

Swarthmore College Department of History



IN THIS ISSUE. . .

FACULTY NEWS. 2

*STUDENT & ALUMNI
NEWS. 2*

*EVENTS, SPRING AND
FALL 2020. 4*

FACULTY TALKS

*WINTER AND SPRING
2020-2021. 5*

Going to my office on campus every few weeks this past semester was a disconcerting experience. The second floor of Trotter was dead quiet since all of us (including Jen Moore) are working from home. I jokingly told friends that I expected to encounter strange flora and fauna in the hallways given the absence of people: no students congregating outside classrooms waiting for the previous class to end, no students squeezing past each other in the stairwells, and no students engaging with faculty once classes were over. Perhaps most unsettling was the fact that the Department Office has been shut since the spring. But Jen has ensured from the control room in her Philadelphia house that everything ran smoothly and efficiently. Words cannot express our gratitude to Jen for enabling us to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic.

As you can imagine, the pandemic has forced us to adapt our teaching. But I am pleased that we rose to the occasion: we have all learned how to use Zoom, set up breakout rooms, and share screens. Many of us devoted a good chunk of the summer learning new technologies and strategies to enable us to teach remotely. While only one History class met in person during the fall semester, and the same will hold for the spring semester (though one colleague does hope to be able to teach in person later in the semester), we nevertheless managed to offer a full range of courses and seminars that engaged our students. I think I speak for the Department when I write that we will be relieved when we can return to in-person

teaching. But I also know that all of us honed our teaching skills by teaching remotely. The pandemic has encouraged us to be more imaginative and flexible in how we organize our classes. Not an experience we want to revisit after this academic year, but a rewarding activity nonetheless.

The pandemic forced students and faculty alike to adjust their research agendas over the summer and during the fall semester. But as you can see from the contents of the newsletter, many colleagues maintained active lives as researchers by delivering papers at conferences that assembled remotely, and students engaged in writing theses and other research projects took advantage of on-line digital resources.

Moreover, the Department managed to complete the search for a specialist in Twentieth-Century U.S. history. Starting in fall 2021 Dr. Vivian Truong will join us as our newest colleague. A specialist in Asian American history, Vivian received her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan and is spending this academic year as a post-doctoral fellow at Vassar College. In addition to teaching survey courses on recent U.S. and Asian American history, she will offer a first-year seminar on the history of Chinatowns, an upper-division course on the carceral state, and other classes on recent American history. Please join me in welcoming her to the Department!

Robert Weinberg

Isaac H. Clothier Professor of History
& International Relations
& Chair
Department of History

Faculty & News

Spring semester found our faculty—like faculty, families, and people everywhere—scrambling to adjust to a new normal. You can find details about [Swarthmore's COVID-19 response on the College website](#).

We are currently teaching our courses remotely for the fall semester. Our main office is physically closed, and masks are required on campus at all times.

Diego Armus managed to deliver a number of talks online during the pandemic and global shutdown. He spoke at [Universidad Nacional de Tucumán's Marcela Vignoli about TB in Buenos Aires from 1910-1950 \(en español\)](#). He wrote about the coronavirus in Argentina's [Caras Y Caretas](#) and [Revista Ñ](#), and he also spoke at the roundtable on [Globalization and the History of Epidemics in Latin America](#) at The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities. In addition, he talked with Mariano Di Pasquale of the Instituto de Estudios Históricos - UNTREF [about medicine, health, and disease \(en español\)](#). Also in Spanish, a conversation with [La Historia da Respuestas](#) that discussed inequality's impact in the US on COVID and compares COVID to other epidemics. Armus could be found in [Revista Ñ](#) again later in the summer. One interview with **Diego** was published in [CIPER](#), [The Conversation](#), and [El País](#).

In addition to these virtual interviews and talks recorded for the public, **Professor Armus** also spoke at [Universidad Nacional de Luján](#), [Universidad Católica de Cali](#), [Universidad](#)

[Nacional de Colombia, Medellín](#), [Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México](#), and at the [VI Seminario de Escrituras Virreinales](#).

Professor Armus also published the following articles: "Narrar la pandemia de Covid-19: historia, incertidumbres, vaticinios" in [Diário de Pandemia: O Olhar dos Historiadores](#) (Hucitec, 2020) and "COVID 19 y Tuberculosis: incertidumbres en tiempos de pandemia y la cara femenina de la tuberculosis en Buenos Aires en los años del tango clásico" in [Epidemias y Endemias en la Argentina Moderna: Diálogos entre Pasado y Presente](#) (Imago Mundi, 2020). Expect to see more from **Diego** in the coming weeks and months, as his expertise in the history of disease makes him a hot commodity on the lecture circuit.

Farid Azfar returned home from sabbatical and is teaching [History 91](#) this semester with **Bob Weinberg**. **Professor Azfar** was appointed Associate Review Editor for the [American Historical Review](#) and is also preparing his book for publication. **Professor Azfar** is also readying a new course for the upcoming January term which you can read more about in our [Events](#) section.

Megan Brown is midway through sabbatical after a successful third-year review. Along with the assistance of Social Sciences librarian **Sarah Elichko** and digital librarian **Nabil Kayshap**, **Professor Brown** developed a [digital exhibit for her course Holidays in the Empire](#).

Professor Brown was awarded a few prizes to help her complete the edits for her forthcoming book and continue the research for her second book. You can get a taste of that second book by reading "[Le Rallye Méditerranée-le Cap: Racing towards Eurafrica?](#)" in *French Politics*,

continued on page 3...

Student & Alumni News

September Porras Payea '20 developed the [Swarthmore Undergraduate History Journal](#). Its first issue came out in spring 2020 with submissions from the TriCo student community. Articles included in [Volume 1, Issue 1](#) are by: **Nirav Mehta '20**, **Diana L. Martínez-Montes '20**, **Eleanor Naiman '20**, **Roman Shemakov '20**, and Emma Ruth Burns of Bryn Mawr College.

Quickly on its heels was the [Special Issue on Infectious Disease](#). This issue was largely based on papers written for courses on disease with **Professor Armus**. Once again, Editor-in-Chief **September Porras Payea '20** led the charge of getting the board to read potential papers and then of contacting authors to see if they would be interested in publishing in the journal. Articles in this issue were written by: **Gabriel Hearn-Desautels '20**, **Jessica Downing '12**, **Eleanor Naiman '20**, **Melissa Frick '12**, **Taylor Tucker '13**, and **Daria Mateescu '20**. We should also mention that our friend **Maria Aghazarian** of McCabe Library really helped by developing the website and getting the journal up and running. We also owe a

continued on page 3...

...continued from Faculty News on page 2

Culture, and Society, published last academic year. Funding for these projects is provided by [The New York Public Library](#) and the [Society for French Historical Studies](#), which originally announced the award in a [Tweet](#). Ah, 2020.

Timothy Burke continues to be busy co-directing, along with **Professor Rachel Buurma** of the [Department of English Literatures](#), the Aydelotte Foundation. They [added a new staff member](#) this summer and have [upgraded their website](#). While no one particularly *likes* teaching remotely, **Professor Burke** seems to have adapted well to both asynchronous and synchronous methods of remote teaching. He will be one of our faculty teaching in the truncated J-Term you can read more about in our [Events](#) section.

BuYun Chen achieved tenure in spring 2020, and we were able to celebrate just before campus shut down. **Professor Chen** was also able to present in person at [McMaster University](#) in Ontario. The rest of Professor Chen's talks were virtual, including at the [Visual & Material Culture of the Silk Road\(s\)](#) symposium hosted by the University of Kansas and at the [Reframing Fashion Studies: Performance, Gender, and the Body](#) workshop hosted by Stanford University.

Allison Dorsey returned from sabbatical ready to tackle her Honors Seminar on slavery for a final time but via Zoom for the first time. While on sabbatical, **Professor Dorsey** taught at MacDougall-Walker Correctional Institution in Connecticut with **Erin Corbett '99's** [Second Chance Educational Alliance, Inc.](#) During 2019 and 2020, **Dr. Dorsey** served as an evaluator on the Pennsylvania Marker Review Panel for the [Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission](#). Over the summer,

Professor Dorsey also delivered a [SwatTalk Short on the history of racial injustice in our country](#).

Bruce Dorsey is utilizing his sabbatical to complete his book that stems from his history course Murder in a Mill Town.

Marjorie Murphy has chosen to teach one more course, in-person, for first-year students. After teaching alongside **Keith Reeves '88** of Political Science about incarceration in the spring 2020 semester, she is teaching about crime and punishment in America to first year students alongside **Professor Ben Berger** of Political Science and the Executive Director of the

continued on page 4...

...continued from Student & Alumni News on page 2

special thanks to artist and office assistant **Alex Malcombe '23** for her artwork in both issues.

Continuing with the seniors, **September, Eleanor**, and **Annie Abruzzo '20** took home the Paul H. Beik and Robert S. DuPlessis Prizes. **Porras** and **Naiman** shared the Beik Prize this year. **Naiman's** thesis, entitled "Positive Women: Women Organized to Respond to Life-Threatening Diseases and Narratives of Emotional Triumph at the Height of the AIDS epidemic in the 1990s," analyzes testimonials of women living with HIV in the 1990s. **Porras'** thesis investigates the changing role of the Catholic Church following the fall of the dictatorship in Chile in the 1990s and is titled "[Una Iglesia Desaparecida: The End of an Era for the Chilean Catholic Church](#)." **Abruzzo** took home the Robert S. DuPlessis Prize for her senior research paper "'Unspoken Understanding': The Evolution of Chinese American Adoption Communities."

Roman Shemakov '20 earned a [Luce Scholarship to study international affairs in Taiwan](#).

Toby Wu '09 wrote a piece for [Medium](#) about commitments PK-12 institutions can make as we look to the future.

Maya Henry '20 earned the Jerry Wood Memorial Excellence & Leadership Award at the 2020 Black Cultural Awards and a Social Justice Award for her Race & Ethnicity Activism at the 2020 Intercultural Center Awards.

Honors did take place in May, albeit remotely. We're happy to report that all seniors in the history Honors Program achieved Honors. You can scroll back chronologically on our [Facebook page](#) to see how we celebrated the seniors during graduation.

Sierra Mondragón '21, recently named a [Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow](#), had a piece published for the cover story of the inaugural edition of *Voices*.

Lizy Bryant '13 is working to [purchase the land her aunt has been caring for in Minnesota](#) for years. Only .03% of MN farmers are Black, and Lizy is hoping to change that.

Susannah Broun '22 participated in an internship over the summer that gave her a chance to produce a podcast from beginning to end. With the [Philadelphia Folklore Project](#), **Susannah** conducted and transcribed interviews, completed editing and post-production, and then put the [podcasts on Spotify](#), all thanks to a Lang Social Impact Scholarship.

Gwendolyn Rak '22 is this year's Editor-in-Chief of the [Swarthmore Undergraduate History Journal](#) and has been working towards collecting and editing submissions with the board. We're looking forward to seeing the next release!

We unfortunately must report on some sad news: [Swarthmore alum and historian Zara Steiner '48 passed in February](#). She was 91. Steiner was affiliated with Cambridge University and was a prominent historian of British foreign policy and international history. ●

Events, Spring and Fall 2020

The History Department had its hands full with the shift to remote teaching. Before spring break and most shutdowns in the United States, we were happy to celebrate **Professor BuYun Chen's** tenure and the successful third-year reappointments of **Professors Megan Brown** and **Ahmad Shokr**.

We do not know when traveling will be possible, and so we do not know when our endowed lectures will commence. We do look forward to bringing you both the James A. Field Lecture in United States History and the Paul F. Beik Lecture in European History again in the near future.

Even with the seeming stoppage, we still have a few things to report on.

We introduced a few new courses this January term and adjusted courses for the fall term.

Yes, January term is new for Swarthmore. The College adjusted to COVID by deciding to invite to campus only first- and second-year students and students who petitioned for housing on campus and were deemed to need it. The College also truncated the semester to twelve weeks; ended on-campus instruction just before Thanksgiving; required testing and

contact-tracing for any member of the community who would be on campus; closed campus to the general public; and required students to abide by The Garnet Pledge. You can find all the details on the [COVID-19 Information sites on the College website](#). With only a small number of cases, it seems Swarthmore handled the crisis well.

The courses we are offering during J-Term—a term consisting of sixteen classes over a four-week period—are a mix of new and old. **Professor Weinberg** revisits his [Angels of Death](#) syllabus, and **Professor Armus** teaches his [deep dive into the archives of the US' "dirty wars" in Latin America](#) without the Writing Course designation. **Professors Azfar** and **Burke** will launch new courses with [Bio-politics vs. Necropolitics](#) and [Surveillance, Privacy, and Transparency](#), respectively. Regardless of content, the experience will be new for all. Classes will be taught over Zoom in both a synchronous and asynchronous format. The J-Term promises to be the most intense single-course term many students and faculty have ever encountered.

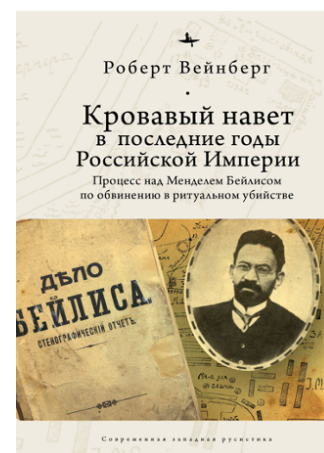
Meanwhile, in the Department, we continued our search for a specialist in twentieth- and twenty-first-century US history that we had begun in the spring. We found it necessary to interview candidates via Zoom, and we are happy to report that we extended an offer that was accepted. Many thanks to the students, faculty, and staff who assisted with the search, especially those who hosted our guests. **Sierra Mondragón '21** hosted the student lunches and talks for us, and we received thoughtful feedback from the students that influenced our decision. We are also especially grateful to our colleagues in [Asian Studies](#), [Black Studies](#), the [Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility](#), the [Library](#), and the [Provost's Office](#) for their collaboration and assistance throughout the process. ●

...continued from Faculty News on [page 3](#).

[Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility](#). The students in the course spend time learning in-person with each other and remotely alongside formerly incarcerated students as part of the Transformative Justice Initiative.

Ahmad Shokr also deserves to celebrate after a successful third-year review. He is spending his sabbatical year preparing his book manuscript.

Robert Weinberg's book *Blood Libel in Late Imperial Russia: The Ritual Murder Trial of Mendel Beilis* has been published in Russian translation by Academic Studies Press.



He's chairing the department through the pandemic and teaching [History 91](#) in tandem with **Professor Azfar**. All the while, he has been able to deliver some talks, including "Documenting the Communist Experience: Swarthmoreans Visit the Soviet Union" at the Conference on the Photography of Frank Fetter in Kazan, Russia, and "The 1905 Pogrom in Odessa" at the Workshop on Odessa and Cosmopolitanism. **Professor Weinberg** will also be teaching during J-Term, for which he has adapted his syllabus for [History 38: Angels of Death: Life under Lenin and Stalin](#). ●

Faculty Talks

Winter and Spring 2020-2021

JANUARY, 2021

1/12	Megan Brown	"Tourism and the Infrastructure of Empire: 1959, 1969" at The Coloniality of Infrastructure: Eurafrican Legacies conference at the Universität Basel	Basel, SWITZERLAND
1/18	Diego Armus	"Elogio de la mascarilla: epidemias, incertidumbres y civilidad sanitaria" at Congreso Futuro 2021 given by the Senado de la República de Chile y Academia de Ciencias de Chile	Santiago, CHILE

FEBRUARY, 2021

2/11	Megan Brown	Jean Monnet European Union Center of Excellence Lecture : "The Seventh Member State: France, Algeria, and the European Project" at the European Studies Center at the University of Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh, PA, USA
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JUNE, 2021

6/20-24	Bob Weinberg	"Ethnic Violence, Politics, and Revolution: The Odessa Pogrom in 1905." Conference on Odessa, Cosmopolitanism, Modernism at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem	Jerusalem
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