Alumni News

Several recent history grads have secured teaching positions. Rachel Simmons is teaching government, economics, and world history at West Orange-Stark High School in Orange, Texas. Courtney Rhodus teaches eighth-grade U.S. history at Vidor Junior High School in Vidor, Texas. Silsbee Junior High School in Silsbee, Texas welcomed Danielle Treadway as their newest U.S. history teacher. Kyle Munn is currently teaching geometry and U.S. history courses on the Island of Saipan in the Mariana Islands in the Pacific.

Terry Rioux, who earned her History M.A. at Lamar and taught as an adjunct instructor for several years, is now working as an assistant and technical advisor for Hollywood director, writer, and producer Nicholas Meyer. Terry also served as consulting producer on The Last Great Circus Flyer, a documentary about trapeze artist Miguel Vasquez.

Faculty News

Jeff Forret's book Slave against Slave: Plantation Violence in the Old South won the 18th Annual Frederick Douglass Book Prize given by the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at Yale University for the best book published in the English language on the subjects of slavery or abolition in 2015. The same book was also one of five finalists for the 1st Annual Harriet Tubman Book Prize given by the Lapidus Center for the Historical Analysis of Transatlantic Slavery and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at the New York Public Library. Lamar University named Dr. Forret the Leland Best Distinguished Faculty Fellow starting in Fall 2016. Dr. Forret also published articles in the Journal of Southern History, the Southern Quarterly, and American Nineteenth Century History, as well as in the anthology The Field of Honor: Essays on Southern Character and American Identity. He presented his current research at the Organization of American Historians meeting and serves as a guest lecturer for the Purchased Lives series on the domestic slave trade. Dr. Forret also accepted invitations to speak at Leiden University in the Netherlands and to give the keynote address at the 3rd Annual Gateway History Conference in Iowa. He currently chairs both the Southern Historical Association’s C. Vann Woodward Award Committee to determine the best dissertation in southern history published 2016-2017 and the SHA Membership Committee for 2018.

History faculty participated in a Gulf Coast Reads panel discussion on October 19, 2016 in the Mary and John Gray Library with Jan Jarboe Russell, the New York Times bestselling author of The Train to Crystal City: FDR’s Secret Prisoner Exchange Program and America’s Only Family Internment Camp During World War II. Ms. Russell discussed her research and Dr. Yasuko Sato (Associate Professor of History), Cassandre Durso (adjunct instructor for the History Department), and Bruce Hodge (Coordinator of Student Services of TALH) provided commentary.

The History Department
Congratulates our Recent Graduates

December 2016:
Reagan Miles Block, Katherine Daniel, Nicholas Lege, Emma Nelson, Morgan Williams

May 2017:
Tammy Byerly, Patrick Hebner, Ryanne Poole, Alecia Ross, Judith Nelams

Other Student News

Undergrad history major Brandon Boullion presented his paper about the role of the Einsatzgruppen in the Holocaust in April 2017 at the Southwestern Social Science Association meeting in Austin, TX. M.A. students Judith Nelams and Adam Gorrell also presented papers, on women in the Renaissance and the emergence of Nazi-punk Rock in the UK and the US, respectively.

Judith Nelams will enter the history Ph.D. program at Saint Louis University.

Recognizing our Students

History Students of the Month - Fall 2016
Ryan Romero - September
Colby Almendarez - October
Taylor Blount - November
Miles Block - December
2016/January 2017

History Students of the Month - Spring 2017
Rebecca Butler - February
Caitlin McAlister - March
Jacob Melancon - April
Ashley Thibodeaux - May

History Student of the Year

The History Student of the Year is selected from the History Students of the Month for the academic year. Caitlin McAlister was selected as this year’s winner and received her award at the Annual Phi Alpha Theta Spring Initiation & History Department Banquet.

Paul E. Issac Award

The Isaac Award is given to a senior history major illustrating “a special interest in research and writing.” Caitlin McAlister was this year’s recipient. Caitlin will receive a generous $800 check from Mrs. Nancy Isaac, Dr. Isaac’s widow. Dr. Isaac taught in Lamar University’s History Department from 1960 to 1995.
Professional Night

The Department held the annual professional night in April. The event exposes history majors to the various options they can explore with a B.A. in history. Alumni Bruce Hodge and Chris Pirnie discussed their experiences in the program and their different career paths. Chris teaches high school history at Harmony Science Academy in Beaumont. Bruce is Coordinator of Student Services for TALH. Tina Kibbe, who earned her history M.A. from Lamar University, talked about her experience continuing her education in a Ph.D. program at the University at Buffalo.

Center for History and Culture

Lamar University officials recently announced the establishment of the Center for History and Culture of Southeast Texas and the Upper Gulf Coast which will serve as a cultural hub for the region and is located less than two miles from the original site of the Spindletop Lucas gusher. “The new Center is an interdisciplinary, multi-cultural organization for preserving, promoting, and transmitting the knowledge of the region, including the role of the petroleum industry in the region, the state, the nation and the world”, said Center Director Mary Scheer, professor and chair of the Department of History.

“The Center strives to be the historical and cultural hub that tells the story of the area through public engagement...”

Dr. Mary Scheer, Director

“The Center will produce high quality publications, creative exhibits and cultural performances, sponsored lectures and symposia, develop innovative curriculum, and support faculty and students in research focused on topics of regional interest”, said Scheer, who holds a Ph.D. from Texas Christian University. The two Center Fellows will work with Scheer to contribute to programming. Fellows will receive a grant to support expenses related to their production of work that addresses important problems and/or enhances the historical/cultural understanding of the region in areas such as energy, history, art, music, literature, environment, society, government and more. They will present their work to the campus and community in lecture, exhibition or performance.

Undergraduate Research Expo

Rebecca Phillips was awarded 1st place in the oral presentation category at the 4th Annual Undergraduate Research Expo held in April. Other history students who presented at the expo included Caitlin McAlister, Carter Beck, Presleigh Green, and Issac Valerio.
Phi Alpha Theta

The Mu Chi chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, the national history honor society, inducted new members for 2016-2017. New PAT members are Bryce Andrew Barrett, Seth Aaron Barrett, Brandon Kyle Boullion, Rebecca Joann Butler, Tammy C. Byerly, Dylan A. Knau, Caitlin D. McAlister, Rianne E. Poole, and Ryan Don Romero. The History Department welcomed the new members at the Annual Spring Initiation & History Department Banquet. Our speaker was Dr. Abbie Grubb, professor of history at San Jacinto College. Her presentation was titled, “The Internment of Memory: The World War II Japanese American Experience”

Webb Society News

Lamar University’s chapter of the Webb Society won the best chapter award for 2016-2017, which is presented by the Texas State Historical Association. The mission of the Webb Society is to stimulate interest in all aspects of history, especially that of Beaumont and Jefferson County; to support the exhibits at the Spindletop Museum; to assist in the collection of books and historical documents for the Texas section of the Lamar University library; to assist the Jefferson County Historical Commission and other local historical societies; and to identify and preserve historical landmarks in Texas. Webb Society activities include sponsoring guest speakers on campus; taking at least one out-of-town trip per semester; attending annual historical conferences; participating in fund-raisers, on-campus activities, and service projects; providing support for history department programs; holding an annual society banquet; and writing articles for publication in Touchstone, the journal of the Webb Society.

History Day - February 16, 2017

The History Department hosted the Eighth Annual History Day event in February 2017. Lamar University hosts the regional National History Day competition for middle and high school students every year. This year’s theme was “Taking a Stand.” Students researched topics related to the theme and submitted individual or group entries in several project categories including: documentaries, poster exhibits, research papers, performances, and websites. Seventy-six students participated this year, with thirty-one junior high schoolers and forty-five high school students. The participating schools were Livingston Junior High, West Brook High School, Beaumont Early College High School and West Orange-Stark. We also had one junior independent contestant.

Lamar University is part of the Texas State University System, which is governed by a nine-member Board of Regents. Chairman—Dr. Jaime R. Garza (San Antonio) Vice Chairman—Rossanna Salazar (Austin) Regents—Charlie Amato (San Antonio), Veronica Muzquiz Edwards (San Antonio), David Montagne (Beaumont), Vernon Reaser III (Bellaire), William F. Scott (Nederland), Alan L. Tinsley (Madisonville), Donna N. Williams (Arlington), Spencer Copeland (Student Regent — Huntsville)

History’s Happenings is produced every fall and spring semesters and relies on the assistance of voluntary contributions of stories and pictures from students, faculty, and staff. Have history-related news? Send it to Dr. Mark Mengerink at mark.mengerink@lamar.edu