

# History News UMBC History Department

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2024-2025



*Professors at Spring Commencement! L-R: Denise Meringolo, Anne Sarah Rubin, Jinghong Zhang, Andrew Nolan, Meredith Oyen*



*Phi Alpha Theta Inductees, 2025*

*Front Row: Finley Bandy, Evan Royston, Robert Moulden*

*Back Row: Ryan Noonan, Carlos Sanes, Asim Muhammad, Megan Gould*

*Not pictured: Kendra Thomas, Siskind Oshry, Felipe Gonzalez-Karg*

## A Word from the Chair



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Share your Personal or Professional News in next Summer’s Newsletter! Email Dr. Meringolo at [ddm@umbc.edu](mailto:ddm@umbc.edu)

*Dear Beloved Friends, Colleagues, and Alumni:*

*The 2024-2025 Academic year has brought change, opportunity, and some anxiety to the Department of History.*

*We have three new faculty members. Dr. Jinghong Zhang (who we highlighted in last summer’s newsletter) and Dr. Silvia Escanilla Huerta have both been with us for one year already. Dr. Miller Wright will join us in the fall. Together, these teacher-scholars bring unique, transnational perspectives to their research, allowing us to expand our course offerings and departmental areas of expertise.*

*We completed the first half of an Academic Program Review which will serve as the basis for planning our department’s future. We are asking exciting questions about how best to serve the next generation of graduate and undergraduate students.*

*We have continued to produce meaningful scholarship with broad relevance to our discipline that helps provide context and raise new questions about our contemporary world.*

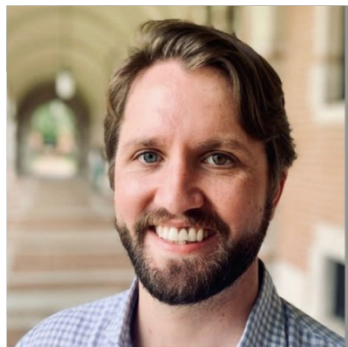
*This critical research and teaching have taken place against a challenging backdrop. Federal policies and decisions have a direct impact on higher education and on state budgets. UMBC is feeling the impact. The reduction in federal grant programs like the National Endowment for the Humanities means that professors and graduate students do not have access to funds that support our research. Reductions and deficits in the Maryland State budget require cuts to the state higher education system.*

*We are fortunate to have incredibly dynamic and dedicated leadership. Our University President, Valerie Sheares Ashby and our Provost Manfred van Dulmen have been working closely with faculty to develop new strategies for supporting research, protecting the quality of our teaching, and continuing our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.*

*In this environment, the Department of History is facing budget cuts. But our university tradition of shared governance and our department’s culture of collaboration and collegiality are reasons for optimism. As educators in a public institution, we are guided by a strong commitment to public service. I am confident that we will continue to advance inclusive excellence as scholars and teachers.*

*Denise D. Meringolo*  
*Rolls Up, Retrievers, we got this!*

## Welcome Dr. Miller Wright!



*The Department is pleased to welcome a new Assistant Professor, Dr. Miller S. Wright to UMBC beginning in Fall 2025.*

*Dr. Wright specializes in the Native American slave trade in North America and Brazil in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He is interested in how Native captivity practices and the Native slave trade influenced conceptions of race, bondage, and indigeneity in the Atlantic slave trade. Some of Dr. Wright's previous work focuses on how Creek matrilineages and women developed their own understandings of racialized slavery and property traditions in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.*

## Introducing Dr. Silvia Escanilla Huerta

*The Department is pleased to introduce our Post-Doctoral Fellow for Faculty Diversity, Dr. Silvia Escanilla Huerta, who joined us in Fall 2024.*

*Dr. Escanilla Huerta is originally from Argentina, and she moved to the U.S. in 2014 to pursue a PhD at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her work focuses on the role of indigenous peoples in the wars of independence in present-day Peru and Bolivia. Her work sits at the intersection of geography, anthropology, and political history to normalize the presence of indigenous peoples during the Age of Revolutions and to highlight their central role as actors in the struggle for freedom in Latin America. She has multiple interests ranging from soccer to telenovelas.*



## Guest Speakers



### **Low Lecture, April 16, 2025**

*Amber N. Mitchell discussed the unique intersections of Black history, preservation, and memory that have presented opportunities and challenges in her career as a Public Historian and looked toward the future of African American storytelling in American public spaces.*



### **Webb Lecture, October 1, 2024**

*Amanda Herbert demonstrated how free white women worked to deliberately erase Black foodworkers from their practices of recipe writing, collection, and record-keeping; close reading of ingredients, techniques, and adaptations, however, can help us to recover Black culinary innovations and contributions.*



## *Faculty Celebrations and Congratulations*



*Dr. Chris Blakley conducted research at the Special and Area Studies Collections Library at the University of Florida. They are now developing an article on the interaction between UF, USDA, and the Florida State Prison at Raiford, known as the "Sunshine Prison," between the 1910s and 1940s. Their research examines how these three institutions relied on unfree labor to support the nascent ramie (China grass) industry in Florida. They are also looking into the overwhelming reliance on prison labor in phosphate mining in the same period. Dr. Blakley has accepted a full-time permanent position outside of UMBC. They have been a wonderful instructor for the Department, and we will miss them!*



*Dr. Michelle Scott won the George Freedly Memorial Award for exemplary scholarship on live performance by the Theatre Library Association in October 2024 for her book T.O.B.A. Time.*



*Dr. Amy Froide is now serving as the Director of UMBC's Drescher Center for the Humanities.*

# Faculty Publications and Presentations

**Dr. Amy Froide** contributed historical context for episode 636 of the Freakonomics Podcast, "[Why Aren't We Having More Babies?](#)"

**Dr. Susan McDonough** has published two articles with co-author Michelle Armstrong-Partida, "[Trans\\* & Gender Identity in the premodern Mediterranean,](#)" appeared in the December 2024 Issue of *Postmedieval* and "Sexual Practices and Fluidities in a Shared Pre-Modern Mediterranean" appeared in the June 2025 Issue of *Medieval Encounters*.

**Dr. Denise Meringolo** writes a quarterly President's Column in the National Council on Public History newsletter, [Public History News](#). This year, she has written about advocacy and funding for history. Dr. Meringolo also wrote "[The Park Service Mandate: History, Education, and Preservation](#)" for the American Historical Association newsletter, *Perspectives Daily*.

**Dr. Meredith Oyen** published an essay, "[Border Crossings and Campaign Trails: Chinese Migration at the US Southern Border](#)" in 9DASHLINE.

**Dr. Michelle Scott** has been promoting her book, *T.O.B.A Time* on a variety of television, web, and radio shows. She was also the keynote speaker at the Mellon Mays Foundation Summer Conference in St. Louis, MO.

**Dr. Brian Van Wyck** was awarded two fellowships to support his research during the summer. He was Visiting Fellow at Internationale Jugendbibliothek, the International Youth Library in Munchen, Bavaria. He was also a Visiting Fellow at Leibniz-Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam (ZZF).

**Dr. Constantine Vaporis** has piloted a video for Great Courses, [The Rise of the Samurai](#).

**Dr. Mirjam Voerkelius** published an article, "Darwinism and the Human-Animal Boundary in the Soviet Union" in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*

**Dr. Noor Zaidi** published a moving reflection on her research and its significance, "[The Lost Memory of Iraqi Female Prisoners](#)" in *1001 Iraqi Thoughts*.

## Congratulations Spring 2025 MA Graduates



(L-R): Aaron Blankenship, Frank Miliham, Anyah St. Louis, Kitri Post, and Jordan Baer. Not pictured Sasha Krongros, William Plessner, and Tazmira Sultana (summer graduate)

## Alumni News

**Travis Clatterbuck** (BA 2024) has been admitted to the graduate program in historic preservation at Ball State University.

**Eliah Goldberg** (BA 2025) won a Fulbright Fellowship to study at Hebrew University in the Fall. Eliah also won the award for Best Fiction entry in UMBC's Bartleby for her piece "Le Livre des Deux Dames."

**Andrew Holter** (MA 2017) defended his dissertation and was awarded his PhD in History at Northwestern University in spring 2025.

**Matthew Kelbaugh** (BA 2023) published "[Ukraine's and Georgia's Recognition of the Circassian Genocide: Strategic Engagement with North Caucasian Causes](#)," in the *Journal of Caucasian Studies*.

**India Kelly** (BA 2024) has been admitted to Oxford University to study Medieval Archaeology.

**Homira Pashai** (MA 2011 ) has published a work of historical fiction, [The Eyes of the Arg: A Persian Saga](#).

**Kitri Post** (MA 2025) is serving as the Maryland 250<sup>th</sup> Research Fellow at the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area.

**Tazmira Sultana** (MA 2025) has accepted a position with New York Folklore.