



Department *of* History

SUMMER 2023 *Newsletter*



Portland State
History





Feeling zen from the balcony of the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, Italy

Summer is here—a time to take a breath, get outdoors, tend gardens, and slow down. For many academics, the end of classes heralds the opportunity to return to projects superseded by the busyness of the academic year. We visit archives, jump-start our writing and research, finish up overdue book reviews, and launch new inquiries. Many of us also continue to teach. Most important of all, perhaps, summer is a time to recharge and reconnect with our passions.

In hindsight, the year 2022-2023 may well prove momentous. While historians generally shy away from making predictions, the advent of AI and its potential applications in academic work—from essay-writing to generating reports (or letters of recommendation!)—feels like a game-changer. If it doesn't change what we do, exactly, it certainly stands to change how we do it. We are only beginning to understand its full potential, but it is clear that students are already putting it to use in ways both disconcerting and innovative. Those who remember the advent of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s will recall how it changed our relationship to information: in its ready accessibility, incalculable quantity, and its often questionable quality (Wikipedia, anyone?). Yet we learned to live with it, adapt to it, and fold it into our classroom pedagogy. ChatGPT and other generative AI systems may follow the same trajectory. Whatever the future holds, we're all being forced to come to terms with AI now. Will blue-book and oral exams stage a comeback?

In the department, the year brought enrollment increases each term over 2021-2022 (including summer enrollments), a gratifying achievement at a time when the College and University saw persistent declines. The College now has as many students as it did in 2000. We continue to look for ways to expose new students to the field of history and, as usual, our majors distinguished themselves in their scholarship, community engagement, internships, and research. I would like to mention our Honors Track thesis presentations especially, which were uniformly stellar. Student **Hailey Brink** (*see p. 4*) won overall prize for Outstanding Paper at the Regional Phi Alpha Theta conference in Ellensburg, WA. **Catherine (Cat) Lopez** delivered the undergraduate address at the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences' commencement ceremony. Cat shared the moving story of being the first member of her family (along with her brother), to attend college (*watch the video segment*). Other graduates are headed into the workforce or to GTEP and other post-baccalaureate programs. We wish them all well, and encourage them to stay in touch.

Lastly, 2022-2023 was a year of passages. Professor Emeritus **Elliott Benowitz**, who taught History courses at PSU for over 30 years, passed at his Florida home at the age of 92. Professor **Evgenia Davidova**, a specialist in Southeast European social history, moved to Cramer Hall from the Department of International and Global Studies. **Bright Alozie**, affiliated faculty in Black Studies, won numerous research fellowships and awards, including the 2023-2024 Hagley Oral History Grant and Fellowship Award and the Charlton Oral History Research Grant. Two of our faculty, Professors **Jennifer Kerns** and **Rodney Koenke**, earned well-deserved promotions to the rank of Associate Teaching Professor. Significant milestones, one and all.

We must end, however, on a note at once happy and sad. **Andrea Janda**, our creative communications and community outreach staff member since 2014, will leave PSU in July to take a new position as a Web Specialist for the Department of Information Technology Services in Washington County. Andrea has been an invaluable presence in everything from event coordination and promotion, to donor support and fundraising, to faculty and student support. If you've come by the office, you've no doubt been welcomed by her warm greeting and helpful demeanor. In ways big and small, she has made our department look good—as evidenced by the beautiful course flyers, web design, event publicity, and newsletters she produces twice yearly, the latest example of which is under your eyes. She has made my job as Chair easier in ways too many to count.

Her botanical expertise is legendary. Personally, I am finally on the cusp of having a decent tomato harvest thanks to her coaching.

Andrea, thank you for making our department a better place to work and learn. Thank you for serving our students and faculty so well. And thank you for helping us put our best foot forward. We'll miss you, and we wish you the best of luck in your new job with Washington County.

John



John Ott, *History Department Chair*



Andrea at the Adelman Peony Gardens

Erica Boyne accepts History Curator position at Western Australian Museum



Erica Boyne

Erica Boyne (MA, year) was appointed as Head of History at the Western Australian Museum. Boyne writes: “I am very excited for the opportunity (and very nervous, especially coming off of a year’s maternity leave). I thought it would be good to share with you that I believe the structure of the Masters Degree in public history at PSU was a defining factor in me being appointed for the role. The nature of the position requires someone with expertise in historical research/historiography, and experience and knowledge in the management and interpretation of historical collections. I applied for the position because it seemed like my dream job, but I was fully aware that there would be applicants that were older, with more experience. I was quite surprised to be appointed to the role in one sense, but I also knew that I was going into the selection process with a unique educational background that required me to fulfill all requirements of a MA in History AND THEN fulfill additional requirements for public history. While I am not familiar with all of the competitors for the position, I know that I was up against pure academic historians and museum professionals who had been developing exhibitions for museums for over twenty years. I truly believe that I came out as the selected candidate because I could present as both an academic historian and a skilled public program developer and collections manager.

I remember being annoyed as a student that the MA in Public History had to do everything that a MA in History did and then more to gain the experience in public history. All I have to say is THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU to **Katy Barber** and PSU, for demanding that public history students be everything a history Masters student was and more. It made my application unique, and it certainly gave me the confidence to argue that I was the ‘total package’ for a role that in many other senses seemed too big for me.”

Hailey Brink at the 2023 Phi Alpha Theta Biennial Conference



Hailey Brink

On January 4th through 7th, 2023, I had the fortunate opportunity to attend the Phi Alpha Theta History Honors Society National Biennial Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico, as a panelist and a delegate for our Phi Beta chapter of Phi Alpha Theta. Phi Alpha Theta recognized its 100th year of existence as a national history honors society, making the conference an even more special opportunity to experience the century of history presented by PAT. This centennial celebration was accomplished through the reading of 166 panelist papers, and one round table talk, a method of presenting that I think holds possibilities for future academic opportunities.

I presented my paper titled, “Bombs, Monsters, and Tourists: Transformations of the Salton Sea in the 1950s,” alongside other undergraduate historians in a panel titled, “Cultural and Environmental Exploitation in the American West.” That week, I heard a sentiment often repeated in my education: we do not study history in a void. This became a recognizable pattern as I listened to other panelists present on seemingly disparate topics, yet somehow connected to one another. Whether it was a research project on the genius of John Williams or a tactful reconsideration of the contributions of our founding fathers, the work of history students illuminates the vast sea of connections between topics and the infinite possibilities presented by historical study.

Phi Alpha Theta Pacific Northwest Conference 2023

On 20–22 April 2023, three Portland State undergraduate history students presented original research papers in the Phi Alpha Theta Northwest Regional Conference at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, Washington. Their trip was made possible by grants from PSU Student Activities and Leadership Programs (SALP) and the Friends of History. The conference brought together eighty-four student presenters, both graduate and undergraduate, from institutions across the Pacific Northwest. One PSU student, **Hailey Brink**, won the top prize for best paper presented at the conference. Pictured from left to right, PSU participants and their paper titles are:



Nick W. Dickens, “A History of Decolonizing the Gender-Binary”

Andi G. Johnson, “‘The Garland of Eternity’: Ivy, European Icon to Pacific Northwest Invasive”

Hailey L. Brink, “Bombs, Monsters, and Tourists: Transformations of the Salton Sea in the 1950s”

Dr. Thomas M. Luckett, faculty advisor to Phi Alpha Theta

For decades one of my greatest privileges as a member of the History Department has been to accompany each year a group of our most promising students to these annual conferences, where I ordinarily do my part by serving as chair of one panel and discussant of another. This year, however, the experience turned out differently than expected. On Friday, I had to go to the Ellensburg Emergency Room where, after a lot of tests, I learned that I needed to have my gallbladder removed. The operation was performed successfully the following morning at Sunnyside. During my ordeal, even as they participated fully in the conference, the students remained in frequent communication with me, packed up my hotel room, and met me in Sunnyside after I was discharged, with Andi doing all the driving on the way home. I could not be prouder of them, or more grateful.

2023 Young Historians Conference Winners by Jennifer Kerns



Young Historians Conference 2023 Winners: Amelia Nason, Poppy Baxter Game, Andy Manne

The History Department and the PSU Challenge Program were pleased to host, in person, the 33rd Annual Young Historians Conference on April 26th, 2023. Students from Grant High School and St. Mary's Academy, taking college level courses at their respective high schools and earning credit at Portland State University, spent the year researching and writing history research papers. Of the many students enrolled in these courses, 27 submitted papers to participate in the conference and present their papers at this very professional yet welcoming conference. As is always the case, the student research papers submitted were innovative, impressive, and amazing! The experience of gathering together to share and listen to student research was rewarding for all involved.



YHC 2023 in the SMSU Ballroom

Students, PSU faculty, Challenge Program staff, and teachers gathered in the Smith Memorial Ballroom early in the morning and were welcomed by History Department Chair **John Ott**, who reminded the students that the study of history remains an incredibly relevant practice and is perhaps, now more than ever, important during these fractious political and cultural times. Critical thinking and the ability to identify and make sense of evidence are important skills to have. He encouraged students, most of whom are off to college in the fall, to keep studying history! Interim Assistant Dean and Interim Head of Library Technologies **Molly Gunderson** shared the significance of their PDXScholar program, where selected papers are uploaded to the PSU library's database.

This welcome was followed by eight panels moderated by PSU History and Judaic Studies faculty, where the students presented their papers, followed by questions and answers from the enthusiastic audience, composed mostly of their peers and family members. Some of the more fun panel titles were: "You Should See Me in A Crown: Philosophy and Power" and "Bodies, Blood, and Punishment." Questions from the audience were thoughtful and inquisitive. More

than one faculty member remarked that the papers were incredibly well written and impressive as were the questions and comments from audience members. Intellectual fun was had by all. Once a faculty member participates in this program, they always sign up to do it the next year. It is that rewarding!

Faculty coordinator of the program **Jennifer Kerns** closed out the event by giving awards to the best three papers of the conference. After sharing that she indeed had the best job of the conference, she decided to announce the awards by the titles first rather than the student. What was so terrific about doing it was that when she announced but two or three words of the title of the papers, students squealed with joy. The fellow students knew of the work that their peers did and were also incredibly supportive of their friends and classmates. The three winners received generous gift cards to Powell's Books, thanks to the generosity of the **Friends of History**.



First Place: Andy Manne (St. Mary's Academy)

"Odysseus of the Arctic: The Epic of John Franklin and the Search for his Lost Expedition"

Second Place: Poppy Baxter Game (Grant High School)

"The History of Vampire Folklore: Fear and Introspection, 2000 BCE.-2000 CE."

Third Place: Amelia Nason (St. Mary's Academy)

"The Contribution of Domestic and International Conflict In Renaissance Italy to the Sport of Fencing"

One final note: We want to thank the jurors who helped Professor Kerns select the papers and organize them into panels: PSU MA Graduate Students **Avery Fisher**, **Patrick LaSalle**, **Gabe Lopez**, and **Zoe Wooff**. They were so dedicated to the process and provided wonderful feedback to the students. We also want to thank the staff of the Challenge Program, Director **Joy Beckett**, Program Coordinator **Stephanie Gustafson**, and Event Coordinator **Sarah Holliday** for working with us to organize this wonderful event. And finally, we want to thank the two wonderful teachers who spent all of 2022 and 2023 guiding these students in their research: **Matt Vannelli** of St. Mary's Academy and **Donald Gavitte** from Grant High School. Their dedication to their students is always so inspiring and hopeful. As Mr. Vannelli remarked, "This is our Super Bowl." Everyone worked so hard to get to that day and it was fun to witness and celebrate all of these committed historians!

Kalani Craig at Indiana University, Bloomington

Kalani Craig (MA, 2007) writes that she was recently promoted to Associate Professor of Digital History (tenure-track) at Indiana University, Bloomington. She also currently serves as the Associate Director of the Medieval Studies Institute and Co-Director of the Institute for Digital Arts & Humanities at IU.

In addition, Kalani is the developer of Net.Create, an open source analysis tool. Kalani and a team of fellow researchers at IU were recently awarded a \$1.3 million grant from the National Science Foundation that will allow the team to develop a new version of Net. Create educational software and conduct research that will help better understand the benefit of network visualizations in the classroom. Networks track individual interactions between people, places and things. Visualizing these interactions helps support a variety of learners and researchers trying to understand how a single interaction fits into a complex network. Kalani and her team are specifically re-designing the tool for use in middle school classrooms.



Kalani Craig

7 PHOTOS FROM RECENT EVENTS



Colloquium-Workshop Dinner. Jenn Tappan, Chia Yin Hsu, Grace Atuonwu, Catherine McNeur, Richard Beyler, Bright Alozie, John Ott, Masepeke Sekhukhuni



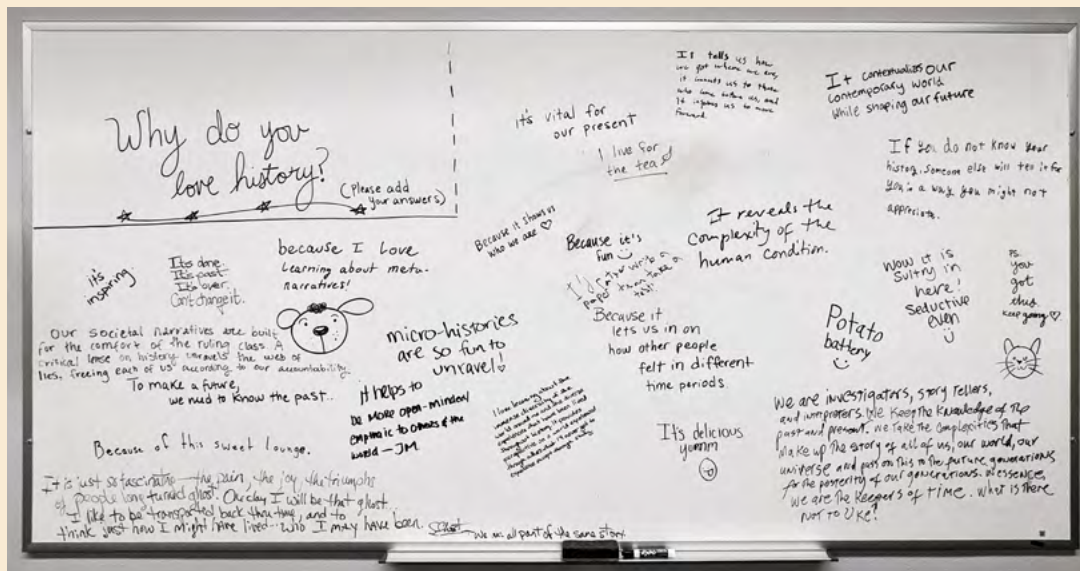
5th Annual History Slam | June 2, 2023



CLAS Dean Todd Rosenstiel delivering remarks at the History Department Graduation Reception and Awards Ceremony June 10, 2023



John Ott, Jennifer Tappan, Joe Bohling, Brian Turner, and Catherine McNeur at the department's Graduation Reception and Awards Ceremony



Why Do You Love History?
Student Lounge Whiteboard

"We are investigators, storytellers, and interpreters. We keep the knowledge of the past and present..."

"Our societal narratives are built on the comfort of the ruling class. A critical lens on history unravels the web..."

"I love learning about the immense diversity of the world around me...It provides perspective on a world experienced through others..."

"It is just so fascinating—the pain, the joy, the triumphs of people long turned ghost."

"It contextualizes our contemporary world while shaping our future."

"Because of this sweet lounge."

In Memoriam: Elliot Benowitz



Elliot Benowitz, 92, of Sarasota, passed away peacefully May 15, 2022. Born in Brooklyn, NY, he was a devoted and loving husband to his wife of 42 years, June Melby Benowitz. He is survived by June, his brother Burton (Sally) Benowitz, two children from an earlier marriage (Michael Benowitz and Mary Rebagliati), and grandchildren (Joseph and Michael Rebagliati). Elliot served in the US Marine Corps during the Korean War, after which he studied at the State University of New York and University of Wisconsin. He received a Ph.D. from University of Wisconsin, Madison in 1966, taught history for more than 30 years, and retired from Portland State University in 1994. His wife, **Dr. June Melby Benowitz**, Associate Professor of History at the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee, received her BA and MA from Portland State University and her PhD from the University of Texas at Austin.

While at Portland State University, Elliot developed and taught a variety of courses, including an introduction to the nature and history of technology, historical preparation for travel, general European and Western civilization, Russian, and East European history. He made eight trips to Eastern Europe, each extending over several months, and several shorter visits to Eastern Europe, as well as to Western Europe where he studied several languages including Russian, French, Greek, Romanian, Serbian and Croatian, Macedonian, and German.

Upon retirement, Elliot wrote "I have always had a passionate attachment to the profession, to its moral and intellectual calling, and to both the students as human beings who are the source and hope of history...and to shed some little light on the complex mix of hope and despair that is so obvious in our world today."

Although he began going blind shortly after moving to Sarasota in 1995, Elliot became active in the local community, doing volunteer work for a variety of organizations. He received a Sarasota Schools Volunteer of the Year Award for his work as a tutor at Alta Vista elementary school, and he served as President of the Sarasota Council for the Blind and was a support group leader at the Lighthouse Vision Loss Education Center.

He had numerous interests, especially enjoying writing poetry, listening to music and attending concerts, traveling, studying science and technology, and conversing with people of all ages and backgrounds. Elliot was known for his lively sense of humor, his kindness and compassion, and he will be sorely missed.



History Highlights | Faculty & Student News

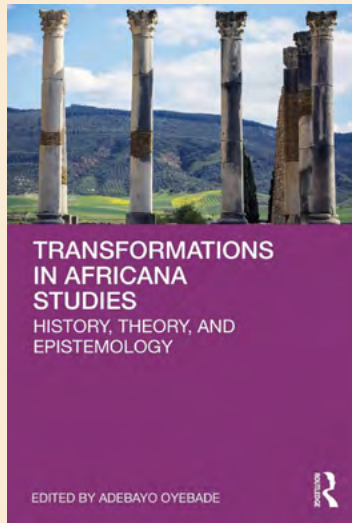
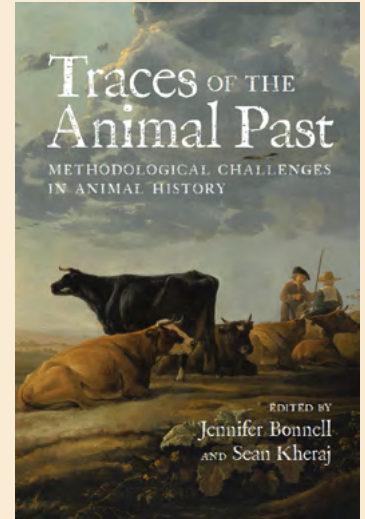
Catherine McNeur, History faculty, was interviewed by the *Smithsonian Magazine* about the history of American food prices and other topics.

She also presented “‘Very Pretty Objects’: North American Seaweed and the Free Labor of Women” on April 1 at the Organization of American Historians conference in Los Angeles, and wrote a chapter titled “Vanishing Flies and the Lady Entomologist” in *Traces of the Animal Past: Methodological Challenges in Animal History* published by UCalgary Press.

John Ott, History faculty, was a panelist for “Innovations on the Pedagogy of Christianity: Teaching Medieval Christianity to Modern Student Audiences” at the Meeting of the Medieval Association of the Pacific and delivered a paper titled “An Unremarked Canonical Collection of ca. 1100 from *La Sauve-Majeure* and the *Collectio Sinemuriensis*.”

He also published two articles: “Texts, Law and Church Reform: The Anti-Simoniatic Dossier of BM Reims Ms. 15 and the *Collectio Sinemuriensis*,” in the journal *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Kanonistische Abteilung* and “Erasing Bad Memories: Fashioning the Reputation of Manasses I, Archbishop of Reims (c. 1069- 1080)” in *L'évêque contesté*.

Chia Yin Hsu, History faculty, presented “‘Promiscuous’ Credit and Monetary Liquidity: Everyday Money and Global Capital in Russian Manchuria, 1920s” at the International Workshop on Shared Histories and Imperial Encounters in North-East Asia on March 11 at Amherst College.



Bright Alozie, Black Studies and History affiliated faculty, presented a conference paper titled “The Forgotten Old Versus the Resurgent New: Rethinking Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Erotic through Mbari Art in Igboland, Nigeria” at the 136th Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association in Philadelphia, held January 5-8, 2023.

He also published a book chapter titled “Colonial History and Documentary Sources: Insights from Southern Nigeria” in the book *Transformations in African Studies: History, Theory, and Epistemology*.

Bennett Gilbert, University Studies and History Faculty, co-edited a book titled, *Ethics and Time in the Philosophy of History: A Cross-Cultural Approach* (Bloomsbury, 2023.)

Ken Ruoff, History faculty, held a seminar on November 29, 2022, at Hokkaido University about the meaning of the Imperial House to contemporary Japan.

David Peterson del Mar, History faculty, was quoted and paraphrased in a *New York Times* opinion piece published October 30 titled, “After a Professor’s Firing, College Students and Professors Weigh In on the New Landscape of Higher Ed.”

Thomas Allsen, (BA, 1962) received a poshumous remembrance written by Ruth Dunnell, Professor Emerita, Kenyon College and Michal Biran, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. “Remembering Thomas T. Allsen (1940–2019): Medieval Eurasia Reimagined.” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies*, vol. 51, 2022, p. v-xvi.

Giving to the Department of History

If you are interested in contributing to the History Department, you can provide support to a specific fund by noting on your contribution where you would like your money to go or donate securely at the [PSU Foundation website](#). To discuss any of the particular funds, please email [John Ott](mailto:ott@pdx.edu) at ott@pdx.edu or phone him at (503) 725-3013.

Fund	Purpose
History Department	Supports the general expenses of the History Department, particularly faculty and student research
<i>Pacific Historical Review</i>	Funds travel, office expenses, research support, and professional development
History Graduate Scholarship Fund	Funds scholarships for incoming MA History students
Tim Alan Garrison History Faculty Awards	Provides a cash award for faculty who publish books
Bernard Burke Award	Provides scholarships for undergraduate students in History
Anne Myers Scholarship	Provides scholarships for incoming graduate students in History
Charles M. White Scholarship	Provides support to part or full-time undergraduate students with financial need and academic promise pursuing a degree in CLAS
Caroline P. Stoel Fellowship	Provides fellowships for graduate students at the <i>Pacific Historical Review</i>
Lauren Banasky Grant	Funds graduate research expenses for students interested in European or women's history
Joel Palmer Fellowship	Provides fellowships for continuing graduate students in Pacific Northwest History
E. Ann Fulton Fellowship	Provides grants, scholarships, and awards for History students
Stephanie K. Oliver Award	Provides support for graduate students nearing the completion of their degree
Friends of History Operations	Supports lectures and other events sponsored by the Friends of History, faculty research, and student awards and scholarships
Friends of History Lecture Endowment	Provides funding to bring top historians to lecture at PSU
Gordon B. Dodds Fellowship	Funds fellowships for continuing graduate students in History
Johnson Family History Awards	Provides awards recognizing Outstanding Graduate Thesis, Undergraduate Honors Thesis, and Outstanding Performance in Lower Division History
History Student Internship and Professionalization Fund	Funds the cost of tuition for students who enroll in HST 404 or 504: Internship
Student Hardship Fund	Provides support to History Majors or MA Students in need of financial assistance



The Friends of History is a community-based organization affiliated with the Portland State University Department of History that is committed to supporting the teaching and study of history

within the larger Portland area. Thanks to the generous support of our members, we are able to provide lectures, discussion groups, and other programming that speaks to a variety of scholarly interests, as well as scholarships and grants to further important research in history by Portland State University students and faculty members.

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