



Winter  
'22/'23

# OLDE NEWS

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# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome back, and welcome to 2023! For me, the New Year always brings a frantic assessment and last minute revision of my spring syllabus. And, as I look through a half-dozen versions of “The Mexican Revolution” -- which I first taught twenty years ago -- I am reminded of how much the past keeps changing. Up to the 1990s, academic and popular history focused on the failure of the Mexican Revolution to live up to Marxist-Leninist or social scientific standards of a “true” revolution; on “soft” post-revolutionary authoritarianism and the power of the state; and on the creation of a hegemonic national myth in 20th-century Mexico. The view from 2020 is so different: over the past two decades historians have challenged unified narratives, exposing limits of state power and questioning the idea of any single definition of “revolution”, or social and political transformation. What was seen as national consolidation now appears to be a nationalist myth, characterized by racist and masculinist prejudices, celebrating centralized authority, and suppressing racial, ethnic, and gender diversity. More recent scholarship -- equally careful and exciting -- has instead focused more on the complexity of lived experience and on subaltern forms of resistance to hegemonic institutions and narratives.

As the past changes with the present, so too does expertise and knowledge. It’s an odd thing about disciplinary history. On the one hand, our knowledge of the past is “cumulative”: carefully produced studies of, say, Mexican labor organizing and ideology in the twentieth century; of state involvement in, and control of, unions; of government economic policy; of diplomacy; of elite culture. Thirty, fifty years after they were produced, these histories provide us unprecedented insight into the 20th-century past. At the same time, the past is not uncovered so much as it is created: these sources necessarily produce an early- and mid-century Mexico designed and imagined by academics, intellectuals, and the curious in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. And, as we define our own ideals and values in part by questioning those of earlier generations, we need to be careful not to accept as “real”, a vision of Mexico a century ago -- or of any “past” -- that shares the biases and unquestioned premises of the generation ago.

# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR CONT.

Thus, like the past itself, historical “expertise” is constantly changing. What I learned as the state-of-the-art “history” of the Andes and early modern Europe thirty years ago in graduate school, is now as notable for its exclusions, its unchallenged assumptions, and its use of unproblematized categories as it is for sophisticated analyses, and careful readings. For those well embarked on our academic careers, this serves as a constant reminder of the intellectual and ethical dangers that the laurels of expertise bring (and, of course, laurel can be toxic). History, and humanistic studies generally, that are not continually revised and rethought can themselves become a real constraint on creatively addressing the challenges and realities of the present.

On the other hand, for those embarking on your study of the past, it’s equally important to keep in mind that however dated it might appear in some aspects, scholarship from decades ago is still enormously valuable. To be curmudgeonly, often the study of institutions, of collectives; the analysis of canonical intellectual traditions; the analysis of economic structures: if we want to know more about those, often sources from thirty or forty years ago are more illuminating than those from the past decade. Indeed, I’m not alone in the concern that sophisticated and careful analysis of class has been a victim of the neo-liberal academy. The challenge is to be always quizzical, both of the received wisdom that constitutes our scholarly expertise, but also of our own blinders, our belief that our contemporary concerns will not themselves be the subject of criticism in a few decades. Because in thirty years the history we produce today will be, well, history, attuned to the concerns of 2020 rather than 2050. And once again people will be rewriting the past, the unending process by which history remains such a timely and topical art.

Anyway, I have to go finish revising my syllabus.

Have a great semester!

David Garrett

# LAW CAREER PANEL CONNECTS PAST AND CURRENT REEDIES

On November 14, eight Reed graduates working in law and related fields spoke via Zoom to a classroom of current Reedies. The panelists encouraged students to make use of Reed networks to explore career possibilities; one panelist suggested a good goal would be to reach out to one contact a month. The panelists also explained different positions within the legal profession (such as judicial clerk and paralegal), offered advice on the law school application process, and assured the audience that everyone in law school isn't mean and hypercompetitive. If you are interested in learning more, please contact Margot Minardi ([minardi@reed.edu](mailto:minardi@reed.edu)) for access to the recording of this event.

This career panel was a great success, and we are grateful to the panelists—most of them history majors—who took the time to share their experiences and insights with current students. A hearty thanks to:

Ian Buckman '18, J.D. Candidate, University of California, Berkeley

Maya Campbell '15, Judicial Clerk, Central District of California

Elisa Cibils '15, Judicial Clerk, New Mexico Supreme Court

David Kerry '20, Ph.D. student, Yale University and NYU-Yale American Indian Sovereignty Project

Ben Levites '11, Associate, Coughlin Betke LLP

Natalie Murphy '21, J.D. Candidate, University of Baltimore

Nhi Nguyen '21, Policy Analyst, Oregon Center for Public

Joanna Rothchild '15, Judicial Clerk, Eastern District of New York

Are you a Reed history alum with an interesting career experience you'd like to share with current students? We'd love to hear from you! Please contact Margot ([minardi@reed.edu](mailto:minardi@reed.edu)) so that we can incorporate you into future career-oriented events.

# THESIS FRIDAYS, SPRING EDITION

Thesis Fridays is a completely optional and informal opportunity for senior thesis-writers in history (and related interdisciplinary fields) to talk about the travails and joys of thesis-writing with other historians and to share ideas for making the thesis process less stressful and more fun. We meet approximately once a month on Fridays. Each meeting revolves around a particular theme related to whatever thesis-writers are likely to be doing at that point in the year.

Our first meeting this year was Friday, January 27, 12:10-1:00 p.m., in Vollum 228. All seniors (fall/spring and spring/fall) were invited to attend.

The theme for the first meeting was planning your semester. We discussed the rhythms of the thesis year, including talking about how the second semester of thesis differs from the first. We discussed time management and organization strategies both for spring-fall thesis writers who are just getting started and for second-semester seniors for whom the end is (perhaps a little too much!) in sight.

Please save the date for these future sessions and check your email for details:

February 17, 12:10-1:00 p.m., Vollum 228: What I wish I knew as a first-semester thesis-writer (advice for Fall '23 seniors from Spring '23 seniors)

March 24, 12:10-1:00 p.m., Vollum 228: The art of revision (and first draft completion celebration!)

April 14, 3:00-5:00 p.m., GCCs: Thesis Extravaganza 2023!

Please contact Margot Minardi with any questions.

# THESIS EXTRAVAGANZA

Friday, April 14, 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Gray Campus Center (GCC)

Join us in celebrating the achievements of History thesis-writers from the Class of 2023! Seniors will give brief presentations of their thesis research, with plenty of time for Q&A. Come hear about innovative historical research, enjoy delicious treats, find out about history classes offered in 2023-2024, and chat with other historians. All are welcome; no RSVP required.

## MCCAFFREY LECTURE ANNOUNCEMENT

Wallace T. MacCaffrey Distinguished Lecture in History presented by Jessica Riskin

Monday, February 27, 2023

4:30pm, Psychology 105

Title: Professor of Insects and Worms: The Life-Made World of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck

Abstract: This lecture, drawn from a book-in-progress, will be about several interconnected things. It will be about the Revolution- and Romantic-era French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, through whose life flowed all the Shakespearean currents of tragedy, comedy and history: hardship, struggle and frustration, resolution and intense creativity, love and farce and solitude. It will be about the science that Lamarck named "Biology," with the first evolutionary theory at its core: how that science began and what it became. And finally, the lecture will also be about a political and cultural struggle over the nature of science in which Lamarck's biology figured crucially, and about how science emerged from this struggle to be, as it is today, in a position of supreme intellectual authority yet also extreme intellectual isolation.

Bio: Jessica Riskin is Frances and Charles Field Professor of History at Stanford. She writes and teaches about the history of science, politics, and culture. She is the author of "Science in the Age of Sensibility" (2002) and "The Restless Clock" (2016), and is currently writing a book about the French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck and the origins and history of evolutionary theory.

# “GRIZZLY BEAR” BY VISITING ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES, BRIAN TYRRELL

In 1953, state legislators in California named the California Grizzly (*Ursus arctos californicus*) official state animal. This symbolic legislation takes on another layer of meaning when you consider that there are no grizzly bears in California. Not today, and not in 1953.\* The last California grizzly was seen in a remote pocket of the High Sierra in 1922. I wondered what it meant to choose an extirpated animal as a state symbol.

Even in the absence of bears, it's easy to understand why Californians adopted the grizzly as their state's mascot. A person is vanishingly small on the California landscape. The state has the biggest trees, the tallest mountains, and the hottest deserts in the contiguous United States. The grizzly was another superlative for the state's impressive geography. Known for their ferocity and size, full grown males could weigh 1,500 pounds, as much as the largest Kodiak bears living today. On the eve of statehood, 10,000 of these snarling, roaring, and stomping animals shared the region with a population of Indigenous people, naturalized Mexicans, and colonists from the US that barely exceeded 100,000. With more than one bear per 10 people, California truly was bear country.

As long as there were people in California they told grizzly stories. Grizzlies played an important role in the cosmologies of Native Californians. For the Modoc of northern California, grizzlies were humanity's distant in-laws, cursed by the Sky Spirit to scramble on all fours and roar and grunt instead of speaking in words and sentences.

Grizzlies were much less familiar to European invaders. As the official diarist of Sebastián Vizcaíno's 1602 expedition, Father Antonio de la Ascensión was the first European to record his bear sighting for posterity. He found traces of bears "so large their feet are a good third of a yard long and a hand wide." From Monterey Bay, de la Ascensión watched as a sleuth of bears feasted on the oily carcass of a beached whale. The colonizers took in the scene with awe, gaping as they imagined what other wonders awaited them on shore.

\*The California grizzly appeared on the state flag since 1911, but this is a reference to the Anglo-led Bear Flag Revolt which resulted in the US military's occupation of the region and a transfer of territory from Mexico to the United States.

# “GRIZZLY BEAR” CONTINUED

The Spanish hunted and killed grizzlies, to be sure, but by and large they tolerated having them on the landscape and even delighted in their ferocity. Spanish Californios tested their mettle and their rope skills by lassoing bears. Bull-and-bear fights, an ancient European tradition, reached elaborate new heights in Alta California where hardly a saint’s day festival was complete without some sort of bloody contest involving a bear.

As Anglos flooded into California in search of gold or oil or fame, the bear population plummeted, and bear stories changed. The Spanish killed bears for food and for lust, but by the last third of the nineteenth century, revenge came to be the dominant motif in the Anglo bear tale. In Southern California, the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century grizzly story was fit for celluloid. A stranger stirs up trouble in town by destroying property, carrying away livestock, or threatening local women and children. The respectable men in town assemble a posse and go into the hills seeking swift, retributive justice. Instead of mustachioed villains in top hats and capes, the antagonists in these real-life westerns were grizzly bears who lumbered through the woods oblivious to their infamy. Eventually, the grizzly encounter as genre piece became the only type of grizzly encounter in California. The documentary record by the twentieth century reads like a dirge, but even as the population of grizzlies dwindled, battalions still fell out after bears to avenge some stolen honey or fruit. If revenge provided the plot for the late-period grizzly story, nostalgia made it tragic. The stories I read were tinged with loss. As Donna Haraway writes, “Once domination is complete, conservation is urgent.” The vigilantes who drove the last grizzlies from coastal California were not grizzled mountain men, they were city folk: judges and barbers avenging minor or major slights. The disappearance of the California grizzly could feel like death by a thousand paper cuts. But not every grizzly killed in California died at the hands of a mob. Just as a person shrank against the backdrop of the California landscape, individual actors disappeared before historical forces like conquest and civilization, progress and expansion. As the landscape adapted to more people and more industry there was less space for grizzly bears, and the ones that remained proved too intractable for a world predicated on things running smoothly. Less than 75 years after statehood, every grizzly bear in California had been hunted and killed. Even that last one high up in the Sierra.



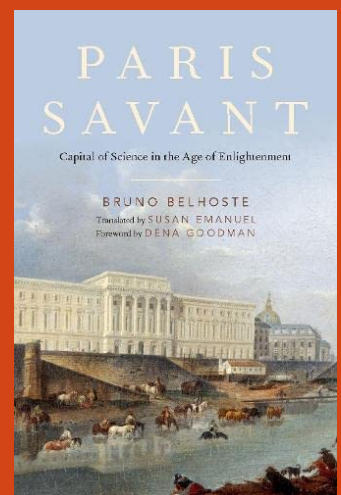
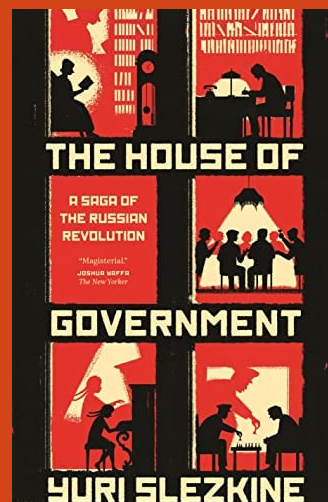
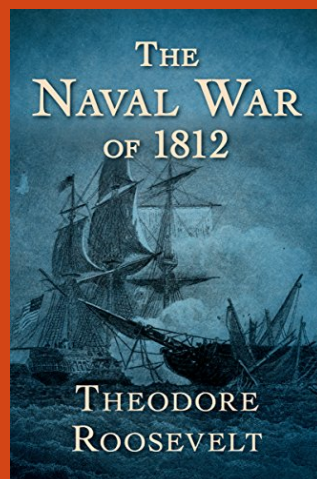
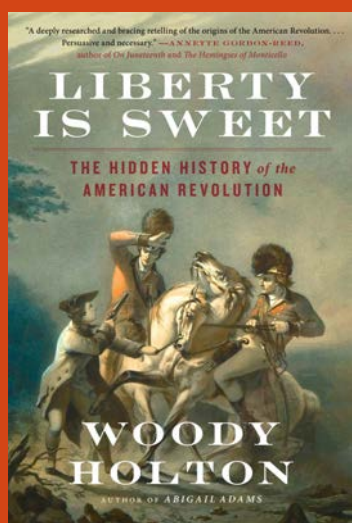
# WHAT ARE REEDIES READING?

JP Peasley-Lynch, '26: "Ian W. Toll's Pacific War Trilogy is an absurdly succinct and fun to read overview of the Pacific Theater, and I can't recommend it enough. Of course, "succinct" for the largest theater of war in history is still upwards of 2000 pages. It's worth it!"

Samuel C. Justice, '74: "Currently reading 'Liberty is Sweet' by Woody Holton, which I would recommend. I also liked the three works by Ron Chernow, anything by Candice Millard, 'The Naval War of 1812' by Theodore Roosevelt, 'Shattered Sword, the Untold Story of Midway' by Marshall and Tully, and the historical novel 'White Guard' by Mikhail Bulgakov."

Jake P. Smith, '02: "Yuri Slezkine, 'The House of Government'"

Julie Landweber, '93: "I'm currently immersed in Bruno Belhoste's 'Paris Savant: Capital of Science in the Age of Enlightenment' (translated to English in 2018). It's a marvelous exploration of Paris in the pre-Revolutionary period, simultaneously providing a bird's-eye overview of the city's intellectual geography and a dive into the deeply messy humanity of doing science in eighteenth-century Paris. A great read!"



# ALUMNI UPDATES

Andy Bruno, '03: "I published a book last year on the history of the mysterious Tunguska explosion of 1908. It blends an academic assessment of Soviet science and environmental perils with entertaining stories about space alien in Siberia. 'Tunguska: A Siberian Mystery and Its Environmental Legacy' is available from Cambridge University Press.

Richard Wolin, '74, Professor of History, Humanities & Political Science, 1982-1984: "My new book, 'Heidegger in Ruins: Between Philosophy and Ideology', was published by Yale University Press on Tuesday, January 10."

Melissa Anore Horton, '92: "Last year I led a coalition of advocates who succeeded in making Vermont one of 5 states that continued universal school breakfast and lunch after the federal school meal waivers ended. Now we are back in the Vermont Statehouse to make this beautiful program permanent. Check out our campaign: [www.universalschoolmealsvt.org](http://www.universalschoolmealsvt.org), and Hunger Free Vermont, the organization I lead: [www.hungerfreevt.org](http://www.hungerfreevt.org). Who knew I would be applying my finely honed research skills and training in historical methodology to school meal policy and the Farm Bill?! Such is the beauty and the glory of a liberal arts education!"

Vijay Shah '93: "During the reunions, I attended the last lecture of Professor Douglas Fix, my thesis advisor. I enjoyed hearing about his emphasis on the humanities on campus. His students' recent multimedia projects sounded innovative."

# ALUMNI UPDATES CONTINUED

Submitted by Professor Jackie Dirks

In 2019, Will Woodson (History, Reed Class of 2010) released his latest musical offering, *The Glory Reel*, with Caitlin Finley and Chris Stevens. These Irish tunes kept me going during the pandemic, and won a favorable review in *The Irish Echo*. Will wrote his senior thesis on “The Highland Bagpipe: Tradition and Transformation in Scotland, 1600-1850,” ably advised by Professor Michael Breen. Will then earned a master’s degree in the performance of Scottish music from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow. Will also makes instruments: he works with Nate Banton crafting Scottish small pipes and Border pipes: ([bantonwoodson.com](http://bantonwoodson.com))

Listen to Will’s music at Spotify, Amazon, or Bandcamp:

<https://thegloryreel.bandcamp.com/album/the-glory-reel>

In 2022, Amy Caroline Foote (History, Reed Class of 2000) shared the news that the most recent film she edited, the documentary *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed*, premiered at the Venice Film Festival where it won the top prize of the Golden Lion. Directed by Laura Poitras, the film tells the story of activist Nan Goldin’s efforts to hold big pharma accountable for lying about the safety of opioids. Amy’s Reed thesis explored the changing meanings of Thanksgiving holiday celebrations from the 19th through the 20th centuries.

# HISTORY-SPONSORED LECTURE IN FALL 2022

Reed Professor Margot Minardi secured funding from Reed's Office of Institutional Diversity to bring nineteenth century Native American historian and historian of Federal Indian Law William Tanner Allread to campus as a speaker and guest in her fall Race and the Law course. His lecture was very well-attended.

Allread is a Joint Degree in Law and History (J.D./Ph.D.) Candidate at Stanford University. His research focuses on nineteenth-century Native American history and the history of Federal Indian Law, with a particular interest in the intersection of tribal state-building and debates over sovereignty and federalism during the Removal era. In addition to his historical work, he has assisted tribes with numerous legal matters, working for the law firm of Kanji & Katzen, P.L.L.C., and the Yurok Tribe's Office of the Tribal Attorney. He is a citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

## ALUMNI AND PROFESSORIAL PUBLICATIONS

Just out, by Reed Professor Joshua P. Howe, "The Tailings of Cold War Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic History* (December 2022): 1-27. Josh teaches in Reed's History Department and Environmental Studies Program.

And see April Heideman Merleaux (Reed '95), "Equal Risks: Workplace Discrimination, Toxic Exposure, and the Environmental Politics of Reproduction, 1976-1991," *Environmental History* v. 26, no. 3 (July 2021): 484-507