

ABIGAIL MODAFF

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ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Instructional Assistant Professor in American History, Honors College at the University of Houston, September 2022–

College Fellow in Social Studies, Harvard University, July 2021–July 2022

EDUCATION

Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

PhD, History, May 2021

Dissertation: “‘To Meet Life Face to Face’: Communication and American Social Reform from Haymarket to the Harlem Renaissance”

Cambridge University, Cambridge, England

MPhil with Distinction, Political Thought and Intellectual History, 2013

Dissertation: “Sin, Conscience, and Authority in the Pro-Toleration Writings of Edmund Calamy and John Shute Barrington, c. 1704”

Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

A.B. *summa cum laude*, Social Studies, language citation in Russian, Phi Beta Kappa, 2012

FELLOWSHIPS, PRIZES, AND AWARDS

Society for United States Intellectual History Leo P. Ribuffo Prize for Best Dissertation in U.S. Intellectual History, July 2022

Boston Ruskin Prize, awarded for essay “‘Those Who Have Ears to Hear, Let Them Hear’: William James and the Significant Life,” May 2021

At Harvard University

Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History Dissertation Completion Fellowship, 2020-21

Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History Graduate Term-Time Research Grant, Modified and Honorary, Fall 2019

Harvard Kennedy School Ash Center for Democracy Doctoral Fellowship, 2018-19

History Departmental Summer Research Grant, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020

Lionel DeJersey Harvard Cambridge Scholarship, 2012-13

Hoopes Undergraduate Thesis Prize, 2012

At Cambridge University

Quentin Skinner Prize, awarded for outstanding performance in the MPhil in Political Thought and Intellectual History, 2013

PUBLICATIONS

The Ladies' Pioneer Society: A History of Women and Ideas in America. Under contract with Simon and Schuster for delivery in 2026.

“The Hidden Life: Ellen Gates Starr, Vida Dutton Scudder, and Catholic Socialist Progressivism.” *Modern Intellectual History* 20, no. 4 (December 2023): 1065–90.

“Progressivism, Then and Now: Teaching Identity, Difference, and the Meaning of Americanism.” [The Journal of the History of Ideas Blog, September 7, 2020.](#)

“[Review of] *William James: Psychical Research and the Challenge of Modernity*, by Krister Dylan Knapp.” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* Vol. 48, no. 4 (Spring 2018): 572–74.

“[Review of] *William James, Pragmatism, and American Culture*, by Deborah Whitehead.” *William James Studies* Vol. 14, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 185-91.

PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS

Roundtables and Symposia

Panelist, “Roundtable: Reckoning with Masculinity in Intellectual History,” Organization of American Historians Annual Conference, New Orleans, April 2024.

Participant, “James Engell: The Creative Imagination and the Committed Word,” Symposium, Harvard University, December 2023.

Panelist, “President’s Lunch and Plenary Roundtable,” Society for United States Intellectual History Conference, Boston, November 2022.

Panelist, “Plenary Roundtable: Remembering Charles Capper,” Society for United States Intellectual History Conference, Virtual, December 2021.

Selected Conference Papers

“Rosa Sonneschein: Forgotten Rebel of the Women’s Club Movement.” Society for United States Intellectual History Conference, Denver, November 2023.

“Men Know So Little of Men?: The Politics of Understanding, 1880-1930.” Society for United States Intellectual History Conference, Boston, November 2022.

“Dynamite and Deliberation: Anarchist ‘Bomb-Talking’ and the Violence of Language.” McGill-Queens Graduate Conference in History, McGill University, March 2018.

“Crossing the Line: Division and Dialogue in Jane Addams’s Democratic Vision.” International Conference on Public Intellectuals, University of the Azores, May 2017. **Invited presentation*

“On a Certain Silence: Literary Form Against Philosophy (Against Itself) in William James.” American Comparative Literature Association, Harvard University, March 2016. **Nominated for the Horst Frenz Prize for best presentation by a graduate student*

“Religion as Toleration: Dissent and Truth in Early-Eighteenth-Century England.” Graduate Conference, Harvard Divinity School, October 2015.

“Varieties of Collective Individualism: William James and Émile Durkheim on Religious Life.” Graduate Conference in Intellectual History, Cambridge University, May 2015.

Panels Organized

“Philosophy and Literature Without Interdisciplinarity” (co-organizer), American Comparative Literature Association, Harvard University, March 2016.

TEACHING

Selected Teaching and Advising Awards

Special Commendation for Extraordinary Teaching in Extraordinary Times, Spring 2020

History Prize Instructor, awarded May 2019

Phi Beta Kappa Alpha Iota Award for Outstanding Teaching, May 2019

Certificate of Distinction in Teaching, Six-Time Recipient (2016–2019, 2021)

As Instructor of Record

Women Breaking the Rules, Honors College at the University of Houston, Spring 2024

American History after 1877, Honors College at the University of Houston, Fall 2022–present

America in the Progressive Era, Honors College at the University of Houston, Fall 2023

Identity and Protest in Modern America, Harvard University, Fall 2021

Identity Before Identity Politics: America in the Progressive Era, Harvard University, Spring 2020

As Tutorial Leader

Social Studies 10b: Introduction to Social Studies II, Harvard University, Spring 2022

Social Studies 10a: Introduction to Social Studies I, Harvard University, Fall 2021

As Teaching Fellow

The American Revolution, Prof. Jane Kamensky, Harvard University, Fall 2019

What is Intellectual History?, Prof. James Kloppenberg, Harvard University, Spring 2018

A Humanities Colloquium from Homer to Garcia Marquez, Prof. Jill Lepore, Harvard University, Fall 2016 and Fall 2017

A Humanities Colloquium from Joyce to Homer, Prof. Jay Harris, Harvard University, Spring 2017

Guest Lectures

“Progressive Reform, the Social Gospel, and Social Settlements.” History 1330: Social Thought in Modern America, Harvard University, February 2017 and October 2019.

“Activating the Declaration of Independence.” History 1776: The American Revolution, Harvard University, October 2019.

Undergraduate Research Advising

Honors Senior Thesis Reader for Megan Dagnall, History Department, University of Houston, for her thesis on diversity and inclusion at the University of Houston (2023-4)

Independent Study Supervisor for Adithi Nythruva, Honors College, University of Houston, Spring 2024, for research on women’s intellectual history and popular literary culture

Faculty Mentor, FrameWorks Program for Undergraduate Humanities Research, University of Houston, 2023-4:

Adrian Stanley, for his project on queer representation and American film in the 1970s

Annfaye Sternberg, for her project on the *M.S. St. Louis*, Jewish refugees, and historical memory

Independent Study Supervisor and Research Assistant Supervisor for Annfaye Sternberg, Honors College, University of Houston, Spring 2023–Spring 2024, for research on American Jewish women and women’s intellectual history

Thesis Advisor to:

Lani Roberts, Committee on Degrees in Social Studies, Harvard University, Spring 2022, for her thesis entitled “‘Minneapolis Had This Coming’: The George Floyd Uprising and the Rise of Police Abolition”

Thomas Elliott, History Department, Harvard University, 2018-19, for his thesis entitled “Pledging Allegiance: Religion and Federal Anti-Communism in the United States in the Early Cold War, 1950-1954”

Co-Convenor, Center for European Studies Undergraduate Thesis Workshop, Harvard College, 2021-22

Further Advising and Student Support

Member, Faculty Advisory Network, Honors College, University of Houston, Fall 2023–

Panelist, “Navigating the Job Market,” Graduate Program, History Department, Harvard University, April 2023

Interim co-Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies, History Department, Harvard University, March 2022–June 2022

Chair, Selection Committee, Harvard-Cambridge Scholarships, June 2018–August 2023

Member, Governance Committee, Harvard-Cambridge Scholarships, June 2018–present

Facilitator, Yearly Workshop on Post-Graduate Fellowship Opportunities for History Students, Harvard College, Fall 2017–Fall 2021

First-Year Proctor (residential staff) and Member of the Board of First-Year Advisors, Harvard College, Fall 2017–Spring 2020

Non-Resident Tutor in Fellowships, Adams House, Harvard University, Fall 2016–Spring 2018

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND ACADEMIC SERVICE

Independent Curriculum Consultant for Diversity and Inclusion, A.P. United States History Team, College Board, July 2021

Member, Harvard History Department Course Support Team, May–September 2018 and June 2021

Member, Twentieth-Century United States History Workshop, September 2018–December 2019

Faculty Representative, History Graduate Student Association, Harvard University, Fall 2017–Summer 2019

Search Committee for Professor of the Indigenous History of North America (graduate representative), History Department, Harvard University, 2016–7

Research Assistant for Professor James Kloppenberg, Spring 2012 and Summer 2016

LANGUAGES

German: advanced reading with dictionary, intermediate speaking

Russian: intermediate reading and speaking

Spanish: intermediate reading and speaking

French: basic reading and speaking