

**A. Ordinary People: Putting a Face on Historic Times**  
*Faculty from multiple departments*  
**Tuesdays, 9:30 - 11:00 a.m. Norris University Center**

This course will look at specific places and moments in history as seen through the lens of little-known voices and often forgotten lives from those times. It's a way of humanizing history through various personal documents and secondary source material that tell of the thoughts, achievements, and intriguing stories of ordinary people. What was their reality? How do these personal narratives reflect on the broader historical landscape?

**Jan. 14                    The Splendid Dead: An American Story**  
**Kevin Boyle, *William Smith Mason Professor of American History***

A few hours before he was to be executed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, on a fevered night in August 1927, Bartolomeo Vanzetti asked for a last chance to see his sister, who had arrived from Italy a few days earlier so that he wouldn't die alone. She was already in hiding at an apartment on Boston's Beacon Hill, waiting for the night to end. A supporter rushed her over to Charlestown, across the barricaded bridge, down the deserted streets, through the mass of policemen gathered in the prison yard. By all rights the warden should have turned her away. But he'd decided that the night was going to be cruel enough already. She could have five minutes. Vanzetti had been prepared for execution. She pressed up against the bars of his cell so they could speak in whispers. As she was about to leave, he slipped her the letter he'd spent the last hours trying to write. "*Sorella carissima*," it began, "*Io sono innocente.*" "I am innocent." A simple declaration. An absolute assurance. A gift for his sister to carry back to the family Vanzetti had abandoned two decades before. If only it were true. In this talk, I'll tell his story.

**Jan. 21                    The City Logical: Why the Edward P. Brennan Plan for Chicago is More Important than the Daniel Burnham Plan**

**Bill Savage, *Professor of Instruction, English***

Most Chicagoans, and any tourist who has taken the Chicago Architectural Center's River Tour know of Daniel Burnham, the man who led the Colombian Exhibition planning process, and whose *Plan of Chicago* (written with Edward Bennett and lushly illustrated) is generally credited with starting the "City Beautiful" movement and creating grand spaces like our Lakefront Park system. But far more important to the lives of everyday Chicagoans and tourists trying to find an unfamiliar destination, was the plan of Edward P.

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Brennan, an everyday Chicagoan himself. In 1909, after years of lobbying, he convinced the City Council to create a logical grid system, with State and Madison Streets as the X and Y axes of our East-West and North-South addresses. He also crusaded to regularize our street names. This pair of initiatives has made Chicago a City Logical, easy to navigate. In this lecture I will explore the process Brennan went through, and the deeper meaning of the street names, from Leif Erickson Drive to Du Sable Lake Shore Drive.

**Jan. 28            Metering the Public Way**

**Henry Binford**, *Professor emeritus, History*

This lecture examines a momentous innovation that occurred in Oklahoma City in the summer of 1935, when an unlikely trio introduced the first coin-operated parking meter. The aim was to combat congestion, but the consequence was outrage, controversy, and litigation. We will examine how this event fit into a long history of regulating activity and space in cities, in the context of changing ideas about the meaning of “public.”

**Feb. 4            Phillis Wheatley and Ona Judge: Black Women, Slavery and Freedom in the Revolutionary Era**

**Leslie Harris**, *Professor, History*

A comparison of the lives of Phillis Wheatley and Ona Judge gives a sense of the different experiences of enslaved women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Wheatley was kidnapped as a child in Africa and sold into slavery, while Ona Judge was born into slavery in Virginia and owned by the Custis estate of Martha Washington. This lecture will tell the fascinating stories of their lives and how they ultimately gained freedom.

**Feb. 11            Colored Orphan Asylum of Antebellum New York City and Interracial Cooperation**

**Leslie Harris**

New York City’s Colored Orphan Asylum opened in 1836. This lecture will explore the Quaker white women who founded it; the Black children and parents who were clients; the Black doctor who worked with them; and what this says about the possibility for interracial collaboration in the pre-Civil War United States.

**Feb. 18            Abortion and Patriarchy in Small Town New England ca. 1860**

**Kate Masur**, *Board of Visitors Professor of History*

This lecture tells the story of a young woman who died from an abortion in New England in 1858 and the legal proceedings against the doctor who provided it. Along the way, we’ll touch on how people in this milieu understood gender

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relations, pregnancy, and contraception. The Supreme Court's 2022 Dobbs decision gave extensive attention to abortion restrictions in the mid-nineteenth century, giving new salience to the topics discussed in this lecture and the next.

**Feb. 25            Slavery, Motherhood, and Women's Authority  
During the Civil War**

**Kate Masur**, *Board of Visitors Professor of History*

This lecture explores the 1863 publication of Fanny Kemble's *Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation*. Kemble, an abolitionist white woman, delivered an uncommonly frank account of enslaved women's experiences with pregnancy and childbearing. We'll explore how the book, which was widely reviewed, both reflected and advanced American discussions of race, gender, and power amid the Civil War.

**Mar. 4             Americans Who Dared: Aiding Refugees  
During the Nazi Era**

**Daniel Greene**, *Adjunct Professor, History*

During the 1930s and '40s, some Americans overcame enormous challenges to help Jewish refugees who were seeking to escape Nazism's grip. Most worked within networks of religious or humanitarian organizations, using both legal and illegal means to overcome significant obstacles, including restrictive US immigration laws. This lecture will focus on Americans who took extraordinary risks, and sometimes jeopardized even their own safety, to assist people in areas of Europe that Nazi Germany controlled or occupied.

**Mar. 11            From Bicycles to Bloomer Girls: How Chicagoans and  
Wildcats Shaped Women's Sports**

**Caitlin Fitz**, Associate Professor, History

This lecture will explore how Northwestern's students, faculty, and alumni – and Chicagoans more generally – have shaped American women's sports. We'll explore why Frances Willard linked bicycles to women's empowerment in the 1890s. We'll watch Olympic organizers respond when NU undergraduate back-stroker Sybil Bauer became the first woman to break a men's world record in 1924. We'll explore why, when the *Chicago Defender* polled readers to identify the city's most popular Black athlete in 1927, women were nearly a third of the nominees, and we'll study the cultural impact of Jazzercise, invented by Evanstonian Judi Sheppard Missett '66. These local histories will serve as a window into the broader history of American women's sports.