Letter from the Chair

Norman Kutcher

This July 1 I concluded my three-year term as department chair. Susan Branson, a scholar of US history whose interests are in the society and culture of the early Republic, is our new chair. While the job of chair is usually considered a lonely endeavor, I believe that's a mischaracterization. Indeed, to me, one of the most appealing aspects of the job is that it allows for a level of teamwork that is rare in the historical profession. As researchers and teachers, historians tend to operate solo, writing their articles and books as single authors and teaching classes as sole instructors. In working as chair, one comes to see that a department is very much a team enterprise. And to quote our emeritus colleague and longtime department chair Roger Sharp, the chair is not so much team captain as head cheerleader. With your indulgence, then, I use this Letter from the Chair to laud and thank my teammates.

Two of my most important teammates these three years were Junko Takeda, who served as Director of Undergraduate Studies, and Alan Allport, who served as Director of Graduate Studies. Junko, who this year completed an impressive four-year term in her role, did an extraordinary job as DUS. Over her tenure the job changed dramatically, at times seeming to grow exponentially in the demands it placed on the DUS to master new technologies. Junko mastered those new technologies while maintaining the one-on-one relationships with students that make the job of DUS so important to the life of the department. With her office two doors down from mine, I could see and hear the excitement and dedication Junko brought to the job. Students lined up to meet with her, and from her office could often be heard peals of laughter as she joked with students and gave them her personal attention. It’s no secret that the history major is in decline nationally, but there is no evidence for that decline at Syracuse. Credit for this goes to our engaged faculty and students, but it also goes to Junko, whose dedication as DUS absolutely bolstered interest in our major. Junko is also to be commended for her particular dedication to first-generation college students. On many occasions I saw her go many extra miles for our first-gen students, and more than a few excelled in college because of her efforts.

Alan Allport likewise did a superb job as Director of Graduate Studies. Alan and I are very different people, and we study very different parts of the world, but I came to admire and trust his sincerity very deeply. DGS, it must be said, is probably the most
The spring semester also witnessed dramatic changes as the University and the world began to deal with the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic. Seemingly overnight, our faculty and students were adapting their coursework to an online world.

This past academic year was unlike any other in my twenty-nine years of working at Syracuse. The fall semester was punctuated by racist and anti-Semitic incidents that shock the campus. In response to a sluggish response from the administration, and amidst allegations that the University had sought to cover up the incidents, students organized protests that aroused national and even international attention. By the spring, the University had responded with promises for sweeping reforms that largely met the protesters’ demands. As I write this letter, the University is in the midst of implementing curricular and other reforms that promise to make the campus and its curriculum more just and inclusive.

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In the twin crises that faced us, I found myself deeply appreciative of our faculty, who were resilient in the face of challenge, and ever willing to engage in rigorous self-scrutiny. And I was deeply appreciative of our students, whose judicious use of history allowed them to reach deeper understandings of the crises we faced. I was also delighted to see our faculty take important roles helping face these crises, and in supporting our students. This spring, our own Gladys McCormick was appointed Maxwell’s Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, a position from which she will have an extraordinary impact on the climate of the Maxwell School. Though far from perfect, Syracuse and its History department are institutions of which I’m deeply proud, and which I feel honored to serve.
Letter from the Undergraduate Director

Junko Takeda

This is my last letter to everyone in my capacity as Undergraduate Director. It has been a pleasure to serve the History Department’s majors and minors for the last four years, and to help grow our program. As I reflect on these years, I feel very lucky to have met and advised so many bright, determined, and talented students.

I first want to acknowledge that this past academic year was a particularly challenging one for many. But I am proud to say that it also brought our History community – our faculty, colleagues, and students – together in meaningful ways. Some of our undergraduates emerged as leaders of #NotAgainSU to fight bias incidents and institutional racism across campus. Our teaching assistants and faculty showed up at the Barnes Center to offer support to their students. When Covid-19 led to the closure of our classrooms and campus, students volunteered to help various communities at the local level stay connected and healthy. As learning moved online, they continued as best as they could, separated across miles and time zones, some across oceans, to complete their studies, and finish papers and exams. As members of the History community, we persisted.

I want to send my congratulations to our many History seniors who graduated this year. The month of May is typically a joyous one, where our faculty get to meet parents and family members and celebrate our graduates. I was personally very much looking forward to welcoming all of you back to Eggers 151. We had an outstanding group of graduates. Eighteen students completed and defended Distinction theses (more than we have ever had in any given academic year). Several Wortman scholars and SOURCE grant recipients conducted independent research at archives and museums before COVID-19 shuttered these institutions. We inducted several new Phi Alpha Theta (PAT) History Honor Society members. I am proud to say that our graduating class was one of the most diverse group of students we have had. As the department’s most senior female faculty of color and as the first in my family to complete a four-year college degree, one of my main goals had been to not only grow our History community in size and numbers, but to help make it substantively a supportive and inclusive home where first-generation students, transfer students, and students from various cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds could excel and thrive. While there is much work left to do, our students have enriched our community and led the way in making our department, and our institution as a whole, a better place than what they found when they arrived. My thanks to all of you.

Though I am completing my term as Undergraduate Director at a particularly turbulent time, I am confident that together, our faculty, graduate students, and our majors and minors will continue to steer our department towards a brighter future. I thank the outgoing Department Chair, Norman Kutcher, outgoing Director of Graduate Studies, Alan Allport, and Faye Morse and Christina Cleason in the History Office for supporting me throughout these four years, and for working together as a team to make my work so rewarding.
Forthcoming and Recent Faculty Books


This work contributes to our understanding of Africa’s experiences with the development process. It does so by adopting a historical and contemporary analysis of this experience. The book is set within the context of critiques on development in Africa that have yielded two general categories of analysis: skepticism and pessimism.

While not overlooking the shortcomings of development, the themes in the book express an optimistic view of Africa’s development experiences, highlighting elements that can be tapped into to enhance the condition of African populations and their states. By using case studies from precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial Africa, contributors to the volume demonstrate that human instincts to improve material, social and spiritual words are universal. They are not limited to the Western world, which the term and process of development are typically associated with.

Before and after contact with the West, Africans have actively created institutions and values that they have actively employed to improve individual and community lives. This innovative spirit has motivated Africans to integrate or experiment with new values and structures, challenges, and solutions to human welfare that resulted from contact with colonialism and the postcolonial global community. The book will be of interest to academics in the fields of history, African studies, and regional studies.


*Iran and a French Empire of Trade* examines the understudied topic of Franco-Persian relations in the long eighteenth century to highlight how rising tensions among Eurasian empires and revolutions in the Atlantic world were profoundly intertwined. Conflicts between Persia, Turkey, India and Russia, and European weapons-dealing with these empires occurred against a backdrop of climate change and food insecurities that destabilized markets. Takeda shows how the French state relied on “entrepreneurial imperialism” to extend commercial activities eastwards beyond the Mediterranean during this time, from Louis XIV’s reign to Napoleon Bonaparte’s First Empire. Organized as a collection of microhistories, her study showcases a colorful set of characters—rogue merchants from Marseille, a gambling house madam, a naturalized Greek-French drogman, and a bi-cultural Genevan-Persian consul, among others—to demonstrate how individuals on the fringes of French society spearheaded projects to foster ties between France and Persia.


This work shows the historical value of texts celebrating saints—both the most abundant medieval source material and among the most difficult to use. Hagiographical sources present many challenges: they are usually anonymous, often hard to date, full of topoi, and unstable. Moreover, they are generally not what we would consider factually accurate. The volume’s twenty-one contributions draw on a range of disciplines and employ a variety of innovative methods to address these challenges and reach new discoveries about the medieval world that extend well beyond the study of sanctity. They show the rich potential of hagiography to enhance our knowledge of that world, and some of the ways to unlock it.

A sweeping, groundbreaking epic that combines military with social history, to illuminate the ways in which Great Britain and its people were permanently transformed by the Second World War.

Here is the many-faceted, world-historically significant story of Britain at war. In looking closely at the military and political dimensions of the conflict’s first crucial years, Alan Allport tackles questions such as: Could the war have been avoided? Could it have been lost? Were the strategic decisions the right ones? How well did the British organize and fight? How well did the British live up to their own values? What difference did the war make in the end to the fate of the nation?

In answering these and other essential questions he focuses on the human contingencies of the war, weighing directly at the roles of individuals and the outcomes determined by luck or chance. Moreover, he looks intimately at the changes in wartime British society and culture. Britain at Bay draws on a large cast of characters—from the leading statesmen and military commanders who made the decisions, to the ordinary men, women, and children who carried them out and lived through their consequences—in a comprehensible and compelling single history of forty-six million people. For better or worse, much of Britain today is ultimately the product of the experiences of 1938-1941.


Early in the seventeenth century, Northeast Asian politics hung in a delicate balance among the Chosŏn dynasty in Korea, the Ming in China, and the Manchu. When a Chosŏn faction realigned Korea with the Ming, the Manchu attacked in 1627 and again a decade later, shattering the Chosŏn-Ming alliance and forcing Korea to support the newly founded Qing dynasty.

The Korean scholar-official Na Man’gap (1592–1642) recorded the second Manchu invasion in his *Diary of 1636*, the only first-person account chronicling the dramatic Korean resistance to the attack. Partly composed as a narrative of quotidian events during the siege of Namhan Mountain Fortress, where Na sought refuge with the king and other officials, the diary recounts Korean opposition to Manchu and Mongol forces and the eventual surrender. Na describes military campaigns along the northern and western regions of the country, the capture of the royal family, and the Manchu treatment of prisoners, offering insights into debates about Confucian loyalty and the conduct of women that took place in the war’s aftermath. His work sheds light on such issues as Confucian statecraft, military decision making, and ethnic interpretations of identity in the seventeenth century. Translated from literary Chinese into English for the first time, the diary illuminates a traumatic moment for early modern Korean politics and society. George Kallander’s critical introduction and extensive annotations place *The Diary of 1636* in its historical, political, and military context, highlighting the importance of this text for students and scholars of Chinese and East Asian as well as Korean history.
Undergraduate Awards

The Bernice Hogan Prize
Awarded to the graduating history major or minor judged to have written the best paper in a History class. This year’s co-winners were Julian Skarston and Dongyong Wei.

The Hotchkiss Prize
Named after the late Professor William Park Hotchkiss, this prize is awarded to the graduating student who achieved the highest level of academic excellence in history. The prize is funded from Professor Hotchkiss’ legacy to the department. The winner this year was Katelyn Bajorek.

The Ketcham Prize
Named after Professor Emeritus Ralph Ketcham, this prize is awarded to the graduating history major who best combines academic excellence in history with contribution to the life of the department. This year’s co-winners were Xinzhi Lin and Talya Myree.

The Marquardt Prize
Named after Maxwell Professor of Teaching Excellence, Emeritus, Frederick D. Marquardt, this prize is awarded to the student judged to have written the best Distinction Thesis in History. The co-winners this year were Katelyn Bajorek and Xinzhi Lin.

Wortman Scholars
Funded through the generosity of Marlene Stein Wortman ’58, Wortman Grants make it possible for undergraduate History students to undertake research-related travel or acquire documents to be used in research projects. Those who receive grades of A or A- on their final projects carry the title “Wortman Scholar” at graduation. This year’s Wortman Scholars were: Sydney France, Hannah Gavin, Aaron Kassman, and Keith McAteer.

Distinction Students
The following students completed year-long research projects, and were awarded Distinction in History: Katelyn Bajorek, Lauren Borg, Sophia Brittain, Suyue Chen, Sydney France, Justin Fromke, Hannah Gavin, Aaron Kassman, Xinzhi Lin, Chelsea Matta, Keith McAteer, Taylor McKinney, Jaqueline Meuser, Aydan Murphy-Stanley, Talya Myree, Megan Neuman, Stephen Skelton, Brianna Ward.

Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, Ars Vitae: The Fate of Inwardness and the Return of the Ancient Arts of Living (University of Notre Dame Press, Coming in October 2020) ISBN: 9780268108892

The ancient Roman philosopher Cicero wrote that philosophy is ars vitae, the art of living. In this ambitious and timely book, Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn engages both general readers and scholars on the topic of well-being. She examines the reappearance of ancient philosophical thought in contemporary American culture, probing whether new stirrings of Gnosticism, Stoicism, Epicureanism, Cynicism, and Platonism present a true alternative to our current therapeutic culture of self-help and consumerism, which elevates the self’s needs and desires yet fails to deliver on its promises of happiness and healing. Do the ancient philosophies represent a counter-tradition to today’s culture, auguring a new cultural vibrancy, or do they merely solidify a modern way of life that has little use for inwardness—the cultivation of an inner life—stemming from those older traditions? Tracing the contours of this cultural resurgence and exploring a range of sources, from scholarship to self-help manuals, films, and other artifacts of popular culture, this book sees the different schools as organically interrelated and asks whether, taken together, they can point us in important new directions. Ars Vitae sounds a clarion call to take back philosophy as part of our everyday lives. It proposes a way to do so, sifting through the ruins of long-forgotten and recent history alike for any shards helpful in piecing together the coherence of a moral framework that allows us ways to move forward toward the life we want and need.
Faculty News

Selected recent accomplishments by our professors . . .

**Alan Allport** is putting the finishing touches on his new book *Britain at Bay 1938-1941*, which will be published in Fall 2020 by Profile Books in the UK and Knopf in North America. The first volume in a two-volume history of the Second World War, the book reexamines the story of the most terrible and consequential conflict in history, looking in particular at the British story as experienced at the time and remembered afterwards. It scrutinizes old myths and seeks to reimagine an old story in a new way. Margaret Macmillan has called it “a welcome and highly readable retelling of the story of Britain’s entry into the Second World War and its initial survival against great odds. Weaving together grand strategy, high politics and the complexities of British society at the time, Alan Allport deftly demolishes some sacred cows along the way and makes the reader think again about the choices and the odds facing Britain.” Volume 2, *Advance Britannia 1942-1945*, is scheduled for publication in 2025.

**David H Bennett** published “Trump’s Impeachment Trifecta” in *The Daily Beast* (December 2019); a longer version appeared in *Medium*, December 18. He also presented “Nativism in American History and Its Resurgence Today” to The Plato Society of Los Angeles on February 20, 2020 at the Skirball Center Auditorium.

**Susan Branson**’s new book, *Scientific Americans: Inventing the Nation, 1776-1876*, is forthcoming from Cornell University Press. She is pleased to report that her research interests have spilled over into her teaching: in Spring, 2020, she taught a course on the history of science and technology that incorporates many of the topics of her book. In July she began her term as department chair.

**Brian Brege** spent the 2019-2020 academic year on research leave at Villa I Tatti, the Harvard University center for the study of the Italian Renaissance in Florence, Italy. After a golden fall and early winter working on his second book project, *The Global Merchants of Florence*, the pandemic and Italy’s strict lockdown confined him to his apartment in a converted hilltop monastery on the edge of Florence. With the partial reopening of early May, he gratefully returned to his office at I Tatti. Happily, he has recently received confirmation that his first book project will be published in the I Tatti Studies in Italian Renaissance History series of Harvard University Press.

During the lockdown, **Andrew Wender Cohen** has been researching a project entitled *Anthony Comstock’s Gilded Age*, focusing on sex and the law during the period 1865-1900. Prior to travel restrictions, Cohen presented a paper in Lille, France on American women who disguised themselves in men’s clothes to vote illegally. He is still revising a book on violence in the nineteenth-century United States, entitled *Gangster of New York*. Cohen sits on the editorial boards of *Reviews in American History and Law and History Review*, and edits an award-winning book series with University of Pennsylvania Press.
Albrecht Diem completed his book The Pursuit of Salvation. Community, Space, and Discipline in Early Medieval Monasticism. It is under contract with Brepols Publishers, Belgium and is scheduled to be published early 2021. Thanks to the support of the Department, the book will appear in open access and will be accessible to students and scholars for free. Since last summer he published six articles and book chapters, among them two co-authored chapters in the Cambridge History of Monasticism in the Latin West. He plans a new book project on asceticism and diversity in late antique religious communities. In the next academic year he will serve as Director of Undergraduate Studies for the History Department.

Michael Ebner continued his research on Fascist Italy’s conquest of Libya during the 1920s and early 1930s. He was also the Benedict Distinguished Visiting Professor at Carleton College (Minnesota) during its 2020 spring quarter. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, he taught two online courses for Carleton students, entitled “Fascism in Europe, 1914-45” and “Modern Italy in the Mediterranean World.”

Carol Faulkner published Unfaithful: Love, Adultery, and Marriage Reform in Nineteenth-Century America (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019). This book shows how the issue of marriage was central to variety of different social movements, including antislavery, utopianism, spiritualism, free love, and women’s rights. Though dismissed as fanatics at the time, these diverse activists argued for voluntary, loving, and happy marriages, as well as for more liberal divorce. They used individual acts of adultery as well as the laws of marriage and adultery to criticize the institution of marriage. For a 20% discount use the code PP20 at https://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/16023.html.

Samantha Herrick edited, contributed to, and wrote the introduction for Hagiography and the History of Latin Christendom, 500-1500 (Brill, 2020). The volume showcases research by twenty-one scholars in the U.S., Europe, and Canada, that illustrates how historians use saints’ lives and miracle collections to shed light on subjects including gender, medicine, power, urban life, beauty, the environment, sex, and death in medieval Europe. Her chapter employed saints’ lives to trace networks of exchange and communication that are otherwise invisible in the historical record. She also learned how to bake bread like the ancient Romans (and to use Zoom).

George Kallander published a new book titled The Diary of 1636: The Second Manchu Invasion of Korea (Columbia University Press, August 2020). He continues to serve as director of the East Asia Program at the Moynihan Institute where he sponsors talks and programs on the Koreas, Japan, Mongolia, and China. He is also the new Director of Graduate Studies for the History Department.
**Norman Kutcher** completed his second non-consecutive term as History department chair and is much looking forward to spending more time teaching and researching. Over the past year, reviews continued to appear for his *Eunuch and Emperor in the Great Age of Qing Rule* (University of California Press, 2018). Most recently, writing in *The American Historical Review*, Professor Ying Zhang called the work “a unique and important study” that “provides an insightful, historically sympathetic analysis of the institution of the eunuch in Qing China.” Kutcher also published “Qing Dynasty Perceptions of Zheng He and His Voyages,” in *China and Asia: A Journal in Historical Studies*.

**Chris Kyle** spent part of the 2019-20 academic year on research leave at the Henry E. Huntington Library in San Marino, California. During this time his book, *Connecting Centre and Locality: Political Communication in Early Modern England*, was published by Manchester University Press. The book, co-edited by Jason Peacey, a professor of British history at University College London, explores the dynamics of local and national political culture in 16th and 17th century Britain. Kyle’s articles in the volume include the co-edited introduction and an essay on the history of Lent in early modern England.

**Elizabeth Lasch-Quinn** completed *Ars Vitae: Th Fate of Inwardness and the Return of the Ancient Arts of Living*, to be published by University of Notre Dame Press on October 15, 2020. *Ars Vitae* weds modern American cultural history and Greco-Roman philosophy to explore ancient and modern approaches to well-being and a resurgence of ancient schools of thought such as Stoicism, Epicureanism, Cynicism, and Platonism in modern thought, self-help, and popular culture. Elisabeth was selected team leader of the team-taught interdisciplinary course, MAX 123: Critical Issues for the U.S., and designed and taught a new Maymester course, HST 300: Cultural History in Images.

**Tessa Murphy** spent the 2019-2020 academic year in residence at the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University, where she was the recipient of a fellowship sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. While she missed her students and colleagues at SU, she was grateful for the opportunity to finish revising her book, *The Creole Archipelago: Race and Colonization in the Eastern Caribbean, 1660-1797*. The book will be published by the University of Pennsylvania Press in fall 2021, as part of their Early American Studies series.

**Mark Schmeller** had a busy year of teaching and research. In addition to offering undergraduate courses on the Civil War and the Early Republic, and seminars on research and methods, he visited with students in over thirty high schools who are taking History 101 (American History to 1865) through the Syracuse University Project Advance Program. He completed an essay on public opinion in American history for an edited volume on *American Democracies* (Oxford University Press, Forthcoming) and several chapters for his next book, which concerns the 1826 kidnapping of William Morgan, a New York Freemason who had threatened to reveal the secrets of that fraternal order. In December of 2019, he published an article on “The Conspiracy-Fueled Origins of the Christmas Poinsettia” in *The Washington Post.*
**Martin Shanghuyia** completed a co-edited book (with Toyin Falola, University of Texas at Austin) titled *Development in Modern Africa: Past and Present Perspectives*. Published by Routledge in January 2020, contributors to the volume analyze the idea and practice of development in Africa on themes spanning the precolonial, colonial, through postcolonial Africa.

**David H. Stam** was elected Honorary Director of the Keats-Shelley Association of America, at the annual meeting of the Board of Directors on May 15. His book *Adventures in Polar Reading: the Book Cultures of High Latitudes* was published in December 2019 by the Grolier Club of New York.

**Junko Takeda** main project for 2020 involved the completion of her second book manuscript, *Iran and a French Empire of Trade, 1700-1808: The Other Persian Letters* will appear with Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment (Liverpool University Press) in December 2020. After serving as the History Department’s Director of Undergraduate Studies for the last four years, she is stepping down from this role this summer, and focusing on her next two book projects. She is currently working on *Avedik, Louis XIV’s Armenian Prisoner: A Global History of Incarceration, Conversion and Madness* and her other monograph, *Global Insects: Silkworms, Statecraft, and Franco-Japanese Trade, 1750-1914*. She looks forward to being able to travel once again in the future and conduct research in France and in Japan.

In his second year in the department, **Robert Terrell** offered a number of courses on modern German and European history while also developing a broad research program. In the fall, his article, “Building the Berlin Mosque: An Episode in Weltpolitik,” was accepted for publication and will appear in *Contemporary European History* later this year. In the spring, his book chapter, “‘Lurvenbrow’: Bavarian Beer and Barstool Diplomacy in the Global Market, 1945-1964,” appeared in an interdisciplinary collection of essays published by Routledge. He also participated in several conferences, presenting and developing parts of his ongoing book project, *The People’s Drink: The Politics and Culture of Beer in Germany’s Twentieth Century*.

**Margaret Susan Thompson** has continued to publish and speak on the history and contemporary lives of Catholic sisters in the United States. She recently has presented on her work at conferences in Rome, Ireland, and the US—and sadly missed doing so this summer at a conference that was to be held at Cambridge University, England. She looks forward to offering her intergenerational Honors class this fall on the Election and Social Media, and is excited about a new class next spring (jointly offered to Honors undergraduates and graduate students) on Modern American Spiritual Memoir.
**Graduate Awards**

**Nelson Blake Prize**
Named in memory of longtime faculty member Nelson Blake, this award supports research by our graduate students: This year’s winner was Yifan Jiang.

**Hotchkiss Scholar**
Endowed by Dr. Angelo C. Garzio in honor of Professor William P. Hotchkiss
This prize is awarded to the most highly deserving graduate student. This year’s winner was Erqi Cheng

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**Forthcoming and Recent Faculty Books**


This collection explores the dynamics of local/national political culture in seventeenth-century Britain, with particular reference to political communication. It examines the degree to which connections were forged between politics in London, Whitehall and Westminster, politics in the localities and the patterns and processes that can be recovered. The goal is to create a dialogue between two prominent strands in recent historiography and between the work of social and political historians of the early modern period. Chapters by leading historians of Stuart England examine how the state worked to communicate with its people and how local communities, often far from the metropole, opened their own lines of communication with the centre.