

News from the Director



By Alan McPherson

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This spring semester has unfortunately been haunted by political uncertainty impacting some of our international students and by the continuing budgetary cutbacks at the university as a whole and the penury of jobs—especially government jobs for historians—that awaits Ph.D.s in history. Amid this insecurity, CENFAD remains a beacon of stability because of the

continuing dedication and creativity of its students and faculty and because it relies on endowments rather than the vagaries of university budgets. The Center has thus continued to invite top scholars to campus and to fund the highest quality study of force and diplomacy. Catch up on how the CENFAD community is doing on [page 8](#).

Spring 2025 Colloquium

Again this semester, top scholars graced us with their presence and attracted healthy, engaged audiences, again testifying to the variety of interests that our department nurtures. Videos of (almost) all of these talks can be seen on CENFAD's [webpage](#).

Our first speaker, on January 23, was the University of Delaware's **David Suisman**, the author of *Instrument of War: Music and the Making of America's Soldiers*, who [brought home](#) to the CENFAD audience the importance not so much of the content of military music but rather of the experience of listening to and playing music while serving in the US military. It was a fascinating display of cultural and social history blending seamlessly with military history.



Dr. David Suisman introduces the contents of his new book to an engaged audience.

On February 11, **Kate Epstein** of the University of Rutgers-Camden discussed her new book, *Analog Superpowers: How Twentieth-Century Technology Theft Built the National Security State*. She discussed how designs of battleship targeting technology were essentially stolen between US and British scientists, telling a little-known but illuminating

tale of how military “progress” occurs.

On March 13, followed **Osamah Khalil** from Syracuse University. Khalil [presented](#) his sweeping history of the last half-century of US superpowerdom, *World of Enemies: America's Wars at Home and Abroad from Kennedy to Biden*, which links domestic security issues to the ever-broadening scope of US global security. Please also see the CENFAD interview with Khalil ([pg. 12](#)).

From Catholic University, our next speaker was **Michael Kimmage**, who [talked about](#) his timely new book, *Collisions: The Origins of the War in Ukraine and the New Global Instability*. CENFAD further discussed the developing war in Ukraine with Kimmage ([pg.18](#)).

On April 4, **Samuel Moyn**, who teaches both history and law at Yale University, [made an argument](#) for why “Making War Humane” in recent US administrations is a misnomer. Moyn is the author of *Humane: How the United States Abandoned Peace and Reinvented War*.



Dr. Samuel Moyn delivers a lecture about his new book to a group of fascinated students and faculty.

And finally, on April 7, **Heather Venable** of the US Air Force's Air Command and Staff College, came to [discuss](#) “Flying into the

Future: The Role of Airpower in Today and Tomorrow’s Warfare.” She is the author of *How the Few Became the Proud: The Making of the Marine Corps’ Mythos, 1974-1918*.



Grace Anne introducing Dr. Heather Venable of the US Air Force’s Air Command and Staff College

Iva Sidash

Outside of our planned speakers of Spring 2025 came the pleasant [surprise visit](#) from Iva Sidash on February 17. Not a scholar but someone who describes herself as a “Visual Storyteller,” Sidash is originally from Ukraine and displayed several of the photos she took of how her fellow Ukrainians are coping with the horrors and deprivations of the Russian war against them. Days after her presentation at CENFAD, Sidash published a [guest essay](#) in the *New York Times*.



Spring 2025 Prizes

In March, the following four graduate students won CENFAD research awards:

- **Joseph Johnson** won the Richard Immerman Research Award of \$3,000 to pursue dissertation research in Seattle, Abilene, and Atlanta.
- **Lucas Martins** won a Wachman Fellowship of \$800 to pursue dissertation research in South America.
- **Andrew Santora** won a Wachman Fellowship of \$3,000 to pursue dissertation research in Germany.
- **Samantha Sproviero** won a Wachman Fellowship of \$610 to pursue dissertation research in Providence, Rhode Island.

The following four students received CENFAD funds to present their work at academic conferences:

- **Lucas Martins**, at the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations in Arlington, Virginia.
- **Grace Anne Parker**, at the Military History Conference in Mobile, Alabama.
- **Audrey Rankin**, at the Cushwa Center Conference at the University of Notre Dame.
- **Jake Wolff**, at the Business History Conference in Atlanta.

Congratulations to all the winners!

- ◀ *Iva Sidash, a visual storyteller based in Ukraine describes how she captures the War through intimate human stories*

Barnes Conference

My “News from the Director” does not typically mention the sponsorship funding that CENFAD gives to the annual Barnes Conference because it happens every year. But it is worth noting every once in a while that this Philadelphia-based conference is entirely run by our graduate students (with faculty helping out by chairing several panels) and attracts undergraduates and other graduate students from throughout the country and beyond it.

Of the many Temple grad students who presented or commented at the Barnes, those who have received any funding from CENFAD include (in order of appearance on the program) **Casey VanSise, Brandon Kinney, Ethan Cohen, Ella Scalse, Audrey Rankin, Grace Anne Parker, Ariel Natalo Lifton, Duncan Knox, and Steps Kostas**.

Fourth CENFAD Emerging Scholar

For the fourth year in a row, thanks to the generosity of Temple History Ph.D. Todd Davis, CENFAD helped in recruiting an incoming MA student with the Emerging Scholar Graduate Award. The award aims to support MA-level students interested in diplomatic and military history and to do so especially among underrepresented candidates, including women. The 2025-2026 incoming Emerging Scholar will be **Isabela “Cas” Casanova**, who is interested in the impact of international solidarity movements on domestic policy. Welcome to the CENFAD community, Cas!

Thanks to the Davis Fellow

Finally, I want to heartily thank Davis Fellow **Grace Anne Parker**, who handled all her duties with aplomb and, well, grace, and did so while also helming the Barnes Club as its president. Grace Anne was somewhat unusual in taking on Davis duties as an advanced, ABD grad student. She demonstrated that it is more than possible to run CENFAD while also drafting dissertation chapters!

Next year’s Davis Fellow will return to being a second-year Ph.D. student: Marcella Toledo, whose interests center on pan-Americanism in nineteenth-century inter-American relations. Welcome to CENFAD, Marcella!