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2005: Pete Smith, "'It's Your America': Gertrude Berg and American Broadcasting, 1929-1956"; Director: Arthur J. Kaul, University of Southern Mississippi

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2011: Ira Chinoy, "Battle of the Brains: Election-Night Forecasting at the Dawn of the Computer Age"; Director: Maurine H. Beasley, University of Maryland

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The AJHA Margaret A. Blanchard Doctoral Dissertation Prize, established in 1997 and named in 2003, is awarded annually for the best doctoral dissertation on media history. Named in honor of the late Professor Margaret A. Blanchard of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill—superb scholar and the source of guidance and inspiration for generations of doctoral students of journalism history—the prize is accompanied by an honorarium of five hundred dollars. A two-hundred-dollar honorarium is awarded to each honorable mention.

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# AMERICAN JOURNALISM HISTORIANS ASSOCIATION

## 2014 MARGARET A. BLANCHARD

## DOCTORAL DISSERTATION PRIZE

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### PRIZE WINNER

Beth Kaszuba, “‘Mob Sisters’: Women Reporting on Crime in Prohibition Era Chicago”;  
Director: Ford Risley, Pennsylvania State University

### HONORABLE MENTION AWARDEES

Kaylene Dial Armstrong, “Telling Their Own Stories: How Student Newspapers Reported Campus Unrest, 1962-1970”;  
Director: David R. Davies, University of Southern Mississippi

Patrick C. File, “‘Bad’ News Travels Fast: The Telegraph, Syndicated Libel, and Conceptualizing Freedom of the Press, 1890-1910”;  
Director: Susanna Blumenthal, University of Minnesota

Jessica L. Ghilani, “Selling Soldiering to Consumers: Advertising, Media, and the Volunteer Army”;  
Director: Ronald J. Zboray, University of Pittsburgh

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### ABSTRACTS

#### Beth Kaszuba, “‘Mob Sisters’: Women Reporting on Crime in Prohibition Era Chicago”

This dissertation examines the work of five women who were employed by the *Chicago Tribune* as general assignment reporters during the 1920s, and whose unique way of covering the city’s epidemic of crime—with sarcastic humor, a cynical viewpoint and slang-infused prose—merits the creation of a new “category” of female reporter, dubbed here the “mob sister.” Histories of American media generally place women reporters who worked at newspapers prior to World War II into narrowly prescribed roles, leading to a widespread assumption that women were only allowed to cover topics such as fashion, society, and news of interest to homemakers. In addition, most histories tell us that those women who did not make the front pages worked either as “stunt girls,” performing daring feats and then writing about their exploits to shock or titillate readers, or as “sob sisters,” covering trials in maudlin prose intended to bring readers to tears. However, a significant number of women broke those barriers during the Prohibition era, especially in Chicago, where the *Tribune*, in particular, gave women journalists wide latitude to pursue beats traditionally considered more suitable for men in that period. The female *Tribune* journalists whose work is examined in this dissertation are Genevieve Forbes Herrick, whose byline was a fixture on the paper’s front page throughout the Roaring Twenties; Maurine Watkins, who drew upon her work as a crime

reporter to write the enduring social satire *Chicago*; Kathleen McLaughlin, a confidante of mobsters whose crime reportage in Chicago earned her a coveted spot in the *New York Times*’s once exclusively male newsroom; Leola Allard, who covered Chicago’s juvenile and domestic courts, reporting on crimes ranging from spousal abuse to kidnapping; and Maureen McKernan, whose clear-thinking, no-nonsense coverage of crime for the *Tribune* began to move closer to the modern ideal of objective, factual reporting. This dissertation also explores factors that allowed for the emergence of the mob sisters, including the explosion of gangland crime—and murders by women—in Chicago during Prohibition; the increasing professionalization of journalism during the 1920s; a female-friendly culture at the *Tribune*; and the intersections of crime, celebrity and entertainment during the Jazz Age, all of which helped to create a window of opportunity for these women to not only cover crime, but to develop a new acerbic, witty, anti-sob-sister voice that reflected the changing attitudes of a city whose residents were concerned—yet proud of and even amused by—the chaos around them.

#### Kaylene Dial Armstrong, “Telling Their Own Stories: How Student Newspapers Reported Campus Unrest, 1962-1970”

When studying the student protest era throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, researchers ignore the student press beyond footnotes. This dissertation considers how the student reporters and editors did their job during major protests between 1962 and 1970 and tells not only the story of reporting protest but the individual stories of the student journalists. The key protests considered are integration in 1962 at Ole Miss, the Free Speech Movement beginning in 1964 at Berkeley, building occupations of 1968 at Howard and Columbia universities, and the 1970 shootings of students at Kent State and Jackson State. These protests, though not inclusive of all that occurred, represent the major underlying issues for which students were demanding change: race and civil rights, student rights and administration control, and the Vietnam War and the university’s role in supporting it. The student journalists also confronted challenges of maintaining freedom of the press, understanding the role of the student newspaper, defining personal positions as journalists, and developing journalistic skills. The research found student journalists considered themselves as professionals working to get at the deeper issues. Though the newspaper staff might support the cause of the protest, none in this study condoned violent behavior that injured people or caused property damage. Many went on to be professional journalists who credited their student newspaper experience as being a training ground for their careers.

#### Patrick C. File, “‘Bad’ News Travels Fast: The Telegraph, Syndicated Libel, and Conceptualizing Freedom of the Press, 1890-1910”

At the turn of the twentieth century, an unprecedented series of libel cases prompted newspaper publishers to articulate a new legal conception of press freedom, calling for greater protection for the social role of the press and its use of the telegraph to deliver timely and diverse news to the public. Five plaintiffs, including city socialites, traveling businessmen, and legendary sharpshooter Annie Oakley, sued hundreds of newspapers across the country between 1890 and 1910 for republishing false and harmful reports spread by news wire services. In analyzing legal discourse surrounding the cases from 28 appellate opinions, relevant legal literature, and nearly two hundred articles covering the cases in newspapers and the trade press, this study combines theories of the cultural history of journalism and critical legal history to illuminate the role law plays in the social process of regulating journalism’s role in a democratic society. The cases are examined against a social backdrop of a tension-filled period when the speed and scale of the industrialized news business clashed with evolving professional values and growing public concerns about sensationalism and threats to personal reputation. The study also prompts consideration of how plaintiffs’ social status could influence perceptions of harm from libel long before the U.S. Supreme Court formally incorporated questions of plaintiff status into the legal analysis in *New York Times v. Sullivan* in 1964.

#### Jessica L. Ghilani, “Selling Soldiering to Consumers: Advertising, Media, and the Volunteer Army”

A study of the United States Military’s recruiting during the “all-volunteer,” post-conscription era requires synthesizing scholarship on advertising, propaganda, and politics. Throughout the twentieth century, advertisers contracted by the U.S. government waged countless national campaigns meant to inform, persuade, and rally, producing what cultural historian Paul Rutherford describes as the “colonization of the American public sphere.” Some of the most iconic advertisements touted military service. This dissertation investigates the role of advertising in transitioning the army branch, in particular, to a volunteer recruitment model. Drawing on rich archival materials and extensive research, I argue that the origins of volunteer-era recruiting strategies predate the overturn of the draft by decades and that recruiting advertisements operate ideologically. By tracing the evolving conceptions of service in depictions, I examine the cultural influences, political contexts, public policy, and visual representations that enabled the volunteer military to be a success. In revealing the above, I also provide an overview of the history of the advertising industry’s partnerships with the department of defense across the twentieth century.