

# HOLGER DROESSLER

hdroessler@wpi.edu

Worcester Polytechnic Institute  
100 Institute Road  
Worcester, MA 01609

Humanities & Arts  
Salisbury Labs 018

## **PERSONAL**

### **1) Education**

Harvard University, Cambridge, MA  
Ph.D., History of American Civilization, 2015  
A.M., History, 2011

Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Munich, Germany  
M.A., *summa cum laude*, American Cultural History, 2008

### **2) Work Experience**

Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, MA, Assistant Professor of History, 2019-present

Reader for AP U.S. History Exam, ETS, 2017-present

Writing Tutor, Harvard Writing Center, 2013-present

Convener of Worcester History of Capitalism Group, together with Liat Spiro (Holy Cross): founded and organized monthly faculty workshop for research on history of capitalism, 2021-present

## **TEACHING**

### **1) Teaching Experience**

Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, MA, Assistant Professor of History, 2019-present

Smith College, Northampton, MA, Lecturer in History, 2018-19

Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, Visiting Assistant Professor of History, 2016-18

Tufts University, Medford, MA, Lecturer, Department of History, 2015-16

Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, College Fellow in U.S. History, 2015-16

### **2) Teaching Innovations at WPI (registered students/capacity)**

B21 HU 3900 Hiphop (12/12)  
D21 HI 2914 Capitalism and Its Discontents (21/20)  
B20 HI 3344 Pacific Worlds (10/20)

### **3) Courses Taught at WPI (registered students/capacity)**

E1-24 HI 1313 U.S. of War Since 1917 (9/20)  
D24 HU 3900 Oceans (12/12)  
D24 HI 2913 Capitalism and Its Discontents (34/35)  
B23 HI 2316 20<sup>th</sup>-Century USFR (31/35)  
B23 HU 3900 Working (11/12)  
B22 HI 2316 20<sup>th</sup>-Century USFR (35/35)  
A22 HI 1313 United States & Territories (25/25)  
D22 HI 3341 Decolonial Thought & Practice (12/20)  
D22 HU 3900 Oceans (13/12)  
C22 HI 2314 U.S. History, 1877-1920 (49/50)  
B21 HU 3900 Hiphop (12/12)  
B21 HI 2316 20<sup>th</sup>-Century USFR (51/50)  
A21 HI 1313 United States & Territories (25/25)  
D21 HU 3900 Oceans (13/12)  
D21 HI 2913 Capitalism and Its Discontents (21/20)  
C21 HI 2314 U.S. History, 1877-1920 (50/50)  
B20 HU 3900 Working (12/12)  
B20 HI 3344 Pacific Worlds (10/20)  
A20 HI 1313 United States & Territories (25/25)  
D20 HU 3900 Oceans (14/12)  
D20 HI 2316 20<sup>th</sup>-Century USFR (49/50)  
C20 HU 3900 Working (9/12)  
C20 HI 3341 Decolonial Thought & Practice (5/20)  
A19 HI 1313 U.S. Empire and Technology (27/25)

### **4) Undergraduate Projects Advised at WPI**

WPI's Links to Slavery and Native American Dispossession, 2022-24: [gray Hauff](#) (2022-23), [Matthew Lydon](#) (2023-24); on-campus Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP), an interdisciplinary degree requirement at the interaction of science or technology and society in junior year, equivalent to three courses (9 credit hours)

### **5) Graduate Theses Advised at WPI**

M.S. Thesis in Science, Technology, and Innovation for Global Development: [Rachel Santarsiero](#) (2022-23)

### **6) Independent Studies at WPI**

C24 HI 3999 Use of Force after Vietnam: Jan Eshun  
C23 HI 3999 US in Iraq: Addie Suckow  
C22 HI 3999 USFR in MENA: Rachel Santarsiero  
B20 HI 3999 Colonialism & Sexuality: Sam Skinner  
C20 HI 3999 War Workers: Liam Rathke

### **7) Academic Advising at WPI**

Insight Advisor for First-Year students (2024)

## 8) Teaching Honors and Awards

Certificate of Teaching Excellence, Bok Center, Harvard, 2015

History Prize Instructorship, History Department, Harvard, 2013

## SCHOLARSHIP

### 1) Books

*Coconut Colonialism: Workers and the Globalization of Samoa* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022).

Reviewed in: *H-Transnational German Studies*, *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, *Pacific Affairs*, *Agricultural History*, *Diplomatic History*, *Business History Review*, *Journal of Pacific History*, *Central European History*, *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, *American Historical Review*

### 2) Book Chapters

“Vermitteln, verweigern und ‘mehr von der Welt sehen’: Samoaner in der Kolonialverwaltung Deutsch-Samoas.” In: *Das Auswärtige Amt und die Kolonien: Geschichte, Erinnerung, Erbe*, edited by Carlos A. Haas, Lars Lehmann, Brigitte Reinwald, and David Simo, 183-210. Munich: C.H. Beck, 2024.

“Changes on the Plantation: An Environmental History of Colonial Samoa.” In: *Migrant Ecologies: Environmental Histories of the Pacific*, edited by James Beattie, Ryan T. Jones, and Edward D. Melillo, 100-116. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2022.

“Afrodeutsche ‘Besatzungskinder’ im Nachkriegsdeutschland: Ein Interview mit Willi Meiler.” In: *The Black Diaspora and Germany/Deutschland und die Schwarze Diaspora*, edited by BDG Network, 144-158. Münster, Germany: edition assemblage, 2018.

“Colonialism by Deferral: Samoa Under the Tridominium, 1889-1899.” In: *Rethinking the Colonial State (Political Power and Social Theory*, Vol. 33), edited by Søren Rud and Søren Ivarsson, 203-224. Bingley, UK: Emerald, 2017.

“Epeli Hau’ofa.” In: *Encyclopedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism*, edited by Zak Cope and Immanuel Ness, 55-58. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015 (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2020).

“Germany’s El Dorado in the Pacific: Metropolitan Representations and Colonial Realities, 1884-1914.” In: *Imperial Expectations and Realities: El Dorados, Utopias, and Dystopias*, edited by Andrekos Varnava, 105-124. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2015.

“Performing Scientificity: Race, Science, and Politics in the United States and Germany after the Second World War.” In: *Black Knowledges/Black Struggles: Essays in Critical Epistemology*, edited by

Jason R. Ambroise and Sabine Broeck, 145-169. Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2015.

“Leonardo Ortiz.” In: *Encyclopedia of Blacks in European History and Culture*, edited by Eric Martone, 397-398. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2009.

### **3) Articles in Peer-Reviewed Journals**

“‘To Bring the Blessings of Peace and Order’: Preservationist Paternalism in American Samoa, 1872-1907.” In: *International History Review* (January 2024): 1-16.

“Copra World: Coconuts, Plantations, and Cooperatives in German Samoa.” In: *Journal of Pacific History* 53, No. 4 (November 2018): 417-435.

“From A-Town to ATL: The Politics of Translation in Global Hip Hop Culture.” In: *Journal of Hip Hop Studies* 2, No. 1 (Summer 2015): 100-116.

“Whose Pacific? U.S. Security Interests in American Samoa from the Age of Empire to the Pacific Pivot.” *Pacific Asia Inquiry* 4, No. 1 (Fall 2013): 58-65.

### **4) Book Reviews**

Paligutan, P. James. Lured by the American Dream: Filipino Servants in the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard, 1952-1970. In: *H-War*, H-Net Reviews. July 2023.

Vicuña Gonzalez, Vernadette. Securing Paradise: Tourism and Militarism in Hawai‘i and the Philippines (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013). In: *Journal of Pacific History* 49, 2 (2014), 239-240.

### **5) Fellowships and Grants**

Global Fellow, Global Lab, WPI, A24

National Endowment for the Humanities, Summer Stipend, 2023 (denied)

DEIJ Planning Grant, Office of Vice Provost for Research, WPI, 2022-23

Postdoctoral Fellow, Dahlem Humanities Center, Berlin, 2015

Graduate Society Dissertation Completion Fellowship, Harvard, 2014-15

Term-Time Dissertation Research Grant, Warren Center, Harvard, 2014

Graduate Summer Research Fellowship in Global History, Harvard, 2013

GSAS Merit/Term-Time Research Award, Harvard, 2013

Doctoral Fellowship, German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C., 2012

Graduate Student Affiliate, Weatherhead Initiative on Global History, Harvard, 2012-15

Graduate Student Affiliate, Center for European Studies, Harvard, 2012-15

Weatherhead Mid-Dissertation Fellowship, Harvard, 2012

GSAS Pre-Dissertation Summer Travel Fellowship, Harvard, 2011

Bavarian American Academy Fellowship, Gilder Lehrman Center, Yale, 2008

Fulbright Scholarship, University of Massachusetts Amherst and Amherst College, 2006-07

## **6) Professional Presentations**

“Jacob Vouza and Islander Suffering in the Battle of Guadalcanal” and “Coconut Capitalism: Copra Cooperatives in Colonial Samoa,” European Labor History Network Conference, Uppsala University, Sweden (June 2024).

“Contain & Conquer: Malaria Control in the Battle of Guadalcanal, 1942-1943,” *Standing on a Cliff: War and Peace in Environmental History*, International Workshop at Renmin University of China and Peking University, China (May 2024).

“New Directions in U.S. Empire” roundtable member, *Organization of American Historians*, New Orleans, LA (April 2024).

“Degrees of Unfreedom: Labor, Mobility, and Resistance in Colonial Samoa,” *Global Voyages, Local Sites: The Long Shadow of Atlantic Slavery in the Anglo-American and German Pacific* Workshop, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies, University of Bonn, Germany (June 2023).

“Occupation, Crisis, and Neglect: The U.S. Navy in Eastern Sāmoa, 1900-1937,” *Organization of American Historians*, Los Angeles, CA (March 2023).

“In the Shadow of the Pacific War: U.S. Empire, Military Labor, and Solomon Islanders in the Battle of Guadalcanal,” *American Historical Association*, Philadelphia, PA (January 2023).

“Solomon Islanders and the U.S. Military in the Battle of Guadalcanal,” *Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations*, New Orleans, LA (June 2022)

Invited lecture, “The Americanizing Mission and the Politics of Incorporation in Eastern Sāmoa, 1900-1937,” at *The Ambiguous Semantics of “Reeducation” in Transnational and Transhistorical Perspective* Conference, Amerikahaus Munich, Germany (February 2022).

Invited member, roundtable on “The After/lives of Pacific Plantations,” Association for the Social Anthropology of Oceania Annual Meeting, Portland, OR (January 2022).

“Servicing the Occupiers: Sex Work in the Vietnam War,” *Historicizing the Concept of Europe in Global History* Conference, European Labor History Network and COST Action “Worlds of Related Coercions in Work,” University of Vienna, Austria (September 2021).

- “Coconuts and Coercion: Colonial Capitalism in German Samoa,” Virtual Conference *Colonial Capitalism in Action: The New Social and Economic History of German Colonialism* (May 2021).
- “The Invisible Army: Third-Country Nationals and the U.S. Military in Iraq, 2003-Present,” Labor and Working-Class History Association, Durham, NC (May 2019).
- “War Workers: Pacific Islanders and the U.S. Military in WWII,” Labor and Working-Class History Association, Seattle, WA (June 2017).
- “Rethinking the Colonial State from the South Pacific: Euro-American Diplomats and Samoan Administrators, 1889-1899,” *Reanalyzing the Colonial State: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives* Workshop, University of Copenhagen, Denmark (August 2016).
- “The Education of Miss Pepe: Samoan Nurses and the Politics of Colonial Care, 1900-1924,” *Circulation of (Post)Colonial Knowledge: A Transpacific History, 1800-1980* Workshop, University of Zurich, Switzerland (March 2015).
- “Coals for Empire: The Building of the U.S. Naval Station in American Samoa and the Roots of Anti-Colonial Resistance, 1899-1920,” *Labor and Empire* Conference, University of California Santa Barbara, CA (November 2014).
- “From Copra Hands to Casino Tourists: Chinese Workers and the Making of Empire in Samoa, 1903-2013,” *European Congress on World and Global History*, Paris, France (September 2014).
- “Germany’s El Dorado in the Pacific: Images and Realities, 1884-1914,” *Association for Asian Studies Conference*, San Diego, CA (March 2013).
- “Whose Pacific? U.S. Interests and Samoan Livelihoods from the Age of Empire to the Present,” *American Studies Association* Conference, San Juan, Puerto Rico (November 2012).
- “‘A Cable to Bring Peace’: Telegraphic Imperialism in Samoa,” *Empires and Technologies in World History* Graduate Conference, Northeastern University, Boston, MA (March 2012).
- “‘And God Has a Long Memory’: Looking at Time in the Short Fiction of Edward P. Jones,” *Black States of Desire: Dispossession, Circulation, Transformation*, Collegium of African American Research Conference, Paris, France (April 2011).
- “Resistant Bodies: Towards an Analytics of the Body in African Diaspora Studies,” *Transcending Diaspora: Whiteness, Performativity, and the Politics of the Body* Inaugural Workshop, German Research Foundation Young Scholars Network on Black Diaspora and Germany, University of Muenster, Germany (December 2010).
- “What Difference Does Difference Make? A Transatlantic Perspective on Policing Interracial Relationships in the United States and Germany,” *British Association for American Studies Conference*, Nottingham, UK (April 2009).

“Recoding Nature: The Transatlantic Realignment of Racial Science after WWII,” *Black Knowledges-Black Struggles-Civil Rights: Transnational Perspectives*, Collegium of African American Research Conference, University of Bremen, Germany (March 2009).

“Searching for Order in the ‘White Atlantic’: Racism, Nationalism, and Interracial Relationships in the United States and Germany, 1877-1917,” Brown Bag Series, *Gilder Lehrman Center*, Yale University, CT (December 2008).

“Afro-German Hip-hop and the Construction of (Trans)National Identity in Postwar Germany: The Case of B-Tight’s *Der Neger*,” *Community Building and Identity Formation in the African Diaspora* Conference, Boston University, Boston, MA (March 2007).

## **7) Commentator/Chair for Academic Conferences**

Invited chair and commentator, panel on “American Empire on the Pacific: Whaling, Militarism, Addiction, and Tourism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” *American Historical Association*, New Orleans, LA (February 2022).

Commentator, panel on “Thinking About the Future of Work,” NSF NRT Program on Future of Robots in the Workplace at WPI (May 2021).

Commentator, panel on Neoliberal Employment & Unemployment Labor at Digital Workshop *Neoliberalism in the Global South*, hosted by The Decolonization Group, Utrecht University, Netherlands (May 2021).

Commentator on Quito Swan (UMass Boston), “Rude Boy International: Sound Systems, Dancehall and Diasporas,” Harvard International and Global History Seminar, Cambridge, MA (April 2021).

## **8) Public Lectures**

Book talks on *Coconut Colonialism*:

Harvard Alumni for Oceania (November 2021); University of Naples, Italy (November 2021); Goethe-University Frankfurt am Main, Germany (November 2021); Association for the Social Anthropology of Oceania, Portland, OR (January 2022); University of Augsburg, Germany (February 2022); WPI (March 2022); Social Democratic Party Berlin-Wedding, Germany (May 2022); Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway (June 2022); Labor and Working-Class History Association (June 2022); University of Otago, Dunedin, NZ (August 2022); Peking University, Beijing, China (May 2024)

“A Sea of Islands: An Introduction to the History of Oceania,” keynote lecture, WPI Global School Oceania Hub launch event (February 2021).

“Apia Calling: How the Telegraph Came to German Samoa,” invited lecture, Goethe-Society, Auckland, New Zealand (August 2012).

## **9) Editorial and Referee Services**

Associate Managing Editor, *Journal of Transnational American Studies* (2024-present)

Manuscript Reviewer for scholarly journals:

*American Journal of Legal History* (Oxford)  
*Labor History* (Routledge)  
*Journal of Pacific History* (Taylor & Francis)  
*Journal of Social History* (Oxford)  
*Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*  
*Modern American History* (Cambridge)  
*Journal of Military History*

Referee for German Fulbright Commission (2025)

## **10) Memberships and Offices in Professional Societies**

American Historical Association (AHA)

Organization of American Historians (OAH)

Society for Historians of U.S. Foreign Relations (SHAFR)

Labor and Working-Class History Association (LAWCHA)

German Research Foundation (DFG), Young Scholars Network “Black Diaspora and Germany”

German Association for American Studies (DGfA)

## **11) Scholarship in Progress**

*War Workers: How Noncombatants Supported and Subverted American Power from the Revolution to the War on Terror* (second book manuscript, research in progress).

“In the Shadow of the Pacific War: U.S. Empire, Military Labor, and Solomon Islanders in the Battle of Guadalcanal” (journal article under review with *Modern American History*, Nov. 2025)

## **12) Scholarly Honors and Awards**

Obama Dissertation Prize, Obama Institute for Transnational American Studies, Mainz, Germany, 2015

## **13) Citations**

See Citation Report

## **14) Public Scholarship**

[“How Samoans Resisted Coconut Colonialism: In the Early 20th Century, the Fruit’s Farmers Sowed the Seeds of Today’s Global Labor Struggle.”](#) *Zócalo Public Square* (February 21, 2024).

[“Teaching U.S. Territories.”](#) Co-author Kristin Oberiano. OAH Magazine, *The American Historian* (June 2023).



[“How Chinese Migrant Workers Resisted Coconut Colonialism in Samoa.”](#) *Asia-Pacific Journal* 20, No. 17:9 (October 2022).

[“American Samoa has succeeded in fighting covid-19 while the U.S. government failed: Historical awareness can save lives.”](#) *Washington Post*, Made by History, July 27, 2020.

Co-Host of “New Books in History” podcast on *New Books Network*, 2020-present

American Samoa Affairs Editor at *Pasquines* (news website for U.S. territories), 2020-present

[“The Life and Times of Taole: Whaling, Unfree Labor, and Lessons for U.S. History in the Pacific.”](#) *U.S. History Scene*, January 2014.

## **SERVICE**

### **1) Service to the Profession**

Jerry Bentley Prize in World History, Committee Member, American Historical Association, 2024-2027

Treasurer, WPI-AAUP Chapter, 2022-present

Member-at-Large, WPI-AAUP Chapter, 2021-2022

### **2) Service to WPI**

Elected Member of Campus Hearing Board, 2022-24

Chair of HUA Class of 1879 Awards Committee (honors excellent works in culminating project for HUA requirement), 2023-24

Member of HUA Class of 1879 Awards Committee (honors excellent works in culminating project for HUA requirement), 2021

Reader for President’s IQP Awards (honors IQPs with outstanding focus on science, technology, and societal needs), 2020, 2021

Co-Founder of WPI Oceania Hub, 2021-present

### **3) Service to the Community**

Member, Advisory Board, Clemente Program Worcester, 2020-present

Mentor, Big Brothers Big Sisters Massachusetts Bay, 2013-15

Member of Amnesty International, 2003-present

---

November 4, 2025