

Spring 2020

# SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY



## History Department NEWSLETTER

### REFLECTIONS

I would like to begin this semester's newsletter with an expression of appreciation to our students, especially our graduating seniors, to the full-time history faculty, our part-time instructors, our department secretary, and so many members of the administration, including the Dean's Office of Arts & Sciences, and Southern staff that worked to get us online and to keep us informed, but let's begin at the beginning when we were young, carefree, and had fewer grey hairs.

### On Ground Events

We held our second spring semester Welcome Back Celebration (with pizza, of course) not only for our history majors and minors and faculty, but for our department secretary, Jackie Isabella, who returned from maternity leave. We adore little Basil Isabella, but we are very happy Jackie is back!

Thanks to the input of Jason Smith, we held our first Cover Letter Camp with the assistance of Aimee O'Shea from the Office of Career and Professional Development. In attendance were representatives of every class from first-year student, Shaoshi Huang, to graduate student, Michel Gomes. Kelly Falvey, our Certification Coordinator, stopped in to listen as well.

Not long after this event, Kelly 'tapped' the institutional memory of Kathy Coords, our longest serving teacher supervisor, who was able to invite several alums to speak to our newest 'crop' of student teachers. It was a delight to welcome back Peter Downhour and Patrick Cumpstone from Amity Regional High School, Hannah McNeil from Griswold High School, Allison Norrie from Fairfield Warde High School and the vice president of the Association for the Study of Connecticut History, Frank Tupka from John Foran High School, and Emily Schuessler from Hillcrest Middle School.



# Going Remote

Just as we were looking forward to spring break the COVID-19 pandemic ‘arrived’ and we went from enjoying a brief reprieve from classes to quarantine, isolation, stay-at-home (shelter in place), social distancing, and preparing to teach (and take) courses online. We did not quite ‘turn on a dime’ but our students appreciated our efforts to see to their wellbeing: Marissa Hackett acknowledged Carmen Coury and others: “the history department has some of the most caring [and] understanding professors.” Shaoshi Huang wrote: “My Western Civ class with Dr. Kern and US History class with Dr. Smith have been the easiest transitions out of all my classes which has been really nice.” Adam Pelz offered a “shout out to Dr. Judd for his transitioning of his HIS340 course to online. He has been awesome with posting lectures and discussion boards for each class we would have had in person. Additionally, he is always readily available for us and has been very supportive.”

With the cancellation of Honors Convocation our Awards Committee, Troy Paddock, Steve Judd, and Julian Madison, made sure our senior award winners received a shout out and a gift of recognition. We were able to receive some of their photos and blurbs to post to our website and the History Department Facebook page. Derek Pearson wrote “The history department at Southern is full of caring people who have helped me at every step of my undergraduate career. Without them, I wouldn’t be where I am today!” Nicole Healy wrote, “I am so thankful for the opportunities for growth that Southern has given me, and I can’t wait to take what I’ve learned out into the world.”

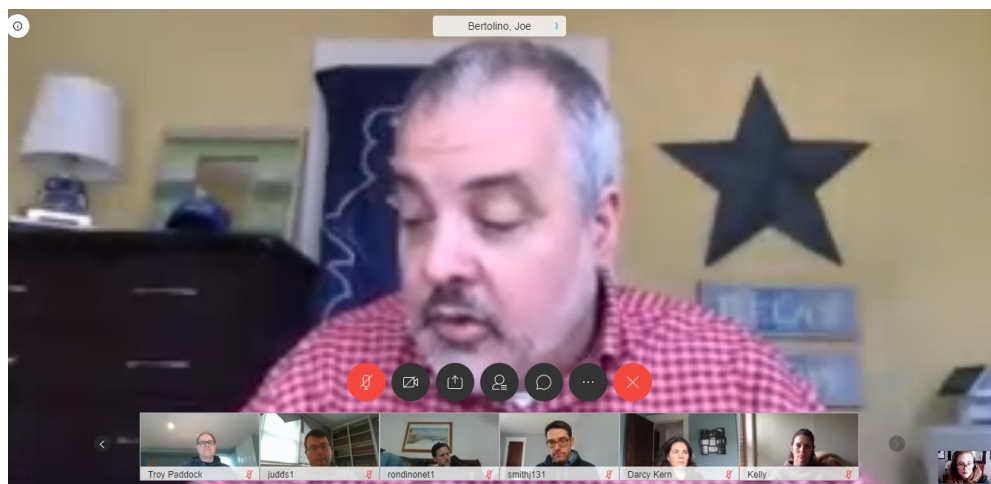


During the pandemic, several of our students found themselves in ‘essential’ positions and/or the sole employed members of their family or even stricken by the virus. Many took on volunteer work to help those in need, and to all of them, we express gratitude for their recovery, appreciation for their invaluable work, and respect for their selfless acts of kindness and service to the community. We offer a particular shout out to graduating senior, Jordan Levin, who has been volunteering at the Medical Reserve Corps of New Haven, doing administrative work.

Siobhan Carter-David was a recipient of a SouthernStrong Award for her weekly film discussion that she held for young people in order to share “how films ‘reflect various aspects of United States history and how we can use a critical eye to glean more from films outside of their entertainment value.’” Her second nominator, a former student, noted that Siobhan “represents all that is wonderful about Southern—Community, inclusion, equity and lifelong support. She is the epitome of Southern excellence.”



Thanks to a suggestion by Marie McDaniel, the history department held a weekly faculty Check-in Chat which gave us an opportunity to share updated information from the administration as well as various university and department committees. Conducted via Webex, we were also able to visit with one another remotely every week. In early April, we were joined by President Joe Bertolino and Provost Bob Prezant, who offered their appreciation for our efforts ‘to go remote’ and provided us with further information on the on-going planning. A month later, we shared our Check-in with many of our history students, including a few graduating seniors. We were even joined by Steve Amerman and Michele Thompson both of whom were on sabbatical this semester and even Nikos Chrissidis, who had to step away from teaching this semester, popped in to join us. It was not the send-off we had anticipated (as there was no pizza!), but it was a joyous occasion.



A special shout out goes to Stuart McCunn (BA '12), our emergency hire, who had the dubious honor to teach his first class on Tuesday, March 10th, and then find himself teaching two classes online! His gift to see opportunity where there are challenges and his unwavering commitment to our students is most appreciated. Stuart attended every department chat, and we looked forward not only to his latest news, but his wind chimes!



Our adjunct Lisa Nakamura who, in recent years, won the BOR award for her teaching, has been going above and beyond to make masks for essential workers.

Just as we were 'going remote', Troy Rondinone offered this blog post at Psychology Today. "I'm an academic historian of American culture, which, as of now, means that I am an Internet Professor. . . . Now that we are facing a pandemic, my thoughts again turn to the culture industry. What has Hollywood taught us about pandemics?" As it turns out, Troy suggests a fair amount. "We also find stories of hope, rooted in ideas of interracial, democratic, selfless neighbor-building. This is something to search for, and maybe even to learn from, in the oft-vapid pop-culture landscape. Stay safe, everyone. And help each other."

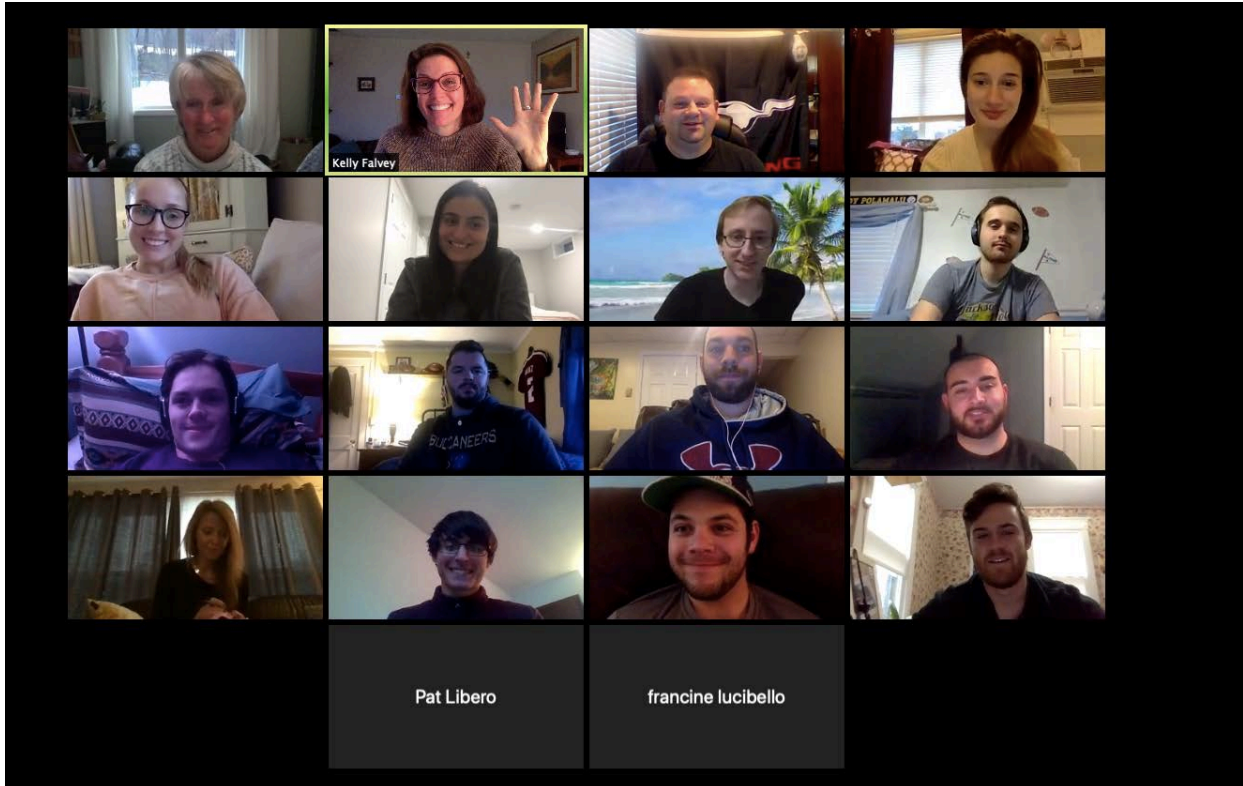
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-asylum/202003/has-hollywood-prepped-us-the-pandemic>

Late in the semester, Michele Thompson, a SE Asia specialist who is currently on a year's sabbatical, was interviewed by Paul Pacelli for WICC's (600 AM) program Connecticut Today. She spoke about the region's aggressive response to COVID-19 and the possibility that the region's relatively recent experience with the SARS epidemic of 2003 prompted more rapid and immediate action.

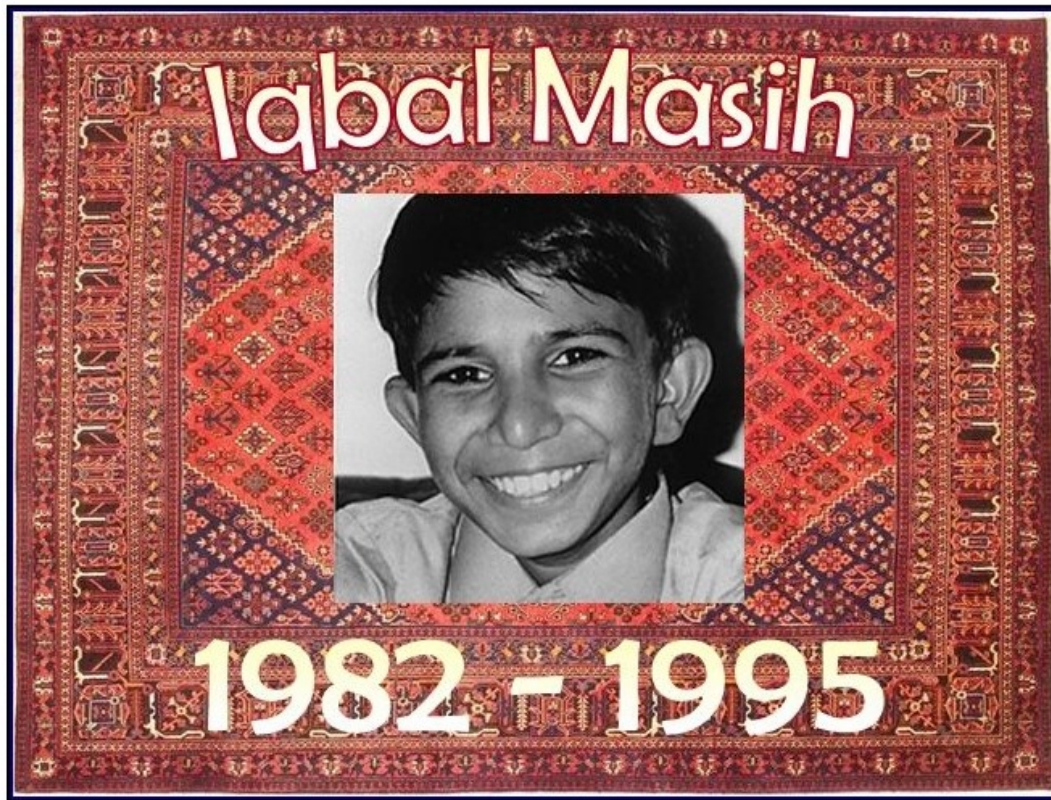
<https://audioboom.com/posts/7563688-connecticut-today-with-paul-pacelli-how-did-the-region-of-southeast-asia-adapt-to-fighting-the-c>

## Certification During the Pandemic

While it is difficult to assess who had the greatest adjustment to make going online, our student teacher candidates and their instructors, Kelly Falvey and Federico Fiondella, as well as our intrepid teacher supervisors (including Kelly), Kathy Coords, Fran Lucibello, Pat Libero, and Mary Skelly perhaps had the most dramatic 'pivot'. Kelly created alternative plans for the remainder of the semester, hosted weekly Zoom meetings for the cohort, and created assignments to guide our students to the completion of their student teaching experience. To celebrate their graduation, Kelly invited Lauren Sepulveda (BS '10) to speak at the final Zoom meeting for the cohort. As the recipient of the 2019-20 National Milken Educator Award excellence in teaching, Lauren was scheduled to speak at a department event in early April, but her words were just as powerful at this virtual celebration as she reminded these future teachers how important their role in society is. The evening celebration included a theme: Dream Vacation Destination. Backdrops included views of football fields, cruise ships going anywhere, sandy beaches and blue oceans, pink flamingos, and exotic drinks. Again there was a spirit of great joy, camaraderie, accomplishment, and appreciation.



While we were unable to host the New Haven Regional Contest for Connecticut History Day, a virtual event did take place. Southern's History Department sponsors a Social Justice Prize for the State Competition. Working with their teacher, Lynn Ouellet, this year's winners, Halei Frey and Elizabeth Lewis, from Ellington High School, created a powerful project on the struggle for children's rights: Iqbal Masih: breaking limits for the limited. How one boy's voice was heard across the world. We are exceedingly proud of their efforts and their determination to share this story at CT History Day. Link to Project: <https://20629537.nhdwebcentral.org/>



## Faculty Acknowledgements

We cannot leave off without making some further acknowledgements. Due to COVID-19 several events had to be cancelled including the Celebration of Faculty Excellence. We take a moment here to congratulate Tom Radice, our East Asia specialist, as Southern's recipient of the Board of Regents Excellence in Teaching Award. We also wish Tom a productive spring 2021 sabbatical. We are also very proud to announce the tenure and promotion to Associate Professor of Darcy Kern, our Medieval Europeanist, and Sarah Roe, our specialist in history and philosophy of science and bio-ethics. We congratulate Carmen Coury and Sarah Roe on their CSU Research Grants and wish them well in their pursuit of knowledge. Sarah will also enjoy a spring 2021 sabbatical to pursue her research project in the history of female medicine. Congratulations also to Polly Beals who is part of a Faculty Development Grant that will collectively explore and pilot effective advising and mentoring practices with our SCSU students using an equity and inclusion lens. We are pleased to add to this news that Siobhan has taken over the position of Graduate Coordinator of the History Department. Byron Nakamura is stepping down after six years of leadership in this position. We welcome Siobhan, and we thank Byron for all his support of our graduate students and our graduate curriculum. We wish him a productive sabbatical for the fall semester.

**Austin Cesare** (BS '98, MA '04) has been teaching in the public school system in Milford for 22 years and is currently the department head at John Foran High School. He serves on the Hamden Town Council as the education committee chair and served on the Hamden Board of Education for six years. He sent well wishes to all during this difficult time.

**Jessica Dooling** (BA '11, MA '17) who is working in the Manuscript Department at Yale University's Sterling Library reported on the adjustments at her job. In recent months, she has been attending several Zoom meetings on digitization and transcribing projects. "[I]t's been challenging, frustrating and immensely rewarding all at the same time to execute them [i.e., projects] . . . Our goal is to assist the Yale academic community to our best ability by making as much material available digitally as possible."

**Shante Hanks** (BS '97, MS '99, SYC '05) has been keeping very busy in her role as the Deputy Commissioner for the Department of Housing. "I've worked in collaboration with our homeless providers, health departments and local hotels/restaurants throughout the state to decompress homeless shelters." She also shared some happy news that her nephew will be a new Owl this coming fall and joins his older brother who also attends Southern.



National College Decision Day 2020

**SCSU**

JUSTICE announced his decision "Huxtable Style" today and chose SCSU for the following reasons:

LEGACY - Justice's maternal Grandmother was in Mr. Barber's 1st SEOP Class in '72, Aunt is an Alumni as well and Brother, Jeremiah, currently attends & is a rising Senior

MAJOR: Exercise Science

**Tula Lacy** passed along messages of hope and strength and suggested we look at the section, "One Good Thing" from the Associated Press "to help us focus on the good things people are doing in the world." She also shared a link from APnews to a story from Brooklyn, NY reflecting on a neighborhood that came together to bury a stranger, a 91-year old woman that died from the virus while in an assisted living facility.

<https://apnews.com/8a87fe27b431a0d2bc3eef5cd4ab576b>

**Hannah McNeil** (BS '16) reported that she continues to grow in her profession as a social studies teacher and is grateful that someone nominated her as teacher of the year. Stay tuned as the results will be in over the next few weeks!

**Frank Tupka** (BS '11) reflected not only on the current situation we all find ourselves in, but how much he enjoys coming back to talk to our History Education cohort. "That is always one of my favorite nights of the year because I get to see the enthusiasm in our future colleagues as well as reflect upon my own practice." Frank also shared with us the good news that he has been named Foran High School Teacher of the Year!

**Donald Yacovone** (BS '74), speaker at our November Phi Alpha Theta Induction ceremony, is an Associate at the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard University. He has been working from home these days. "I am especially fortunate to have completed the research for my book on education and white supremacy just before the pandemic hit the country. So, I climb the stairs to my office just like days before the crisis and move the project along."

**Emily Gebhardt** (MA '18) has finished her master's degree in Medieval Studies at Columbia University and is headed to Duke University for her doctoral degree.

**Stephen Manke** (BA '15) completed his master's thesis, "World War II: Patriotism Through Film," under the direction of Troy Rondinone.

**Catherine Nuzzo** (BS '09) completed her master's thesis, "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.

**Matthew Roumeles** (BS '11) completed his special project, "Perspectives on Radicalism: A Global Comparative Study," under the direction of Troy Rondinone.

**Damon Piselli** (BA '17) completed his special project, "A Comparative Historiography of the Sámi, Hmong, and Pequot/Mohegans, Indigenous Peoples of Europe, Asia, and North America," under the direction of Steve Amerman.

**Jeffrey Cash** completed his master's comprehensive exams in American history and European history.

**Miguel Luis Soto** completed his master's comprehensive exams in American history and European history.

**Eric Anderson** completed his master's thesis, "The Northern Italian Immigration Experience" under the direction of Troy Rondinone.

**Edward Cordero** (BA '20) has been accepted to Southern's graduate program in history.

**Nicole Healy** (BA '20) will be a graduate intern in the Student Activities Office at Eastern CT State University this summer, and in the fall she will begin her master's degree in Counselor Education with specialization in Student Development in Higher Education at Central CT State University. As a graduating senior, Nicole was also awarded the Outstanding Achievement Award in history for her 3.83 grade point average.

**Brenda Fernandes** (BS '20) earned top honors with the Excellence in History Award for her 3.97 grade point average.

**Benjamin Johnson** (BA '20) has been accepted to Central CT State University's graduate program in Public History.

**Jordan Levin** (BA '20) is headed to Law School! He is currently deciding among several offers to law programs in Connecticut and Rhode Island.

**Martin Lippai** (BS '20) was awarded the Outstanding Achievement in History Award for his 3.91 grade point average and the Robert Phipps Sr. Award for the outstanding senior paper in History. We hope to see Martin in our graduate program in history this coming fall.

**Patrick Moore** (BA '20), who is a double major in history and political science was awarded the Outstanding Achievement in History Award for his 3.88 grade point average.

**Jessica Petry** (BA '20) will be a graduate intern at Eastern CT State University this summer in their Unity Wing, and in the fall she will begin her master's degree in Counseling focusing on Higher Education at Central CT State University.



# Student Success Stories cont...

**Derek Pearson** (BS '20) will be attending Virginia Polytechnical Institute and State University to pursue his graduate degree and has earned a graduate assistantship to support his studies. As a graduating senior, Derek was also awarded the Outstanding Achievement in History Award for his 3.86 grade point average.

**Gabriel Rodriguez** (BA '20) earned the Distinction in History Award for her 3.7 grade point average.

**John Saksa** (BS '20) was awarded the Outstanding Achievement in History Award for his 3.92 grade point average. We also hope to see John in our graduate program in history this coming fall.

**John Wells** (BS '20) graduated with departmental honors having completed an honors thesis, "The Untold History of Traumatic Brain Injuries in American Football," under the direction of Troy Rondinone.

## A Final Thought

To all of us who have lost loved ones or have suffered through or because of the virus, we offer our heartfelt sympathies and healing thoughts. And I echo Troy Rondinone's comment: "Stay safe, everyone. And help each other" because life is too short!

