



# Footnotes

Department of History, University of Northwestern – St. Paul  
Offering courses in History, Politics, Economics, and Geography

## Fall 2021 Edition Congratulations!

On May 14, 2021, thirteen graduates from our department participated in Northwestern's commencement and joined the ranks of UNW alumni.



In the back row (with Dr. Miller and Dr. Loopstra) are **Micah Krahn, Leo Montgomery Chamberlain, David Graske, and Joshua Waldriff**. In the front row (with Dr. Kelley) are **Wyatt Martinson, Juli Hunt, Abby Erickson, Andrew Roth, Luke LeBrun, and Hannah Hanson**. Not pictured are **Jonathan Eckstrom, Stephany Lopez, and Adam Seward**. We are grateful for the learning and experiences we have shared and look forward to seeing how their journeys continue on from Northwestern. Each of these graduates will be entering the career world or continuing with graduate education. Two will be studying at the University of St. Thomas: **Juli Hunt** has been accepted to a masters program in art history, and **Adam Seward** will enter law school. **Abby Erickson** will serve as a Library Associate at North Dakota State University in Fargo.

We have enjoyed receiving updates from our alumni on their accomplishments as well. **Jacob Wolf** ('11) has been invited to serve as Assistant Professor of Political Science at Regent University in Virginia. **Brett Jouwstra** ('14) is an Information Technology Compliance Specialist at Black Hills Energy in Rapid City, South Dakota. **Gabrielle Mesko** ('17) serves as Program Supervisor at Mille Lacs Indian Museum in Onamia, Minnesota. She oversees the museum's interpretive program, which focuses on the story of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, past and present. **Steven Soto** ('19) has joined UnitedHealth Group as a Marketing and Sales Business Development Representative.

Julia Gams ('20) has written to share this update: "Since graduating, I have been working at the Kanabec History Center in my hometown of Mora, Minnesota. My months spent here have been filled with curating and creating new exhibits, re-building relationships with the community, and organizing the highest grossing fundraiser in the organization's history. The hats I have been wearing are endless, but it's so rewarding to preserve history on a local level! Non-profit work is difficult and frustrating at times, as all work can be, but I am so thankful that my time at Northwestern taught me how to think critically and effectively problem solve. Having to consider multiple perspectives and being encouraged to examine viewpoints in class has aided in working through difficult situations that arise, and there have been several. If there is any advice I can give to undergrads who want to pursue work in a museum or other non-profits, it is to become very familiar with grant writing. The course on campus is a great introduction to that world and will give you a strong foundation to build on!"

*Please write and share your updates with us—we are always glad to hear from you!*

- Dr. Matt Miller, Department Chair, [mlmiller@unwsp.edu](mailto:mlmiller@unwsp.edu)

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## Digital Humanities and Public History Class

During the spring 2021 semester, students in Dr. Adina Kelley's Digital Humanities and Public History course learned about and gained experience in various forms of public history including archival work, museum studies, digital history, and oral history. The class worked on several hands-on projects.

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### Voices of Northwestern's History

Students in the course created an oral history project entitled "Voices of Northwestern's History," the goal of which was to document how Northwestern has changed over time in regard to academics, faith, and culture. Students worked in pairs to interview five faculty and administrators with long histories and a breadth of experience at UNW: President Alan Cureton, Professor Tim Sawyer, Dr. Charles Aling, Dr. Clyde Billington, and Dr. Michael Wise. Students utilized technology to record the interviews, most of which took place remotely over Zoom. After completing the interviews, students transcribed portions of the audio using special transcription software.



The interviews will be archived and made available to current and future members of the Northwestern community who wish to learn about the history of the institution.

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### Transcribing Letters from the 1860s

Dr. Kelley's class also had the opportunity to transcribe historic letters from the collection of the Longfellow House National Historic Site in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Two professionals from the National Park Service joined a class session via Zoom and taught students the basics of transcribing historical letters. The class was provided with scanned copies of correspondence between Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's daughters and their friends dating from 1868–1869. Students then got to try their hands at deciphering mid-nineteenth-century handwriting and learned about the conventions of letter writing one hundred and fifty years ago. The letter transcriptions produced by the students will be sent to the Longfellow House for review and publication.

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## Medieval History and Literature Club

Outside the classroom, history majors are finding creative ways to learn about the past and expand their knowledge of history. In the spring of 2020, a group of history majors created the Medieval History and Literature Club, which meets weekly on Monday evenings to discuss topics related to the Middle Ages. “The idea for the club came when a number of students realized Northwestern was not planning on offering a course on medieval history while we were at school,” said club founder and senior history major David Graska. “Though the department has many outstanding courses, we desired to learn more about this fascinating and often misunderstood period.”

At the beginning of each semester, members sign up to present on a topic of their choosing. Highlights from the past three semesters include presentations on these topics of this era: views of the universe, art, fashion, and witchcraft. The club has welcomed faculty guests as well, and Dr. Charles Aling presented via Zoom on ordinary life during the period.

In addition to presentations, the club has been reading works of literature. Several meetings have included readings from *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer’s collection of stories from the late fourteenth century. The club has also read *The Decameron*, a series of stories about a group of young men and women living during the Plague of the mid-fourteenth century. While we are living through our own twenty-first century pandemic, history students have been looking to the past to gain perspective and learn about how people their age lived through a similar situation in medieval times.



## Dr. Loopstra in Princeton

While on sabbatical during the 2020-21 academic year, Dr. Jonathan Loopstra was a Member at the prestigious Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) in Princeton, New Jersey. This institute is dedicated to the advancement of knowledge in all areas and has the motto “Truth and Beauty.” IAS has hosted many distinguished members since its foundation in 1930, and one of its most famous faculty was Albert Einstein.

As a visiting researcher, Dr. Loopstra has completed an introduction to a relatively unknown genre of early biblical literature known as the Syriac Masora. “I have been working this year on the early transmission of the Bible, showing how Syriac Christians may have influenced how their Jewish neighbors developed their own ways of reading and vocalizing the Old Testament,” Dr. Loopstra explained. The purpose of these instructional manuscripts was to help the reader pronounce and interpret words from across a spectrum of different sources, including works of patristics, grammar, exegesis, lexicography, and the Bible. You can see Dr. Loopstra’s project on the IAS faculty page here: <https://www.ias.edu/scholars/jonathan-loopstra>.

Among other projects, Dr. Loopstra has finished translating a very beautiful fifth-century poem about the spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem to the Gentile nations and is also on a committee reviewing and finalizing the first translation of the Syriac-Aramaic Bible into English. This translation will be used by Christians of Middle Eastern background around the world. Dr. Loopstra also found time to have fun while on sabbatical—in addition to academic work, he successfully through-hiked the Ice Age Trail in Wisconsin!



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“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.” - Jeremiah 6:16 (NIV)