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Honors Thesis Abstracts

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SAMPLE OF SENIOR HONORS THESIS ABSTRACTS

Personal In The Political: The Usage of Political Postcards During the Dreyfus Affair

Rebecca Alifimoff

There is no shortage of academic work published on the subject of the Dreyfus Affair. Many of these studies focus on the large amount of documentation that accompanied the Affair, which was widely chronicled in newspapers, journals, posters, and cartoons throughout the duration of the Affair. Invented in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, picture postcards were massively popular at the time of the Dreyfus Affair and political Dreyfus postcards became part of the media culture surrounding the Affair. Though many studies that examine the visual culture of the Affair make note of the existence of Dreyfus related postcards, few works treat the postcards in-depth. Drawing on Dreyfus postcards from the archives of the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme in Paris, the Centre Charles Péguy in Orléans, and the Lorraine Beitler Collection of the Dreyfus Affair at the Kislak Center for Rare Books and Special Collections, this thesis places the political postcards of the Dreyfus Affair within the historical context of the postcard medium. It also examines how postcards were used as mediums of political expression during the Affair. While Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards used postcards as part of a media campaign aimed at influencing public opinions, postcard users used the cards to communicate political opinions within their larger social circle. Political postcards allowed members of the general public to become active participants in the Dreyfus Affair.

The Butcher and the Arson: How Spain's Generals Lost her Empire and Destroyed her Crown Jewel

Daniel Brennan

This thesis examines the Cuban War of Independence which was fought from 1895 to 1898. In particular, it is an exploration of the various strategies which the Spanish authorities implemented in response to the insurgent threat, culminating with the orders by Governor General Valeriano Weyler mandating the relocation of Cuban civilians to the island's Spanish-held cities and towns. This so called 'Reconcentration' sparked a humanitarian crisis which resulted in the deaths of well over 150,000 Cuban civilians and drew widespread international condemnation of Spain's vicious counterinsurgency campaign. Through examination of archival correspondence, government records, and original cartography this thesis arrives at a conclusion hinted at but not expressly argued by existing historiography. It finds that despite its operational and tactical successes, Reconcentration failed to deliver an ultimate victory because it was a strategy ill-suited to the shifting political sands in Madrid and oblivious to evolving moral sentiments abroad.

Snipping a Trouser Button: How Britain Gave Away Heligoland

Ryan Delgaudio

Condemning his successor, Leo von Caprivi, for signing a terrible diplomatic deal, former German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck in 1890 quipped that the Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty had given Britain a new suit, Germany's various East African kingdoms, in exchange for a trouser button, an island in the North Sea measuring less than one square mile in area. Its Frisian population and geostrategic position at the mouths of five major European rivers made Heligoland an object of German affection in a nationalizing moment. As thousands of German tourists flocked to Britain's smallest colony every summer, the British colonial government struggled to maintain its position as the colony's legal system, finances, and communication apparatuses

became inextricably linked to the German Empire. After repeatedly rejecting earlier diplomatic overtures by the German government to acquire the island, Lord Salisbury seized the moment of Bismarck's dismissal and the ensuing administrative turmoil in Berlin to expand British imperial power. The Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty represents the height of the tenuous Anglo-German bilateral relationship, which culminated in the First World War.

The Reception and Reaction to the French Revolution of 1848 in America

John Keblish

In the middle of the nineteenth century the entirety of Europe was engulfed by a revolutionary wave. Spearheaded by the people of France in the year 1848, historic monarchies across the continent toppled at the hands of popular protests. While some revolutionaries at the time cited Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto as their source of inspiration, many French protesters used rhetoric from the American revolution to justify their revolt. While the Revolutions of 1848 are an amazing event to understand European politics, economics, and social structure, this thesis focuses mainly on the American perspective of this unique event. Following the Revolutionary War and early republic-building stages of the United States, American history seems to lag until the Civil War. My thesis helps bring new light to a brief moment in this untapped history: America's reaction, publicly and politically, to the French Revolution of 1848. Through diligent primary source synthesis, this thesis argues that the events of the French Revolution of 1848 were used to promote specific agendas, namely abolition and anti-abolition, both in Congressional debates as well as public newspapers.

“A Modern and Distinctively Scottish Portrait”: Scottish Modern Art and National Identity in the Interwar Period

Brooke Krancer

Although the Scottish Renaissance in the early 20th century is largely considered a literary movement, visual artists significantly contributed to it as well. In so doing, they aimed to legitimize Scotland as an intellectual force in Europe separate from the broader British tradition. They thus made important contributions to the burgeoning Scottish nationalist movement—largely based on a newfound perception of a Scottish rather than British national identity. My thesis examines the ways in which modern art in Scotland in the interwar period contributed to the formation of a modern Scottish national identity that was instrumental to the rise of Scottish nationalism during the era. Specifically, I explore two different ways in which Scottish artists practicing in the period attempted to forge a unique artistic identity: contribution to the growing Scottish arts at home and engagement with the broader international modern art movement abroad. Four artists who were active in the interwar period underscore the importance of visual artists in the Scottish Renaissance through both their contributions to the movement at home and their international artistic influences and practice—J.D. Fergusson (1874-1961), William Johnstone (1897–1981), William McCance (1894–1970), and Edward Baird (1904-1949). Identifying politically as Scottish nationalists, they showcase the link between the Scottish modern art movement and the building of a Scottish national identity, or Scottish cultural nationalism, during the period that saw the rise of Scottish nationalism as a political force.

Mothers, Wives and Voters: A Transition to Difference-Oriented Feminist Rhetoric in Mexico, 1938-1953

Alia Schechter

The women's suffrage movement in Mexico lasted almost four decades (1917-1953) and was regularly forced to change

political messaging to adapt to the changing political and social currents. In the years after Lázaro Cárdenas' presidency, the language used to justify women's political enfranchisement shifted from an equality-centric argument to one that highlighted the differences between men and women. This thesis seeks to examine the factors that led to such a significant discursive shift in the women's suffrage movement and how these factors affected the movement's achievements. My first chapter analyzes how contradictions in the post-Revolutionary state created political pressure for women's organizations to work within the government bureaucracy and, as a result, adopt rhetoric that was less subversive. My second chapter addresses how women's organizing changed over the course of the 1940s, which provided evidence for speeches and campaigns of how women were able to use their "maternal" skills for social good. Lastly, I argue that this language made its way into the political mainstream – both for male and female political figures – because of Amalia Castillo Ledón and her tireless efforts both in Mexico and in international feminist circles.