2018-2019 UTHC Faculty Fellows

Nuria Cruz Cámara
Professor
Department of Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures

Project Title: Constructing the Spanish Modern Woman, 1928-1938: The Magazines Estampa and Crónica

This book project investigates cultural manifestations of the modern woman in Spain by casting an analytical eye on the significant but largely neglected venue of the popular press, and it makes a much-needed contribution to the international academic dialog on the diverse representations of the modern woman. It focuses on Estampa (1928-1938) and Crónica (1929-1938), two widely-read Spanish general interest magazines that were fundamental to the process of circulating and normalizing a modern vision of womanhood that promoted the progressive values of the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1936). By examining Spanish culture through these outlets, the book questions common perceptions of the 1930s as a time when women’s advances were stalled or reversed and demonstrates the need for contextualized approaches to representations of the modern woman.

Gina M. Di Salvo
Assistant Professor
Department of Theatre

Project Title: The Theatrical Life of the Saints: English Performance from the Middle Ages to Shakespeare

This book project constructs a new history of the English saint play. Re-examining both historical records and dramatic texts, the book shows that the English saint play existed as a range of theatrical forms in the Middle Ages and emerged as an identifiable dramatic genre only in the time of Shakespeare. Medieval representations of saints encompass a wide variety of theatrical practices, and the English saint play did not end with the Protestant Reformation, but was in fact an innovation of the public theatre in
the Stuart period. Considering the history of the saint play across the medieval and Renaissance divide, the book also considers shared archives and methods across literary, religious, and theatre studies, the performative discourses of religious orthodoxy, the secularizing effects of genre formation, and how a new history of the marginal saint play forces a critical reconsideration of Shakespeare and the canon of Renaissance drama.

Nicole Eggers
Assistant Professor
Department of History

Project Title: *Kitawala in the Congo: Power, Prayer, and the Politics of Health*

This book will recount the history of one of the most influential religious/healing movements in 20th-century Congo, Kitawala, from its colonial beginnings in the 1920s through its continued practice in some of the most conflicted parts of the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo today. The study investigates the broad history of Kitawala, emphasizing its connection to deeply rooted Congolese histories of spiritual, political, and therapeutic power as well as its transformation of and by colonial and post-colonial realities. *Kitawala in the Congo* is a history of discourses and practices of power in central Africa that investigates the ways in which communities and individuals in the region have historically imagined power and sought to access it, wield it, and police the morality of its uses, in ways that were sometimes violent and very often gendered.

Mary McAlpin
Professor
Department of Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures

Project Title: *Rationalizing Rape: Nature, History, and Sexual Violence in the French Enlightenment*

This book project proposes that the Enlightenment promotion of the human sex drive as a positive force in both individuals and societies—a secularizing discourse that transformed Western culture—resulted in the reconceptualization of heterosexual violence as part of the natural order of things. Uncoupling sin from sex transformed modesty from a Christian virtue into a universal female “instinct.” Women were
said to first attract men, only to resist them in the last instance. By thus “requiring” men to use violence, it was argued, women satisfied their own physical needs while ensuring the survival of the species—for resistance was said to enhance male desire. Positing female sexual response as inherently contradictory allowed Enlightenment theorists to efface the moral opprobrium attached to rape by imagining women as inviting sex most of all when saying “No.”

Urmila Seshagiri
Associate Professor
Department of English

Project Title: *Virginia Woolf’s “Sketch of the Past”*

Based on Virginia Woolf’s manuscripts, typescripts, and notes archived in the British Library, the New York Public Library, Smith College, and the University of Sussex, this project is the first scholarly edition of Woolf’s unfinished memoir "Sketch of the Past," the sole piece of autobiographical writing she intended for publication. Composed between 1939–1940 but undiscovered until 1976, Woolf’s "Sketch" is a vibrant archive of English literary culture, a record of historical change following Queen Victoria's death, a complex treatise on life-writing, and, above all, a self-portrait of artistic growth. Updated to reflect a detailed, historically rich understanding of Woolf’s literary and professional achievements, this scholarly edition of "Sketch of the Past" will shine crucial new light on the author’s conception of “the whole world as a work of art.”

Helene Sinnreich
Associate Professor
Department of Religious Studies

Project Title: *Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die? The High Holy Days in Auschwitz 1944*

This research project is a microhistory that focuses on a group of 2,000 young boys between the ages of 12 and 16 who came from very religious backgrounds and who arrived in the Auschwitz quarantine camp from Poland and Hungary in the summer and fall of 1944. The project examines their experiences during a period of
weeks covering September and October 1944. It analyzes, from a multitude of perspectives, two processes of selection (including how various privileged prisoners intervened to assist some of these boys in survival) that resulted in their survival or selection for death at Auschwitz during the holiest part of the Jewish year. This project interrogates how memories of these events have been preserved, mythologized, and understood, especially within the most religious Jewish communities.

Graduate Fellows

Anna (Catherine) Greer
Fifth-Year Doctoral Student (in 2018–19)
Department of Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures

Project Title: Singing in the Anteroom to Hell: Memorializing Music in Theresienstadt

Numerous Jewish musicians, composers, and artists were imprisoned in Theresienstadt, which has routinely served as a symbol of thriving Jewish cultural activity during the Holocaust. This dissertation complicates reductive narratives of musical activity in Theresienstadt that rely upon tropes of resistance and defiance and argues that musical performance was, like everything else there, a reflection of Theresienstadt’s cruel, coercive conditions. It establishes a historically nuanced and contextualized understanding of five musical works that were rehearsed and performed in the camp–ghetto. Relying upon archival records, survivor testimonies, memoirs, and present–day commemorations, the dissertation examines redemptive narratives of Theresienstadt’s cultural life.

Joshua Hodge
Sixth-Year Doctoral Student (in 2018–19)
Department of History

Project Title: Alabama’s Public Wilderness: Reconstruction Politics, Natural Resources, and the End of the Southern Commons, 1866–1905

This project examines the Southern Homestead Act of 1866 and the
important role played by the federal government in the rural, industrializing South. With this legislation, Republican legislators sought to settle common-use public domain with people freed from slavery, but southern conservatives saw such legislation as economically restrictive, racially motivated, and an example of federal overreach. Federal land agents stationed in the state’s capitol refereed a contest between homesteaders and lumber companies as each sought to control Alabama’s public land. By 1905, this contest between egalitarian democracy and acquisitive capitalism resulted in the destruction of the ancient longleaf forest, and the management of the nation’s sylvan resources moved out of the land office and into the domain of the nation’s first foresters.

Max Matherne
Sixth-Year Doctoral Student (in 2018–19)
Department of History

Project Title: The Jacksonian Reformation: Political Patronage and Republican Identity

This dissertation examines the ideological underpinnings of Andrew Jackson’s infamous “spoils system” and its portentous consequences for the US democratic tradition. Between the Revolution and 1828, American democratic thinkers had crafted a theory of society that drew moral distinctions between the virtuous, independent “people” and the imagined sub-class of “aristocrats” who secured power through political appointments. The first task of the Jackson administration was to extirpate these aristocratic fifth columns in their midst, and they did so with a ruthless purge of federal officeholders. In the process, they further refined a narrative of American democracy as a struggle between disinterested, retiring outsiders and self-serving, ambitious insiders.

Kendra Slayton
Sixth-Year Doctoral Student (in 2018–19)
Department of English

Project Title: For commune profit sith it may availle: Gender, Circumscription, and the Common Good in Chaucer

This dissertation examines how Chaucer’s theological interests
fundamentally inform his social projects, particularly his depiction of women in society. Many medieval theologians believed that humans felt a natural inclination toward God as the *summum bonum*, or highest good, but actively followed this inclination through free choice. Several of Chaucer’s works question what happens if hyper-masculine social ideologies usurp the role of the *summum bonum*, subjecting individuals to systemic social determinism. Chaucer documents the negative impacts of such circumscription but also provides alternative models, in which acknowledging women’s agency in public discourse helps to break society’s reproduction of its own deterministic, pugnacious capacities.

Brittany Poe  
Sixth-Year Doctoral Student (in 2018–19)  
Department of History  
Marco Haslam Dissertation Fellow  

*Project Title: Beyond Paris: Alan of Lille and the Reception of Scholastic Theology in Occitania and Iberia, 1150–1300*  

This project broadens discussion of medieval Scholastic theology to include the mutual relationship between theologians and their environments by examining the ways in which Scholastic theology was adapted to and consumed by the multiconfessional populations of the Languedoc and northern Iberia, specifically through the career and works of Alan of Lille (c. 1120–1201). His theological program was picked up in various intellectual circles in Iberia where it was adapted for use in mediating Christian–Muslim–Jewish relations. Alan represents, in many ways, the diffusion of Scholastic theology and an opportunity to examine the interaction between schoolmen and their environment.