

Veterans' **Stories** to **Live on** through UT Project

UT's Center for the Study of War and Society and our history department have been awarded a contract as part of the US Department of Veterans Affairs' new Veterans Legacy Program. This program pairs local universities and school systems to produce education materials and public outreach programs about local National Cemeteries. Nine universities in the United States received awards.

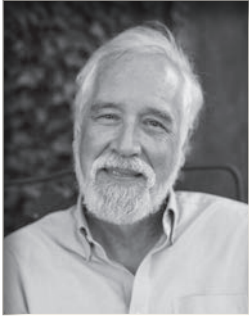
At UT, a team of four undergraduate researchers has launched into investigating individual stories of veterans interred in the Knoxville National Cemetery. In partnership with the East Tennessee Historical Society and the Knoxville History Project, their research will be used for a book about the cemetery and for lesson plans, digital

resources, and teaching materials for K-12 students in Knox County Schools and cemetery guides for the general public.

Knoxville's cemetery has special significance as one of the nation's earliest, established by Union Major General Ambrose Burnside during the Civil War following the siege of Knoxville and Battle of Fort Sanders, with veterans from every conflict the United States has been involved in. The experience of intense local primary source research will enrich undergraduate education in our department and is already yielding unexpected local history.



Read more about the story at tiny.utk.edu/veterans-project.



ERNIE FREEBERG

Professor and Head
Department of History

More Than Memorizing Facts

The UT Department of History has finished another successful year, by any measure. We continue to publish important, fascinating, and award-winning research that deepens our society's understanding of all that has come before us; our faculty and graduate students have won another round of top national research fellowships, and university teaching and outreach awards; and we continue to engage the community, from high school students to senior citizens, through our many public lectures and forums. A sampling of this success can be found here in our annual newsletter.

Another way to take the measure of the vibrancy of my colleagues is to survey the deep and rich range of courses we offer UT undergraduates every year. Toward that end, consider the catalog.

Though cast in the prim prose of catalog copy, the titles alone suggest the many intellectual adventures we provide. While several courses survey a wide chronological field, others dive deep, exploring samurai culture, the French resistance to fascism, the social history of the bicycle, African-American business history, and the Medieval Game of Thrones. And there's Dolly Parton's America, Lynn Sacco's honors course that has piqued the interest of journalists from Knoxville to Australia. A growing number of courses reflect faculty interest in the history of the body, health, healing, and medicine. Students can explore this through courses on Gender and Medicine in the Middle Ages, Medicine in the Third Reich, Medicine and Healing in the Atlantic World, and Health and Healing in African History.

History, our students come to see, is not just about memorizing facts but learning to consider the many possible answers to big questions—What does the Enlightenment tell us about “the good life”? Where does a university like UT come from, and what is it good for? How have people in other times and places imposed order, fought for justice, celebrated life, and faced death?

Exploring those questions, our students develop greater empathy and build skills in understanding the complex forces that shaped the past; the same ones that continue to shape our world today. Learning to think this way is an essential part of a liberal arts education, and we embrace the opportunity to provide that experience to all of our university's students.



Neely Named Distinguished Alumnus

The Department of History is honored to award **Jack Neely** the fourth annual Distinguished Alumnus Award. Neely ('81) is the executive director of the Knoxville History Project, but his love for history began before he could read. Tales of King Arthur, Robin Hood, and Davy Crockett, combined with his father's interest in world history, built the foundation for a lifelong passion.

Neely began his college career at UT studying journalism. He spent a few months as an undeclared English major interested in modern poetry until one day he realized, to his surprise, that he had more credits in history than English.

"I think I took every undergraduate class that Bruce Wheeler and Milton Klein taught," Neely says. "I remember several other faculty I had for one class or so, and no two were at all alike. The worldviews they presented were so different that it was startling to see any of them together. To me, that was part of what made history, which is really a synonym for reality, so interesting."

Neely credits his history degree for giving him the skills to investigate more or less everything.

Since graduating, Neely has combined his passion for history with his journalism experience to become one of the most distinguished journalists in Knoxville and its best known historian. For more than two decades, he was a staff writer, columnist, and associate editor of *Metro Pulse*.



Neely accepts the Distinguished Alumnus award from Ernie Freener, professor and head of the Department of History.

He then helped to found the *Knoxville Mercury*, for which he wrote a weekly history column and features pertaining to Knoxville history. At the same time, he founded the Knoxville History Project, whose mission is to research and promote the history of Knoxville. He has written a number of books on Knoxville history, gives many tours and lectures each year, and mentors UT undergraduates through his role in the department's course on public history.



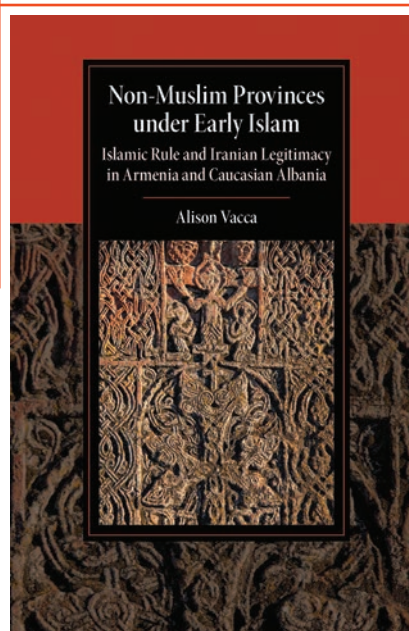
Bringing Histories into Dialogue

FACULTY PROFILE:
Alison Vacca

Alison Vacca, assistant professor of history, joined our department in 2014. Vacca is a historian of the medieval Caucasus and the early Islamic world. Her research focuses on stories that break down the traditional narrative of the South Caucasus in ethnic terms, bringing the histories of Armenians, Arabs, Albanians, Georgians, and Persians into dialogue.

“I am particularly interested in the long-standing cultural and political ties between the Caucasus and Iran, the role of medieval women as cultural mediators in ethnically- and religiously-diverse settings, and transmission of historical accounts across linguistic lines,” Vacca says.

Her new book, *Non-Muslim Provinces under Early Islam* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), relies on Arabic and Armenian sources to trace the memories and legacies of the pre-Islamic Iranian empire in the Islamic Caliphate. Using the example of the South Caucasus, this approach embraces Christian-majority provinces as part of (instead of distinct from) both the Islamic empire and the Iranian cultural sphere.



New Faculty Profiles



Nicole Eggers joined the department this year as assistant professor of African history. She received her PhD at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2013 and spent four years at Loyola University in New Orleans (which partially explains her penchant for making elaborate masks) before moving to Knoxville. Eggers is interested in histories of health and healing, religion, violence, and incarceration in Central Africa, with a focus on the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Currently, she is working on a book titled *Kitawala in the Congo: Power, Prayer, and the Politics of Health*, which follows the history of an influential religious/healing movement known as Kitawala from its colonial beginnings in the 1920s to its present-day influence in some of the most conflicted parts of Eastern Congo. As a researcher, Eggers relies on both oral and archival sources, utilizing both Belgian colonial archives as well as oral histories and field work conducted in Congo.

During the summer of 2018, Eggers returned to the Congo and collected oral histories from the former site of a prison camp that hundreds of Kitawalists were sent to in the 1940s and 50s, in an effort to gain a better understanding of the meanings and memories that such spaces evoke.



Sara Ritchey joins the UT Department of History as an associate professor after having served as associate professor and department head in history at the University of Louisiana, in the Cajun and Creole hub of Lafayette. Her research explores late medieval conceptions of nature, body, and community, and evaluates the way that these concepts continue to resonate in contemporary discussions about the environment, health, and the public sphere.

Her current book project, *'Salvation is Medicine': Gender and the Healing Communities of Late Medieval Europe*, examines therapeutic knowledge and practice found in women's religious communities in northern Europe. She is also the author of *Holy Matter: Changing Perceptions of the Material World in Late Medieval Christianity* (Cornell University Press, 2014) and several articles on gender and religious life in the European Middle Ages.

When not historicizing, Ritchey gets her kicks by running marathons, sewing garish dresses, cooking vegetarian meals, reading contemporary fiction, and joining her partner in the rearing of household pets and a nine-year-old human.

Exploring the American Revolution on the Tennessee Frontier

More than 200 people attended our the department's symposium exploring Tennessee's role in the American Revolution. Chris Magra, associate professor of history, organized the event, which took place April 21, 2018. Magra, a historian of early America, examines the Revolution from the vantage point of the Atlantic Ocean.

"The symposium shines a light on local history, raising public awareness of the rich Revolutionary Era history in east Tennessee," Magra says. "Many people are familiar with the fact that the Civil War touched this region, but the area's ties to the American Revolution are too often overlooked."

The symposium showcased work by UT historians, including Professor Julie Reed's archaeological study of Cherokee towns, new PhD J. Tomlin's work on frontier fears of British religious tyranny, and graduate student Michael Lynch's new research on the Battle of King's Mountain. Hosted at the East Tennessee Historical Society, the program also highlighted several local history organizations that preserve and interpret colonial sites and artifacts.

"Our department has a particularly strong tradition of community outreach," Magra says. "Local history speaks to the people who live in the region."

Magra is already planning next year's spring symposium, a partnership with the local community that will showcase new work on Tennessee's role in the American Revolution.

"The Revolution in our region is filled with drama, such as William Blount switching sides in the contest between Patriots and Loyalists," Magra says. "If you can't find something interesting in the Revolution, then you better check your pulse."



UT Bridge to AP US History

The UT Bridge to AP US History has completed its fourth year, sending UT history professors to the AP US History classes at Austin East and Fulton High Schools. In addition to presenting lectures and class discussions on their areas of expertise, UT professors also share syllabi so that the high school students can see the requirements and rigors of university courses. Fulton teacher John Troupe and Austin East teacher Tara Laroy have given high praise to the program, particularly as it prepares their students for college.

We hosted students and faculty from Austin East and Fulton April 3 on the UT campus. Department Chair Ernie Freeberg presented a lecture and led a lively discussion on John Brown, and UT Admissions Officer Julian Wright gave an overview of the admissions process. Students ended the day with a campus tour and a visit to the Civil War Exhibit at McClung Museum, led by historian Joan Markel.

UT history faculty who participated in this year's UT Bridge to AP US History were Kristen Block, Dan Feller, Ernie Freeberg, Bob Hutton, Chris Magra, Julie Reed, Pat Rutenberg, and Lynn Sacco.



Alum Wins Prize, Makes History

Brad Nichols ('16) recently won the 2017 Fritz Stern Dissertation Prize from the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC. Nichols' dissertation, "The Hunt for Lost Blood: Nazi Germanization Policy in Occupied Europe," sheds light on an aspect of the wartime Third Reich and reveals the inner dynamics of Nazi racial policy and practices towards foreign nationals they suspected of being carriers of Germanic ancestry.

What is the central research question of your dissertation?

My research focuses on the question of how it was that more than six million people ended up becoming German citizens in the midst of the most destructive conflict in human history. Although we don't typically think about the Second World War in this way, the fact of the matter is that the Nazis considered demographic growth to be just as important as the physical annihilation of so-called racial enemies. My manuscript seeks to explain what motivated this drive to augment the German nation with foreigners, while simultaneously exploring why ordinary civilians throughout occupied Europe chose to go along with it.

How did you come to this topic? What surprised you most as you conducted your research?

I was originally interested in doing something on the Nazis' ethnic cleansing campaign in western Poland, but when I started conducting research in the archives, I kept coming across documents with the heading "Poles earmarked for assimilation." This piqued my curiosity because I had always been taught that the Nazis rejected assimilation on grounds of biological determinism. The more I looked into it, however, the more I realized that this dynamic actually worked the other way around, that Germanization was predicated on discourses of race and notions of "racial kinship" specifically. Equally surprising was the enormous degree of influence that potential converts were able to exert over policy-making from below.

How did your graduate training at UT contribute to your work?

Among other things, I acquired a firm grasp of how to parse evidence, incorporate relevant theoretical tools, and frame my research in terms of gaps or misconceptions in the historiography. These were the most important skills I learned as a graduate student at UT, especially from the Germanist cohort, though I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge the input provided by faculty members in outside fields. I think there's a tendency to develop tunnel vision when you're only engaging with a single body of literature, so it was incredibly beneficial to see how scholars who specialize in other time periods approach similar themes.

What does it mean to have been awarded the Fritz Stern Prize? What are your future plans?

It is naturally a tremendous honor to have my dissertation recognized as the best in its field, even more so given all of the excellent doctoral work on German history being produced at universities across North America. As the first graduate of UT's history department to receive this award, it is also quite gratifying to be able to share the attendant prestige with the institution that made such an achievement possible in the first place. As for future plans, I have secured a contract with Cambridge University Press, and I hope to finish revising my manuscript soon so that it can appear in print as a full-fledged monograph within the next few years.

GRAD STUDENT NEWS



Michael Lynch, whose dissertation research was supported by the Filson Historical Society in Kentucky, an Archie K. Davis fellowship from the North Caroliniana Society, and a fellowship at the David Library of the American Revolution in Pennsylvania, is now the Director of the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum and Instructor of History at Lincoln Memorial University.



Max Matherne has also racked up the awards. He won a Friends of the American Philosophical Society Fellowship in Early American History, a major national fellowship and a first for our graduate program. Max was also awarded a Dirksen Congressional Research Award.



(In order from left to right)

Closer to home, in 2017-2018 three of the four graduate students fellowship at the UT Humanities were awarded to history doctoral students, **Bradley Phillis** and **Lydia Walker** who both recently defended their dissertations (congratulations Drs) and **Brittany Poe**. They were joined at the UT Humanities Center by **Katie Kleinkopf**, the Marco Institute's Haslam Dissertation Fellow. Our graduate students continue to be successful as Max Matherne and **Josh Hodge** will be doctoral fellows at the UT Humanities Center next year.



To read more news about our outstanding graduate students, please visit us online.

<https://tiny.utk.edu/graduate-news>



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HOMECOMING TAILGATE

NOVEMBER 3, 2018



Calling all history majors and alums at UT!



Join us for our first ever **HOMECOMING TAILGATE** November 3, 2018.
Come by three hours before kickoff for food and drinks and to catch up with your current and former professors and friends. Look for our tent on the Hill by Ayres Hall.



FALL / 2018
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
NEWSLETTER

FOOTnotes