

MACALESTER COLLEGE

HISTORY DEPARTMENT



Fall Newsletter 2024

Edited by Daniel Wiltse



Welcome from our chair

Autumn greetings from the Chair's office in the Macalester History Department! We've had an exciting few months over the 2024 Fall Semester and it is my pleasure to highlight a few of our events. We kicked off the semester with a campus-wide event – History and Reparations – Panel to Commemorate the United Nations's "International Decade for People of African Descent". This event featured five extraordinary panelists including Dr. Westenley (Wes) Alcenat, Professor of History and Africana Studies at Scripps College (and Mac '10 grad), Mr. Marvin Roger Anderson, retired Attorney at Law, former Minnesota State Law Librarian and champion of Saint Paul's African American community of Rondo, Ms. Jennifer Branche, former Legal Counsel and Corporate Secretary of the Bank of Guyana and Vice-President of the Guyana Association of Women Lawyers, Mr. Jean-Pierre Brutus, Senior Counsel in the Economic Justice Program at the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, and Professor Verene Shepherd, historian and social justice advocate and Vice-Chair of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. We also had the pleasure of a virtual welcome from His Excellency Dennis Francis, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations. The History Department welcomed a full-house of audience members from our campus community and beyond as well as over one hundred online participants. Many thanks to Professors Linda Sturtz and Walter Greason for organizing and hosting the event!

This fall the History Department also hosted a new event, co-sponsored by the History Club – the History Film Festival. The fall film fest featured films from across the world with Professors Coplin, Greason, Capello, and Federova providing context and Q&A opportunities. The event took place over a fall weekend and we fully anticipate continuing this new event in the future. Watch for announcements for the Spring History Film Festival and upcoming events including a Spring 2025 talk by Prof. Ajantha Subramaniam (Anthropology, CUNY Graduate Center) scheduled for February 26, 2025. More details will be forthcoming. As it is the Fall Semester, 12 students wrote and successfully defended their capstone projects. On December 2, students presented their final capstone papers in a public conference-style format, complete with discussants and wrapped-up the evening with a final celebratory reception. In closing, I want to thank the members of the History Department for their dedication to our history students and their attention and dedication to creating new opportunities and exciting new courses, field trips and events to engage our community. Thank you and have a wonderful Winter Break!



Dr. Holly Barcus

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Thank You, Professor Tam



This year saw the retirement of a quiet luminary in the History department, Professor Yue Him Tam. Professor Tam, by any academic measurement, is a scholar of exceptional achievements and reputation globally. He has advised and been commended by heads of state, published 17 books and translated works in China, Japan, the US, UK, and Germany, and served as editor for hundreds of volumes - two such series alone comprise 132 volumes. He has served as a professor, dean, and director of numerous centers in China, Japan, and the US. Throughout his career, he has labored tirelessly in pursuit of expanding studies of China and East Asia in the US with an additional focus on healing wounds between Japan and China as a result of atrocities committed during WW2 through education and activism.

His success is apparent in the establishment of the first East Asian Studies program at the ACTC colleges locally which includes Macalester, St. Catherine's, St. Thomas, Hamline, and Augsburg. Additionally, his years of service as president of the Global Alliance for Preserving the History of WWII in Asia show his deep commitment to pushing his insights and beliefs out of the classroom and into the world. All of this, taken together, shows a dedication to scholarly pursuits and life which is truly impressive, admirable, consequential, and a career well lived and well served. His course on WW2 war crimes, memory, and reconciliation was the only of its kind in the United States and perhaps the world. His collection of documents from the course are currently being archived at Macalester for future scholars to continue his work. However, for thousands of others in all walks of life, his most enduring and lasting legacy, one that is quieter, less often seen and difficult to quantify on a CV, is his role as a teacher. To truly understand Yue Him Tam, it is essential to see this facet of his life. It was the most important aspect of how he perceived his purpose. So much so, that he turned down an offer to become the head of University of Minnesota's History Department to instead come to Macalester where he would have interaction with students and teaching rather than research and administration that would have had more immediate and tangible benefits.

The History Department thanks Professor Tam for his many contributions to the Macalester Community and to our department.

James Coplin, Professor Tam's former student and current Visiting Instructor

Meet Professor Liang



Professor Yanling Liang is visiting us this fall from Beijing, China. She is a professor and director at Northwestern Branch of Teacher Education Research Center of Beijing Normal University and an evaluator for the National Evaluation of Teacher Education Programs at Chinese Higher Education Institutions. She is at Macalester on a grant from the Chinese government to research US higher education institutions. Her research in the US is focused on university administrations, which are structured much differently in China. Professor Liang plans to travel to the University

of Chicago to research William Rainey Harper, the university's first president. She played a very active role in the school and taught classes while serving as president. Another interesting figure that Professor Liang is researching is Eliphalet Nott, who served 61 years as the president of Union College in upstate New York. Besides her academic research, Professor Liang plays an instrumental role in the Chinese education system. She advocates for increased attention to be paid to rural communities whose school systems often lack the resources to allow their students to compete for opportunities in China's wealthy cities. Additionally, she is an expert in Chinese educational history and how this history and Chinese culture impact the education system in China today. A fascinating example is how the ancient tradition of civil service exams influenced China's college entrance exams. While vigorous and stressful, emphasizing standardized tests can be meritocratic, helping rural students, who often lack the resources to compete with urban students with extracurriculars.

Checking in with the Professors

Amy Sullivan



Professor Sullivan is working for Johns Hopkins University's Berman Institute of Bioethics on a project entitled Moral Histories. It is a year-long position where she will be researching and conducting long form oral histories with some of the founding figures of bioethics such as Jim Childress (pictured on the left).

Walter Greason



Professor Walter Greason's new work on 'Unequal Housing and the Case for Reparations' has won three major awards as part of the edited collection, *The Black Reparations Project -- The Phyllis Wheatley Book Award*, the *Next Generation Indie Book Award*, and the *Finalist PROSE Award*. His graphic narrative, *The Graphic History of Hip Hop*, has been honored at the Schomburg Center, the National Museum for African-American History and Culture, the Metropolitan Museum, the Library of Congress, and the United Nations' Summit of the Future since its debut earlier this year. His essay, "Civil Rights Challenges against the Housing Act of 1949," appeared in the most recent issue of the *Journal of the American Planning Association*.

Jess Pearson



Professor Jess Pearson’s current book project, “Traveling to the End of Empire” explores how people moved through the decolonizing world in search of relaxation, discovery, and independence—both personal and political. Leisure travel, this book will argue, offered an opportunity to create national communities, to build postcolonial solidarity between newly sovereign countries, and to reimagine relationships between Europe and its former colonies. At the same time, the obstacles and disappointments that travelers of color have encountered—and, indeed, continue to face today—are a testament to the durability of European colonialism.

Katrina Phillips



Professor Phillips is currently working on an eight-book series of biographies aimed at elementary-aged readers. The books’ subjects include Lakota military leader Red Cloud, Ojibwe baseball player Charles Albert Bender, Osage dancer Maria Tallchief, and Cherokee leader Wilma Mankiller. She’s written a number of children’s books over the years, and it has been a lot of fun (and somewhat challenging) to find ways to make Native history accessible to younger readers. Both of her kids seem to enjoy the books, though – her younger son likes to take her books out of his school’s library, even though he has copies at home! Her most recent collection is pictured here.

Masha Fedorova



This summer, Professor Masha Fedorova and Audrey Smyczek (25, Computer Science) received a CSR grant to work on a project titled "The Cry for Food: A Global Food Insecurity during World War I." The project explored how the global disruption of agricultural production and the resulting food insecurity were met by people in various countries during the war. It used RStudio to create maps based on data from American, British, Russian, and Indian newspapers. These maps highlighted the extent of food insecurity, its underlying causes, the gender of participants, and the use of police force in response to these crises. Audrey presented the project at the Summer Showcase during the MacFest days in September 2024.



Course Spotlight

On September 21, Dr. Masha Fedorova and Dr. Alan Barenberg took their students to the Museum of Russian Art in Minneapolis to visit the exhibition "Peasant Women of the Russian North: Heritage of a Culture Lost."

History Events



Reparations Panel

As the United Nations' "International Decade for People of African Descent" concludes, Macalester History and African Studies hosted five reparations experts for a panel and conversation with Macalester students. The panelists spoke about how history shapes the contemporary discussion on reparations in Minnesota, the US, and throughout the world.



Westenley Alcenat, '10
Scripps College



Keith Baker
ReConnect Rondo



Verene Shepherd
The Centre for Reparation
Research



Jennifer Branche
United Nations



Jean-Pierre Brutus
New Jersey Institute for
Social Justice



Preregistration Lunch

Insead of our typical preregistration lunch we hosted an open house on the 3rd floor of Old Main. Students and professors got lunch and walked around chatting and conversing about our spring course offerings.

Capstone Research

Interview with Maya Saidel, one of this year's capstone presenters (and last year's newsletter editor)

How did you pick your capstone topic?

Thanks to classes I've taken in the past at Macalester like Professor Karin Velez's "Pirates, Translators, and Missionaries" I was introduced to the role of Jesuits and other religious orders in the spread of Catholicism in Latin America. In the early days of the semester, when I was thinking of a specific question I could ask, I was lucky enough to stumble upon an article that introduced me to a formative idea in my capstone research. So it was a mix of the support that I've gotten from the Macalester history department and good luck that lead me to my topic.

Did you have any difficulties with your research?

Plenty! I would say that the capstone was full of unexpected twists and turns. You set out on this big project and expect everything to fall into place, but the actual nuts and bolts about conducting historical research end up being very much dependent on luck, on what's translated into English, and what's digitally accessible to you on Macalester's campus. So for me, the focus of my paper became this sacred historical text called "*The History of the Triumphs*" and originally I thought it was going to be a supplementary source that I would just brush over on my way to other sources. When those sources fell through, I had to pivot to focusing solely on this one text that I originally thought would only take up a paragraph or two in my capstone. In the end, this text was the bulk of my research!

How was it adapting your paper into a presentation?

Did you have to cut anything that you were excited to present?

I did! Somebody in the audience asked me a question about if there was anything I wish I could've spoken about. Right now the capstone is designed to have ten-minute presentations for something that can be a twenty to thirty-five-page paper. So it's really hard to condense all the really exciting details you put forward in your paper argument into that kind of presentation. And you have to weigh what would interest the audience the most versus what's most representative of the work you're doing...so that was kind of difficult. But it ended up being a really fun exercise; I just thought about the most hard-hitting points from my paper and how to translate them for a public audience.

Panel 1: Revolution and Reaction

Manas Kapoor, “Red Storm in Princely India: The Role of the Communist Party in the Rise and Fall of the Telangana Rebellion and it’s role in shaping Indian Politics, 1946-1951”

Fabio “Don” Padilla, “Las Raiz dePaz/The Roots of Peace: How Thr Honduran Governemnt Avoided Revolution In The Central American Cold War”

Liz Matlin, “Just Say No, and Other Inadequate Solutions: Maerican Political Reations to Methadone Maintenance Therapy, 1965-1989”



Panel 2: Distortion and Cooptation of Marginalized Identities

Fatima Ortega Barba, “Embodied Myth and Masculinity: Zapata’s Vaquero and Roosevelt’s Cowboy as Emblems of National Identity.”

Alma Angantyr, “Legacies of Love: Lesbian (Non)Existence in the Holocaust”

Leah Long, “A White Middle Class Club: Trans Feminist Clashes Over Race and Class”



Panel 3: Displacement and Emplacement: Possession of Land in the Americas

Andres Diaz Kirk, “The Sole Conservator of Liberty: Land and Violence in Jacksonian New York”

Taylor Sibthorp, “Land Dispossession is American: The Impact of the Colonization of Northwest Ohio on the Farm Debt Crisis of the 1980s”

Maya Saidel, “The Jesuit Martyrs of the Corpus Coloniae Mysticum: Dismemberment and Consolidation in the Northwestern Borderlands of Nueva Espana



Panel 4: Media Manipulation and the State: The Soviet Union and the Americas

Emma Henry, "Countering Colonial Childhood: Representations of Indigenous People in Children's Literature in the Northeastern United States, 1815-1860"

Wesley Hearne, "Fujimori's Phantasm: The Radical Subversion of the Peruvian Media Ecosystem"

Talia Ostacher, "'Standard-Bearers of Peace': Youth Internationalism in the Post-Stalin Soviet Union, 1953-1979"



Coming up this Spring

Number	Name	Instructor
HIST 115-01	Africa Since 1800	Tara Hollies
HIST 154-01	African Life Histories	Walter Greason
HIST 168-01	Introduction to Gender History	Tara Hollies
HIST 219-01	In Motion: African Americans in the United States	Walter Greason
HIST 222-01	Imagining the American West	Katrina Phillips
HIST 224-01	African American History Before 1865: Enslavement, Resistance, and Emancipation	Linda Sturtz
HIST 226-01	American Indian History Since 1871	Katrina Phillips
HIST 234-01	U.S. Environmental History	Chris Wells
HIST 235-01	Captives, Cannibals, and Capitalists in Early Modern Atlantic World	Linda Sturtz
HIST 258-01	Postwar Europe	Jess Pearson
HIST 275-01	The Rise of Modern China	James Coplin
HIST 284-01	Imaging the Modern City	Ernesto Capello
HIST 285-01	Cold War Latin America	Ethan Besser Fredrick
HIST 290-01	History: Then and Now	Walter Greason
HIST 294-01	Religion and Law in Africa	Tara Hollies
HIST 294-02	Contemporary India, 1940-Present	Niharika Yadav
HIST 294-03	Terror and the Gulag	Alan Barenberg
HIST 294-04	Empire of Nations: Nations and Nationalism in the USSR	Alan Barenberg
HIST 320-01	Decolonization	Jess Pearson
HIST 394-01	Sexual Economies of South Asia	Niharika Yadav
HIST 394-02	Labor and Class and the Theater	Wu Chen Khoo