

## 2017 Belmont Undergraduate Research Symposium

### History

Moderator: Pete Kuryla, Ph.D.

April 20, 2017, 3:30-5:00 p.m.  
JAAC 2142

3:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.

#### **Freedom's Cause: Early Jazz and its Critics**

Jordan Heykoop

Faculty Advisor: Brenda Jackson-Abernathy, Ph.D.

During the First World War, the appearance of jazz music—a distinctly African American art form—inspired middlebrow white music critics to rethink democracy. Because of prevailing racial notions, sexual taboos and stereotypes, these critics' ideas of democracy also required a re-imagining of black bodies as profoundly "other": primitive or exotic, reflecting stages of development lost to history. If jazz somehow represented great potential for democratic freedom—open-ended, improvisatory, pluralistic and yet unified—then the freedom of black bodies in performance spaces seemed alien or threatening—sensual, dangerous, and sexually charged. As James Reese Europe's spread "freedom's cause," or the democratic message of American jazz music across war-torn Europe, at home in Jim Crow America white music critics grappled with multiple meanings of freedom as jazz music became ever more popular.

3:45 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

#### **The Waldorf to the Wilderness: Hotels in Gilded Age America**

Parker Van Der Hyde

Faculty Advisor: Brenda Jackson-Abernathy, Ph.D.

As industrial-capitalism American-style triumphed at the end of the nineteenth century, the American hotel attracted transatlantic notice. Visiting New York City's Waldorf Astoria in 1904 after a long absence from his native country, the novelist Henry James wondered whether "the hotel-spirit might not just *be* the American spirit most seeking and most finding itself." The hotel seemed to represent the pinnacle of Gilded Age style: remarkable displays of opulence that only hid deeper ideas about the proper relationship between labor and leisure among a new and rising bureaucratic class. Hotels symbolized a whole host of desires for those who could afford them. At the Waldorf, one could enter a sumptuous world of luxury after escaping the perilous workaday traffic of New York City streets. In the Adirondacks at so-called "wilderness" hotels guests might imagine the rugged frontier spirit in a safe space blissfully free of physical labor. As class distinctions and divisions of labor tightened, Gilded Age hotels represented the opportunity to role-play, to experience social mobility up and down the scale, all for a fee.

4:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

## **An Appeal to Heaven: Chaplains of the Revolution and the Theology of Battle**

Nicholas J. Johnston

Faculty Advisor: Brenda Jackson-Abernathy, Ph.D.

Ideas of many different kinds drove the American Revolution, including religious ones. Typical for sophisticated thinkers of their age, the major American revolutionary figures (Paine, Jefferson, Adams, Franklin and the like) had a variety of theological ideas and tendencies. The rank and file in the American army came into the war with any number of theological dispositions too, but the experience of soldierly life and battle unified their thinking in remarkable ways. In the field and from the pulpit, “fighting chaplains” or “soldier parsons” developed a remarkably coherent battle theology. God had blessed the war against Britain, and he had ordained the cause of religious and civil liberty. As the minister Jonathan Mayhew famously suggested, rebelling against a tyrannical force was a “glorious” Christian duty. Like the religious inscriptions sewn onto flags and carried into battle, these messages became powerful means for spreading the revolutionary gospel. To inspire soldiers, enforce morality and military discipline, revolutionary chaplains apotheosized revolutionary violence as God’s patriotic will, inseparable from political right.

4:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

## **The Impact of Rousseau’s Writings, The French Revolution, and Napoleon’s Conquest of Spain on Mexican Independence**

Alex DaCruz

Faculty Advisor: Cynthia Bisson, Ph.D.

“The Tartars, its subjects or neighbors, will become its masters... Such a revolution seems to me inevitable. All the kings of Europe are laboring in concert to hasten its coming.” These words, written by the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, signified the momentous age of revolutions in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The American colonies gained their independence from George III and England, France executed its King, initiated the Reign of Terror, and paved the way for Napoleon to conquer Europe. After the American Revolution and during the French Revolution, a seed of revolutionary fervor was planted in Latin America and the Caribbean. One of the most significant case studies during the Age of Revolution was New Spain, the Spanish colony that became independent Mexico. New Spain was a culturally and intellectually prosperous colony in the New World, and was introduced to and influenced by French revolutionary works and ideas that helped spur its push for independence from its mother country. The reception of Rousseau’s works in Latin America, the ideas of the French Revolution brought into New Spain, and Napoleon’s conquest of Spain exemplify the indirect, yet significant way French thought influenced Mexican independence.