



**WESTERN ILLINOIS
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NOTA BENE

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
2026 NEWSLETTER**

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Greetings friends,

Mr. Jefferson opined that certain truths are self-evident, but the value of studying history and the humanities, for better or worse, isn't one of them. We in the history department realize we need to show *why* study of the past is crucial in our era of disruptive technology, wars over natural resources, and exploration of terrae incognitae. Sounds like the early sixteenth century, doesn't it? Our faculty seek ways to share our expertise off campus as much as possible, and we train students to be able to communicate with all kinds of audiences, in and outside the classroom, for one reason, because increasingly our majors seek careers in public history.



One exciting public history event is our third rendition of Macomb's World War II Living History Weekend, coming this October 9, 10, and 11. Join us if you can. We'll host some 100 authentic reenactors who will stage military camps and demonstrate WWII maneuvers and tactics at Veterans Park. We'll put on a Camp Ellis-style kids' recreation area, and install a Victory Garden.

For more information or to make a donation to support us, visit the fundraising page at go.wiu.edu/4rudaVE or the Facebook page at go.wiu.edu/4sHCQiv.

This year, of course, is the country's semiquincentennial. Use it to gather your family and read the whole Declaration and, go crazy, also the Constitution, Bill of Rights, and Federalist essays 10 and 78. The history department is invigorating our focus on citizenship and civic values. Help us out by practicing vigilant citizenship where you are, and letting anyone curious about what you're up to know that Western helped put you up to it. "Stand forth," as Mr. Paine put it.

Nota bene,
Tim Roberts

At left: An 1800 cartoon showing the two "mad Toms," Jefferson & Paine, attempting to topple the government. Self-government was a radical idea at the time.





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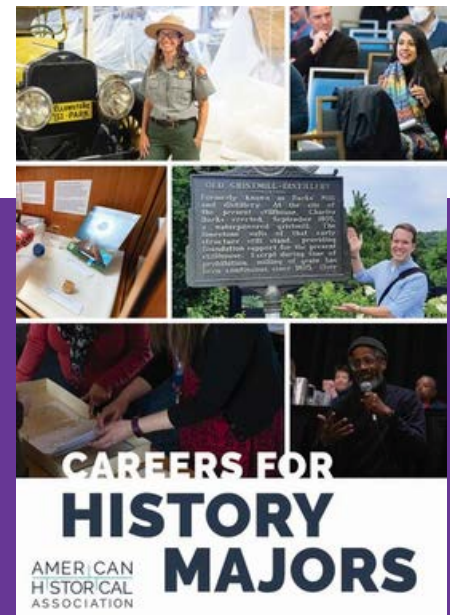
RECENT DEPARTMENT SCHOLARSHIP & CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENTS

Ute Chamberlin was selected via a competitive process to participate in The National WWII Museum's Summer Faculty Seminar in WWII History in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Peter Cole published an article, “Scrap Iron Becomes Bullets’: When Dockers Fought Fascism with Direct Action,” *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History* (2025), pp. 33-56. Dr. Cole was appointed a Research Fellow at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, Netherlands, the premier archive in Europe for labor and social history. And you can watch a video clip of a 5K run around Chicago’s Bronzeville area that he co-organized as part of the Chicago Race Riot of 1919 Commemoration Project.

Febe Pamonag received a contract to publish a book, *Island of Pain, Island of Hope: A Social History of Leprosy in U.S.-Occupied Philippines*, with the University of Illinois Press. You can listen to her interview on the topic by the podcast Relevant or Irrelevant.

Tim Roberts published a book, *After Barbary: Algeria's Roles in the French and American Empires*, with Cornell University Press. You can listen to his interview on the topic by the podcast New Books Network.



The History department launched two new courses this year, Introduction to Digital and Public History, & Careers in History.



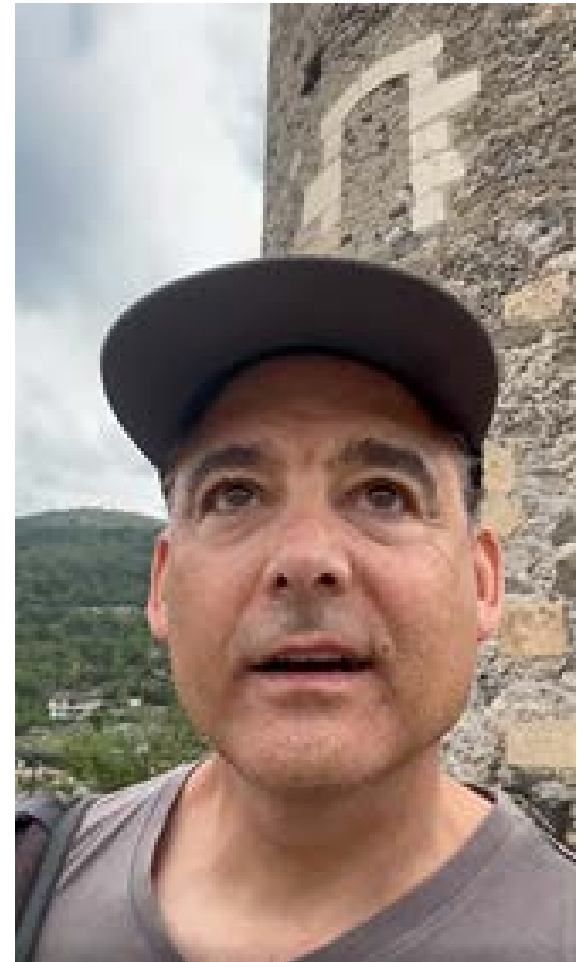
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RECENT DEPARTMENT SCHOLARSHIP & CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENTS

Edward Woell was awarded a sabbatical to conduct research at the archives départementales de l'Aveyron in the town of Rodez, France on violence against priests who supported the revolutionary French Constitution of 1791 (pictured is Dr. Woell describing a scene in Tarascon-sur-Ariège, another quaint town like Rodez in France's Occitanie region).



Two graduate students published essays in this year's edition of the *Western Illinois Historical Review*: **Paolo Romero**, "Defiance and Defense of Heritage: Spanish-Language Literature in the Philippines under U.S. Colonial Rule"; and **Jesse Godbey**, "Representations of Samurai in Anglophone Popular Music, 1970-2024." Jesse also won the department's William and Doris Burton essay prize for his work.

Undergrad student **Winter Hurst-Leadicker** published an article in *The Routledge Handbook on Marginalized Groups in the United States and their Challenges*.

Graduate students may now earn a minor field in Museum Studies through Western's Museum Studies department. Pictured is Nancy Benz, MA 2018, Curator of Collections and Exhibits at the Quincy Museum in Quincy, Illinois, receiving the 2025 Quincy Chamber of Commerce's EmpowerHer award.





INTERNSHIP SPOTLIGHT

The history department has seen a growth in student interest in public history careers, which they can start via internships. Our grad student Jodi Clayton blogged this year about her internship in the Malpass Library's Archives & Special Collections. Here's one of her posts.

The Engine Room of History

As a history student I have little realized the meticulous labor of an archivist behind my access to historical materials. But in my internship I have stepped into the 'engine room' of the historical process. The photographs, newspaper articles, and other ephemeral items I sift through show that 'history' starts as a chaotic pile of document traces. In the Malpass Library's Special Hoyt Estate Collection I have come across photographs of a road trip a family took in 1961. I ask myself, "How do I describe these photos accurately so a researcher can then find them in a database?" How I answer that question can enable an historian to ask, "What does this say about a 1960s middle class family's vacation habits?"

When I began my internship, there were plastic tubs and cardboard boxes piled with photos, newspaper articles and funeral announcements. As I slowly itemize each one, I have started to recognize faces and names. It's satisfying to turn a messy envelope of snapshots into a clean, digitized container list, and begin to create a picture of life in Colchester, Illinois since the late 1800s.

To my surprise, I find it challenging to be objective when I describe a funeral announcement or a road trip snapshot. I need to be precise, without letting my emotions shape an artifact's description. An archivist does more than file papers, but leaves the narratives about those papers to others.

This internship is teaching me that before the historian can speak, the archivist must prepare the stage. I will never look at a library database the same way again.



MAY • 61



Image: Alma Carson Murphy with 1958 Buick, roadside stop, May 1961, WIU Archives and Special Collections.



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BLASTS FROM THE PAST

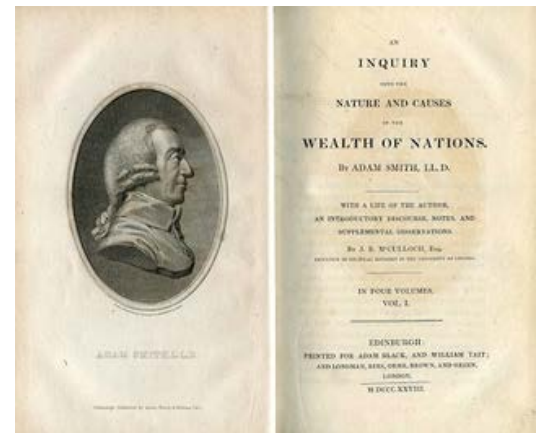
Every other week this year Prof. Tim Roberts emailed all history students a “Blast From the Past” alert about upcoming department events and opportunities. To incentivize students to read each Blast, emails included trivia questions offering prizes to the first students to answer questions correctly. All questions this year concerned The American Revolution, including the ones below. Are you an American Revolution history nerd?

“Listen My Children and You Shall Hear” - Who wrote this phrase, to what or who were they referring, and in what U.S. state would you predict that the children are most familiar with the phrase (for one reason, the event is the basis of a state holiday)?



What event is pictured in the illustration at left? Who's the central figure in it? The illustration was first published in 1856. What might be a reason that an illustration that year (86 years after the fact) showed this central figure, who didn't appear in the event's more famous image, published in 1770?

What was the term for the British colonial economic system that Adam Smith took to task in *Wealth of Nations*, published obscurely in 1776?



What woman did Heather Lind portray in the Nextflix series *Washington's Spies*? And how did this woman use her gendered position in colonial society to relay intelligence (i.e., spy)?





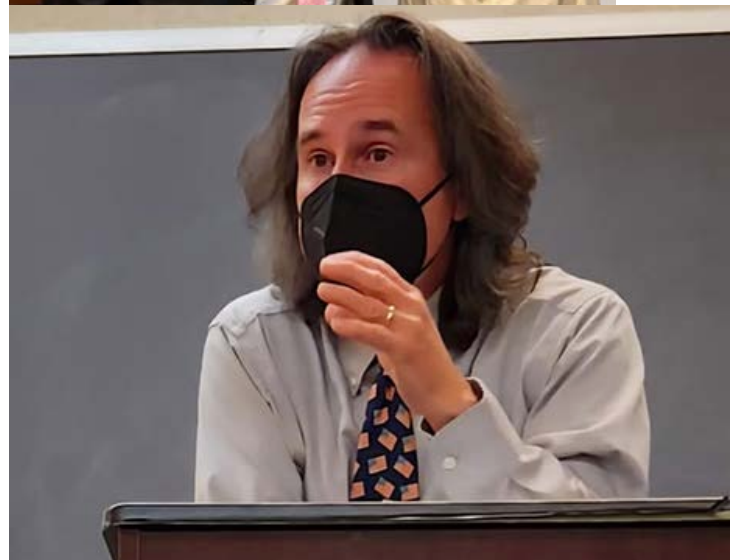
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DEPARTMENT SCENES



Clockwise from upper left: Undergrad **Ellieana Walden**, **Prof. Tim Roberts**, and two special guests at our Future Teachers Day event for high school students; **Prof. Ute Chamberlin** giving a LIFE talk on the history of Ukraine; Undergrad **Blue Mladenovich** meeting with an IL state legislator about higher education funding; **Prof. Richard Filipink** delivering the College of Arts & Sciences Last Lecture on the lesson of Watergate (it's not what you think; also, he's not leaving Western!); Grad student **Henry Dickinson**, an Illinois Regional Archives Depository (IRAD) intern in the Malpass Library, processing fragile McDonough County Circuit Court Case Files.





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DEPARTMENT SCENES



Clockwise from upper left: Associated Students of History (ASH) club members **Nick Hull, Natalia Shields, Frank Wauer, Zach Sztukowski**, and advisor **Prof. Ed Woell** at the Joseph and Hyrum Smith memorial in Carthage, Illinois; ASH pizza party!; **Dr. Febe Pamonag** at Macomb’s NPR station to tape a Voices of Women commentary; Macomb City Hall’s display of an exhibition curated by history majors on civil rights leader C. T. Vivian as a Western student.



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HISTORY STUDENT TEACHER SPOTLIGHTS IN 2025-26

Where I am teaching: Dixon High School, Dixon, IL

What I am teaching: United States History and Global Cultural Studies



Cool Teaching Experience: Integrating a biography project into my U.S. History class. It's been awesome getting students into the library and reading and writing on pop figures like Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, Eminem, David Goggins. Some students went deep in the past and wrote on victims of the Salem Witch Trials or potential suspects for Jack the Ripper. Several students went beyond the page-count target. It felt like payback for all the times I had written long papers myself - now I was the one grading them! Other memorable experiences: attending football games and participating in the Homecoming Staff vs. Senior Tug-of-War contest.



Peyton Ward



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Where I am teaching: Hamilton High School



I am student teaching at Hamilton High School in Hamilton, Illinois, where I teach geography, U.S. History, Intro to Law, and Contemporary History.

A memorable teaching moment so far would be teaching about the Gilded Age because the students were very interested in this time period. (Interesting....) That was a fun unit to teach.

Kolbe Barnes



Where I am teaching:

Spoon River Valley High School, London Mills, IL

What I am teaching:

Geography, American History, Civics, and Current Events

highlight this semester:

When I was growing up my high school had 4,000 kids. Spoon River Valley High School has 60. The different sizes really shocked me. But getting to know kids a lot and working with them 1-on-1 is something that I really enjoy. Students' learning can become more personalized and meaningful. They're not just 'another kid in the classroom'.



**Sam
Appelbaum**



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2025-26 GRADUATES



Clockwise, from upper left: Sam Appelbaum, Reese Smith, Peyton Ward; Paolo Romero (MA), Christian Fumey (MA); Abby Troxell-Skaggs (MA); Natalie Gibson. Congratulations to all our new History alumni!



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2025-26 GRADUATES



From right to left: Frank Wauer, Kane Struwe, Nick Hull, Lea Kennedy, Viktor Wallace, Natalia Shields, Braden Kane, Devin Heightman, and Winter Hurst-Leadicker. Not pictured: Bruce Newman, Bradley Sharp, Kolbe Barnes, & Lily Martinek. Congratulations! We are Leatherneck proud.



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ALUMNI NEWS

The history department reconnected with a few Leatherneck historian alumni this year. **Ben Toal** (Left of Dr. Roberts) (BA, 2005, MA, 2007), earned his J.D. from Drake and is now in Des Moines, Iowa. Right of Dr. R is **Zach Sutton** (BA, 2020, MS, GIS, 2022), who is now a Planner at Bi-State Regional Commission in Rock Island.



Our office manager **Cindy Arnett** did some sleuthing and learned that **Nick Atwood** (BA, 2009) earned his J.D. from Northern Illinois and is now an attorney with the Illinois State's Attorneys Appellate Prosecutor Office in Ottawa, Illinois. Likewise, **Jason Boucher** (MA, 2016) received his J.D. from Michigan State and now practices with the firm of Hasselberg Grebe Snodgrass Urban and Wentworth in Peoria. And **Logan Elko** (BA, 2021) joined us for a pre-law school discussion panel, speaking on his law school experience at the University of Arkansas.

The department hosted its annual alumni panel this spring. Our speakers were **Brian Hayes** (BA, African American Studies, 2007, MA, History, 2010); and **Rachel (Eaton) Willyard** (BA, 2018). Brian teaches in Chicago, and Rachel, in Bloomington, Illinois.

Leatherneck History Alumni Panel
Hear from former History majors!
Everyone welcome
Wednesday March 11 2026 7:00-8:00 p.m.

Brian Hayes
Chicago Public Schools

Rachel Willyard
Bloomington H. S.

via Zoom
<https://tinyurl.com/42r72duj>

Sponsored by the WIU Department of History - Where History Comes Alive! For more information contact history1@wiu.edu



Do you have news to share with the history department and Leatherneck history alumni? We would welcome it with open arms! Feel free to email the department at history1@wiu.edu, call us at (309) 298-1053, or share a public post or private message on our [Facebook](#) page.



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HOW TO SUPPORT & STAY IN TOUCH!

Don't Forget Us!

The Department of History appreciates your generosity. Through your giving we annually award scholarships and prizes to nearly one-third of all students majoring in history and history education. Your donations fund student research, departmental resources for teaching, and history events.

Please give and help maintain our standard of excellence. Click [here](#) to make your gift to the department, or type in a scholarship you wish to support. If you wish to write a check, make it payable to the WIU Foundation, designated History Department, and mail to WIU Foundation, Sherman Hall 309, 1 University Circle, Macomb, IL 61455-1390.



Pictured: Neil Gamm, "Governor of the Republic of Forgottonia," c. 1973.

Follow Leatherneck History!

Take opportunities to visit Macomb & stop by the History Department

Follow us on Facebook & Instagram

Join our Leatherneck historians alumni LinkedIn group

And let us know if you'll be in town for our WWII Living History Weekend!

