
2020 COVID Challenge Contest

2020 A Prize Contest: Applying History to Clarify the COVID-19 Challenge

In early April 2020, the American Historical Association issued a call for historians to apply their skills to help illuminate the challenge COVID-19 poses to our nation and the world.

To reinforce and support this call to action, the Stanton Foundation launched a weekly contest to identify and reward what we judged the best new Applied History article or op-ed that illuminated the COVID-19 crisis.

GRAND PRIZES

The Foundation awarded two grand prizes for best articles published during the first six months of 2020.

Best January 1 - June 30, 2020

A. Wess Mitchell and Charles Ingrao, "[Emperor Joseph's Solution to Coronavirus](https://www.wsj.com/articles/emperor-josephs-solution-to-coronavirus-11586214561)" (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/emperor-josephs-solution-to-coronavirus-11586214561>) *The Wall Street Journal*, 4/6/2020

The Foundation determined that this article best achieves the aims of the contest by providing an excellent illustration of how "Historians ...play an important role by providing context, in this case shedding light on the history of pandemics and the utility of that history to policy formation and

public culture.” The authors draw lessons for crisis management, epidemiology, and international politics from an analysis of the Habsburg-Ottoman border that they call "one of the most successful quarantine systems ever created," and present their research in a lively and accessible form.*

A. Wess Mitchell formerly served as Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs. He is the author of three books, including *The Grand Strategy of the Habsburg Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2018).

Charles Ingrao is Emeritus Professor of History at Purdue University. He has published over a dozen books on Habsburg, German and Balkan history, including *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1618–1815* and *In Quest and Crisis: Emperor Joseph I and the Habsburg Monarchy* and served for a decade as editor of *The Austrian History Yearbook*.

*AHA Issues Statement ([https://www.historians.org/news-and-advocacy/aha-advocacy/aha-issues-statement-regarding-historians-and-covid-19-\(april-2020\)](https://www.historians.org/news-and-advocacy/aha-advocacy/aha-issues-statement-regarding-historians-and-covid-19-(april-2020))) Regarding Historians and COVID-19 (April 2020)

Best Overall of the Contest

Andrew Ehrhardt, "[Disease and Diplomacy in the 19th Century](https://warontherocks.com/2020/04/disease-and-diplomacy-in-the-nineteenth-century/)" (<https://warontherocks.com/2020/04/disease-and-diplomacy-in-the-nineteenth-century/>), *War on the Rocks*, 4/30/20

The Selection Committee's recommendation noted, 'of all the articles in the contest, this offers the most original analysis of a specific historical analogy and best applies it to the present moment.'

Andrew Ehrhardt is a postdoctoral fellow with the Engelsberg Applied History Programme at King's College London.

Week Ten

Marc-Michael Blum and Peter Neumann, "[Corona and Bioterrorism: How Serious is the Threat?](https://warontherocks.com/2020/06/corona-and-bioterrorism-how-serious-is-the-threat/)" (<https://warontherocks.com/2020/06/corona-and-bioterrorism-how-serious-is-the-threat/>) *War on the Rocks*, 6/22/20

The Selection Committee recommended the article as "an illuminating analysis of the risk of bioterrorism in light of coronavirus, informed by history and technical expertise.'

Marc-Michael Blum is a former Head of Laboratory at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. He holds a PhD in Biochemistry from the University of Frankfurt.

Peter Neumann is Professor of Security Studies at King's College London, and served as Director of its International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation from 2008-18.

Week Nine

Jim Harris, “[Pandemics: Today and Yesterday](http://origins.osu.edu/article/pandemics-history-covid-plague-cholera-influenza-hiv)” (<http://origins.osu.edu/article/pandemics-history-covid-plague-cholera-influenza-hiv>) *Origins: Current Events in Historical Perspective*, 6/15/20

The Selection Committee described the article as 'an outstanding example of "how we got here" Applied History, interspersed with helpful clues and insights for the present, and a comprehensive and readable overview of pandemics since Ancient Greece.'

Jim Harris is a lecturer in history at The Ohio State University, where he received his PhD in modern European history and the history of science in 2017.

Week Eight

After careful consideration, the Foundation did not award a prize for Week 8.

As the Selection Committee observed, 'In light of current events, many Applied Historians have turned their attention from coronavirus to write prolifically about race relations, policing, and protests. While this is a positive and productive use of energy, it has also led to a clear reduction in the number and quality of Applied History articles on the coronavirus challenge.'

Week Seven

Eleanor Russell and Martin Parker, “[How pandemics past and present fuel the rise of mega-corporations](https://theconversation.com/how-pandemics-past-and-present-fuel-the-rise-of-mega-corporations-137732)” (<https://theconversation.com/how-pandemics-past-and-present-fuel-the-rise-of-mega-corporations-137732>) *The Conversation*, 6/3/20

The Selection Committee described it as 'an exemplary Applied History article that draws on analogies as well as the evolution of economies and governments to illuminate coronavirus, while also carefully evaluating the past and present on their own terms.'

Eleanor Russell is a PhD Candidate in History at the University of Cambridge.

Martin Parker is Professor of Organization Studies at the University of Bristol. His recent books are *Shut Down the Business School* (Pluto 2018) and *Anarchism, Organization and Management* (Routledge 2020).

Week Six

Walter Scheidel, “[The Spanish Flu Didn't Wreck the Global Economy](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-05-28/spanish-flu-didnt-wreck-global-economy)” (<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-05-28/spanish-flu-didnt-wreck-global-economy>) *Foreign Affairs*, 5/28/20

The Selection Committee described it as 'a provocative argument explaining the evolution of Americans' risk tolerance and its social and economic implications for coronavirus.'

Walter Scheidel is Dickason Professor in the Humanities, Professor of Classics and History, and Kennedy-Grossman Fellow in Human Biology at Stanford University.

Week Five

Michael T. Osterholm and Mark Olshaker, "Chronicle of a Pandemic Foretold" (<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-05-21/coronavirus-chronicle-pandemic-foretold>), *Foreign Affairs*, 5/21/20

The Selection Committee described it as 'a masterful combination of institutional history, historical analogies, and subject-matter expertise that clarifies why the US was unprepared for coronavirus and what it can do to better manage future pandemics.'

Michael T. Osterholm is Regents Professor and Director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota.

Mark Olshaker is a writer and Emmy Award-winning documentary filmmaker.

The two are authors of *Deadliest Enemy: Our War Against Killer Germs* (2017).

Week Four

George H. Nash, "The Coronavirus Pandemic of 2020 in Historical Perspective," (<https://www.nationalreview.com/2020/05/coronavirus-pandemic-historical-perspective/>) *National Review*, 5/11/20

The Selection Committee commended the article's 'illuminating history of the 1918 flu, with an exemplary analysis of similarities and differences to the coronavirus pandemic and an inspiring, insightful lesson.'

George H. Nash is an independent scholar, historian, and lecturer, with specialties in twentieth century American political and intellectual history. He is the author of *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* and three volumes of a definitive, scholarly biography under the general title *The Life of Herbert Hoover*.

Week Three

Douglas Bell and Conrad Crane, "Korean War Economic Mobilization Is More Relevant To The Current Pandemic Than World War II," (<https://warontherocks.com/2020/05/korean-war-economic-mobilization-is-more-relevant-to-the-current-pandemic-than-world-war-ii/>) *War on the Rocks*, 5/6/20

The Selection Committee highlighted the article's 'detailed analysis of the political, operational, and economic aspects of Korean War mobilization that illuminates present policy choices and offers helpful suggestions for the future.'

Douglas Bell is a Post-Doctoral Fellow with the Historical Services Division at the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center and recently completed his PhD at Texas A&M University.

Conrad Crane is Chief of Historical Services for the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center. His most recent book is *Cassandra in Oz: Counterinsurgency and Future War*, published by Naval Institute Press.

The opinions expressed are those of the authors alone and do not reflect those of the U.S. Army, the Department of Defense, or any part of the U.S. government.

Week Two

Andrew Ehrhardt, "[Disease and Diplomacy in the 19th Century](https://warontherocks.com/2020/04/disease-and-diplomacy-in-the-nineteenth-century/)" (<https://warontherocks.com/2020/04/disease-and-diplomacy-in-the-nineteenth-century/>), *War on the Rocks*, 4/30/20

The Selection Committee noted its 'clear-eyed, ambitious international history of public health and diplomacy that illuminates possibilities for global cooperation in managing coronavirus!'

Andrew Ehrhardt is a postdoctoral fellow with the Engelsberg Applied History Programme at King's College London.

Week One

Mary Eschelbach Hansen and Bradley Hansen, "[Making it easier to declare bankruptcy could avert economic catastrophe](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/04/24/making-it-easier-declare-bankruptcy-could-avert-economic-catastrophe/)" (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/04/24/making-it-easier-declare-bankruptcy-could-avert-economic-catastrophe/>), *Washington Post*, 4/24/20

The Selection Committee was particularly impressed with the detailed legal history of bankruptcy in the Great Depression that makes a clear, compelling argument for a concrete policy prescription.

Mary Eschelbach Hansen is professor of economics at American University and co-author of *Bankrupt in America*. She works on historical and contemporary issues in US social policy. In addition to bankruptcy, she has published on child welfare policy and the development of the US economy.

Bradley Hansen is professor of economics at University of Mary Washington and co-author of *Bankrupt in America*. He is also author of *Institutions, Entrepreneurs, and American Economic History: How the Farmers' Loan and Trust Company Shaped the Laws of Business from 1822 to 1929*.