

THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST



BU HISTORY
DEPARTMENT
NEWSLETTER

SEPT
2023

BOSTON
UNIVERSITY

FROM THE CHAIR'S DESK

JAMES JOHNSON, PROFESSOR AND CHAIR

Dear Friends of the Boston University History Department:

September for me means returning to the rhythm of familiar routines, catching up with friends and colleagues I've not seen since May, and once again feeling butterflies when I face a classroom filled with strangers. It also means the promise of coming to know these strangers and embarking together on another semester of study and discovery.



The start of classes this year brings a series of good things: a new faculty member to the department, the book launch of a groundbreaking work on the Second World War, the debut episodes of a new History Department podcast, and the ongoing afterglow of Commencement, 2023, a happy celebration of growth and accomplishment last May. We also welcome a fresh cohort of History majors and a group of bright, incoming graduate students.

We're delighted to have Jilene Chua as a new colleague in the department. Professor Chua, an Asian American historian, studies the experience of ordinary people caught up in international struggles—in this case, early twentieth-century migrants from China who negotiated the complex dynamics of daily life in the U.S. colony of the Philippines. Professor Chua studied at the Sorbonne and holds a PhD from Johns Hopkins University. If you haven't yet met and welcomed her to BU, look for the opportunity to do so.

In late-September, we gather to celebrate Brooke Blower's new book, *Americans in a World at War*. This history, whose central event is the 1943 crash of Pan Am's legendary *Yankee Clipper*, is both intimate and global. Just out from Oxford University Press, the book situates the individual lives of seven passengers who perished within the context of global war. *BU Today's* superb [profile of Professor Blower and her new book](#) appeared in *The Brink*, a supplement dedicated to pioneering research at BU.

This semester sees the launch of *Amplifying the Past*, a new podcast series produced by the Department of History. Among its episodes, we'll hear Paula Austin describe what life was like for Black adolescents growing up in Washington, D. C. in the 1930s and '40s, Alexis Peri discuss the extraordinary correspondence she has unearthed between American and Russian women during the tense years of the Cold War, and Rachel Nolan—our colleague in the Pardee School—speak about her work on the unknown and often painful history of adoption in Guatemala.

This issue of *The Presence of the Past* features these and other stories about the good work undergrads, graduate students, staff, and faculty are doing on Bay State Road. These feature an impressive series of talks and publications, a new undergraduate journal managed by our majors, and *Bostonia* magazine's cover-story about Cari Babitzke, a recent History PhD who has written about the NRA and her own experience growing up with guns in Texas. You'll also want to read about the new comic novel, set at a school suspiciously like BU, written by a former professor in the department.

May the new semester bring you many good things.

James Johnson

Chair and Professor, Department of History

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CONGRATS CLASS OF 2023 HISTORY GRADUATES!

On May 19th, 2023, we celebrated the graduating class at their convocation ceremony. Faculty remarks were given by the chair, **Professor James Johnson**, and **Professor Arianna Chernock**, this year's history convocation speaker. Student speeches were given by CAS College Prize Winner **Priscilla Bright** and Warren O. Ault recipient **Mairéad Downes**.



Paula Austin was quoted and interviewed in a [BU Today article](#), entitled “BU Historians Weigh In on Ron DeSantis’ Slavery Remarks and His Defense of Florida’s Controversial Social Studies Curriculum.”

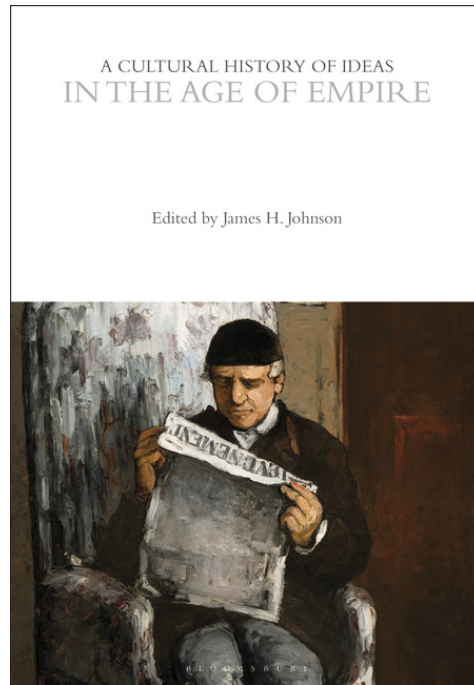
Brooke Blower’s new book, *Americans in a World at War: Intimate Histories from the Crash of Pan Am’s Yankee Clipper*, was published with Oxford University Press in August. An article was published following the release, written by BU’s Research Magazine, The Brink, and entitled “Broadway Singers, a Nazi Sympathizer, and the Doomed Flight of the Yankee Clipper.” The History Department will celebrate Professor Blower’s [book launch later this month](#).

Ariane Chernock published an article entitled “Suffrage as Philosophy: Women Theorizing the Vote in Britain, 1792–1918” in the *The Oxford Handbook of American and British Women Philosophers in the Nineteenth Century*, with editors Lydia Moland and Alison Stone. [A PDF of the article is available here](#).

Rui Hua won recognition for his dissertation from The International Convention of Asian Scholars (ICAS) Book Prize (IBP). In the 2023 Shortlist for Dissertations in the Humanities Prize (English language), the dissertation of Professor Hua was [one of five selected worldwide](#). The ICAS Book Prize (IBP) is awarded to outstanding publications in the field of Asian Studies and has always been organized around broad interdisciplinary bases (social sciences and humanities) rather than traditional geographic or disciplinary compartmentalization. It has grown from an experiment with 50 books and 5 dissertations in 2005, to the leading Book Prize in the field of Asian Studies, with almost 700 books, more than 170 dissertations and 98 articles in 2021. To reflect ICAS’s decentering approach, the IBP honors [publications in different languages](#). Professor Hua’s Dissertation is entitled [Peasants Versus Empires: Transnational Civil](#)

[Justice and National Legal Decolonization in Manchuria, 1881-1951](#).

James Johnson is the editor of Volume Five of *A Cultural History of Ideas*, (*featured below*) published this year by Bloomsbury. Its six volumes span the period from Classical Antiquity to the Present, with the same nine chapters in each: Knowledge; The Human Self; Ethics and Social Relations; Politics and Economics; Nature; Religion and the Divine; Language, Poetry and Rhetoric; The Arts; and History. The set has been named winner of 2023 *Prose Award for Reference Works in the Humanities*, awarded by the American Association of Publishers.



Eugenio Menegon, while a Visiting Professor at the [Department of Asian and North African Studies](#) of his alma mater, Ca’ Foscari University of Venice (Italy), also kept busy with several other activities in Europe and Asia. He made two presentations in Lisbon (Portugal) on the China missions’ economic and social data from the [China Historical Christian Database](#) (CHCD), at the [Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau](#) and at the symposium [“Circa Misiones: Jesuit Understandings of Mission through the Centuries”](#) (June 7 and June 13). He then traveled to Taiwan as invited speaker at the

central research institution there, the Academia Sinica, where he gave three talks (June 20, 21 and 26) at the History Department of the famed [Institute of History and Philology](#) (“European Networks at the Qing Court, 1601-1838” and “The Propaganda Fide Mission in Beijing, 1711-1811”), and at the [Institute of Modern History](#) (“Empire of Paper. The Astonishing Story of an 18th-Century Manuscript Vocabulary of the Chinese Language”). On July 7 he gave a presentation on the attitude of the Qing government to Christianity in the international workshop [“The Lone Guardian: Politics, Culture and Society in China under the Yongzheng Emperor \(1723-1735\)”](#) at the University “L’Orientale” of Naples (Italy), a long-time BU sister institution in Italy. He spent a few days in mid-July conducting archival research in the Biblioteca Laudense and the Diocesan Archives in Lodi (Lombardy, Italy), gathering materials on Carlo Ambrogio Mezzabarba, Papal Legate to the Court of the Kangxi Emperor of the Qing dynasty in 1720-21, and thereafter Bishop of Lodi. After some rest in July and August, he finally offered a research methodology lesson on “global microhistory in European-Asian relations” on August 22 for the Summer School participants (doctoral students from all over the world) at the [Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History](#) at Boston College.



(Featured above: Professor Menegon consulting a manuscript at the Biblioteca Laudense in Lodi)



(Featured above: the main salon of the Bishop Palace in Lodi, Italy, built by Carlo Ambrogio Mezzabarba after his return from China.)

Simon Payaslian published an article, entitled “The Origins of Armenian Nationalism in the United States and the American Armenian Press (1880s-1920s),” in [Studies on National Movements](#).

Bruce Schulman, with several BU historian alumni, assembled in Newcastle for the annual meeting of HOTCUS, the Historians of the Twentieth Century United States. Professor Schulman gave the keynote address, “The New American Political Tradition: And the People Who Made It.”

John Thornton was quoted and interviewed in a [BU Today article](#), entitled “BU Historians Weigh In on Ron DeSantis’ Slavery Remarks and His Defense of Florida’s Controversial Social Studies Curriculum.”

NEW FACULTY: **JILENE CHUA**

**Cultural History, Asian/American History,
Race and Law, Empire and Migration Migration**

Is there a class you are particularly excited to teach?

In the Spring semester, I am teaching a course called “Fashion and Beauty Under War and Empire.” I have never taught a fashion history class before, but I studied it when I lived in Paris for a few years. I am excited to explore how histories of colonialism, the environment, and race come to the fore from investigating histories of clothing, accessories, and shoes.

Where are you from?

I was born in Manila, the capital city of the Philippines. I moved with my parents to Marshfield, Wisconsin when I was around the age of three, and then Cleveland, Ohio when I was five. Finally, when I was ten, we moved to Richland, Washington, where I mainly grew up.

What do you like to do outside of teaching History?

I have a growing collection of indoor plants, and I enjoy watching each plant grow and change. Sometimes, I spend hours watching YouTube videos about how to repot or propagate different kinds of plants. I also like watching movies, and I am part of a monthly movie club.

What is one interesting or fun fact about you?

When I was a child, I used to collect buttons. I especially loved the buttons that sparkled like gemstones.



This fall, Professor Chua is teaching [HI 372: Power and Pleasure in Asian America](#) and [HI 400 B1: Topics in History \(Paper Children, Tiger Parents: Capitalism and Asian American Families\)](#).

Warren Dennis received a 2023-24 Consortium for the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine fellowship.

Ethan Key is presenting a paper in the [CURA colloquium](#) for this Fall 2023 semester.

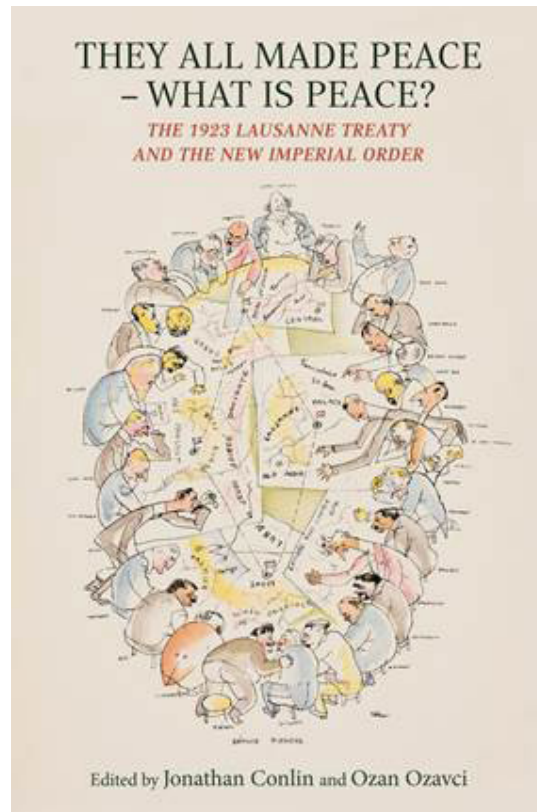
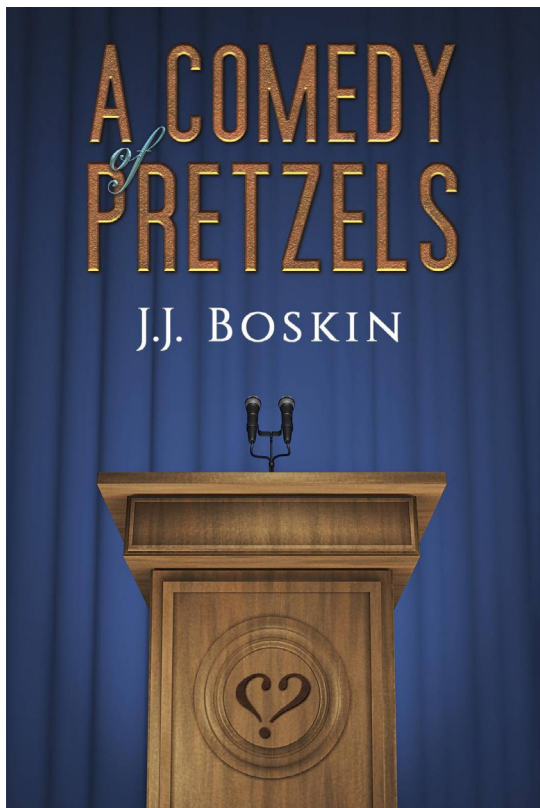
Tom Sojka received a North American Conference on British Studies-Gale Digital Scholar Lab Fellowship. This award is designed to support research and projects that utilize Gale Primary Sources, such as Gale’s British Library Newspaper series. Tom will use this fellowship to research his fifth dissertation chapter on the interwar gossip column.

Henry Tonks published a review essay this summer, entitled “Can American Liberalism Reinvent Itself?” Read the entire essay on the website of [Public Seminar](#). His article “You Can Always Get What You Want: On ‘The Big Chill’ and American Politics” appears in the [Los Angeles Review of Books](#).

Henry also was awarded a grant from the Dirksen Congressional Center for his research proposal and selected for the Newberry Library’s 2023-24 History of Capitalism Seminar (seminar call is [here](#)). His paper is “The Next American Frontier: Liberalism, Technology, and the Quest for a New Industrial Policy in the 1980s.”

Joe Boskin has just published [A Comedy of Pretzles](#), a comic novel set on the campus of a prestigious university in the Northeast whose President is the tyrannical Jeremiah Brittle.

Erik Goldstein published “Britain’s Plans for a New Eastern Mediterranean Empire, 1916-23,” which appears Jonathan Conlin and Ozan Ozavci, eds., *They All Made Peace – What is Peace? The 1923 Lausanne Treaty and the New Imperial Order* (London: Gingko, 2023).



PROFESSIONALIZATION & PRODUCTIVE SUMMMERING WORKSHOP

In May, the department launched its first professionalization workshop for all advanced graduate students. The workshop consisted of three panels: conducting archival research, writing the dissertation, and going on the job market. **Andy Robichaud, Rui Hua,** and **Cari Babitzke** kicked the day off with tips on archival research, from crafting a strong prospectus to organizing information and managing data. **Phil Haberkern** then provided strategies for the dissertation process, including accountability and time management. Finally, **Dave Glovsky** shared insights into the academic job market, while **Sasha Goldman** from Professional Development and Postdoctoral Affairs discussed pursuing alt-ac jobs, interviewing strategies, and preparing application materials. The workshop was well-attended and well-received by advanced graduate students. Thank you to **Alexis Peri** and **Sarah Phillips** for organizing what will surely become an annual event!

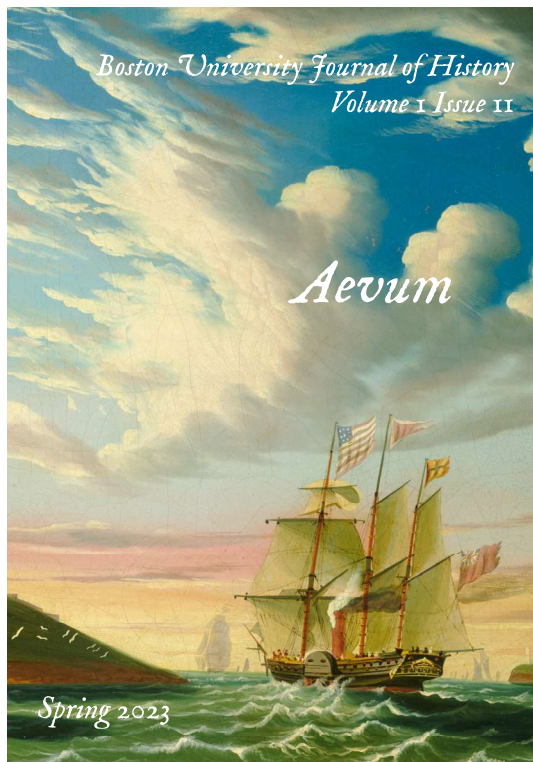


HISTORY DEPARTMENT MEDIA



Department Podcast

Amplifying the Past is a podcast featuring a regular series of conversations on history, brought to you by the History Department at Boston University. The first episode is now live and you can find it on [Spotify](#), Apple Podcasts, and anywhere else you get your podcasts. The first season of *Amplifying the Past* features interviews with **Rachel Nolan, Alexis Peri, Paula Austin, James Uden, Rui Hua, and Cari Babitzke.**



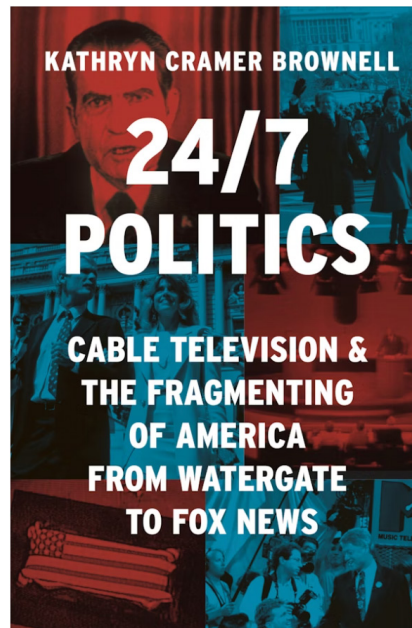
Undergraduate History Journal

Aevum: Boston University's Journal of History is a peer-reviewed journal seeking proposals, submissions, and editors for its Fall, 2023 issue. *Aevum* publishes work from BU students across all majors and minors. No previous experience is required to join as a writer or editor. To read their most recent publication, Spring 2023, click [HERE](#).

If you are interested in writing a new article or submitting an essay from a previous course, please click [HERE](#). If you are interested in improving your editing skills and learning more about how articles are published, please click [HERE](#). The deadline is Monday, September 18, 2023 at 11:59 PM EST.

Cari Babitzke (GRS '22) was interviewed by *Bostonia*, BU's alumni magazine, about partisan gun politics in America and her own experience growing up with guns. Read the full article, entitled "Under the Gun: How the AR-15 Divided a Nation" [here](#). (See next page)

Katie Brownell (GRS '11) has published her second book, *24/7 Politics: Cable Television and The Fragmenting of America From Watergate to Fox News* (featured right) with Princeton University Press. Read more about Katie and her new book on the [History Department's website](#).



BU at HOTCUS:

In June 2023, several BU historians assembled in Newcastle for the annual meeting of HOTCUS, the Historians of the Twentieth Century United States. The program featured presentations by BU Ph.D. **Andrew Bell** (currently at Oberlin College) and BU History B.A. and Fulbright Scholar **Anna Stroinski**, a panel devoted to the new book by BU Ph.D. and Purdue University Professor **Katie Brownell**, and the keynote address, 'The New American Political Tradition: And the People Who Made It,' by Professor **Bruce Schulman**.



From left to right: Anna Stroinski, Bruce Schulman, Andrew Bell, and Katie Brownell

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: **DR. CARI BABITZKE**



Photo by Jackie Ricciardi

History PhD Alumna and former BU History lecturer, Cari Babitzke, was interviewed for the [feature article](#) in the latest issue of *Bostonia*, Boston University's Alumni Magazine. Babitzke's research specializes in 20th century U.S. History, with a focus on firearm politics.

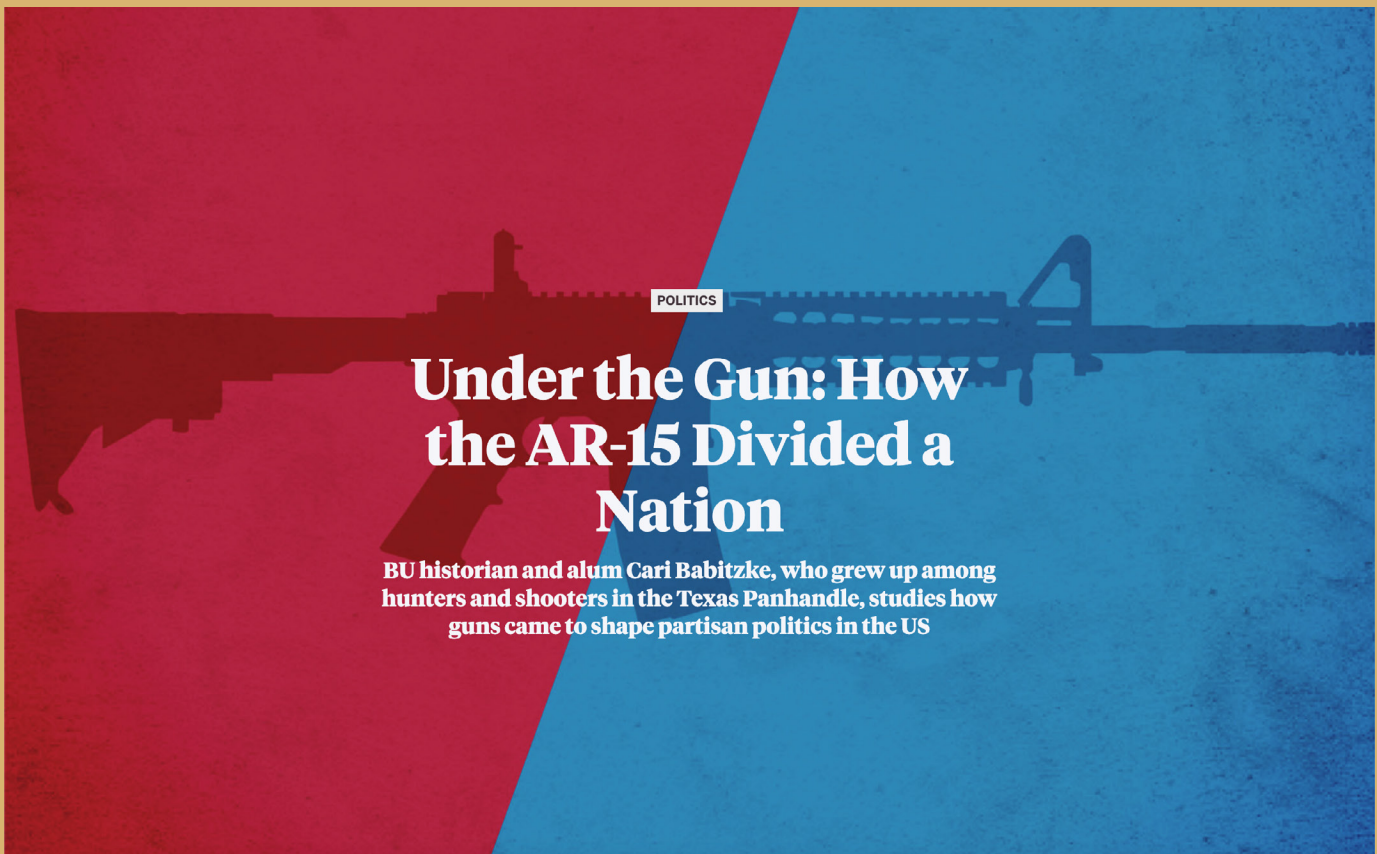


Image by Stephanie Testa

UPCOMING EVENTS

CAS 150TH ALUMNI WEEKEND CELEBRATION

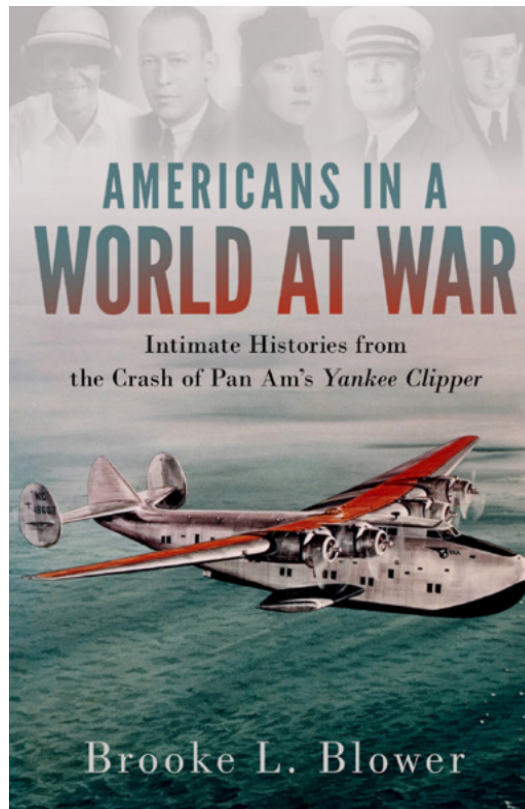
September 21 and 22, 2023

This year's Alumni Weekend will double in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the College of Arts and Sciences! Alumni of the History Department are encouraged to partake in on-campus celebrations, which will include a guided tour of Boston and an after party on the 21st, with full-campus celebrations the following day.

BOOK RELEASE PARTY FOR PROFESSOR BROOKE BLOWER

September 26, 2023

Come celebrate Boston University History Department's Professor Brooke L. Blower on the launch of her new book *Americans in a World at War: Intimate Histories from the Crash of Pan Am's Yankee Clipper*. The celebration features a symposium on the book with Professor Blower and Professor Chad Williams of Brandeis University. [RSVP for this event on Eventbrite.](#)



**READ MORE ABOUT THE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY ON OUR SOCIALS:**

