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Young Historians Conference

Young Historians Conference 2021

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May 19th, 1:00 PM

## 31st Annual Young Historians Conference

Portland State University History Department

Portland State University Challenge Program

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**31<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL  
YOUNG HISTORIANS CONFERENCE**

Sponsored by:  
**Portland State University's History  
Department  
& The Challenge Program**  
May 19, 2021



# Young Historians 2021 Schedule

1:00 – 1:20 WELCOME & PDXScholar RECAP  
1:20 – 2:35 FIRST SESSIONS  
2:35 – 2:45 BREAK  
2:45 – 4:00 SECOND SESSIONS  
4:00 – 4:15 AWARDS CEREMONY

1:00 – 1:20 **WELCOME:** Dr. Jennifer Kerns, Department of History  
Dr. Susan Jeffords, Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs  
**PDXScholar RECAP:** Karen Bjork, Head of Digital Initiatives, PSU Library

1:20–2:35 **FIRST SESSIONS:** Choose from three

**SESSION ONE:** [Colonial Settler Policies and Practices and Their Impact on Local Communities](#)

**Moderator:** *Professor Katrine Barber*

**Ruby Lewis**  
St. Mary's

"To Hell or Connaught:" How British Colonizers Both Caused and Benefitted from the Irish Potato Famine

**Sara Shallenberger**  
Lakeridge

The Rogue River War 1855–1856

**Madeleine Stewart**  
Lakeridge

The Alaska Native Claim Settlement Act: The Impact on Alaskan Natives

**SESSION TWO:** [Marginalized Communities: Perceptions and Resistance](#)

**Moderator:** *Professor Jennifer Selwyn*

**Brianna Anderson**  
Lakeridge

The Gay Rights Movement: A Reaction to the Lavender Scare

**Charlotte Cody**  
St. Mary's

The Irish Language and Nationalism in the 20th Century

**Minami Powers**  
Grant

Nonbinary Significance: Roles and Perceptions Throughout History

**SESSION THREE:** [US Geopolitical Policy in the Modern Era](#)

**Moderator:** *Professor David A. Horowitz*

**Roselyn Dai**  
Lakeridge

Fight for Star Wars: The Reagan Doctrine and the Ending of the Cold War

**Cole Powers**  
Lakeridge

Fighting for Freedom: Jazz and the Cold War

**Fevronia Van Sickle**  
St. Mary's

The Reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev and Their Effect on the USSR

2:35 – 2:45

**BREAK**

2:45–4:00

**SECOND SESSIONS:** Choose from three

**SESSION ONE:**

[Mystics, Indulgences, Witches and Power Dynamics in the Catholic Church](#)

**Moderator:** *Professor John Ott*

**Kasaundra Bonanno**  
St. Mary's

The Struggle of the Soul: Medieval Women Mystics and the Constraints of the Orthodoxy

**Charlotte Levine**  
St. Mary's

Pope Leo X and the St. Peter's Indulgence: The Accidental Path to Reformation and Church Fragmentation

**Devika Narendra**  
St. Mary's

Hunting Power through Witch Hunts in Early Modern Scotland

**SESSION TWO:**

[La Longue Durée of the History of Global Commodities and Practices](#)

**Moderator:** *Professor Thomas Lockett*

**Toby Boudreau**  
Grant

A Brief History of Footwear

**Ben Iboshi**  
Grant

The History of Bathing: A Cross-Cultural Tradition

**Celeste Johnson**  
Grant

Silver Mining and Commerce: Initiation of the Global Economy

**SESSION THREE:**

[US Racialized Policies and Their Effects](#)

**Moderator:** *Professor Patricia Schechter*

**Mete Bakircioglu**  
Lakeridge

Friend or Foe?: The American Response to the Armenian Genocide, 1890–1920

**Melanie Du**  
Lakeridge

The Anti-Chinese Movement and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882

**Belise Nishimwe**  
St. Mary's

Slavery's Effect on the African American DNA: The Gullah-Geechee People's Predisposition to Hypertension and Heart Disease

**Arianna  
Sinlapasai-Okamura**  
Lakeridge

Internment: The Legal Challenges and Effects of Displacement on Japanese Americans

4:00 – 4:15

[AWARDS CEREMONY](#)

**Joy Beckett, Challenge Program Director**

**Professor Jennifer Kerns, Department of History**

# ABSTRACTS

1:20 – 2:35

FIRST SESSIONS

[Colonial Settler Policies and Practices and Their Impact on Local Communities](#)

Moderator: *Professor Katrine Barber*

## **“To Hell or Connaught:” How British Colonizers Both Caused and Benefitted from the Irish Potato Famine**

The Irish potato famine is well-known for the suffering and death it inflicted upon the masses of Irish peasantry between 1845 and 1848. The famine is often remembered and mourned as the tragic but unavoidable result of natural circumstances, and the blight that swept through the potato crop year after year is attributed as the sole cause of starvation. This misrepresentation of the famine’s history ignores the role of the British colonizer state in establishing conditions in Ireland that led to famine and exacerbating the suffering of the Irish through neglect. This paper explores the role of the British colonial government in Ireland in causing and amplifying the negative impacts of the Irish potato famine.

**Ruby Lewis**, St. Mary’s Academy

## **The Rogue River War 1855–1856**

The Rogue River War of 1855 to 1856 was a series of armed conflicts fought between U.S. Army regulars, local militia, and a conglomerate of indigenous groups in the Rogue River watershed. The main cause of the conflict was the intrusion of white settlers and miners into Rogue River Native territory. These white immigrants misused resources upon which the local indigenous people relied and violently retaliated against local Native people for misdeeds they often did not commit. The Lupton Massacre, Battle of Hungry Hill, and the Battle of Big Bend serve as critical points in this war which represented the end of any effective Native American resistance to white control of Oregon lands.

**Sara Shallenberger**, Lakeridge High School

## **The Alaska Native Claim Settlement Act: The Impact on Alaskan Natives**

Alaska Natives have been living on the land that is now known as Alaska since time immemorial. Although that is the case, legally that does not give them immediate rights to the land in the colonial world. The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA) was put in place to resolve the aboriginal land claims that were ignored when Alaska became a state in 1959. This forced Alaskan Natives to come together and make an agreement with the United States government. In the end, ANCSA made it possible to exploit the land for natural resources, which greatly impacted and continues to impact the Indigenous communities. The real question lies in whether or not ANCSA was just another form of assimilation for Indigenous Peoples in the United States.

**Madeleine Stewart**, Lakeridge High School



1:20 – 2:35

## FIRST SESSIONS

### [Marginalized Communities: Perceptions and Resistance](#)

Moderator: *Professor Jennifer Selwyn*

#### **The Gay Rights Movement: A Reaction to the Lavender Scare**

In the 1950s, the federal government began to systematically root out gay individuals from the civil service in what is known as the “Lavender Scare.” This eradication paralleled McCarthyism and was a part of the larger homophobic culture. A closer look at the media reveals how this panic was spread throughout the nation. Despite persecution in and out of the workplace, the voices of those oppressed were not irreversibly silenced. In fact, the Lavender Scare gave rise to pioneers of the gay rights movement, nearly a decade before the Stonewall Riots.

**Brianna Anderson**, Lakeridge High School

#### **The Irish Language and Nationalism in the 20th Century**

Under centuries of British colonial rule, mass emigration, and discriminatory laws, the Irish language took a secondary position to English. As Irish nationalist ideology gained momentum in the early 20th century, Irish became useful and popular as a powerful symbol of resilience and a discrete national identity. However, Irish’s significance to nationalism had a mixed impact on its perception across the island due to the violence and sectarianism that accompanied the struggle for independence. This paper explores the influence that this divisive history had and continues to exert on the perception of and legislation supporting the Irish language, as well as the integral role of the Irish nationalist and independence movements on its revival and survival.

**Charlotte Cody**, St. Mary’s Academy

#### **Nonbinary Significance: Roles and Perceptions Throughout History**

Nonbinary people existed in many different cultures and often held special or important roles before their presence was decimated by colonization. Despite this, nonbinary people are still around today, whether with a cultural aspect to their identity or not. In this paper, three cultural examples are given. The hijra of India have been around for a long time and are considered able to bless people. The British came and enacted laws that led them to be majorly stigmatized, and today they are still struggling to gain acceptance. Similarly, in Indonesia, the bissu have been priests for hundreds of years, and then when Islam came into the area, they were almost eradicated. They now are trying to survive by coexisting with Islam. Finally, many Native American cultures have had a nonbinary gender with a spiritual aspect. When Westerners came to America and the culture was systematically taken apart, the gender systems were almost lost as well. Today, nonbinary people in all cultures still face many different challenges, but they are also gaining visibility and acceptance.

**Minami Powers**, Grant High School

1:20 – 2:35

**FIRST SESSIONS**

[US Geopolitical Policy in the Modern Era](#)

**Moderator:** *Professor David A. Horowitz*

**Fight for Star Wars: The Reagan Doctrine and the Ending of the Cold War**

The strenuous conflict between the US and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, which persisted for over four decades, finally came to a close in the early 1990's, shortly after the presidency of Ronald Reagan. A common assumption is that Reagan's hardline foreign policies and weapons buildup finally forced the Soviet Union to back down. However, this assumption is only a small portion of the picture. The cause for the ending of the Cold War is a much more nuanced story centered around the arms race as well as the collapsing Soviet economy and the domestic issues of the Gorbachev era.

**Roselyn Dai**, Lakeridge High School

**Fighting for Freedom: Jazz and the Cold War**

As part of a Cold War propaganda campaign, the U.S. State Department sponsored the international tours of many prominent American jazz musicians. This paper uses news articles and documents produced by the United States Information Agency to demonstrate how the Cold War jazz tours symbolized freedom in the context of both the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement. It then explores the contradictions that arose between these two visions of freedom, and between the rhetoric and reality of U.S. Cold War policy.

**Cole Powers**, Lakeridge High School

**The Reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev and Their Effect on the USSR**

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, most commonly referred to as the USSR, came into being in the early 20th century and lasted only around seventy years. Built upon revolutionary Marxist ideology, the USSR governed according to the ideology of communism while simultaneously contradicting the very ideology that formed its foundations, such as clinging to the existence of a state. Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) from 1985 to 1991, sought through his policies of glasnost and perestroika to reform the Union, but his attempts at reformation ultimately ended with the USSR's disbanding. This paper explores the influence of Gorbachev's policies on Soviet governance in relation to the USSR's foundational ideology of communism, and the factors that led to the Union's demise.

**Fevronia Van Sickle**, St. Mary's Academy

2:45 – 4:00

## SECOND SESSIONS

### [Mystics, Indulgences, Witches and Power Dynamics in the Catholic Church](#)

Moderator: *Professor John Ott*

#### **The Struggle of the Soul: Medieval Women Mystics and the Constraints of the Orthodoxy**

First Corinthians 14:34 tells us, “let your women keep silence in the churches for it is not permitted unto them to speak.” But what happened when medieval women in the 12-15th centuries *did* speak, and what techniques did they apply to gain credibility? This paper explores the various methods (along with cultural aspects such as the appearance of piousness) women mystics utilized to gain power within the Church in a time when their voices were silenced, and the factors that allowed individuals such as Catherine of Siena to gain incredible influence where individuals like Joan of Arc were burned at the stake.

**Kasaundra Bonanno**, St. Mary's Academy

#### **Pope Leo X and the St. Peter's Indulgence: The Accidental Path to Reformation and Church Fragmentation**

Throughout the history of the Catholic Church, the concept of Original Sin has defined prayer and ritual. As this idea evolved throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance, its teachings proved to be profitable, as exemplified by the creation of indulgences. This paper examines the sale of indulgences for the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica under the jurisdiction of Pope Leo X from 1515–1518, and its implications on the Catholic Church's splintering authority in Western Europe. As a direct effect of the use of indulgences for financial gain, Martin Luther wrote and presented his *Ninety Five Theses*, an event widely thought of as the commencement of the Protestant Reformation. His revolutionary ideals unveiled the true corruption and greed of the Catholic Church and paved the way for the criticism of papal infallibility. In Pope Leo X's underestimation of the solemnity of the Protestant Reformation, he ultimately narrowed the reach of the Catholic Church's previously unyielding power over its followers and Biblical texts and was forced to cease the monetization of the Catholic faith. This paper reveals the consequences of promoting a sinless life through the narratives of penance and purgatory, while simultaneously profiting off such supposedly immoral acts.

**Charlotte Levine**, St. Mary's Academy

#### **Hunting Power through Witch Hunts in Early Modern Scotland**

Witch hunts occurred throughout early modern Europe and few countries were unaffected by the rampant prosecution of “witches.” Although many places experienced such witch hunts, Scotland uniquely saw a rapid increase in witch trials during the reign of King James the VI. The King, who prior to ascending the throne had not expressed interest in the prosecution of witches, suddenly focused his leadership on witch hunts. This paper explores the reasons King James VI increased Scotland's witch prosecutions. Specifically, this paper analyzes how the increasing witch trials were correlated to various attacks on King James' power and how the prosecutions aided the King in protecting his sovereignty.

**Devika Narendra**, St. Mary's Academy



2:45 – 4:00

## SECOND SESSIONS

### [La Longue Durée of the History of Global Commodities and Practices](#)

Moderator: *Professor Thomas Lockett*

#### **A Brief History of Footwear**

The use of footwear as a unit of analysis will help historians re-evaluate the relationship between technological diffusion and culture. Shoes are a common item across the globe, regardless of various boundaries, and have been for a long time. Footwear reflects the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural environment of its owner, as well as characteristics of the owner themselves. Shoes have taken on significant symbolic roles in art, literature, and everyday life. Essay is divided into four sections: Prehistory, Ancient, Middle Ages, Modern. Various examples from each time period are explained, compared with one another, and connected together with broad themes. Focus is placed on the Middle East initially, then expands outwards and analyzes the West.

**Toby Boudreau**, Grant High School

#### **The History of Bathing: A Cross-Cultural Tradition**

This essay discusses how bathing practices worldwide have evolved throughout history through cultural interaction. While there is much literature on how bathing practices in specific regions have changed over time, few take a global perspective and track where bathing rituals originate and how they spread. Using bathing as a unit of analysis can reveal interactions and influences between cultures. The essay is divided into three periods in which bathing practices are analyzed: ancient, medieval, and modern. In the ancient period, the spread of Hindu and Buddhist bathing practices is discussed, as well as how Greek bathing practices went on to influence Roman bathing in Europe. The Medieval section discusses private vs public bathing in Europe and North Africa, how the spread of Buddhism to Japan affected bathing rituals, and the rise of Islamic bathing rituals, influenced by earlier Roman practices. The modern section discusses how Spanish Conquistadors impacted Central American bathing habits, the application of public bathing in modern Britain, as well as developments in health science and education.

**Ben Iboshi**, Grant High School

#### **Silver Mining and Commerce: Initiation of the Global Economy**

Silver was the metal that initiated interdependence throughout the world, establishing connections between all sectors of the globe. From as early as 3,000 BCE to the present day, silver production has uniquely inspired the way our modern society has formed and how it functions. Silver's influence can be tracked through three epochs of time: 3,000 BCE - 1500 CE, 1400-1800, and 1850-present. During the earliest period, introductory mining practices, cross-cultural trade, methods of processing technology, and the beginning of coins, are shown in relation to select societies to demonstrate impacts and influence—the Egyptians, the Greek Empire, the Roman Empire, and Chinese Dynasties. The second period emphasizes new renaissance technologies, (liqutation, the patio process, explosives), and the complex beginnings of a connection between China, Spanish American silver, and the cultivation of connecting trade routes. The most recent period continues with advancements, identifies impacts of the 1850 North America silver boom, and analyzes our continual global need for silver. An investigation of world history through the impact of silver has proved to be a useful tool in analyzing the development of the global economy.

**Celeste Johnson**, Grant High School

2:45 – 4:00

## SECOND SESSIONS

### [US Racialized Policies and Their Effects](#)

Moderator: *Professor Patricia Schechter*

#### **Friend or Foe?: The American Response to the Armenian Genocide, 1890–1920**

Beginning in the early 20th century, the American public was galvanized in support of Armenians under the oppressive rule of the Ottoman Empire, but Congress prioritized relations with the Empire and passed no foreign policy to ameliorate the plight of Armenians. The United States' posturing as an international arbiter of justice, especially during the Wilson Administration, was a facade to expand global influence. This paper analyzes how the United States response to the Armenian Genocide is riddled with neglect, false promises, and selfish intentions.

**Mete Bakircioglu**, Lakeridge High School

#### **The Anti-Chinese Movement and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882**

The paper goes into detail about the history of the Chinese in America beginning at their first large immigration to the U.S. during the Gold Rush period and ending in the early 1900s when anti-Chinese legislation was finally banned. The focus is on the influence of labor unions on anti-Chinese legislation and how their protests ultimately influenced the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act, the first of its kind to restrict immigration of an entire race. The paper follows how labor unions were able to develop a regional issue into a national one in order to achieve their goal of Chinese exclusion, motivated by racist and selfish purposes.

**Melanie Du**, Lakeridge High School

#### **Slavery's Effect on the African American DNA: The Gullah-Geechee People's Predisposition to Hypertension and Heart Disease**

In 2005, Dr. Joy DeGruy published her book, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing*. Combining history and modern science, researchers have begun to explain slavery's lasting impact on African American descendants. While many are exploring slavery's prevalence within American systems, this paper explores chattel slavery's potential biological and behavioral effects on the descendants of enslaved Africans by examining the Gullah-Geechee communities' predisposition to heart ailments.

**Belise Nishimwe**, St. Mary's Academy

#### **Internment: The Legal Challenges and Effects of Displacement on Japanese Americans**

Although the history of Executive Order 9066 and the subsequent Japanese Internment is well known, the legal struggles against the internment process and the consequences of that displacement are often overlooked. In an attempt to end policies that were primarily motivated by racial prejudice, four first-generation Japanese Americans took it upon themselves to appeal four different cases to the Supreme Court. However, it was not until the decision of the last of the four Supreme Court cases, *Ex Parte Endo*, that Japanese Americans received even a sliver of justice for the discrimination they had faced. Having lost their work, homes, communities, personal liberties, and human rights as they were rounded up like cattle and interned, Japanese Americans sought to find a way to cope with the trauma they endured. Having become perpetual foreigners in their own country in their best efforts to assimilate into the white mainstream, they almost completely abandoned their previous lives and cultural identities, becoming as American as possible. This paper examines how internment and four Supreme Court cases, *Yasui v. United States*, *Hirabayashi v. United States*, *Korematsu v. United States*, and *Ex Parte Endo*, shaped Japanese Americans' trauma, identities, and their ability to survive.

**Arianna Sinlapasai-Okamura**, Lakeridge High School

**Thanks to all those who make The Young Historians Conference possible:**

**Challenge Program Instructors**

**Don Gavitte**, Grant High School:  
PSU HST 104, 105, 106 - World History  
PSU HON 101, 102, 103 - The Global City

**Karen Hoppes**, Lakeridge High School:  
PSU HST 201, 202, 203 - History of the US

**Matt Vannelli**, St. Mary's Academy:  
PSU HST 102 - Western Civ

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John S. Ott, Department Chair  
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Thomas Lockett  
Brian Turner

**Other Participating History Faculty**

Katrine Barber  
David A. Horowitz  
Patricia Schechter  
Jennifer Selwyn

**Jury of Graduate Students in History**

Alexandra Ibarra  
James Masnov  
Liza Schade  
Icarus Smith

**PSU Librarians**

**Special thanks to  
Friends of History  
and all the students who were part of the day**