



Johannes Moreelse *Clio-Muse of History*

# Indiana University of Pennsylvania History Program

## Alumni Newsletter

2025

Greetings from the History Department!

Another year has come and gone. This year brought quite a number of changes to the department. First, we redesigned our curricular programs to fit into the new Crimson Core, which is replacing our current Liberal Studies this fall. Secondly, last June, we officially became the Department of History, Philosophy, Political Science, and Religious Studies (HPPR) as three former departments (History; Political Science; and Philosophy and Religious Studies) merged into one as part of the academic restructuring taking place at IUP. This resulted in our faculty numbers rising to twenty-two, with the history faculty accounting for eleven of that total. With Dr. Botelho retiring at the end of last June, we dropped to ten history faculty. Unfortunately, Dr. So Lu and Dr. Tamara Whited are retiring this June, and we will be down to only eight history faculty – about half of where we were ten years ago. Since the upcoming retirement of a Philosophy faculty member and a Religious Studies faculty member dropped our new department down to seventeen faculty members, this July we will be consolidating all our faculty into the former History Department suite (Leonard 304) as Political Science and Philosophy and Religious Studies faculty move down from the fourth and fifth floors of Leonard into our space on the third floor. This will certainly make the suite a much busier place with more activities and people. We also took the consolidation as an opportunity to reorganize and redesign our space to reflect the three former departments, and even included a new student lounge area. We encourage everyone to stop by and see the changes.

R. Scott Moore, Department Chair

PS: Our departmental scholarships provide invaluable financial assistance to our deserving majors. We are always looking for assistance in growing these funds and appreciate your support.

**Dr. Tamara Whited, retiring after 30 years**

Dr. Whited is happy to have taught several generations of IUP students, contributed to the curricular and scholarly life of the department, and helped put together the program in Sustainability Studies. She looks forward to taking care of her 97-year-old mother, catching up on her education, becoming fluent in Spanish, volunteering in the community, and taking advantage of whatever opportunities retirement might hold. You may contact her at [tamarawhited100@gmail.com](mailto:tamarawhited100@gmail.com).

**Dr. Soo Chun Lu, retiring after 25 years**

Dr. Lu is proud of the roles she has had in social studies teacher education - coordinating the program, preparing our majors for their careers in teaching, working with area schoolteachers, and working with other teacher Ed faculty across campus. (And keeping Scott on the straight and narrow!) In retirement she looks forward to reading all the books she wants to read, learning new baking skills, learning another language (it's a toss up between German and Spanish) and not having to grade another paper!!

**Dr. Jeanine Mazak-Kahne, President of the PHA**

Dr. Mazak-Kahne began her 2-year term as president for the Pennsylvania History Association. She's been a member for several years, serving in various capacities. The organization and its community are very special to her as a scholar, teacher, and public history practitioner of Pennsylvania History. She looks forward to serving the membership during her tenure as president.

**IUP Partners with Shippensburg for Early Admission Graduate Program**

This year IUP partnered with Shippensburg University to create an early admission process to the Shipp Applied History, MA program. Applied history, which is also referred to as public history, trains students to work as museum professionals, cultural resource managers, community researchers and more.

IUP undergraduates with a 3.0 GPA can apply for admission to the program during the second semester of their junior year. During their senior year, students will take two approved graduate-level classes (six credits) that will count toward both their undergraduate degree and Shippensburg's MA in Applied History.

Interested in learning more? Contact Dr. Jeanine Mazak-Kahne ([jmkane@iup.edu](mailto:jmkane@iup.edu))

## Scholarship and Award Winners for Academic Year 2024-25

### **The Kadlubowski Memorial Scholarship**

The Kadlubowski Memorial Scholarship is awarded each year to a student who plans to pursue a career in teaching. The scholarship is given in honor of Dr. Jack Kadlubowski, who taught the history of Russia and Eastern Europe at IUP for 36 years, from 1967 until his death in 1999.

**Matthew Frank**

### **The Eric Slebodnik Memorial Scholarship**

The Eric Slebodnik Memorial Scholarship is awarded each year to a student who demonstrates a commitment to civic engagement at the local, national, or global level. The scholarship is given in honor of Sergeant Eric Slebodnik, a history major who was called to active duty during his junior year and was killed in action in Ramadi, Iraq on September 29, 2005.

**Mallory Dixon and Sarah Renniger**

**Alice Schuster Award** for Outstanding Achievement in the B.A. Program in History.

**Zackery McGarvey**

**Judith McDonough Award** for Outstanding Achievement in the Social Studies Education Program.

**Megan Gent**

### **Charles D. Cashdollar History Scholarship**

The Charles D. Cashdollar History Scholarship is given each year given in honor of Charles Cashdollar who taught history at IUP from 1969 to 2005.

**Chloe Ailes and Matthew Reid**

### **Joseph M. Mastro Memorial Scholarship**

The Joseph M. Mastro Memorial Scholarship is awarded to student(s) enrolled full time pursuing a Social Studies, BSEd degree. It is awarded in honor of Joe Mastro who taught history at both the high school level and as a professor at IUP from 1969 to 1989.

**John Lengel and Kieran Pote**

### **IUP Scholars Form Undergraduate Outstanding Podium Presentation**

**Kaylee Becker-George,**

"Student Governance at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania: The Evolution of the Student Government Association into the Organization it is Today" (faculty mentor, Scott Moore)

Our scholarships and awards are supported by donations from alumni and friends of the History Department. To make a donation please contact the department or contact the Office of Annual Giving at 724-357-5555 or email [iup-giving@iup.edu](mailto:iup-giving@iup.edu).



## Alumni Interview

**Frankie Checchio, Reference and Instruction Librarian,  
Penn State- Beaver Campus**

### What do you do in your current job?

I am a Reference and Instruction Librarian at Penn State Beaver. I do a lot of traditional "library work" like reference and collection development, but my primary duty is to visit classes during the semester for course-related instruction and teach students about the libraries' resources and what can help them with specific research assignments. Outside of the library, I serve as the student-athlete academic liaison, an instructor for First-Year Seminar and chair of the campus Student Success Committee. I take great pride in supporting the student as a whole person and becoming a trusted ally in their academic career.

### What do you find most rewarding or challenging about your career? Are there things you did not expect in your job that you wish you'd known more about before pursuing it?

I love learning and working with students. So, working at a small campus allows me to work closely with Penn State Beaver students to increase the benefits they receive from the library. I am excited to come to work and give my all every day because I have the opportunity to know and help so many students in different ways. I do not think there is a more rewarding feeling than being able to connect with a student to identify and fulfill their needs. Being a librarian, at the Beaver campus, allows me to get that feeling on a nearly daily basis.

### How did you decide what kind of job or career to pursue after graduation?

Initially, I wanted to teach high school history, and for a while I had no other plan than that! But during my junior year, at IUP, after taking several classes with Dr. Mazak-Kahne, I found myself extremely interested in public history, libraries, archives and museums, but had no idea how to pursue that. Dr. Mazak-Kahne helped me understand the fields I could work in with a master's in library science, and helped me apply to grad school.

After graduating with my MLIS, I worked at several public and academic libraries around Pittsburgh. It became clear to me that helping students was still the path for me. Along with the general comfort of being back on a college campus, being an academic librarian gave me the chance to teach classes and break down the wall of library anxiety that so many first-year students face.

### What advice would you give to IUP history students in general or to those who want to pursue a career like yours?

Be open-minded about what you can do. I was stuck with the idea that I could only be a history teacher for far too long.



**Frankie Checchio, class of 2015**

Talk with and get to know your history faculty on campus to see what other things you can pursue or do based on your interests. One thing that I learned is that they want to see you succeed as much as anything and will take the extra time to help. I try to pass that on to all the students that I work with now!

### How has your background in history helped you in your career or life?

How to do proper research! Prior to IUP, I had very little exposure or experience doing academic research. Being a history major forced me to learn information literacy skills that I use every day and pass on to other students!

### Looking back, what do you find most rewarding about your time at IUP?

Being a first-generation college student, I was pretty overwhelmed coming to college. But in those four years, I opened up and learned a lot about myself. Along with being a history major, I played for the Men's Rugby team. Balancing the time between being a student and an athlete helped me meet so many people, taught me time-management and study skills, and how to use all the available resources to benefit yourself. The confidence I had after graduating compared to prior was light years different! IUP really helped me learn how to ask for help and not try to figure out everything myself.

### Have you read any good books lately?

Yes! As you can probably guess, as a librarian, I try to read as much as possible, in my free time! I am just finishing *Live From New York. The Complete, Uncensored History of Saturday Night Live*. I have always loved reading non-fiction or oral histories. Probably what initially pushed me to become a history major!

## Alumni Interview

**Amy M. (Pozar) Shellhammer**

**Class of 1995 (BA); 1996 (MA) Teaching Certificate**

**Community Traffic Safety Project Coordinator,**

**IUP Institute for Rural Health and Safety**

### How did you get from IUP to the career you have now?

I spent 26 years as a Social Studies teacher at United Jr. Sr. High School in Armagh, Indiana county. During that time, I taught 7th grade World Regions and 8th grade American History. I was the sponsor of many clubs and activities. I attended the Governor's School for History on more than one occasion. I coached Jr. High Girls Basketball for several years and for a brief period I served as interim Assistant Principal.

In the spring of 2023, I learned about a job opportunity here at IUP. At this point in my life, I was pretty much settled in teaching and 51 is a bit old to be making a career move, but something in me kept saying that I needed to go after this opportunity. This required updating a resume that I hadn't touched in 26 years and sharpening my interview skills. I kept thinking if this was meant to be, then I would get the job, if not then nothing ventured, nothing gained. With all that being said, I am currently the Community Traffic Safety Project coordinator in the IUP Institute for Rural Health and Safety. This is a grant funded position from PennDOT District 10-0. Basically, I travel to the 5 counties of District 10-0 (Armstrong, Butler, Clarion, Indiana and Jefferson) teaching traffic safety and awareness.

My background in teaching was essential for my current job. My experience in the classroom provided me with the skills needed to interact with the public – which I do on a daily basis. I absolutely love my current job. It is something different every single day. Other skills that have carried over include adaptability, patience, time management, creative thinking, planning and organization.

### What advice do you have for current students or alumni early in their careers?

You never know where life is going to take you. I never thought I was going to leave the classroom, and I wouldn't change any of that for the world. I will always love history, and it will always be a passion of mine. But I would tell students (and anyone) to be open to experiences and take calculated risks. You may find you have other interests and passions you never really knew you had.



### How has your background in history or your time at IUP helped you in your career or life?

I feel like I have come full circle in my life – I am back where I started at IUP. I loved my time here as a student. The professors in the history department were amazing – knowledgeable, supportive and motivating. I was a member of a social sorority, Theta Phi Alpha and president of the Greek honor society, Order of Omega. I met so many interesting people of all walks of life and maintained friendships with many of them, including some of my professors to this day. I was given fantastic opportunities to grow as a student and person. And now that I am back at IUP, I continue to meet wonderful people and have amazing opportunities and experiences.

*Amy is married to the love of her life, Michael Shellhammer and has one son, Paul James (PJ). They currently live in Indiana, PA with their two dogs, Scout and Coco. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her family at her sons various sporting events, hiking and doing yoga.*

**Alumni Interview****Eric C. Weber, Vice President- Business Banking Relationship Manager at Bank of America****What do you do in your current job?**

I have been in banking for 13 years. I spent the first ten years of my career in retail/consumer banking as a branch manager and small business lender. Three years ago, I was fortunate to move into the commercial banking space. In my current segment I focus on the acquisition and portfolio management of commercial and industrial companies with annual revenue between 10 million and 100 million. My areas of focus are manufacturing, transportation, and wholesale distribution. I deliver to my clients a full suite of banking products such as deposits, treasury management services, fraud protection and various lending products. Much of my day is comprised of sales efforts including prospect calling and networking with C-Suite executives as well as centers of influence like accountants, attorneys, and financial advisors. After I uncover a new opportunity, I then perform an analysis whether it be a treasury management analysis or a credit analysis if the client has a credit request. Based on that analysis we then make recommendations to the client for various products and services that Bank of America can offer them.

**What do you find most rewarding or challenging about your career? Are there things you did not expect in your job that you wish you'd known more about before pursuing it?**

Early in my banking career, the most rewarding part was helping somebody improve their financial lives. For example, consolidating debt, repairing credit, purchase their first home, or save for retirement. Commercial banking is very different. It's very rewarding when you win a big client and I also have a much better work/life balance now that I am not tied to the retail branch hours.

It does have its challenges; the biggest challenge was getting used to the very long sales cycle. It takes months and sometimes years to win and onboard a new client. You must be very persistent and determined to be successful.

**How did you get from IUP to the career you have now?**

While studying for finals I was also simultaneously applying for jobs in various industries, and I was fortunate enough to start with a full-time job the first week in June after a May graduation date. I had a background in both customer service and management from my jobs during my undergrad and I was able to leverage that experience into my first banking job which was a management training program at Dollar Bank in Pittsburgh PA. Over my 10-year consumer banking career I

**Eric C. Weber, class of 2012 (BA)**

worked at a few other regional banks learning management, customer service, consumer, and commercial lending.

**How has your background in history helped you in your career or life?**

I know my career path wasn't typical for a history major however if you look at the qualifications for any of the jobs that I have had in my career a bachelor's degree is always on that list. There is an enormous value to your education even if you end up in a career that is different than the degree that you graduated with. IUP and specifically the history department prepared me for my professional journey, even though I did not become a social studies teacher.

**What is your advice to IUP history majors?**

Once you begin in your career stay committed to learning. Whether its certifications related to your field or traditional education, stay focused on being the best professional that you can. Ten years into my career I started taking accounting and business courses through my local Community College and it was one of the best decisions I've made.

*Eric lives in Pittsburgh with his wife Natalie, who is also an IUP grad (BA, Psychology 2015), their 6-year-old daughter Nora, and two cats Luna and Tuna.*



## Social Studies Education Class of 2025 (and a few former SSED majors who changed to the BA)



Keep an eye out for our new graduates on LinkedIn or via the IUP Alumni network! (Apologies to the BA students that we didn't get a picture with all of you!) Back row: Ethan Joiner, Nicholas Howie, Zachery Perkey, Kaylee Becker-George; front row: Dr. Soo Lu, Jane Register, Megan Gent, Jonathan Scialabba, Kieran Pote, Anthony Williams

We are continually seeking meaningful internship opportunities for our students—both within Pennsylvania and beyond. While we value our strong ties to public history, we're especially eager to build connections with alumni, organizations, government agencies, and companies outside the traditional history field. Many of our students study history but pursue careers in diverse industries. Internships offer them invaluable, hands-on experience to explore these paths.

If you or your organization can offer an opportunity—or would like to collaborate—we'd love to hear from you. Your support helps prepare the next generation of thoughtful, skilled professionals. Contact the internship coordinator, Erin Conlin ([elconlin@iup.edu](mailto:elconlin@iup.edu))

Thank you for being part of our students' journey.

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Are you willing to be interviewed for our Alumni Interview feature or talk to students about your career? Let us know!

Information or queries can be sent to.  
Erin Conlin [elconlin@iup.edu](mailto:elconlin@iup.edu)

Have you taken your IUP swag someplace interesting? Send us a picture and we'll highlight you in next year's newsletter!

Dr. Erin Conlin, husband Joe Burke, and Milo in Newfoundland

