

David Roth Singerman — *updated November 29, 2021*

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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 and Corruption in the American Sugar Empire*, under contract 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

- “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.](#)
- Blogger for “American Science” (official blog of the Forum for the History of Science in America), <http://americanscienceblog.com>, September 2014-present.

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

- "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.
- “Fraud, Suspicion, and Control in the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Sugar Trade.” Beyond Sweetness: New Histories of Sugar in the Early Atlantic World, John Carter Brown Library, Brown University. 25 October 2013.
- “Corruption and control in the 19th-century sugar trade.” Business History Conference 2013 Annual Meeting, Columbus, Ohio. 22 March 2013.
- “Chemical control in the Atlantic sugar trade.” 3 Societies Conference (Joint meeting of the History of Science Society, British Society for the History of Science, and Canadian Society for the History and Philosophy of Science), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. 13 July 2012.
- “A factory in miniature: Sugar and machines in Glasgow and Cuba.” North American Conference on British Studies, Denver, Colorado. 18 November 2011.
- “Lance Armstrong, Floyd Landis, and the ‘Doper’s Regress’ in Professional Cycling.” 2011 Conference of the British Society for the History of Science, Exeter, UK. 15 July 2011.
- “‘Any ass can manage a sugar factory’: The nature of ‘chemical control’.” Workshop on the History of the Environment, Agriculture, Technology, and Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison (WHEATS). 9 October 2010.
- “‘Any ass can manage a sugar factory’: Labor, Efficiency, and Chemical Control.” The History of Capitalism in the United States, Harvard University. 8 November 2008.
- “A Room of One’s Own Polariscope, or: Is Pure Sugar in Barbados Still Pure in Berlin?” 27th Symposium of the Scientific Instrument Commission, Centre for the History of Science, University of Lisbon. 20 September 2008.

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 2020 Joint Meeting, New Orleans (postponed to 2021)
- (chair) “Labor Control as Management Strategy,” Business History Conference 2020 Annual Meeting, Charlotte (postponed to 2021)
- (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.
- (organizer) “Global Technologies of Commodification.” Business History Conference 2013 Annual Meeting, Columbus, Ohio. 22 March 2013.
- (organizer) Workshop on the History of the Environment, Agriculture, Technology, and Science (WHEATS). Massachusetts Institute of Technology, October 2011.

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)
- Haas Dissertation Writing Fellowship, Chemical Heritage Foundation, 2012-13
- National Science Foundation (NSF) Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant, 2011-14
- Social Science Research Council (SSRC) International Dissertation Research Fellowship, 2011-12
- MIT Luis Francisco Verges Graduate Fellowship, 2011
- American Philosophical Society Library Resident Research Fellowship, 2011
- MIT Center for International Studies Summer Research Grant, 2011 and 2013
- NSF Graduate Research Fellowship, 2008-11
- MIT Presidential Graduate Fellowship, 2007-8
- Prize Research Grant, Centre for History & Economics, King's College Cambridge, 2007-8 (declined)
- Cambridge Overseas Trust, PhD bursary, 2007-2010 (declined)
- Carl B. Boyer Prize for Best Essay in the History of Science, Columbia College, Columbia University, 2006
- Center for the Study of the Presidency, Columbia University Fellowship, 2003-4

TEACHING AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF
VIRGINIA

- History
 - HIUS 2101, “Technologies of American Life” (Spring 2021, Spring 2022)
 - HIST 1501, “The Global Financial Crisis of 2008” (Fall 2018, Fall 2020)
 - HIST 1501, “Corruption and Fraud” (Fall 2017)
- American Studies
 - AMST 3559, “Science and Democracy in America” (Spring 2018)
 - AMST 3001, “Theories and Methods of American Studies” (Spring 2018, Fall 2018, Spring 2022)
- 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: 3
 - DMP theses supervised: 2 American Studies, 3 History
 - Harrison Undergraduate Research Awards: 1
 - Departmental advisees: approximately 12 per year
 - 1st and 2nd year advisees: 10 (2019-2021)

SERVICE AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF
VIRGINIA

- Corcoran Department of History
 - Co-organizer, MADCAP history of capitalism workshop, 2017-present
- Department of American Studies
 - Departmental assessment director, 2019-present
 - Pizza and Praxis coordinator, fall 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

PRIOR POSITIONS

- University of Virginia, Visiting Scholar, Americas Center/Centro de las Américas, 2016-2017
- Harvard Business School, Research Associate, 2015-2016
- Rutgers University, Postdoctoral Associate, Center for Historical Analysis, 2014-15

PROFESSIONAL
EXPERIENCE

- Council Member, Association of Business Historians, 2015-16
- Research Adviser, The History Project of the Joint Centre for History and Economics, Harvard and Cambridge Universities (www.histproj.org), 2012-present
- Graduate Student Member, MIT Institute-Wide Task Force on Budget Planning, Student Life Working Group, 2009-2010
- Columbia College History Council, 2004-6 (represented interests of students in the College’s largest major to faculty)

OTHER
EMPLOYMENT

- Editorial intern, *Vanity Fair* magazine, New York City (August-September 2006). Conducted research for editors, staff writers, contributors, and special features. Substituted for editorial assistants.
- Guest Researcher, Museum of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Gaithersburg, MD, (June-August 2005, June 2006). Created museum exhibit on Federal government role in sugar measurement, c. 1900. Researched and wrote article for NIST *Journal of Research* (see Publications).

RESEARCH
LANGUAGES

- French
- Spanish

PRIOR AFFILIATIONS

- Centre for Business History in Scotland, University of Glasgow (Glasgow, UK), 2012-13
- Instituto de Estudios del Caribe, Universidad de Puerto Rico - Río Piedras (San Juan, PR), 2012
- Center for History and Economics, Harvard University (Cambridge, MA), 2007-2014