

History Happenings

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

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An artifact from a plague year: a Department of History faculty meeting over Zoom



What's Old is New

Greetings from the old (and new) editor of *History Happenings*, **Aram Goudsouzian**

Sometimes, historians chronicle changes over time. Sometimes, we trace the threads that tie us to the past. As I step back into the role of editor for *History Happenings*, I find myself doing both.

I edited the first issue of this newsletter seventeen years ago, right after joining the Department of History at the University of Memphis. Back then, I slept like a rock, and I could run down a soccer field without sending arthritic shocks through my knees. I had a lot more hair!

Looking back, I can see that publishing the newsletter immersed me in the life of my new academic home. I learned about the innovative research of my colleagues, the projects of our graduate students, and the accomplishments of our alumni. For that inaugural issue, I interviewed the renowned Columbia University historian Kenneth Jackson (B.A., Memphis State University, 1961) over lunch at Three Little Pigs Barbecue. I often reflect upon that experience.

From 2011 to 2019, when I was directing the Marcus W. Orr Center for the Humanities and then chairing the Department of History, my colleague Guiomar Duenas-Vargas took over *History Happenings*. If you ever scan the archives on the department's webpage, you will notice how the quality of the publication improved under her direction and the assistance of Amanda Lee Savage. Their dedication, creativity, and intellectual curiosity made *History Happenings* more stimulating and vibrant, and the department owes them big thanks.

It's hard to imagine that only six of my colleagues from 2004 are still members of the faculty. Most of one generation of historians have retired – including Maurice Crouse, with whom I worked on the newsletter. We have mourned the passing of Bob Brown, Abe Kriegel, Kell Mitchell, and Major Wilson.

Since that time, History has also evolved into one of the flagship departments at the University of Memphis. Our faculty have brought great esteem to the university through critically acclaimed books, prestigious fellowships, and public-facing scholarship that enriches the community around us. We own a reputation for outstanding teaching and advising, and under the leadership of former chair Janann Sherman, we pioneered an online program that became a model for other departments.

The past year has tested us, of course, as it has tested everyone. But we are proud of how we have responded. More than ever, we understand that to promote the ideals of the historical profession, we must put our faith in each other. A good department needs good people.

That's the theme for this edition of *History Happenings*. We are spotlighting the people who make a department. We are asking them questions and highlighting their voices. In the pages that follow, you will find our chair Dan Unowsky outlining the challenges posed by the COVID crisis. You'll read about our terrific faculty, as Catherine Phipps tells us about her research on imperial Japan, and Christine Eisel explains her innovative teaching. Mantri Sivvananda explains how he became one of our adjunct instructors.

But the department is more than faculty. You'll find interviews with our graduate students Danyel Clark, who helps coordinate West Tennessee History Day, and Greg Viessman, who is performing archaeological research in Egypt. Undergraduate students Ulysses Jones and Najah Muhammad tell us about their lives and classroom experiences. Our fantastic administrative associate Karen Bradley explains her critical role in the department and her long career at the University of Memphis.

Finally, we hope to emphasize that once you are part of the department, you are always with us. Get ready to learn about the amazing Sheena Harris, who graduated from our PhD program. Cody Fletcher, who received his BA from our department, is emerging as a leader in the university and the Memphis community. And Milton Moreland has risen to lofty heights that would surely impress his legendary mentor, Marcus Orr.

Enjoy the newsletter and stay in touch! You can reach me at agoudszn@memphis.edu and our department chair Dan Unowsky at dunowsky@memphis.edu.



From Student to President

In 2020, **Milton Moreland** became the 21st president of Centre College, a liberal arts institution in Danville, Kentucky. He traces that journey back to his undergraduate days at what was Memphis State University.



You have mentioned that when you were an undergraduate student, Dr. Marcus Orr was your mentor. Can you speak to his influence?

I came to the university with too much confidence and too little intellectual rigor. Along with many other faculty, Dr. Orr helped me channel that confidence into a desire to learn and encouraged me

to become more curious about the world around me. For many students who studied with him, he had an uncanny ability to humble us and build us up in the same conversation. It was a constant exchange of challenge and support. After four years of his advising and mentoring, I was unendingly curious about life on the planet. I had many more questions than answers. The faculty at Memphis helped me develop new lenses to explore the human experience, and I was ready to tackle the many challenges of graduate school at Claremont. Dr. Orr guided me to study with a plethora of excellent faculty at Memphis who opened my eyes to fields of study that I didn't know existed when I walked into his World Civilizations class as an 18-year-old.

How did your time at Memphis State shape your future scholarly pursuits?

My time at Memphis was life-changing. I met lifelong friends, including my wife Dina ('88, '05) who came to the university and played on the racquetball team. I took courses across the curriculum, and have fond memories of excellent faculty in the sciences, social sciences, literature and arts who were first-rate scholars and dedicated teachers. Of course, the faculty in History, Jewish Studies and Philosophy helped lay the foundation for my career as a scholar of religion and archaeology. I found my faculty to be great role models of teacher-scholars who encouraged students like myself to pursue their dreams and supported us as we explored graduate programs.

Many Memphis faculty had projects and worked on initiatives that dealt with entrenched social problems and issues related to justice, diversity, and equity. As I returned to Memphis after graduate school to teach at Rhodes, I attempted to find similar pathways into making my scholarship relevant to the Memphis community. By engaging in partnerships like the Zion Cemetery restoration project and the archaeological fieldwork in Fayette County at Ames, I was able to develop as a person through those partnerships, and hopefully have a positive impact on the region in and around Memphis.

While teaching at Rhodes College here in Memphis, you moved into academic administration, ultimately serving as the institution's chief academic officer. Why did you chose this path?

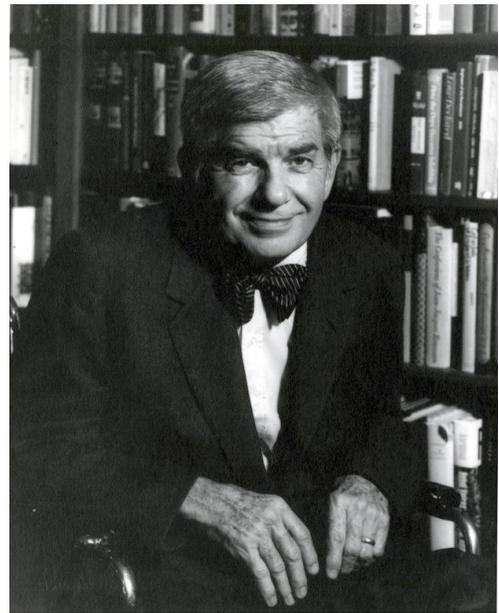
During my 17 years at Rhodes, I had the opportunity to lead several initiatives, participate in grant writing, and work with community partners. Directing the Rhodes Institute for Regional Studies, and serving as the founding director of the Lynne and Henry Turley Memphis Center, I dipped my toe into administrative work. The best part of administrative work is being able to support faculty and students, and provide much-needed resources for research and pedagogy. I've been happy to be in conversations about how we can support higher education and say "yes" to more good ideas. But I sorely miss teaching. And, while I still read each day, I can no longer keep up with the rigors of writing and scholarly production. I miss that part of my life but hope that as a provost and now a college president I'm able to support scholars and teachers and provide resources for their important work.



President Moreland and his trusted adviser, Blue

What advice do you have for any of our current history majors at the University of Memphis?

As a history major I came away feeling like I could find a way into a thoughtful consideration of many different entrenched human problems. I might not always figure out the answer, but I had skillsets that would allow me to conduct solid research, collect data, process information, and present it in a way that was understandable. The study of history and historiography has a way of humbling us — but also can capture our intellect and imagination, allowing us to be collaborative problem-solvers. I've enjoyed teaching widely on topics ranging from ancient religions to the archaeology of West Tennessee. Having a strong foundation in the study of history helped me be less intimidated throughout my career as I encountered new challenges and different theories and methods to think with. History is a wonderful field of study for those who want to prepare for an unknown world ahead. It may sound counterintuitive, but the academic study of history is a terrific preparation for the careers of the future that have yet to be invented.



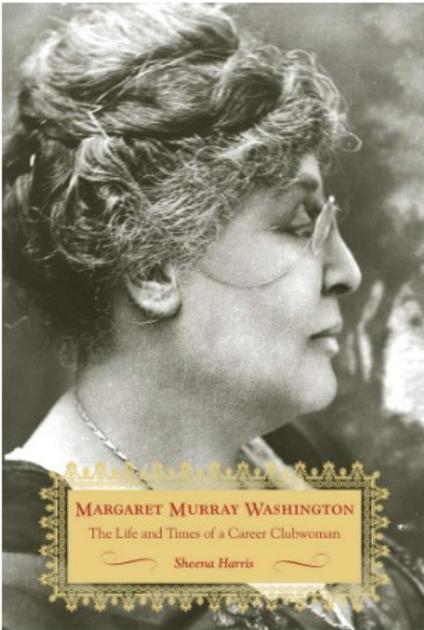
Marcus Orr, mentor to Milton Moreland and countless other students



“It was clear that Milton had a transformational intellectual experience as an undergraduate, which drives his love of learning to this day,” stated a board member at Centre College, upon the hiring of the new president.

Learning and Leadership

Sheena Harris earned her Ph.D. in History at the University of Memphis in 2012. An emerging leader at Tuskegee University, she is the author of the new book *Margaret Murray Washington: The Life and Times of a Career Clubwoman*.



Congratulations on your new book! Who was Margaret Murray Washington, and why was she important?

Margaret Murray Washington was a leading figure of the Black Women's Club Movement. She founded and presided over the Tuskegee Woman's Club, the National Federation of Afro-American Women, the National Association of Colored Women, the Alabama Federation of

Colored Women, the Southern Federation of Colored Women, and the International Council of Women of the Darker Races of the World. She was also the third wife of Booker T. Washington and the Lady Principal of Tuskegee Institute. Yet, beyond her marital status and extensive club work, Margaret Washington was a prolific educator and international humanitarian. Her life helps us to better understand the influential role Black women played in Institution building, social work, and the long civil rights movement.

What are your roles and responsibilities at Tuskegee University? What are your favorite parts of your job?

I am currently an Associate Professor of History and the Inaugural Director of Student Engagement Initiatives. I recently received a NEH grant to create a digital platform for TU's historic campus and archives. The grant purposefully weaves together my work in the classroom with my administrative duties.

As an administrator, I run the University's Lyceum Series, our Common Reading Experience, the President's Men and Women Leadership Program, and the University-Wide Honors Program. I serve as the advisor to Presidential Scholars. In addition, in 2016 I co-created the annual History Research Symposium where scholars and students across the nation present their research on our campus.

As you can see, I wear many hats. What I enjoy most is the op-

portunity to share with students and administrators the vast possibilities and skillsets of a historian.

How did your experience as a Ph.D. student at the University of Memphis shape your professional success?

While a student at the U of M I got my feet wet in the classroom and I had the pleasure of serving as the president of the Graduate Association of African American History (GAAAH). These opportunities were crucial to my success as an instructor, administrator, conference organizer, and scholar!

What advice would you give to our current graduate students?

Take advantage of the opportunities within the History department and the community. Don't be afraid to take on leadership roles and to ask the tough questions of yourself and your professors. Embrace critical feedback. If something doesn't exist, create it. Build relationships across campus – we all benefit from community. Find mentors and be willing to bring something to the table. Join and attend at least one national conference per year. Stay focused, engaged, and productive! Self-care is important for your scholarship! Plan ahead, be creative in your approach, and set realistic goals.

What are your goals for the future?

I'm looking forward to retirement on an exotic island! Until then, I plan to publish my second book on the first two wives of Washington and to complete my first full marathon within the next year!



Pull Up a Chair

Department chair **Dan Unowsky** describes running an academic department in the midst of a pandemic



The COVID-19 crisis started during your first year as department chair. What have been the biggest challenges for the department?

When the world realized the pandemic was truly out of control and infection rates soared in our region in the first weeks of March, we had to move our entire on campus schedule into the virtual environment with little notice. Our teachers are

caring and serious about course development and student achievement. They had designed their classes for the dynamic face-2-face experience. Shifting online with little notice while endeavoring to maintain the expected high quality, and when many had never taught online before, demanded complete buy-in and a great effort by all instructors.

This challenge continued into the fall. Not knowing what the health situation would be like, the university and our department had to plan for on-campus classes but build in the flexibility to move our schedule online—which is of course what happened in the end.

For us, the most important measure of our success in this difficult year must be student achievement. Judging by Spring and Fall 2020 student evaluations and success rates, our department succeeded in meeting this challenge. I am proud of what we were able to accomplish for our students.

Another major challenge has concerned our department's efforts to cultivate a sense of community. Over the past few years, we have sought to create an on-campus student community based in Mitchell Hall. At the center of this effort has been the HERC (History Educational Resource Center), both as our in-house tutoring center and as a gathering space where students and faculty can meet formally and informally. The move to virtual education has complicated our efforts at bolstering this sense of community. We have offered a full schedule of virtual events and gatherings, but we are certainly looking forward to a return to campus.

What has surprised you since you started as chair? What have been the biggest personal challenges?

One very pleasant surprise has been learning how positively the Department of History is viewed within the university as a whole. The university administration clearly recognizes and values our student and faculty accomplishments as well as our ever-stronger rankings for our on-campus and online undergraduate and graduate programs.

Perhaps my greatest personal challenge related to being chair has been finding a balance between moving forward in my own scholarly work and fulfilling the many tasks of the chair to the best of my ability. In this time of national emergency, the work of the chair has of course increased. In this context, my own scholarly projects, with the exception of the journal I edit (*Austrian History Yearbook*), have moved more slowly than I had hoped.

Looking to the future, what do you see as the major goals and directions for the department?

This is a difficult time for the humanities. With the cost of college rising, many students have turned to other fields, believing those to offer more direct paths to future employment. We must continue to make the case for the humanities, and we have a strong case to make. Studies have shown that history majors find jobs in a wide variety of occupations. They enjoy high standards of living and job satisfaction. The skills we teach—research, writing, creating arguments based on evidence—are valued by employers. But the case we make cannot be simply based on job outcomes. The humanities help us to learn to empathize with others, to understand how the world came to be as it is, to see the US in a larger global context. A humanities education makes us all better citizens of our country and of the world.

Here in Memphis, we live in a majority-minority city. Our department is committed to creating and maintaining a diverse and welcoming scholarly community. We will be increasing our efforts to attract a broader range of students to our courses and our major. Diversity is also at the center of our current and future plans for hiring new faculty.



A sweet treat in Warsaw, Poland

What courses have you been teaching? Which do you enjoy the most?

I was fortunate to be able to teach two of my favorite courses the past two semesters. In the fall 2020 semester, I taught a graduate course on the history of nations and nationalism in Europe. We conducted our weekly discussions via Zoom. The students were very focused on the material. Their presentations were substantive, and our discussions were lively. Every time I teach this course I add in a great deal of new scholarship. This time, I included more readings by a diverse group of authors as well as additional articles exploring questions of race, colonialism, and antisemitism in interwar Europe.

This current Spring 2021 semester, I am teaching Europe in the Age of Total War, 1914-45. I have taught this combined undergraduate/graduate course several times; however, this is the first time I offered the course as a fully asynchronous online class. This was a challenge, as I enjoy lecturing and integrating class discussions in every session of my undergraduate classes. I decided to design the online version of the course to mirror what I do in class as closely as possible. I turned my lectures into .pdfs, added weekly discussions and quizzes, linked additional readings, images, films, and music so that interested students could explore topics beyond what we were able to do together as a class. This experience has convinced me of the great benefits of online asynchronous learning. Every student had to interact. No one could avoid participation. There was more writing—I kept my usual writing assignments in addition to the weekly discussions. One of the challenges of online class discussions: it can be difficult to convey nuance in short discussion posts, and it is not always easy to keep discussion on track and on topic when contemporary events seem to echo the history of this most explosive period of 20th century history.

Assuming international travel restrictions are lifted, you are going to be a Visiting Fulbright Professor at the University of Salzburg next fall. What are your plans for this experience?

Right now, as you might have heard, European countries have fallen behind the US in vaccinations. I am still hopeful that I can go to Austria in the fall, but it is possible my plans might change, and I would remain in Memphis. If I do get to Salzburg, I have a full program ahead of me. I am set to offer two undergraduate courses—one on the history of antisemitism, the other on Modern Poland. Each class is seminar-style. They each meet one time a week. From Salzburg I will regularly travel to Vienna to utilize the archives and libraries there. I also plan research trips to Warsaw, Poland and to Lviv, Ukraine as I work on two projects: 1) I am researching a spectacular series of trials in the 1880s in which a Jewish couple from Galicia, today divided between Poland and Ukraine, were falsely accused of having killed a Christian woman for ritual purposes; 2) My second project explores the history of the town and beer brewery of Żywiec, Poland, as a window into how the great transformations of the 19th and 20th century—industrialization, world war, mass murder, population transfer, fascism, communism—affected eastern Europe.



At a conference in Florence, Italy

One Step at a Time

Ulysses Jones, who is pursuing his BA in History online, reflects on challenges and opportunities

Can you tell us about your life and some of your early challenges as a student?

I was born in raised in Memphis – that’s why it’s “Memphis State” to me and always will be! Once I saw Keith Lee play, son, I was locked in. School was never easy for me for one reason or another. I became a firefighter for 10 years (MFD forever), I got hurt really bad, and because of massive damage to my spine, my arms and legs wouldn’t function. I was in a wheelchair for about four years. But GOD. My broken spirit was weaker than the strength of HIS will. I’ve been out the wheelchair for about four years now.

How and why did you come back to college?

Before my life got off track – before the wheelchair, MS, the MFD, all the jobs and experiences – my original plan was to be a teacher. My best friend was going to teach math, and I was going to teach English and history/social studies at Snowden. Once I was starting to get out of the wheelchair, I had to think of something to do, I thought about teaching again, and I decided that teaching civics would be a good idea, since it entails a lot of history, I went back and finished my associates degree and then enrolled in Memphis State to pursue a master’s in history.



Why did you choose our online program?

I don’t know that I so much “chose” the online classes, as there were not a lot of options for me at the time.

What have been your favorite classes? Why?

My favorite classes have been in History, because its my major area of study. The professors have been knowledgeable and

engaging and personable. They go to lengths to not only teach and give information but to paint a picture of the material so you can mentally put your hands on abstract concepts. That’s very much appreciated. I’ve only had one bad experience and I don’t think it was the instructor’s fault – I think it was more so the circumstances of the time, and from what I understand, the professor is an outstanding teacher.

The advisors have also been great. The people in the department seem to want you to succeed. That is not always the case everywhere, because there are people who seem to want to

play “gotcha” and trip you up. But the people you deal with at Memphis State seem to want you to succeed.

What are your plans for after you graduate?

My plans after graduation are to teach. As someone once told me, if it is in you, you tend to think of things to do and to innovate ahead of time, with GOD putting things on your heart. To question the “who, what, when, where, and how” of a situation and rightly apply it to situations – to filter the emotional and cultural framework so that the truth and application can be seen and applied – that’s what I want to be able to convey and to teach others to do that.

Do you have any advice for other non-traditional or online students?

If you are going to learn, the question has to be asked: To what end? You can find information, context, details and application at Memphis State. While you are in the midst of doing so, you are going to find great teachers, leaders, and advisors, to give you direction and resources to navigate that direction. Things “seem” big and they may be, but it doesn’t mean you can’t conquer it. You chip it away bit by bit. If it takes you four years, then after two, the four is a smaller hill to climb. A year later you are in the home stretch. When you have one class to go, it is a goal as opposed to a journey. What seemed big is easier to take when you walk one step at a time.

On Japan and Empire and History

Associate Professor **Catherine Phipps** describes her journey into Japan's past and her life at the university

How did you become interested in Japanese history? How did your understanding of that history evolve as you became a trained scholar?

My interest in history started with Japan, not the other way around. In college, I wanted to study abroad, picked Japan, and quickly fell in love with learning about the country and its language. After graduating from college, I returned to Osaka on the Ministry of Education's JET Program and stayed for three years. When I entered the History PhD program at Duke University, I was excited to be working toward a career that would keep me engaged with Japan. I hadn't previously majored in history, so studying Japan in historical perspective deepened my knowledge of its long, difficult, and fascinating past. Through my graduate education I learned that building a framework of historical knowledge is not simply an ongoing process of accumulation, but rather requires continually challenging and reinterpreting that knowledge. As a trained scholar, I've come to feel that being part of the conversation and contributing to the production of knowledge about Japan and its place in the world is a hugely rewarding endeavor.



At the Cup Noodles Museum in Yokohama

*What are your research interests?
What are you working on now?*

My primary areas of research are maritime history, historical geography, global history, imperialism, and mobility. My first book, *Empires on the Waterfront: Japan's Ports and Power, 1858-1899*, is about Japan's seaports, the international coal trade, and imperialism. I'm currently working on a few different projects, including a journal article, "Mobility in an Age of Revolutions and Empires: A Japanese Globe-Trotter's Late-Nineteenth-Century World," that I may later turn into a book. In the meantime, however, I'll be spending the summer writing a more accessible general history of Japan's modern age in global perspective, which is under contract with Routledge and is tentatively titled *Japan in the World*.

What is your favorite course to teach? Why?

Perhaps not surprisingly, my favorite class is Modern Japan. I love discussing the country, its history, and current happenings in new and exciting ways every time I teach it. If students in the class aren't already greatly interested in Japan when they register, my hope is that they leave sharing the love!

You became the Director of the Program in International and Global Studies in January 2018. How has this experience changed your professional life?

Taking this position has changed my professional life in numerous ways. I'll offer three of them here. First, being director has enabled me to engage with students, faculty, staff, and administrators across campus, broadening my appreciation for and understanding of the complex systems that go into running a university. Second, I've gotten the chance to enhance the global dimensions of my own work. Third and most importantly, as an advisor, I get to work with students throughout their college years and beyond. It's an honor to help them navigate their academic journeys to get from where they are as incoming students to where they want to go after graduation.

How has COVID shaped your life as a professor?

Conducting all my academic work—research, teaching, and administration—from home (and with my family nearby) has created some challenges for sure. For example, I spend way too much time in Zoom meetings. That said, one positive development is being able to join research talks, conferences, and book launches being held all over the world. While I wouldn't want it to replace travel, I do hope this kind of access continues well after the pandemic takes its rightful place in the past.

How to be a Historian

Through the National History Day program, Ph.D. student **Danyel Clark** trains youngsters in the skills of history

You started working this year as the graduate assistant for Susan O'Donovan, coordinating West Tennessee History Day. Can you tell us about the National History Day program? What is your role?

Prior to becoming the graduate assistant for West Tennessee History Day, I served as a judge each year since the 2017 contest. Making the transition from judge to assistant coordinator has given me the opportunity to learn all aspects of HD. National History Day is a yearlong program that teaches students 6th to 12th grade how to do historical research. With an annual theme as a guide to exploring topics, students select a category (documentary, exhibit, paper, performance, website) to present their research. Starting with the regional contest, students can advance to the state level and then to the national competition. As the assistant coordinator, I handle the administrative duties and planning of the regional contest. In addition to those tasks, I assist Dr. O'Donovan with the outreach to educators and students. We offer workshops for brainstorming project ideas, help students sort through primary sources, and provide feedback to students as they put the final touches to their projects.

What has been the most rewarding experience of working on History Day? The most challenging?

By far, working with the students is the most rewarding part of my experience with History Day. The students produce great work and for those that participate in our workshops, I can watch their progress from the beginning stages to the final project. Planning a contest of this size with so many moving parts during a pandemic was the most challenging aspect for WTHD 2021. Like everyone else, we moved everything online. Since we were not able to do in-person visits to schools, I held weekly virtual office hours for students to discuss all things contest-related. Despite these challenges, participation amongst students and judges was still high.

How do you think your History Day experience will shape your professional life after you have finished your Ph.D.?

Like all my other graduate assistant assignments, this position builds off what I am learning as I train to be a historian and educator. History Day introduces students to the task of historians. This experience allows me to assist students in the process of historical research. As a result, I get to further develop the skills that I will need to be an effective educator and researcher. In addition to these skills, HD gives me the opportunity to interact with people that are not professional historians. Having attended book talks and other speaking engagements, I know taking part in these public events will be part of my professional life and HD has been a good training in how I can explain the work of historians to people outside of the profession.

What is your area of academic interest? Do you know your dissertation topic?

My major field of study is US History to 1877 and minor fields of African and African American History. Some of my areas of interest include 19th century, US history, black women, racial violence, and the Reconstruction era. My dissertation topic will focus on the African American community in Pulaski, Tennessee, and its response to the formation of the Ku Klux Klan in the aftermath of the Civil War. In addition to being of academic interest, this topic is close to me because my family is from Pulaski and they were part of the community during this period.

What advice do you have for someone who is considering graduate school in History?

Be prepared to read a lot (ha!). I think with any program, it is important to get an idea of how the department supports graduate students. With graduate school being such a serious commitment, you want to be in an environment that gives you the tools to be successful. More specific to the discipline of history, identify programs and professors who have research interests that align with your own. That way you can see how good of a fit that program is for your academic goals.



Making an Impact

Since graduating from the University of Memphis in 2014, **Cody Fletcher** has been serving the university and the city



Why did you choose the University of Memphis? Why did you major in History?

I chose the University of Memphis for a few reasons. I'm a lifelong Memphian and Tigers fan so the University has always played a role in my life in one form or another. I began working in high school and continued during college, and the University of Memphis has always been a flexible and understanding of the needs of working

students. I majored in History because I've always enjoyed the study of ancient civilizations and the impact they have on modern day society. I also respect the ability of a person to think objectively and analytically about ideas, and this is something learned during the study of history.

What were your best experiences with the Department of History?

I always enjoyed tackling subjects that were completely foreign to me. There were classes I'd sign up for with no previous knowledge of the subject, which would end up being some of my favorite topics still to this day. One example was a History of the Caribbean class, which I took with Andy Daily. It was incredibly fascinating.

How has the study of history shaped your career?

I believe the most important skills developed in the study of history are the ability to analyze problems, see them from every angle, and communicate issues in a concise and cohesive manner. Every job I've held, from radio broadcaster to tour guide to non-profit leader has required extensive use of communication and analytical skills. Whether it's writing a grant,

giving a presentation, or selling an idea, every action is influenced in some way by skills developed during the study of history. Being successful in any field also entails being empathetic to others and receptive to new ideas or change. Studying past events and the way people responded to challenges provides a framework for approaching modern challenges.

You recently ran for Memphis City Council. What was that experience like? Will you run for office again?

Running for local office was an exciting and rewarding experience. It was also grueling and frustrating at times, but it allowed me to meet so many people who I otherwise never would've had contact with. It's a great way to get to know your city and its citizens on a deeper level. It's something that requires a huge commitment on many levels and I appreciate any person who steps up and desires to serve their community. I have always had a strong interest in participating to the fullest extent in the world around me, so I would not be surprised if I decided to run again.

What is your current job at the University of Memphis?

I work in the Office of Economic Development and Government Relations. My job is to manage a non-profit economic development organization called the University Neighborhoods Development Corporation. Our primary mission is to facilitate and incentivize economic investment in the University District. Currently, we're set to begin construction on Phase 1 of the Highland Streetscapes Improvements Project this summer; this is a roughly \$15,000,000 investment in the public realm along Highland Street. The goal is to make the area more comfortable and safer for pedestrians, most of whom are students of the University of Memphis who patronize restaurants and other businesses on the Highland Strip. My job also includes frequent contact with local government agencies and elected officials, so there is a government relations aspect as well.



The Highland Strip, reimagined

Starting with the Students

Instructor **Christine Eisel** owns a well-deserved reputation for innovative teaching, especially in the online format

What are the biggest challenges when teaching online courses? What are the greater opportunities?

The challenges are many, but they are in all courses, really, so I guess I just look at them as different. From a design perspective, I see the course plan and layout as critical components to teaching online. There's no "winging it," yet knowing where to build in flexibility matters. This has evolved for me over time, as I have been better able to connect my own pedagogical style and preferences to good course design. For me, that has meant to think more deeply about student learning objectives: What do I want students to get out of this assignment? Out of this course? Then I building the course around those objectives in a way that most benefits the student and best relays what and how I want to teach. I see that as both a challenge and an opportunity because it has improved (I think!) my courses over the last few years.

One of the other big challenges is realizing the many barriers to student learning and success that can seem inherent in this format. Students really need to buy into the format, so again, that goes back to good course design. It also makes me think a little bit harder about how I engage with students and help keep them engaged with their peers and the course material. Weekly emails, virtual office hours (even before the current Covid-19 situation!), and early intervention tools all help with that. Working through those barriers, I see the amazing opportunities that online teaching can bring to my students. We can get really creative with assignments and projects.

How has your approach to teaching evolved since you started at the University of Memphis?

I started at the University of Memphis in 2012! Time flies! I think my approach to teaching has become more student-centered — as in "what and how do I want them to learn?" rather than "how do I want to teach?" Starting from a student perspective (based on surveys, evaluations, comments during the semester, informal discussions with students) has helped me continuously re-evaluate and update courses. It's helped, too, that all of my courses function pretty similarly, so students know what to expect should they choose to follow me from one course to another.

What is your favorite course to teach? Why?

Geez, hard question. It's probably whatever course in which I'm currently involved! From a gen-ed perspective, I really love teaching American Ideas and Culture. It's outside of my usual early American and women's history courses, so it makes me work a little bit harder, but I have loved what the students have brought to this course over the last couple of semesters (especially since we changed the course title from Intellectual and Social History — we actually have a discussion early in the semester about the name change). The course lets us take a deep dive into ideas and issues that still resonate today (including "anti-intellectualism") so they seem really invested in understanding the intellectual foundations of the present day. I'm loving teaching Witchcraft, Magic, and Sorcery in Early America remotely this semester. The scholarship is vast and it allows us to take both a really broad view (starting in Europe, Africa, and indigenous America) and conduct a focused examination on one place and time (Salem, obviously). The scholarship and sources are so rich, though, that students learn so much about differing views on a gamut of issues, from religion to gender to sexuality to government.



Can you tell us about your research on women in 17th century Virginia? Has it shaped your teaching in any way?

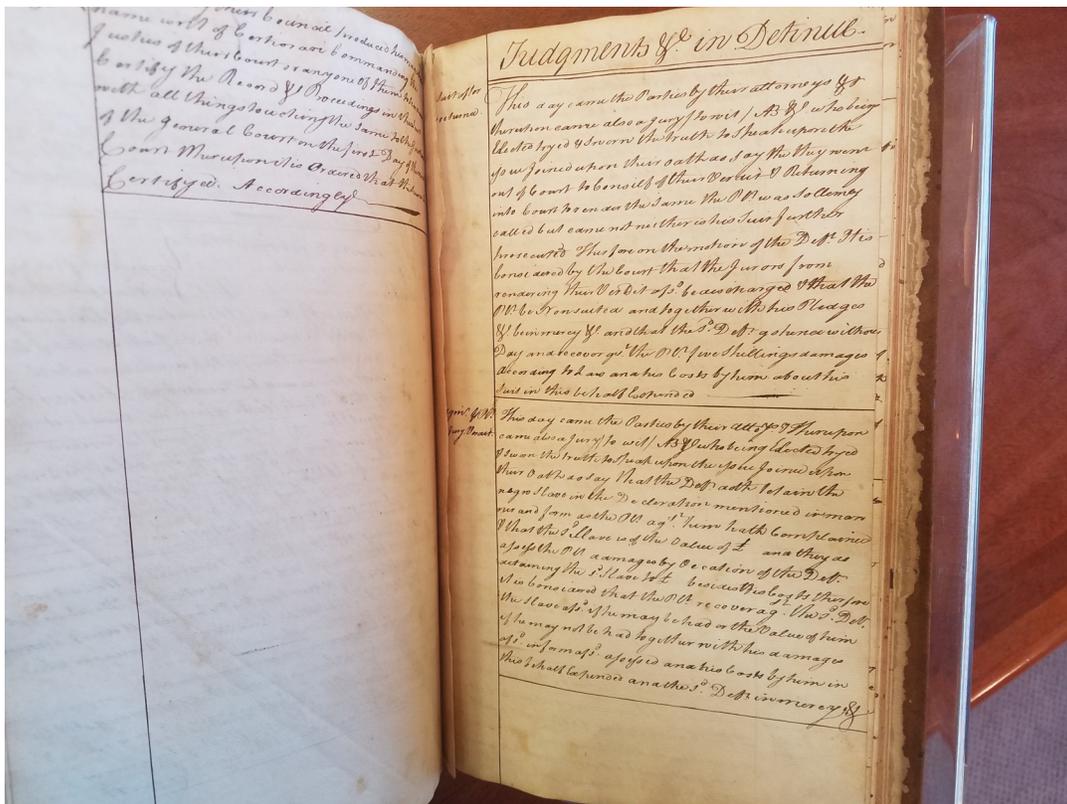
I study (mainly) women's gossip in early Virginia. In a series of case studies, I show how women's speech influenced the shape and direction of Virginia's legal and political culture in its formative years. English culture defined gossip in gendered terms as trivial and irresponsible, and Virginia's colonial assembly indeed found women's words troublesome. Through their gossip, women had the potential to become powerful and dangerous and Virginia's assembly gave local magistrates considerable latitude in responding to it. The cases I examine show some of the ways Early Americans adapted English law and institutions to meet their own needs.

I incorporate bits of my research in nearly every upper division and graduate course I teach. Gossip tells us so much to us about people of the past. What people talked about, how it was recorded, how it was viewed, and whether it was challenged or accepted all reveal social, economic, and political networks. My work moves from the micro-historical level to the macro (county to colony to empire), so I tend to think that way when I teach as well. How can I get students to think about and understand bigger processes by looking at something very specific? That question is central to how I teach.

What have been your biggest professional challenges during the COVID-19 crisis? How have you navigated them?

My focus has really been on making sure that, despite the current crisis, students still learn and succeed in my courses, and that's been tough for so many of them. I can design the best course and make myself more available (virtually) than ever, but that work can't always overcome the many challenges they face, so that can be frustrating. I've had to learn to be much more flexible, but in ways that still maintain the learning objectives of any particular course. So it's been, for me, a lot of re-evaluation of expectations and how can I help students navigate those that work for all of us.

I do miss, too, just being present on campus, seeing colleagues and students in person, getting in my daily steps walking across campus! I've tried to stay connected via virtual seminars, which have been great and gives me (and even some of my students!) access to scholarship-in-progress that I wouldn't otherwise have access to.



A reference book from a county clerk in 18th century Virginia, one of the key sources for Christine Eisel's research

Analyzing the Past, Understanding the Present

Undergraduate student **Najah Muhammad** discusses how history helps her see the world

Why did you decide to major in History?

I majored in History because I enjoyed it. When I enrolled, I originally declared Engineering, but during orientation I realized that I hardly found Engineering interesting. When I talked to my Engineering advisor, she suggested I spend my freshman year undecided and try different Gen Eds to figure out what I wanted to major in. As I worked through my requirements, I learned that I still didn't know what I wanted to spend the rest of my life doing, but that my favorite classes were in History and other Humanities subjects. I chose to declare a major I could commit to completing, even if it didn't feel like my calling, so I declared a History major.



What have been your favorite classes so far?

I've liked all of my classes, but some of them really stuck with me. The World History surveys were refreshing breaks from high school's constant US History, and they sold me on the major. Life and Death in Ancient Egypt reminded me of the World History classes, and it was one of the few classes I enjoyed doing homework for at 1:00 am. US Sport History is another 1:00 am favorite, and it's making me regret that I didn't

play more sports as a kid. 20th Century US Sexuality taught me that interviews aren't nearly as scary as they seem and that I'm interested in queer theory. Finally, Conspiracy Theories in America taught me that modern conspiracy theories are slightly-updated versions of those from the past.

How has your training in history affected the way that you view the world around you?

My history classes helped me see the context and parallels for current events and trends. I've especially noticed this with the current crisis of masculinity. In US Since 1877, I learned about how American men had been feeling lost since the West Coast was colonized, so they turned to rough sports like boxing and football to feel secure in their masculinity. Then Sport History explored how men used those sports to express their masculinity. Combine that with how 20th Century Sexuality said there still isn't a healthy role model for masculinity, and you understand why tactical diaper bags exist.

Do you know what you plan to do after you graduate?

My postgraduate plans are somewhat vague right now. I plan to focus on self-care and enjoying the things I missed out on during social distancing: lifting weights, spending time with my friends, etc. Career-wise, I'll ideally figure out some semblance of a career path before I graduate, but if I don't, I can fall back on my Spanish major or my Anthropology minor. Failing that, I'll take whatever job that pays my bills and that I somewhat like. I'm considering coming back for grad school in the future, but if I decide to, I'll need to take a few years' break first.

What do you want to learn more about?

I'd like to go more in-depth with all the classes I've taken, but I mainly want to learn more about pop culture, especially in the 20th century, because it was an important part of several of my favorite classes and because it might explain why trends come back every few decades. I also want to learn more about queer theory since it was important in 20th Century Sexuality and since it's overlooked in other classes. Finally, I'd like to learn more ancient history because of its dramatic events and figures.

The Heartbeat in History

Administrative associate **Karen Bradley** knows better than anyone else what makes the Department of History tick

When did you begin working in the Department of History? How has the department changed during your time here?

In 1995 my first job was working in the Office of the President. The University was undergoing a RIF—reduction in force—and I was hired to work with the person in charge. The job lasted about 18 months. It was an interesting introduction to the administration side of university employment. I started looking for other openings here, because U of M supported and encouraged staff to work to one's highest ability, to pursue creative solutions, and to interact with other staff to learn, to grow. I was lucky to be hired to work for Dr. Charles Crawford, as Secretary, for The Oral History Research Office. It was a vibrant and welcoming workplace. About five years later, when the admin for the Department of History retired, I applied for her job and won it.

There can be little doubt that technology drives change at the University, and from the late 1990s through the present, I think you can safely say we have participated in a technology revolution. No more typewriters or ditto machines. Believe it! It has been a quantum leap this year, to almost complete digital documentation, making it easier to maintain standards and store information. Now a document is always ready to share, to review, and to improve. . . as long as you have electricity, or battery power, and internet connections. Haven't we had some doozies of power outages? Times like those are successful reminders that we are still interacting with other humans: to walk across campus to work things out in conversation can be enormously energizing.

What is your role in the department? How has it evolved?

I started out as with a title of "secretary" in OHRO dealing with courses, students, the general public, and equipment. I took a lot of organizing and acclimating to annual academic cycles. Working for the department as an "administration assistant" meant taking on more complex administrative responsibilities, and finally, transitioning to "administrative associate" added greater fiscal responsibilities. It was a "big picture" jump, for



sure, but still required daily attention to details. Looking back, after 25 years at U of M and almost 20 in History, I see that the department stands out as continually creating and supporting opportunities for faculty, student, and staff growth. These are good people and their minds are sharp and their work is fascinating and compelling.

What have been the challenges of COVID-19, from an administrative and staff perspective?

First of all, I like my one-person zone. I tend to work deeply focused, so nowadays with fewer interruptions, it's easier to adapt when necessary. Actually, the innovations in routine tasks (like Zoom meetings, digitalization of documents including signatures, emails as 24-hour info/document carriers) throughout the university, have alleviated quite a bit of stress and improved and facilitated routine processes. It's easier to incorporate time to think, too. I think it is possible that Karen Jackett (the department's other administrative assistant) and I talk more frequently; we have probably learned more from each other than we might have being in the same office. There are some changes whose time had come and only habits were holding us back.

What is your favorite part of working here? Least favorite?

My favorite part is that every day is different and there are always puzzles to solve. A lot of work can be done right away—I take intense satisfaction in that. My least favorite is anything I procrastinate about.

How do you spend your time, when not at Mitchell Hall? What are your hobbies and leisure activities?

I read. More than anything else I read.

In the Shadow of the Pyramids

Ph.D. student **Greg Viessman** explains how archaeology can shape our understanding of ancient history

Your dissertation concerns the location of pyramid complexes in Old Kingdom Egypt. What questions are you asking? What are you seeking to learn?

There are many small questions that I am asking in my dissertation, but the biggest one pertains to why pharaohs chose a specific location for their pyramid complexes. The Old Kingdom spanned 500 years and 24 pyramid complexes were constructed (not all of them were finished though). They are spread along 28 miles across the western desert edge of the Nile. The location of ancient Memphis as the administrative capital played a factor, but there were other considerations, such as practical purposes and a sense of history. Access to limestone and proximities to bodies of water to transport other materials more easily are only two practical factors. Furthermore, based on the sheer size of some of these pyramid complexes, the pharaohs wanted to be remembered and there was a historical consciousness that connected them. Most likely this is only a small portion of what connected a pharaoh such as Khufu, who built the Great Pyramid, and Pepi II, who built his pyramid complex 300 years later. It gives a glimpse into the lives of these men who lived over 4,000 years ago.

You spent two field seasons on excavations in the shadow of the Great Pyramid and Sphinx. What was this experience like?

Though my second field season was cut short due to the pandemic, the first season was the most awe-inspiring event of my life. This was the first time I ever participated on an archaeological excavation and even the first time I left the country. The best part of every day was walking across Giza Plateau to the Menkaure Valley Temple at 7 am when there were no tourists, horses, or camels. It was calming yet surreal. My site supervisor Dan, the project director Mark Lehner, and others were patient with me as I learned on the job and became part of the team. I never felt overwhelmed. The work was difficult at times, but there was a nice laid-back feeling to the whole excavation process.

How do you see the relationship between the disciplines of archaeology and history? When combined, what insights can they give us?

They are intertwined with one another, especially when it comes to ancient history. This inter-disciplinary approach is crucial because traditional historical sources such as archives only give a fragment of the larger picture. The archaeological record tells us more about ancient Egypt and other ancient so-



cieties mainly because more of it survives compared to textual evidence. While each discipline has its own theoretical approaches, each can provide another puzzle piece. In order to construct the stories of the people of the past, we need to combine scholarship from the humanities and the sciences.

Does your interest your interest in archaeological and architectural remains filter into your teaching?

Yes. I make sure to emphasize these aspects in both halves of World History. Apart from the ancient Egyptian archaeological and architectural remains, I emphasize the remains from sites such as Göbekli Tepe, the Great Wall of China, Cahokia, and Machu Picchu. My classes are structured where I only lecture when necessary (such as giving crucial background information that the textbook does not cover) and active participation from the students is a requirement. While my students read primary sources each week on the society or time period we are discussing at the time, I also make sure to include images of these remains. For example, most of my past students understood Incan society more when I showed them some of the architectural remains that Hernando Pizarro described in a letter to his superiors. They see Pizarro's biases and understand the complexity of Incan life.

What are your goals upon finishing your Ph.D.?

I love teaching. I knew that I possibly wanted to teach during my master's program at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville when I got to lead discussion sections once a week. However, after the first time teaching on my own using a syllabus I put together, teaching became my top priority once I finish my Ph.D. I also fell in love with excavating in Egypt. My dream scenario is being hired by a history department teaching World History and Egyptology courses with the opportunities to excavate in Egypt during the year as well.

“An Interesting Turn of Events”

Adjunct instructor **Mantri Sivananda** reflects on teaching our students and following his own path as a historian

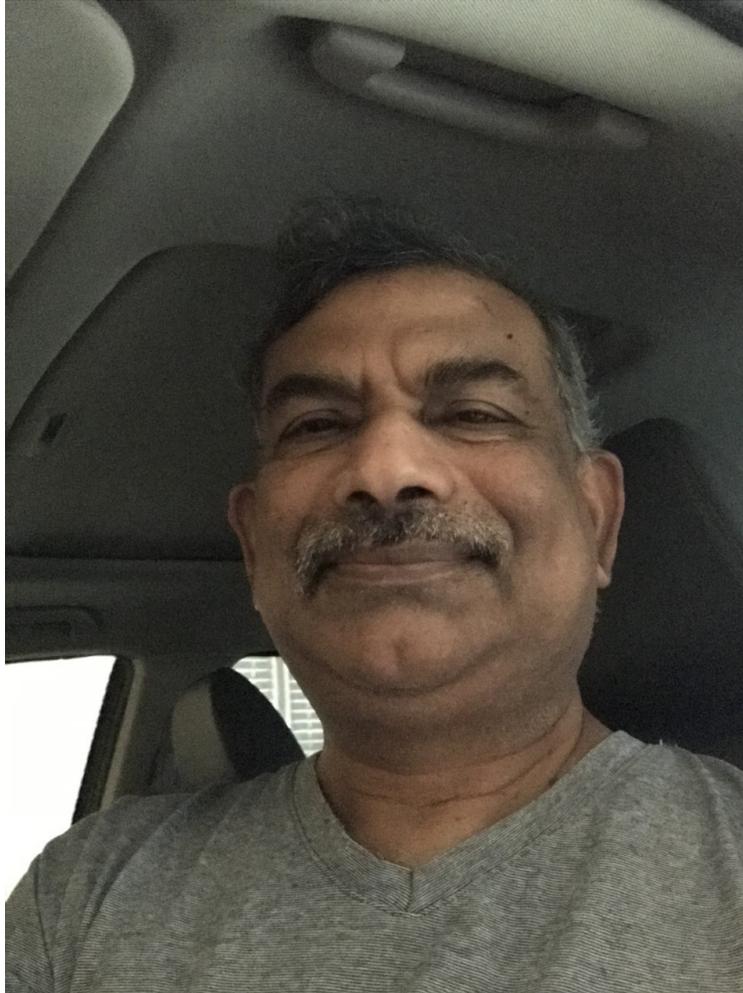
*What are the challenges of teaching as an adjunct instructor?
What are the rewards?*

Let us first look at the challenges and then to the rewards. The first challenge is getting students to class; the solution to this challenge is giving incentives to students for instance attendance grade or rounding up border line grades. The second challenge is that many students are not interested in History (since their majors are biological sciences or nursing or engineering or Computer Science or sports); the solution to this problem is linking history lectures with other disciplines. The third challenge is grades, since all students want nothing less than an A or B; the solution to this problem is to cross all your T's and dot your I's with your grading policy and to engage one-on-one with students about what might have gone wrong.

Remote teaching has both advantages and disadvantages. One the one hand, our learning platform of eCourseware puts all the tools of an on-ground class within our reach. But the main problem is the lack of face-to-face interaction. We all miss the real classroom environment.

Now to the rewards. It certainly gives me the satisfaction that as an adjunct, I am helping the students, the department, and the university (my alma mater). It is not the financial reward, but personal satisfaction that we are providing the best service we can. It is also rewarding to look at the same subject with a new perspective. Creative teaching comes with intuition, a new cognition, and a new understanding of the same subject. Lectures do not need to be just a straight line from A to B. In the

process of teaching a class, as we get students' input, we may add something new on the spot, which we never read before and tie the subject to another situation or another discipline – such as when I recently tied the Cold War to the painter Jackson Pollock and the Museum of Modern Art.



What is your favorite course to teach? Why?

I love teaching the survey course of US History since 1877. This is the time frame that includes many events from the end Reconstruction to rise of Donald Trump. It intersects with other disciplines from economics (from John Keynes to Reaganomics) to sociology (race and the underclass, blue and white collar workers) to political science (cycles of American politics) to the environment (global warming) to African American Studies (from civil rights to Black Lives Matter) to sports (Jackie Robinson, Joe DiMaggio, Tiger Woods, and whoever is the next big sports icon). Also one of the most fascinating aspects is how the debate on immigration changed over time. I am part of this debate. This time frame is a watershed and allows us to study many “isms” (liberalism, conservatism, capitalism, McCarthyism, communism, pluralism, feminism, Trumpism). It is multi-disciplinary and multi-faceted, and it establishes a platform for the future and ties the past to the present. For these reasons, I certainly find U S Since 1877 the most fascinating part of American History.

How did you decide to become a historian?

An interesting turn of events made me a historian. I was a biological science major but was denied admission to medical school and master's programs in biological science. That left me with one alternative, which is archaeology. I was an Ancient Indian Archaeology major and then switched over to Modern India, which had close ties to American History, as the Indian Freedom Movement adopted the enlightenment ideals of the American Revolution, and Franklin Roosevelt and Mohandas Gandhi communicated with each other during the movement for Indian independence. Also, the Great Depression devastated both countries. While studying the Great Depression in India, I was introduced to the New Deal, and that was the point where I got interested in American history. Hence I became a historian because of circumstances and by default. I have never regretted being a historian.

Your dissertation was about Henry Loeb (pictured here), the infamous mayor of Memphis during the 1968 Sanitation Strike. Why did you choose this topic, and what did you learn about him?

The reference desk staff at the Memphis Public Library, Patricia Lapointe and Wayne Dowdy, introduced me to Henry Loeb and his archival papers. After going through the sources available, the topic seemed interesting.

Loeb was controversial in almost every aspect. He was a staunch segregationist along the lines of Alabama Governor George Wallace. He was a Democrat-turned-Republican and very conservative. In 1968, he had absolutely no concern for the conditions and wages of the striking sanitation workers. He ignored his own advisors, who urged him to change course. He had his own problems: he was stubborn, with no room for a second thought. Loeb put Memphis on the national map during the sanitation strike that led to the assassination of Dr. King. This got the attention of President Lyndon Johnson. In the midst of criticism and backlash, Loeb decided not to run for another term. He left Memphis for Forrest City, Arkansas, where he pursued a business career and stayed active in local politics. He owned Loeb Dutch Treat Luncheon, which catered to mainly white conservative Republicans, until his death 1992.



Loeb, to a large extent, reminds me of Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity. Had he been alive today, he would have certainly been part of Trumpism.

But even though Loeb was racist, he appointed African Americans to the hospital board and some high positions in the city. He had some principles. He was honest, a family man, married once, with a clean character. There are several instances where he came forward to help those in need. Despite his brash outward demeanor, he was a kind and compassionate man within. His friends admired him, even though many people disliked him.

What advice would you give to someone who is teaching their first college history class?

For any teacher walking into the classroom for the first time, whether on-ground or virtual or hybrid, it is important to make a strong first impression, since students will carry it throughout the semester. You can project confidence and a clear message, assuring students that you are there as not only their teacher but also their well-wisher. You can also communicate

that you will be a facilitator for the course and will be there with them through the semester.

Technology is another important aspect. On the back end, the professor can create a good course shell and syllabus design. Planning also involves organizing and preparing course lectures, course content management, learning modules, and uploading images, tables, text, and videos wherever necessary.

Back end design needs a platform. I recommend taking a training course on campus that helps you to use the available technologies.

On the front end, the most important element is the lecture. Lecture should include not just the information from the prescribed textbook, but should also place the topic in a broader context. Connect your lectures to other disciplines and everyday experience. Leave the room open for discussions or opinions. Be the first to arrive in class and be the last to leave. Email, chats, zoom sessions are like extended classroom features. Use these features for office hours, one-on-one sessions, or communication with the class. Include your contact number so that the students can reach out to you.