

ROOTS REVIEW

Roots of Contemporary Issues | Year in Review, 2016-2017

Director's Welcome



I'm excited to offer RCI's first *Roots Review*, an annual newsletter that will replace our annual report. The *Review* offers a record of our work in improving student learning outcomes over the last academic year, the professional accomplishments of our faculty and students, and a sense of where our program is headed in the future. For more detail on our attention to student learning in the classroom, I invite you to see our forthcoming 2016-17 Program Assessment Report. I also encourage you to visit our [website](#) to learn more about the structure and approach of our program, our faculty, and upcoming events. We are excited about the impacts we are making here at Washington State and beyond.

The past year has been exciting,

Meet Our Newest Colleagues

We are excited to welcome three new postdoctoral teaching fellows to the program this year. Each were chosen from a nationally-competitive pool of candidates, and collectively they reflect RCI's commitment to hiring the most innovative, up-and-coming scholar-teachers in the field. [Dr. Michelle Mann](#) (Ph.D., History, Brandeis University, 2016) studies the impact of French settler colonialism on European-Muslim relations in the Western Mediterranean in the 19th and 20th centuries. She brings to WSU vital experience using history to teach writing skills to students of all majors and backgrounds. [Dr. Jennifer Schaefer](#) (Ph.D., History, Emory University, 2015) is a scholar of modern Latin America. She is especially interested in the history of cultural articulations of political change in 20th-century Argentina. In 2016-17, Schaefer was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies at the University of Michigan. Dr. Schaefer is based on the WSU-Vancouver campus. With an interest in the experience of World War I in colonial Cameroon, [Dr. George Njung](#) (Ph.D., History, University of Michigan, 2016) emphasizes how notions of respectability, honor, and



challenging, and quite productive. We expanded the ranks of our leadership team and hired three new postdoctoral teaching fellows. Our faculty earned major awards and fellowships, and we began work on what we hope to be a widely-read book series with Oxford University Press. Meanwhile our undergraduate students translated the skills and research they developed in RCI into conference, showcase, and global case competition presentations. In doing so, they learned what it means to be part of a community of scholars.

We are pleased with the success we've had in our first five years of existence, and we're excited about the next five. Thank you for your interest. Do not hesitate to reach out to learn more about RCI.

-Jesse Spohnholz

masculinity remained pivotal to how Africans responded to the call to war in 1914. We know from past annual assessments that our postdoctoral program offers an effective model for undergraduate general education, and we're excited to welcome these three scholars as part of that effort.

Faculty Productivity and Accolades

Our faculty have just completed a productive year in and out of the classroom. Their accomplishments reveal their collective commitment to the idea that research and undergraduate teaching are mutually-sustaining efforts, and they embody what it means to be a team of scholars. In Fall 2017, [Dr. Katy Fry](#) began work in her new role as Curriculum Coordinator for the program - a testament to her effectiveness in the classroom over the past four years. Fry will oversee the mentorship and training of graduate teaching assistants and the coordination of our curricular efforts. She will also develop new lessons that bring together the latest historical scholarship and the emergence of pressing global developments and crisis today - the nexus at which RCI positions itself. Fry's new position reflects her ongoing commitment to teaching. Last



year, she developed and piloted a "US West in the World" version of History 105 in order to capitalize on student and faculty interest in the region's historical and contemporary importance in the world. In Spring 2017, she was awarded the 1st inaugural Excellence in Teaching Award from WSU's Global Campus. Fry's History 305 student and award nominator praised Fry's responsiveness, dedication, passion, and attention to different learning styles.



Fry's honor from Global Campus was one of several awarded to RCI faculty last year. [Dr. Sean Wempe](#) (right) received the 2017 award for Exceptional Service to Students Needing Accommodations from WSU's Access Center. [Roger Chan](#) (left) earned the 2017 Learning Communities Excellence Award from the Office of Undergraduate Education for his commitment to WSU's [First-Year Focus](#) program. [Dr. Jesse Spohnholz](#) was awarded the 2017 William F.



Mullen Teaching Award by the College of Arts and Sciences for his “unmistakable” enthusiasm for teaching. Last but not least, Fry, Spohnholz, and Dr. Clif Stratton were named Distinguished Teaching Fellows by the Office of the Provost. Their work as fellows during 2017-18 will center on the use of digital technology in the classroom and enhancing WSU’s profile as a top-tier institution for undergraduate research. Congratulations to all of our faculty award and fellowship winners. Their recognitions are a testament to the strength and effectiveness of the RCI program.

To complement their teaching-related accolades, RCI faculty remain highly engaged researchers and publishers. Here are some highlights. Dr. Matthew Unangst (top right) received external travel grants from the American Historical Association and the Central European History Society to conduct research in Tanzania during Summer 2017. Dr. Sean



Wempe published an article in *International History Review* titled “Peripheral Players?: German Colonial Interests, the Press, and the Spirit of Locarno,” which is drawn from his book project “Revenants of a Fallen Empire,” now under peer review at Oxford University Press.



Dr. Charles Weller (left) completed work as the editor of two new books: an English translation from Kazakh of Garifolla Yesim, *The Agony of Socialism: Kazakh Memoirs of the Soviet Past*, which

appeared in March 2017, and *21st-Century Narratives of World History: Global and Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, which will appear with Palgrave

MacMillan in October 2017. Dr. Jesse Spohnholz’s co-edited volume

Archeologies of Confession: Writing the German Reformation, 1517-2017 appeared with Berghahn Books in May 2017. In the past year faculty have

also organized panels and presented their research at meetings of the World History Association, American Historical Association, German

Studies Association, and the German Historical Institute, including Dr. Julian Dodson (middle right), whose AHA panel titled “Utopian

Visionaries, Exiles and other Stateless Peoples in the Americas” was reviewed by Borderlands History. Dr.



Dodson also complete and submitted his book manuscript titled “*Fanaticos, Exiles, and Spies: Revolutionary Failures on the U.S-Mexico Border*,” to Texas A & M University Press, where it is currently



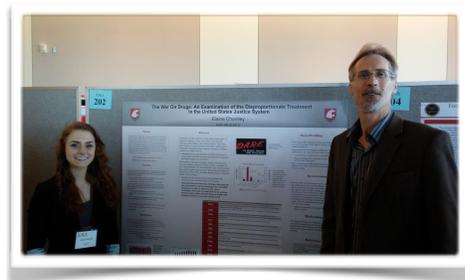
under peer review. Dr. Karen Phoenix’s (left) article “Wars of Empire and Expansion” recently appeared in *The Routledge Handbook of Gender, War, and US Military History* (2017), and Dr. Sue Peabody’s (bottom right) latest book, *Madeleine’s Children: Family, Freedom,*



Secrets, and Lies in France's Indian Ocean Colonies was recently published with Oxford University Press. In short, our faculty have had a productive year in research and publishing.

Undergraduate Student Learning and Accomplishments

RCI offers first-year and transfer students the opportunity to delve immediately into the robust culture of research at WSU, and it demonstrates to students that inquiry does not stop at the classroom door. Under the mentorship of Dr. Charles Weller, RCI students Brittany Cummings, Elaine Chumley (right, with Dr. Weller), Christaldo Rodriguez, and Savannah Griff presented the fruits of their research at WSU's annual Showcase for Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities (SURCA) in March 2017. Topics included a history of Hawaiian tourism, the War on Drugs, Islam and the West, and the relationship between diet and cancer rates in the United States and China.



In Fall 2016, [Dr. Ken Faunce](#) served as the faculty mentor for the winning team of undergraduate students at WSU's Global Case Competition, which addressed the problem of arbitrary detention in the United States. Under Dr. Faunce's mentorship, the team honed their historical thinking to identify the root socio-economic causes of arbitrary detention in order to identify appropriate solutions. The team traveled to Geneva, Switzerland in November 2016 to present their findings to at the United Nations (left).

On October 29, 2016, fourteen students presented the results of their research projects at the 2nd Annual RCI Undergraduate Research Conference. Panel themes included the historical impacts of carbon energy; politics, media, and propaganda; colonialism and mental health; and race and gender inequalities. History graduate students Ryan Booth, Matthias Baudinet, Amanda Svehla, and Taylor Smith chaired the panels and offered insightful remarks, providing models of scholarship to undergraduates and audience members. Students Kelly McCracken, Kiara Seguire, Samantha Nesbitt, and Jordan Sykes each took home top panelists awards, and Torri Pownall (right, with Dr. Stratton) received the award for best overall presentation from faculty judges.



Program Outreach

RCI has become a national model for teaching history at the undergraduate level and for general education more broadly, and faculty are actively sharing the good word. Drawing on the intersection of his research interests and RCI's pedagogical approach, Dr. Jesse Spohnholz delivered an address titled "Are Migrants a Threat to Europeans Today? Europe's Refugee Crisis in Historical Perspective" at the Martin-Springer Institute at Northern Arizona University in March 2016. In April 2017, Dr. Clif Stratton (right) offered the keynote address at the annual meeting of the Association of Washington Historians, for which Dr. Sean Wempe served as last year's president. The address, "From Stories to Skills: Teaching History in the Age of Automation and Austerity," offered colleagues at institutions around the state a sense of RCI's central focus on inquiry-based, skill-centered learning.



Here at WSU, Drs. Stratton and Weller each delivered lectures as part of WSU's Common Reading series in Fall 2016, which featured the New York Times Best Seller *I Am Malala*. Weller's lecture "Islamic Contributions to Western Civilization in World Historical Perspective" revealed to audience members the deep and lasting impacts of Islamic culture and thought on all facets of the human experience, emphasizing the historical and contemporary interdependence of all peoples and cultures with the aim of promoting greater understanding, cooperation, and peace. Stratton's talk "Parsing Violence: War and Terrorism in Historical and Contemporary Perspective" drew on his work in the classroom that asks students to critically interrogate how we describe and categorize political violence. Stratton also offered a related lecture, "The Medieval Crusades and the War on Terror: Connections and Discontinuities," as well as the keynote alumni address titled "Race, Immigration, Empire, and the Politics of American Education" at Presbyterian College (South Carolina) in September 2016.

Each year, the RCI program hosts a lecture series (organized by Dr. Charles Weller) that is designed to engage students and faculty at WSU, both in and beyond the RCI program, as well as interested



members of the broader Pullman-Moscow community, with cutting-edge scholarship addressing vital contemporary issues in global-historical perspective. In November 2016, Dr. John Wolff, Professor of Petrology, Volcanology, and Geochemistry at WSU delivered the year's interdepartmental lecture on the historical role that volcanic activity has played in shaping

human economic, political, and social developments, as well as its contributions to global warming and climate change. Dr. Wolff's highly engaging lecture emphasized for students the central role that the natural world has played in human history. In February 2017, Dr. Bart Elmore (above) of The Ohio State University delivered the George and Bernadine Converse RCI Lecture, which was based on his book *Citizen Coke: The Making of Coca-Cola Capitalism*. Dr. Elmore's talk revealed the global historical environmental and political impacts of the Coca-Cola company, and emphasized the company's cooptation of environmental initiatives (especially public recycling programs) for its own purposes. Each lecture was attended by over 800 students, faculty, and community members, and both demonstrated the interdisciplinarity of historical thinking and research.

RCI's outreach extended to its participation in national discussions about assessment of student learning in higher education. In February 2017, Stratton and Spohnholz, in partnership with university colleagues Corey Johnson (WSU Libraries) and Kimberly Green (Office for the Assessment of Teaching and Learning) offered RCI's approach to general education assessment as a model for other institutions of higher education at the American Association of Colleges and Universities' conference for General Education and Assessment: Design Thinking for Student Learning in Phoenix, Arizona.

Finally, in Fall 2016, four current and one former RCI faculty members signed a contract with Oxford University Press for the forthcoming book series: *The Roots of Contemporary Issues: Connecting the Global Past and Present*. The series is geared toward use in undergraduate classrooms and toward a general reading public, and is organized by the five central themes of the RCI: *Humans & the Environment, Globalization, Inequality, Diverse Ways of Thinking, and Roots of Contemporary Conflicts*. The first volumes to appear in the series (expected 2020) will all be authored by current and former RCI faculty, and Stratton and Spohnholz will continue to co-edit the series as authors from other institutions come on board. Oxford series authors plan to complete their manuscripts by late Summer 2018, at which point the series will undergo peer review before publication.

The first volumes to appear in the Oxford series will be:

The Historical Politics of Carbon Energy (Clif Stratton)

The Historical Origins of the Global Drug Trade (Ken Faunce)

The Religious Roots of Race and Racism (Karoline Cook - now at Royal Holloway University, London)

Imperialism and Constructions of Gender (Karen Phoenix)

Refugee Crises in Historical Perspective (Jesse Spohnholz)

The Year Ahead

This year promises exciting new developments. We are expanding and enhancing our efforts to measure undergraduate learning outcomes. In Spring 2017, Jesse Spohnholz drafted a ten-year assessment plan as part of his work with the Provost's Leadership Academy. The plan will go into effect this year, and will include an assessment of the University Common Requirements' Diversity

and Communication learning goals, student focus groups on college skills success, enhanced teaching assistant training led by our new Curriculum Coordinator Katy Fry, and a continuation of discussions among faculty about programmatic grade rubric and grade distribution alignment.

This year's RCI lecture series features two renowned scholars in their respective fields. Dr. Catherine Cooper (Professor of Geophysics, School of the Environment, WSU) will deliver the Fall 2017 Interdepartmental lecture, and Dr. Jane Freedman (Professor, Département de sociologie & d'anthropologie, Université Paris) will deliver the George and Bernadine Converse lecture in Spring 2018.

This Fall, we are excited to take the RCI undergraduate research conference on the road. It will be held in conjunction with the [2nd Annual Northwest Humanities Conference](#) at North Idaho College in Coeur d'Alene on November 4, 2017. The conference will offer students the chance to network with students and faculty at other institutions in the region and to see how historical thinking shapes and is shaped by other disciplines.