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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 includes an honorarium of five hundred dollars. A two-hundred-dollar honorarium is awarded each honorable mention.

2019 AJHA ANNUAL CONVENTION
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This qualitative cultural history of Mormonism in Kirtland, Ohio, from 1831 to 1837 uses Agenda Setting and Vilification Theories to analyze an unprecedented 1,617 articles from 325 newspapers in 161 U.S. cities. The research reveals the power of nineteenth-century print culture on a uniquely American religion by exposing the most recurring topics on Mormonism in the newspaper exchange; editorial tone; the number of times identical or similar texts were reprinted; and the dispersion and geographical reach of articles. It illustrates how texts about and by Mormonism created, shaped, changed, and directed its formative trajectory. Editors addressed Mormonism on average every 1.5 days and employed six agendas when covering the religion, including: criminality; fanaticism; power; and vilification. Mormon reactions in their own newspapers demonstrated a hypersensitivity to what was printed about them and revealed the use of four of their own agendas. Experiencing the power of the press led the Mormons to establish presses at every settlement including soon after they settled in Utah in 1847 and eventually inspired formation of a powerful PR bureau to control Church messages and respond to present-day vilification in the media. This research fills gaps in studies of American, religious, print, Mormon, and communication/journalism history.

**Rich Shumate, “Elite Voices and Irritated Conservatives: Pathsways Leading To the Perception of Liberal Media Bias Arising From Elite News Media Coverage of the Emergence of Movement Conservatism (1960 TO 1964).”** Director: Huan Chen, University of Florida

**Elisabeth Fondren, “Breathless Zeal And Careless Confidence”: German Propaganda In World War I (1914-1918).”** Director: John Maxwell Hamilton, Louisiana State

**Jason Lee Guthrie, “Authors and Inventors: The Ritual Economy of Early American Copyright Law.”** Director: Janice Hume, University of Georgia

**ABSTRACTS**

**Rich Shumate, “Elite Voices and Irritated Conservatives:”** This study explores the origins of the perception among American conservatives that news media exhibit a liberal bias by investigating news coverage of the emergence of movement conservatism between 1960 and 1964, a critical juncture when conservatism emerged as a social movement and asserted control over the Republican Party. Based on historical data from 10 news media outlets of national influence and 16 voices of authority in the news media, this study posits that the perception resulted from conservatives’ social and psychological reactions to news content, in addition to any biased content that may have been present. Through comprehensive thematic analysis, five pathways to the perception were identified: movement conservatives’ need to maintain social identity by rejecting news narratives incongruous with their worldview; their rejection of incongruous narratives from news media seen as elite, their hostile reaction to presentations of conflict in news coverage; their reaction to perceived violations of the objectivity/balance expectation in journalism; and their rejection of homogenous elite news media narratives that were the result of pack journalism. The findings provide a new way to look at the perception of liberal media bias; namely, that it acts independently of content and is instead rooted in movement conservatives’ self-perception and the elite nature of national news media.

**Elisabeth Fondren, “Breathless Zeal and Careless Confidence.”** This study examines the building and rethinking of German propaganda institutions during World War I. The goal of this dissertation is to illustrate the evolution of German government ideas on propaganda between 1914 and 1918. During the war, German military leaders, politicians, and diplomats had ambitions to change, reform and modernize approaches to media governance. They were losing the battle of ideas, they realized early on. And so German officials were desperate to make propaganda fit into the structure of government; they tried to use new media technologies to be more persuasive. Although there was an abundance of ideas, all of their approaches for better publicity and censorship failed. The root causes were Germany’s political structure, the lack of organization, and their messages, which were tone-deaf and not persuasive. In their struggle to adjust their propaganda efforts, however, the German propagandists were slowly learning from their mistakes. By 1918, they had drawn their own conclusions of what went wrong. Germany’s propaganda experience in the First World War is exemplary of how governments learned, over time, through countless blunders, and by modeling after their enemies, the lessons of fighting a modern propaganda war. Building on original research at political and military archives in Germany and the United States (German Federal Archives; Political Archive of the Foreign Office; Prussian Privy State Archives, Hoover Institution Library and Archives; and U.S. National Archives), the results of this study show why the ideas of German propagandists could not win the war.

**Jason Lee Guthrie, “Authors and Inventors.”** Authors, musicians, photographers, and other content creators currently have unprecedented levels of access to production and distribution networks. The disruptive rise of digitization and the internet have undermined monopolies previously enjoyed by creative industries. Yet, the intricacies of copyright law remain an enigma to the typical content creator. Throughout the three-hundred-year history of statutory copyright contentious debates over its justification and scope have yet to be resolved. A focus on suggestions for policy reform in previous literature has further obscured copyright’s most intractable philosophical problems. Rather than suggesting a set of reforms, this dissertation argues that a fundamental problem in copyright law is an incomplete theorization of creativity and creative labor. Previous frameworks used to theorize copyright have encountered difficulties in legitimating individual creativity while contextualizing its relationship with the sociocultural and political economic aspects of creative labor. The theory of ritual economy provides an alternative framework capable of legitimating individual contribution through a twin emphasis on worldview and process. Ritual economy opens new vistas of historical exploration that suggest a return to the primary evidence left by three early American content creators – Benjamin Franklin, Stephen Foster, and Mathew Brady – of how they interpreted and used copyright in practice.