UCLA Luskin Center for History and Policy





2025-26 ANNUAL REPORT



Caltrans



studying change to make change

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Letter from the Outgoing Director

2 Letter from the Director

3 About LCHP

4 The LCHP Team

Research Grants: 2025-26 5

Research Grants: 2026-27 8

The History-Politics Podcast 11

2025-26 Public Programming 15

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LETTER FROM THE OUTGOING DIRECTOR

More than twenty years ago, at a gathering in a backyard in Mandeville Canyon, Meyer Luskin gave voice to the idea that we should find a way to make better use of history as a source of illumination of the present and a guide to the future. The historians gathered around him listened with rapt attention as Meyer described how an understanding of history had allowed him to make some fateful and salutary professional decisions. Over the course of the next decade, the idea ebbed and flowed in response to varying Departmental priorities. In 2017, the idea leaped to the top of the Department agenda, and Meyer and Renee Luskin decided to make a visionary gift to establish the UCLA Luskin Center for History and Policy. The Center opened by sponsoring a national History and Policy Summit on February 12, 2018.

Since then, the Luskin Center has gained renown on-campus and beyond for the wide array of its activities: workshops and lectures that combine history and policy, the annual Summer Research Institute, a fortnightly podcast, grant support to campus partners, and its own research papers that link history and policy on a wide array of local, regional, national, and international issues.
It has been a distinct honor and pleasure to direct the Luskin Center since its founding. And yet, the ultimate measure of success is the ability of the Center to move in important new directions under new leadership. As I commence a sabbatical at the University of Pennsylvania, it was the right time for me to step down as director of the Luskin Center. I'm grateful to Prof. Tawny Paul for stepping in as director for the 2026-27 academic year and wish her much success as she brings her own deep commitments to public history to the work of the Center. My thanks to the Center's assistant director, Dr. Rose Campbell, for her partnership and support over the years. And to Meyer and Renee Luskin, dedicated lovers of history and dear friends, my deep gratitude for your support. I look forward to the Luskin Center flourishing in the coming years, as it explores exciting new areas of work at the juncture of history and policy.



David N. Myers
Distinguished Professor of History
Founding Director, UCLA Luskin Center for History and Policy

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

I am honored to follow David and serve as Director of the Luskin Center for History and Policy for the 2026-27 academic year. During his time as the inaugural director of LCHP, David helped LCHP grow into the center of research and public education it is today. Under David's leadership, LCHP:

- Recorded 150+ episodes of the History-Politics podcast.
- Produced 21 research reports.
- Awarded 14 research grants to over 70 scholars.
- Hosted over 80 events and co-hosted over a dozen with its many partners.
- Conducted 5 Summer Research Institutes with over 500 student attendees.

I am grateful for David's dedication to setting the groundwork for future LCHP growth, and look forward to exciting things ahead in 2026-27.

My work over the past fifteen years, in early modern history and as a public historian, is anchored to the idea that history matters. An historical perspective is essential to understanding society's most pressing problems, be those political, economic or social. I strongly believe that history is a form of justice. The stories that we tell inform us of who we are, making history an essential tool for both inclusion and exclusion. History is not simple. As professional historians, it is our job to communicate history in all of its messiness and nuance, and to represent diverse voices, even when they contradict one another.

Over the next year, the LCHP will be engaged in a number of exciting initiatives as we carry out our mission to bring historical knowledge, perspective, and analysis to bear on key contemporary issues.

- This year, our research fellowships focus on the theme of "monuments." We are sponsoring teams of academics and practitioners to address policy issues related broadly to commemoration.
- Leading up to the 2026 elections, and with a generous grant from the Haynes Foundation, we are partnering with the Los Angeles History Collaborative to hold a public event and produce an academic report and series of videos on the history of democracy in Los Angeles.
- Our podcast will continue to bring historical expertise to public audiences, connecting history to a range of issues in the public interest.
- Our public events series will provide opportunities for historians and policymakers to have conversations about how the past shapes the present, and to learn from one another.

We are living in a moment when history is being increasingly politicized. No matter which side of the political spectrum we are speaking to, we will continue to insist on evidence-based interpretations of the past as a path toward a better future. I look forward to leading the Luskin Center as we bring historical expertise to public audiences.

Sincerely,



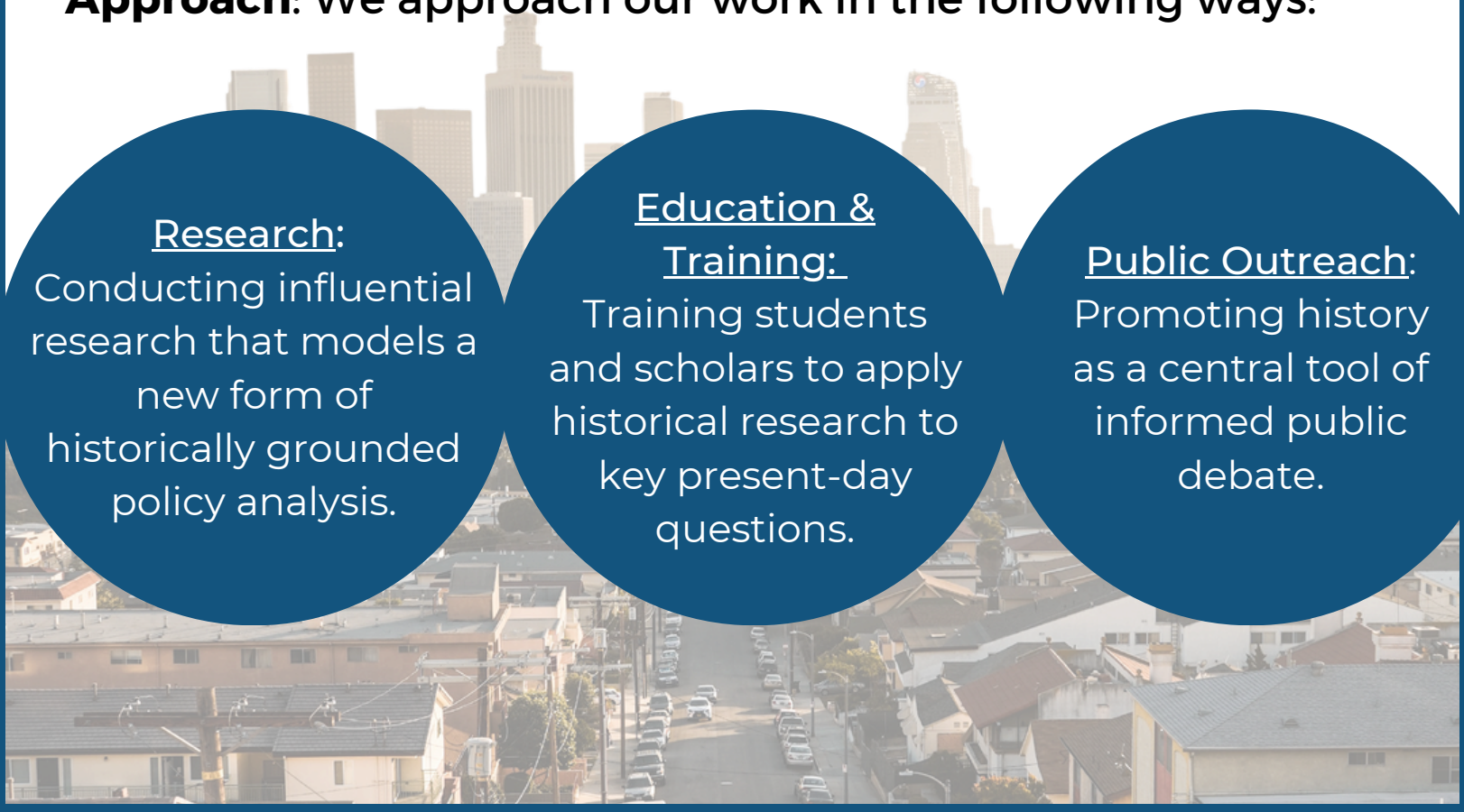
Tawny Paul
Director, UCLA Luskin Center for History and Policy
Director, UCLA Public History Initiative

ABOUT LCHP

Vision: The UCLA Luskin Center for History and Policy (LCHP) imagines a world in which leaders, policymakers, and citizens regularly use history as a guide to civic engagement, policy formation, and an alternative and better future.

Mission: LCHP aims to bring vital historical knowledge, perspective, and analysis to bear on key contemporary issues and policy deliberations.

Approach: We approach our work in the following ways:



Research: Conducting influential research that models a new form of historically grounded policy analysis.

Education & Training: Training students and scholars to apply historical research to key present-day questions.

Public Outreach: Promoting history as a central tool of informed public debate.

THE LCHP TEAM



Tawny Paul
Director

Tawny Paul is serving as Interim Director of LCHP from 2026 to 2027. Tawny is a social and economic historian of Britain and the Atlantic World, as well as a public historian. Her research concerns the history of capitalism, poverty and debt, labor, and incarceration. As a public historian, Tawny's work uses history to think critically about current social problems. As director of UCLA's Public History Initiative as well as LCHP, Tawny is uniquely situated to guide LCHP's research and public engagement.

Rose Campbell
Assistant Director



Rose has been the Assistant Director of LCHP since early 2023. Rose produces and frequently hosts LCHP's podcast (The History-Politics Podcast), organizes lectures and events, coordinates LCHP's grants as well as the research teams and employees, and handles all LCHP day-to-day logistics. In addition to her LCHP work, Rose researches state-sanctioned violence in the past through the archaeological study of human remains..

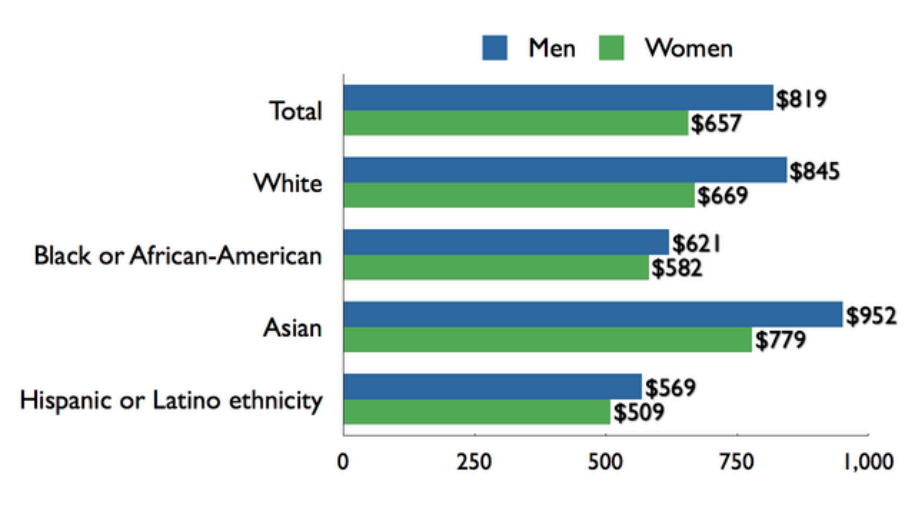


Sofia Sheremet
Undergraduate Student Worker

Sofia joined LCHP at the beginning of 2026 and will continue with us through 2027. Sofia is an undergraduate student at UCLA, majoring in history and Russian studies. She is interested in the ways history informs policies on domestic and international levels, from policy to diplomacy. She hopes to pursue a career in law.

Research Grants: 2025-26

Every year, LCHP awards grants to teams who conduct collaborative research that brings historical analysis to bear on key issues of contemporary relevance. During the 2025-26 academic year, LCHP awarded funding to support five major research projects.



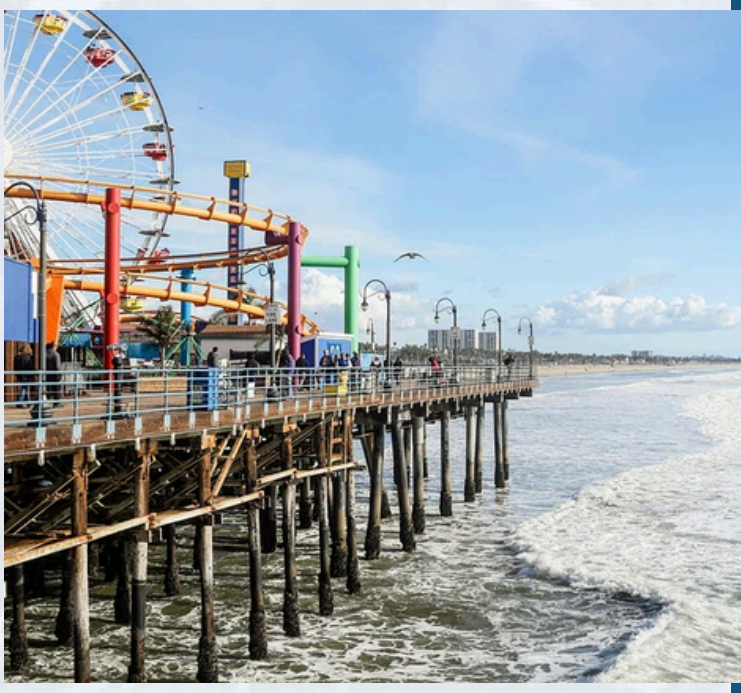
Sueño Incompleto: A History of the Latino Wealth Gap in the U.S.

Researchers: Amada Armenta, Rodrigo Dominguez-Villegas, Gabriella Carmona, Eileen Diaz McConnell, Juan Gonzalez

In 2022, the median Latino household held a quarter of the wealth of white households. This project explored three primary questions: What historical and contemporary structural barriers have contributed to the contemporary Latino wealth gap? How do Latino subgroups experience wealth disparities differently? And what indicators best define and measure Latino wealth over time?

Landback and Reparations in Santa Monica

Researchers: Kyle Mays and Peta Lindsay



This project explored the intersection of land returns to Indigenous populations and reparations for Black communities, specifically focusing on Santa Monica. By analyzing the harms caused by the City of Santa Monica to its Black and Indigenous populations in the 20th century, this project aimed not only to create a historical account of these events but also to partner with local educators to create instructional materials and lesson plans to disseminate the findings of this important work.



Seeds of Talent: The Long-term Effects of Knowledge Transfers through Foreign Education

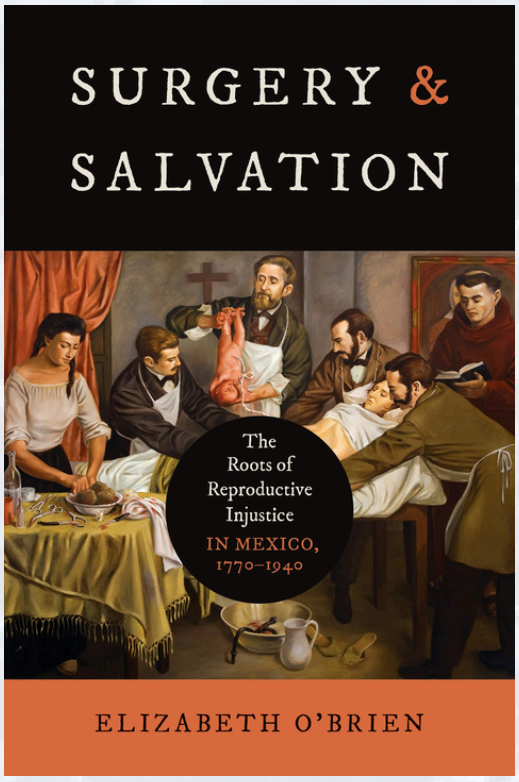
Researchers: Michela Giorcelli, Bo Li, and Yujing Huang

This project investigated the long-term effects of knowledge transfer through foreign education by examining the academic trajectories and institutional impact of Chinese scholars who studied in the United States during the 20th century. By evaluating changes in research topics, influence, and productivity between Chinese scholars who returned to China and those who remained abroad, the team explored the broader role that returnees played in building China's scientific infrastructure.

A Graphic Novel Interpretation of Reproductive Healthcare Policy and Ethics

Researchers: Elizabeth O'Brien and José Arboleda

This project translated historical insights about reproductive healthcare in colonial Mexico into popular knowledge, with the ultimate goal of influencing healthcare policy and advocacy. At the core of this project was the translation of O'Brien's scholarly monograph, *Surgery and Salvation*, into a Spanish-language graphic novel, which explored medical ethics and the politics of fetal and maternal life in Mexico between 1770 and 1940.





Staging Heritage: Policy Lessons from Global Cultural Events for the 2028 LA Olympics

Researchers: Tawny Paul and Esmerelda Ziani

This project examined how cultural programming is prepared and presented for international events such as the Olympics and other mega-sporting events. Specifically, this project analyzed the Olympics in 1984 (Los Angeles), 2012 (London), 2024 (Paris), and the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar to understand how major cities present national identity and craft public memory and history, often excluding Indigenous and other marginalized voices and perspectives. Ultimately, the outcomes of this project aim to inform institutions currently shaping programming for the Olympics in Los Angeles in 2028.

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Wealth gap: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3e/US_gender_pay_gap%2C_by_sex%2C_race-ethnicity-2009.png
Santa Monica:
https://images.rawpixel.com/image_800/czNmcy1wcml2YXRlL3Jhd3BpeGVsX2ltYWdlcy93ZWJzaXRlX2NvbnRlbnQvbHIvdXB3azYxODUxNTYwLXdpa2ltZWRpYS1pbWFnZS1rb3drcWY5dS5qcGc.jpg
Chinese students:
https://lh4.googleusercontent.com/proxy/Q4gezBAes1sgG6e8oSaBM79OnU45psCxkLbbql8iDYuX2I7GZzjgwvfaQz80wscwp1QsdXlNx99u_mhyFghNmP0URibbW5kM1IcrotIfsYZd0IUO3fLAu_so737lqEw8dvt23bdORDJU-Q
Surgery and Salvation: https://uncpress.org/9781469675879/surgery-and-salvation/
LA Olympics: https://www.aecbytes.com/illustrations/viewpoint/2024/issue_118-images/fig1.jpg

Upcoming Research Grants: 2026-27

We are thrilled to introduce our 2026-27 LCHP research grantees!



Walking Altadena: A moving monument for Black memory and just recovery

Researchers: Dana Cuff, Yang Yang, Claire Nelischer

This project reimagines monuments for public memory in a post-disaster context, beyond fixed objects and toward mobile, experiential forms. Together with our community partners, the team will use critical archival research and participatory design to develop community-authored walking tours that engage Altadena's built and cultural heritage in the wake of the 2025 Eaton Fire. Treating walking as a moving monument as well as meaningful engagement, the project asks how embodied, replicable, community-led interpretation can document Black Altadena, interpret loss and memory, and inform recovery policy.

Sevan Writers' House: A Virtual Monument Zone

Researchers: Mashinka Hakopian and Daniel Snelson



Constructed in 1935 on the shores of Lake Sevan in Armenia, the Sevan Writers' House has long served as a cultural site for local and international writers and artists. Building on previous conservation work, this project will use photogrammetry and 3D modeling to create a digital rendering of the Writers' House as a virtual monument zone. This process will hopefully lead to the development of policy recommendations for digital cultural heritage preservation at the Sevan Writers' House and beyond.

Upcoming Research Grants: 2026-27



The Political Economy of Confederate Monuments: From Construction to Removal

Researchers: Carlo Medici and Francesco Ferlenga

This project examines Confederate monuments across their life cycle. It first studies their construction, concentrating on the under-examined second wave of the 1950s and 1960s, to identify the political conditions under which monuments were erected and to estimate their effect on residential segregation. However, the team will also study the removal of these statues as another phase of their lifecycle, estimating the distributional consequences of recent removals for local housing markets.

The 605 Freeway as a Monument of Displacement: (Re)membering the Whittier Community of Jimtown

Researchers: Melissa Villa Nicholas, Daniel Diaz, Jerry Gonzalez, and Aramis Sandoval

This project addresses the systemic historical erasure and disenfranchisement of Jimtown, an unincorporated Mexican and Native American community in Whittier that was shaped by restrictive housing covenants, redlining maps, and midcentury urban renewal policies tied to the construction of the Interstate 605 Freeway. By reframing the 605 Freeway as both a tangible and ideological monument to “urban renewal” and “regional progress,” the project challenges official narratives that presented freeway construction as neutral modernization and recovers the community whose narratives were largely erased.



Upcoming Research Grants: 2026-27



The Lifecycle of Monuments: A Comparative Policy Framework for the Governance of Public Memory

Researchers: Caroline Streeter, Jasper Sattentau, and Laine Barriga

This research project examines the lifecycle of contested monuments to inform local public policy, decision-making, and stewardship at each stage of a monument's lifecycle. Changing political climates and shifts in public discourse change interpretations of a monument throughout its life; at every stage, monuments are continually reconstructed and their status as political and cultural objects of public memory shifts.

Consideration for Renaming Caltrans Facilities

Researchers: Jacob Wasserman, Juan Matute, Evelyn Blumenberg

This project will synthesize how major institutions choose to name and rename their facilities, characterize the groups of people for whom the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has named its facilities, and offer suggestions for where and how to approach facility renaming. For years, but especially since nationwide protests for racial justice in 2020, stakeholders have asked major institutions to take a fresh look at whom they honor, whose history they commemorate and how, and who has been left out. This research brings this conversation, along with its implications for racial, gender, and ability equity to the transportation space.

The History-Politics Podcast

In 2026, LCHP rebranded our podcast after extensive consultation with a podcast coach. You can now find all our episodes, old and new, under our new name: *The History-Politics Podcast: Putting the Past to Work*. Just like in our previous seasons under our old name, we continue to connect past to present, using historical analysis and context to help guide us through modern issues and policy decisions. Every other week we interview historians, policymakers, and thought leaders who bring historical knowledge of the past to bear on the most pressing issues of today.

By the numbers:

65,000
lifetime downloads

4412
Season 6 downloads

166
lifetime episodes

The Future of History
most popular episode

19
Season 6 episodes

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The History-Politics Podcast
Season 6 Highlights



Episode 5: Why Does U.S.-Iran Hostility Persist?

Guest: Dalia Dassa Kaye

Listen to the full episode here.



Episode 8: Native Agency, NAGPRA, and Museums

Guests: Joe Horse Capture and Stephen Aron

Listen to the full episode here.



Episode 14: Orbán, Trump, and the Autocrat's Playbook

Guest: Kim Lane Scheppele

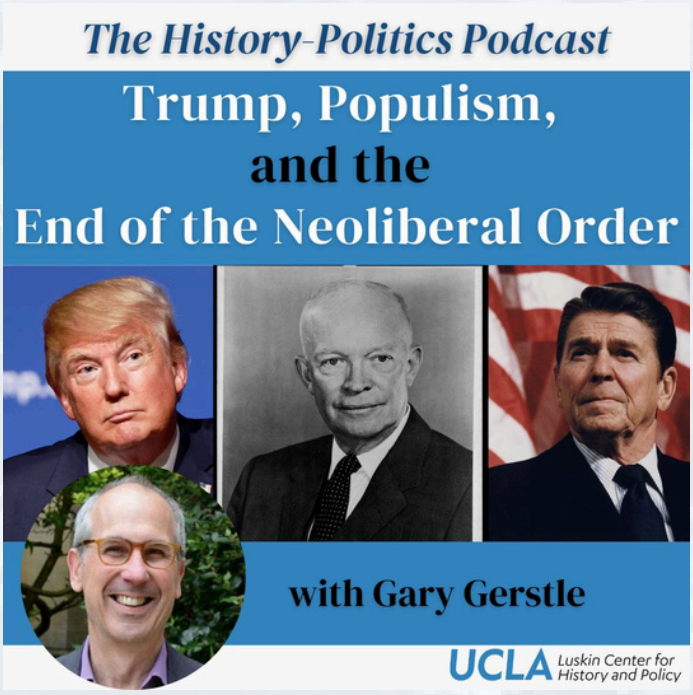
Listen to the full episode here.



Episode 17: Equality, Law, and the Trans Community

Guest: Cary Franklin

Listen to the full episode here.



Episode 18: Trump, Populism, and the End of the Neoliberal Order

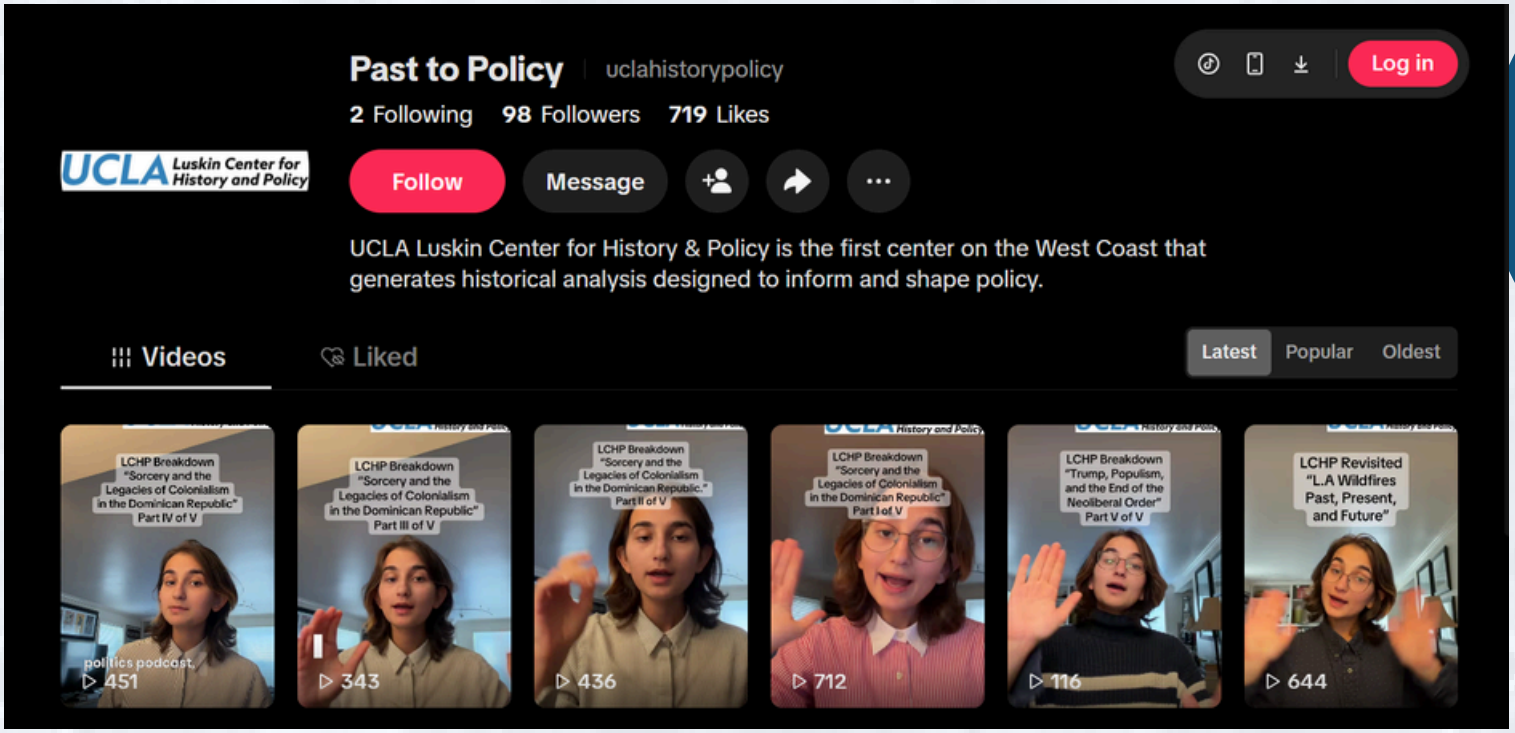
Guest: Gary Gerstle

Listen to the full episode here.

Updates for *The History-Politics Podcast*

We're on TikTok!

LCHP is now on TikTok! If you missed an episode of our podcast or don't have time to listen to the full episode, check out our short, multi-part videos that summarize the highlights of each new and revisited episode. Come check us out at @PasttoPolicy on TikTok!



Podcast Format Changes

As we continually search for ways to better serve our listeners, in 2026-27 we'll be experimenting with a new format for *The History-Politics Podcast*. This year, we'll be producing multiple short seasons (around 4 to 6 episodes each) that will focus on a specific theme. Stay tuned for our first season on public history, museums, and policy starting in October!

2025-26 Public Programming



Higher Education in Peril

Dec. 2, 2025

Kim Lane Scheppele, Ariela Gross, and Nomi Stolzenberg (who replaced David Kaye at the last minute) considered the ways that universities have responded to crises past and present.

Listen to the recording here.

The Law and Politics of the Federal Assault on Higher Education

Feb. 3, 2026

Joseph Fishkin joined David Myers to consider legal aspects of the various federal attacks on higher education under the Trump administration.

Listen to the recording here.





Antisemitism and the Law in the Second Trump Administration

Apr. 6, 2026

Amanda Shanor, Sigal Ben-Porath, and Serena Mayeri discussed how the University of Pennsylvania has responded to claims of antisemitism from the federal government, and considered the implications for academic freedom and university independence throughout the U.S.

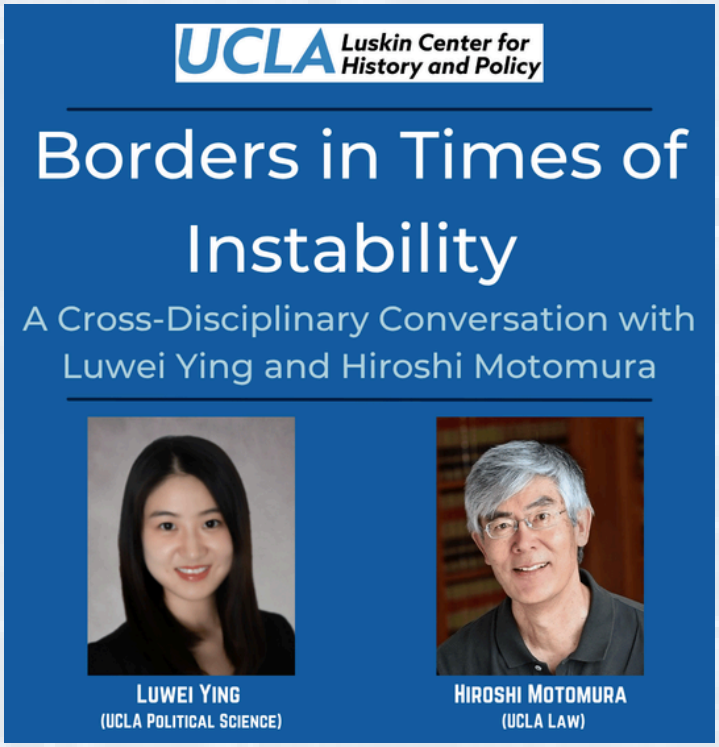
Listen to the recording here.

Borders in Times of Instability

Apr. 14, 2026

Luwei Ying and Hiroshi Motomura considered the nature of borders and discussed how national and international borders respond to political instability.

Listen to the recording here.





Stay in touch!

Follow us to hear about LCHP activities in the coming year

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Luskin Center for History and Policy

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