

GGC History and Geography News

A Journal of GGC's History and Geography Department

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Issue

22

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History and Geography Department Formed

GGC asked its disciplines to join into academic departments. Several were formed in the School of Liberal Arts, including the Department of History and Geography. The idea was to create efficiencies and also disciplinary synergies.

"It is striking--already in the few months we've been working together as a larger group--how well the group personality of the geographers and historians seems to mesh together," said Dr. Nathan Orgill, the chair of the new department, which was formed

starting with academic year 2022-23. "The historians have already collaborated with the geographers on a number of different institutional projects in the past," he observed.

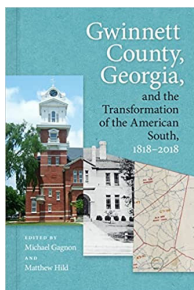
James Lowry, Associate Professor of Geography and Coordinator of Geography, suggested that the two academic disciplines were a good fit because "both try to learn about time and place to try to paint a picture of life in those times and places. It's a natural marriage of like-minded people."

GGC Historians Contribute to Book on Gwinnett County's History

Citing a lack of academic scholarship about Gwinnett County, GGC historian Michael Gagnon teamed up with a professor at Georgia Tech to edit a book of scholarly investigations. Joining the group of scholars were GGC historians David Mason, Carey Shellman, Richard Cook, and Erica Metcalfe.

Gagnon enlisted Katheryn Nikolich, a GGC history grad, to write the chapter "Saving Gwinnett County: Preservation, Modernization, and the Three Women Who Informed a Suburban Sunbelt."

Gagnon recognized that writing about the span of Gwinnett County's history would require so much depth and breadth in history that

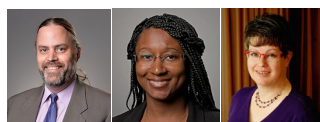


Below: L-R: Mason, Gagnon, Shellman

the project would challenge any aspiring author. "I originally thought I would singularly compose a monograph about the county's history, but quickly realized that I lacked the expertise to do justice to all the stories," he said. "I knew the general contours of which stories to include but without expertise in each period of US history, I would have missed a lot."



Below, L-R: Cook, Metcalfe, and Nikolich.



Chapters Contributed by GGC Historians:

Richard Cook, "Cherokee and Creek Agency: Gwinnett County before the Button." Michael Gagnon, "Slavery and Cotton in Antebellum Gwinnett." Michael Gagnon and Matthew Hild, "Reconstruction and Race in Gwinnett and Northeast Georgia." David Mason, "Luck and Pluck: The Life of Buck Buchanan." Carey Olmstead Shellman, "Alice Harrell Strickland (1859-1947): Civic Motherhood in Progressive-Era Gwinnett County." Erica Metcalfe, "In Search of the Promised Land: Segregation, Migration, and the African American Experience in Gwinnett County, 1910-1980."

Ex Libris: On Personal Growth and Writing



Remalian Cocar earned the B.A. degree at the University of Michigan and the Ph.D. at Emory University. He has taught history at GGC since 2009.

Tom Bilyeu is an Internet media personality who created a reading agenda for personal growth. This list appealed to me since I wanted to rekindle my historical research after the pain of graduate school.

Due to Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) programming, I had already read two books from the list: *Grit*, by Angela Duckworth and *Mindset: The New Psychology*, by Carol Dweck. Duckworth concludes that grit - persevering towards a particular goal - decides success more than IQ. My doctoral adviser, back in 2008, told me to get up every morning at 5:30 am and write. [At the time, I could not understand how a mere half hour would produce results.] Dweck argues that people have two mindsets about learning: a growth or fixed mindset. Somebody with a growth mindset can learn and get better at anything. A person with a fixed mindset sees no to little chance of improvement. For Dweck, success depends on having a growth mindset, not IQ. Together, these two books suggested why intelligence alone was insufficient to power my research.

The remaining books from the list were new to me. David Goggins is a Navy SEAL and an endurance athlete; he wrote *Can't Hurt Me: Master Your Mind and Defy the Odds*. Goggins lived a life of setbacks, but persevered to become a

SEAL. He continued to look for challenges, entering races that span over several days in challenging terrains. Goggins laments that most people do not push themselves sufficiently. In our age of comfort, this is a timely reminder about the dangers of comfort. Yet, there is also the question of balance: he detailed several relationship failures.

One of the gems on the list is *Man's Search for Meaning*, by Victor Frankl. As a survivor of the

“Somebody with a growth mindset can learn and get better at anything.”

Holocaust, Frankl's perspective is powerful. He concludes that values can help one survive anything. Not knowing that his wife would die during the Holocaust, his desire to see her again allowed him to make the choices that, combined with chance or

providence, helped him survive. Frankl contends that people with a purpose can endure the greatest sorrows and difficulties.

The fifth book from Bilyeu's list is John Maxwell's *Sometimes You Win, Sometimes You Learn*. Maxwell, a leadership expert, suggests that difficult moments provide the best learning opportunities. He once left his briefcase, containing the only copy of a book manuscript, on the side of the road. From that debacle, he began to make copies of his handwritten legal pads.

These books have not magically unlocked the key to persevering with my research. But they all point to the kind of emotional intelligence that has been crucial to that process.

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Take a Bow! Faculty Accomplishments

Academic Promotions:

GGC recognized faculty promotions at a ceremony in Cisco Auditorium on Thursday, October 20, 2022.

Michael Gagnon was promoted to Professor of History, **Carey Shellman** was promoted to Associate Professor of History, and **Remalian Cocar** was promoted to the rank of Senior Lecturer. Congratulations to all GGC faculty receiving promotion!



Georgeta Connor, Associate Professor of Geography, had a productive academic year. She **published** "Reflections on Fieldwork in Romania: Subjectivities, Risks, Benefits, and Ethics," in *The Geographical Bulletin of Gamma Theta Upsilon*, Vol. 63 (2), 2022, pp. 67-72. She **also published** a review of A. Umland, *When the Future Came: The Collapse of the USSR and the Emergence of National Memory in Post-Soviet History Textbooks*. Edited by Li Bennic-Björkman and Sergiy Kurbatov. Stuttgart: ibidem Press, 2019. The review was published in *Balkanistica* 35, 2022, pp. 205-209. She also gave three **academic presentations** of research: **1)** "Shifting Rural Property from Private to Collectivized Land: The Politics of Land Reform and Agricultural Development in Romania, 1939-1962." Association of American Geographers (AAG) 2022 Annual Meeting. Section: Topics in Rural Geography. New York City. February 26, 2022 (Virtual). **2)** "Identity and Change: The Destiny of the Romanian Wine." Agriculture, Food, and Human Values Society & Association for the Study of Food and Society (AFHVS/ASFS) Conference: Cultivating Connections: Exploring Entry Points into Sustainable Food Systems. Section 109: Wines and Ciders. University of Georgia (UGA), College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. Athens, GA, May 19, 2022. Finally, **3)** "The Drama of the Romanian Seeds." Council for European Studies: 28th International Conference of Europeanists. Instituto Universitario de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal, June 20, 2022 (Virtual)

Richard Rawls received the **Registered [Student] Organization Advisor of the Year** for Academic Year 2021-22, for his work advising the *Organization of Latin American Students*. It was the second year in a row for this award. He also **presented** "Exiles, Holocaust, Homecoming, and Memory," at the Association for Core Texts and Courses, 22 April 2022, at the University of Notre Dame. He co-composed the panel "Memory, Canon, and Power."



Michael Gunther published a chapter, "Environmental Footprints in President Polk's Thickly Forested Interior," in Michael D. Cohen, ed., *James K. Polk and His Time: Essays at the Conclusion of the Polk Project* (University of Tennessee Press, 2022), pp. 261-284.

Ellen Rafshoon was awarded academic study leave (sometimes called "sabbatical" at other universities), and she will be researching and working on a book titled, *Pussy Hats to the Polls: How Women Turned Georgia Purple*. We shall carry news about her oral interviews in the next newsletter.



Michael Gagnon was awarded a one-month short term PEAES (Program in Early American Economy and Society) Fellowship from the Library Company of Philadelphia to visit archives in Philadelphia to study the 1832 Congressional Bank Committee's visit investigating irregularities at the Bank of the United States, which was based in Philadelphia. Gagnon completed the research in Philadelphia in Summer 2022. He is working on a journal article based on his research.

Alumni/ae, Student, and Event News

News About our Grads

Michelle Samson, '19, began law school at Georgia State University in Fall 2022.

Jack Harrison, '21, began a position at Richards Middle School in Gwinnett County, where he teaches 7th grade.



Monica El-Amin, '17, was hired by the Atlanta History Center as the Volunteer and Intern Coordinator. In July 2022, she earned a Master of Arts in History and a Museum Studies Certificate at the University of West Georgia.

James Rooks, '16, earned a MHP (Master's in Historic Preservation) degree from the University of Georgia, and he also earned a Certificate in Native American Studies, both in 2020. He is currently employed as an archaeologist.



Constitution Day: Three Days of Events

GGC complied with the federal mandate to observe "Constitution Day," and historians contributed to the events. On September 15, Drs. Richard Cook (HIST), Michael Gunther (HIST), Steven Jones (POLs), and Dovile Budryte (POLs) presented on the "Constitution and Foreign Policy." History major Charis Wilkinson moderated. On September 19, Drs. Michael Fournier (ENGL), Richard Rawls (HIST), and Ibrahim Ashour (ENGL), presented on the "Constitution and Freedom of Speech for Foreign Nationals." Dr. Antiwan Walker (ENGL) moderated. On September 20, Drs. Scott Boykin (POLs), David Mason (HIST), and Jamie Lewis (ED) discussed "The Constitution and Education." Dr. Janita Rawls (BUS) moderated.

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Additions and Departures

The Department of History and Geography welcomes Katie Goldsmith as the department's administrative assistant. She graduated from UGA with a B.A. in Linguistics. Her hobbies include reading, singing, and board games. In academic year 2021-2022, three GGC professors left GGC to pursue other interests: Fang Zhou, Erica Metcalfe, and Robert Findley. Zhou specialized in Asian history and taught at GGC from 2011-2021. Metcalfe specialized in African-American history and taught from 2018-2021. Findley specialized in Asian history and taught at GGC from 2018-2021.



*Faculty and History Graduates **Spring 2022 commencement** ceremony. A list of graduates will appear in the next News. The commencement ceremony was held at the Gas South Arena in Duluth, Georgia, on May 11, 2022. The keynote speaker was poet laureate Hank Stewart.*

Phi Alpha Theta: History Honors

GGC's historians inducted new members into Phi Alpha Theta, the Zeta chapter of the history honors society, in May 2022. In-person induction ceremonies were not possible in 2020-21



due to Covid-19. Pictured (L-R) Shawna Lynn, Dr. Nathan Orgill, Dr. Carey Shellman, Andrew Peska, Dr. Richard Rawls, and Michael Milstein, in the Library Heritage Room. Dr. Nathan Orgill gave the address, and Drs. Carey Shellman and Richard Rawls also participated in welcoming the new members.