

Summer Fieldwork awardees statements



Johnny Bassett

Johnny Bassett is a historian of 20th and 21st century Southeast Asia, with a focus on economic history in the Philippines. His dissertation explores the recent economic history of Davao City, whose celebrated economic revival between the early 1980s and 2016 is credited with driving the successful campaign of former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, but many basic details of the city's revival remain poorly understood. Therefore, drawing on an innovative set of methods from the fields of economics, history, and geography, his project aims to clear the fog from this consequential period. The research he will conduct in Davao City using the 2023 IRIS Graduate Fieldwork Grant will include gathering primary sources, including government reports and newspapers, and conducting interviews with witnesses to this fascinating history.



John Bennett

John Bennett is pursuing doctoral work in the Department of Communication Arts on the Algerian film industry. In researching the historical components of the Algerian film industry's international activities, he plans on conducting research at the Museo Nazionale del Cinema in Turin, Italy, as well as the Algerian Cultural Center, the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, and the Cinémathèque Française in Paris during the summer of 2023.



Juan Camilo

Juan Camilo Franco is an environmental historian of Latin America. He is pursuing a PhD in History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and is a Graduate Associate of the Center for Culture, History, and the Environment (CHE). His current research project is an environmental and technological history of Colombia's Agrarian Reform in the Caribbean Coast, and thanks to the IRIS Fieldwork Award, he will be able to develop research on the historical material transformations of the Ciénaga de Ayapel, Colombia, in the second half of the twentieth century.



Napakadol Kittisenee

Napakadol Kittisenee is a PhD student in the Department of History. His research interests include the history of Theravāda Buddhism and religions of mainland Southeast Asia as well as the anthropology of borderlands, migration, diaspora, decolonization, and enchantment. He is currently working on the dissertation project, Cross-border Lives of Magical Monks in 1941-1957 mainland Southeast Asia. With generous support from the Institute for Regional and International Studies' Graduate Student Summer Fieldwork Award, he plans to conduct archival research from June 30 – September 1, 2023, at the National Archives of Thailand (NAT) in Ubon Ratchathani and the National Library of Laos in Vientiane. At these sites, he hopes to explore the Buddhist publications between 1940s-1950s and official records on monastic travel.



Sarah Tolbert

Sarah Tolbert is a Geography PhD student whose work focuses on the intersection of community well-being, forest conservation, and land tenure in Central Africa. After completing a joint bachelor's degree in political science and environmental studies, Sarah joined the Peace Corps and served as an agricultural extension volunteer in Benin for three years. She then went on to earn a dual master's degree in Environmental Management and Global Affairs from the Yale School of the Environment and the Jackson Institute for Global Affairs. Her master's research focused on the impact of gorilla protected areas on communities in Central Africa. She then returned to Central Africa where she collaborated with communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

and Rwanda to manage forests for gorilla conservation and community development. It was during this time that the DRC passed the final piece of the Community Forest Law which made it possible for communities to legally own their forests for the first time. Sarah returned for her PhD at UW-Madison in order to better understand whether community forests were working for both people and wildlife. With the generous funding from IRIS, Sarah's pre-dissertation research will begin to untangle how decentralizing forest management affects local governance institutions and forest outcomes in eastern DRC.



Thomas Brami

Thomas Brami is a PhD candidate in film studies in the Communication Arts department at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. His dissertation considers the relationship between landscape and cinema by focusing on the Australian film industry. In particular, this project is concerned with the relations between globally dispersed film production and exhibition and Australia's local production centers, including its media precincts, post-production houses, and Indigenous media centers.



Harry Kiiru

Harry Kiiru is a PhD candidate in the Department of African Cultural Studies with a minor in African American Studies. His dissertation, entitled "The Culturally and Racially Body in Motion: How Sub-Saharan African Immigrants Become Black in the United States," is a study of the new African diaspora's racialization processes of incorporation into the ethnoracial hierarchal order within the United States and how they negotiate this identity. The study begins with the 1959-63 East African Students' Airlift which saw almost eight hundred students attend schools in the U.S. and Canada. Through the generosity of the 2023 IRIS Graduate Student Summer Fieldwork Award, he will be traveling to Nairobi, Kenya from June 19 to August 16 to examine Kenyan nationalist and trade unionist Tom Mboya's private archives. Mboya with the aid of William

Scheinman envisioned and executed the East African Airlift and later formed the African American Student Foundation (AASF) for this endeavor. This collection has hundreds of application letters from prospective Airlift students and their biographical data, student reports from university officials, the AASF records and communiques between Mboya and his U.S. counterparts, particularly William Scheinman, and other significant people such as Martin Luther King Jr., Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, among others, newspaper clippings, and Mboya's speeches.

2023 IRIS BLAC Foundation awardees statements



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