

## History Section

In academic year 2019, the MIT History faculty continued to excel in the areas of scholarship, teaching, and public engagement. MIT historians published scholarship grounded in deep archival research and employed cutting-edge methodologies. Faculty taught a wide array of undergraduate subjects, helped to train a talented cohort of graduate students in the History, Anthropology and Science, Technology and Society (HASTS) doctoral program, and reached out to public audiences in the United States and around the world. History especially seeks to give MIT students a well-rounded educational experience that will prepare them to be engaged members of their local communities and an increasingly global society.

### Highlights

The MIT History faculty were recognized for excellence in AY2019 in several ways. The MIT Corporation approved the appointment of Kenda Mutongi, previously professor of history at Williams College, to the rank of full professor of history at MIT. Mutongi, an internationally recognized scholar of Kenya and Modern Africa, is the first historian of Africa to join the section. Her presence expands our research profile and curricular offerings into this crucial sector of the world, and allows the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (SHASS) to deepen its expertise in the region. This promotion became effective on January 1, 2019. In addition, the Corporation approved the promotion of Sana Aiyar to the rank of associate professor with tenure, and the promotion of Caley Horan to the rank of associate professor without tenure, both effective July 1, 2019. Pouya Alimagham, a lecturer in Middle Eastern history, was awarded a Levitan Teaching Award from SHASS for excellence in undergraduate teaching. He joins past Levitan winners from History, including Elizabeth Wood, Merritt Roe Smith, Christopher Leighton, William Broadhead, and Christopher Capozzola.

In early August, Anne McCants hosted the triennial gathering of the World Economic History Congress at MIT. Almost 1,500 national and international scholars, including 250 doctoral students or early career scholars from underresourced parts of the world, assembled in Cambridge to participate in more than 200 half-day sessions over five days. Highlights included a plenary address by Professor Thomas Piketty, formerly of the MIT Economics Department and the author of the best-selling 2013 book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*.

History profited from the presence of several distinguished visitors in the past year. Jeffery Stewart, a professor of Black studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, was a visiting scholar. He is the author of *The New Negro: The Life of Alain Locke* (2018), the winner of the 2019 Pulitzer Prize for Biography and the 2018 National Book Award for Nonfiction. Régis Coursin, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Montreal, was also a visiting scholar; while in residence, he continued his research into the circulation of revolutionaries and political ideology in the French Atlantic world at the end of the eighteenth century. Naomi Yuval, a postdoctoral fellow on a Fulbright Fellowship, spent the year with us continuing her research into the environmental history of 19th-century Britain. She has accepted a tenure-track position at Hebrew University in Jerusalem for

2019–2020. Cheng-Ying Zuo, a doctoral student at Renmin University in the People's Republic of China, spent the year with us while she researched her PhD thesis on American biologists who traveled to China in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The History Section again co-sponsored the Seminar in Environmental and Agricultural History, a series organized by Harriet Ritvo and Deborah Fitzgerald, a historian in the Program in Science, Technology, and Society. Speakers from the University at Buffalo, SUNY; Arizona State University; Brown University; the University of Tennessee; Boston University; the University of British Columbia; Trinity College; and the University of Kansas all presented their research.

We also initiated a speaker series on the theme of History and the Digital Humanities (DH) in the spring term. Inaugural speakers in this series included Cameron Blevins (Northeastern University); Juliette Levy (University of California, Riverside); and William Turkel (University of Western Ontario). The section and its faculty actively support DH projects such as the [Comédie-Française Registers Project](#), Feminisms in Armenian, and the Visualizing Maritime History Project. We supported the newly established SHASS DH Lab during its first year of operations. In addition, a massive online open course (MOOC) entitled “Visualizing the Philippines,” created by Chris Capozzola, went live on MITx in the spring. In the fall, Hiromu Nagahara, and Sana Aiyar worked with the Office of Open Learning to create a “globalized classroom” online with Keio University in Tokyo. Working with Professor Yuichiro Shimizu at Keio, students in Cambridge and Tokyo worked together for a month online discussing twentieth-century world history and doing joint readings exercises. This teaching collaboration between History and Open Learning will continue in AY2020, with financial support from Open Learning.

The History Section continued its commitment to issues of equity and diversity at MIT. Our faculty, evenly balanced between women and men, researches and writes about the history of times and places around the world from local, national, transnational, and global perspectives. We bring these concerns into our classrooms, where we are committed to exposing students to the diversity of past human and animal experience on the planet so that they may be increasingly efficient stewards of our natural and political heritages. Each semester History appoints an equity and diversity officer whose role is to follow these concerns and report to our faculty periodically on relevant MIT community-wide conversations. Nine members of the History Section published a letter in the January–February 2019 edition of the MIT Faculty Newsletter in opposition to the ongoing research collaborations between MIT and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

## Teaching

The History faculty takes great pride in the quality of its innovative graduate and undergraduate teaching, as witnessed by the significant number among us who have been named MacVicar Fellows and Levitan Prize winners. In AY2019, at the request of President Rafael Reif and with the support of the SHASS dean and the MIT Libraries, Craig Wilder continued to teach subject 21H.281 MIT and Slavery. Wilder, the pre-eminent historian of slavery and its foundational role in higher education in the United States, created this seminar in which undergraduates do original research on the topic

in the MIT archives. The [results of their work](#) have been posted on an MIT Libraries website. Other teaching innovations include the global classroom experiment that Nagahara and Aiyar conducted with Keio University in the fall, and the use of the [Beaver Press](#), a Gutenberg-facsimile letterpress, in the teaching of media and cultural history. Exhibits displaying student work created using the Beaver Press went up in Rotch Library in February and in the Maihaugen Gallery in Building 14 in June.

History continued its popular offering “IAP in Ancient Italy and Greece.” Led by Professors Broadhead and Goldberg, a group of 20 students visited classical sites in ancient Athens and elsewhere in Greece. The Beaver Press was also opened to MIT faculty, staff, and students for introductory letterpress workshops during IAP and the spring semester.

In AY2019, the History Section offered 44 subjects which enrolled 591 students, an 8% increase over last year’s total enrollment figure. Thirty-three members of the Class of 2019 graduated with a HASS Concentration in History. The winners this year’s year-end essay competition were:

- Alden James ’20, “Pragmatism and Pride Before the Fall: Julius Caesar and the Roman Triumph.”
- Pedro Vergara Merino ’19, “Creating the Patriarchal Nuclear Family Home: The Emergence and Evolution of Public Housing During the 1930s.”
- Jessica Yu, ’19, “The Postwar Trial: Husband, Wife, and Therapist in an Age of Collectivism.”

### **Faculty and Staff Updates**

Sana Aiyar, associate professor of history with tenure, continued work on her next book-length project, tentatively titled “India’s First Partition: Burma and India in the 1930s.”

William Broadhead, associate professor of history with tenure, currently holds a MacVicar Faculty Fellowship, and the Levitan Award for Excellence in Teaching. Professor Broadhead is finishing his book, “Hegemony and Mobility in Roman Italy, 4th–1st Centuries BC.”

Christopher Capozzola, professor of history, completed his book manuscript, “Bound by War: How the United States and the Philippines Built America’s First Pacific Century.”

Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, associate professor of history and women’s and gender studies with tenure, holds the McMillan-Stewart Career Development Chair in Women in the Middle East and North Africa. She continued work on her book project and website, “Feminisms in Armenian.”

Robert M. Fogelson, professor of history and urban studies and planning, has taught at MIT since 1968. He continued work on a book-length project concerning the rise of Co-op City in the Bronx in the late 1960s and the fall of cooperative housing.

Malick W. Ghachem, associate professor of history with tenure, held a Frederick Burkhardt Residential Fellowship for Recently Tenured Professors from the American Council of Learned Societies this past year, which he paired with a residency at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies at Harvard. He continued work on his current book-length project, “In the Name of the Colony’: The Fall of the Indies Company and the Rise of Plantation Slavery in Haiti, 1720–1725”; and began a new book-length project on the history of the Jesuits in Haiti from the 18th century to the present.

Eric Goldberg, associate professor of history with tenure, will soon publish “In the Manner of the Franks: Hunting, Kingship, and Nobility in Early Medieval Europe,” with the University of Pennsylvania Press.

Caley Horan, associate professor of history without tenure, continued revisions to her first book project, tentatively titled “Actuarial Age: Insurance and American Culture in the Post-WWII United States.” This work is under contract with the University of Chicago Press.

Christopher Leighton, associate professor of history without tenure, left MIT at the end of AY2019.

Kathleen Lopes completed her second year as an administrative assistant in the History Section.

Anne McCants, professor of history, served as the president of the International Economic History Congress, which held its 2018 annual meeting at MIT in August. On campus, she directed the Concourse first-year learning community. She has begun a new project on the impact of polygamous marriage practices on the long-term wealth and prosperity of nations.

Hiromu Nagahara, associate professor of history with tenure, continued work on “After the Masquerade Ball: The Birth of Japan’s Cosmopolitan Elite.” This project explores the cultural history of Japanese international diplomacy in the 20th century.

Tanalís Padilla, associate professor of history with tenure, is completing a history of the radicalization and politicization of Mexico’s rural normal schools, tentatively titled “Unintended Lessons of Revolution: Teachers and the Mexican Countryside, 1940–1980.” She is currently the director of graduate studies for the HASTS doctoral program that is jointly administered by the History, Anthropology, and STS sections.

Meghan Pepin, undergraduate administrator, completed her fourth year with the History Section.

Valentina Pugliano, a specialist in the History of Science and Technology in Early Modern Europe, completed her first year as a lecturer in the section.

Jeffrey Ravel, professor and head of the History Section, continued work on a book-length study of the history of French playing cards from 1650 to 1850. He continued to serve as faculty lead on the MIT-Nepal Initiative and as co-director of MIT's Beaver Press. He was the first vice president of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies.

Harriet Ritvo, Arthur J. Conner Professor of History, continues as editor of the "Animals, History, Culture Series" at the Johns Hopkins University Press, and co-editor of the "Flows, Migrations, and Exchanges" series at the University of North Carolina Press. She is currently finishing a book-length project titled "At the Edge of the Wild," which is under contract with Harvard University Press.

Emma J. Teng, T.T. and Wei Fong Chao Professor of Asian Civilizations, has a dual appointment in History and the Global Studies and Languages (GSL) section. She is currently working on a study of pioneering Chinese culinary author, Buwei Yang Chao (1889–1981), and of the 1905 King Incident in relation to the Chinese boycott of 1905–1906.

Craig Steven Wilder, Barton L. Weller Professor of History, advises many educational institutions in the United States that wish to understand better the roles slavery and the slave trade played in their origins and development. He was a visiting scholar in the History Department of Columbia University in AY2019.

Elizabeth Wood, professor of history, is co-director of the MISTI-Russia Program. She continues work on a book-length project concerning the gendered politics of Vladimir Putin's rule in Russia.

Susanne Zwierlein, a specialist in Early Medieval history, was a postdoctoral associate in the History Section in AY2019.

Mabel Sorett, a 30-year veteran of the Institute who spent most of her career as an administrator in History, including the last decade as our administrative officer, retired as of July 1, 2019. Her dedication to the research and educational missions of the section will be sorely missed.

**Jeffrey S. Ravel**  
**Section Head**  
**Professor of History**