

SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY



History Department

NEWSLETTER

Reflections

As we (literally) await a shot (or two) in the arm, let's pause to reflect on where we have been and where we hope we are going. Like all of you, we watched with horror and heavy hearts the violent actions of the insurrectionists on January 6th 2021. As historians, we well understand the consequences that such events hold. Armed with the wisdom of history, we are able to participate in reasoned debate and champion the democratic process. We look forward to continuing our conversations this spring semester. We also want to send a message of gratitude to all of you that receive this newsletter and have worked so hard to educate and support our students (current and past), to support department initiatives, and in your not insignificant way make the world a better a place. And finally, to all of us that have lost loved ones to the virus or watched family and friends suffer on account of COVID-19, we extend our sympathies. We wish we had the words to ease your pain and sorrow. We acknowledge that in these uncertain and stressful times, it is not always easy to keep the hostile and negative energy at bay, but we persevere.

Black Lives Matter

Our faculty, students, and alumni have been hard at work creating valuable connections to the Black Lives Matter Movement and many facets of history.



A thoughtful compilation of recommended readings can be found at <https://inside.southernct.edu/history/black-lives-matter>, and was put together in the summer of 2020 by faculty and alumni alike. Also featured there (or on our YouTube channel) is the BLM Summer Lecture Series, a collection of lectures provided by **Steve Amerman, Siobhan Carter-David, Steve Judd, Julian Madison, Marie McDaniel, Troy Paddock, Troy Rondinone, Jason W. Smith, and Michele Thompson**. Professor Smith was the facilitator for the series, and so was interviewed for a spotlight piece in Southern News (<http://news.southernct.edu/2020/08/18/history-department-launches-teach-in-series/>).

"History provides the much-needed context for how we got to the present moment, says **Jason Smith**, an assistant professor of history at Southern. George Floyd's death in March 2020 and the Black Lives Matter Movement only strengthened his belief that now, more than ever, 'thinking historically' can help students model what it means to be historians and humanists."

Siobhan Carter-David has been extremely busy and contributes to many conversations surrounding race. In addition to giving the last summer lecture, *On Black Joy*, for the department's BLM Lecture Series, Siobhan participated in an NEH Summer Institute - *City of Print: New York and the Periodical Press* that went virtual in late June and early July.

In June, Siobhan joined Geena Clonan, the Founding President of the CT Women's Hall of Fame for the webinar series, "A Conversation Between." In her powerful two-part conversation, *Protest, Policing and the Pandemic*, Siobhan addressed "the responsibilities of white people in white anti-racist education." She reminded the listener that "People like myself and yourself, we are people who have chosen this fight. I'm a historian, I've chosen this. We're the kinds of people who might be open to having these kinds of conversations. But every woman and every Black person is not open to that all of the time. It can be very traumatic to have to constantly engage with these issues when you might not necessarily feel like it or be up to it. We live this experience as Black people every day, so to have to talk about it when people feel ready to is not always the opportune time for us." For the full webinar series, including Siobhan's Episode 7 & 8, see this link: <https://www.cwhf.org/webinar-a-conversation-between>

In July, Siobhan moderated an international conversation, *Diasporic Dress: Blackness & Fashion* with Carol Tulloch(UK) and Dr. Tanisha Ford (CUNY,NY) for the YouTube five-week series, *Bridging the Atlantic: Conversation on Blackness* (see below) started by one of our alums, Daisha Brabham. For this conversation see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaP5CmoUxKA>

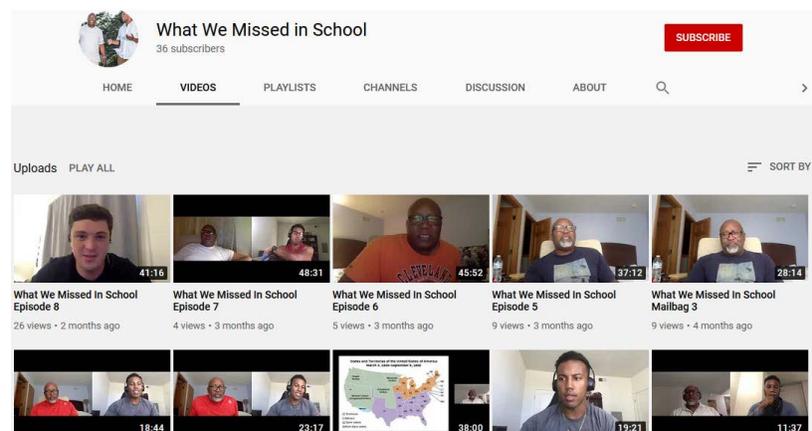


In October, Siobhan participated in the discussion "Critical Race Theory," a Facebook Live event held by Women and Gender Studies. She is highlighted in this article from Southern News: <https://thesouthernnews.org/2020/11/04/professors-talk-about-diversity/>



History major and Student Government Association President **Sarah Gossman** helped to organize the university's Black Lives Matter March, which took place on September 30th. See <https://thesouthernnews.org/2020/10/07/march-held-for-racial-inequality/>

In addition to participating in the department's BLM Summer Lecture Series, **Julian Madison** launched with his son, **Julian Madison III** ('Jeep') a YouTube series, *What We Missed in School*.



Episode 1 from late June addressed the origins of slavery in the American colonies. They have continued their episodes into the fall semester following the course of American history and pausing at times to devote sessions to questions from the 'mailbag'. It is worth the reminder that Jeep delivers, "remember, Black history is American history." Their series can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCy0S7gcJff2xvbSHzy0WYQQ>

In November, Julian participated in Grassroots to Higher Education with several other Southern colleagues: "A panel discussion with Black male professionals, as they speak of the successes they've enjoyed, the challenges they faced during their careers, and what it means to be a Black male in America," hosted by the university's Multicultural Center.

Troy Rondinone continues to post on his blog, *The Asylum*, at *Psychology Today*, and in early June offered this post, "Black Lives in Asylum Fiction: Understanding our sad legacy of white victimhood and Black caricature." He wrote: "Today we face a national crisis stemming from historical injustices and willfully false, racist narratives. It is time to reflect on the racial angle of our asylum plotlines. People of color have not only been treated disastrously by our society and its institutions, but their presence in asylum fiction has been deployed to buttress white victimhood, while eliding their own. Our task as academics (and any who want to investigate the past truthfully) is to shine a sharp light on the past and its stories. The misleading theme of 'imperiled whiteness' carries a long pedigree. By reckoning honestly with the ways white people have defined their tribulations vis-à-vis crudely imagined African American foils, we might pave a path to a better future." For the full post see: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-asylum/202006/black-lives-in-asylum-fiction>

Pandemic Stories

Our lives continue to be touched by the pandemic, and though the department worked hard to offer many modalities of learning and events, we cannot deny the toll being mostly remote has taken on us all. **Carmen Coury**, our expert in oral history, has been working on the collection and archival of stories of those affected by COVID-19.

Over the course of the summer, Carmen not only contributed interviews with people facing the pandemic in Costa Rica, but also helped to create teaching materials such as the Oral History Training Module for other scholars to use. She also joined two panels this fall semester: Oral History Association 2020 panel, October 21st "Telling COVID's Stories: Implications for the Field" and Speaker Panel: Virtual Conference- Humanities at Arizona State University, November 5th "Moving from Collecting to Interpreting and Analyzing Covid-19 Oral Histories." See that YouTube video here: <https://youtu.be/ND7ulg42tNk>



If you would like to aide in the collection of COVID-19 stories, please visit: <https://sites.google.com/iu.edu/covid-19oralhistoryproject/about>

Siobhan Carter-David participated in "Southern Votes," a university event sponsored by Women's and Gender Studies and Art, by providing historical facts that have to do with voting.

With the help of her son, Julian Madison, **Mrs. Mildred Madison** traveled all the way from Chicago to Detroit in order to vote. She was featured in this news story: <https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2020/10/15/94-year-old-mildred-madison-traveled-300-miles-from-chicago-area-to-detroit-to-make-sure-her-vote-counted/>



Troy Rondinone wrote a thought-provoking article about the challenges we face in today's political climate, "On Our Parallel Realities: A Professor's Perspective." You can read it here: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-asylum/202011/our-parallel-realities-professors-perspective>

Events



September 9th - The department hosted a virtual welcome (sans pizza) with students and faculty.

October 26th - Scoops and Schedules is usually an in-person History Club sponsored event which encourages students to discuss upcoming course options available to them while enjoying ice cream. To accommodate the virtual nature of this semester, and with a nod to Halloween, the event became Spooks and Schedules and students were encouraged to wear costumes.

November 6th - The History Club invited students to join them and advisor Jason W. Smith on a guided walking tour of New Haven. Jason utilizes the New Haven Walking Tour for his Digital New Haven course, as well, emphasizing monuments and memorials.

November 11th - Federico Fiondella served as a panelist for Alumni Professionals Day, a virtual College of Arts and Sciences event.

December 2nd - The 5th annual FYRE Day saw students presenting their research through posters and artistry. Mary Pelkey (BS program) won a provost's award for her research poster, "Sustainability in Death Care" under the direction of Tom Radice.

Sustainability in Death Care

Mary Pelkey

Burning Question & Significance
Why aren't more people choosing green burial as a sustainable funeral option?
The funeral industry has a huge negative impact on the environment, but even with the emergence of green burials, people are still choosing traditional funerals. I'm curious as to why, when there can be almost no difference in the funeral proceedings.

Existing Knowledge
Green burial is the environmentally friendly funeral process. Traditionally the funeral industry uses over 60,000 gallons of embalming fluid and 10 million feet of wood for caskets (Boyer). However, embalming is a relatively recent idea. Before the civil war, people were only buried by way of what we would now call "coffin" (boards). A traditional funeral also costs upwards of \$12,000, while a green funeral only typically costs under \$1,000. Green burials and funerals can include natural and with minimal waste, compostable water cremation, etc. Despite this, embalming and cremation continue to dominate the funeral industry, heavily contributing to climate change and environmental issues.

Methodology
To gain insight into some of the reasons why people don't choose green burial, I created a survey and sent it out to people of all ages to determine their knowledge and preference of funerals. This survey contained questions pertaining to the cost and environmental impact of both a traditional and environmentally friendly funeral. Afterwards, I compared the answers to the existing knowledge.

Findings

Analysis
A total of 19 people completed the survey. Out of those 19, 17 were in the age range of 18-24, the others 55+ and 17 & under. The survey yielded some very interesting results. One of those being that 15 people answered yes to being an environmentalist, but only 2 people said they wanted a green burial. It would be assumed that if one identifies as being environmentally conscious, it will impact all aspects of one's life. However, the results show that 66% of participants had never heard of Green Burial. But after explaining the pros and cons of both traditional and green funerals, 13 of the participants said they would consider or definitely have a green funeral for reasons including expense and environmental impact.

Conclusions
After looking at the existing knowledge and survey results, it seems that one of the biggest reasons for people not choosing green funerals is a lack of knowledge. Green Burial is not highly promoted, as it does not financially benefit funeral directors as it does not financially benefit funeral directors as much as a traditional funeral would. More people and funeral directors would need to provide detailed information on the pros, cost, and location availability for a green burial. As seen from the survey results, people who are thought about the waste and cost of a traditional funeral, as well as the ecological benefits of an environmentally friendly funeral are more likely to choose it as a death care option.

Limitations and Implications
As this research was completed during a global pandemic, there was difficulty in getting people to participate in the survey. There was a total of 19 participants. Also of those 19, 16 were female. Therefore there was lacking results in what male participants would have answered. This could have potentially skewed the results one way or the other. If done again, I would attempt to send out the survey to a wider range of people.

Sources

1. Boyer, David. 2018. "Green Burial: Some Basic Facts About It." <https://www.greengraves.com/green-burial>.
2. Green Burial Council. 2019. <https://www.greenburial.org/>.
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Artistry
The issue in people not choosing to have green funerals comes from a lack of awareness. Therefore, I have chosen to create an image to be used as a social media post. It's simplicity and clear message reflect the core ideas of green burial, which is sustainability and simplicity. The "Love Our Planet" is a call to do something about environmentally toxic practices, and the "Choose Green Burial" clearly states the purpose. Green funerals can involve the planting of a tree as a grave marker, so I thought it was important to have that as a symbol. The image could be easily spread and start the conversation about green funerals.

Bertie Connally completed a master's thesis, "Shattered Promises: British Foreign Policy in the Lead Up to the Great War and Before It, Aims, Duplicity, and Failure," under the direction of Polly Beals.

Steve Michael Brown completed a master's thesis, "The Proteus of Nature: The Epigenetic Metaphor in Kant and Schelling," under the direction of Sarah Roe. Michael was awarded the Fran Dykstra Thesis of Distinction in History Award (AY 20/21).

Catherine Nuzzo (BS '09) completed a thesis in Spring 2020, "Orpheus and Orphism: Philosophical Religiosity in the Crises of Third-Century C.E. Rome and Fourth-Century B.C.E. Greece," under the direction of Byron Nakamura, but we neglected to include in our Spring Newsletter that she was awarded the Fran Dykstra Thesis of Distinction in History Award (AY 19/20).

News From Alumni

Casassandra Bellavance (BS '20) will teach and sub at Monroe Middle School in Monroe, CT.

Matthew Bonito (BS '14, MA '18) is the middle school Social Studies teacher at Saint Mark School in Stratford, CT.

Daisha Brabham (BS '17) completed her MA in Public History at Royal Holloway University of London. She created YouTube series Bridging the Atlantic which can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUI5ta_kBXbYn7mSEjKMrmA. She was featured in an article for Southern News, which can be read here: <https://news.southernct.edu/2020/08/24/fulbright-recipient-daisha-brabham-17-on-building-bridges/>. Daisha teaches Social Studies at P-Tech Norwalk.

Brenda Fernandes (BS '20) will teach at Bassick High School in Bridgeport, CT.

Eleni Galanos (BA '17, MLIS '20) is the School Library Media Specialist at the Jonathan E. Reed School in Waterbury, CT.

Shanté Hanks (BS '97, MS '99, SYC '05) is co-host of Southern's Diversity in Higher Education Podcast, which aims to connect the community and shed light on topics dealing with diversity, equity and inclusion. You can listen here: <https://diversity-in-higher-ed.captivate.fm/listen>

Liam Norton (BS '20) will teach at Guilford High School in Guilford, CT.

Keith Pomposi (BS '20) will be a building substitute at Southington High and is waiting to hear about a middle school teaching position.

John Saksa (BS '20) will be a building substitute for Ansonia Public Schools.

Alysia Southern (BS '20) will teach grades 7 and 8 at Achievement First.

John Wells (BS '20) will teach at Monroe High School in Monroe, CT.

Donald Yacovone (BS '74) was interviewed by WPIX New York and featured in an article about making education more inclusive. You can view the article here: <https://www.pix11.com/news/created-equal/how-textbooks-classroom-resources-have-racism-built-in-and-how-to-make-education-more-inclusive>



Southern alumnus and department adjunct **Federico Fiondella** who earned the honor of Connecticut History Teacher of the Year and was featured in this Southern News article: <https://news.southernct.edu/2020/08/17/alumnus-named-2020-connecticut-history-teacher-of-the-year/>

Sabbatical for **Darcy Kern** (Fall 2021), **Tom Radice** (Spring 2021), and **Sarah Roe** (Spring 2021)

Tom Radice for earning the BOR Teaching Award. Watch the virtual Celebration of Excellence here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHyLwIYLP4c>



Board of Regents Teaching Award

■ Thomas Radice, Ph.D.

■ Associate Professor of History

■ Courses Taught:

- INQ 101 – Intellectual & Creative Inquiry
- HIS 106 – East Asia to 1850
- HIS 200 – Historical Methods & Materials
- HIS 342 – 20th Century China
- HIS 378 – Early China
- HIS 485 – Seminar in History
- HIS 548 – China Since Western Impact
- HIS 578 – Early Chinese Texts

Final Thoughts

We look forward to seeing this bench occupied with students very soon!



Upcoming Events

Phi Alpha Theta Induction Ceremony - Spring Date TBA

A Conversation on Fighting White Supremacy - February Date TBA

CT History Day - March 20, 2021

IASESP 16th Annual Conference - April 23-25, 2021