

David Roth Singerman — updated January 31, 2024

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CURRENT POSITION

- **University of Virginia**
Assistant Professor of History and American Studies, July 2017-present

BOOK IN PROGRESS

- *The Purity Machine: Science, Power, and the Invention of Sugar*, advance contract and under review with the University of Chicago Press

ACADEMIC
PUBLICATIONS

- “Who’s Afraid of the Dark Sugar?,” in *Acquired Tastes: Stories About the Origins of Modern Food*, ed. Benjamin Cohen, Anna Zeide, and Michael Kideckel (MIT Press, 2021)
- “The Reproducibility Crisis in the Age of Digital Medicine” (with Aaron Stuppel and Leo Anthony Celi), *npj Digital Medicine* 2, no. 1 (January 29, 2019): 2. [Click here to read the article.](#)
- “Sugar machines and the fragile infrastructure of commodities in the nineteenth century,” *Osiris* vol. 33 (2018), special issue on “Science and Capitalism: Entangled Histories.”
- “The Limits of Chemical Control in the Caribbean Sugar Factory,” *Radical History Review* no. 127, “Political Histories of Technoscience,” January 2017.
- “Keynesian Eugenics and the Goodness of the World,” *Journal of British Studies* 55, no. 3, July 2016.
- “Science, Commodities, and Corruption in the Gilded Age,” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 15, no. 3, July 2016. (Awarded the 2018 Treasury Historical Association 1500 Penn Prize.)
- “Inventing Purity in the Atlantic Sugar World, 1860-1930,” *Enterprise & Society* 16, no. 4, December 2015.
- “‘A Doubt is At Best an Unsafe Standard’: Measuring Sugar in the Early Bureau of Standards,” *NIST Journal of Research*, January 2007.

PUBLIC WRITING

- “Public Thinker: Lara Putnam Wants You to Knock on Your Neighbor’s Door,” *Public Books* online, July 2022. [Click here to read the article.](#)
- “There’s Something Fishy about U.S.-Canada Trade Wars,” *The Atlantic* online, 14 June 2018. [Click here to read the article.](#)
- “Zones of Doubt: What we can learn about trade policy from a misbegotten 19th century effort to quantify the chemical properties of wool,” *Bunk*, 2 October 2018, [Click here to read the article.](#)
- “The Sugar Tramp: One man’s obsession with the ephemera of his industry,” *Bunk*, 10 January 2018, [Click here to read the article](#)
- “The Other End of the Telescope: Considering astronomy’s history from the shadow of the Arecibo Observatory reveals the discipline’s intimate ties to imperialism,” *Bunk*, 24 November 2017, [Click here to read the article.](#)
- “When Science Was Big: This year’s Nobel Prize in physics is a blast from the past of Cold War-era research investment. Is that era gone for good?” *Bunk*, 19 October 2017, [Click here to read the article.](#)
- “The Shady History of Big Sugar,” Op-Ed, *The New York Times*, 17 September 2016. [Click here to read the article.](#)

REVIEWS

- Review of Daniel B. Rood, *The Reinvention of Atlantic Slavery: Technology, Labor, Race, and Capitalism in the Greater Caribbean* (Oxford University Press, 2017), in the *World Sugar History Newsletter* 51 (March 2019).
- Review of Megan Raby, *American Tropics: The Caribbean Roots of Biodiversity Science* (University of North Carolina Press, 2017), *New West Indian Guide* 93, nos. 1-2 (2019).
- Review of Adrian Leonard & D. Pretel, eds., *The Caribbean and the Atlantic World Economy: Circuits of Trade, Money and Knowledge, 1650-1914* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), in the *World Sugar History Newsletter* 49 (March 2018).
- Review of Bruce E. Baker and Barbara Hahn, *The Cotton Kings: Capitalism and Corruption in Turn-of-the-Century New York and New Orleans* (Oxford University Press, 2016), in *American Nineteenth-Century History* 19, no. 2 (2018).
- Review of April Merleaux, *Sweetness and Civilization: American Empire and the Cultural Politics of Sweetness* (University of North Carolina Press, 2015), in *Agricultural History* 90, no. 3 (summer 2016).
- Review of C. Allan Jones and Robert V. Osgood, *From King Cane to the Last Sugar Mill: Agricultural Technology and the Making of Hawai'i's Premier Crop* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), in *Hawaiian Journal of History* (2016).
- "Social History of Knowledge in the Slaveholding Atlantic World," review of Daniel Rood, "Plantation Technocrats: A Social History of Knowledge in the Slaveholding Atlantic World" (PhD dissertation, University of California - Irvine, 2010), at dissertationreviews.org, April 2012.

INVITED TALKS AND PRESENTATIONS

- "Freedom From the New World: The Invention of Beet Sugar," Princeton University Davis Seminar, 31 March 2023.
- "Is history funny?" Harriet Ritvo Symposium, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. 30 April 2022. [Click here to watch the talk.](#)
- "Sugar!" UVA Medical Center Hour. 6 March 2019. [Click here to watch the talk.](#)
- "Stolen sugar, smuggled herring, and other lessons in corruption from the Gilded Age." United States Department of the Treasury, Treasury Historical Association 1500 Penn Prize Lecture. 6 February 2019.
- "Sugar," at Edible Environments summer school, Concordia University, Montreal. 10 July 2018.
- "Sugar, science, and the history of capitalism," Department Seminar, History and Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge. 1 February 2018.
- "Inventing Purity in the Atlantic Sugar World, 1860-1930," Coleman Prize Plenary Session, Association of Business Historians Annual Meeting, Exeter, UK. 3 July 2015.
- "Inventing Purity in the Atlantic Sugar World, 1860-1930," Krooss Prize Plenary Session, Business History Conference, Miami, Florida. 26 June 2015.
- "Purity and Power in the American Sugar Empire," Lafayette College, Easton, PA. 23 April 2015.

PRESENTATIONS AND ROUNDTABLES

- "Freedom from the New World: The Invention of Beet Sugar." Business History Collective (online). 6 April 2021. [Click here to watch the presentation.](#)
- Roundtable participant, "Histories of Science, Technology, and Capitalism in Latin America and the Caribbean," History of Science Society/Society for the History of Technology Joint Meeting, New Orleans. 19 November 2021.
- "How Hawaiian sugar colonized the Caribbean," American Society for Environmental History Annual Meeting, Columbus, OH. 13 April 2019.
- "The Limits of Control in the Ingenio Central, 1860-1935." Association of Caribbean Historians 2016 Conference, Havana, Cuba. June 2016.

- “Sugar Work and Scientific Control in Puerto Rico and Hawaii, 1875-1920.” Organization of American Historians 2016 Annual Meeting, Providence, Rhode Island. April 2016.
- “Local Laboratories and Global Standards in the Sugar Trade, 1907-1930.” Business History Conference 2016 Annual Meeting, Portland, Oregon. March 2016.
- “Frozen Herring and the Gilded Age State.” American Society for Environmental History 2015 Annual Conference, Washington, D.C. 19 March 2015.
- “Sweetness and Control: Chemists in the Sugar Market.” American Historical Association 2015 Annual Meeting, New York. 4 January 2015.
- “Sugar, Labor, and Chemical Control in the Caribbean.” Small Conference on Labor and Empire (sponsored by *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*), University of California, Santa Barbara. 15 November 2014.

CONFERENCES AND
PANELS CHAIRED OR
ORGANIZED

- (chair) “Histories of Data and the Data of History,” History of Science Society/Society for the History of Technology 2021 Joint Meeting
- (chair) “Labor Control as Management Strategy,” Business History Conference 2021 Annual Meeting
- (organizer and chair) “After María: What Environmental History can Learn from the Caribbean,” American Society for Environmental History Annual Meeting. Columbus, OH. 10-13 April 2019.
- (organizer) “Measuring Nature: Commodities and Standards,” Business History Conference 2016 Annual Meeting, Portland, Oregon. March 2016.
- (organizer) “Poisoned and Pissed: Public Scandals and Environmental Regulation,” American Society for Environmental History 2015 Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C. 18-22 March 2015.
- (organizer) “The Authority of Science at the Edges of Empire.” American Historical Association 2015 Annual Meeting, New York. 4 January 2015.

RESEARCH GRANTS,
FELLOWSHIPS, AND
PRIZES

- Treasury Historical Association 1500 Penn Prize, 2018
- New York Public Library Short-Term Research Fellowship, 2017
- Krooss Prize for Best Dissertation in Business History, Business History Conference, 2015
- Coleman Prize for Best Dissertation in Business History, Association of Business Historians (UK), 2015
- Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry Research Award, 2014-15
- Massachusetts Historical Society Short-Term Fellowship, 2014-15
- Visiting Fellowship, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2014-15 (declined)

TEACHING AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF
VIRGINIA

- History
 - HIUS 2101, “Technologies of American Life” (Spring 2021, Spring 2022, Spring 2024)
 - HIST 3501, “Introductory History Workshop: Sugar and Global History” (Spring 2023)
 - HIST 1501, “The Global Financial Crisis of 2008” (Fall 2018, Fall 2020, Fall 2022)
 - HIST 1501, “Corruption and Fraud” (Fall 2017)
- American Studies
 - AMST 3001, “Theories and Methods of American Studies” (Spring 2018, Fall 2018, Spring 2022, Fall 2022, Spring 2023, Spring 2024)
 - AMST 3559, “Science and Democracy in America” (Spring 2018)
- Arts & Sciences
 - FORU 1500, “The World Gone Wrong: Introduction to the Forum” (Fall 2019)
 - FORU 2500, “The World Gone Wrong: Forum Capstone” (Spring 2021)

- Development
 - Center for Teaching Excellence, Course Design Institute & IGNITE (Summer/Fall 2018)
 - Writing Program, Faculty Seminar on the Teaching of Writing (Summer 2019)
 - UVA Library Course Enrichment Grant (Summer 2020)
- Advising
 - Dissertation committees: 4
 - DMP theses supervised: 3 American Studies, 3 History
 - Harrison Undergraduate Research Awards: 1
 - Departmental advisees: 10 per year
 - 1st and 2nd year advisees: 10 (2019-2021)

SERVICE AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF
VIRGINIA

- Co-convener, Working Tools for Humanities Research workshop, 2023-present
- Corcoran Department of History
 - Co-organizer, MADCAP history of capitalism workshop, 2017-present
 - Faculty advisor, department colloquium
- Department of American Studies
 - Departmental assessment director, 2019-present
- UVA-CLEAR (Corruption Lab on Ethics, Accountability, and the Rule of Law)
 - Led search for a CLEAR/History postdoctoral associate, 2018-2019
 - Managed postdoctoral associate for CLEAR/History Department, 2019-2021
 - Organized CLEAR lunchtime workshops, 2019-present
 - Organized and funded CLEAR graduate fellowships, 2020-2021
- Civic service
 - Visited approximately a dozen classes per year to register hundreds of students to vote, 2017-present

TEACHING AT
OTHER
INSTITUTIONS

- Spring 2016, Instructor, “Science, Technology, and Global Capitalism,” University of Pennsylvania
- Fall 2015, Instructor, STS.004, “Intersections: Science, Technology, and the World,” MIT
- Spring 2015, Lecturer, History 328, “Science in American Culture,” Rutgers University - New Brunswick
- Fall 2014, Lecturer, History 251, “History of Science and Society,” Rutgers University - New Brunswick
- October 2010, “History of Technology,” NuVu Studio for high school students, Cambridge, MA
- Fall 2010, Teaching assistant and guest lecturer, “Ethics and Politics in Science and Technology,” Professor Vincent Lepinay, MIT
- Spring 2010, Teaching assistant, “Bioethics,” Professors David Jones and Caspar Hare, MIT
- Fall 2009, Teaching assistant, “The Rise of Modern Science,” Professors David Kaiser and Hanna Rose Shell, MIT

EDUCATION

- **Massachusetts Institute of Technology**
PhD in History, Anthropology, and Science, Technology, & Society, 2014
- **University of Cambridge**
MPhil, History and Philosophy of Science, 2007
- **Columbia University**
BA in American History, 2006