



ILLINOIS STATE
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Today & Yesterday

Newsletter of the Department of History

Volume 50, 2026

History Day at Illinois State grows to 290 competitors

By Greg Carter, instructional assistant professor of history



Illinois State students and alumni assisted in the judging process on History Day.

From March 17-21, 2026, the Illinois State University Department of History sponsored the Central Illinois regional competition for the Illinois History Day and the National History Day competition. One of the earliest types of “academic bowl” competitions, the National History Day event was organized in 1974, and Illinois History Day began in 1976. Students in grades 6-10 and their sponsoring teachers compete locally, and the local winners advance to the regional competition, which is usually hosted by a university or a public museum. In Illinois, there are four regional competitions: Chicago Metro (Chicago History Museum), Northern Illinois (Burpee Museum), Central Illinois (Illinois State University), and Southern Illinois (Southern Illinois University Carbondale). All schools compete using a national theme. The 2026 theme was “revolution, reaction, and reform in history.” In addition to being a public event for the

Department of History, the annual history competitions around the state are an effective method for introducing prospective students to the University campus, and an opportunity for judges, many of whom are student teachers, to network with active teachers and school administrators from around the region.

The central regional competition transitioned from Milliken University to Illinois State in 2025. The event was coordinated by NTT faculty member Dr. Greg Carter, who has been involved with regional and

state history competitions since 2009, and Trish Gudeman, the department administrative aide. This year, 210 projects, including research papers, documentary films, performance skits, websites, and physical exhibits, were submitted by 290 students from 17 schools in the central region, which covers almost one-third of the state of Illinois. This was a 10% increase in size from 2025, and a substantial increase from the years prior to COVID.

Thirty current Illinois State students and several alumni assisted in the judging process over four days, beginning with research papers and website submissions. The event culminated with an all-day public event at the Alumni Center on Saturday, March 21. During this second phase of judging, all performances, documentaries, and exhibits were judged, followed by an awards ceremony. Ribbons were awarded to 122 projects, which advanced to the Illinois State History Day competition in late April. Winners at state competed in the National History Day competition, held at the University of Maryland-College Park, in early June.



Two Illinois State history ed student judges stand by a submission to the competition.

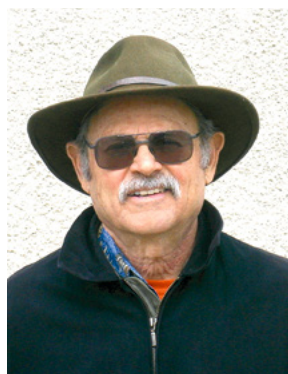
Alumni spotlight

W. Robert Beckman '96, M.S. '01, retired from teaching at Dunlap High School after 28 years. Beckman co-authored *Carrying the Colors: The Life and Times of Medal of Honor Winner Andrew Jackson Smith* and *The Echo of Manly Voices: The 55th Massachusetts at War in the Department of the South* (submitted and pending), and is the co-author of five historical articles.

Riley Biondi '24 teaches at York Community High School in Elmhurst.

Jessica Infelise Datzman '15, AICP, works as the zoning administration coordinator for DuPage County.

Gordon Duguid '78 served in U.S. Foreign Service from 1990-2020, after receiving a master's degree in American studies from the University of London. He taught previously at the George Washington University, the United States National Intelligence University, and United States Foreign Service Institute. Duguid is currently the Donald F. McHenry Visiting Professor in Diplomacy and International Relations at Illinois State University Department of Politics and Government.



David Ganyon

David Ganyon, M.A. '81, after several decades working as an archivist, records manager, and e-discovery specialist, retired to Oregon where he serves on the board of the Senior Studies Institute (SSI) as curriculum chair. SSI, sponsored by Portland Community College, holds 90 lectures per year, some in-person and others remotely via Zoom. The institute is always looking for speakers, so consider volunteering in person or online at ssipdx.org. Ganyon has given lectures about Lincoln's second inaugural address, Theodore Roosevelt's time as pres-

ident of the New York City police commission, and Frank Oppenheimer's story.

Juan Gutierrez, M.A. '19, is a CCS case manager at St. Charles Youth and Family Services in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Rexton Jones '25 is a juris doctor candidate at the Indiana University Maurer School of Law.

John Moreland, M.A. '14, started a new job as director of library and research at Phillips Lytle LLP in Buffalo, New York.



Laura Morrical and a student participate in a "staff as students and students as senior citizens" activity during spirit week.

Morrical taught economics and personal finance, history, psychology, civics, and physical education for the past six years at Lincolnton High School in North Carolina.

Matthew Nalefski, M.A. '21, earned the university-wide James L. Fisher Award in 2022 for his master's thesis on federal slave-trade suppression, completed under the supervision of professors Ron Gifford, Ross Kennedy, and Stewart Winger. Nalefski served as an instructor in the Department of History at Illinois State for four semesters. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in history at Princeton University, where he continues to focus on the federal government's interactions with the abolition movement. His aim is to teach at a research university. Nalefski encourages those interested in following a similar career path to take



Matthew Nalefski

Laura (Simonton) Morrical '09, '11, moved to North Carolina in 2020 after leaving Hartsburg-Emden CUSD.

advantage of the valuable counsel available from the department's faculty and welcomes inquiries himself. His contact information is available through the Department of History office.

Patricia Ann Owens '72 went on to get her M.A. in history and M.S. in forestry in 1975 from Southern Illinois University (SIU) at Carbondale, another M.A. from the University of Wyoming in American studies in 1991, and her Ph.D. in historical studies in 1986 from SIU. Owens has worked for the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, and as a professor of history at Wabash Valley College where she retired after 35 years.

Erica Senffner '08 has built a distinguished career at Joliet Central High School, where she is now in her 18th year of teaching. For the past 13 years, she has



Erica Senffner

specialized in AP human geography, helping to strengthen the school's advanced placement program and contributing to the district's recognition as the College Board's Advanced Placement District of the Year in 2017.

Noah Tang '19, M.S. '23, teaches at Bloomington High School and has been an advocate for Bloomington's housing crisis, speaking with the governor at a roundtable discussion in March.

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Illinois State University
Department of History
Campus Box 4420
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Editors

Matthijs Tieleman, Trish Gudeman,
and Katie Lopez

Professors Kennedy and Hartman bestowed with university honors

Andrew Hartman has been named a **Distinguished Professor** and **Ross Kennedy** has been named a **University Professor** effective August 16, 2026. These are among the highest honors bestowed on

faculty at Illinois State University, and they recognize sustained excellence in scholarship, teaching, and service.

The Department of History is incredibly proud of having these honors bestowed

on members of our faculty and we send our congratulations to both Dr. Hartman and Dr. Kennedy.

Department of History organizes exciting student trips to Springfield and Chicago

By Alan Lessoff, University Professor of history

During 2025-26, Illinois State history students participated in programs that illustrated ongoing student involvement in urban affairs, public and local history.

In October 2025, Drs. Greg Carter and Alan Lessoff led a group on a Saturday trip to Chicago's South Side. Central Illinois labor leader and historian Mike Matejka, a 1974 graduate of the department, arranged the trip and came along for the day. A member of the Historic Pullman Foundation board and an organizer of popular industrial tours in Bloomington-Normal, Matejka substituted for National Park Service rangers and gave a dramatic explanation of the Pullman factory site. The group met key figures in Pullman's restoration efforts, along with Chicago historians Ann Durkin Keating of North Central College, co-editor of the *Encyclopedia of Chicago*; and Lionel Kimble of Chicago State University, father of a student on the trip. This trip grew out of Lessoff's upper-level classes. It was the second visit to Pullman by Illinois State students since 2024. The hope is that this can grow into opportunities for internships and other ongoing student involvement with one of the country's most significant industrial heritage sites.

In March 2026, Lessoff took another group to Springfield for the first undergraduate public history conference at the University of Illinois Springfield's center at Horace Mann Plaza near the Old State Capitol. Seven students gave lively accounts of internships with the McLean County Museum of History, the University Archives, the David Davis Mansion, and the Peoria Riverfront Museum. Professionals in the audience remarked especially upon the students' understanding of institutional operations and their grasp of the skills needed for public history and museum work. Two of the internship program's most appreciated and consistent collaborators participated in the program: April Anderson-Zorn, university archivist at Illinois State; and Maria Mears, curator of historical interpretation at the McLean County Museum of History.

Other field trips this year were to the Lincoln Museum in Springfield led by Dr. Dan Stump for HIS 320, Dr. Carter's HIS 278 class to the First Infantry Division Museum at Cantigny in Wheaton, and the trip to the Symposium on Premodern Manuscript and Print Fragments at the Newberry Library in Chicago led by Dr. Katie Jasper. Trips such as these have been made possible by the John Freed Student Research Fund.



Students and Dr. Lessoff tour the Pullman factory. Remains of the factory can be seen in the background.



From left, April Anderson-Zorn, Jameson Warfield, Raquel Mancias, Will Bernico, Tucker LaHaie, Lucas Chase, Alivia Mani, Aidan Coyne, and Maria Mears stand outside the Horace Mann Plaza on a trip to Springfield in March 2026.



Dr. Greg Carter's HIS 278 American Military History class visit the First Infantry Division Museum at Cantigny in Wheaton. The fall 2025 class focused on Operation Torch, the 1943 Allied invasion of North Africa. As part of their studies, the class visited the museum at Cantigny because the First Division played a key role in the operation.

Undergraduate program highlights

History ed major Shannon Mahoney named Bone Scholar for 2025-26

The Robert G. Bone Scholar is the highest honor the University can bestow on undergraduate students. Shannon Mahoney was nominated by Dr. Kyle Ciani and chosen for this honor for 2025-26. Mahoney studied secondary education with a focus on history-social sciences. During her time at Illinois State University, she was honored with several distinctions, including the Louis E. Miglio Scholarship, Redbird Scholarship, Rising Ray Award, Lucy

Lucille Tasher Senior Scholarship, William and Jeanne Howard Scholarship, and the Lawrence McBride Award. She was also selected for the University High School Internship, a year-long student teaching placement. She credits her understanding of history and education to the rigorous course work and to her roles as a history peer mentor, Rho Gamma recruitment leader, and undergraduate teaching assistant. Congratulations, Shannon!



Shannon Mahoney, Bone Scholar 2025-26

Women's History Club expands board and activities

By Lindsay Stallones Marshall, assistant professor of history

Women's History Club (WHC) expanded its board from two to five this year. They also implemented a role within their board structure that serves on the Center for Civic Engagement Voter Engagement Coalition. At the beginning of each semester,



Women's History Club members promote the club at their campus booth

they participated in Festival ISU and Winterfest.

WHC's focus throughout this school year has been expanding what it means to study women's history. While they do often continue to focus on women in history, they are actively emphasizing the importance of studying all history through a gender-critical lens. They have done this by hosting seven speakers from a variety of departments across campus. At meetings, the club dedicated active discussion time to their methods of doing history, enabling students to explore these critical tools in another environment that supplements the traditional classroom and research environments. WHC hosted speakers from the Department of History; the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures; the Honors Program; and the Wonsook

Kim College of Fine Arts. Topics included recent contemporary art historical exhibitions by University Galleries Curator Kendra Paitz, and a talk by theatre historian Dr. Le'Mil L. Eiland about the Black Archives and his implementation of feminist methodologies into his work as a cultural historian. WHC also hosted Dr. Megan VanGorder, who discussed the research that led to her recently published book.

WHC improved their reach on social media and officers hope to adapt how they use the platforms in the future, turning toward more informative content rather than just communication with members. Members are really looking forward to how this club continues to grow and develop.

Phi Alpha Theta flourishes at Department of History

By Camille Cole, assistant professor of history

This year, Phi Alpha Theta welcomed 17 new members into our national history honor society. We also welcomed an entirely new executive board, participated in a conference, took part in our first Welcome Week, and held two induction ceremonies. Our executive board consists of President/Vice President Jennifer Correa, Secretary Lydia Shaw, and Treasurer/Social Media Manager Justin Stengel.

At our conference, two board members and two of our newest inductees traveled

with Dr. Camille Cole to the American Historical Association conference in Chicago. This was an incredible opportunity that inspired members and encouraged them to present through Phi Alpha Theta in the future. During our induction ceremony, members received their honor cords alongside their certificates of membership.

It has been an amazing year for Phi Alpha Theta, and we hope the organization will continue to flourish.



Students attended the AHA Annual Meeting in Chicago this year.



Phi Alpha Theta Induction ceremony members

Graduate program highlights

By Katrin Paehler, professor and graduate advisor

The history master's program is looking back on another busy and exciting year.

In August 2025, we welcomed our new cohort. As the “gods of all history grad programs” decree, they were thrown into the philosophy of history class, taught by Dr. Nathan Kapoor. Everyone lived to tell the tale and to go on to Dr. Cole's graduate research seminar this spring. Asked to write microhistories, students showed off their wide-ranging interests and produced papers ranging from land scams in New Mexico to early-modern Japanese Christianity to women's anti-slavery activism in Central Illinois. In the meantime, Jonathan Parker presented his paper “Pius XII: Still at War” at Illinois Central College's Between the Lines program. Alicia Rubio, one of our first-year grad students, has an article in our student journal *Recounting the Past*, entitled “Marxism Among Latin-Americans: Invisible Actors in the Historiographical Record.”

In the spring semester, we introduced our hybrid Blockseminar. In this format, class meets twice a month on Zoom and one Saturday a month for a block of six hours in person. Our trial run, taught by Dr. Katrin Paehler, was a success. Meeting on a Saturday—especially for a class titled A History of Violence—is exhausting, no doubt. But it is also six hours to jointly “geek out” about a history, so, what is not to like?

This fall, Dr. Matthijs Tieleman will

teach *Entangled Empires* as our hybrid Blockseminar. If you are reading this and thinking “how fascinating,” you should probably become a visiting grad student and take the class.

Our second-year students, busy with classes and theses and fields of studies, ventured outside the classroom as well. Erin Wilcox gave her paper “Cybernetics and the (Counter) Cultural Production of Technology” at the Midwest Junto for the History of Science at Purdue in April; Janet Okantah worked as a history outreach intern at the McLean County Museum of History where she developed docent scripts that cover all five museum exhibits and the architectural history of the building; and Kylie Black readied her paper “Lemkinian Gendercide: Gendered Violence in Genocide” for the 2026 edition of our departmental journal *Recounting the Past*. And some got a head start: Maurice Greene enjoyed interning at Peoria Riverfront Museum, where he worked on the “Promise of Liberty” and the athlete exhibits.

In the middle of all of this, Kylie Black and Erin Wilcox not only defended their M.A. theses with great aplomb and in front of a “full house,” but also applied for Ph.D. programs. To no one's surprise, they found success: this fall, Black—our first accelerated master's student ever—will start her Ph.D. in history at Princeton University. Wilcox, meanwhile, will go



Erin Wilcox and her thesis advisors, from left, Amy Wood, Erin Wilcox, Nathan Kapoor, and Andrew Hartman



Kylie Black and her thesis advisors, from left, Christine Varga-Harris, Keith Pluymer, Kylie Black, and Katrin Paehler

west (at least a little bit) and begin her Ph.D. studies in the history of science, technology, and medicine at the University of Oklahoma.

Finally, we were pleased to honor our newly minted masters with well-deserved Cavanagh Awards: Black and Wilcox received awards for the Best Master's Thesis in American History and Best Master's Thesis in Non-American History, respectively. Wade Kirchner—who defended his M.A. thesis last November and presented on his work at the Society for Historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era in June—and Janet Okantah were honored as this year's Best Master's Students. Congratulations!

2025–26 student awards



Gleynafa T. Ray Award winners from the spring 2026 award ceremony

HELEN M. CAVANAGH AWARD FOR BEST MASTER'S THESIS - U.S.

Erin Wilcox

HELEN M. CAVANAGH AWARD FOR BEST MASTER'S THESIS - NON-U.S.

Kylie Black

HELEN M. CAVANAGH AWARD FOR BEST MASTER'S DEGREE STUDENT

Wade Kirchner
Janet Okantah

LUCY LUCILE TASHER SENIOR SCHOLARSHIP

Fall 2025

Haley Afable
Hannah Pelphrey

Spring 2026

Emma Cox
Meghan Feltes

Bobby Kallieris
Abby LeClere
Shannon Mahoney

GLEYNafa T. RAY AWARD

Fall 2025

Kristen Cubelic

Spring 2026

Adam Faiz
Mia Norris
Max Silkaitis
Grace Zaleski

MARK WYMAN - STEPHANE BOOTH SCHOLARSHIP

Ty Benhoff
Alison Korval
Zach Manahan
Abigail Sanders

JAMES TODD WILBORN SCHOLARSHIP

Anthony Addante
Lydia Shaw

SESSIONS HONORS SCHOLARSHIP

Caleb King
Zach Stoeger

WILLIAM AND JEANNE HOWARD SCHOLARSHIP

Luke Celandia
Shannon Mahoney

HARMON RECRUITMENT SCHOLARSHIP

Katie Kramer
Samantha Tejada

DARREL A. SUTTER SCHOLARSHIP
Brennan Haydysch

DARREL A. SUTTER TEXTBOOK AWARD

Anna Hutchison
Haley Thies

THE TOUSEY SCHOLARSHIP
Melanie Donis

DARREL A. SUTTER STUDENT TEACHER AWARD

Fall 2025

Jack Morenzoni

Spring 2026

Melanie Cerda
Caroline Colella

LAWRENCE MCBRIDE AWARD

Fall 2025

Joshua Kraft

Spring 2026

Shannon Mahoney

HOWARD ROMANEK AWARD

Fall 2025

AJ Martorano

Spring 2026

Rachel Kramer
Mia Norris

New faculty/staff profile

Megan VanGorder

My name is Megan VanGorder and I'm so humbled and excited to be joining the incredible history faculty at Illinois State. As you can see from my photo, I've considered myself a Redbird my entire life. I grew up in Normal, both of my parents are alumni, and my dad worked in Institutional Research.

I graduated from the Illinois State history ed program in 2010. I taught at Olympia Middle School while beginning my graduate work in history. I completed my Ph.D. at Northern Illinois, and for the last three years, I've been teaching and leading the history education program at Governors State University.

My current book, *A Mother's Work: Mary Bickerdyke, Civil War Era Nurse*, explores medical authority in the Civil War era and how one woman navigated the shifting world of work and cultural conceptions of motherhood in the 19th century United States. As a historian and teacher educator, I strongly believe that



Megan VanGorder, once a Redbird, always a Redbird!

the past is most powerful when it connects us to the places and people around us. My education-related research considers how teaching U.S. history through localized source materials has the potential to increase civic engagement.

I live in Normal with my husband, David, and my three sons. I like sports (and I don't care who knows), millennial-

coded pop culture references, and I can almost always be found drinking coffee or Coke Zero.

History social sciences education program

2026 History and Social Sciences Teacher Symposium

By Katie Lopez, coordinator of student teaching for the history-social sciences education program

On January 30, the Department of History, the McLean County Museum of History, and the Regional Office of Education No. 17 welcomed 350 classroom teachers, administrators, teacher candidates, and museum science experts to campus for the annual History and Social Sciences Teacher Symposium. The event was held in both the Bone Student Center and Schroeder Hall, and the focus was primarily on public history in the classroom. The keynote speaker was Dr. Patricia Melvin-Mooney of Loyola University, Chicago, and her public address was titled “‘The Universe is Made Up of Stories, not Atoms’: The Power of Narrative in the Public Sphere.” Melvin-Mooney expanded on the value of incorporating public history into the

classroom, and she also included multiple accomplished graduate assistants in her keynote and subsequent breakout session.

Symposium participants selected from 31 unique and engaging breakout sessions, which included presenters from a variety of high schools, museums, nonprofits, educational institutes, and universities. There was a heavy emphasis on museum sciences, along with best practices for student engagement, America 250, and civic involvement. Ten Department of History faculty participated in the breakout sessions, and their sessions featured an analysis of favorite primary sources from World History, a historical review of Illinois road markers and their alignment with major historical events, a discussion



Symposium participants attend the keynote speaker presentation at the Bone Student Center.

of new research on Karl Marx's influence on American society, and a lecture on the public classroom as a site of historical memory. A special thanks to **Katie Lopez, Richard Hughes, Megan VanGorder, Andrew Hartman, Janet Okantah, Trish Gudeman, Candace Summers, Emily McCusker, and Stacie France** for their involvement in planning this event.

2026 Capitol Forum on America's Future

By Richard Hughes, professor of history and director of the history and social sciences education program

For the 13th time since 2012, the history and social science education program hosted Capitol Forum on America's Future, which provides opportunities for high school students to deliberate United States foreign policy—past, present, and future. Convening all day in the State Farm Hall of Business, over 50 high school students and their teachers from seven schools throughout Illinois explored the impact of foreign aid, human rights, immigration, and trade on American policy. This year's participants included Fieldcrest High School (Chad Kuehn), Newark High School (Mike Hall), Galesburg High School (Erin Crawford),

Dwight High School (Kristin Pruitt), Normal Community West High School (Jason Klockenga), Olympia High School (Matt Modrusic and Madelyn Hubble), and Normal Community High School (Sarah Lamkin). History teacher candidates from Andrew Hartman's HIS 390 class served as instructors and discussion moderators in the morning and the event culminated with a large simulation of a meeting of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Eight Illinois State teacher candidates served as U.S. Senators (Ariana Akiti, Anna Hutchison, Elijah Lurigo, Wiat Miller, Riley Newman, Haley Thies, Hannah Torkelson, and Allie Whyte) while



Local high school students meet on Illinois State's campus for the annual Capitol Forum.

high school students testified on contemporary foreign policy options. Department alumni and school partners Jason Klockenga and Kelly Keogh played key roles in organizing the annual event which continues to prepare our teacher candidates to teach government and civics.

Special events

Alexis Peri gives lecture at Department of History on September 15, 2025

By Christine Varga-Harris, professor of history

In 1947, Celia Wesle, a Midwest artist and writer, Bloomington teacher and Illinois State alumna; and El'ga Koff, a Russian producer and editor at the Soviet Mosfilm



Ann White, left, VSCA historian and wife of the late William White, and Alexis Peri, right

studio, struck up a lively correspondence. Their letters addressed matters both personal and political, including daily life, balancing motherhood and a career, and the merits of their different societies. From 1943-53, hundreds of U.S. and Soviet women participated in this kind of correspondence, sanctioned by their governments amid their wartime alliance against Nazi Germany, and petering out under the pressures of the Red Scare and Stalinist xenophobia and isolationism. Delving into these letters that are at the heart of her 2024 book *Dear Unknown Friend* (Harvard U Press), Alexis Peri gave a fascinating talk at Illinois State this past fall. Peri, an associate professor of history at Boston University, demonstrated that in the early Cold War, ordinary people continued to find common ground. Asserting that emotional human connection can be as politically effective in diplomacy as negotiation and debate, Peri revealed that even as U.S.-Soviet relations faltered at the state level, they persisted in the realm of citizen engagement. The talk, with department support, made for a fitting program for the annual William White Forum and the organization spearheading it: the Vladimir-Canterbury Sister Cities Association (VCSCA). Forged through citizen diplomacy in the mid-1980s, the association continues to maintain links between Bloomington-Normal and Vladimir, Russia—virtually now due to the war

in Ukraine. For more information, to get involved, or to learn about its archives, visit VCSisterCityBN.org.

Megan Kate Nelson visits campus on March 19, 2026

By Amy Wood, professor of history

In late March, we welcomed celebrated historian of the U.S. Civil War and the American West, Megan Kate Nelson, to campus. Dr. Nelson is the author of multiple notable books, including *The Three-Cornered War: The Union, the Confederacy, and Native Peoples in the Fight for the West* (Scribner, 2020), which was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in History. The focus of her lively talk was her most recent book, *The Westerners: Mythmaking and Belonging on the American Frontier* (Simon & Schuster, 2026), which narrates the lives of men and women whose stories have historically been omitted from mythic accounts of frontier expansion and pioneer settlement. Nelson recounted the surprising stories of three of her subjects: James Beckwourth, who was born into slavery and, once emancipated, traveled the West as a trapper and scout, among other occupations; Ella Watson, a Canadian immigrant and legendary rancher and cattle rustler; and, the most well-known of the three, Sacajawea, the interpreter and guide for the Lewis and Clark expedition. On her visit, Nelson also conducted a workshop for a small group of undergraduate and graduate students on the art of narrative writing.

Kenneth Pomeranz lecture on the Chinese Empire on April 1, 2026

By Dan Knorr, assistant professor of history

This spring, the Department of History welcomed Dr. Kenneth Pomeranz to campus to give a public lecture titled, “Why Didn’t the Chinese Empire Fall? Conceptualizing and Transforming Frontier Governance Strategies, ca. 1759–1949.” Pomeranz is university professor of modern Chinese history at the University of

Chicago, a past president of the American Historical Association, and an award-winning author. He is best known for his 2000 book *The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the Making of the World Economy*. In his lecture at Illinois State, he presented material from his ongoing research project that addresses the question, “Why is China so big?” Unlike other early modern empires that fragmented in the early 20th century, the borders of China’s last imperial dynasty, the Qing (1644–1912), still align fairly closely with those of the People’s Republic of China today. Pomeranz’s lecture emphasized that this was not an inevitable outcome. Instead, it was a product of a range of factors, including multiple waves of migration by Chinese wage laborers and agrarian settlers, increasingly accommodative government attitudes toward these migrants, and the stimulus that political crisis and transimperial competition provided to regional state-building projects in the 19th and early 20th century.

History Trivia Spectacular on April 30, 2026

The third annual History Trivia Spectacular, held in Stevenson Hall 401, was another hit. It was a fierce battle of wits between the 10 teams, each led by a history faculty member while Matt Blue dazzled as the Spectacular’s master of ceremonies. Dr. Ross Kennedy’s team “Nixon’s the One!” took first place in a tie standoff against Dr. Ron Gifford’s team, “Gifford’s Gang.”



Dr. Kennedy’s winning team: Nixon’s the One!

History alumni take a Wrigley Field field trip



History alumni pose with their custom Cub colored history department rally towels.



First annual History Alumni Day at Wrigley Field on June 2, 2026



In Memoriam

Tim Helmuth (1969-2026) In January, the department learned of the passing of Tim Helmuth, our tech support specialist since 2014. Tim's dedication, professionalism, and kindness touched countless people across our campus. He was not only a skilled technician but also someone who cared deeply about helping others. His good humor and willingness to go above and beyond made him a wonderful colleague, and his contributions to Illinois State University and to our community will be remembered and appreciated for years to come.

For more information, visit
Homecoming.IllinoisState.edu.



Faculty accomplishments

Amy Wood gave an online talk “Retribution or Rehabilitation? The New York Prison System in Historical Perspective” to Hostos Community College in Bronx, New York, as part of their common core curriculum.

Andrew Hartman published the book, *Karl Marx in America*, with University of Chicago Press.

Camille Cole presented a paper on “Monopoly, Development, and Protest in Late Ottoman Concessions” at the Middle East Studies Association annual meeting.

Christine Varga-Harris published the article “From ‘Backward Villages’ to ‘Speaking of Success’: Representations of African Women through the Lens of Soviet Woman during Early Decolonization” in *Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis*.

Dan Knorr presented a paper entitled “Place, Public, and Patrimony in Early Modern China” at the Social Sciences History Association conference.

Georgia Tsouvala published the chapter “Women and Armed Conflict: Never Was It Just a Man’s World” in *Brill’s Companion to Ancient Women and War in the Mediterranean World*.

Greg Carter published the book *Backtime Religion in the Danish West Indies: Africana Heritage Religion Beyond Obeah* with Bloomsbury Academic.

Janice Jayes published the article “The Deportation Industry and the Shadows of Indian Removal” in *Public I, the newspaper of the Independent Media Center of Urbana-Champaign*.

Kathryn Jasper was awarded a third year of ARCS funding for an archaeological project in Italy.

Katrin Paehler published the article “The Space Between: Hildegard Beetz, Espionage, and Gender, 1944-1949” in *Shots in the Dark* with Fordham University Press.

Keith Pluymers published the article “Regulating the City: Streetscaping, Sewers, and the Project of Universal Drainage in Philadelphia” in *Journal for the History of Knowledge*.

Kyle Ciani wrote the book chapter “Family Resources in the Progressive Era” forthcoming in *New Directions in United States Family History* with Routledge.

Lindsay Stallones Marshall organized and facilitated annual conference of the Equine History Collective 2025 titled “Horse Sense and Sensibility: Equids, Humans, and Meaning-Making.”

Megan VanGorder published the book *A Mother’s Work: Mary Bickerdyke, Civil War-Era Nurse* with the University of North Carolina Press.

Richard Hughes presented the paper “What Happens When Teaching Mandates Go Your Way: Reimagining History Teaching and Curricula in Blue States” at History Educators International Research Network Conference in Cologne, Germany.

Ross Kennedy published the book *The United States and the Origins of World War II in Europe* with Routledge.

Stewart Winger moderated a panel and delivered the paper “Lincoln and the Wealth Tax” at Conference on Illinois History.

Taylor Soja was selected for a visiting research fellowship by Indiana University Indianapolis Arts and Humanities Institute and North American Conference on British Studies.

Retirements

Tony Crubaugh came to Illinois State 25 years ago, joining a department undergoing a generational turnover that resulted in



Tony Crubaugh

a faculty unusually dominated by assistant professors. He quickly established himself as a leader, at one point simultaneously serving, as he put together his tenure file, on the DFSC, as chair of a search committee, and as the editor of *Recounting the Past*—all while also serving his

discipline as an editor for H-France Book Reviews and publishing major scholarly works on Revolutionary France. In 2008, in the context of the unexpected resignation of a chair and a failed chair search, Crubaugh volunteered to serve and went on to lead the department until 2017. Citing all of Crubaugh's accomplishments as chair—and his contributions to the University outside the department—would be a lengthy task; it is impossible to overstate the high quality and lasting impact of his work. Unsurprisingly, when the College of Arts and Sciences needed to fill the position of associate dean for budget, personnel, and planning, Crubaugh again stepped up to the task. He has excelled in that leadership role over the last six and a half years.



Kyle Ciani visits the Navajo Nation Archives in Window Rock, Arizona.

Kyle Ciani has been a faculty member since August 2001 and has served the department and the University with distinction.

She arrived at Illinois State to fill a critical gap in women's history and has since then anchored our program in that field while becoming a core faculty member in the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) Program. She has been devoted to supporting undergraduate research, sponsoring and encouraging students every academic year to present their work at the University Research Symposium, the WGSS Symposium, and to a wide audience through our student journal, *Recounting the Past*. She's guided our honors students through their course programs and research endeavors and, with consistent success, overseen the department's nominees for the Robert G. Bone Scholarship. At the same time, Ciani established herself as a nationally recognized expert on women's history, publishing a well-received book as well as multiple articles, essays, and book reviews. She has also been a leader on countless committees across campus and selflessly stepped in when asked to serve as acting chair of the department and, twice, as acting director of WGSS.



Georgia Tsouvala

Georgia Tsouvala joined the department in 2007 to teach our courses on ancient Greece and Rome. She supervised our Phi Alpha Theta chapter for several years while, for the discipline, was twice elected president of the Association of Ancient Historians. An active scholar, she published several notable articles and edited volumes on women in the Greco-Roman world.

Best wishes to our friends and colleagues as they embark on the next chapter of their lives!



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