

Kaela E. Thuney, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of History, Warren Wilson College

RESEARCH INTERESTS and CURRENT PROJECTS

I am a historian of British and French West Africa and the Atlantic world, focusing on gender, transnationalism, religion, and education for African women and girls in the 19th and 20th centuries. My dissertation, “Valiant Women, Virtuous Girls: Gender and Education in Colonial West Africa, 1808-1920,” examined the relationship between girls’ education and colonial rule in French and British West Africa. I study missionization, gender, and education, revealing how students in West Africa experienced colonialism as something to be navigated, rather than endured. I situate students’ experiences as integral to a broader, transnational narrative of colonial history, enriching understandings of the everyday lives of African women and girls navigating the impacts of colonialism. My secondary research emphasis is on women and gender studies in Africa and the Atlantic world. I examine state power, globalization, violence, law, labor, memory, gender, and the history of education within the broader context of colonialism. I am interested in exploring the connections between gendered education and the anxieties, aspirations, and maintenance of colonial expansion in West Africa during the 19th and 20th centuries. Other research interests include memory and memorialization, religious studies, and the history of art and medicine.

My upcoming project focuses on female doctors and medical practitioners who formed a late and post-colonial cohort of professionals in West Africa and the Atlantic World, placing their educational experiences into conversation with international decolonization projects, medical modernization, and mobility. Exploring the trajectories of African women educated in colonial schools and the evolving landscape of activism and professionalism in the twentieth century, this project demonstrates how colonial educational traditions equipped politicians, artists, activists, and other women to challenge colonial rule. It builds on ideas that motivated my earlier scholarship: the aspirations and motivations of female graduates of colonial schools, and how revisiting well-studied periods of African history from the perspective of women and girls helps draw new conclusions about colonial and post-colonial narratives.

EDUCATION

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill—*Chapel Hill, North Carolina*

MA coursework completed in African History, African American and African Diaspora Studies, and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

M.A. History, conferred Spring 2021. Thesis: “‘These Atrocious Practices:’ Confinement, Abolition, and Subjecthood in Sierra Leone and Senegal, 1830-32”

Ph.D. History: “Valiant Women, Virtuous Girls: Gender and Education in Colonial West Africa, 1808-1920.”

Western Washington University—*Bellingham, Washington*

B.A. History, conferred Spring 2018, *cum laude*

Emphasis on West African, Atlantic, and Gender History

Honors: Dean's List (Spring 2014, Fall 2017), President's List (Spring 2018)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- Early American History and Foundations of American Democracy
- Globalization Since 1500
- Baseball and American History
- The World Since 1945
- Modern South Africa
- The Transatlantic Slave Trade
- South African History Capstone

Nominated by students for the history department's 'excellence in teaching' award for work in the Transatlantic Slave Trade course

RELEVANT COURSEWORK and STUDIES

Graduate Seminars: Topics in African History, Independent Study in African History, U.S. and Atlantic History, Readings in West African Atlantic History, Readings in African History, Feminist Theory and Epistemologies, Gender History, Law, Society, and Empire, Colonial Encounters

Language Courses: French for Research, Wolof 401, Wolof 402, Wolof 403, Wolof 404

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

U.S. Department of State Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship (Academic Year 2022-23)

U.S. Department of Education Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowship: Wolof (Academic Year 2021-22)

U.S. Department of Education Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowship: Wolof (Academic Year 2020-21)

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Graduate Student Transportation Grant (2024)

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

- Review: *The Paradox of Protection: The Making of Indirect Rule in Southern Sierra Leone, 1850–1915* by Trina Leah Hogg, published in *Traces: the UNC Journal of History*, Spring 2026
- “The Women’s Caucus: A Collective History,” *African Studies Association News*, Fall 2025
- Review: *African Women in the Atlantic World: Property, Vulnerability, and Mobility, 1660-1880* by Mariana P. Candido and Adam Jones, eds., published in *The History Teacher*, Volume 56, No. 4, August 2023
- Review: *Atlantic Studies: Prospects and Challenges* by William Boelhower, published in *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, Vol. 62, No. 1, Winter 2021

PRESENTATIONS

- **Carolina Romance Studies Annual Conference**, 2026 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina)
"Massacre at the Mission: Gender and the Hut Tax War"
- **French Colonial Historical Society Annual Conference**, 2025 (Buffalo, New York):
"Education and Secularization at the 1906 Marseille Colonial Exposition"
- **University Of North Carolina History Department, Graduate Research Colloquium**, 2025 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina): "Gendered Education at the Dakar Medical School"
- **National Women's Studies Association Annual Conference**, 2024 (Detroit, Michigan):
"Teaching Motherhood: Gender, Midwifery, and Education in Dakar, Senegal, 1918-1940"
- **African Studies Association Annual Conference**, 2023 (San Francisco, California):
"Abolition Work: The Education of Liberated African Girls in Freetown"
- **Phi Alpha Theta History Society Washington Chapter Annual Conference**, 2018 (Spokane, Washington): "Women and Afro-Syncretic Religion in the African Diaspora"

PROFESSIONAL and ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

African Studies Association— *Program Support Assistant, 2025*

Corresponded with African Studies Association members regarding the ASA 2025 conference in Atlanta, assisting with registration and coordinating invitation letters for visiting scholars' visas. Updated standard operating procedures for the ASA secretariat, managed membership roles, and oversaw voting for the 2025 Board of Directors and bylaws elections. Adjusted the conference program for scheduling conflicts and coordinated workers for the event, holding meetings with the secretariat and conference board throughout Summer 2025.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, History Department— *Graduate Teaching Assistant and Assistant Teacher, 2019-2026*

Wrote and implemented lesson plans, led weekly recitation sections, document workshops, and writing groups for an average of forty-eight undergraduate students per semester. Attended weekly meetings with other graduate students and professors to plan weekly lessons and goals for student engagement with course topics. Maintained grade books and online forums for students, distributed and graded midterm and final tests and essays, held office hours and student meetings. Experience teaching both in-person and virtual courses.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, History Department— *Graduate Research Coordinator, 2023*

Served as Graduate Research Coordinator for HIST 398, the Modern South Africa seminar. Held meetings with students, facilitated their research, assisted in locating sources for their 25-page capstone papers, and discussed historiography and essay writing. Addressed student questions about the history profession and relevant topics, meeting both in-person and virtually.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, History Department— *Europe and Empire History Seminar Coordinator, 2024-25*

Coordinated the UNC History Department's 'Europe and Empire' seminar series, facilitating monthly meetings for graduate students to present in-progress work and provide feedback. Handled logistics such as catering and room reservations, and communicated with students about upcoming meetings.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, History Department—*Article and Manuscript Editor 2020-2022*

Edited and reviewed the archival and academic content of footnotes, corrected translations, and communicated with authors working on book manuscripts and academic journal publications.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, History Department—*Prospective Student Visit Coordinator, 2022-2024*

Organized social events for prospective graduate students in the history department at UNC Chapel Hill, both in-person and virtual. Collaborated with faculty on logistics and budgets, scheduled meetings between incoming students and advisors, and coordinated transportation. Communicated with caterers and local businesses to support the events.

Graduate Historical Society at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill—*Department Social Chair, 2020-2021*

Organized virtual social events for graduate students in the University of North Carolina's History Department during COVID-19 lockdowns. Participated in monthly Graduate Historical Society meetings and collaborated with members and faculty to plan events and public history functions throughout the year.

The Pike Place Market Foundation—*Intern and Assistant, 2018-19*

Interned with the Pike Place Market Foundation, categorizing and replacing outdated heritage markers at the Historic Pike Place Market in Seattle. Helped plan and execute fundraising efforts for new exhibits and the Market Safety Net Fund. Assisted in designing new heritage markers while using professional historical methods. Transcribed existing markers into an online database and attended donor meetings.

SKILLS

- French reading and writing proficiency
- Wolof reading and writing proficiency
- Experience teaching virtual and in-person courses in seminar and lecture format
- Familiarity with Slack, Asana, and other virtual scheduling and programming platforms
- Experience with WordPress website maintenance
- Familiarity with Sakai and Canvas course sites and maintenance

SCHOLARLY and PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- African Studies Association
- National Women's Studies Association
- French Colonial Historical Society