

History Section

In the 2019–2020 academic year, the MIT History faculty continued to excel in the areas of scholarship, teaching, and public engagement. MIT historians published scholarship grounded in deep archival research and employed cutting-edge methodologies. The History faculty taught a wide array of undergraduate subjects, and helped to train a talented cohort of graduate students in the History, Anthropology, and Science, Technology, and Society (HASTS) doctoral program. Members of the History faculty seek to give MIT students a well-rounded educational experience that will prepare them to be engaged members of their local communities and an increasingly global society. Along with the rest of the Institute, the History Section moved to online teaching at the end of March 2020, which presented many challenges for both our faculty and staff.

Highlights

The MIT History faculty gained two new members in AY2020. In August 2019, the dean of the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (SHASS) transferred to History the line occupied by Catherine Clark, an associate professor without tenure, initially appointed in the Global Studies and Languages Section (GSL). Clark was trained as a historian of modern France, and had taught classes in GSL focused on French culture and history. The History faculty voted at the start of the year to bring Professor Clark up for promotion to the rank of associate professor with tenure. At the end of the spring term, the MIT Corporation approved this promotion, effective July 1, 2020. In History, Clark will teach subjects in modern French and European history, filling a curricular gap that we have sought to address for a decade.

The History Section conducted a search this year in the field of environmental history to replace our distinguished senior colleague Harriet Ritvo. The search attracted a deep and talented pool of scholars, from whom we selected Meghan Black, an assistant professor at the London School of Economics who had previously held a postdoctoral fellowship at the Charles Warren Center for American History at Harvard University. Black is the author of *The Global Interior: Mineral Frontiers and American Power* (Harvard University Press, 2018), which won prizes from the American Society for Environmental History, the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, the Western History Association, and the British Association of American Studies. She will join the MIT faculty in Fall 2020 at the rank of associate professor without tenure.

The History section also participated in a joint tenure-track search with the Department of Urban Studies and Planning (DUSP) to replace Robert Fogelson, a specialist in United States urban history who retired at the end of this year after a half century on the MIT faculty. Fogelson's line had been split administratively between History and DUSP since 1970, and the two units had originally agreed to hire a junior faculty member who would also be a member of both units. The needs of both sections had changed over the decades, however, to the extent that we were unable to agree on a joint hire, at which point the Provost decided to move the line fully to DUSP. Karilyn Crockett, an urban ethnologist with a focus on questions of race, was appointed to this position at the end of the spring, but soon after, she was asked to join tBoston City government by Mayor

Marty Walsh to address diversity and equity issues at city hall. DUSP granted her a leave of absence from MIT to take up these responsibilities.

After a wait of several years, the History and the Literature Sections in SHASS received permission to make a joint hire in ancient and medieval studies at the rank of lecturer I. The two units had sought for several years to find a multi-year replacement for Steven Ostrow, a long-serving lecturer in classical studies who retired two years ago. The units agreed on the need to hire a Hellenist who could teach classes in the history, literature, and language of ancient Greece. After a national search, an offer was made to Alexander Forte, a Harvard-trained classicist who has held a lectureship the past three years at Colgate University. Forte will take up his teaching responsibilities in both units this coming fall.

For the second time in three years, History played host to a Martin Luther King, Jr. Visiting Professor. Each year, four or five individuals external to the Institute are appointed to these distinguished visiting positions. We were fortunate to have in residence with us Rhonda Williams, the holder of the John L. Seigenthaler Chair in American History at Vanderbilt University. While at MIT, Williams continued her work on two book projects, one on the history of black power in America and the other on narcotics policing in communities of color in the 20th century. In the fall, she gave a public lecture/performance in Killian Hall called “The Things That Divide Us,” a meditation on the past, present, and future of race relations in America. In the spring, she was going to organize a workshop for the MIT community on these same themes, but that activity was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The History section again co-sponsored the Seminar in Environmental and Agricultural History, a series organized by Harriet Ritvo and Deborah Fitzgerald, a historian in the Program in Science, Technology, and Society. Professor Kate Brown, from the MIT Program in Science, Technology, and Society, was one of the speakers. The seminar also hosted speakers from the University of Toronto, Harvard University, and Boston University. Lectures in March and April by scholars from Leeds Trinity University and the University of Texas-Austin were cancelled due to the spread of COVID-19.

The History Section and its faculty actively supported Digital Humanities projects such as the Comédie-Française Registers Project and Feminism in Armenian. We continued to support the recently established SHASS Digital Humanities Lab; Jeff Ravel served as the chair of the laboratory’s advisory committee. In addition, Chris Capozzola’s Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) “Visualizing the Philippines” continued its run on the MITx platform. Hiromu Nagahara and Sana Aiyar continued their work with the Office of Open Learning to create a “globalized classroom” online with Keio University in Tokyo. The fall 2020 version of this subject will also include the participation of students at Jindal Global University outside of New Delhi, India. As a unit, History stands ready to collaborate with the recently established MIT Schwarzman College of Computing in both curricular and programmatic matters related to the social, cultural, political, and ethical aspects of our increasingly digital world.

In AY2020, the History Section continued its commitment to issues of equity and diversity at MIT. Our faculty—evenly balanced between women and men and

originating in cultures around the world—researches and writes about history from local, national, transnational, and global perspectives. We bring these concerns into our classrooms, where we are committed to exposing students to the diversity of past experience on the planet so that they may be increasingly thoughtful stewards of our natural and political heritages. At the outset of this academic year, members of the unit were shocked and dismayed at the revelations about Jeffrey Epstein’s involvements on the MIT campus. We urge the Institute to conduct a consequential investigation into the campus fundraising culture that allowed Epstein to associate with MIT. In June, we posted a statement on our website condemning the entrenched institutional and intellectual racism behind the killing of George Floyd by the Minneapolis Police Department. This statement read in part:

“The members of the MIT History Faculty condemn this racialized violence against people of color as historians, teachers, and members of the public. We are committed to fight against the most visible and grotesque spectacles of white supremacy and to being vigilant against the invisible, insidious racism that silently seeps into our institutions and communities. We do so...in our research and writing on the history of racism and inequality in many past times and places. Individually and collectively, we affirm—and insist—that Black Lives Matter.”

Teaching

The History faculty takes great pride in the quality of its innovative graduate and undergraduate teaching as witnessed by the significant number who have been named MacVicar Fellows and Levitan Prize winners. In AY2020, at the request of President Rafael Reif and with the support of the SHASS dean and the MIT Libraries, Professor Craig Wilder continued to teach the subject “MIT and Slavery.” Wilder, the pre-eminent historian of slavery and its foundational role in higher education in the United States, created this seminar in which undergraduates do original research on the topic in the MIT archives. The results of their work have been posted on an [MIT Libraries website](#). The group’s work this year revealed connections between the history of MIT and the treatment of Native Americans; Professor Wilder anticipates that emphasis of the subject may shift in this direction in future iterations.

Other teaching innovations in History include the global classroom experiment that Professors Nagahara and Aiyar continue to conduct with Keio University and Jindal Global University, and the use of the [Beaver Press](#), a Gutenberg-facsimile letterpress, in the teaching of media and cultural history. Students in our signature undergraduate class, 21H.001 “How to Stage a Revolution,” designed and printed historically themed posters relevant to the class in the fall 2019 iteration of this subject. Activity at the Beaver Press ceased with the campus lockdown at the end of March, but in the future, we hope to reopen the shop and relocate it to a bigger space in collaboration with our partners in the MIT Libraries and the Concourse first-year program. In addition to the hand-built letterpress currently in the print shop, the Beaver Press has acquired two more printing presses, which will allow it to accommodate many more educational and community printing projects.

History continued its popular Independent Activities Period offering “IAP in Ancient Italy and Greece,” in January 2019. Led by Professors Broadhead and Goldberg, as well

as Linda Rabieh from the Concourse program, a group of 20 students visited classical sites in the city of Rome and the ruins of Pompeii. Next year's trip will return to Greece. Professor Clark led this year's undergraduate January Scholars in Paris Program, funded through the Global Languages unit in SHASS; six students participated. Highlights included visits to various theaters, restaurants, and museums, and a photography lesson followed by a contest to photograph the City of Lights.

In AY2020, History offered 45 subjects that enrolled 626 students. Twenty-three undergraduates identified as History concentrators this year. The winners of History's year-end essay competition this year were:

- Megan McCandless '20: "Russian Officers Against Military Reforms"
- Charlotte Minsky '20: "Settler Colonialism and the Making of the Lick Observatory, 1846–1919"
- Elizabeth Tso, '21: "Roman Relationships: Rhetoric and Reputation"

Faculty and Staff Updates

Sana Aiyar, associate professor of history with tenure, continued work on her next book-length project, tentatively titled *India's First Partition: Burma and India in the 1930s*. She also begun an archival exploration into the history of South Asian students at MIT in conjunction with the MIT South Asian Alumni Association and the Institute Archives.

Pouya Alimaghani, lecturer in middle east history, completed his fourth year of full-time teaching in the History Section. In spring, he published *Contesting the Iranian Revolution: The Green Uprisings* with Cambridge University Press.

Patty Alves completed her first year as the administrative officer for the MIT History Section.

William Broadhead, associate professor of history with tenure, currently holds a MacVicar Faculty Fellowship. Professor Broadhead is finishing his book, *Hegemony and Mobility in Roman Italy, 4th–1st centuries BC*. In fall 2019, he was the acting director of the First-Year Concourse program.

Tristan Brown, a specialist in Chinese history, was hired into a tenure-track line in the History faculty in 2018–2019. This year, while on a postdoctoral fellowship at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom, he held an MIT appointment as a visiting scholar in History. He will leave Cambridge University and join MIT full-time in fall 2020.

Christopher Capozzola, professor of history and currently a MacVicar Faculty Fellow, will soon publish a major work, *Bound by War: How the United States and the Philippines Built America's First Pacific Century*, with Basic Books. He will become the new Head of the History Section next year.

Catherine Clark joined the History faculty this year after six years in MIT's Global Studies and Languages Section. Her 2018 Oxford University Press book, *Paris and the Cliché of History: The City and Photographs, 1860-1970*, won the biennial Laurence Wylie Prize in French Cultural History, awarded by the Institute of French Studies at New York University.

Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, Associate Professor of History and Women's and Gender Studies with Tenure, holds the McMillan-Stewart Career Development Chair in Women in the Middle East and North Africa. She continued work on her book project and website, *Feminism in Armenian*. She was on sabbatical leave in Spring 2020.

Robert M. Fogelson, Professor of History and Urban Studies and Planning, has taught at MIT since 1968. He continued work on a book-length project concerning the rise of Co-op City in the Bronx in the late 1960s and the fall of cooperative housing. He retired at the end of the academic year.

Malick W. Ghachem, Associate Professor of History with Tenure, continued work on two book-length projects: *'In the Name of the Colony': The Fall of the Indies Company and the Rise of Plantation Slavery in Haiti, 1720-1725*; and a study of the history of the Jesuits in Haiti from the eighteenth century to the present. He is the co-organizer of an international project entitled "Taking Stock of the Archives of Saint-Domingue (Haiti)," a collaborative that hopes to increase physical and online access to the sources of Haitian history. In spring 2020, he received a "Teaching with Digital Technology" award for his thoughtful transition to the online teaching environment at the end of March.

Eric Goldberg, Associate Professor of History with Tenure, will soon publish *In the Manner of the Franks: Hunting, Kingship, and Nobility in Early Medieval Europe*, with the University of Pennsylvania Press. He is the co-director of the MIT Ancient and Medieval Studies Program.

Caley Horan, Associate Professor of History without Tenure, continued revisions to her first book project, tentatively entitled *Actuarial Age: Insurance and American Culture in the Post-WWII United States*. This work is under contract with the University of Chicago Press. She was on junior leave this academic year.

Kathleen Lopes completed her third year as an administrative assistant in the MIT History Section.

Anne E. C. McCants, professor of history, is the director of the Concourse first-year learning community. She continued work on projects on the economic history of Europe's gothic cathedrals and on the impact of polygamous marriage practices on the long-term wealth and prosperity of nations. This year she became the editor of the path-breaking *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, published by the MIT Press.

Hiromu Nagahara, Associate Professor of History with Tenure, held a year-long fellowship at the Newhouse Center for the Humanities at Wellesley College. He continued work on *After the Masquerade Ball: The Birth of Japan's Cosmopolitan Elite*. This project explores the cultural history of Japanese international diplomacy in the twentieth century.

Tanalís Padilla, associate professor of history with tenure, completed a history of the radicalization and politicization of Mexico's rural normal schools titled *Unintended Lessons of Revolution: Student-Teachers and Political Radicalism in 20th-Century Mexico*, to be published by Duke University Press. She finished a two-year term as the director of graduate studies for the HASTS doctoral program that is jointly administered by the History, Anthropology, and STS sections.

Meghan Pepin, the undergraduate administrator for the History Section, completed her fifth year in this role.

Valentina Pugliano, a specialist in the history of science and technology in early modern Europe, completed her second year as a lecturer.

Jeffrey Ravel, Professor and Head of History, continued work on a book-length study of the history of French playing cards from 1650 to 1850. He continued to serve as faculty lead on the MIT-Nepal Initiative and as Co-Director of MIT's Beaver Press. He was the president of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies.

Harriet Ritvo, Arthur J. Conner Professor of History, is finishing a book-length project, *At the Edge of the Wild*, which is under contract with Harvard University Press. She received a Career Distinguished Scholar Award from the American Society for Environmental History for her many contributions to this historical subfield. She retired from the MIT faculty at the end of the year.

Emma J. Teng, T.T. and Wei Fong Chao Professor of Asian Civilizations, is the director of the Global Languages Program at MIT. She is currently working on a study of pioneering Chinese culinary author Buwei Yang Chao (1889–1981), and of the 1905 King Incident in relation to the Chinese boycott of 1905–1906.

Craig Steven Wilder, Barton L. Weller Professor of History, advises many educational institutions in the United States that wish to understand better the roles slavery and the slave trade played in their origins and development.

Elizabeth Wood, professor of history, is co-director of the MIT International Science and Technology Initiatives (MISTI) Russia Program. She continues work on a book-length project concerning the gendered politics of Vladimir Putin's rule in Russia.

Jeffrey S. Ravel
Section Head
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