

Department of



AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, D.C.

HISTORY

College of Arts and Sciences

NEWSLETTER 2013-2014

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AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

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Banner Year for History Faculty Books

This past year, American University's Department of History made history of its own. Ten faculty published eight books—three monographs, two co-authored books, and three co-edited books.

How to explain it? "Not only are our faculty remarkably productive," says Pamela Nadell, History Department chair, "but the department also has an exciting synergy. Richard Breitman and Allan Lichtman's *FDR and the Jews*, for example, came out of a friendship and meeting of the minds of colleagues over more than three decades."

Turn to page 5 for a brief rundown of the Department of History's crowded shelf of recently published books.

Adapted from web article by Charles Spencer.

Roosevelt Neither Hero Nor Villain for the Jews

In their new book, *FDR and the Jews* (Belknap of Harvard University Press), American University Distinguished Professors of History



Courtesy of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Museum.

Richard Breitman and Allan J. Lichtman show that previous accounts of Franklin Roosevelt's responses to Jewish suffering during World War II, which paint him either as indifferent or as a savior, fail to reveal the full complexities of Roosevelt and his presidency.

FDR's paper trail was sur-

prisingly limited. "We describe him as one of the most private leaders in American history," Breitman said. "FDR wrote no memoirs and precious few revealing letters, notes, or memos." FDR also did not regularly tape conversations in the Oval Office. He even prohibited minutes at cabinet meetings or other presidential meetings so as to encourage people to speak freely.

While Breitman was working on another project, he and his colleagues discovered a previously unknown document reconstructing an April 1938 conversation in which FDR said he would like to get all the Jews out of Europe. Struck by the document's implications, Breitman joined with his friend and American University colleague Lichtman, a renowned presidential historian.

Together, the two historians scoured numerous archives and

libraries to locate previously unused documents. Ultimately, they reconstructed a nuanced portrait of FDR's response to Jewish struggles, showing how his attitudes and policies evolved over time.

"While most of FDR's peers and their families would have espoused antisemitic beliefs, FDR did not," Lichtman said. "His parents inculcated tolerance in him and led by example. His mother was involved in Jewish charitable work and received an award for her efforts."

Breitman and Lichtman debunk several claims of Roosevelt's indifference to Jewish refugees and concentration camp deaths. The book also provides fresh insight into FDR's position on Palestine and his relations with Jewish advocates and world leaders.

In a discussion with important implications for today,

Breitman and Lichtman reveal how limited information, bureaucratic languor, and domestic political pressures can prevent a president from responding to foreign atrocities as forcefully or as quickly as circumstances demand.

"We have seen examples of this with other presidents known as liberal humanitarians, such as Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton," Lichtman said. "And now, President Barack Obama is challenged with what role the United States should have in addressing the crisis in Syria. All presidents deal with competing priorities and complex situations that vary with the times. And the answer of how or whether to respond is never simple."

Adapted from web article by Maggie Barrett.



Chair's Letter

Pamela S. Nadell

When you, our readers, look at this year's History Department photo, you see a long line of broadly smiling faculty and staff. What I wish you could have seen was how long it took our estimable AU photographer Jeff Watts to corral the department for this shot in early September.

Faculty, who had not seen one another since May, were chattering loudly and enthusiastically catching up on summer news—the book manuscripts submitted, contracts scored, articles drafted, papers presented (at home and abroad, often combined with well-deserved vacations). But, most of all, we were smiling so broadly because we were returning to campus,

meeting our new classes, and starting off the new year, which I remain convinced, despite the Gregorian calendar, begins in September and not in January.

This year's faculty photo shows several new faces: Michael Brenner arrived as AU's Seymour and Lillian Abensohn Chair in Israel Studies. Theresa Runstedtler joined us as our expert in African-American history, and Elke Stockreiter as our first-ever faculty member in African history.

The Department celebrated several milestones this past year. Max Paul Friedman and Eric Lohr were promoted to Professor, and Kate Haulman was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure. We also welcomed Kelsi Schagunn as our new senior administrative assistant and Sarah Adler as our new administrative assistant.

The pages ahead describe just some of what we did last year, but, at the risk of singling out some colleagues and not others, I want to highlight two very special

accomplishments here. We congratulate Professor Max Paul Friedman on winning a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship for his new research project, "The Containment of the United States: The Latin American Diplomatic Tradition and the Limits of Principle." The Department also takes great pride in the election of our colleague University Professor Alan Kraut as president of the Organization of American Historians.

Our department sponsors an array of lectures and symposia, including our well-received Holocaust Studies Forum. In the year ahead, we invite you—students, alumni, and friends—to join us at our public events and to like us on Facebook at the American University Department of History.

As always, if I may be of any assistance, please do contact me: pnadell@american.edu.

History Department Faculty and Staff

Pictured left to right:

Pedram Partovi, Justin Jacobs, Theresa Runstedtler, Gautham Rao, Peter Kuznick, Kelsi Schagunn, Pamela Nadell, Anton Fedyashin, Sarah Adler, Laura Beers, April Shelford, Eric Lohr, Michael Brenner, Elke Stockreiter, Mary Frances Giandrea, Dan Kerr, Allan Lichtman, Eileen Findlay, Mary Ellen Curtin, Katharina Vester, Richard Breitman, Max Paul Friedman.

Not pictured: Kathleen Franz, Kate Haulman, Alan Kraut, Lisa Leff.



Welcome New Faculty!

Michael Brenner Seymour and Lillian Abensohn Chair in Israel Studies

Michael Brenner, an internationally respected scholar who started Germany's first Jewish history and culture program, joins AU as the Seymour and Lillian Abensohn Chair in Israel Studies.

Brenner is the author of six books, co-author of numerous journal articles, and editor of a major Jewish studies book series. After studying in Heidelberg and Jerusalem, he received his PhD in Jewish history from Columbia University.

Brenner has taught at Indiana University, Brandeis, Stanford, Johns Hopkins, University of California–Berkeley, the University of Haifa, the Central European University of Budapest, and l'École des hautes études in Paris.

His current research “deals with the tension between the original Zionist vision to bring normalcy to the Jewish people by establishing a state of their own and the challenges Israel faces today to be regarded as a ‘normal state,’” he says.

His goals at AU include bringing in visiting scholars from Israel to demonstrate the spectrum of opinions and research there. This semester he brought distinguished scholars in Israel's history for the series, “The Founders of Israel and Their Relevance Today.”

Brenner's lifetime fascination with Jewish studies starts with a rich personal history.

“I grew up in a small town in Germany as the only Jewish kid of my age,” he says. “My parents were both Holocaust survivors. I learned early on what it meant to be an outsider and was curious to further



explore the history and fate of Jews in different parts of the world. Having lived and studied in many places, I feel that this history is so rich and diverse that you need a few lifetimes to fully understand it.”

Adapted from web article by Charles Spencer.

Theresa Runstedtler Associate Professor

Former professional dancer/actress from Canada, Theresa Runstedtler joins American University after teaching at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Shifting her passion for popular culture from the studio and stage to the classroom, she is the author of *Jack Johnson, Rebel Sojourner: Boxing in the Shadow of the Global Color Line* (University of California Press, 2012). *Jack Johnson, Rebel Sojourner* explores the first African American world heavyweight champion's legacy as a black sporting hero and anti-colonial icon in places as far-flung

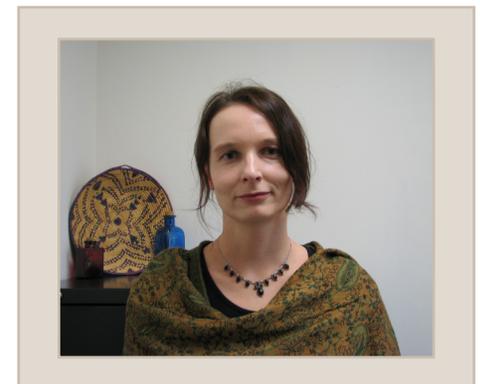
as Sydney, London, Cape Town, Manila, Paris, Havana, and Mexico City. She has published scholarly articles and chapters in the *Radical History Review*, *Journal of World History*, *Escape from New York: The New Negro Renaissance Beyond Harlem*, and *In the Game: Race, Identity, and Sports in the Twentieth Century*. Her research focuses on the intersection of black popular culture and the African American freedom struggle, and the historical connections between African American transnationalism and anticolonial politics abroad. She teaches courses on race and popular culture and African American history.



Elke Stockreiter Assistant Professor

Elke Stockreiter earned her PhD at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London in 2008 and joins American University after teaching at the University of Iowa. She is currently completing *Islamic Law, Gender, and Social Change in Post-Abolitionary Zanzibar Town*, for Cambridge University Press. Based on archival research in Zanzibar in multiple languages—Stockreiter is fluent in four, including Swahili, and has proficiency or conversational ability in

five others, including Arabic—she studies Arabic-language Islamic court records revealing that they did not uniformly discriminate against African women and that, in fact, the courts could be used to advance women's status. In addition to her book manuscript, she has published articles and book chapters in the *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, *Domestic Violence and the Law in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, *Stichproben: Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien*, and *Domestic Tensions, National Anxieties: Global Perspectives on Modern Marriage Crises*.



American University Professor Elected President of the Organization of American Historians



American University Professor Alan Kraut was elected the 107th President of the Organization of American Historians (OAH). Founded in 1907, the OAH, is the largest organization of American historians in the world. In Summer 2013, Professor Kraut travelled to China to inaugurate the collaboration between the OAH and the American History Research Association of China (AHRAC). The China Residency Program is the third and most recently created OAH program designed to encourage U.S. historians to work collaboratively with their counterparts in other countries.

Alumni News

Ramón Cruz (BA) was recently appointed by Puerto Rico's Governor Alejandro García Padilla as Vice-President of the 3-member Environmental Quality Board (EQB). The EQB is Puerto Rico's equivalent of the Environmental Protection Agency. Previously, he was Vice-President for Energy and Environment at the Partnership for New York City, Senior Policy Analyst at the Environmental Defense Fund, as well as a consultant for several international environmental organizations and United Nations agencies.

Pete Muller (BA) was just chosen as one of *The Diplomatic Courier* and *Young Professionals in Foreign Policy's* "Top 99 under 33" for 2013, a list identifying the 99 most influential foreign policy leaders under age 33. Based in Nairobi, Muller is an award-winning photographer and contributor to the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and other publications. In 2011, *Time* magazine named Muller wire photographer of the year.

Kimberly Welch (MA) finished her PhD at the University of Maryland and was hired to teach American History in a tenure track position at West Virginia University.

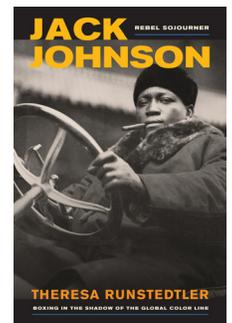
Nile Blunt (BA) received his PhD from the University of Indiana and is teaching at Phillips Andover.

Rod Coeller (PhD) is teaching at Diablo Valley Community College in California.

AU Faculty Wins Book Prize

Professor Theresa Runstedtler was awarded the 2013 Phillis Wheatley Prize by the Northeast Black Studies Association (NEBSA) for her book *Jack Johnson, Rebel Sojourner: Boxing in the Shadow of the Global Color Line*. Jack Johnson, the first African American World Heavyweight Champion, challenged white supremacy. Runstedtler shows how Johnson's life and career illuminate a global his-

tory of race, gender and empire. The prize is named after Phillis Wheatley, an 18th-century woman who is believed to be the first published African American author.



Alumna Nominated for the National Book Award

The new book by AU alumna Professor Wendy Lower (PhD), *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields*, is a finalist for the 2013 National Book Award.

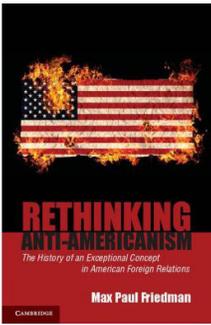
As a graduate student in the Department of History, Lower was inspired by Professor Richard Breitman's scholarship on the Holocaust. "I decided to focus my research in Holocaust history after reading Professor Breitman's excellent study of Heinrich Himmler," she says. "Professor Breitman is a model scholar and mentor,

and an outstanding example of the first-rate history faculty at AU."

Lower, now a professor of history at Claremont McKenna College, a consultant for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the author of other works on the history of the Holocaust, remarks: "I am thrilled to be a finalist for the National Book Award; this is beyond my wildest dreams and nothing that I could have imagined when I started the history graduate program at American University in autumn 1991."



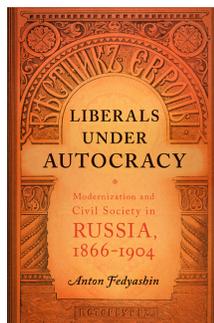
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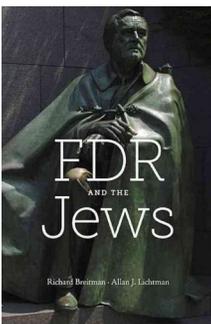
Max Paul Friedman:
Rethinking Anti-Americanism: The History of an Exceptional Concept in American Foreign Relations (Cambridge University Press)

Explaining the impetus for writing his book, Max Friedman, who was promoted this past year to the rank of Professor, recalls French President Jacques Chirac’s attempt to warn the United States against getting involved in a war in Iraq. Americans responded angrily proposing renaming french fries “freedom fries” and even calling to dig up fallen soldiers from their graves in Normandy. Friedman’s research led him to French president Charles DeGaulle’s eerily similar warning to President Kennedy about invading Vietnam and to similarly enraged anti-French American responses .

Anton Fedyashin:
Liberals under Autocracy: Modernization and Civil Society in Russia, 1866–1904 (University of Wisconsin Press)



Assistant Professor Fedyashin, who is also director of AU’s Initiative for Russian Culture, says: “I wanted to examine the vibrant, distinctly Russian liberal culture that flourished in the late imperial era; which blended self-governance, populism, and other cultural traditions. The book emphasizes the role of local politics in modernization and the evolution of Russian civil society in an extraparliamentary environment.”

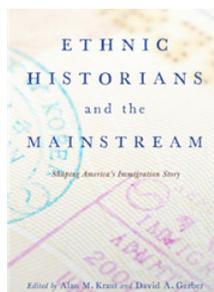


Richard Breitman and Allan J. Lichtman:
FDR and the Jews (Belknap/Harvard University Press)

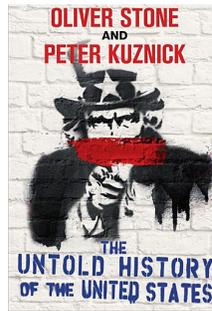
When Distinguished Professor Richard Breitman decided that one could now do a more nuanced and thorough study of Roosevelt and his stance towards Jewish persecution by the Nazis, he went to the best American political historian he

knew, Allan J. Lichtman, who is also the Department’s only other Distinguished Professor.

Alan Kraut and David A. Gerber, co-editors:
Ethnic Historians and the Mainstream: Shaping the Nation’s Immigration Story (Rutgers University Press)



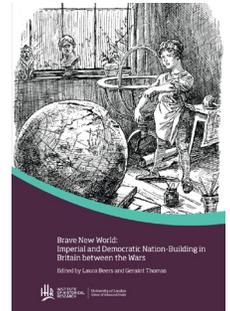
In this book AU University Professor Alan Kraut presents eleven autobiographical essays which consider how their authors’ ethnic backgrounds influenced their scholarly careers.



Peter Kuznick and Oliver Stone:
The Untold History of the United States (Gallery Books)

The collaboration between Associate Professor Peter Kuznick and Academy Award–winning director Oliver Stone produced a companion volume for a 10-part Showtime documentary series. “It’s been a great project,” Kuznick says, who appreciates the research and feedback from large numbers of students and colleagues in the department.

Laura Beers and Geraint Thomas, co-editors:
Brave New World: Imperial and Democratic Nation-Building in Britain between the Wars (Institute of Historical Research)



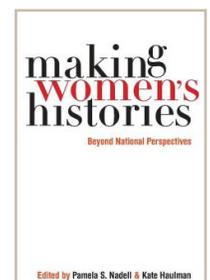
AU Assistant Professor Laura Beers co-edited this volume, which grew out of a conference organized at Cambridge University to encourage dialogue among young scholars in the U.S. and Britain. This book examines the complex relationship between nationalism, imperialism, communication, and modernity.



Eric Lohr:
Russian Citizenship: From Empire to Soviet Union (Harvard University Press)

Eric Lohr, who was recently promoted to Professor and who holds AU’s Susan Carmel Lehrman Chair in Russian History and Culture, says: “I entered Russian studies when the Soviet Union collapsed and questions of citizenship and nationality were in the headlines every day, yet historical study of the region was largely focused on other issues. No one had written a history of Russian citizenship.”

Pamela S. Nadell and Kate Haulman, Co-Editors:
Making Women’s Histories: Beyond National Perspective (New York University Press)



Pamela Nadell, who holds AU’s Patrick Clendenen Chair in Women’s and Gender History, teamed up with Kate Haulman, who was recently promoted to AU Associate Professor of History, to examine the intellectual and political production of women’s history across time and space. Chapters explore the politicized project of writing women’s history in settings as diverse as Tsarist Russia, the British empire in Egypt and India, Qing-dynasty China, and the 1960’s U.S.

Faculty News

Laura Beers's journal article "Model MP?: Ellen Wilkinson, gender, politics and celebrity culture in interwar Britain" appeared in *Cultural and Social History*.

Richard Breitman and **Allan J. Lichtman's** *FDR and the Jews* was featured in the *New York Times*. Their public presentations about the book have made it the center of conversations about Roosevelt and the Holocaust in Germany and across the United States.

Michael Brenner has joined the boards of the Association for Israel Studies and the Israel Institute, and now chairs the advisory board of the Hebrew University's Franz Rosenzweig Center. His *Short History of the Jews* has appeared in Spanish, Portuguese, and Turkish, and is being translated into Danish and Czech.

Mary Ellen Curtin is writing a biography of former Congresswoman Barbara Jordan of Texas. Her article, "Please Hear Our Cries: The Hidden History of Black Prisoners in America," appears in *The Punitive Turn: New Approaches to Race and Incarceration* (University of Virginia Press.)

Anton Fedyashin published "Sergei Witte and the Press: A Study in Careerism and Statecraft" in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* (Fall 2013) and has commented on Russian affairs for Al Jazeera, NPR, *Opera News* magazine, NBC, Voice of America, and Voice of Russia.

Duke University will publish **Eileen Findlay's** book *We Are Left Without a Father Here: Transnational Domesticity, Colonial Populism and Puerto Rican Labor Migration, 1930-1950*.

Kathy Franz continued work on the National Museum of American History's new exhibition "American Enterprise."

Max Paul Friedman received a John Simon Guggenheim fellowship for 2014.

Mary Frances Giandrea was invited by the Smithsonian Associates to present "The Chaotic Fourteenth Century."

Kate Haulman earned tenure and was promoted to associate professor. Her article "Rods and Reels: Fishing, Dancing and Political Culture in Early Pennsylvania" is forthcoming in *Early American Studies*.

Justin Jacobs has completed his first book manuscript, *Empire Among Empires: Xinjiang and the Modern Chinese State*, and had articles on Chinese geopolitics accepted for publication in the *Journal of Asian Studies* and *Journal of Cold War Studies*.



Professor Anton Fedyashin and his Romanov Russia class pose in front of the Neva River in St. Petersburg.

Daniel Kerr is currently writing *To What End? Documenting Extreme Poverty*, under contract with Oxford University Press, which draws extensively from the oral histories he conducted in the Cleveland Homeless Oral History Project.

Alan Kraut has been elected President of the Organization of American Historians (OAH), the professional organization of American historians. He was awarded a China Residency by the OAH and the Ford Foundation.

Peter Kuznick and Oliver Stone's book *The Untold History of the United States* spent five weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list and has appeared in Bulgarian, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, French, and Russian, and as a comic book and in a middle-school version. Their companion documentary film series aired on Showtime.

Lisa Leff's "The Jewish Oath and the Making of Secularism in Modern France" appeared in the *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* and "Recue or Theft? Zosa Szajkowski and the Salvaging of French Jewish History" appeared in *Jewish Social Studies*. Leff co-organized the international workshop "Jewish History after the Imperial Turn," at Brown University which was co-sponsored by the American University.

Allan Lichtman published the 2012 edition of *Keys to the White House*.

Eric Lohr published a study guide for the National Academic Decathlon, and completed a two-year National Council for Eurasian and East European Research Fellowship. He gave talks at Yale, Columbia, and the Smolny Institute in Russia.

Pamela Nadell gave the keynote at Vienna's Bet Debora Conference and presented on the founding of the Women of Reform Judaism at the World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem.

Pedram Partovi has written review essays on Iranian film history for *Iranian Studies* and *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and is completing a book manuscript, based on his dissertation, *Popular Film and the National Imagination in Modern Iran*.

Gautham Rao's book manuscript *At the Water's Edge: Customhouses, Governance, and the Early American State*, is under contract with the University of Chicago Press. He presented his research at NYU School of Law, the American Society for Legal History, and Rutgers University.



Professor Kathy Franz holds a rose-colored prom dress, a new addition to the National Museum of American History.

Theresa Runstedtler's book *Jack Johnson, Rebel Sojourner: Boxing in the Shadow of the Global Color Line* was released in paperback. Her essay, "The New Negro's Brown Brother: African American and Filipino Boxers and the 'Rising Tide of Color'," will appear in *Escape from New York: The New Negro Renaissance Beyond Harlem* (University of Minnesota Press).

April G. Shelford spent fall 2012 as a fellow at the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University working on "A Caribbean Enlightenment". Her article "Race and Scripture in the Eighteenth-Century French Caribbean" was published in *Atlantic Studies*.

Elke Stockreiter is currently writing *Islamic Law, Gender, and Social Change in Post-Abolitionary Zanzibar Town*, which is under contract with Cambridge University Press.

Katharina Vester was on leave during 2012-13 with an American Association of University Women fellowship.

Student News



Public History students at the Virginia Center for Architecture with alumna Lauren Stelzer (MA), the Center's program manager.

Students in Anton Fedyashin's Romanov Russia summer course look out upon the Neva River in St. Petersburg.



Mattea Sanders (MA) poses with Miss Piggy at the National Museum of American History.

The Student Historical Society holds its annual history trivia competition.



Mary Frances Giandrea's senior thesis class poses for a picture on History Day. Students presented on their thesis topics to an audience of classmates, graduate students, and professors.

Graduate News

Mattea Sanders was appointed to the Membership Committee of the National Council on Public History, and was asked to write a piece for *The Federalist*.

Alon Milwicki won a research grant from the Institute of Hate Studies and presented at their conference.

Rebecca DeWolf won the Department's Clendenen Dissertation Fellowship and will present a paper at Roger Williams University in November 2013.

Aaron Bell won a research grant from the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations and presented a paper at Leiden University in the Netherlands.

Susan Perlman won a research grant from the Truman Library.

Terumi Rafferty-Osaki authored six articles for the *Asian-American Encyclopedia* and another for the *Densho Encyclopedia*. He also presented three conference papers.

Allen Pietrobon will publish "The Role of Norman Cousins and Track II Diplomacy in the Breakthrough to the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty" in *Journal of Cold War Studies*.

Nguyet Nguyen won the award for Best Professional Presentation Prize at the Robyn Mathias Student Research Conference at AU.

Borislav Chernev published two articles: "Beyond Annexationism: The Central Powers' *Ostpolitik* as Structural Transformation, 1917-1918" in *The International History Review*; and "The Brest-Litovsk Mo-

ment: Self-Determination Discourse in Eastern Europe before Wilsonianism" in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*.

Holly Scott and **Aaron Bell** won the Roger Brown dissertation fellowship.

Erika Munkwitz and **Borislav Chernev** won the Richard and Carol Breitman scholarship.

Eric Singer and **Shannon Mohan** received Vice-Provost's awards for dissertation research, while **Adam Fenner** and **Matthew Pembleton** brought home the College of Arts and Sciences Dissertation Awards.

Adam Fenner also won a Gondos research fellowship, along with **Terumi Rafferty-Osaki** and **Kit Crawford**, **Nguyet Nguyen**, **Louie Milojevic**, and **Jordan Grant**.

College of Arts and Sciences research and travel grants went to **Brian D'Haeseleer**, **Jordan Grant**, **Johanna Neuman**, **Loren Miller**, **Erica Munkwitz**, **Matthew Pembleton**, and **Susan Perlman**.

Shannon Mohan won the Robert Griffith Award for best Teaching Assistant.

Undergraduate News

Sarah Adler and **Kathryn O'Dwyer** shared the Gondos Beers Scholarship.

Hallie Borstel, **Kristen Ennis**, **Ivy Johnson**, **Brian Mandel**, **Mariah Measey**, **Kathryn O'Dwyer**, and **T. Hunter Presti** received James Mooney Research Awards and Janet Oppenheim Research Awards for their senior theses.

Lindsay Inge won the Janet Oppenheim award for best senior thesis.



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Student Historical Society

Founded in 2011, the Student Historical Society works to promote the study of history at American University and encourages students to get involved in the field of public history. Over the past year, the SHS expanded its membership and prominence on campus.

Highlights of the past year include a series of discussions with Department of History Professors Alan Kraut, Dan Kerr, Gautham Rao, and Max Friedman; a behind-the-scenes tour of the collections at the National Museum of American History; and the group's largest-event-to-date, a History Trivia Night competition that drew over 70 participants and spectators. The SHS also worked with the AU Archives to begin a campaign called "A Historical U," highlighting American University's history with display tables and campus signs.

The SHS kicked off the Fall 2013 semester with a National Mall scavenger hunt and a trip to Mount Vernon. For more information, follow the SHS on Facebook or email: historysociety@american.edu.



Members of the American University Student Historical Society pose during a trip to Mount Vernon.

MAKING HISTORY IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL

For information regarding the accreditation and state licensing of American University, please visit: www.american.edu/academics.

Header photograph: Battelle Memorial Library (Battelle-Tompkins Library) (ca. 1932). Courtesy of American University History Photograph and Print Collection.

Newsletter design by Julie Rogers.