Dear Students:

I write these lines from home—like all of you, I am hunkered down and practicing social distancing. This is not how any of us envisioned our lives just a few months ago. As you all know, the sudden and shocking health crisis forced all instructors teaching in-person courses to move online. We have made great efforts to maintain the history department’s high standards during this transition. I want to thank our caring and devoted faculty and staff. I also want to ensure you we recognize that you have faced (and continue to face) unexpected and serious difficulties this semester whether you normally take courses in-person or online. We applaud you for your dedication and devotion to the study of history. We are here for you. If you have questions or concerns, please reach out to your professors and advisors.

As the semester comes to a close, we know that we will miss all of you. Your energy and curiosity inspire us. We look forward to sharing our mutual excitement in the study of history with those of you enrolled in summer courses and with those planning to return in the fall.

Speaking of the fall, we have a fascinating line-up of upper-division courses on the schedule. I will just highlight a few: Dr. Bradley Dixon is offering a new class, Chucalissa: A Global History of a Native Town (HIST 3000). The course focuses on the nearby archaeological site and the history of its inhabitants in a broad global context. Our Postdoctoral Fellow, Dr. Isabel Machado Wildberger, is teaching a course on Sexuality in Twentieth Century US (HIST 3001). This class centers on how the meaning and politics of sexuality and sexual identity has changed over time. Just what is going on in the Middle East and why is it always in the news? Dr. Beverly Tsacoyianis will help you explore these and other questions in her Modern Middle East (HIST 4272). I also urge you to consider enrolling in Dr. Aram Goudsouzian’s new course on the 1960s (HIST 4051). Students will read great writers of the era and learn about this tumultuous decade in American history. For more on our fall upper-division courses, click [here](#).
To Our Graduating Seniors: Congratulations!

Wherever you go and whatever you do you will bring with you the skills and insights gleaned from your study of the past. That study has prepared you for today’s job market and for playing an active role as a citizen in a democratic society. Historians are expert researchers. We know how to develop convincing arguments drawn from evidence, we are experienced in analyzing source material, we write clearly, we think critically about society, we are students of the diversity of human experience in the past and how that past has shaped our present moment.

With live graduation ceremonies canceled this year, the American Historical Association has made two short commencement speeches available to university history departments. I wanted to share these with you. I hope you will find them meaningful and inspiring as you move to the next phases of your lives. We send our best wishes to you and our sincere congratulations for all that you have accomplished!

Lonnie G. Bunch III's Graduation Speech to the Class of 2020
Lonnie G. Bunch III is the secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. He served as the founding director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture from 2005 to 2019, and as president and director of the Chicago History Museum (Chicago Historical Society) from 2000 to 2005.

Mary Lindemann's Graduation Speech to the Class of 2020
Dr. Mary Lindemann is professor of history and chair of the Department of History at the University of Miami, where she has taught since 2004 and where she offers courses on the history of early modern European, urban, and medical history. She is currently serving as the president of the American Historical Association.

--We hope you will stay in touch with us—with your favorite instructors and with the department. If you have not already done so, please “like” our Facebook page Memphis Historians and follow our student-run Instagram page uofm_historysociety. These are great ways to keep up with what our faculty and students are doing.

Daniel Unowsky
Chair | Catherine and Charles Freeburg Professor
Department of History