

Brown Bag Program

Semester One 2022

**10 March**

**Sarah Walsh (University of Melbourne)**

*The Religion of Life: Eugenics, Race, and Catholicism in Chile*

*The Religion of Life* examines the interconnections and relationship between Catholicism and eugenics in early-twentieth-century Chile. Specifically, it demonstrates that the popularity of eugenic science was not diminished by the influence of Catholicism there. In fact, both eugenics and Catholicism worked together to construct the concept of a unique Chilean race, *la raza chilena*. A major factor that facilitated this conceptual overlap was a generalized belief among historical actors that male and female gender roles were biologically determined and therefore essential to a functioning society. As the first English-language study of eugenics in Chile, *The Religion of Life* surveys a wide variety of different materials (periodicals, newspapers, medical theses, and monographs) produced by Catholic and secular intellectuals from the first half of the twentieth century. What emerges from this examination is not only a more complex rendering of the relationship between religion and science, but also the development of White supremacist logics in a Latin American context.

Dr Sarah Walsh is Hansen Lecturer in Global History at the University of Melbourne. She received her PhD in Latin American history from the University of Maryland, College Park. She specializes in the history of the human sciences in Latin America with an emphasis on race and ethnicity. Dr Walsh has held positions at the University of Sydney, the Universidade de Lisboa, and Washington State University.

**17 March**

**Carlos Dimas (University of Las Vegas, Nevada)**

*Poisoned Eden: The Practice of Governance and Autonomy in the Cholera Epidemic of 1886- 1887 in Northwestern Argentina*

In the closing half of the nineteenth century Argentina experienced a string of cholera epidemics like so many other parts of the world. The epidemics arrived at a point in time in which the Argentine state, based in the national capital of Buenos Aires, worked with the provincial governments to establish the modes of governance that straddled the thin line between centralized control and provincial autonomy. The talk explores this process through the topics of epidemic disease, public health, and the medicalization of nineteenth-century Argentine society. It shows that in contrast to other more common topics within the field of state-building/formation studies, war and high politics, a new disease required a continual process of negotiation and adaptation between national

and provincial officials as the state struggled to create the organizational structures to respond to the disease in the Argentine provinces.

Carlos S. Dimas is an assistant professor in the history department at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. His work has appeared in numerous journals on topics from medical history, the history of meteorology, and the history of science and technology. Most recently the University of Nebraska Press published his book *Poisoned Eden: Cholera Epidemics, State-Building, and the Problem of Public Health in Tucumán, Argentina, 1865-1908*. He is currently working on his next project, a survey of Argentina but told from the perspective of environmental humanities, animal studies, and science and technology studies.

## 24 March

**Mia Martin Hobbs (University of Melbourne/Deakin University)**

*Return to Vietnam: An Oral History of American and Australian Veterans' Journeys*

Between 1981 and 2016, thousands of American and Australian veterans returned to Việt Nam. *Return to Vietnam* is the first historical study of their journeys. Drawing on original oral histories, the book takes a comparative, transnational approach to investigate why veterans returned and how they reacted to the people and places of Việt Nam - their former enemies, allies, and battlefields - as the war receded into history and memory.

In this talk, I focus on the comparative feature of the book, revealing key differences between returning Americans and Australians. Demonstrating a new digital mapping technique, I show how national geographies of return mirrored the war experience, creating national enclaves of veteran returnees in contemporary Việt Nam. Different national narratives about the war also shaped their returns: an anti-war American narrative and an “Anzac” Australian narrative, creating different nostalgic imaginaries of “Vietnam” among the returnees. Upon return, veterans drew on these national war narratives to negotiate displacement, relying on familiar stories in a suddenly unfamiliar place. In doing so, they reclaimed a sense of belonging in Việt Nam.

Dr Mia Martin Hobbs is an oral historian of war and conflict. She completed her PhD, a transnational oral history with Vietnam veterans who returned to Việt Nam after the War, at the University of Melbourne in 2018. Her book, *Return to Vietnam: An Oral History of American and Australian Veterans' Journeys*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2021. Mia is undertaking a second transnational oral history project with women and minorities who served in the British, American, and Australian militaries in the War on Terror. She is presently a research fellow at Deakin University.

**31 March**

**Sam Watts (University of Melbourne)**

*No Masters but Ourselves': Black Reconstruction in the Deep South City (Completion Seminar)*

The destruction of slavery brought about dramatic opportunities and challenges for formerly enslaved Black Southerners, many of whom migrated to Southern cities in search of safety and freedom following the Civil War. During Reconstruction, the Deep South city offered economic, social and political opportunities that rural life could not, and it was in the city that Black Southerners were able to assert themselves in public and private spaces. These assertions of Black power and Black identity varied from seemingly minor interactions on the sidewalk, in the workplace or at school, to street celebrations, protests, strikes and pitched battles. Through an examination of Black daily life and the constant threat of white violence during this period, this thesis demonstrates how radical the pursuit of freedom and security in the Deep South city was, and how it was only in this particular time and place that such radicalism was at all possible. Despite the relative freedom that urban life offered, white racial violence and brutality remained a constant – making the achievements of Black men, women and children in this period all the more extraordinary. It is through these – often temporary – achievements, that one can see the radical potential of Black Reconstruction to revise the foundations and future of the American republic, to an extent that was not then and has not now been fully realized.

Sam Watts is a final year-PhD candidate in History at the University of Melbourne. Sam has taught in both the History and Politics schools and writes about American history and politics for the Australian Book Review.

**7 April**

**Filip Slaveski (Deakin University)**

TBA

**14 April**

**D. Coleman**

*Pacific Blackbirding, Inter-colonial Rivalry, and Islander Perspectives*

This paper will draw on the fiction and journalism of Robert Louis and Fanny Stevenson, Jack London, and Louis Becke for a sketch of German rule in Samoa.

Deirdre Coleman is the Robert Wallace Chair of English and Redmond Barry Distinguished Professor at the University of Melbourne. Her most recent ARC Discovery, entitled “Slavery, Sugar, Race: Australian South Sea Islander Labourers”, is a collaboration with Scientia researcher A/Prof Emma Christopher at UNSW and Ms Emelda Davis, President of the Australian South Sea Islanders (Port Jackson).

**28 April**

**Oleg Beyda (University of Melbourne)**

*God, Nukes, USA: Colonel Boris Pash – The Russian Element of the American Nuclear Equation*

This paper will outline the biography of Colonel Boris Pash (Pashkovskii) – a maverick Russian-American powerhouse who took part in the most pivotal events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and yet remains an obscure figure. An American-born ethnic Russian, Boris returned to Russia shortly before the First World War, in which he participated with his father. The First World War merged into the quagmire of the Russian Civil War and then he emigrated. For almost 20 years, Boris led a life of a simple high-school teacher in Hollywood, only in 1940 becoming an asset for the American military intelligence. Suddenly, something changed: Pash skyrocketed through the ranks, participated in the grim internment of Japanese Americans after Pearl Harbor, and later became one of the key figures in the Manhattan Project. He undertook investigation against Oppenheimer, stole the uranium ore from the Nazis in Europe, along with the Nobel Prize winners, thus making Hiroshima possible. After the war, he was one of the key architects of the Cold War security system in Europe and was the core planner of anti-Communist coups in Eastern Europe. Dabbling into Orthodox Church politics on the side, Pash fanatically served the USA and tilted the balance of nuclear power in its favour, without any consideration for the methods and consequences.

Dr Oleg Beyda holds a PhD in History and currently teaches at the University of Melbourne. He is a multi-lingual historian focusing on diaspora studies (the first and second waves of migration from Russia after 1917) and the Second World War in Eastern Europe. He has authored a series of publications on military and civil collaboration in Europe during the Second World War, Russian emigration, and the German-Soviet War, including those for Cambridge University Press (2017), European University of Saint Petersburg (2018), Palgrave Macmillan (2020), and George Washington University (2021). Dr Beyda has extensive teaching experience in Soviet history, the historiography of Stalinism, the history of the world since 1750, and the global history of World War Two.

**5 May**

**Caroline Ritter (Texas State University)**

TBA

**12 May**

**Sean Scalmer (University of Melbourne)**

*Inventing Direct Action: A Transnational History*

**19 May**

**Julia Hurst (University of Melbourne)**

TBA

**26 May**

**Katherine Louise Molyneux (University of Melbourne)**

TBA