

# PAST AND PRESENT

## Newsletter of the CSB/SJU History Department

### Volume 5, Issue 1, December 2023

Greetings from the History Department!

This fall has been lovely on campus. We have celebrated with current students at our welcome Throwback Party and enjoyed the Haunted Halloween History party. Student enthusiasm and impressive costumes make these can't-miss events for History students!

Our biggest event was the Tegeder-Berg Society's fall program, "The Bahamas and the Benedictines," on Oct. 19. This was a fantastic event with enthusiastic student and alum turnout to celebrate the more 1,600 Bahamians who have attended CSB+SJU over the last century and the more than fifty Bahamian students on campus today.

Special thanks to many of you for your gifts to the History Department on Give CSB Day on Oct. 11. We are excited to continue creating networking events for current students and alumnae/i through the Tegeder-Berg Society, inviting authors into our classrooms, and offering research opportunities for current students. We are grateful for your generosity to support the department's efforts.

The annual Connections XPO featured alums Rob Hedburg (2014), Connor Beck (2015), and Madelyn Strelow (2020) sharing their career paths and expertise. It is great to see alums doing wonderful things in the world and inspiring students with the range of career opportunities they can pursue with their History degree.

Thanks for your ongoing work to encourage prospective students to study history at our schools and other opportunities to connect with current students. Stay tuned for upcoming events!

Best wishes,  
Shannon Smith  
History Department Chair



Dr. Shannon Smith

## Tegeder-Berg Society Fall 2023 Event - The Bahamas and the Benedictines



On October 19, the Tegeder-Berg Society held its fall event, "[The Bahamas and the Benedictines](#)." The event began with a reception, catered by SJU Bahamian alum Nick Hall. Students mingled with alums and faculty as they enjoyed Bahamian and Caribbean-inspired appetizers and desserts. At the event, History alum Tamia Francois (CSB '22) shared how her experience in the CSB SJU History program helped to prepare her for her current job in the Bahamian government. Dr. Brittany Merritt Nash then described her research into the history of the connection between CSB and SJU and The Bahamas, highlighting the ways in which Bahamians who attended Benedictine schools in The Bahamas and then went on to graduate from CSB and SJU used their educations to contribute to Bahamian nation-building.



Following the talk, CSB and SJU Bahamian alums Prince Wallace, Philip Galanis, and Trevare Sherman came on stage for a roundtable discussion. They shared their stories and experiences related to Benedictine education in The Bahamas, focusing on scarce educational opportunities when The Bahamas was under British rule and the legacies of women's leadership in education following independence in 1973. The alums concluded by taking questions from students in the audience. The event was attended by alums, students, and friends, both in-person and remotely from around the world.

-submitted by Dr. Brittany Merritt Nash

## Alum Spotlight - Kathryn Gaydos



Kathryn Gaydos '14

Kathryn Gaydos, a 2014 graduate from CSB+SJU and a double major in History and Economics, loved her experience at our joint institutions. Kathryn chose the history path because she appreciated her history classes in high school. When in college, the skills of analysis and reading from her history major combined with the math and project management abilities she learned from her economics major prepared her for anything in life!

Kathryn's favorite class while at CSB+SJU was, East and West: Ever the Twain Shall Meet by Professor Bohr. She had never been exposed to Asian history before, and this class allowed her that opportunity. For her economics capstone, she wrote about US-China trade relations and credits her favorite history class for providing the steppingstones to choose that topic.

When asked about advice she would give to current students, Kathryn says: "College goes quickly; study something you enjoy! A history major will help you develop the skills of reading, writing, speaking, and thinking critically (as Professor Bohr would often remind us), and those skills can be applied to a variety of careers after college."

Currently, Gaydos is a cybersecurity analyst focused on fraud prevention with Target. She uses her critical thinking and ability to "combine different attributes to create an argument" daily in her work, and claims her history major helped her develop those practices immensely. She also stated that she learns new skills and abilities through her job and the baseline of being able to create arguments and think critically has helped her excel in learning those new abilities.

Outside of work, Kathryn mentioned she loves the movie *Gladiator* because of its epic and quotable lines, as well as its fantastic musical score. Kathryn also enjoyed a pilgrimage to Poland last summer.

When writing about the experience she exclaimed, "Poland is a beautiful and peaceful Catholic country, and I would definitely recommend it as a place to visit!" (Her photo was taken at the Shrine of Divine Mercy in Krakow.)

-submitted by Jackson May '24 and Jack Giitter '26

**Take History!  
Make History!**

# Student Spotlight - Claire Kouri



Claire Kouri '24

Choosing to be a History major was a natural choice for Claire Kouri since Social Studies (and eventually History) was her favorite subject growing up. She enjoys learning about the world around her, which makes her a great trivia competitor. The opportunities to study History at CSB+SJU make her realize the greater significance of studying history, specifically through the field of history and memory. She was first introduced to the topic in a Colloquium course with Dr. Brittany Merritt Nash, but dove further into the study of history and memory in her Historiography course with Dr. Schroeder. Studying History has helped her to recognize ways that history is embedded into the framework of our society, especially outside of the classroom.

Claire took the true liberal arts route and chose to double major in History and Classical Languages her first year. While she studies History to understand the basis of our current world more generally, her interest in Classics comes from a Religious Studies perspective. She had no intention of studying Classical Languages before entering college but enrolled in a course to learn Ancient Greek in order to read the original version of the New Testament. To get into that class (which she thought for some reason would fill up easily) she listed herself as a Classical Languages major. Her History and Classical Languages majors pair very well for her Classical Languages capstone project on the Septuagint Book of Esther with Apocrypha as well as the Letter of Aristeas to understand the ancient Diasporic Jewish experience. In this project, she translated the original Greek texts herself and read texts by modern historians and classicists.

Her journey at CSB+SJU has been full of twists and turns (many not anticipated). She started during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and was so grateful to have the hybrid option to learn in person Fall of 2021. But looking back she felt it was not a very vibrant experience. She did enjoy the block schedule (maybe the only one) but found the transition back into a normal college schedule daunting. Claire has found community here on campus through participating in choir, working closely with faculty, and working at the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (HMML) as well as with The Saint John's Bible. She is feeling sad knowing her time as a student at CSB+SJU is nearing the end, but the connections she made will carry her to the next opportunity. As for after graduation, she is undecided, but is highly considering volunteering for a year or so before entering the workforce.

## THE STUDENT SCOPE!

**Jack Giitter '26:** "I would say that my favorite part of working for the history department is getting to know the history professors and fellow history majors more and the amount of creativity that I can use on the job."

**Kate Heibel '24:** "I am a student assistant for both the History and Gender Studies Departments. My favorite part about working here is helping run the Gender Studies Instagram page and making flyers for all the events happening in both departments!"

**Jackson May '24:** "I love working in the history department because of the great events and people. My favorite event is the Valentine's Day party, where we get matched up with a historical figure! I also enjoy the faculty and students I work with because of their friendliness and passion for their work!"

**Rishabh Sharma '25** "I love being an office assistant as I get to hang with the professors and ask them for guidance. The professors are amazing, smart, and fun to be around. Parties are also fun, as I get to decorate, socialize, and be involved in the history community."

## Alum Spotlight - Hekang Yang



Hekang Yang '16

Hekang Yang is a 2016 History CSB+SJU alum, who found in the major “a combination of challenge and captivation.” After he received a bad grade on his first paper in Dr. Schroeder’s introductory modern European history course, he devoted himself to mastering the course materials, leading to a notable improvement at semester’s end and a drive to continue.

Yang’s favorite CSB+SJU course was “Monsters and Modernity: Japanese History Through Horror,” which was “intellectually stimulating and profound.” He mentions that before the first class began, Dr. Perelman assigned the book *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, which he read in detail at home. He enjoyed the book, and he was surprised at the critique coming from his professor. He saw this as another good lesson in scholarship, as it encouraged him to question secondary works. During the same semester, he

explored comics, folklore, horror films, novels, and criminals’ confessions, which intricately incorporated human nature with the course of Japanese history. To him, this was a highly enriching experience that made it stand out.

For current students, Yang recommends attending professors’ office hours and the writing center as useful tools. He also mentions that history professors are a great resource for guidance which you may be seeking in the history major and to contact people in any subject that intrigues you. He suggests taking advantage of the opportunity to study abroad and travel as immersing oneself in diverse cultures is a significant benefit to one’s development. As a student, Yang was able to participate in the 68th Japan-American Student Conference, which is a 21-day tour across different parts of the U.S. alongside students from Japan, and he was able to receive funding from SJU Senate, Experiential Learning, and the VP’s office, funding sources that he discovered from talking with professors. Lastly, he stresses the importance of fostering relationships with classmates and professors as they have the potential to last a lifetime.

Currently, Yang is a doctoral candidate in modern East Asian history at Columbia University. His hard work at CSB+SJU prepared him for his continued success, as “the foundation which was laid in undergraduate studies has proven invaluable in navigating the challenges and complexities of my doctoral program.”

-submitted by Adrion Sangster, '26

# Alum Spotlight - Charles Pults



Charles Pults, a 2017 CSB+SJU history alum, chose to major in history because he always loved the subject: “From a young age, my parents and grandparents (particularly, my grandfather) sparked my love of reading and I was always drawn to non-fiction history book and biographies.”

Pults enjoyed most (if not all) of his history classes, so when asked about his favorite, he narrowed it down to four: “I have fond memories of Dr. Jones’ U.S history since the 1960s class, Dr. Nash’s American Revolution colloquium, Dr. Curran’s British History class, Dr. Smith’s Reconstruction class.” What he remembers most was the passion the professors had for the subject matter and how they regularly encouraged students to get involved in class discussions and debates. He “can’t say enough good things about the faculty and staff in the history department. They genuinely care about their students.”

As a student at CSB+SJU, he worked for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (part of the Washington, D.C. Summer Study Program) in the research department where he discovered that “the reading and writing skills I developed as part of my history major made me well-suited for that role.”

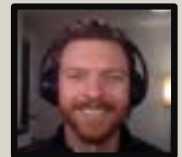
Currently, Charles is a litigation attorney at Dorsey & Whitney, LLP – a Minneapolis-based law firm. “I use the skills I developed as a history major every day. In addition to some of the obvious applications such as reading caselaw and writing briefs, I’ve found myself looking at primary sources in the same way that I did as a history major. The skills that you can develop as a history student are those that you can carry forward into life and apply well into your career.”

In his free time, Charles loves reading about American history, and he recommends *Profiles in Courage* by JFK, *John Adams* by David McCullough, and Edmund Morris’s three-part trilogy on Teddy Roosevelt. When it comes to movies, he suggests *Good Will Hunting* and *Lincoln*, which he has watched multiple times. He strives to live by Robert F. Kennedy’s creed, “Only those who dare to fail greatly, can ever achieve greatly.”

-submitted by Adrion Sangster '26

## History Alums and Their Career Paths

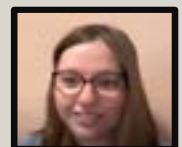
On November 1, 2023, the History Department hosted an alumni panel at Connections XPO, supported by the Office of Experience and Professional Development. This year’s session, [“History Alums & Their Career Paths,”](#) moderated by Professor Jonathan Merritt Nash, featured alumni Rob Hedburg (2014), Connor Beck (2015), and Maddie Strelow (2020). We extend our heartfelt thanks to Rob, Connor, and Maddie for sharing their professional experiences, underscoring the immense value and versatility of a history education to various careers in today’s rapidly changing world. Students from the HIST 295 History Colloquium gained insights into leveraging faculty expertise, securing internships, communicating with corporate recruiters, and building a professional network. This event not only offered practical career guidance but also celebrated the rich, ongoing connection between our alumni, faculty, and current students. For alumni interested in engaging with current students, please reach out to Professor Merritt Nash ([jnash@csbsju.edu](mailto:jnash@csbsju.edu)).



Connor Beck '15



Rob Hedburg '14



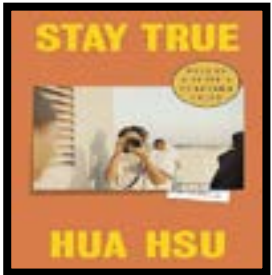
Maddie Strelow '20

# Suggested Books/Podcasts



This series seems like it's a dive into the supernatural among the British upper crust, but stick with it (if that isn't your cup of earl grey) for it to unravel a murder mystery, a dive into archival research and family history, an amazing commentary on gender roles and expectations in post-WWI England, and the confabulations (or plain old lies?) of a beloved patriarch. Without giving away too much, it's proof that all true crime is just historical research, for good or ill.

~submitted by Dr. Elisheva Perelman



Historian Hua Hsu's memoir swept book awards for a reason. Even if you weren't a student at Berkeley in the late '90s and early noughties (Go Golden Bears!), Hsu's thoughts on college and postgrad life before and in the wake of a friend's death are a beautiful testament to the passage of time, the possibilities of history and identity, and the need to find yourself when the possibilities of self-creation and seem both limitless and limited. I chose this book for my Asian American history class for multiple reasons, but mostly just to share it with as many people as possible. Now it's your turn.

~submitted by Dr Elisheva Perelman



I recommend the podcast series "[Monumental](#)," which investigates public memory and the ways in which we commemorate or obscure the past. Topics include the removal of Christopher Columbus statues from many public places, controversies surrounding monuments to soldiers who fought against indigenous Americans, and the erasure of historic events like the Wilmington Massacre from public memory. If you are interested in debates surrounding statues and monuments, check it out!

-submitted by Dr. Brittany Merritt Nash

## HISTORY HOODIES!

Help us choose the final design for our new History hoodies! View images on a larger scale by going to our [website](#) and opening the History Hoodies link in the bottom left corner of the page.



## Clio's Corner

Like many of you, Clio is happy to report that she was able to enjoy learning about the fascinating history of the longstanding connection between The Bahamas and CSBSJU, although, as the seasons change, she would prefer to be serving as Dr. Brittany Merritt Nash's research assistant in the Caribbean. Instead, like many of you, she's been stuck inside as winter descends upon us. Unlike you, she has Dio to keep her company as she ponders the vagaries of history and she's thankful that, unlike so many males (apparently), he is not obsessed with the Roman Empire. After all, they both agree that Carthage is much cooler. Hope your winter is filled with visions of Hannibal and Hamilcar!

