and interdisciplinary research, with a particular focus on women, gender, health, and the history of medicine in Southern Africa. She has been instrumental in establishing medical humanities as a field of study in the region and continues to shape its development through research, teaching, and collaboration.






Faith, Hope and Science in the Time of AIDS: The Sinikethemba Centre and McCord Zulu Hospital, Durban, South Africa

Catherine Burns
University of Johannesburg

Oct. 6, 10:00 a.m.
Via Zoom



go.unl.edu/hmedburns

Her recent publications include a history of breastfeeding in Southern Africa, published by UCL Press, and a biography of the Eastern Cape midwife and herbalist Louisa Mvemve, scheduled for publication by Ohio University Press. Her book about Sinikithemba, in collaboration with a HIV doctor, was out with Jacana Press in South Africa late 2025 and the University of Virginia Press in the U.S. in 2026.

The event was organized by Cindy Ermus, director of the Humanities in Medicine Program and Charles and Linda Wilson Professor in the Department of History.

Sources: College of Arts and Sciences, “[Burns to give talk Oct. 6,](#)” 3 September 2025; University Communication and Marketing, “[Humanities in Medicine Virtual Talk - Oct. 6,](#)” 23 September 2025; [events.unl.edu/history/2025/10/06/192925/](#)

RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT FELLOW

Donna Anderson, Mellon Research Assistant Professor in the Department of History, was among 12 University of Nebraska-Lincoln faculty members selected to participate

in the 18th cohort of the Office of Research and Innovation’s [Research Development Fellows Program](#) (RDFP).

The fellows, selected through a competitive application process, represent 12 departments spanning five colleges.

RDFP is an eight-month program designed to provide full-time University of Nebraska-Lincoln faculty at the assistant-level rank with the information and resources necessary to position themselves for success in securing external funding. Fellows graduate from the program with an intentional plan for pursuing external funding and gain practical experience to effectively communicate their research, scholarship, and creative endeavors to potential funders and other audiences. More than 284 fellows from across all University of Nebraska-Lincoln colleges have completed the program to date.

This year’s program launched in October 2025 and concluded in May 2026.

Source: College of Arts and Sciences, “[Anderson selected for Research Development Fellows Program,](#)” 31 October 2025



NEBRASKA STORIES EVENT



Community members discovered the vibrant histories of Japanese Americans in Nebraska from the late 19th century to the present and explored the community-led efforts to preserve them through a [screening and panel discussion](#) on 11 November 2025 in the Lied Commons.

The event was part of the Paul A. Olson Great Plains lecture series by the Center for Great Plains Studies. It began with a screening of Nebraska Public Media’s recently aired “Nebraska Stories: Rescuing Japanese Hall” episode, followed by a panel of Japanese American community

members.

Panelists included: Vickie Sakurada Schaepler, the Japanese Hall and history project coordinator; Kim Hachiya, community descendant; Sharon Ishii-Jordan, professor emerita at Creighton University and community descendant; and Kay Hall, senior producer of “Nebraska Stories.”

The moderator was Donna

Anderson of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s Department of History.

Learn more about the Paul A. Olson Great Plains lecture series [through the Center for Great Plains Studies](#).

Source: Donna Anderson | History, “[Japanese American histories to be focus of screening, panel discussion,](#)” 17 October 2025

“PETITIONING FOR FREEDOM” RECOGNITIONS

The digital humanities project “[Petitioning for Freedom](#)” received the Mary L. Dudziak Digital Legal History Prize from the American Society for Legal History (ASLH).

The project was developed by [Katrina Jagodinsky](#), Susan Rosowski Associate Professor in the Department of History, and her team in the Digital Legal Research Lab at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Visitors can explore how marginalized communities navigated the courts to seek justice. Hosted by the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities (CDRH), [the project is the first of its kind](#) and explores thousands of habeas corpus petitions lodged to challenge coercion and confinement in eight states.

Jagodinsky said the award is the highest accolade in this specific field.

“The award is a testament to the incredible effort of our team of CDRH staff and student researchers from history and many other programs,” she said.

The ASLH was founded in 1956 to foster interdisciplinary scholarship and teaching in the broad field of legal history. It is based in the U.S. but international in scope. Awarded annually, [the prize](#) is named in honor of Mary L. Dudziak, a digital history pioneer and a leading scholar of twentieth century U.S. legal history and international relations.

From the ASLH:

“‘Petitioning for Freedom’ offers a deeply researched and carefully curated online database of over 2,000 habeas petitions filed across the American West in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The database inventory continues to be updated monthly with a diverse array of petitions from those challenging slavery, peonage, removal and deportation, state custody over Indigenous wards, and abusive husbands’ custody over their dependents.

“The database offers a regularized schema of records whose handwritten originals are often buried under the haphazard organization and inconsistent recording practices of their rendering courts, and alongside this, the project site provides numerous essays and stories

drawn from the habeas proceedings to help researchers at all levels understand the records and make informed interpretations about the deployment of legal power against and on behalf of the less empowered peoples of the American West.”

A [National Endowment for the Humanities grant](#) will help University of Nebraska-Lincoln historian Katrina Jagodinsky illuminate how ordinary people across the American West used habeas corpus to challenge confinement and injustice, offering a new look at cases still shaping American courts today.



Since 1965, the NEH has supported research and learning in the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation. NEH grants have supported the building blocks of American civil society, helped to examine the human condition, promoted civics education, created an understanding of our cultural heritage, fostered mutual respect for diverse beliefs and cultures, and developed media and information literacy.

With the grant, Jagodinsky is writing a book that builds on her expansive digital humanities project “[Petitioning for Freedom: Habeas Corpus in the American West, 1812-1924](#).” The online searchable database contains analysis and

primary documents, transcribed and annotated, for more than 2,000 cases from Arizona, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oregon, and Washington. Jagodinsky said there are about 2,000 more to be added.

The forthcoming book will explore the myriad ways habeas corpus – a foundational right to due process to challenge wrongful arrest and detainment – was used by people seeking freedom from enslavement, deportation, institutionalization, and even marriage.

“Narrowing it down has been the biggest challenge,” said Jagodinsky, associate professor of history. “With more than 2,000 cases to work from, I have massively increased the scale, and I have the challenge of trying to give each

Petitioning for Freedom

Habeas Corpus in the American West, 1812-1924

[Home](#)[About](#)[Explore](#)[Cases](#)[People](#)[Locations](#)[Stories](#)[Find](#)

Explore

Who

What

When

Where

Welcome to Petitioning for Freedom

We invite you to explore the thousands of petitions lodged to challenge coercion and confinement in the American West between 1812 and 1924. Offering a compelling portrait of marginalized peoples’ legal mobilization and campaigns for racial and social justice, *Petitioning for Freedom* invites you to learn more about the creative and critical uses of habeas corpus in local, state, and federal courts. Collectively, these petitions tell the story of coercion and resistance in American history; individually, they tell the story of local jurists and remarkable petitioners who leveraged the law in unexpected ways.

The Browsing Guides encourage you to navigate the database thematically and are suited to visitors curious about [who](#) wielded habeas in the long nineteenth century, [where](#) habeas trends emerged and shifted, [when](#) habeas coincided with or diverged from national and local events, and [what](#) types of petitions featured prominently over time.

Visitors with more specific questions are welcome to search Cases and People for known case or party names and will find a useful array of case attributes and demographic features to broaden their searches.

Featured Stories

Learn more about the sophisticated legal arguments and poignant freedom stories contained in individual petitions that highlight the significance of habeas more broadly as a central chapter in American legal history.

case its due while I’m writing about anywhere from a dozen to hundreds of cases in each chapter.”

Jagodinsky began the research for what would become “Petitioning for Freedom” in 2017, after finishing her first book, *Legal Codes and Talking Trees: Indigenous Women’s Sovereignty in the Sonoran and Puget Sound Borderlands, 1854-1946* ([Yale University Press](#), 2016). During the work of building the database, large groups with similar habeas petitions emerged, and Jagodinsky is organizing her new book by tying individual cases to these overarching themes.

“I’m trying to give my readers an in-depth view of selected cases, while also giving them that bird’s eye view,” she said. “Each chapter of the new book features a different group of petitioners.”

Themes explored include:

- Black petitioners, who used habeas petitions to challenge enslavement;
- Native habeas petitioners, many in Nebraska, challenging various forms of colonialism;
- women who used habeas petitions for family law situations in the 19th century;
- immigrant petitioners who used habeas petitions often to challenge deportation; and
- institutionalized petitioners, often held in carceral asylums or homes for the delinquent, who used habeas to challenge the institutionalization.

Jagodinsky said each of the themes unearths new ways of thinking about history and the legal foundations that still inform American courts and due process. Throughout the development of the digital project, she was surprised to see the diverse ways ordinary people used habeas corpus – and what constitutes detainment.

“Habeas ended up being used to think about child separation and child removal as a form of confinement,” Jagodinsky said. “In the 19th century, women are often depicted as minimal legal actors, but it turns out that women were very active in using habeas. They’re currently showing up in the database at about 20% to a third of the records, depending on the jurisdiction you look at, of all habeas petitioners, which is huge.”

Additionally, the habeas petitions from those institutionalized in asylums and similar facilities shed light on how states developed laws and policies around the disabled.

“Through this research, I didn’t even expect to find these cases, but the cases are actually teaching us what happened,” Jagodinsky said. “There had been private asylums throughout the 19th century, but at the turn of the 20th century, states throughout the American West began to invest in state-run institutions. They became very carceral spaces, even though they were not criminally sentenced.”

Jagodinsky is excited about the conversations already happening around “Petitioning for Freedom” and hopes the book will encourage more scholars to dive into the database.

“I hope that the database will launch many books and many other projects, and that is why we ended up launching over a year ago,” Jagodinsky said. “I want to encourage people and invite that kind of collaboration, and to see how other scholars think of these cases. It gives us an opportunity to rethink some of the assumptions we have about how the law operated in the 19th century, and I’m excited about that.

“I hope to offer into the contemporary conversation a

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sense that American legal history is not built on binaries of free and unfree, citizen and non-citizen, franchised or disfranchised. The American legal tradition has all of those people in it from the founding forward.”

Sources: College of Arts and Sciences, “[Petitioning for Freedom’ earns ASLH award](#),” 2 December 2025; College of Arts and Sciences, “[Jagodinsky’s ‘Petitioning for Freedom’](#)

[project earns NEH funding](#),” 20 January 2026; Deann Gayman | University Communication and Marketing, “[Jagodinsky earns NEH grant to reveal untold history of habeas corpus](#),” 24 February 2026

Photo Credits: Craig Chandler | University Communication and Marketing; Megan Brown / [Petitioning for Freedom](#) homepage

“EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW” OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

The U.S. Law and Race Initiative hosted a product launch on 16 December 2025 in the Ubuntu Room of the Jackie Gaughan Multicultural Center.

The event celebrated the culmination of the three-year Mellon Foundation grant and the digital publication of [Equality Before the Law](#). The Open Educational Resource (OER) will help teachers, students, scholars, and communities piece together (and pull apart) how law and legal processes shaped the construction of race, slavery, freedom, and unfreedom across U.S. history to today.

“Our launch is an opportunity to celebrate the work of our students, scholars, and collaborators who are passionate about bringing underexamined cases and legislation to a broader public,” Katrina Jagodinsky, co-director of the Mellon Initiative and then-Associate Professor in the Department of History, said.

OER are educational materials in the public domain or licensed to be freely used, changed, and shared.

“This resource removes barriers in profound ways,” Anne Gregory, a Ph.D. student and research assistant in the department, said. “It levels the playing field for anyone interested in studying these histories.”

The project has been used for the [primary course materials](#) for HIST 115, “And Justice for All: Race, Gender, and the Law in U.S. History,” in the fall 2025 semester. The course was launched in fall 2023 as part of the initiative.

“This course is such a unique experience for undergraduates,” Donna Anderson, co-director of the initiative and assistant

professor in the department, said. Students can interrogate historical legal documents and interpret them with supporting essays and videos.

“I truly have never taught a class like this in my fifteen-year teaching career,” she said. “How often can someone say they participated in creating a classroom resource that is tailor-made to the course they teach?”

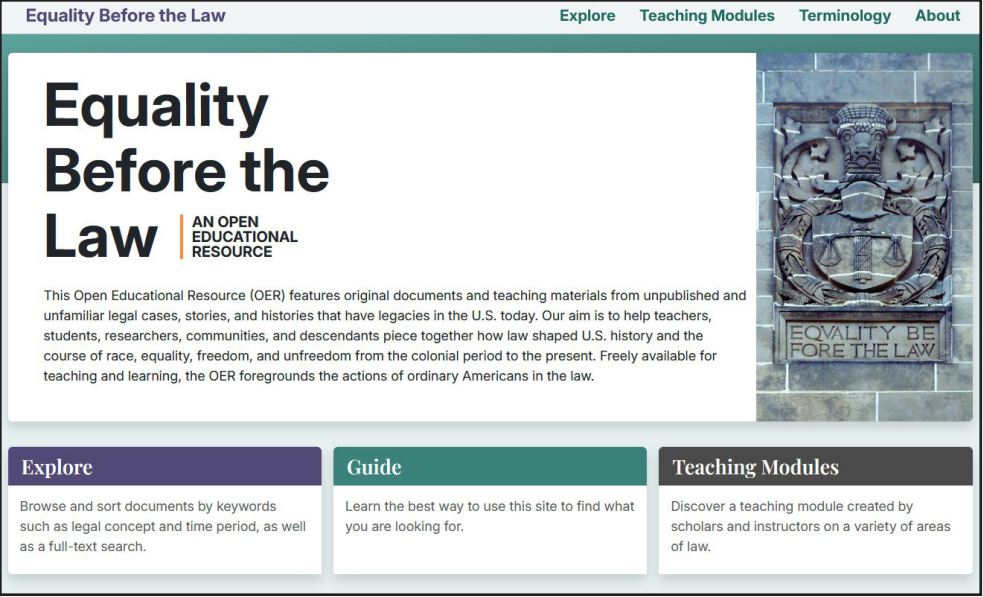
Researchers can use the tool to study how people engage with critical histories, comprehend the meaning of historical evidence, and absorb the meaning of unfamiliar stories, storytelling, and historical perspectives on present experiences.

“It opens up possibilities for research by giving streamlined access to an outstanding data set of curated records,” Gregory said.

The project was also a beneficial professional development



Zoe Williams (right), a Howard University student, works with Prof. Katrina Jagodinsky to help decipher writing on an old legal document for the Initiative.



opportunity.

“I gained mentorship from the senior faculty, learned how to manage all the considerations that come with large research projects, built networks, and ultimately benefited from the financial and intellectual support,” Anderson said.

“Being a part of this project was challenging but rewarding work,” Gregory said, “and I am proud of what the whole team accomplished.”

Phil Harper, the Mellon Foundation’s Program Director of Higher Learning, attended the event, along with members of the Mellon team working to expand programming throughout the Midwest. University of Nebraska-Lincoln leadership also attended to celebrate this important development in public engagement and scholarship.

AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING

Prof. Carolyn Twomey organized a panel on Medieval European Medicine and Culture at the American Historical Association annual meeting in Chicago 8-11 January 2026. She delivered a paper on a new article project on the pharmaceutical and liturgical uses of salt in the early Middle Ages alongside the department’s own Dr. Angela Bolen and chair Prof. Cindy Ermus. Bolen’s paper developed a portion of her book manuscript that examined how medical and ecclesiastical authorities used medieval amenorrhea – the cessation of a monthly period – to make

The [U.S. Law and Race Initiative](#) brings together large university teaching programs, immersive new forms of digital media content, and community partnership storytelling in order to connect Americans to law and race in U.S. history. Additional co-directors are Jeannette Eileen Jones, professor in the department, and William G. Thomas III, PI and Dean of the College of Letters and Science at Montana State University. Partners from the College of Law and Libraries have also made important contributions.

“I believe ‘Equality Before the Law’ empowers the next generation of scholars to create innovative perspectives on American history,” Gregory said.

A video of this celebration has been uploaded to the initiative’s MediaHub channel: [mediahub.unl.edu/media/26293](#).

The Department of History is part of the [College of Arts and Sciences](#). Learn more about [the work of the initiative](#) on Nebraska Today.

Sources: Mike O’Connor | College of Arts and Sciences, “[UNL to host launch event for transformative race and law resource](#),” 14 November 2025; [uslawandrace.unl.edu/news/unl-host-launch-event-transformative-race-and-law-resource/](#)

Photo Credit: University Communication and Marketing; Megan Brown / [Equality Before the Law](#) homepage

and unmake the gender of holy women as a sign of both sanctity and sickness.

Several Nebraska faculty as well as graduate and undergraduate students attended the conference and presented on their research and teaching, raising a glass together in the Hilton hotel pub (pictured top of p. 16).

Source & Photo Credit: [Carolyn Twomey](#)



Profs. Cindy Ermus, Angela Bolen, Carolyn Twomey, and the University of Oslo's Claire Pippa Burridge

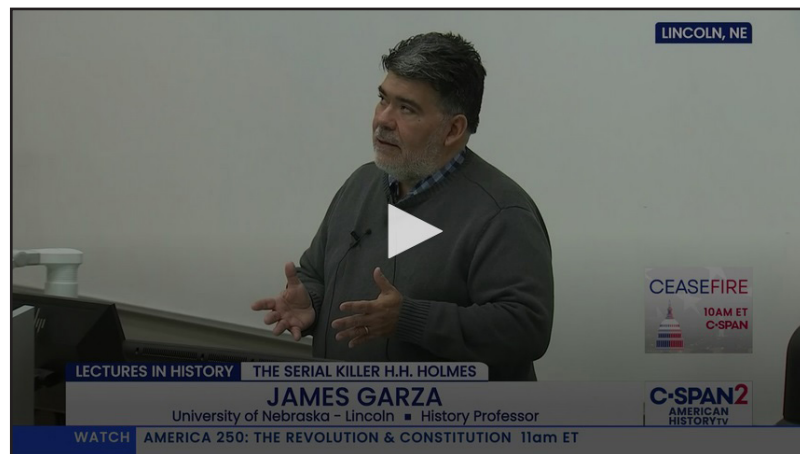


From Left to Right: Dr. Angela Bolen; Colten Skinner; Prof. Bedross Der Matossian; Prof. Cindy Ermus; Dr. Donna Anderson; Prof. Angel Hinzo; Josh Bivins; Prof. Carolyn Twomey; Anne Gregory

C-SPAN RECORDS COURSE

Nebraska history professor James Garza taught a class on H.H. Holmes, described as “America’s First Serial Killer,” and his crimes during the Gilded Age. Garza dispelled the myths surrounding the 19th-century murderer and analyzed how Holmes became mythologized.

Source: C-SPAN, “Lectures in History: The Serial Killer H.H. Holmes,” 11 February 2026 (aired 30 May 2026)



CENTER FOR DIGITAL RESEARCH IN THE HUMANITIES IMPACT

To mark the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities (CDRH), the center engaged Jeff Young, an editor, reporter, and podcaster focused on higher education and how technologies are reshaping the world, to write the story of the CDRH’s rich impact, which has had significant contributions from History faculty and their

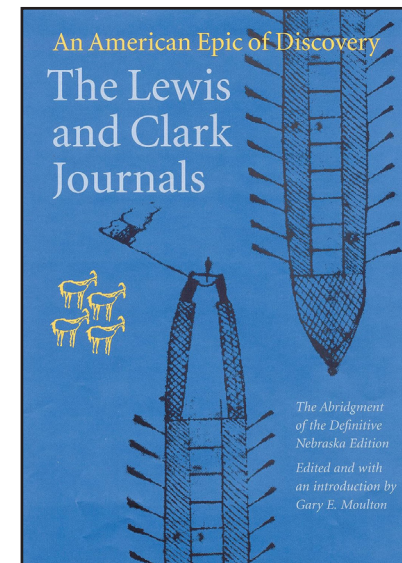
research. More than a dozen of the Center’s leaders, professors, and alumni were interviewed to share their stories and key moments in the history of the center and to share its impact in personal terms:

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln has cultivated

expertise in digital humanities since the early days of computer networks. And it has played a leading role in shaping the culture and practices of this emerging field.

A key driver of that work has been an interdisciplinary center at Nebraska called the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities (CDRH), which is recognized as one of the most prolific and impactful centers of its kind in the world.

Steve Hilliard, a professor in the Department of English, was interim director of the University of Nebraska Press, which was the publisher of History Professor Emeritus Gary E. Moulton’s award-winning edition *The Definitive Journals of Lewis and Clark*, which spans some thirteen volumes in print. What if, Hilliard wondered, the university created a free digital version of the journals that made use of multimedia, including audio and video. And it could also include supplementary material to provide context, informed by other experts at the university, about the native plants and animals mentioned in the journal entries.



Former Thomas C. Sorensen Professor of History & Emeritus Professor of History Gary E. Moulton’s *The Lewis and Clark Journals* (the abridged version of which is depicted here) served as the basis for the online expedition site lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu, sponsored by the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#), the [Center for Great Plains Studies](#), the [University of Nebraska Center for Digital Research in the Humanities](#), and [University of Nebraska Press](#).

This proved to be an early collaboration in digital humanities that involved the Center for Great Plains Studies and Nebraska Press – and that garnered significant funding from the NEH. In 2003, the NEH gave the university a \$223,000 grant to support [The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition Online](#).

Other seeds were sprouting in different departments at Nebraska in this scholarly area that was then called “humanities computing.” At meetings, Katherine (Kay) Walter, one of the CDRH founders, remembers, a question bubbled up: “How can we make Nebraska this big thing in the humanities?”

Scholars submitted a pitch that made bold claims about the possibilities in digital humanities for Nebraska to make a name for itself by creating what they dubbed the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities.

As the center officially got underway in 2005, two donors – John and Catherine Angle – offered the university the chance to endow a new professorship, and the leaders of CDRH convinced the deans to focus the search on a scholar in the digital humanities. “I think it was the first endowed professor-level search in the digital humanities in the U.S.,” says CDRH co-founder Kenneth Price.

He saw this as an opportunity to bring in a big-league player who could advise the new center and help take it to the next level. He and Walter suggested to the deans that the University of Nebraska-Lincoln recruit a rising star in the digital humanities from UVA, William G. Thomas III, who had cofounded and led the Virginia Center for Digital History there and managed a high-profile project called the [Valley of the Shadow](#), which had been one of the first works of digital scholarship to be published by W. W. Norton. That project presented more than five thousand pages of diaries, letters, newspaper articles, photographs, and other primary documents from two counties just a couple of hundred miles apart in the Shenandoah Valley from 1857 to 1870 – Franklin County, Pennsylvania, in the North, and August County, Virginia, in the South. The book came with a CD-ROM with the materials and encouraged readers to explore the messy details of history on their own to get a richer understanding of the time, especially the complicated views on slavery in both the North and the South. As a [New York Times](#) article around that time noted, the work by Thomas, and his mentor Edward Ayers, represented “a new kind of popular history genre mixing multimedia and scholarship.”

“My sense was, it’s visible that he’s going to be a star,” Price remembers thinking about Thomas. Comparing the situation to a professional sports team snatching up a young star, he says it was a chance to score a team-changing player. “So we should do it now, when we can get him,” he remembers arguing. “If we make him this outlandish offer, they’re not going to be able to match it. We can compete with the top two or three centers in the world.”

The offer Nebraska made Thomas: a jump to an endowed full professorship, a highly unusual chance for this young scholar to vault up the academic ladder.

It was an offer he couldn’t turn down. “What Nebraska did was say, ‘We want you to come here,’” Thomas says, noting that the research funds that came



with the position were “substantial.” “They said we are building a center, and we want you to be part of that.”

At a time when much of the academic discipline of history was “looking askance” at digital projects, Thomas says, it was refreshing to join a department where almost everyone was at least willing to consider trying the digital humanities.

“Our approach was, ‘We’re going to try to build the strongest, most diverse digital scholarship across the department,’” he says. And he brought in more people to the university with experience in digital humanities, including helping to recruit Stephen Ramsay from UVA (now a professor of English at Nebraska who describes himself as obsessed with computer languages and with the question of how algorithms can change the understanding of literature).

Thomas worked in partnership with Walter and Price, the codirectors of the new CDRH. Perhaps their most impactful collaboration involved coordinating a “cluster hire” of faculty members with an interest in digital projects. This might have been the first time the University used the strategy, a coordinated recruitment across departments of faculty members with a shared expertise, focus, or approach.

“We were able to say that we had already planted a flag in this area, and we already had prominence, and if the university were to invest, we could go from being prominent to being potentially dominant in digital humanities nationally and internationally,” says Price, explaining the argument made for the cluster hire.

Between 2009 and 2013, the cluster hire brought in seven professors with digital humanities expertise in art history, anthropology, classics, English, and history. That effectively doubled the center’s faculty at the time.

When Katrina Jagodinsky joined the faculty of the Department of History in 2012, she had no training in digital scholarship and no plans to get involved.

But she found herself surrounded by graduate students

working on projects for the CDRH, and she attended some of the center’s open sessions during which students and professors describe projects they’re working on and seek input.

“A lot of lightbulbs were going off for me,” remembers Jagodinsky. “I focus on marginalized people,” she adds, noting that her research explores the history of Native Americans and other people who audiences often “assume aren’t numerically significant actors in the past.” As she dug through various archives for her work, however, she found Native peoples routinely represented in legal records of nineteenth-century America. And she realized that digital techniques could help explain complex stories she was uncovering as she dug through boxes in physical archives.

“As I was talking with graduate research assistants, I realized that digital humanities would allow me to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches,” she says. Her interest was in revealing human stories that had been forgotten but also in finding patterns among those nuanced stories. “I thought, ‘I better jump on this train or I’m not going to be able to do the project I want.’”

Jagodinsky was digging through the texts of legal filings in the American West from 1812 to 1924, with a focus on understanding how ordinary people challenged their arrests, deportations, and other legal actions against them. A digital archive, she realized, would allow unprecedented analysis across these disparate documents and let anyone explore the raw materials.

At most universities, she says, mounting such an archive would have been a tough sell. After all, she started with no skills in building or harnessing such archives. “I knew the research questions I had, but I wasn’t sure what I would need to answer those questions,” she remembers. “CDRH helped me figure out how – and which grants to write to get funding for deeper training.”

Jagodinsky decided to go big, applying for a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant to scan and analyze legal petitions from Arizona, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oregon, and

Washington. It was a different kind of project than the center’s other signature efforts like the Willa Cather Archive or the Walt Whitman Archive. “Every legal case is different,” the scholar explains. But leaders of the center enthusiastically supported the idea and jumped at the challenge to build a new technical framework for it.

NSF awarded Jagodinsky’s project nearly half a million dollars, and to date Jagodinsky has led a team of student research assistants to scan more than two thousand legal cases to create a public archive called [Petitioning for Freedom](#) (see p. 15 for screenshot).

“It is yielding some field-shifting understanding of law in the American west,” says Jagodinsky.

“A lot of people would assume that Native people weren’t using local courts in the 1800s,” she notes, because they were not recognized as U.S. citizens until 1924. “But we learned that they appear in every state – not in really large numbers, but they are everywhere.”

The story embodies the center’s approach – and its impact. The playbook has been to set a high bar for projects, win external funding, prioritize the sharing of ideas across disciplines and with tech experts, and encourage mentorship to bring in more scholars.

And every year the center brings together digital humanities leaders from around the country for the Nebraska Forum on Digital Humanities. The gathering has taken many forms over the years, but the event aims to showcase the work of early-career scholars in the digital humanities in a discussion of pressing issues in the field. The [2024 forum](#) tackled how to use artificial intelligence tools in digital cultural heritage in responsible and equitable ways.

“It’s one of the longest-running digital humanities convenings out there,” notes Thomas, who started the tradition more than fifteen years ago as, initially, the Nebraska Digital Workshop. “To get the invite to Nebraska to present has become a sign of the impact of someone’s scholarly work.”

Talk to any researcher involved in the CDRH, and you’re also bound to hear about surprising moments of discovery that could only have happened because of the new digital

techniques they use.

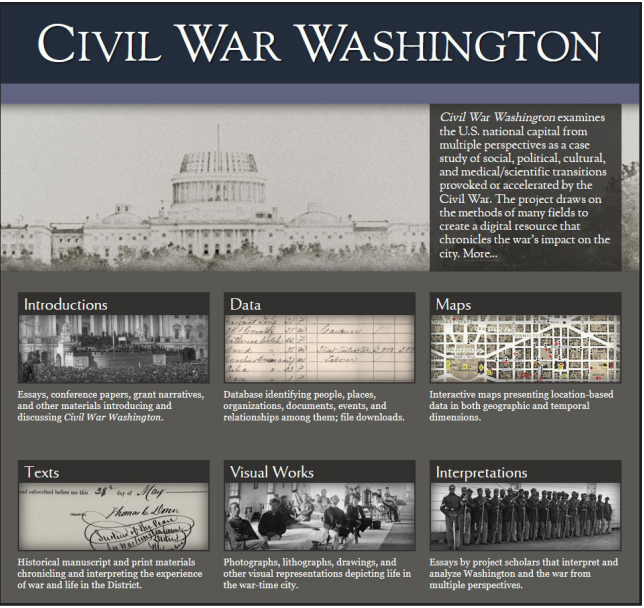
“A lot of it is how you can manage a whole lot of documents and how you can arrange them and make them searchable,” explains Jeannette Eileen Jones, a history professor at the university and a fellow at the CDRH. In her own research on cultural ideas about Africa among people in the United States between 1862 and 1919, her findings have “challenged interpretations that we thought were set because we were able to deal with only a small number of documents.”

For instance, by mapping large amounts of data about trends in diplomatic services in Africa during the time period, she curated a series of maps that users can interact with to see how U.S. foreign policy regarding Africa changed throughout a set time period in, say, where U.S. diplomatic staff were placed in Africa to get a sense of where information was being gathered by government officials.

Other projects involving History faculty, namely the [Genoa Indian School Digital Reconciliation Project](#) (with History and the Center for Great Plains Studies’s Margaret Jacobs) and [Civil War Washington](#) (directed by Susan C. Lawrence, Elizabeth



A student in a Research Experiences for Undergraduates summer program examines a digitized historical document for transcription and annotation, under advisement of Prof. Katrina Jagodinsky (a reverse shot of the photo on p. 14).



Lorang, Kenneth M. Price, and Kenneth J. Winkle), work to welcome both experienced researchers and anyone in the community and in the larger public who might stumble upon the websites.

The idea of the “digital humanities” has always represented a bigger mission than just applying the latest computer

technology to scholarly work. From the earliest experiments at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and other colleges and universities, working in the digital humanities meant a culture shift in how scholars collaborate and share their work.

It's about working across disciplines to break out of traditional academic silos. It's about engaging with the broader public by making the raw materials of scholarship – often historic letters, photographs, or literary drafts – free and open to all. It's about rethinking what is possible to publish, even for an audience of other scholars. And it's about developing new techniques, enabled by technology, to unlock discoveries across literature, history, anthropology, art history, and any humanities field.

The CDRH has grown to support thirty-seven staff members and faculty fellows, published more than seventy-three projects, attracted tens of millions in grants, and won honors and awards both nationally and internationally.

One goal has been to make sure the center lives on, no matter who is leading it, by diversifying funding with a mix of federal, state, and university grants; by setting up an endowment; and by establishing clear governance structures to make sure professors and students affiliated with the center get recognized for their work.



“It’s not built around a cult of personality,” says Jagodinsky, noting that the center has always focused on a mission of supporting digital humanities work, rather than any particular scholar or project.

From the beginning, the center’s leaders set the bar high for every project, consistently winning external grants and support. They have worked to build a base of financing and to codify practices that will ensure that digital humanities continues to play a key role at Nebraska and beyond.

The 20th anniversary of the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities was just one of the anniversaries the University Libraries celebrated in the 2025-2026 academic year. See more that Libraries celebrated at [Pages to Paths: A Celebration of Our Libraries](#).

Sources: Jeff Young, “[Growing a Digital Humanities Culture: Twenty Years of the UNL Center for Digital Research in the Humanities](#),” 3 April 2026; University Communication and Marketing, “[Nebraska center celebrates 20 years of transforming humanities research](#),” 3 April 2026

Photo Credit: Craig Chandler | University Communication and Marketing; Jeff Young; University of Nebraska Press

Olivia Weisser of University of Massachusetts Boston gave the 2026 [Linda and Charles Wilson Humanities in Medicine Lecture](#) on 9 April 2026 in the Great Plains Art Museum. The event was free and open to the public.

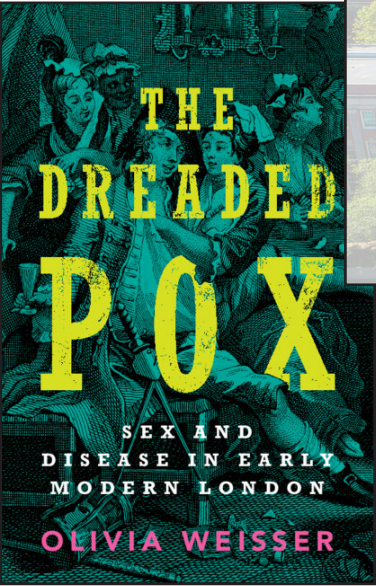
“The Dreaded Pox: Sex and Disease in Early Modern London” offered a history of London life from 1650-1750 from the point of view of a shameful sexually transmitted disease. A substantial number of Londoners contracted

venereal disease, yet we know relatively little about what it was like to live with it. The talk recovered everyday experiences of disease by turning away from medical institutions and learned writing and toward streets, shops, and homes where ordinary patients and healers interacted.

In particular, Weisser looked at how patients shopped for pox cures using addresses printed on over 700 advertisements. There was a substantial market for

treating the pox that included healers peddling pills and potions alongside non-medical retailers like bakers and grocers who sold treatments secretly out of their shops – the leading edge of a vast proprietary drug trade over a century earlier than historians presumed.

Weisser’s book *The Dreaded Pox* was published by [Cambridge University Press](#). Her previous book, *Ill Composed* (Yale University Press, 2015) was a finalist for the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians Book Award and short-listed for a British Medical Association Book Award. Her work has been supported by the National Endowment for



the Humanities, American Historical Association, and Huntington Library, among others.

Visit her [faculty webpage](#) to learn more.

Source: College of Arts and Sciences, “[Weisser to give talk on ‘The Dreaded Pox’ Apr. 9](#),” 22 January 2026

COLLEGE & EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR AWARDS

The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) is proud to recognize the faculty and staff whose work strengthens its mission in teaching, research, creative activity, and service. Their achievements reflect the dedication, innovation, and care that shape CAS and support the success of students and communities. The College celebrates these colleagues and thanks them for the many ways they advance the impact of CAS and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Awardees from the Department of History are listed below.

CAS Mentoring Award

Honors faculty or staff involved in exemplary mentoring activities that go above and beyond normally expected contributions.

Jeannette Eileen Jones

19th Century Studies, History, Ethnic Studies

College Distinguished Teaching Award

This award is coordinated by the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor. The [College Distinguished Teaching Award](#) recognizes faculty with consistently excellent teaching.

Dawne Y. Curry

History, Ethnic Studies

Katrina Jagodinsky

History

Sources: College of Arts and Sciences, “[Faculty and Staff Recognition 2025-2026](#),” 10 April 2026; Julie Kundhi | Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor, “[Faculty, staff honors announced by executive vice chancellor’s office](#),” 21 April 2026

PROMOTION TO PROFESSOR

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln has awarded promotion and/or tenure to 95 faculty in 2026. History faculty receiving

honors are listed below and on the [2026 Promotion and Tenure page](#).

Promoted to Professor

Katrina Jagodinsky, History

Sources: Julie Kundhi | Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor, “[95 faculty earn promotion, tenure honors](#),” 10 April 2026; College of Arts and Sciences, “[23 CAS faculty earn promotion, tenure honors](#),” 10 April 2026

Photo Credit: Jordan Opp | University Communication and Marketing



JOHN SIMON GUGGENHEIM FELLOW

The Board of Trustees of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation announced, on 14 April 2026, their appointment of the 101st class of Guggenheim Fellows. [Bedross Der Matossian](#), a historian of the modern Middle East at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, was awarded a 2026 fellowship in Near Eastern Studies.

Der Matossian, Professor of History and Hymen Rosenberg Professor in Judaic Studies, is among 223 distinguished individuals representing 55 scholarly disciplines and artistic fields, 97 academic institutions, 33 US states and the District of Columbia, three Canadian provinces, and eight countries beyond the United States and Canada. The fellows were chosen through a rigorous application and peer review process from a pool of nearly 5,000 applicants; the Class of 2026 Guggenheim Fellows was tapped based on both prior career achievement and exceptional promise.

The Guggenheim

Foundation has always been committed to awarding Fellowships at the highest level. As established in 1925 by founder Senator Simon Guggenheim, each Fellow receives a monetary stipend to pursue independent work at the highest level under “the freest possible conditions.” Since its founding, the Foundation has awarded nearly \$450 million in fellowships to more than 19,000 Fellows.



The fellowship will support Der Matossian’s latest project, “Victims of Empires: Mass Violence in the Caucasus and Eastern Anatolia, 1774–2024.”

“Our new class of Guggenheim Fellows is representative of the world’s best thinkers, innovators, and creators in art, science, and scholarship,” said Edward Hirsch, award-winning poet and President of the Guggenheim Foundation. “As the Foundation enters its second century and looks to the future, I feel confident that this new class will do bold and inspiring work, undaunted by the challenges ahead. We are honored to support their visionary contributions.”

Fellows’ projects grapple with timeless themes and timely issues. They explore the promise and perils of artificial intelligence, propose life-changing advancements in medical technology, unearth the historical roots of contemporary crises, and forge new directions in artistic expression.

“Professor Der Matossian’s selection as a Guggenheim Fellow is a well-deserved recognition of his outstanding and impactful scholarship,” said Pat Dussault, interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. “His contributions elevate both the Department of History and the college, and we are proud to see his excellence recognized on a national stage.”

At Nebraska, Der Matossian focuses on interethnic relations, political violence, and the late Ottoman Empire. His research explores patterns of communal conflict and coexistence, offering insight into both historical and contemporary issues in the region.

“I am currently undertaking my most ambitious project,” Der Matossian said. “Drawing on sources in eight languages, it examines two historically interconnected ‘shatter zones’ at the crossroads of Ottoman, Russian, and Persian imperial legacies.

“Through a longue durée analysis, I trace how imperial collapse and its unresolved aftermath produced recurring cycles of ethnic cleansing, deportation, and genocide – patterns that continue to shape the region today.”



Prof. Bedross Der Matossian was honored to attend the Guggenheim Fellowship reception organized by the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation at the Harvard Club of New York. It was a privilege to celebrate the extraordinary achievements of this year’s fellows and to be among a community dedicated to advancing creativity, scholarship, and innovation.

well as to my family in Lincoln, Jerusalem, Los Angeles, Yerevan, and Beirut; my friends and colleagues; and the scholars who wrote recommendation letters. Their support and guidance have been invaluable throughout my journey.”

Der Matossian joins the ranks of Husker faculty members previously recognized by the Guggenheim Foundation, including Xiao Cheng Zeng (2004)(Chemistry), Kwame Dawes (2012)(English), John Hibbing (2013)(Political Science), William G. Thomas III (2016)(History), and Amy Burnett (2020)(History).

Sources: Guggenheim Foundation, “[Announcing the 2026 Guggenheim Fellows](#),” 14 April 2026; Terri Pieper | Arts and Sciences, “[Der Matossian earns Guggenheim Fellowship](#),” 16 April 2026; NTV News, “[University of Nebraska’s Bedross Der Matossian wins 2026 Guggenheim fellowship](#),” 16 April 2026; University of Nebraska Lincoln, “[Der Matossian earns Guggenheim Fellowship for Middle East history](#),” 16 April 2026; Guest Contributor to Armenian Weekly, “[Bedross Der Matossian receives Guggenheim Fellowship](#),” 16 April 2026; University of Nebraska Press, “[Bedross Der Matossian Receives Guggenheim Fellowship](#),” 29 April 2026; Sean Hagewood | University Communication and Marketing, “[Nebraska in the national news: April 2026](#),” 1 May 2026

Photo Credit: Jordan Opp | University Communication and Marketing; Bedross Der Matossian via Facebook and X/ Twitter

Der Matossian also said, “Receiving this fellowship is both humbling and inspiring. It not only affirms the work I have devoted myself to over the years, but also provides me with the time, resources, and encouragement to continue pursuing ambitious projects that challenge me creatively and intellectually. I am profoundly grateful to the selection committee for this recognition, as

PLAGUES, PEOPLE, & PUBLIC HEALTH

Each week in the spring 2026 semester, Honors students gathered in a small classroom in Knoll Residential Center to unravel one of the greatest drivers shaping human history: disease. For these Honors students, their studies went beyond symptoms and treatments to include an understanding of people, societies, and the evolution of medicine.

Students in the Honors seminar “Plagues, People, and Public Health,” taught by [Dr. Angela Bolen](#) from the Department of History and the Humanities in Medicine program, learn about a different disease and trace it throughout history each class period. Bolen structures the class to gradually reveal how scientific knowledge has developed and how those discoveries are tied to the human experience.

“It’s plagues, and then it’s people,” Bolen said. “The point is to understand how these disease agents affect human society.”

This human-centered approach is furthered by class discussions about medical ethics. For example, students examine how the Nuremberg trials reshaped medicine and emphasized accountability. Bolen said these discussions “help humanize medicine and bring the people back into it.”

Much of the classwork involves engaging with both primary and secondary sources to inform their debates. “You cannot learn any of this without talking about it,” Bolen said. “A lot of the class involves presenting information, asking questions, and then just working through it together.”



At its core, the course is part of the Humanities in Medicine program, which aims to highlight the emotional and cultural dimensions of healthcare. Bolen said one of her primary goals for the course was to challenge stereotypes about medicine.

“Medicine is not just science,” she said. “It’s feelings, history, perspectives. Diseases do not just exist in nature; they shape how societies see themselves.”

The course’s unique position as an Honors seminar plays a key role in making that exploration possible. Smaller class sizes and highly engaged students allow for deeper, more nuanced discussions. Bolen said Honors students bring a level of curiosity and willingness to tackle difficult topics that elevate the course.

“The discussions never fall flat,” she said. “Students are not afraid to ask hard questions or sit with complex and sometimes uncomfortable ideas.”

The class fosters a personal learning environment through meaningful and personalized engagement between Bolen and the students. Bolen said she works to understand each student as an individual with their own experience, rather than just a name on a list.

“I love this class because it makes learning interactive,” second-year actuarial science major Ruby Barger said. “Dr. Bolen values engagement and individual interactions, which makes learning feel very personal.”

Bolen first proposed the course during the COVID-19 pandemic, drawing on her long-standing interest in the history of medicine through a human lens. “I had been wanting to teach a class like this for a long time, and during COVID it felt especially relevant,” she said.

“Plagues, People, and Public Health” offers more

than a history of illnesses. It provides students with a deep understanding of how medicine continues to evolve in relation to the human experience. For students like Barger, this experience meant taking ownership of her learning on a personal level, which meant a transformation in how she saw the history of medicine.

Source: College of Arts and Sciences, “[Honors course puts human stories at the heart of medicine](#),” 6 May 2026

Photo Credit: University Communication and Marketing

HONORABLE MENTION FOR BOOK AWARD

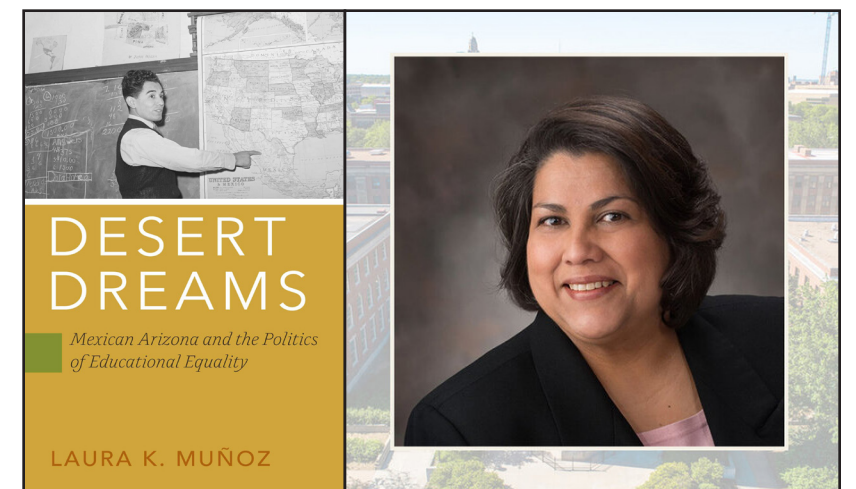
[Laura K. Muñoz](#), associate professor of history and director of the Institute for Ethnic Studies, was awarded Honorable Mention by the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies for *Desert Dreams: Mexican Arizona and the Politics of Educational Equality*.

The [book award](#) recognizes an outstanding new book in the field of Chicana and Chicano Studies and was celebrated in April 2026 at the organization’s annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas.

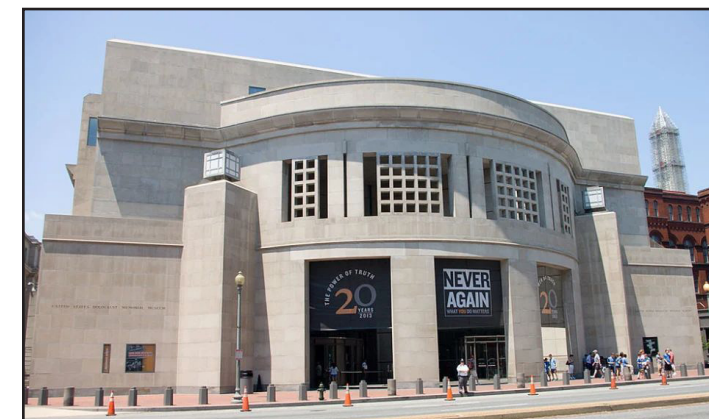
Published by [University of Pennsylvania Press](#), the book chronicles seventy-five years of Mexican American efforts to attain educational equality in Arizona, from its territorial period in the nineteenth century to the post-World War II era.

Sources: Laura Muñoz; College of Arts and

Sciences, “[Muñoz earns Honorable Mention from NACCS](#),” 14 May 2026; University Communication and Marketing, “[Achievements | Honors, appointments and publications for June 5](#),” 5 June 2026



SENIOR SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE APPOINTMENT



[Gerald Steinacher](#), James A. Rawley Professor of History, has been invited to serve as the 2028-29 J. B. and Maurice C. Shapiro Senior Scholar-in-Residence at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. He will work on a biography of Alois Hudal. This prestigious fellowship enables the Museum to bring a distinguished scholar to conduct innovative Holocaust research and to share it widely through lectures, seminars, and public engagement over the course of one academic year. It is regarded as a major honor in Holocaust studies, recognizing both significant scholarly achievement and sustained contributions to teaching and public scholarship.

The appointment marks a full-circle moment for Steinacher, who began his U.S. academic career as a postdoctoral fellow at the Museum in 2006 after arriving from Italy. Calling the Museum a “gold standard” institution in the field, he said he is proud to represent the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Department of History

during his residency.

Sources: Gerald Steinacher; University Communication and Marketing, “[Achievements | Honors, appointments and publications for May 15](#),” 15 May 2026; [ushmm.org/research/opportunities-for-academics/lectures/shapiro](#)

JAPANESE HALL COMMUNITY DIGITIZATION

Donna D. Anderson, research assistant professor of history at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Japanese Hall and History Project Advisory Council member, was at the Japanese Hall at the Legacy of the Plains Museum in Gering 3-6 June 2026 to scan photographs, documents, and books related to the tri-state Japanese American community for an open-access digital archive.

the digitization efforts were able to reach out to Anderson at danderson79@nebraska.edu.



The Japanese Hall was the center of digitizing efforts led by Prof. Donna D. Anderson, Japanese Hall and History Project Advisory Council member.

Hosted and supported by the university’s Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, the digital archive will enable community members and the broader public to explore Asian American histories of the Midwest and Great Plains.

Digitization opens opportunities to extend engagement with the hall’s materials and relieves the demand on docents and volunteers for additional context. It also adds a safeguard to the hall’s materials by ensuring digital copies are kept safe in case of item deterioration, natural disaster, or theft.

In addition to digitizing materials, Anderson conducted oral history interviews of the sansei (third generation) or any other Japanese American community members to be added to the digital archive. The archive will launch to the public in June 2028 at the Japanese Hall’s 100th-anniversary celebration.

The digitization project builds on Anderson’s existing research documenting, archiving, and analyzing histories of Asian American communities in the region. In fall 2025, Anderson organized and hosted an event with the Center for Great Plains Studies and Nebraska Public Media titled “Rescuing Japanese American Histories of Nebraska” (see p. 11). The event drew 100-plus people, further highlighting the demand and desire to chronicle Asian American histories of the heartland.

Those interested in contributing materials to scan, recording an oral history interview, or volunteering with

Seeking a deeper understanding of Asian American history, an Omaha-raised Vietnamese American found more than answers – she found connections and a platform to share those stories with others.

Prof. Donna Anderson is currently on a mission to digitize historic materials related to the Japanese American community in the tri-state area.

Her goal is to build a digital archive of Asian American communities, currently focused on communities in the Midwest and Great Plains, that’s open access and free for public use.

The week of 3 June 2026, Anderson and her team worked at the Legacy of the Plains to digitize its archives and record the history of Japanese Americans. It was the first site

that Anderson had worked with, partly, she said, because of the support of Vickie Sakurada Schaepler, Japanese Hall chair and coordinator, and executive director Dave Wolf.

Anderson herself is also connected to the Japanese Hall project, serving on its advisory council.

“There’s also such a plethora of historical materials here that I wish people knew more about,” she said.

Anderson and her team worked through different collections and documented them on-site at Legacy of the Plains. When they got back to Lincoln, they were able to process them and get their collections ready for a public archive.

“Because what’s the point of documenting and writing about it (and) researching if nobody hears about it, right?” Anderson said.

Anderson’s team of partners includes Andy Jewell, Laura Weakly, and Chad Koch from the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Their involvement makes Anderson’s work a joint partnership within the university to build the archive. Other team members include Regan Nanbara and You-Jin Kim.

Anderson plans to work with other locations for digitization, though specific plans haven’t been announced as she works to receive permissions.

“Part of this is making sure that the communities we work with have full rights to the materials they’re contributing,” she said. “I want to ensure that we build those relationships of trust and reciprocity.”

While at Legacy of the Plains, Anderson said many people from the area, even as far as Wyoming and Denver, brought their own items to be added to the collection.

“We’re doing our best to manage all the materials,” she said.



Prof. Donna Anderson (right) looks over artifacts brought in by Sharon Bartlett (left) at Legacy of the Plains on 3 June 2026.

When Anderson goes to locations to make a digital archive, there are several tools she works with.

Some artifacts will be paper-like artifacts that her team inputs with a basic scanner. Other devices she uses are still scanners, but are for artifacts that aren’t paper, while others are tent-like and diffuse the light for sensitive materials.

“Glare is a huge issue when you’re dealing with photographs and historic materials,” Anderson said, hence the diffuser tents.

Another aspect of the digitization process during her time in Gering was gathering oral histories. She recorded those stories, interviewed people, and added those to the collection, as well.

“In the evening I’m sitting down with people, and I’m having conversations,” Anderson said. “Print material can disappear easily. It falls apart, it disintegrates. People throw away things. But people telling their own stories, recalling them, that passes down.”

She added that that part is fun, because it feels like she’s simply having coffee and conversation with a friend.

Her first visit to the Japanese Hall at Legacy of the Plains was in 2022.

“The exhibit hadn’t been placed,” Anderson said. “It was still empty, so to be able to see what it was at one point in



Prof. You-Jin Kim shows Profs. Donna Anderson and Andy Jewell the LiDAR scans he took of the Japanese Hall site at Legacy of the Plains.

time, to like where it is right now, is really powerful and impactful.”

Her personal goal is to make the Japanese Hall exhibit more accessible.

“Gering and Scottsbluff are really special places, and I wish more people came out to the Legacy of the Plains Museum and got to see the Japanese Hall in person,” she said. “The reality is that not a lot of people come through, especially in this kind of moment when people are strained for resources, time, all of that.”

She added that making the materials available to the public online could help inspire some of that interest for people to make personal visits to the Japanese Hall.

As a former high school history teacher and now professor, she imagines the online collection being added to the Nebraska history curriculum.

“I always think about like what it means to share these histories with students, too,” she said.

Sources: Donna Anderson | History, “[Digitization efforts coming to Japanese Hall June 3-6,](#)” 5 May 2026; Megan Kelley | Star-Herald, “[Preserving Voices Across Generations: Nebraska professor works to preserve Japanese American history,](#)” 5 June 2026

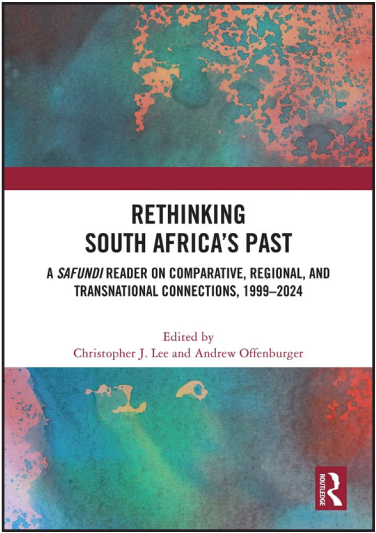
Photo Credit: University Communication and Marketing; Megan Kelley

participated in the Office of Research and Innovation’s year-long Research Development Fellows Program (RDFP), presented at three conferences, hosted eight New Books Network podcast episodes, and was interviewed for an Iowa History curricular program, “Think Like A Historian.”

Dr. Angela Bolen, lecturer in the Department of History, continued her work at the intersection of medieval Christianity, gender, embodiment, and the history of medicine.

Bolen received the Department of History Distinguished Teaching Award, accompanied by a \$2,000 research stipend, in recognition of her teaching. Her courses this year spanned medieval history, medical humanities, women’s and gender studies, and the history of medicine, including “The History of Medicine in the Western World” and “Saints, Witches, and Madwomen.”

[Africa and Covid-19](#) in September 2025. She was extremely glad to have an article that she wrote during her Fulbright year in South Africa be chosen as one of the best in *Safundi’s* 25-year history and was reprinted in one of the four anthologies that celebrate the journal: *Rethinking South Africa’s Past: A Safundi Reader on Comparative, Regional, and Transnational Connections, 1999-2024*.



FACULTY, LECTURER, & POST-DOC NOTES

Prof. Donna D. Anderson continues her research on Asian American communities in the Midwest and Great Plains. This year’s research focused specifically on the Japanese American community in the tri-state area of Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming. In collaboration with the Center for Great Plains Studies, she organized and moderated “[‘Rescuing’ Japanese American Histories of Nebraska,](#)” (pictured right) which brought together community descendants, scholars, and Nebraska Public Media for a panel in November 2025 (see p. 11). In June 2026, she led a [digitization effort at the Japanese Hall](#) at the Legacy of the Plains Museum in Gering, Nebraska, which garnered participants from across the state and California, Hawaii, Colorado, and Wyoming



who contributed materials and recorded oral histories for her forthcoming digital archive (see pp. 26-28; pictured above and left).

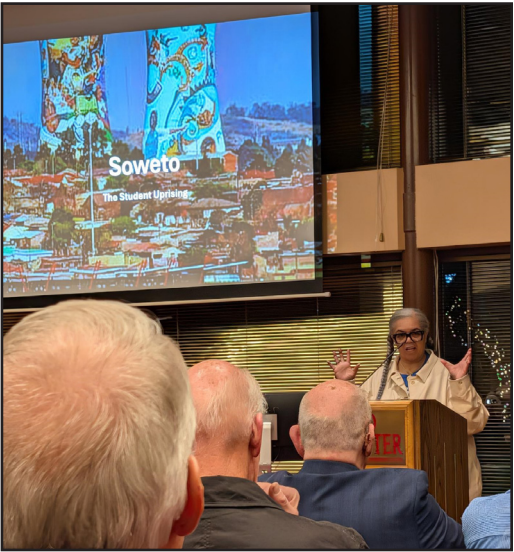
In addition to working on her first monograph, Anderson wrote public-facing pieces analyzing [anti-Asian land laws in the 21st century](#) and a [supplementary piece](#) explaining their roots in the 19th and 20th centuries. She also

Her research also moved forward in several significant ways. Bolen’s book manuscript, *Bodies and Blood: Women’s Wounds, Masculine Virtue, and the Medieval Virago*, is currently in contract negotiations with Bloomsbury Academic. The book investigates medieval holy women, wounds, blood, menstruation, medical theory, and the religious construction of female sanctity and masculine virtue.

Bolen also submitted the chapter “Amenorrhea and the Medieval Holy Woman: A Biological and Religious Interpretation of Menstruation in the Middle Ages” for the edited collection *Medieval Menstrual Matters: Power, Purity, and Bodies in Global Contexts*. She presented this research at the American Historical Association Annual Meeting in Chicago in January 2026 (see pp. 15-16). Together, these projects extend Bolen’s work on medieval medicine, women’s bodies, religious authority, and the biological meanings attached to sanctity.

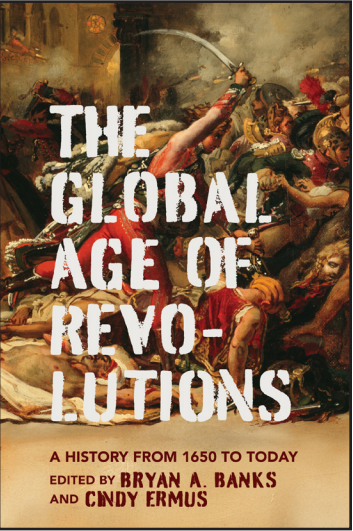


Dr. Angela Bolen stopping at Clifford’s Tower in York, England before she heads back to the archives.



Prof. Dawne Curry speaks on Soweto for her Pre-Performance Talk at the Lied Center for Performing Arts on 13 November 2025. Photo Credit: Carolyn Twomey

In February 2026, **Prof. Cindy Ermus** and co-editor Dr. Bryan Banks (CSU) published their edited volume, *The Global Age of Revolutions: A History from 1650 to Today*, with the [University of Virginia Press](#). The book’s contributors, which include Ermus and Banks, place the revolutionary era within a larger and more fluid context of global interconnections to encourage a more nuanced and expansive conception of revolution



across time and space. Ermus also continues to work on her co-authored book (with Claire Edington, UCSD), tentatively titled *Epidemics: A Global History*, which is under contract with University of California Press (2027), and on her chapter contribution, titled *Epidemics and Populations*, for volume 4 of the multi-volume collection *The Cambridge History of Medicine*.

This year, Ermus organized and hosted the 2026 annual Wilson Lecture in Humanities in Medicine featuring Dr. Olivia Weisser (UMass Boston)(see pp. 20-21), as well as the Humanities in Medicine Virtual Fall Lecture, featuring Catherine Burns (fall 2025)(see p. 10). Ermus was also invited to give a talk for the Göttingen Enlightenment Club of Interdisciplinary Scholars, and she participated in conference sessions for the annual meetings of the American Historical Association and the Urban History Association, where she accepted her book award for *The Great Plague Scare of 1720*.

Ermus is director of the Humanities in Medicine program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and she continues to serve as co-series editor for the France Overseas series of the University of Nebraska Press.

This year, **Prof. James A. Garza** has continued to prepare his forthcoming manuscript for publication. Tentatively titled *Channeling the Waters: Environment, Community, and the Forging of State Power in the Valley of Mexico: 1884-1910*, the study explores how the Mexican government, in partnership with the British transnational engineering firm Pearson and Son, designed and built a hydraulic public works system – the Gran Canal – in the Valley of Mexico to prevent flooding and improve sanitation in Mexico City. While the project’s overall goal aimed to modernize the region, it had profound and lasting consequences: it physically reshaped part of the valley’s landscape and disrupted the daily lives and traditions of the basin’s inhabitants, some of whom resisted violently while others negotiated and adapted to the advances of capitalism and technology, as well as ecological change.

In April 2026, Garza discussed his research via Zoom to the University of Chicago Mexican Studies in a research seminar titled “Water and Power in the Valley of Mexico.” He also presented a paper based on his forthcoming book at the annual meeting of the Rocky Mountain Council for Latin American Studies Conference which took place in April 2026 in Puebla, Mexico. Additionally, the Institute for Ethnic Studies invited Mikael D. Wolfe, Associate Professor from Stanford University, to review Garza’s preliminary manuscript through a workshop for faculty and graduate students. This workshop was made possible by the generosity of the Institute’s donors. Finally, a lecture taught by Garza in February 2026 on the notorious Chicago Gilded Age killer H. H. Holmes, appeared on the C-SPAN series titled “Lectures in History” in May 2026 (see p. 16).

Dr. Jennifer Garza, lecturer, is the Archival Research Coordinator for the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia in Lincoln.

Prof. Vanessa B. Gorman has been focusing on pedagogy. At Colgate University, she gave a paper on Reading Ancient Greek in the Digital Age at a conference for innovative language teaching. In her senior class on the Roman Revolution, she created a “game” that focused on the aftermath of the assassination of Caesar. Students were assigned historical characters whom they researched in the early part of the course and for whom they developed both factional and individual goals. They then spent the last five weeks negotiating and orating, holding senate meetings, army rallies, public assemblies, and a trial in order to secure the grain supply, shore up the borders, eliminate traitors, and decide the future of Rome’s government. In a different, freshman-level course on Powerful Queens in World History, Gorman embraced the college goals of promoting involvement and feelings of inclusion for beginning students by having them develop a game that demonstrated the knowledge they learned in this course. The resulting product, May the Best Queen Win, was a combination of Risk and D&D. Students researched individuals and made character sheets. They collaborated on rules and modifications of rules. They divided themselves into teams and invoked their collective creativity to produce a pedagogical game that taught history while also developing friendships and making the students look forward to coming to class.

Outside of class, Gorman has continued as chair of the Commencement Committee (about 10 years now) and, outside of school, has been deeply engaged in dog rescue, fostering, and rehoming.

Prof. Angel M. Hinzo is happy to announce the publication of her article, “Not Your ‘Queen,’ Not Your ‘Sq**w’”: Reclaiming Ho-Chunk Histories of Hapoguwiga and Challenging Settler Memory” in the Spring 2026 issue of the *Native American and Indigenous Studies Journal*. The issue is available through [Project Muse](#) and the



[University of Minnesota Press](#). This article discusses the Ho-Chunk leader Hapoguwiga (Glory of the Morning) who led her village in present-day Wisconsin, during a pivotal era of political negotiation with the French. Hinzo discusses how settler histories diminished Hapoguwiga’s accomplishments to shape her into a historical figure acceptable to U.S. nation-building history. Additionally, in summer 2025, Hinzo’s co-authored chapter “Illuminating the Bright Spots of Our Educational Pathways: A Gift from Us to Our Younger Selves” was published in the volume *Indigenous Voices of Girls and Women in Educational Spaces: Celebrating Presence*.

Earlier in spring 2026, Hinzo participated in the First Friday opening of the [Great Plains Art Museum’s exhibit](#) “With a Little Help from Our Friends: New Perspectives on the Collection.” This exhibit features short responses written by 20 Great Plains Fellows reflecting on artwork from the Great Plains Art Museum’s permanent collection. Hinzo selected the artwork *The Originators... still* by Edmundo “Gahi’gezhiNga” Encinas (Omaha Tribe of Nebraska). The exhibit is on display in the lower-level gallery until 8 August 2026 and you can view the exhibit catalog, which features the Fellows’ reflections, on the Center for Great Plains Studies’s [website](#). Hinzo organized a panel with contributors from the exhibit for the 2026 Annual Western History Association Conference in October. The roundtable will share their experiences selecting artwork, crafting their reflections, and discuss the importance of public history and the arts while celebrating the Center for Great Plains Studies’s 50th year anniversary.

Prof. Margaret D. Jacobs is premiering her hour-long documentary, *The Land Returns*, in August 2026 in Lincoln. It will air nationally on PBS in November 2026. The film, which Jacobs began eight years ago, regards grassroots Land Back efforts to return land to Native peoples. Jacobs has been serving as the Director of the Center for Great Plains Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for the last six years. The Center’s current signature project is the [Walking in the Footsteps of our Ancestors Project](#), a Mellon Foundation-funded effort to develop new commemorations in southeast Nebraska that reconnect the Otoe-Missouria Tribe to their homeland and engage non-Natives in the region with the Tribe’s history and culture. Project activities include a shared garden of traditional food crops and ceremonial plants at Prairie Pines in Lincoln, an annual Otoe-Missouria Day celebration, art exhibitions at the Great Plains Art Museum, and a mural at the Lincoln Indian Center. Future plans include the building of a ceremonial ground (or dance arbor) at a new park in Lincoln and new interpretive signage and historical markers in the region. You can learn more about the project through the “[Talking in the Footsteps of our Ancestors](#)” podcast. This project builds on Jacobs’s latest research focus on truth and reconciliation, including her 2021 book, *After One Hundred Winters: In Search of Reconciliation on America’s Stolen Lands* ([Princeton University Press](#)). Jacobs will be stepping down as director

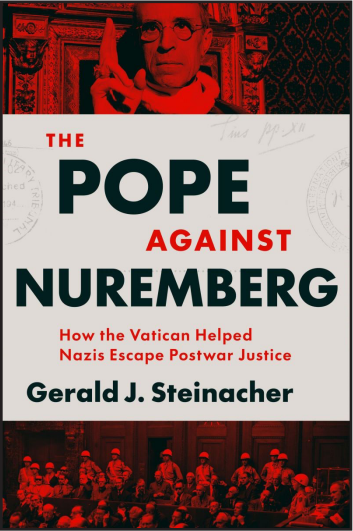
of the Center and moving into a half-time position for the next two years. She will focus her work on the Walking in the Footsteps project, a new book project called “Playing Pioneer Woman,” and touring *The Land Returns*.

Prof. Jeannette Eileen Jones received the Voices of Impact award, but because the event was rescheduled due to a major snowstorm on 20 February 2026, she was unable to participate in the interview-style panel. The event, whose full title was [Voices of Impact: Leaders Shaping Modern Nebraska](#), included local leaders in art, academia, social entrepreneurship, political activism, and well-being; Jones was recognized as a historian and scholar illuminating African American history, race, and global connections through teaching, research, and mentorship.

Further regarding her scholarship, in April 2026, at the University at Buffalo (SUNY), she presented the [Third Annual Wozniak Lecture](#): “To Re-Pay to Africa that Heavy Debt: Negotiating American National Guilt and the African Question, 1807-1865.”

For service, Jones won Chapter Advisor of the Year for National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Prof. Gerald J. Steinacher’s 2026 began in an exceptionally productive fashion, with one major monograph and two edited volumes scheduled for publication in the summer and fall. His new book, *The Pope Against Nuremberg*, will be published by [NYU Press](#) in November 2026. Drawing on more than a decade of archival research across Europe and the United States – including newly opened Vatican archives – the monograph examines Catholic responses to Allied postwar justice. It explores reactions within the Catholic Church to the Nuremberg trials and related war crimes proceedings, as well as broader questions of guilt, reconciliation, and justice in the aftermath of war and genocide.



During 2025-2026, Steinacher also completed two major edited collections. Together with Prof. Ari Kohen (Political Science), he co-edited *Fascist Legacies: Far-Right Ideologies Then and Now*, forthcoming with the [University of Nebraska Press](#). In addition, he co-edited the German-language volume *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz 1918-1945: Zwischen humanitärem Anspruch und Wirklichkeit* [*The German Red Cross 1918-1945: Between Humanitarian*



Aspiration and Reality], forthcoming with Schöningh (October 2026), which explores the history of the German Red Cross during the Nazi dictatorship, the Holocaust, and the Second World War. With these publications, Steinacher’s scholarly output now reaches eighteen books.

Steinacher remained highly active internationally throughout 2025 and 2026, presenting research and delivering invited lectures at major conferences in Holocaust, fascism, church, and contemporary European studies. One highlight was his keynote address at the International NORFAS Conference on Postwar Fascism at Uppsala University (Sweden) in June 2025 (see p. 8). In October 2025, Steinacher was invited to speak at the University of Colorado Boulder



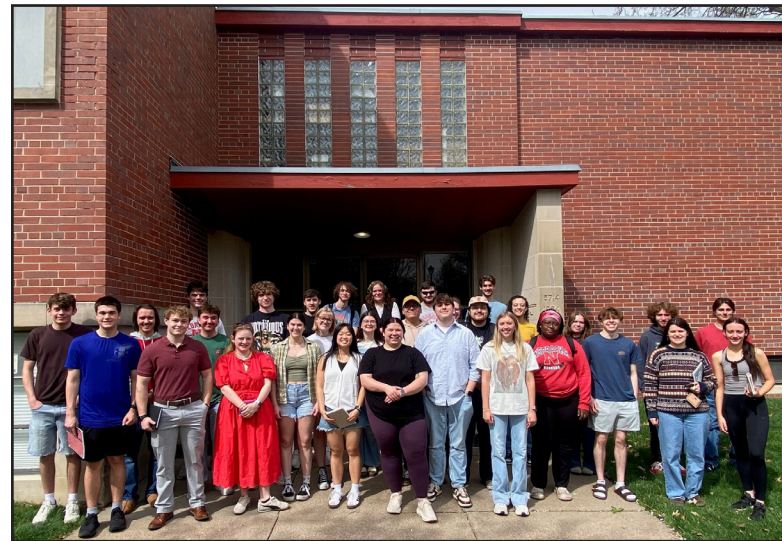
Prof. Gerald Steinacher at Uppsala University during the NORFAS Conference on Postwar Fascism in June 2025, pictured in front of the university’s historic main building in Uppsala.

about his latest research on the Vatican and postwar justice, including a colloquium with graduate students. He greatly enjoyed the visit, with the nearby mountains providing an additional highlight of the trip. In February 2026, he was also honored to participate in the Joseph and Rebecca Meyerhoff Annual Lecture,

“Landscapes of the Holocaust: Buried History in Eastern Europe,” organized by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in cooperation with the University of South Dakota.

In recognition of his contributions to Holocaust and European history, Prof. Steinacher was invited to serve as the 2028-2029 J.B. and Maurice C. Shapiro Senior Scholar-in-Residence at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. (see pp. 25-26).

While in residence at the Holocaust Museum, Steinacher will continue work on a new major monograph about the Catholic Church and the Nazi regime. At the same time, he continues to supervise four Ph.D. students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and serves as advisor to an additional



Students from Prof. Gerald Steinacher’s course HIST 339: The Holocaust during a visit to Tifereth Israel Synagogue (Lincoln) in May 2026. The visit provided students with an opportunity to engage with Jewish history, religious traditions, and Holocaust remembrance beyond the classroom setting.

doctoral student at Harvard University. He remains deeply engaged in collaborative scholarship and is currently co-editing, together with Prof. Ari Kohen, the volume *Postwar Justice: War Crimes Trials from Nuremberg to Bucha* (University of Nebraska Press, forthcoming 2027).

Steinacher remains deeply engaged in professional service within Holocaust studies and modern European history. He serves on executive boards, academic councils, editorial and fellowship committees, and acts as a consultant and external reviewer for academic programs in Europe and the United States. Steinacher is also co-editor of the University of Nebraska Press book series *Contemporary Holocaust Studies* and Associate Editor of *Contemporary Church History Quarterly*.

RETIREMENTS: TIM BORSTELMANN & TIMOTHY R. MAHONEY

On behalf of Tim Borstelmann, E.N. and Katherine Thompson Emeritus Professor of Modern World History

Dr. Gary J. Simpson is a retired U.S. Marine Corps lieutenant colonel and Lincoln native. He recently completed a Ph.D. at Tufts University’s Fletcher School and writes on service, leadership, and U.S. national security.

Most retirement ceremonies I’ve attended were for Marines. This one was for a teacher, and it landed differently.

Thomas “Tim” Borstelmann spent more than two decades teaching history at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I traveled to Boulder, Colorado, for his retirement dinner. Tim and his family moved there in 2024, and he finished his remaining teaching obligations remotely. The story is still Nebraska. Fourteen of us gathered: family; colleagues; former students; and old friends. Tim didn’t know I would be there until I walked in. At brunch the next morning, a Sunday *New York Times* lay open in his living room, proof that retirement hasn’t dulled his curiosity.

I met Tim in my last semester at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, in 2004, before I commissioned as a Marine officer. I enrolled in his course on U.S. history after World War II, expecting a solid elective. I left with a new way of seeing the world, and my place in it.

Tim didn’t teach history as trivia or nostalgia. He treated it as a craft. Read closely. Argue honestly. Write clearly. Revise. One line from his take-home final instructions has followed me ever since: “Avoid vague and unsubstantiated claims (you are trying to persuade a skeptical but open-minded reader).” I carried that sentence far from Lincoln

– on counterterror deployments in Iraq and the southern Philippines, and later into speechwriting and intelligence briefings for senior leaders at the Pentagon. Tim taught with chalk and an outline on the blackboard, as if to say: slow down; follow the chain of reasoning; and do the work.

After graduation, his influence continued to expand. Over the years, he became the professor I stayed in touch with from stateside posts to overseas tours and combat deployments. When I wrestled with whether graduate school was worth it, he didn’t just say “go.” He made me believe I could belong there. That encouragement helped carry me to a master’s degree abroad and, eventually, a Ph.D. in international relations, which I completed shortly before I retired from the military last year.

He also treated Lincoln like a place where the world should show up. Through his work with the University’s E.N. Thompson Forum on World Issues, he helped bring big debates to Nebraska. He once told me, more or less, that if you want to write well, you have to read good writing. I’ve heard that voice in my head for years. It’s one reason I became a faithful reader of long-form journalism. Small habits compound.

Tim isn’t the only teacher who mattered to me. I can still name Lincoln Public Schools teachers who showed care, demanded effort, or sparked interests. Tim stands out because he stayed present across the decades. He kept asking questions. He kept offering counsel. He kept reminding me that learning isn’t a phase of life. It’s a way of life.

That matters when you think about what young adults were being asked to do in 2004. During the semester I took Tim’s class, a fellow University of Nebraska-Lincoln student I had



known, Edward Iwan, was killed in Iraq. Years later, after I retired, I visited Ed’s grave in Albion.

Standing there on the hillside, with Nebraska fields stretching out beyond the cemetery, I found myself thinking about service and sacrifice, and about classrooms. About how the country forms people, and how teachers shape a mind before adulthood hardens it.

Teachers shape how students meet the world. They teach habits of mind: clarity; humility; curiosity. Those pay off in public life. That’s civic infrastructure.

For a while, I assumed I might become a teacher someday. Retirement from the military has made that question feel both more open and more complicated. Watching Tim mark the end of his career reminded me of something

By Timothy R. Mahoney

Timothy R. Mahoney Retires After Forty Year Career at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Timothy R. Mahoney, Professor of History, retired at the end of the 2025-2026 academic year after a career of forty years at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. As a scholar and a teacher, he taught almost two hundred classes from undergraduate survey courses to graduate seminars in United States History, Nineteenth Century Studies, Urban History, Regional History, and Historical Theory and Historiography. He taught several thousand students over the years. Mahoney published a “trilogy” of books (with a fourth book due after retirement), an edited volume, numerous articles on the development of the American middle class in the nineteenth century urban America and the Middle west. He was director of the digital project “Gilded Age Plains City.” Professor Mahoney made significant contributions to the academic fields of urban, social, gender, and regional history. He has taught in Poland on a Fulbright Award and at Hannover, Germany through a University of Nebraska-Lincoln exchange program. He also received a year-long NEH grant to work at the Newberry Library, as well as several other external and internal grants to pursue his research at archives across the United States and the United Kingdom. He was also the Executive Secretary of the Urban History Association 2000-2004, during which he initiated the successful biennial Urban History Conference. He also served as the Director of the Plains Humanities Alliance from 2003 through 2007.

simple: the best teachers don’t just deliver content. They multiply capability over years and miles, often far beyond what they ever see.

At the end of the night, Tim said he would remember that evening on his last day. Then, in classic Tim fashion, he worked a personal anecdote about every person in the room into his remarks. I believe him. I’m grateful for what he has already written into the lives of his students, including me and many others.

Thanks, Tim. Well done.

Source: Gary J. Simpson | Lincoln Journal Star, “The UNL teacher who taught me how to think,” 25 February 2026

Prof. Mahoney at a recent Humanities in Medicine event



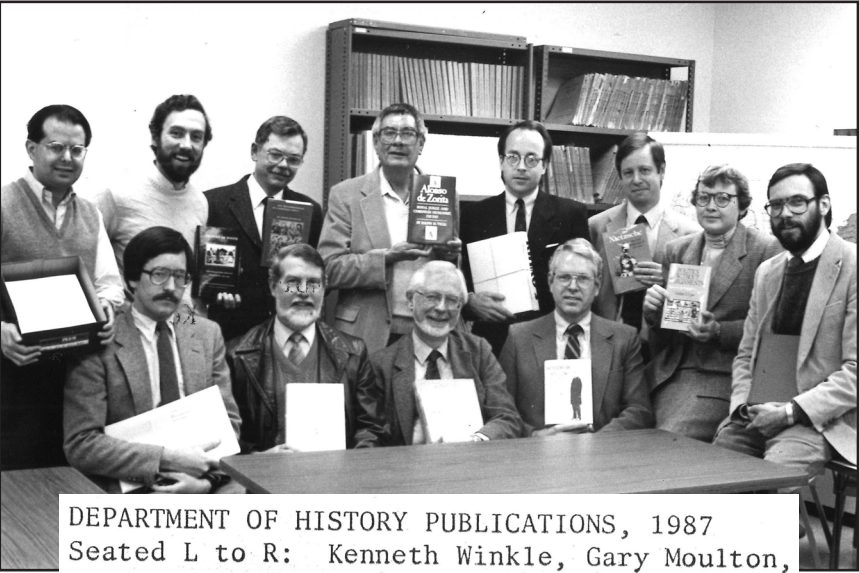
Tim’s wife, Gosia Mahoney, standing to his immediate right, who received her Ph.D. in geosciences at UNL during the same week, “crashed” the event 😊

On 5 May 2026, members of the Department of History gathered at Hub Cafe in Lincoln, to celebrate Professor Mahoney’s retirement. Department Chair James D. Le Sueur thanked Professor Mahoney for his many years of service and presented him with a gift of cash and a generous gift card at a local bookstore. In response, Professor Mahoney thanked Professor Le Sueur and then gave a short colloquial speech. He thanked the members of the department and wished them well in expanding the

department after his retirement. He also thanked them for unanimously voting to grant him Emeritus Professor status. Finally, he expressed his optimism on the future of history and the humanities and assured his colleagues that though he will be retired from teaching, he will continue to be an historian and an advocate of the critical importance of the study of history and the humanities in our world today.

“From the Archives”

In his files Professor Mahoney found a photo from his second year in the department. In 1987 the department had the incredible coincidence of a dozen of the twenty-one members of the department have a book manuscript either accepted for publication (Mahoney), in press (Winkle and Cahan), or published (all the others). This group photo was on the front page of Bulletin Board, A weekly publication for faculty and staff, Vol. 52, No. 19, p. 1, 14 December 1987. The headline of the article was “History Profs turn out spate of books.” With Mahoney’s retirement, only one person in the photo is still in the department.



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY PUBLICATIONS, 1987
Seated L to R: Kenneth Winkle, Gary Moulton, Frederick Luebke, Lloyd Ambrosius
Standing L to R: David Cahan, Dane Kennedy, David Nicholas, Ralph Vigil, Timothy Mahoney, Peter Bergmann, Esther Cope, Thomas Mackey

GRADUATE STUDENT NOTES

Emily Binder successfully defended her Master’s portfolio in April 2026. Her research focused on legal belonging and whiteness in Kearney, Nebraska’s Lebanese community. As a part of Binder’s portfolio, she utilized net.create to create a network graph of the early 20th century Lebanese immigrants to Nebraska. She is hoping to expand this graph in the future to include Lebanese immigrants across the Midwest. In addition to finishing her master’s degree, Binder served as the HGSA president for the 2025-2026 school year, and is working to organize the 2026 James A. Rawley Conference in the Humanities. Binder also received a Harry Thompson Prize from Augustana University’s Dakota Conference for a paper she presented in April 2024 on the role of Czech and Irish Nationalism in settling Nebraska. With support from the department’s Belousek Fellowship, Binder will be continuing her study of the Czech language at the Summer School of Slavonic Studies in Olomouc, Czech Republic. She is hoping to investigate the role of whiteness in the lives of Eastern European and West Asian immigrants to the US in the

early 20th century for her dissertation. Binder is also finishing her second year as a research and teaching assistant for the US Law and Race Initiative by working with the graduate students who are a part of

Photo Credit: The Equality Before the Law homepage



the initiative’s fellowship program to discuss using digital humanities and legal history to contribute to an open educational resource (see pp. 14-15). As a part of her work with the US Law and Race Initiative, Binder is also co-writing an article on the Initiative’s website, teachinglegalhistory.unl.edu, interventions in teaching legal history.

During the 2025-2026 academic year, **Kaitlyn Cannady** completed her second year in the Ph.D. program while continuing her research on Holocaust memory and European history. In summer 2025, she received a Title VIII Fellowship to participate in an intensive Czech language program through Indiana University. Throughout the academic year, Cannady worked as a Graduate Teaching Assistant alongside her coursework. In spring 2026, she presented her paper, “Scholarship and Memorialization as Restorative Justice: Czech Victims of the Nazi ‘Euthanasia’ Program,” at the Czech and Slovak Studies Workshop at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (see pp. 5-6). She received funding from the Harris Center, the Forsythe Scholarship through the Department of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, and a Travel Award from the History Department to support research and study at Hartheim Castle in Linz, Austria. While in Austria, Cannady also attended the Austrian Studies Association Conference in Salzburg, where she connected with fellow scholars, exchanged ideas, and received valuable feedback on her developing research. Cannady was further supported by the Victor and Nita F. Chab Czech Heritage Fund from the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, which enabled her participation in the Summer School for Slavonic Studies in Olomouc, Czech Republic. The year offered exciting opportunities to connect language study, teaching, travel, and research in meaningful ways.

Julian Gillilan has had yet another busy and productive year in the doctoral program! In October 2025, Julian presented a paper at the European Studies conference at the University of Nebraska-Omaha. He also attended the German Historical Institute’s West Coast Germanists Workshop at the University of Colorado-Boulder in March 2026 and the Czech Studies Workshop at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in April 2026 (see pp. 5-6). Alongside attending conferences and workshops, Julian finished his coursework in the fall of 2025 and worked as a departmental TA. He also volunteer-taught an OLLI course titled *What Is Antisemitism?*

Julian passed his comprehensive exams at the end of the spring semester and is now a doctoral candidate. He plans to complete his dissertation prospectus in the coming months. Like the past few summers, he is working again as a translator and tour guide at the American Historical Society for Germans from Russia. In addition to this, Julian will attend the Austrian Studies Association conference this May at the Paris Lodron Universität Salzburg in Austria, where he began his graduate work in 2017 as a yearlong exchange student from BGSU. With the generous support of the department’s Belousek fund, Julian is also able to study intensive Czech for the second time at Palacký University’s monthlong Summer School for Slavonic Studies in Olomouc, Czech Republic. Julian received a Fulbright-Mach fellowship to Austria for the 2026-2027 academic year. He will conduct dissertation research in various Central European archives as an affiliate of the University of Vienna and Central European University.



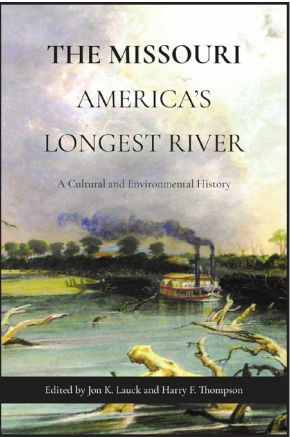
The southern and western side of Hartheim castle (Schloss Hartheim, Ansicht von Südwesten). Photo Credit: Wikipedia (Liberaler Humanist, CC-BY-SA 3.0)

In May 2026, Ph.D. student **Catherine Nicholson**, J.D., attended the annual North American Society for Sport History Conference in Austin, Texas, where she presented “Defying Gravity: The Flights of Olympians Mabel ‘Dolly’ Landry Staton, Marjorie ‘Margie’ Larney, and Karen Anderson Oldham.” Using oral history methodology, Catherine examined three American Olympic field event participants, who competed from 1952-1960, and how they faced the intersectional challenges of race, gender, class, and sexuality, which weighed down upon them like gravity and impeded their success.

Recently, *Middle West Review* (Volume 12, nos. 1-2 [Fall 2025 / Spring 2026]) has published **Ann Vlock**’s article on twenty-four-year-old reform editor Ada Coleman of Stromsburg, Nebraska. Its title, “The Best Man For the Job: Ada Coleman and 1890s Reform Journalism on the Midwest Prairie,” was prompted by a Lincoln reform editor’s comments complimenting her take-over of the Stromsburg *Headlight* in 1892; he couched his compliment in terms of his version of the male-centric publishing world by saying that her work was an admirable continuation of that of her male predecessor, Isaac Chamberlain: “It takes a pretty good man to fill Chamberlain’s shoes, but Miss Coleman seems to be that man.” This article attempts to show the family-oriented and generational aspects of the reform movement as well as the wider network of women in Nebraska who participated in reform journalism. It also makes the point that reform editors such as Ada were successful in ensuring the election of honest local officials

even though the overall movement did not make headway on the national level in the 1890s.

Vlock also wrote a chapter in *America’s Longest River: A Cultural and Environmental History of the Missouri River* (April 2026). Her chapter is called “The Missouri River, the Waterways Movement, and Anti-Railroad Populism.” It focuses on a national movement after the Civil War that lasted until the Great Depression: the Waterways movement, a businessman’s movement that



wanted the government to fix the nation’s waterways so that rivers could compete with railroad commerce. Vlock found it fascinating that during its long history, two groups attempted to ally with the businessmen, the Populists in the 1880s who were unsuccessful, and women in the early 20th century who were successful. But the women didn’t just join, they changed the emphasis on the movement from commerce to conservation.

2025-2026 THEODORE SORENSEN FELLOW

The University of Nebraska College of Law named Velma Lockman, a graduate student in history and law, as the recipient of the prestigious Theodore Sorensen Fellowship for the 2025-2026 academic year.

The Sorensen Fellowship is one of the highest honors awarded by Nebraska Law, recognizing not only exceptional academic achievement but also the promise of future leadership in the legal profession. Established to honor the legacy of Theodore C. Sorensen, a 1951 graduate, and his family’s deep ties to the College of Law, the fellowship reflects the values of public service and the pursuit of justice.

“The Sorensen Fellowship encourages Nebraska law students, as Mr. Sorensen once did, to use their legal training to improve the world in which we live, rather than devoting their talents solely to private enrichment,” said Law Dean Richard Moberly. “We are confident that Velma embodies these values and will carry forward this meaningful tradition.”



Sources: College of Law, “Lockman, ’26, Named 2025-26 Theodore Sorensen Fellow,” 29 August 2025; University Communication and Marketing, “Achievements | Honors, appointments and publications for Sept. 12,” 12 September 2025

FULBRIGHT-MACH AWARD

Julian Gillilan, a doctoral candidate in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s Department of History, has accepted a Fulbright-Mach Award from the Fulbright U.S. Student Program for the 2026-27 academic year. He will travel to Vienna, Austria, to perform dissertation research in various archives as an affiliate of the University of Vienna and Central European University.

Gillilan’s research interests include 19th and 20th century central European history and Austrian studies. His dissertation research, under the advisement of Gerald Steinacher, James A. Rawley Professor of History, explores Austrian Pan-Germanism and the concept of cultural despair in fin de siècle Habsburg Austria. He recently completed doctoral comprehensive field exams in 19th and 20th century central European history, modern European

history, genocide studies, and the history of empire. In summer 2025, Gillilan was a fellow at the Summer Institute on the Holocaust and Jewish Civilization at Northwestern University. He also studied intensive Czech at the Summer School for Slavonic Studies at Palacký University in Olomouc, Czech Republic, and returned for summer 2026.

A native of Ashville, Ohio, Gillilan is a graduate of Bowling Green State University, where he received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in history and German studies. He is also an alumnus of Bowling Green’s academic year abroad program in Salzburg, Austria. Prior to enrolling in the history doctoral program at Nebraska, he worked as the education abroad student adviser at Bowling Green.

The Fulbright U.S. Student Program expands perspectives through academic and professional advancement and cross-cultural dialogue. In partnership with more than 140 countries worldwide, the program offers opportunities in numerous academic disciplines to accomplished graduating college seniors, graduate students, and young professionals from all backgrounds. Participants pursue graduate study, conduct research, or teach English abroad.

Including Gillilan, six Husker students and recent alumni were recommended to host countries and recognized by the U.S. National Screening Committee as finalists, alternates, or semifinalists. Of these, the History student

semifinalist is listed below, with his hometown, academic majors, country where he requested to teach and/or study, Fulbright grant type, and award status:

- Luke McDermott (Omaha, Nebraska) – political science, history, and economics (B.A., May 2026): United Kingdom, Fulbright-University of St. Andrews Award, semifinalist

The primary source of funding for the Fulbright Program is an annual appropriation made by Congress to the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Participating governments, host institutions, corporations, and foundations in foreign countries and the United States also provide direct and indirect support.

Fulbright recipients are selected based on academic or professional achievement, as well as demonstrated leadership potential in their fields. The program operates in more than 160 countries worldwide.

Sources: Julian Gillilan (courtesy

photo); College of Arts and Sciences, “[Gillilan earns Fulbright award for dissertation research](#),” 17 April 2026; University Communication and Marketing, “[Achievements | Honors, appointments and publications for May 15](#),” 15 May 2026; Undergraduate Research and Fellowships, “[Gillilan earns Fulbright Award to conduct research in Austria: Five other Huskers named finalists, semifinalists or alternates](#),” 26 May 2026



DIGITAL HUMANITIES FELLOW

The Center for Digital Research in the Humanities welcomed the fifth annual cohort of digital humanities fellows for the summer of 2026. Graduate students participated in the program designed to support their research, scholarship, professional development, and creative production skills.

The 2026 interdisciplinary cohort was selected through a competitive application process. The fellows received a stipend and spent the first half of the summer in a dedicated shared workspace at the Dinsdale Family

Learning Commons under the mentorship of Carrie Heitman, director of the Digital Humanities Summer Fellowship.

“Our goal with this program is to both support DH student projects and foster meaningful cross-disciplinary collaboration. So many technical barriers are lower now than ever before. Students have access to things like AI-driven coding assistants that can really accelerate project development. I’m excited to help support another group of extraordinary scholars this summer,” Heitman said.

A mid-summer project showcase took place at Dinsdale where students received useful feedback from faculty and staff from across campus. During the second half of the summer, students continued to receive support through weekly Zoom meetings and cohort collaboration. In September 2026, the students will present their final projects in a public DH Afternoons event sponsored by the center.

The following History scholar was chosen for the cohort:

Brianna Rose DeValk is a fourth-year doctoral student in history at Nebraska. She received a Bachelor of Arts in history pedagogy from California Lutheran University and a Master of Arts in history from Minnesota State University, Mankato. In summer 2026, she worked on “Citizenship Taken: Recovering Married Women’s Citizenship on the Northern Great Plains, 1907-1967,” a relational database that brings together seemingly disparate historical records to reconstruct the identities and stories of American-born women whose birthright citizenship was taken following

their marriage to an unnaturalized immigrant during the early 20th century.

The fellows had opportunities during their shared time together to discuss their projects, brainstorm ideas and solutions, meet with practitioners, learn about University of Nebraska-Lincoln support services, and meet with libraries and Center for Digital Research in the Humanities faculty and staff.



Source: Joan Barnes | University Libraries, “[Summer 2026 digital humanities fellows announced](#),” 12 May 2026

GRADUATED STUDENTS

The Department of History celebrates the successful completion of four Masters degrees and one Doctoral degree in the 2025-2026 Academic Year. These students are listed in chronological order below:

Please join us in congratulating **Emily Binder**, who successfully passed her M.A. defense on 13 April 2026! Her portfolio, “‘They Fight in Earnest’: Overcoming Barriers to Whiteness and American Identity in the Lebanese Community of Kearney, Nebraska,” interrogated how Lebanese migrants in the state and their networks maneuvered the spaces between legal and functional

whiteness. Making up her committee were Profs. Laura Muñoz (adviser), Donna Anderson, and Stephen Ramsay (English). Emily will progress in her studies as a Ph.D. student with Prof. Muñoz at the University of



Nebraska-Lincoln.



Abbey Dittmer successfully defended her M.A. portfolio 8 April 2026. Her committee consisted of Profs. Laura Muñoz (adviser), Donna Anderson, and Stephen Ramsay (English). Her work covered the experiences of Mexican immigrant agricultural labor in the American Midwest during the Great Depression. Abbey is continuing with her Ph.D. at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, with Prof. Muñoz returning as her adviser.

The Department of History had one December 2025 M.A. graduate: **Mason Lee**. Mason defended his portfolio, “‘The Thermopylae of my Campaign:’ Confederate Classical Analogy in the American Civil War,” on 14 November 2025. Profs. Alexander Vazansky (adviser), Kenneth Winkle, and Vanessa Gorman served as his committee.



Iván Pérez Guerra graduated in May 2026 with an M.A. with an emphasis in Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs. His portfolio title was “Narratives Across Scales: Power, Memory, and Media from Global History to Exile and the Cold War.” His committee members were Profs. James Garza (adviser), Bedross Der Matossian, and Iker González Allende (Modern Languages and Literatures [Spanish]). Iván will start in the Ph.D. program York University in Toronto, Canada in August 2026.

On 10 April 2026, **Dr. Andrea Wagh** successfully defended her doctoral dissertation, “For Good and Evil: Orphanages in the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust, 1915-1945.” Serving on her committee were Profs. Bedross Der Matossian (adviser), Gerald Steinacher, Alexander Vazansky, and Emily Kazyak (Sociology). Andrea’s research explored the ways orphanages were used to either rescue child victims of genocide or perpetrate genocidal policies against them in the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust. In fall 2026, she will start her new job as an Assistant Professor of History at Cottey College in Nevada, Missouri.



2026 DEPARTMENT AWARDS CEREMONY



Prof. James Le Sueur presents his final speech as Department Chair at History’s End-of-the-Year Awards Celebration on 29 April 2026, in the Willa Cather Dining Center.



Prof. Carolyn Twomey (right) is given the 2026 Department of History Distinguished Teaching Award by Prof. James Le Sueur. Dr. Angela Bolen also received this award.



Allen P. Gerlach Scholarship in Non-U.S. History: Seth Blankenship (right), with Prof. Sean Trundle



Larry R. Gerlach Scholarship in U.S. History: Sydney Cochran



Glenn W. Gray Outstanding History Student Award: Luke McDermott (class of spring 2026) – Luke’s award accepted by his parents as he was in Washington, D.C. at the time of the Awards Ceremony



Glenn W. Gray Outstanding History Student Award: Natasja Swanson (class of spring 2026)(second from right), with Profs. James Le Sueur, Sean Trundle, and Dawne Curry



Best Undergraduate History Paper Award: Kendell Brown (class of summer 2026) – “Murder and Medical School Controversy in Lincoln, Nebraska”



Best Undergraduate History Paper Award: Lucy Mohr – “Omaha 1918-1919: The Deadly Cost of Intense Political Tension”

Dov Ospovat Memorial Award for a Distinguished Graduate Research Paper: Iván Pérez Guerra (left), with Prof. Alexander Vazansky – “The Many Faces of Spain: Franco’s Spain within the American Public Sphere in the Early Cold War”



Other Undergraduate Awardees Not Pictured Here:

- ◇ Sam Kiser – Larry R. Gerlach Scholarship in U.S. History
- ◇ Paisley Steiner – Allen P. Gerlach Scholarship in Non-U.S. History
- ◇ Alexandria Lionberger – Carole Levin History Student Award



Ospovat Honorable Mention:
Abbey Dittmer – “The Beets Would
Rot in the Ground’: Mexican Labor,
Sugar Beets, and Belonging in the
High Plains”



Ospovat Honorable Mention:
Olivia Guyodo – “Faith in Ruins: Cultural
Erasure and the Destruction of Armenian
Churches in Turkey and Artsakh”

Spring-Summer 2026 Graduate Travel Funding Awardees:

- ◇ Kaitlyn Cannady – Homze Award
for European History & Maslowski
Research Award
- ◇ Brianna DeValk – Addison E. Sheldon
Conference Travel Award
- ◇ Anne Gregory – Addison E. Sheldon
Conference Travel Award
- ◇ Olivia Guyodo – Ambrosius Award
- ◇ Jonathan Laska – Addison E. Sheldon
Conference Travel Award
- ◇ Luis Martínez – Maslowski Research
Award
- ◇ Gregory Payne – Addison E. Sheldon
Conference Travel Award
- ◇ Colten Skinner – Ambrosius Award &
Maslowski Conference Award
- ◇ Kim Sleeper – Meyer Conference
Travel Award

N EMERITI NEWS & ALUMNI INFO HISTORY

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Carole Levin, professor emerita in history, received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women and Gender. The award recognizes scholars who have made significant contributions and dedicated their careers to the study of women and gender in the early modern period. Levin was recognized for her scholarship focused on the history of early modern women and the women in Shakespeare; teaching at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the Folger Shakespeare Library and the Newberry Library; service to multiple organizations that bring recognition to early modern women; and nearly 50 years of mentorship to Husker students and other young scholars in the field.



Source: University
Communication
and Marketing,
“[Achievements
| Honors,
appointments and
publications for Sept.
26,](#)” 26 September
2025

BICENTENNIAL REFLECTIONS

As the United States nears its 250th anniversary, celebrations are already taking shape across the country.

But for some Americans, the milestone brings a more complicated question: what is there to celebrate at a time marked by political division in the Middle East and with immigration enforcement.



local communities to take a more active role in shaping celebrations.

“Many communities used the Bicentennial to leave a lasting mark, building monuments, museums, and exhibits that people still visit today,” he said.

That localized approach helped create a sense of participation, even during a turbulent time.

Historians noted the Bicentennial was not as unified as it may appear in hindsight.

Tim Borstelmann, Elwood N. and Katherine Thompson Distinguished Emeritus Professor of Modern World History at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said 1976 came during a period of deep national strain.

“You might think about the context of 1976,” Borstelmann said. “The civil rights movement, women’s rights, and the counterculture created a kind of social crisis.”

That uncertainty extended to national leadership and led

As the nation approaches its 250th year, the questions may not just be how to celebrate, but whether Americans can still find shared meaning in the moment.

Sources: KUNR Public Radio | By James Perez, “[As the U.S. turns 250, Nevadans reflect on what there is to celebrate,](#)” 20 April 2026; Sean Hagewood | University Communication and Marketing, “[Nebraska in the national news: April 2026,](#)” 1 May 2026

Photo Credit: John Sonderman / Flickr Creative Commons

FREE PLAY PERFORMANCE ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

Audiences stepped into the world of one of history’s most formidable and fascinating monarchs with *Elizabeth I: In Her Own Words*, a theatrical portrait of the iconic monarch. The play was crafted by Carole Levin, emerita professor of history, in collaboration with Tamara Meneghini.

Starring Meneghini and accompanied by Rick Pruitt, the play was performed 20 May 2026 in Westbrook Music Building, Room 130. The play was presented through a partnership of the International Quilt Museum and the Glenn Korff School of Music, and coincided with the exhibition, “[Crown and Stage,](#)” at the museum. The performance was free and open to the public.

Drawing directly from Queen Elizabeth’s speeches, letters, and other sources, this play brings the legendary ruler to life through her own voice – revealing her

wit, vulnerability, political brilliance, and unshakable strength. With a masterful solo performance at its heart, the production invites audiences into the mind and spirit of a woman who defied the limitations of her time and redefined power for generations to come. This production is more than historical drama – it’s an intimate exploration of leadership, identity, and resilience. Elizabeth’s words are as relevant and riveting today as they were in the 16th century.

Books about Queen Elizabeth were for sale at the event by [Francie and Finch](#).

The exhibition, “[Crown and Stage: The Monarchy and Shakespeare in Quilts,](#)” explores how quilts and other forms of material culture traveled beyond the playhouse and palace. This exhibition features quilts honoring

British queens, Shakespeare’s words stitched in fabric, and contemporary objects that reinterpret these icons. Together, they trace how symbols of the monarchy and theater entered everyday life. These objects reveal layers of cultural exchange, colonial influence, and American reinterpretations of British icons. “Crown and Stage” shows how the enduring power of royal portraits and Shakespearean imagery continues to resonate within popular culture, connecting the past and the present. This exhibition was on view at the [International Quilt Museum](#) through 30 May 2026.

Sources: event flier (courtesy Tony Foreman); University Communication and Marketing, “[Levin’s play, ‘Elizabeth I’ to be performed May 20,](#)” 15 May 2026

Photo Credit: Courtesy / Carole Levin

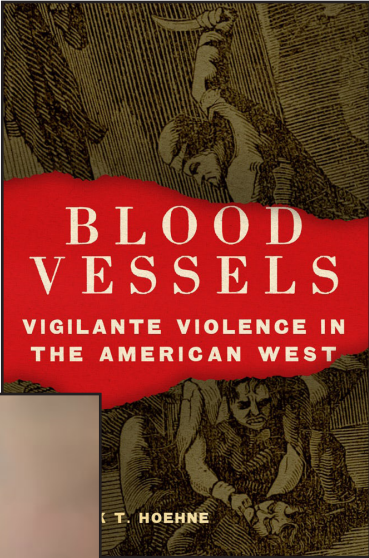


“There have been numerous television series and films featuring fine actresses as Elizabeth I. None are as intimate and humanizing and few as moving as this play/performance.” – Alix Cohen, [TheatreLife.com](#)

BOOK PUBLISHED

Patrick T. Hoehne was thrilled to announce that his book, *Blood Vessels: Vigilante Violence in the American West*, was published 3 February 2026! In the book, he examines a sequence of extralegal violent action that took place between 1840 and 1865 and stretched from Illinois through what is now known as Montana. Hoehne further tracks the human beings and networks bound up in each of these episodes – including the Bellevue War, killing of Joseph Smith, Montana vigilante movement, and more – and shows that each of these episodes was directly connected, forming an unbroken sequence of violence. Human beings and networks tethered this violence together, and formed the linkages across which violence flowed across the Middle West and into the West. The human-centered approach of the book highlights just how fluid legal categories could be. In Nebraska, for example, a horse thief from Illinois reinvented himself as a sheriff, living alongside an Iowa vigilante turned claim club enforcer. For Hoehne, this is an important story for how we understand not only each of these episodes of violence, but the nature of a mechanics behind American extralegal violence more generally. The publisher, University of Oklahoma

Press, describes the book as reframing the prevailing understanding of both the individual incidents of violent action and the larger history of vigilante violence in the antebellum United States.



Hoehne sincerely thanks the wonderful folks the University of Oklahoma Press, Montana Historical Society, Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, his mentors from his Ph.D. program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, his former colleagues at The University of Southern Mississippi, his family, and everyone else who supported him in this endeavor. Hoehne completed his Ph.D. from Nebraska in May 2023 under the advisement of Prof. Will Thomas

(currently Dean of the College of Letters and Science, and Professor of History, at Montana State University).

Source: Patrick Hoehne via X/Twitter

SENIOR ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN POSITION

From Prof. James Garza

Some of you may know Lina Homberger Cordia, who graduated our program with a Ph.D. in May 2024. I am happy to pass along the news that she has been hired as a tenure-track Sr. Assistant Librarian (faculty position) at California State University, Fresno starting 1 July 2026. While she worked as a curator and Community Engagement Director at the Buffalo County Historical Society, the position at Cal State is a great university position for her. As a public service librarian, she will have faculty status and will be responsible for the Kremen School of Education and Human Development.



Her committee members were Laura Muñoz, Katrina Jagodinsky, and Sergio Wals (Political Science), and myself as her adviser. Lina’s dissertation was titled “Las Aztecas: Gender, Nationalism, and Sport in Mexico and the World in the early 1970s.”

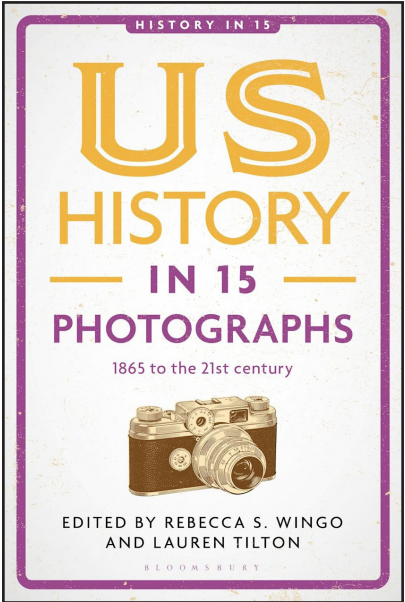
ANTHOLOGY PUBLISHED

Rebecca S. Wingo (Ph.D., May 2015, adviser: Margaret Jacobs) has published *U.S. History in 15 Photographs: 1865 to the 21st Century* ([Bloomsbury Academic](#), April 2026) with anthology co-editor Lauren Tilton. She also contributed a chapter on “The Enola Gay and the Culture Wars.”

Friefeld is the Director of the Center for Lincoln Studies at the University of Illinois Springfield. He came to the Center from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum and his research has focused on Abraham Lincoln’s western legacy. His recent book, *The First Migrants: How Black Homesteaders’ Quest for Land and Freedom Heralded America’s Great Migration*, tells the epic story of Black Americans homesteading in the Great Plains after the Civil War. *The First Migrants* was a finalist for the Association for the Study of African American Life and History book award and winner of the Nebraska Book Award for History. His first book, *Homesteading the Plains: Toward a New History* ([University of Nebraska Press](#), 2019; also with Edwards and Wingo), examines the Homestead Act of 1862, one of the most important social policies ever enacted in the United States.

Wingo is the Director of Public History and an Associate Professor of History at University of Cincinnati. A settler scholar of the Indigenous and American Wests, her work examines photography as a tool of empire in the late 19th and early 20th century. Wingo’s current manuscript, *Framed: Housing and Photography on the Crow Reservation*, argues that federal housing policy was designed to restructure the relationships the Crows had to the house, to the land, and to each other.

A chapter by fellow University of Nebraska-Lincoln graduate Jacob K. Friefeld (Ph.D., May 2016; adviser: Timothy Mahoney) is also included in this volume. His piece, “Owned to Landowner: Black Homesteaders in the West,” is built upon previous work, namely (for this Newsletter publication) the Black Homesteading Project in the [Center for Great Plains Studies](#) and *The First Migrants* ([Bison Books](#), 2023; with Richard Edwards).



Photographs are more than just illustrations of a moment in time – they offer a powerful way to interpret and understand the past like no other historical source can. *U.S. History in 15 Photographs* introduces this power through 15 iconic and lesser-known photographs representing key eras in American History. Taking the reader from Reconstruction

and Westward Expansion, to the Roaring Twenties and the World Wars, right up to Modern American Culture, it offers a refreshing, visual account of American history.

This volume reorients photography as a major source for understanding the past, expanding not only the stories that we tell, but the way we tell them. Teaching students how to understand, contextualize, and interpret historic photography, *U.S. History in 15 Photographs* centers diverse stories about the American experience by exploring topics around race, class, gender, disability, the environment, and social justice.

The scholars who contributed to this volume show that

photographs are more just illustrations *from* the past, but foundational sources with surprising revelations *about* the past.

“Brilliantly curated, this volume brings together some of the leading historians of race, gender, labor, and empire to explore U.S. history through the lens of photography. Richly illustrated and intellectually engaging, it offers students a compelling new way to study the past.” – Elspeth Brown, University of Toronto, Canada

Sources: [Bloomsbury](#); [University of Cincinnati](#); [Center for Lincoln Studies](#)

IN MEMORIAM: TOM SMITH

Dr. Tom Smith (Thomas Eastwood Smith IV), History Professor and Department Chair at Chadron State College, died 21 February 2026, at his home in Chadron, Nebraska. He was 59. A memorial service for Smith was held 6 March 2026 at Chamberlain Chapel in Chadron.



Smith was born in Omaha, Nebraska, on 2 August 1966, to Thomas Eastwood Smith III and Roslyn Russell Smith. He later lived with his father and stepmother in Wichita, Kansas.

On 25 October 2003, Smith and Jeanice Caporaso were joined in marriage in Buena Vista, Colorado. They later welcomed the birth of their two children, daughter Jackson Caporaso Smith and son Thomas Eastwood Smith V.

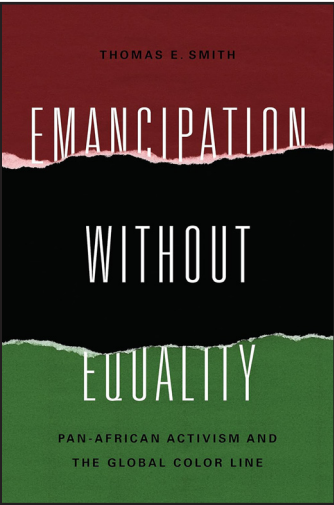
Smith spent the majority of his academic career teaching at Chadron State College (CSC). He joined CSC as an Assistant Professor in the fall of 2011, was promoted to Associate Professor in 2014, and became Professor in 2019. Prior to teaching at CSC, he was a Visiting Assistant

Professor of History at the University of Nevada at Reno and at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where he had received his Ph.D. in 2006. Two other University of Nebraska-Lincoln graduates, Kurt Kinbacher (Ph.D., 2006) and David Nesheim (Ph.D., 2009), also teach in the CSC History Department.

“Dr. Smith was a well-respected professor, colleague, researcher, and friend to so many students and employees on our campus,” said CSC President Jodi Kupper. “His confidence and intellect were equally at home on a rugby pitch as they were in a classroom. He will certainly be missed in our community, and I extend my deepest sympathies to his family, friends, and all those whose lives he touched.”

Smith was a respected global history scholar, researcher, and presenter who focused his academic work on Pan-African activism, post-colonial politics, and human rights. Smith published widely, and his book, *Emancipation without Equality: Pan-African Activism and the Global Color Line*, was released with [University of Massachusetts Press](#) in 2018.

Smith was an engaged



faculty member who served on several campus committees, including Faculty Senate’s Academic Review Committee. He developed thoughtful courses and was committed to creating meaningful learning experiences for students. Alongside Professor Deane Tucker, he led study abroad trips to Cuba that immersed students in the history they were studying.

He is survived by his wife and two children, sisters Jennifer Leigh Smith and Mollie Smith Myers, brother Jacob Smith, mother Roslyn Smith, stepmother Mary Jo Taylor, and six nephews, Marc Stephens, Emerson Utter, Jameson O’Rourke, AJ Smith, Leo Smith, and Issaac Smith who will miss him sorely.

Smith was preceded in death by his father, Thomas Eastwood Smith III, and his sister, Kristina Marie Smith.

Photo Credit: Daniel Binkard/Chadron State College

From James Le Sueur, University of Nebraska-Lincoln History Chair:
The Department mourns the loss of Tom Smith. Professor Tim Mahoney and I co-chaired his dissertation, “Reform and Empire: The British and American Transnational Search for the Rights of Black People in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century.” Tom was one of the smartest people I knew, and the nicest. We became very close friends, and our kids skied together in Colorado and fished together in Nebraska. He and I spent a summer together working in archives at the Rhodes House and Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford. He had been scheduled to be in South Africa working on his next book the week that he passed away after what was supposed to be a routine medical procedure. A consummate gentleman-scholar and fierce rugby player, he left a real mark on anyone who knew him. He was, in every way, the best of the best and a true friend. Our prayers are with his family and his colleagues in Chadron.

Sources: Chamberlain Chapel, “[Obituary: Tom Smith](#),” 21 February 2026; Alex Helmbrecht, “[CSC mourns loss of Dr. Smith](#),” 27 February 2026; James Le Sueur

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