

# History Happenings

*A newsletter published by the Department of History at the University of Memphis*

---

Vol. 18. No. 2

April 2022

---



***What are we so happy about? Find out on page 5.***

# In This Issue



Page 3: Dan Unowsky on the Ukraine crisis



Page 5: A profile of our amazing advisors, Amanda Lee Savage and Chrystal Goudsouzian



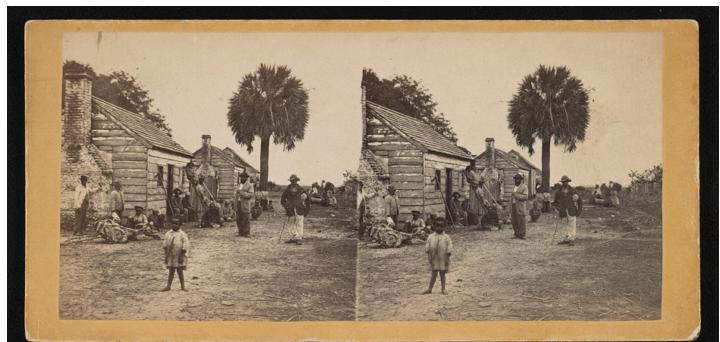
Page 7: Tyler Kynn's new course,  
"Gaming and History"



Page 8: The legacies of ancient Egyptian grammar,  
by Hagar Abdelrahman



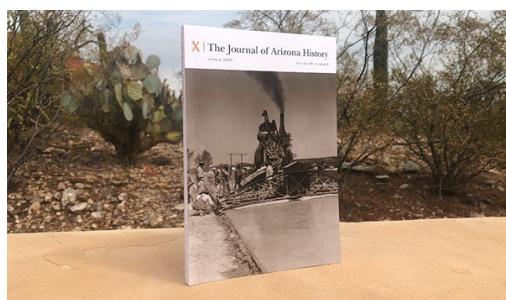
Page 9: Don't call it a comeback! Brianna Harrison on the GAAAH conference



Page 10: Cookie Woolner reviews the annual Women's History Month lecture



Page 11: Phi Alpha Theta news  
from Beverly Tsacoyianis



Page 12: Catching up with alum David Turpie

# Ukraine: Where History Really Matters

Department chair **Dan Unowsky** examines the crisis in Ukraine and the ways that historians are explaining it

Russia's war on Ukraine commenced on February 24 and continues as I write these lines. For those who are not news junkies, this brutal invasion likely seems to have leaped out of nowhere onto front pages and news channels. In response to Russia's unprovoked attack, talking heads on some TV stations have suddenly remade themselves as Eastern European specialists. Many viewers without a background in Eastern European history and politics believe what they hear from these newly self-defined experts. People are also turning to the web for information and, at times, lend credence to the same kinds of "authorities" that promote various conspiracy theories gleaned from the "dark web" and inspired by Russian disinformation campaigns.

This is the context for the explosion of workshops, teach-ins, and Zoom panels organized by universities in the US and around the world. Academics and Eastern European specialists are offering their expertise, based not on their perusal of a few online summaries, but drawing on their many years of study. On our campus, the Department of History has been the main organizer of Ukraine-related events. As chair of the department and a historian of Central and Eastern Europe, I felt it was our obligation to offer our campus community a basis for understanding what is going on right now in Eastern Europe and what this means for the US and the world.



The Department of History sponsored two public events related to the Ukraine crisis. The first, *Ukraine on Fire: Contested History and Current Crisis*, took place on March 3. I presented a brief overview of Ukrainian history. Andrei Znamenski spoke about developments since the fall of the USSR, including the outbreak of the current violence. Political scientist Dursun Peksen talked about sanctions, which are the primary means (along with weapons transfers) that NATO countries and others are utilizing to exact a heavy price from Russia for this war. Catherine Phipps moderated the event and gave her own thoughts on the crisis.

Our second event, *Crisis in Ukraine: Nuclear Threat and Modern Warfare*, took place on March 18.

This presentation was the second in our 2021-2022 History Matters Pizza Talk series. Caroline Peyton spoke about the history of nuclear power in Ukraine, including the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. Chernobyl is in the news again today. Russian forces occupy the zone of exclusion around the reactor. Stephen Stein spoke about the progress of the war—the unexpectedly effective resistance put up by the Ukrainian army, weapons transferred to Ukraine from the US and its NATO allies, and what Professor Stein termed “the internet war.” He also speculated about how the war could play out in the weeks ahead.



Catherine Phipps, Dan Unowsky, Dursun Peksen, and Andrei Znamenski at the "Ukraine on Fire" panel



*Ben Graham moderates the “Crisis in Ukraine” event, with Caroline Peyton (seated) and Stephen Stein (on Zoom)*

Vladimir Putin has repeatedly justified his invasion with a series of claims rooted in a distorted view of the Russian and Ukrainian pasts. He insists that Russia has its origins in medieval Rus', that Ukraine has no equivalent historical basis for statehood and was brought to life by Lenin with the formation of the USSR, that Russians have a centuries-old national consciousness, that Ukrainians are an artificially created people without true nationhood who should not have become separate from the Russian world. Putin further claims that NATO promised not to expand into the former Warsaw Pact countries, let alone those broken off from the USSR in 1991. He asserts that ethnic Russians inside Ukraine have been experiencing a genocide and that Ukraine is dominated by "Nazis." For all of these reasons, Putin proclaims it his obligation to bring all Russian speakers living in Ukraine into the mother country by any means necessary.

It is important for historians to make clear that Putin's myth of Russian heroism and dismissal of Ukrainian history distorts the past. As I explained in my own overview of Ukrainian history for *Ukraine on Fire*, Putin's assertions do not stand up to scrutiny. History cannot justify Russian claims to Ukraine or the killing of thousands of Ukrainian citizens. The Russian invasion of Ukraine constitutes an attack by an autocratic nationalist ruler on a democratic state with internationally recognized borders. This attack is an outrageous throwback to an earlier time in Europe, when nationalist leaders claimed to have the authority to "protect" their supposed fellow nationals living across their borders. The death and destruction caused by this war do not arise from any provocation and have no justification in any his-

torical grievances. It is also important to point out that all nationalist histories distort the past in order to make claims on the present and future. This is not unique to Putin and his supporters.

Putin's repeated assertion that Ukraine is led by Nazis and that denazification is a major goal of this war is transparent disinformation. There are certainly right-wing extremists fighting on Ukraine's side (and many right-wing extremists fighting in Russia's invading army). It is also true that Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was born in eastern Ukraine into a Russian-speaking Jewish family. His grandfather fought in the Red Army against Nazi Germany and his family lost many members in the Holocaust. Zelenskyy leads a democratically elected government that does not seek to "purify" Ukraine of minorities. The political parties of the far right have no representation in the Ukrainian parliament. Public opinion polls show that Ukraine is one of the least antisemitic countries in Europe. This does not mean all is perfect and glorious in Ukraine, but it does mean that we must sweep aside the disinformation to see the current situation for what it is: A huge powerful country led by an autocrat who rejects notions of freedom of assembly, the rule of law, freedom of the press, and democratic sovereignty, is attacking a smaller country committed to these central ideals.

Both of our department's Ukraine-related events were recorded and are linked to our Facebook pages. You can find the YouTube link for *Ukraine on Fire* [here](#), and the recording for *Crisis in Ukraine* [here](#).

# Rising and Advising



Chrystal Goudsouzian

Amanda Lee Savage

Sometimes, a great advisor guides a student through picking their courses, satisfying all their requirements, and ensuring a timely graduation. Sometimes, a great advisor counsels a student through a challenging time or provides resources to help them succeed in their careers after they leave the University of Memphis. And sometimes, a great advisor dresses up in a silly, history-inspired costume.

Chrystal Goudsouzian and Amanda Lee Savage, the Department of History's two undergraduate advisors, do all this and more. This year, the University of Memphis recognized their extraordinary contributions. Savage won the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Award for Advising Excellence, while Goudsouzian won the Faculty Advisor Award for Excellence in Academic Advising.

The university was acknowledging what our students already knew. In their annual evaluations and outgoing senior surveys, History majors overwhelmingly praise both faculty members for their knowledge about courses, concern for student welfare, and willingness to listen. "Dr. Goudsouzian is the history department's Wonder Woman," raved one student, who marveled at her faith in students' ability to succeed.

"Professor Savage was more than just an advisor," stated another major. "She helped me grow as a student and understood my circumstances." Together, they have built a positive culture and helped sustain the department's viability.

Goudsouzian and Savage are committed to a comprehensive advising model, which goes way beyond just advice on selecting courses. Rather, they develop personal connections with all majors, meeting with them at least twice a year. They practice what they call "whole student advising," which includes counsel on how students can enrich their education, plan for their career, and overcome personal obstacles. They also build a sense of community with weekly emails updating students on department events, registration deadlines, and professional opportunities, as well as by fostering a vibrant network on social media.

*History's undergraduate advisors, Chrystal Goudsouzian and Amanda Lee Savage, shape students' lives — and win awards!*

That sense of community exists both on-campus and online. Goudsouzian spearheaded the creation of the History Educational Resource Center (HERC), a chic, comfortable space in Mitchell Hall for study and socializing. Attached to the HERC is an office staffed by two graduate assistants, whom she trains to provide tutoring specific to the discipline of history. Substantial numbers of students have used the HERC services. As a result, more students have passed their intro-level History courses, while majors have expressed gratitude for this vital resource.

Meanwhile, Savage has championed the growth of our pioneering online program, consistently advocating for weaving online students into the fabric of the department. For years, she also served as the advisor for the Student History Society, the undergraduate student organization that stages events and activities for interested students, while spearheading the creation of Clio's Closet, a space where students could find clothes, supplies, or food if they were struggling with poverty-related issues. (Goudsouzian and Savage explain many of these innovations in more detail in a new publication. Their co-authored chapter, "Advising Online Students," will appear in *Teaching and Learning History Online: A Guide for College Instructors*, forthcoming from Routledge.)



*A student presentation at the HERC*

And what about those silly costumes? The Department of History has acquired a well-deserved reputation for the most elaborate, impressive displays at “Discover Your Major Day,” a fall on-campus event, in which thousands of students tour from table to table, learning more about different majors. Goudsouzian and Savage have dressed up and decorated their tables in a variety of historical themes over the years, from the French Revolution to ancient mythology. It is not just for fun, though! Their get-ups inspire students to ask questions, and then the advisors extol the benefits of upcoming classes, the major or minor in History, and the rich benefits of a humanities-centered education.

Both advisors fully participate in the intellectual and practical aspects of life as History faculty. Goudsouzian teaches courses about the ancient world including Myth and Magic in Ancient Egypt and the Bronze Age Aegean. She is an important member of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, and her own research focuses on childbirth practices in ancient Egypt. Savage, who often teaches United States History to 1877, often delivers public lectures about how to decolonize historical narratives. Among her examples of community engagement, she worked with the Chickasaw Nation to craft a territorial acknowledgement for the City of Memphis.

Students at the University of Memphis hail from a wide variety of backgrounds. Over 40 percent are first-generation college students, and 40 percent have transferred from another institution. Most take five or six classes per semester. Over 90 percent have a job, and the majority of those work over thirty hours a



week. Because of their comprehensive advising model and their commitment to the personal well-being of History majors and minors, Goudsouzian and Savage help our students navigate through the choppy waters of college life.

But it is not just students who rely on the advisors – it is also the faculty. “Chrystal and Amanda Lee both really have their fingers on the pulse of the students,” extols Sarah Potter. As the department’s Associate Chair, Potter plans the department’s course schedule, and she relies on Goudsouzian and Savage for their student-centered viewpoint.

Ben Graham, the department’s Undergraduate Studies Coordinator, adds that “students from other departments often feel alienated or ignored and that simply does not happen in our department.” He singles out Savage for her ability “to make students feel at home in History,” while especially praising Goudsouzian for her deep institutional knowledge and comprehensive insight. “She is one of the very few people who see how the whole department works, from undergraduates to office personnel to senior faculty,” he explains. “Even more, Chrystal has keen logistical powers that enable her to envision and plan the development of new programs.”

Everyone around the Department of History knows that our advisors are absolutely essential to our mission. Their recent awards reflect their longstanding, deep, informed commitment to our work and our students.



# Gaming the Past

Tyler Kynn explains how games can help

teach and understand history



This semester I am teaching HIST 3002: Gaming and History. The class aims to work with students to interpret modern games and how they shape popular imaginations of the past. In concept, it is like a historical film class but through the lens of a different medium – gaming. In the course students have played a wide variety of games from board games to indie video games, to digital stories, to AAA title platform games. The course introduces students to these different titles and asks them to analyze how the game mechanics, imagery, and the choices of game designers shape how players of the games come to understand and imagine each historical topic. In many ways, this is an important conversation for historians, since many of our students come into the classroom with these imaginaries that games present. The worldbuilding that these games produce are front and center for students in conversations about many historical topics and eras and the course is designed to get students to deconstruct the narratives that games present to them.

Throughout the course students have played new anti-colonial board games like *Pax Pamir* (2020) and *Spirit Island* (2017), paired in a unit with older historical games which problematically celebrate colonial expansion like *Puerto Rico* (2002). Beyond conversations and readings around how these different games present their historical topic, we also had the game developers of *Pax Pamir* and *Spirit Island* Zoom in with the class to talk about how they designed their games and their experiences of getting into the more than 2-billion-dollar board game industry. These class sessions provided students with perspectives of different career paths with a history undergraduate degree.

The discussion of board games was not the only medium of gaming that the class explored. We began with a foundational game title, *Oregon Trial* (1974), which provided a basis for building conversations around gaming, history, and historical oversights. The indie game world – i.e. video

games produced by smaller companies – provide the best array of different topics and themes covered in newer titles. In the class these include a game about resistance to the rise of fascism in 1930's Germany, *Through the Darkest of Times* (2020), and one about the 1979 revolution in Iran, *1979 Revolution: Black Friday* (2016). For both games students will be speaking via Zoom later in the term with the developers and gain some insight into how one enters the indie game industry. Later in the semester, students will also play the major historical video game *Assassin's Creed: Discovery Tour*, an historical educational mode for the famous game series.

The last unique facet of the course was to have students make their own digital story using the digital story editor *Twine* (<https://twinery.org/>), which allows users to create their own game and simple text-based choose-your-own-adventures. In this activity, students took the role of game developer themselves, utilizing historical primary source sets ranging from topics such as the Salem Witch Trials to stories about an Ottoman cat merchant. Through this activity they began to understand the immense work that goes into game creation and how the addition of choice in games, which make them such a different form of media, also requires an immense amount of narrative design on the backend. This perspective of seeing games as "narratives" can help students better unravel the historical narrative that a game presents, utilizing the skills they have picked up in other history courses. Together all these different game titles, supporting articles, and conversations with the developers themselves help students to better deconstruct and engage with future historical representations they encounter in the games they play.



The anti-colonial board game *Pax Pamir*

# The Language of History

Hagar Abdelrahman, a Ph.D. student in Egyptology, narrates her intellectual journey

I did not realize that my personality traits would have a part in shaping my career. But somehow, they did. As a classical music lover, I remember sitting at my desk studying for my high school Arabic grammar class listening to *Abdelwahab's* music in the background. I still remember that grammar book with its torn cover and yellow pages – I think it was published in the 1970s. I can also remember the passion that I had for learning how Arabic grammar came about, attempting to understand how it was initially formed. It makes me smile when I remember these moments, not only because it feels as if it had just occurred yesterday, but also because my passion for learning the historical development of languages has lived with me and is reflected in the subject matter of my doctoral research.

The idea of my doctoral research came about one night when I was working in my office going through dictionaries. I came across some grammatical constructions in the ancient Egyptian grammar which resembled certain constructions in my native Egyptian Arabic. I started investigating the topic further and became even more interested in the question of the nature of the genetic relationship between the ancient Egyptian and Semitic languages, in particular Arabic and Egyptian Arabic.

Although the data on the Semitic-Egyptian genetic relationship is not conclusive, a few scholars have cautiously suggested that Ancient Egyptian can be classified as a sub-Semitic language based on the common distinct features that ancient Egyptian share with Semitic. Adolf Erman, for example, has investigated word formations and the syntax of Egyptian-Coptic in relation to Semitic in his renowned work *Ägyptische Grammatik*, which considers Egyptian as a relative of the Semitic languages.

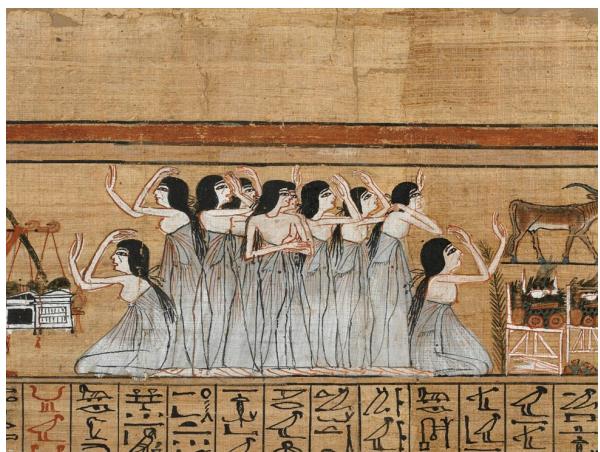
Ancient Egypt began a process of continuous decline in native power after the collapse of the New Kingdom, from the Third Intermediate Period, through the Kushite conquest of the 25th Dynasty, the Persian conquest, the Ptolemaic Dynasty, the Roman Empire, and finally the Arabs' annexation of Egypt in 642 CE. Arabic penetrated Egypt's culture as a non-native language,

gradually superseding Coptic, which represented the last phase of the ancient Egyptian language. In the thirteenth century, Arabic became the official language in Egypt, while Coptic remained the liturgical language of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt. About a century after the Arab annexation of Egypt, Coptic texts were translated into Arabic and there was a gradual shift in the vernacular of the Egyptians. Even though Arabic is the official language of Egypt today, it is used only in administrative and official writing. The Egyptian Arabic dialect is the spoken language in modern Egypt in everyday communication and in the media, which makes Egyptian Arabic a *lingua franca* in the Arab world.

There is a common belief between Arabic grammarians that Classical Arabic is the parent and direct ancestor of the Egyptian Arabic dialect. Consequently, according to this perception, the grammar of Egyptian Arabic must be derived from Classical Arabic. However, there have been studies that suggest that Coptic has influenced not only the lexicon of Egyptian Arabic but also its grammar. Even though there has been a consensus on the lexical influence of Coptic on the development of Egyptian Arabic, the extent and nature of the grammatical influence are disputed.

My research focuses on the grammatical influence of Coptic on Egyptian Arabic through the investigation of common grammatical elements and parallel developments which can be recognized despite the lapse of time between the two languages. The linguistic influence of Coptic on Egyptian Arabic is just another aspect of the cultural and social continuity of the ancient Egyptian traditions into the life of Modern Egypt.

Thus, rethinking the influential linguistic relationship between Coptic and Egyptian Arabic could reveal a bigger picture of the social life of the Egyptian society. My research idea sprouted from an observation, which I turned into a doctoral dissertation. Observation is the core of thinking, and thinking is the core of our existence.



Another example of cultural continuity: ritual mourners around 1250 BCE and grieving women at a funeral in modern Egypt.

# GAAAH-mazing!

**Brianna Harrison**, president of the GAAAH, celebrates the comeback of the annual conference in African American history

The Graduate Association for African American History (GAAAH) held its 21<sup>st</sup> annual graduate conference on February 17-18, 2022. After a year hiatus because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference theme welcomed presenters back and emphasized African American history for the next generation of scholars. Dr. Deirdre Cooper Owens—the Charles and Linda Wilson Professor in the History of Medicine and Director of Humanities in Medicine at the University of Nebraska—delivered the keynote address. Owens's address highlighted hope, community, and the methodological practice of love as entryways to protecting your peace and honoring the subjects of your scholarly research.



*Deirdre Cooper Owens and Brianna Harrison*

The conference also hosted Dr. Sheena Harris as a guest speaker. Dr. Sheena Harris earned her Ph.D. in History from the University of Memphis and served as president of GAAAH. Harris spoke on the subject of her first book: Margaret Murray Washington, a prominent political and educational activist in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Alabama.

The conference hosted six sessions in the University Center, offering in-person and virtual presentations. GAAAH adjusted to pandemic protocol, ensuring the safety of participants while cultivating an intellectually vibrant academic conference. The



*Nervous panelists!*

Maxine A. Smith University Center at the University of Memphis provided the necessary technology for the virtual component of the conference.

Session themes included Black women and gender; Black folk and the religious

experience; race and medicine in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; African American rhetoric and public address; and paths and roadblocks to freedom for African Americans. Each session featured a faculty commentator who offered scholarly feedback to presenters. Despite the unusual circumstances, presenters and audience members engaged in insightful conversations that centered the African American experience.

Each year the conference awards the Memphis State Eight paper prizes, named for the eight African American students that integrated Memphis State University (now the University of Memphis) in the fall of 1959. The papers are read and judged by faculty in the Department of History. This year's three winners: "Malcolm X's Pan-Africanism" by Bishop Lawton of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (3<sup>rd</sup>); "Petitioning for Freedom" by Donald Guillory of the University of Mississippi (2<sup>nd</sup>); and "'Crooked as a young dogwood tree:' Frances Thompson and Disability in Reconstruction America by Andrea Spencer of the University of Delaware (1<sup>st</sup>).



*Damarius Harris*

Special thanks to faculty and staff in the Department of History; the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change; the African and African American Studies program; and staff in the Maxine A. Smith University Center for assisting with this year's conference. Special thanks to the presenters, commentators, and GAAAH alumni for the continued support and scholarly dedication to the African American experience.



*The rapt audience included GAAAH's Paola Cavallari (left), department chair Dan Unowsky (center), and GAAAH alumnus James Conway (right), who is now as Assistant Professor of History at Arkansas State University.*

March is Women's History Month, and as usual the History Department at the University of Memphis created events showcasing cutting edge scholarship by women's historians for the campus community. This year we were happy to host a well-attended virtual lecture by Dr. LaKisha Simmons, Associate Professor of History and Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Michigan.

I invited Simmons because of her specialty in histories of Black girlhood in the South, which I knew would be a topic that resonated with many of our students. Her first award-winning book, *Crescent City Girls: The Lives of Young Black Women in Segregated New Orleans* (UNC Press, 2015) used a variety of interdisciplinary methodologies from geography to affect studies to center

the experiences of Black girls in this important southern city. As she wrote in her first book's introduction, "in the archives I became a miner, looking for any usable and even seemingly unusable scrap."

This tenacity to find creative new ways to narrative the lives of Black girls, who are often hard to find in the archives, was on display in Dr. Simmons's WHM lecture, which featured her current research for her second book. Her virtual lecture for us was entitled, "Labor, Love & Loss:

Black Women's Care-Work during the Civil War." It high-



LaKisha Simmons

lighted the experiences of abolitionist and teacher Charlotte Forten, a young, free Black woman from Philadelphia who went to the South Carolina Sea Islands during the Civil War to educate newly freed people. But more than focusing just on the rather well-known Forten, Dr. Simmons turned her lens to her relationships with some of the young Black girls she cared for in South Carolina, many of whom were very young children. Some of these girls also died quite young from prevalent diseases, and Forten herself would go on to lose an infant child in the coming years. Simmons discussed mourning rituals for children that were practiced in the Sea Islands and observed by Forten, which were gatherings designed to send love and solace to those lost too soon.

Simmons then shared a quote from a recent article she wrote in the preeminent feminist journal, *Signs*: "Black women defined themselves through a complex set of relations that included family members but also the ancestors and the unborn. . . . Black women understand loss within a wider relational model that collapses notions of time, space, and generation." Here, Simmons brought her interdisciplinary and theoretical training to



## Women Make History

**Cookie Woolner** describes this year's  
Women's History Month lecture

her topic, as she did not merely try to show change over time, upon which historians tend to focus. Rather, she turned to the generational connections of Black women that span time and connect mothers and daughters throughout and across time. As one of my students in my History of Women in America course commented on the talk, "Dr. Simmons's lecture really gave an incredible insight into black maternal relationships and how much deeper than surface level they are." The historian also included in her presentation some beautiful photos documenting Forten's time in South Carolina.



Charlotte Forten

This year's Women's History Month lecture showcased brand new scholarship by a leading historian of African American women and girls, which shed light not only on Black women's achievements and relationships in the past, but also on the unique approaches one can take study the past and tell such stories.



The schoolhouse where Forten taught during the Civil War

# A PAT on the Back

**Beverly Tsacoyianis** reports on an award-winning excursion to the Phi Alpha Theta regional conference

In February, History Department professor Beverly Tsacoyianis and senior Sophia Rouse proudly represented the Epsilon Nu chapter of the national history honors society, Phi Alpha Theta (PAT). They attended the 2022 PAT regional conference hosted by Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. They brought back an undergraduate “Best Paper in Panel” award, a few photos, some business cards, and lasting memories to inspire future students interested in presenting their own research.

The conference brought together the regional chapters of Phi Alpha Theta, serving as an excellent opportunity to meet faculty and students from several different institutions and to recruit exceptional students to the University of Memphis graduate program in History.

History major Sophia Rouse was selected along with an elite group of seventeen other students from the region to present their undergraduate research. Rouse’s paper, “Germanic Immigrants’ Impact on the Expansion of Education in Memphis, 1865-1880” was on the “Building New Identities” panel along with papers on Alabama’s Tallapoosa County’s frontier history and NAFTA’s effect on US automaker and agricultural industries, chaired by Samford University PAT advisor Anthony Minnema. Tsacoyianis chaired a concurrent panel titled “Churchill and Company” that had papers on Winston Churchill’s relationship with Admiral Sir John Fisher at the British Admiralty (1911-



Beverly Tsacoyianis and Sophia Rouse

1912) and Winston Churchill’s relationship with Charles de Gaulle in the 1940s.

Faculty members at the conference judged Rouse’s to be the best in her panel. “I enjoyed the conference,” notes Rouse. “I think it was a good experience to meet and hear students from other history departments present, too. I hope more students take advantage of this opportunity because there are so many benefits to this, especially if students want to go to graduate school.”

Alex Colvin, Public Programs Curator of the Alabama Department of Archives and History, gave the plenary address on biculturalism, matrilineal Creek society, and relationships between communities in the Creek Nation and European traders

in early nineteenth-century Alabama. Dr. Colvin’s inspiring presentation encouraged students and faculty alike to never stop discovering and interpreting sources as we continue to frame narratives about the past that make space for voices that are often marginalized in telling our entangled histories.

The Executive Director of Phi Alpha Theta’s national organization, Jonathan Scott Perry, reminded the audience of students, their families, and faculty to spread the word about PAT and to visit the PAT website, [phialphatheta.org](http://phialphatheta.org). The website’s “Get Involved” section has more information on prizes and awards.

Stay tuned for details on an upcoming PAT regional conference right here in Memphis! Tsacoyianis is working on the details to host the conference at the University of Memphis in March 2023 or 2024. Please reach out to her at [btscynis@memphis.edu](mailto:btscynis@memphis.edu) if you would like to learn more about the Student History Society or Phi Alpha Theta.



The award-winning Rouse, flanked by Professors Minnema and Perry

# Alumni Profile: David Turpie

*History Happenings* caught up with Turpie, who earned his MA in History at the University of Memphis and now serves as the VP of Education, Exhibitions, and Publications at the Arizona Historical Society

**History Happenings:** How did you make the transition into journal editing and public history after finishing your Ph.D.?

**David Turpie:** I've been a journal editor for a little over ten years now. As I was wrapping up my PhD, I started to think about the possibility that I might not get a teaching position. The market was bad then (2009–10), and one of my grad school colleagues suggested I develop skills besides research and teaching. It was good advice, so I volunteered to help Dick Judd, a professor in the History Department at the University of Maine who also served as editor of the state history journal, *Maine History*. Dick was an excellent mentor. Over the next year, I mostly helped him with copy-editing and proofreading. At the end of the Spring 2011 semester (after I had graduated), Dick let me know that he had reluctantly taken on the role of department chair starting the next academic year. He asked if I would take over *Maine History*, to take that off his plate. I jumped at the chance.

Over the next two-and-a-half years, while also teaching as an adjunct (usually four or five classes a semester), I served as editor of *Maine History*. Despite the minimal funding this position offered, I took the job very seriously and, with Dick as my safety net, taught myself how to be a journal editor. I saw it as a potential path to a job. As I gained more experience as an editor, I began applying for fewer teaching positions and more editorial positions. I never once got invited for an interview for a teaching position. By contrast, I had at least a dozen phone interviews and three onsite interviews for editorial positions. It turns out, the third time was the charm, as the Kentucky Historical Society (KHS) hired me to be the editor of their quarterly journal, the *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*. After four years there, I applied for a senior leadership position at the Arizona Historical Society (AHS) and made the move here to Tucson to take over the *Journal of Arizona History* and oversee the Publications Division at AHS.

**History Happenings:** Tell us about life as a journal editor. What are the challenges? What are the rewards?

**Turpie:** I really enjoy my work as a journal editor, and I actually enjoy all of the work that I do as a public historian. I'm probably the only person who can say I've been the editor of three different state history journals—in Maine, Kentucky, and Arizona. Running a state history journal is very different from working at a big national journal. At every stop, I've handled most or all aspects of the editorial process. I have evaluated manuscripts, overseen the peer-review process, made the decisions to accept or reject, guided authors through their revisions, copy-edited, proofread, selected images, written captions, and worked with graphic designers, printers, and mailing services to ensure the journal is printed and mailed on time.



*Turpie, second from right, with former colleagues at the Kentucky Historical Society. Apparently his reading skills still need work.*

State history journals are also different in that we have to overcome the (sometimes) negative perceptions of scholars regarding state history. My goal has always been to publish the best scholarship I can on Maine, Kentucky, or Arizona history, and to do that, I have focused on building relationships with good scholars. I see author recruitment as one of the most—if not THE most—important thing I've done as an editor. (I'm fortunate now to have an excellent colleague at the Arizona Historical Society, Dr. Lora Key, who handles this for me.)

I've learned some tricks over the years, the most important of which is to produce special issues. Special issues can help fill a gap in our knowledge about a particular topic or they can highlight an interesting topic that is worthy of a fresh look. They also help with author recruitment, especially since I usually enlist the help of a content expert who serves as guest editor. In my time as editor of the *Journal of Arizona History*, we've produced some impressive special issues, all of which are all available on Project MUSE. We have more planned over the next several years, including one on Indigenous history and one on Latinx history. This is one of the main rewards for me: shaping not only a journal but also a field of study. The other major reward is getting to work with—and getting to know—some amazing authors, including Caroline Peyton (now a professor at the University of Memphis), who published a groundbreaking and award-winning article in the *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* in 2017.



*Turpie and colleagues at the opening of a new permanent exhibit at AHS's Sanguinetti House Museum in Yuma*

**History Happenings:** You received your MA in History from the University of Memphis in 2004. How did this program shape your future?

**Turpie:** This is an easy question to answer: I learned how to be a historian at the U of M. Like most undergrads (I assume?), I learned little about how to really read a history book, about historiography, or about how to research and write history. I learned about all of that as an MA student in Mitchell Hall. I had some excellent professors whose classes meant a lot to me, including Jan Sherman, Maurice Crouse, Daniel Unowsky, and Edward Skeen, among others. There was also a new hire at the time who really influenced me a lot: Aram Goudsouzian. Perhaps more than anything, his comments on various drafts of my master's thesis helped me understand what it meant to be a professional historian. I have been grateful ever since. And, although looking back I see many flaws in my thesis, I was able to take a section of it and have it published in the *Journal of Sport History* (Spring 2008)—my first publication. (Editor's note: Goudsouzian assigns this article, "From Broadway to Hollywood: The Image of the 1939 University of Tennessee Football Team and the Americanization of the South," in his U.S. Sport History class. It is always a favorite of the students.)

**History Happenings:** What advice do you have for today's graduate students in History?

**Turpie:** Be willing to adapt and also gain experience doing things other than research and teaching. After leaving U of M, I went on to get a PhD, expecting that I would then teach at the college level. That didn't work out, but I was able to adapt and follow another career path in editing. I've adapted along the way beyond that. At the Arizona Historical Society, I not only edit the journal and oversee the publications department, but also oversee the exhibitions and education teams at our four museums around the state. I've done things in the last few years that I never imagined doing – everything from researching and writing exhibit panels to painting and preparing an exhibit gallery for a new installation. In fact, my team and I just went up to Flagstaff (about a four-hour drive from Tucson) to install a new temporary exhibit at our small museum there. I supervise an excellent team of historians and museum professionals; they've taught me a lot about presenting history in ways other than in a scholarly journal.

**History Happenings:** What are your dreams and ambitions for your professional future?

**Turpie:** I'm honestly very happy where I am. Arizona is great place to live and it has a fascinating history. I enjoy learning new things about the state's past every day, and I enjoy working with the great team I have here (most of whom I have hired myself). And having lived here for a few years now, it would be hard to spend a winter anywhere else! In the world of state historical societies, I really can't go much higher. The next step would be a deputy director or executive director position. I *might* be interested if the opportunity ever came about, but there'd be drawbacks, too. Those positions are more administrative and fund-raising positions. I do some administrative work now, but I also get to play historian a lot. I'd miss that if I moved up.



*Turpie with AHS colleagues and former congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, former congressman Ron Barber, and current U.S. senator Mark Kelly*