

Shannan Catherine Mason, Ph.D.
University of Missouri | History Department
615 Locust Street | Columbia, MO 65201
Shannan.Mason@mail.missouri.edu | 618-616-9717

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Search Committee
College of Arts and Sciences | University of Maine at Presque Isle
181 Main Street | Presque Isle, ME 04769

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

I'm writing to express my interest in the Assistant Professor of History and Political Science position at the University of Maine at Presque Isle. I am a historian of science, communication, empire, and political economy whose teaching and research are shaped by the belief that history matters most when it helps people make sense of their communities, institutions, and daily lives. With a Ph.D. in American History from the University of Missouri (2024) and graduate certificates in GIS and Museum Studies, I bring to the classroom a commitment to hands-on, interdisciplinary, and public-facing education. I've taught across liberal arts colleges, research universities, and rural community colleges, and I see in UMPI a campus that shares my belief in teaching as a form of civic engagement and regional investment.

That sense of mission is what draws me to UMPI. I've taught in rural Illinois for a decade working closely with first-generation students, adult learners, and students balancing jobs, families, and coursework. That experience has taught me, good teaching isn't just about content, rather, it's about building flexible, high trust learning environments where students feel equipped and encouraged to take intellectual risks. Whether teaching U.S. history surveys, upper-level seminars or writing intensive, I design courses that emphasize historical thinking as a tool for understanding systems, power, and the everyday. At McKendree University and the University of Missouri, I've taught courses in American history and government, world civilizations, and thematic seminars on capitalism, environment, the frontier, west, and empire. My classes are built around archival analysis, collaborative writing, digital storytelling, and spatial thinking, tools that help students practice doing history, not just learning about it.

I've worked across formats, synchronous, asynchronous, hyflex, and hybrid, and across LMS platforms including Brightspace, Canvas, and Blackboard. My experience teaching students at LLCC in Illinois' College Now program prepared me to support high school students earning dual credit through scaffolded, skills-first instruction. I also draw from a foundation in special education, having completed two years of master's coursework before transitioning to college teaching. These experiences shape how I approach inclusive and multi-modal instruction, which I see as essential to serving a diverse student body through UMPI's YourPace program and other flexible modalities.

In my courses, students explore diverse topics through multimedia assignments, like disease, disaster, scientific exchange, and Indigenous diplomacy through both source work and video responses. In my environmental history course students create public exhibits mimicking the style and language of environmentalists of the past using digital archives. In my borderlands history course, I center science, trade,

and cultural exchange, students build maps and object-based case studies that trace movement and resistance across imperial spaces. At Mckendree university a school of similar size and demographics I regularly teach writing-intensive seminars, where I mentor students through capstone projects, and guide research development and proposal writing. I have also successfully used *Reacting to the Past's* role-immersion lessons, more specifically the "Forest Diplomacy," unit to foster historical empathy and deliberative practice in classroom simulations.

Digital and Public history is central to both my teaching and research. As team lead for *Madison Historical*, a digital public history project, I mentored undergraduate and graduate students through digitizing oral histories, developing metadata, and building collaborative exhibits with regional libraries. We published more than 70 interviews and helped students learn digital curation and community-based research. I've developed digital exhibits at the Campbell House Museum, co-author/annotated a 19th-century print serial *Legends of Mexico*, and contributed four public encyclopedia entries on 20th and 21st century topics like, environmental justice, the role of the Standard Oil Co. in its surrounding communities, the decline of midwestern industry, and a local inter-city baseball league. I enjoy having students create similar reinforce that history can, and should, be useful, something students can carry with them outside the classroom,

My book project, *Reciprocities Market: John Bartram's Subscription Service and the Seeds of Independence*, investigates how knowledge and commerce became intertwined in the early American republic. The project reconstructs Bartram's networks through GIS and social mapping and explores how his subscription model created new ways for colonists to assert economic and intellectual agency. This research was awarded the University of Missouri's *Distinguished Dissertation Award in the Humanities* and has been supported by fellowships from the American Philosophical Society, the Huntington, and Winterthur. I bring these stories and sources into the classroom as case studies in how people used science, nature, and information to navigate shifting systems of power.

In terms of service, I serve my community by serving on my cities Historic Preservation Commission nominating historic landmark designations and teaching my local community about preservation. At the University of Missouri, I serve on the Undergraduate Studies and Lecture Series Committees. And recently accepted a 3-year position as social media editor for *The Journal of the Early Republic* and its online counterpart *The Panorama*, where I help connect academic work to public audiences. I also contributed to our department's five-year program review, helping revise U.S. survey, methods, and capstone course structures to better reflect evolving student needs. This work has deepened my investment in curriculum design, mentoring, and institutional collaboration.

What excites me most about UMPI is its commitment to pairing academic rigor with community impact. I would be honored to support students through meaningful instruction, thoughtful advising, and public projects that bridge classroom and community. I believe my teaching, scholarship, and service reflect the kind of responsive, place-rooted work that defines UMPI's vision.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I've included my CV and teaching portfolio, and I'd welcome the opportunity to speak further about how I can contribute to your students, faculty, and broader community.

Sincerely,

Shannan Catherine Mason, Ph.D.