

Faculty



Daniel Kotzin, Ph.D.

Dr. Daniel Kotzin is chair of the History Department at William Jewell College, a role he has held since Fall 2022. He specializes in American immigration history, the Civil War, modern Jewish history, and the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Dr. Kotzin is the author of *Judah L. Magnes: An American Jewish Non-Conformist*. His current research explores the experiences of Irish soldiers in the Union Army during the Civil War.



Megan Groninger, Ph.D.

Dr. Megan Groninger joined William Jewell College after earning her Ph.D. in History from Florida State University in 2023. She also holds a Master's degree from the University of West Georgia. Her research focuses on the intersections of gender and religion in 19th century Britain. In November 2024, she presented her paper, "Creating 'Mothers in Israel,'" at the Southern Conference on British Studies.



Brendon Benz, Ph.D.

Dr. Brendon Benz is a scholar of Israelite history, religion, and biblical interpretation, serving as Associate Professor of Religion and Theologian-in-Residence for William Jewell College's Center for Faith and Culture. He earned his M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary—where he received the Henry Snyder Gehman Award in Old Testament—and a Ph.D. in Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East from New York University.



Benjamin Jasnow, Ph.D.

Dr. Benjamin Jasnow is a scholar of Greco-Roman antiquity, with an emphasis on Greek poetry, myth, and the reception of the ancient world. At William Jewell, he teaches courses in Latin, Greek, ancient history, and in the Core Curriculum. During the 2024-25 academic year, he published an article about the influence of the Athenian Parthenon on the Nelson-Atkins Museum.



Featured Image: "Dakota Delegation, ca. 1871-1907"

Pulled from Dr. Kotzin and McKinzie Thompson's article, "Reconceptualizing the Independent Study"

<https://clioandthecontemporary.com/2023/09/27/reconceptualizing-the-independent-study/>

Cherokee and Lakota Peoples

Senior McKinzie Thompson is making a powerful impact in her final semester at William Jewell as a Teaching Assistant for the Cherokee and Lakota Peoples course—an opportunity that grew from both curiosity and dedication.

McKinzie's journey into Indigenous history began during her sophomore year in a Civil War class with Dr. Kotzin. Near the end of the semester, she approached him with a question: Does William Jewell offer a course on Indigenous history? At the time, the answer was no—but Dr. Kotzin encouraged McKinzie to pursue an Independent Study on the subject.

The following semester, McKinzie dove deep, studying a different Indigenous group from the Midwest each week and writing an in-depth paper on her findings, which eventually laid the groundwork for the creation of a new undergraduate course focused on Indigenous peoples, particularly the Lakota and Cherokee. As the course took shape, McKinzie played a vital role in developing its structure, topics, and lecture materials. Today, as a TA, she helps lead weekly discussions, delivers content, and engages students in meaningful conversations about identity, culture, and history.

The course challenges students to move beyond monolithic portrayals of Indigenous peoples. Rather than grouping all Indigenous cultures into one narrative, McKinzie emphasizes their diversity and complexity. "Each Indigenous group has its own rich traditions, worldviews, and ways of understanding identity, gender, and spirituality," she shares. "These perspectives often contrast with Euro-centric views, offering students a more inclusive and multifaceted understanding of what it means to be American."

Russia-Ukraine Panel

Junior Rane Rynard organized a compelling and educational panel on March 12th, focused on the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. The event featured insightful presentations from a diverse group of experts:

- **Dr. Alan Holiman**, Professor and Chair of the Department of Political Science at William Jewell College. Dr. Holiman previously served as Assistant Director at the Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at the University of Kansas and directed KU's exchange program at Leningrad State University for three years.
- **Dr. Yuriy Bots**, John W. Boatwright Associate Professor of Economics in the Department of Business and Leadership at Jewell and a native of Ukraine. During his 2022–23 sabbatical, Dr. Bots played a key role in launching American University Kyiv, where he provided academic leadership and fostered a culture of excellence.
- **Nathaniel Baggerly**, a senior Political Science major, presented insights from his impressive capstone project, which explored the historical context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Each speaker was given 15 minutes to share their expertise, followed by an engaging Q&A session with the audience. The panel was skillfully moderated by Junior Riley Frasure Smith, a Non-Profit Leadership major, who helped ensure the event ran smoothly and successfully.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Hallie Lindsey

Hallie Lindsey graduated from William Jewell College in 2024 with majors in Oxbridge History and Spanish, along with a minor in Entrepreneurial Leadership. During her time at Jewell, she was actively involved in the Slavery, Memory, and Justice Project. Hallie recently finished her work as a Digital Archivist at Park University, where she evaluated and digitized the George S. Park Collection. She first connected with her current supervisor, Dr. Tim Westcott, after presenting her senior thesis at the Missouri Conference on History in spring 2024. She began her role at Park University in the fall of 2024, almost immediately following her graduation from Jewell.

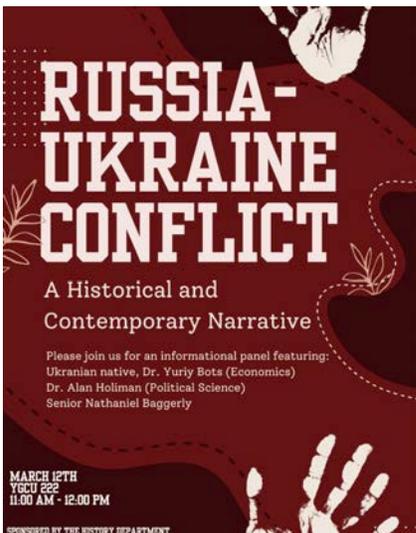


Chris Thompson

Chris Thompson is a proud member of William Jewell College's Class of 1989, where he was actively involved in Phi Gamma Delta, the baseball team, and College Union Activities. After graduating, Chris spent three decades as an educator, first teaching at Thomas Jefferson Middle School in Jefferson City (1989–1999), then at Warrensburg High School (1999–2019), and finally at the University of Central Missouri (2019–2022).

Today, he continues to pursue his passion for coaching as the Assistant Men's Soccer Coach at Metropolitan Community College and as a staff coach for Union KC Soccer Club.

Chris fondly remembers his time at Jewell—especially the impact of his favorite professor, Dr. Fred Spletstoser, who made history come alive through storytelling. As a student, Chris held multiple work-study jobs, from manning the Union desk on night shifts to helping with tournaments in the Mabee Center. Reflecting on his journey, Chris says, "My studies, experiences, friends, and the people who invested in me while at William Jewell College forged a young teacher and coach that served well."



Meet Your Author

Rane Rynard is a junior at William Jewell College, double majoring in history and secondary education. She plans to student teach in the fall at Smithville High School, with a focus in civics classes. Outside of her studies, she is a member of Alpha Gamma Delta, Kappa Delta Pi, and Mortor Board Honor Society.

Rane has taken on several tasks for the department in an effort to increase campus and alumni involvement, including the creation of this newsletter.

For any inquires, please reach out to Rane directly at: rynardr.23@williamjewell.edu, or Dr. Kotzin at: kotzind@williamjewell.edu

