

ROOTS REVIEW

Director's Welcome



As is usually the case, life in the Roots of Contemporary Issues program has been quite dynamic and exciting this year.

In August, we welcomed four new colleagues - Sarah Walsh, Brenna Miller, Eugene Smelyansky, and Ben Nobbs-Thiessen. As you can read to the right, we are now beginning what is sure to be a successful leadership transition for the program for next year.

Our students engaged in exciting research under the mentorship of accomplished graduate teaching assistants and faculty, who continue to produce innovative scholarship and earn well deserved accolades for their research and teaching.

I invite you to visit our website to learn more about RCI.

-Jesse Spohnholz

Leadership Transitions

The end of the 2018-19 academic year has brought multiple exciting transitions in leadership for the program. While **Jesse Spohnholz** is on research sabbatical following his recent promotion to full professor (congrats!), **Rob McCoy** will serve as Interim Director for 2019-20. Rob brings teaching experience in RCI dating back to the earliest years of the program and a wealth of departmental leadership experience to the Interim Director's position. **Clif Stratton**, who has served as Assistant Director since 2014, has accepted the position of Director of University Common Requirements (UCORE) for WSU. Stratton will continue to teach in the program and will now bring experience in RCI to the Office of Undergraduate Education. **Katy Whalen** will seamlessly step into the role of Assistant Director. Whalen has served as Curriculum Coordinator for the past two years, is a seasoned classroom teacher, and is therefore well positioned to assume the Assistant Director role. In her place, **Ashley Wright** will serve as Curriculum Coordinator. As a tenure-track member of the History faculty, Wright, like McCoy, also brings teaching experience in RCI to her new role.

Faculty Accomplishments

Our faculty have just completed another incredibly productive year of teaching, scholarship, and service. Their collective accomplishments reflect their commitments to these three interrelated endeavors.

Our faculty remain award-winning scholars and classroom teachers. In Spring 2019, **Rob McCoy** (top left page 2) was awarded the Learning Communities Excellence Award from



the Office of Undergraduate Education for exemplary work in WSU's First-Year Focus program, of which all Pullman History 105 sections are a part in Fall semesters. Rebecca Ellis was nominated as the best online course instructor for 2018-19 by her students. Likewise, **Clif Stratton** received two teaching awards in 2019: the College of Arts & Sciences Excellence in Teaching by Clinical Faculty Award and the WSU President's Distinguished Teaching Award for Clinical Faculty. Stratton was also promoted to the rank of Clinical Associate Professor in March. **Andra Chastain** (right), who courageously taught RCI right out the gate upon her arrival as a new Assistant Professor at

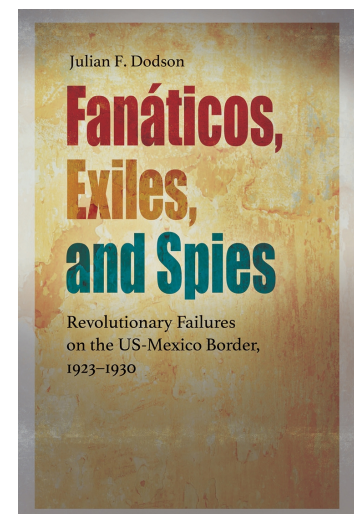
WSU Vancouver, received Yale University's Arthur and Mary Wright Prize for outstanding dissertation in a field of history outside the United States or Europe for "**Vehicle of Progress: The Santiago Metro, Technopolitics, and State Formation in Chile, 1965-1989.**" Lastly, **Jesse Spohnholz's** most recent book, *The Convent of Wesel* (Cambridge, 2017) won two prizes: the 2018 Book Prize in German History from the German Academic Exchange Service & German Studies Association, along with the 2018 Albert C. Outler Prize in Church History.

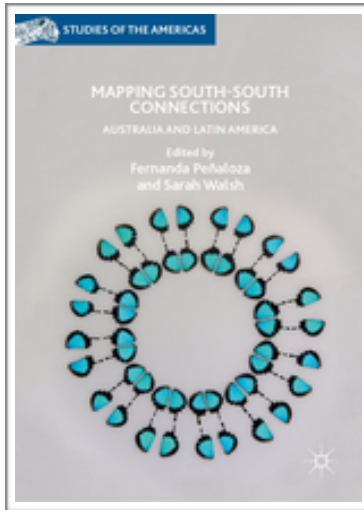


Publishing and other scholarly activities remains another impressive strength among RCI faculty. In March 2019, Texas A & M University Press published **Julian Dodson's** (left) latest book, *Fanáticos, Exiles, and Spies: Revolutionary Failures on the US-Mexico Border, 1923-1930*. Julian's article, "'Bandits,' 'Revolutionists,' and other 'Insult[s] to the Constitutional Government of My Country'" was

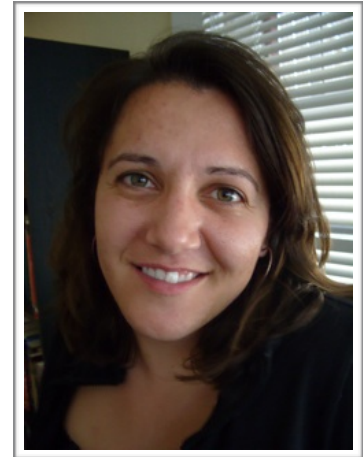


also published in *The Latin Americanist* in December 2018. **Andra Chastain's** co-edited volume (with Timothy W. Lorek) on experts and expertise in the Latin American Cold War went under contract with University of Pittsburgh Press. The volume, *Itineraries of Expertise: Science, Technology, and the Environment* will appear in 2020. Chastain also presented her work on French metro-building in Latin





America at an international conference – “Transforming Cities: Urbanization and International Development Policies in the Global South in the Twentieth Century” – in Berlin in October 2018. **Rebecca Ellis’s** (right) book, *Disabled Dignity: Gender, Labor, and Blindness in Argentina, 1900-1952*, entered pre-contract with University Illinois Press. Similarly, Sarah Walsh (left) submitted her book manuscript, *The Religion of Life: Race, Eugenics, and Catholicism in Chile*, for peer review with University of Pittsburgh Press. Walsh’s co-edited volume (with Fernando Penaloza), *Mapping South-South Connections: Australia and Latin America*, appeared with Palgrave Macmillan. **Ben Nobbs-Thiessen’s**



(right) book, *Landscape of Migration: Mobility and Environmental Change on Bolivia’s Tropical Frontier since 1952*, was formally approved for Spring 2020 publication by the editorial board at University of North Carolina Press. Ben also attended the Bucerius Young Scholars Forum on migration UC Berkeley at the invitation of the German Historical Institute. He recently

published a piece on GHI’s new blog [Migrant Knowledge](#). Ben is also the 2019 recipient of the [RCI Summer Research Fellowship](#) for his new project on the history of Mennonite migration between Mexico, Canada, and the US. Among other research tasks, Ben is conducting fieldwork interviews with migrant farmers in southern Ontario this May and June.

Ben is not the only RCI faculty member to have received fellowship or grant support for their scholarship. **Ken Faunce** completed work on assignment development for an RCI case study on the Global Drug Trade. His work was supported by a 2018 [Smith Teaching & Learning Grant](#) from the Office of Undergraduate Education. Similarly, Michelle Mann completed a year-long [L.I.F.T.](#) (Learn, Inspire, Foster, Transform) fellowship, which involved implementing pedagogical innovation centered on research as a growth mindset in RCI. Michelle collected and contributed data to the overall WSU grant, as well as for her own



study on the connection between qualitative research skills, historical content, and student success. And we are also very excited to announce that in April, **Corey Johnson** (bottom left) of WSU Libraries, along with **Katy Whalen** (top left) and History graduate teaching assistant **Nick Martin** were awarded a Smith grant for Summer 2019. Johnson, Whalen, and Martin will study RCI Library Research Assignments to understand patterns in how students' research topics develop over a semester, how well students identify and utilize sources at various stages in their projects, and how well they integrate the work they do in their Library Research Assignments into their final papers. This study has the potential to help RCI faculty and leadership understand assignments from a student perspective, and to improve those assignments, leading to more effective student research projects.

Congrats to Corey, Katy, and Nick! This grant work promises to further strengthen RCI faculty and student relationships with WSU Libraries and librarians, which has recently been featured in [American Libraries Magazine](#). Lastly, **Clif Stratton** (right) and **Ashley Wright** (right) both received fellowships from the



Center for Arts & Humanities for

2019-20. Ashley will advance work on her latest book project: "Difficult Cases: Governing Marginal Women in Colonial India and Burma, 1858-1915." The project analyzes a series of legal cases that involved the imperial regime and women who were, in different ways, displaced by the forces of empire. Likewise, Clif will advance work on his current book project: *Race and the Atlanta Braves from Summerhill to Cobb County*. The project examines how the arrival and departure of the Braves baseball franchise impacted and reflected the relationship between race, city politics, and capitalism in Atlanta from the late Civil Rights era to the present.



Program Outreach & Service

RCI faculty and the program itself remain important models for scholarly engagement beyond WSU and beyond the academy. On September 22, 2018, **Sue Peabody** organized a workshop – “Roots of Contemporary Issues: An Innovative Approach to Core Humanities Curriculum.” **Jesse Spohnholz** and **Clif Stratton** co-led the workshop, participants at which represented nine colleges and universities in the Pacific Northwest. It was highly successful in planting seeds with our colleagues at other institutions about how they too might implement useful changes to their undergraduate curriculum

and attract new majors using their core history courses. In October 2018, **Ken Faunce** (right)



delivered an address at Pullman’s Neill Public Library on the history of the electoral college and the US political system, bringing his expertise in US history to bare on vital issues as we move into the 2020 presidential election. Also in October, **Jesse Spohnholz**, along with his co-PI at the Free University of Amsterdam, Mirjam van Veen, rolled out Rijn Religies, a dual language (German & Dutch) smartphone app introducing history of religious refugees to travelers of the Rhine River Valley. This Spring, **Michelle Mann** (left) organized two roundtable events, one on decolonization pedagogy at the Western Association of Women Historians Annual Conference, and one on publishing in the field of





empire and decolonization for the French Colonial Historical Association. Michelle was also an invited speaker for a public history event at Central Oregon Community College’s Bend campus. **Rob McCoy** served as a board member for the Spokane Preservation Advocates and Washington Trust for Historical Preservation and as a review panel member for the National Endowment for the Humanities Division of Preservation Access in November 2018 in Washington D.C. Last but not least, **Charles Weller** (right) kept the channels of international academic dialogue flowing by hosting **Zhazira Baisarina** – a Kazakh doctoral student from Eurasian National University in Astana – for a three-month research visit at WSU, serving as the foreign advisor on her doctoral committee. A number of RCI students from



Weller's fall classes, along with other RCI and history department faculty and scholars from across the university, were treated to a talk on "The 19th-Century Kazakh Reformer, Abai Kunanbaev, in the English-Speaking World" offered by Baisarina in December 2018 as a capstone to her stay. The international dialogue with Central Eurasian scholars was also furthered through the publication of Weller's article on "Al-Farabi's World Historical Travels: From Central Asia and the Middle East, to Europe and Russia, and Back Again" in the *Eurasian Journal of Religious Studies* (Habarshi/Vestnik: Dintanu, Vol 15, No 3, Oct 2018: 30-34). The journal emanates from the halls of Kazakh National University, who published the article as an expansion of his short plenary address delivered at the 5th International Farabi Forum at the university in Almaty, Kazakhstan in April 2018. Tracing other Islamic threads in world history, Weller's article on "The Spread of Islam to the Americas via the Transatlantic Slave Trade: Its Civilizational Legacy, Indigenous Encounters and Implications for American National History and Identity" appeared in *World History Connected*. It serves as the draft of a chapter for a small book he is working on titled "Islam in Global History," with both the article and future book emerging from his teaching in RCI.

With the closing of AY 2018-19, Weller passes on the baton after five years of service as the RCI Public Lectures Coordinator into the capable hands of the new Assistant Director, **Katy Whalen**. Through the cooperative teamwork of the entire RCI faculty - with the generous support of the Department of History, College of Arts & Sciences, and partnering Foley Institute, both lectures for the 2018-19 year proved once again successful. **Dr. Lawrence Pintak**, founding dean and professor of the Edward R. Murrow College of Communications and long-time correspondent for CBS news, delivered the fall Interdisciplinary Lecture on "Islam and America: A Tortured Relationship," while **Dr. Alfiee Breland-Noble** of the Georgetown Medical Center spoke in the spring George and

<i>Issues of Global Religion & Politics, From one of WSU's own Experts in the Field</i> <small>RCI 2018-19 Interdisciplinary Lecture - Free & Open to the Public</small>	
<i>Tues, Nov 6, 7pm, CUB 220 (Senior Ballroom)</i>	
"America & Islam: A tortured relationship"	
<small>The forces that shape American perceptions of Islam date back to the dawn of the U.S. republic. In recent decades, the relationship has been defined by soundbites and suicide bombs, most vividly in the 2016 president campaign and the two years since. This talk will look at the long history that brought us to the present moment and the way in which anti-Muslim rhetoric has energized American Muslims to engage politically for the first time.</small>	
	<i>Founding Dean & Professor</i> Dr. Lawrence Pintak <i>WSU Edward R. Murrow College of Communication</i>
<small>Sponsored by: Roots of Contemporary Issues (RCI) Program, Department of History For more information, contact history@wsu.edu</small>	

The 2019 RCI George and Bernadine Converse Lecture <small>Free & Open to the Public @ Washington State University</small>	
<i>Wed, Mar 20, 7pm, CUB 220 (Senior Ballroom)</i>	
"AAKOMA: Understanding Global-Historical Context and Complexity of Mental Health & Depression Disparities in Black Youth"	
<small>While the prevalence of depression rates varies little across racial groups of teens, Black (African American, Caribbean Black, Black African and Black Latinx) youth face significant disparities in accessing state of the art care. This presentation will illuminate the underlying historical and globally applicable psychological barriers to depression treatment engagement and research participation cited by Black youth, families and communities. Our presenter, Dr. Alfiee M. Breland-Noble (known publicly Dr. Alfiee), a leading expert in this area, will highlight 20+ years of research findings to examine the practical application of theoretical approaches to community empowerment to address this problem and will describe outcomes of her team's approach to strategic community engagement for reducing mental health disparities. She will also articulate real world barriers and facilitators of Patient Centered Outcomes Research (PCOR), Comparative Effectiveness Research (CER) and Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) with racially diverse populations, with an emphasis on Faith Based Mental Health Promotion.</small>	
	<i>Dr. Alfiee M. Breland-Noble</i> (Dr. Alfiee) <i>Director of the AAKOMA Research Lab Georgetown University Medical Center</i>
<small>Sponsored by: Roots of Contemporary Issues (RCI) Program, Department of History in partnership with the Foley Institute and WSU College of Arts & Sciences For more information, contact history@wsu.edu</small>	

Bernadine Converse Lecture on “Understanding Global-Historical Context and Complexity of Mental Health & Depression Disparities in Black Youth.” 500-600 students, along with RCI and other university faculty and community members, tuned in attentively and engaged in lively, meaningful exchanges on both occasions.

The Year Ahead

As indicated at the outset of this edition of the Roots Review, the coming year will be one of exciting transition and change, even as we remain focused on our core mission of high impact undergraduate education at Washington State University. We have three main goals in this regard.

First, as we continue to hone and refine our assessment of undergraduate learning outcomes, we are also exploring new ways to enhance the research profile and visibility of our students, including the securement of support for faculty-mentored research and public presentation. We hope not only to increase our students’ presence at WSU’s Showcase for Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities (SURCA) in Spring 2020, but to create or seek out places and times off campus for students to showcase their work.

Second, we also intend to further strengthen our presence and relationship with co-curricular partners at WSU. **Rob McCoy**, incoming interim director, will serve on WSU’s University Common Requirements committee, further strengthening our relationship with the Office of Undergraduate Education begun by **Jesse Spohnholz** and continued by **Clif Stratton**, who will now serve as UCORE’s Director. Additionally, **Katy Whalen** has already begun discussions with WSU’s Center for Arts & Humanities to become partners with us in our George and Bernadine Converse Lecture Series, which continues to demonstrate the cross-disciplinary nature of problem-based inquiry at WSU.

Third, we have planned a significant re-design of our Global Campus versions of History 105 and 305. The courses, first developed in 2014, are in need of updating in the ways we have updated our face-to-face offerings. **Katy Whalen** will be leading a team that will complete this re-design, which will integrate the forthcoming RCI book series with Oxford University Press. These volumes will serve as the backbone of the new Global Campus course, providing students with direct engagement with RCI faculty members’ research and teaching expertise.

We want to thank you for your interest in the ongoings of the Roots of Contemporary Issues program. Do not hesitate to visit our [website](#) for more.