

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

THE HISTORIAN | **SPRING 2026**

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR - DR. DANIELLE BATTISTI

As we conclude another successful semester in the Department of History, I want to share my excitement about a transformative new initiative that will help shape the future of humanities education at UNO: *Humanities in Action: The Maverick Internship Program*.

Supported through grant funding from the Mellon Foundation, Humanities in Action helps to expand history majors' access to paid internships with non-profit community partners. For many years, our students have been learning by doing, curating exhibits, cataloging archival materials, crafting public histories, and much more. This program will help to expand student opportunities and ensure equitable access for all of our majors to learn in the field, expand their networks, and explore different career paths. We also hope that the program will provide students with more opportunities for civic engagement as well.



Dr. Danielle Battisti (second from left) and Dr. Martina Saltamacchia (center) with Graduate Teaching Assistants (L to R): Md Robiul Alam Roni, David Clark, Michelle Bud, Cassandra Mendoza, and Megan Streff. History Department Awards Ceremony, Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center, April 23rd, 2026.

At its core, Humanities in Action reflects something historians have always known: the humanities matter deeply in public life. History majors are training in critical thinking, ethical reasoning, cultural understanding, and communication in narrating and story telling. These are skills that are urgently needed in nonprofits, public institutions, and businesses alike. I am especially proud that History alum, Mike Gutierrez-Madrigal (M.A. 2025) is helping lead this effort from the ground up. Please read more about Mike's role as our internship coordinator below. This is an exciting moment for the humanities at UNO, and I look forward to sharing more as Humanities in Action launches its first cohort of interns in the coming year.

Wishing everyone a restful and relaxing Summer!

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University of Nebraska Omaha

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2025 - 2026 GRADUATES!

Undergraduate Students

Xavier Bradley-Rael BA
Sean Collard BS
Vivian Hickman BA
Sharon Houchin BS
Maurice Jones BS
Brayden Kimball BA
Maxwell LeRoy BA
Tyler Lubberstedt BS
Isabella Martin BA
Megan McDaneld BA
Emma Mitchell BA
Kyleigh Monaghan BS
Daniel Schuncke BA
Christopher Weaver BS
Jackson Wynn BS

Graduate Students

Ellen Albright MA
Shad Beam HISTORY CERTIFICATE
Carter Bruneau MA
David Clark MA
Katie Dykstra MA
Patrick Flanigan HISTORY CERTIFICATE
Amber Green-Meiners MA
Amasa Hartwell MA
Paul Jensen MA
Darcy Meinke HISTORY CERTIFICATE
Cassandra Mendoza MA
Dennis Rinderknecht MA
Md Robiul Alam Roni MA
John Schnelker MA



Masters students (L to R): Md Robiul Alam Roni, John Schnelker, David Clark, Mason Hartwell, Katie Dykstra, Cassandra Mendoza. Baxter Arena, May 7th 2026.

SPRING GRADUATION SPOTLIGHT

Our graduate students have distinguished themselves this year through their academic achievement, research projects, and professional promise. This spring's graduates were recognized with several awards and honors, reflecting their dedication to the field of history.

Among these recognitions is the Virginia Dare Shuflata Award, which honors excellence in graduate-level historical study. Students also earned Graduate Research and Creative Activity (GRACA) Grants, competitive awards that provide up to $5,000 to support faculty-mentored research and creative projects at UNO. In addition, the Shuflata Graduate Fellowship supports outstanding graduate students as they complete their master's thesis or final portfolio project, helping bring their scholarly work to fruition. See page 6 for more on all of our award winners.

As our graduates move forward, they are pursuing a range of exciting paths. Md Robiul Alam Roni and Cassandra Mendoza are preparing for careers in higher education, including teaching at the university level. David Clark plans to continue his academic journey by applying to Ph.D. programs. Mason Hartwell and Katie Dykstra are exploring careers in public history, particularly museum work. While John Schnelker anticipates a government position and relocating to Texas.

We are incredibly proud of all they have accomplished and look forward to seeing the many ways they will contribute to the field of history and beyond.

Wishing all of our graduates the best as they begin their next exciting chapter!



Michael Gutierrez-Madrigal (right), Spring 2025 Commencement, Baxter Arena.

FEATURED ALUMNUS - MICHAEL GUTIERREZ-MADRIGAL, MA '25

While earning his M.A. in History at UNO, Michael "Mike" Gutierrez-Madrigal served as an Academic Advisor in the University's Health Careers Resource Center, supporting students pursuing careers in healthcare. After graduating in spring 2025, Mike continued in this role, helping students navigate their academic and professional paths.

When UNO received a Mellon Foundation grant to expand access to paid internships for humanities majors, Mike recognized an opportunity to further support student success. He stepped into a new role as Internship Coordinator for *Humanities in Action: The Maverick Internship Program*, where he now helps connect humanities students with meaningful, hands-on experiences.

Mike's commitment to student success is evident in each of his roles. Passionate about the value of a humanities education, he emphasizes how his own history degree strengthened his understanding of the world while developing essential skills in communication, writing, and critical thinking. Drawing on the relationships and skills he built during his time as a student, Mike is excited to help others engage beyond the classroom. Through new and revised internship courses, professional development workshops, and public events with community partners, he is working to create pathways for students to apply their learning in real-world settings. Reflecting on his own experience, Mike encourages students to get involved and aims to foster the same sense of connection and opportunity for others as he found in history.

Congratulations on this exciting new role, Mike—we look forward to seeing the continued impact of your work!

"My degree has opened a range of professional opportunities. Once I began engaging, I discovered a wealth of opportunities and developed lasting friendships and professional connections."

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY INTERNSHIP PARTNERS

Below is a list of past and present Partnering Institutions from throughout the Greater Omaha area and Great Plains Region where our undergraduate and graduate students have held internship positions. This list continues to grow as the History Department strengthens its mission on building a program that emphasizes Public History and Community Engagement.

- Durham Museum
- Union Pacific Railroad Museum
- Joslyn Castle
- Great Plains Black History Museum
- Boys Town History Center
- Criss Library Archives and Special Collections
- UNMC McGoogan Library
- National Park Service (Midwest Regional Office)
- El Museo Latino
- Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center (NSHS)
- Strategic Air & Space Museum
- Saunders Historical Society (Wahoo)
- UCC First Congregational Church
- Catholic Cemetery & Holy Sepulchre
- Nishna Heritage Museum



"I found my place in the History Department and the amazing team of faculty and staff that make this department so great."

FEATURED ALUMNUS - COLE STORMBERG, MA '23

A 2023 M.A. graduate, Cole Stormberg is already making a meaningful impact in his professional career. Now serving as an academic advisor in the Maverick Advising Center, he was recognized as the Academic Advising Council's (AAC) "Advisor of the Month" for February 2026.

The honor reflects his strong commitment to student success. According to his nominator, Cole "provides excellent guidance to students in crisis, and he's great at connecting with them. He's proven himself to be a great advisor and student advocate. Cole is such a great addition to the UNO advising community."

Cole credits his time in UNO's History graduate program for preparing him well for this role. He describes his graduate experience as both intellectually rewarding and personally transformative, deepening his understanding of history through courses such as Dr. Danielle Battisti's American Immigration History, while also developing essential interpersonal and mentoring skills as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. Those experiences made the transition into advising a natural fit. Drawn to the opportunity to support students who are exploring their academic paths, Cole embraced the chance to work with undecided students. He often shares his own journey of discovering History, helping students identify majors and minors that align with their interests and passions.

For current History students, Stormberg offers both encouragement and practical advice. "As a historian, find a topic you are passionate about and dive in—you've got this!" he says. "What you find will not only add to the continuous conversation all historians are having; it will also help uncover new passions, interests, and lifelong connections for you as a person." He also emphasizes the importance of thinking early about career pathways, noting that History equips students with a broad range of transferable skills that are highly valued by employers.

As Cole continues to build his career, his recognition as Advisor of the Month highlights his professional achievements.

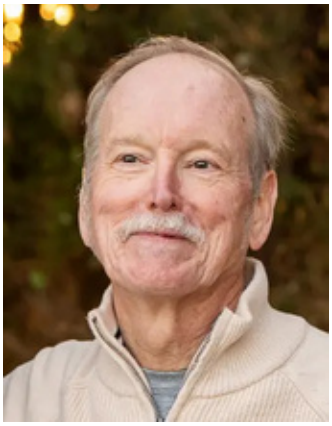
Congratulations on this well-deserved honor, Cole!

IN MEMORIUM - JOHN ZAK (1957-2026)

The Department of History mourns the loss of John Zak, a master's student whose presence enriched our community in countless ways. John came to graduate study out of a deep curiosity about the past, with interests ranging from medieval history to 20th-century genocides. His passion for learning seemed inexhaustible. In the final weeks of his life, he was working on a research paper on Christology in the early Church and was preparing to attend a teacher workshop on Holocaust education.

Graduate study was only one part of a full and meaningful life that encompassed a career as a respiratory therapist, decades of service as a permanent deacon, and a family that grew to 13 children and 31 grandchildren. Yet John threw himself wholeheartedly into every class he took, with the same passion that he brought to everything he did.

Those who studied alongside him and taught him will remember not only the joy he found in learning, but also his kind presence and deep generosity of spirit, always ready to encourage others and share his knowledge. He will be deeply missed.



Master's student, John Zak

FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS

Dr. Danielle Battisti

Presented research from her recent book publication, *Hidden Histories of Unauthorized Migrations from Europe to United States* (University of Illinois Press), at the Center for Global Migration Studies at the University of Maryland in March.

Dr. Mark Boxell

Attended the American Society for Environmental History conference in March in Kansas City, where he presented his paper, "Is There a Populist Political Ecology? King Corn and Hog Cholera on the Gilded Age Great Plains."

Dr. Mark Celinscak

Traveled to New Orleans in February to speak at the Jewish American & Holocaust Literature Symposium about, *Two Roses: A Story of Deception and Determination in Nazi Germany*, a book he edited and was published that month.

Dr. Jennifer Harbour

Presented the paper "Black Declarations of Independence: Before and After 1776" at the Library Company of Philadelphia's Conference on the Semi-quincentennial of the Declaration of Independence in February. In April, Dr. Harbour traveled to Glasgow to present on pedagogy at the British Associate for American Studies Annual Studies.

Dr. Susan Long

Presented research from "Prisoners of War in the Southern Theater of the Revolutionary War" at the Society for Military History's Annual Conference in Arlington in March.

Dr. Jeanne Reames

Presented at the international conference "Alexander's Minions: under the greatness' shadow" held at Universitat Autònoma deBarcelona in February. She delivered her paper, "Dionysos and Ariadne, Alexander and Roxana, love, lust, and humor in a Pompeii Villa."



Graduate Program Chair and Medieval Renaissance Studies Minor Director, Dr. Martina Saltamacchia (second from right) at the Department of History's annual Spring Awards Ceremony. Pictured with Shuflata Fellows (left to right): Bryan Yumul, Rebekah Sidzyik, Dennis Rinderknecht, and John Schnelker.

FEATURED FACULTY - DR. MARTINA SALTAMACCHIA

Dr. Martina Saltamacchia had a busy spring semester! She welcomed the EnChanted Images Project to the Strauss Performing Arts Center in January and Dr. Emanuele Colombo in April to discuss Jesuit Missionaries at the Milo Bail Student Center. Also in April, she presented a paper titled "Teaching the Crusades in the Age of Generative AI" at the Symposium on Crusade Studies at Saint Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri.

Looking ahead, she will continue to share her work on innovative teaching with a poster presentation, "Redesigning General Education with AI: From Enduring Questions to Transferable Skills," at the Teaching and Learning with AI conference in Orlando, Florida, on June 11.

Supporting her ongoing research, Dr. Saltamacchia has been awarded a University Committee on Research and Creative Activity (UCRCA) grant for her project, "Cathedrals and Donors: Archival and Visual Documentation in Milan and France."

She also recently published an article, "Teaching the Crusades with Role-Playing: Reacting to the Past's 'The Second Crusade: The War Council at Acre, 1148,'" in *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods, 50 (1): November 2025.*

Check out our graduate program on our website, or email Graduate Program Chair, Dr. Martina Saltamacchia for more information

DEPARTMENT EVENTS - AWARDS CEREMONY

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, the Department of History celebrates outstanding undergraduate and graduate students at its annual spring awards ceremony.

This year offered much to celebrate, with recognition for scholarship and achievement across a wide range of honors—including departmental awards, scholarships, fellowships, and assistantships, as well as University GRACA grant recipients.

In partnership with the Sam & Frances Fried Holocaust & Genocide Academy, the department recognized more than 30 students. Explore the program and event photos to see the full list of names and photo highlights from this special celebration.

Congratulations to all of our awardees!







Pictured Top: Sydney Conrad (Left), Dr. Jeanne Reames (Right)

Pictured Bottom Left: Riley O'Connor (Left), Dr. Susan Brynne Long (Right)

Pictured Bottom Right: Kim Hawkins (Left), Dr. Mark Celinscak (Center-Left), Ava Krohn (Center-Right), Meredith Ruyle (Right)



R.D. Winchell Lecture speakers (Left) Dr. Annette Gordon-Reed, Harvard University and (Right) Dr. Peter Onuf, Professor Emeritus University of Virginia

DEPARTMENT EVENTS - "THE CAUSE OF ALL MANKIND"

This spring, the Department of History marked the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence with three free public events collectively titled, "The Cause of All Mankind."

The first of the three events, this year's **Richard Dean Winchell Lecture** featured Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Dr. Annette Gordon-Reed (Harvard University) and Dr. Peter Onuf (Professor Emeritus, University of Virginia). History and the Department of Political Science co-hosted the event presented in partnership with Nebraska Public Media.

Speaking before more than 300 students, faculty, staff, and community members, Drs. Gordon-Reed and Onuf took part in a spirited conversation about the Declaration of Independence and the meaning that it continues to hold for us today. Just of few of the many topics that were covered included Jefferson's vision for a grassroots democracy, views on race and citizenship, and an exploration of what revisionist history can reveal about our past and present. The talk was followed by a lively Q & A. Many thanks to all of those who were able to join and help to make the evening a success!

A transcription event and film screening were also key events of "The Cause of All Mankind."

Transcribathon: Voices of the Early Republic

On April 13th, **Dr. Susan Brynne Long** partnered with UNO Archives & Special Collections **Associate Professor Claire Du Laney-Dunker** to bring transcription to life. Participants worked with "By the People" documents from the Library of Congress and learned of the political ideals and social conflicts that shaped the nation's founding.

Reel Revolution: The American Founding On Screen

In an engaging event on April 14th, **Dr. Susan Brynne Long** and **Dr. John Lyden (Religion)** explored some of the most iconic pop-culture portrayals of the American Revolution, including *Hamilton*, *1776*, and HBO's *John Adams*.



The Cause of All Mankind Film event was held on 04.14.26 at the Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center

Department of History

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