



# Ursinus College

601 E. Main Street • Collegeville, Pa. 19426

[ursinus.edu](http://ursinus.edu)

November 4, 2018

Dr. Susanna Throop  
601 E. Main Street  
Collegeville, PA 19426

Dear Dr. Susanna Throop and Members of the Search Committee:

I am applying for the position of Assistant Professor of World History at Ursinus College. I completed my PhD in History at the University of Florida in 2018, and am a Visiting Assistant Professor of European and World History at Ursinus College. As a socio-cultural historian, my teaching and research connect people's lived experiences to global issues and the public. My dynamic teaching style will contribute to the department's hands-on, rigorous teaching about the necessity of critically engaging all perspectives on the path to becoming global citizens.

Oral and public history form the heart of my teaching curriculum. In 2016 I taught two internships at UF's prestigious Samuel Proctor Oral History Program. In the small setting I worked closely with students hailing from a variety of backgrounds. Through readings and experiential activities like transcribing and interviewing each other, students learned three skills necessary for the dialogic interview process: listening, empathizing, and valuing the experiences of seemingly-dissimilar people. By crafting interview-based podcasts, students produced creative historical analyses that successfully engaged the public. In 2016 I also co-wrote a grant for the Hungary Initiatives Foundation, wherein I conducted interviews with Hungarian refugees who settled in Florida after 1956. Ursinus students will use them for a public history project in my spring 2019 "Cold War in Europe" course. These activities illustrate my commitment to collaborations that connect students to people's voices, various audiences, and World history themes such as migration and resettlement.

By participating in experiential activities in oral, public, and digital history alongside writing analytical papers in my classes, students of all abilities learn to value and present the multiplicity of human voices to others. For example, in my "Sport in Communist Eastern Europe" course, students used interview transcripts from my research to discuss how the source offers new perspectives on the Cold War. I am revising this exercise to teach India's Partition in my spring "The Modern World" course. After studying interviews from UT-Austin's South Asia Institute, students will role-play their narrator in an Oral History Jigsaw activity. This activity will allow students to grasp the interplay between power, inequities, and agency in the world on a personal level. I am employing another dynamic activity in my "Nationalism and Memory in European History" course, wherein students are designing commemoration proposals about a community's past. In addition to building teamwork skills through group proposals, students are tangibly experiencing the process and power of shaping historical narratives and learning to engage the public through history. Finally, Timeline JS and other digital tools are a critical component in my courses. Creating timelines in my "20<sup>th</sup> Century Europe" class allowed students to sharpen their digital faculties and feel inspired by democratizing history for others. These activities exemplify my practice of honing students' ability to create arguments based in others' voices that assess links between the past, present, and future in different formats.

Based on work funded by a Fulbright and Olympic Studies Centre PhD grant, my dissertation analyzed the interactions between athletes, Hungarian sport leaders, and the International Olympic



# Ursinus College

601 E. Main Street • Collegeville, Pa. 19426

[ursinus.edu](http://ursinus.edu)

Committee (IOC) as a microcosm of Cold War relations between society, the socialist state, and international organizations. Each group's evolving priorities showed that by the 1960s, cooperation—and not resistance or East-West battles—characterized international sport. I am revising and resubmitting an article to the *Contemporary European History* journal that shows why athletes actively worked with the state after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. My book manuscript, titled, *The Politics of Cooperation in Cold War Sport: Hungarian Athletes, Sport Leaders, and the IOC*, continues this uncharted analysis of Cold War sport by highlighting each group's voice and agency, especially the athletes. It combines oral histories and archival documents from Hungary, Switzerland, and the U.S. to connect local voices to the global development of sport. Editors from McGill-Queens University Press and Palgrave Macmillan have requested to see a proposal.

My next project studies Cold War migration by building on the collaborative “Cold War Athlete-Refugee in California Oral History Project” with Toby Rider and the LA84 Foundation. In a forthcoming article in the *Journal of Sport History*, I explore the hurdles of two Hungarian sportsmen who defected to California after 1956. For my larger project, I will extend this work to Europe and Australia to compare the global opportunities, obstacles, and legacies of East-West sport migrants.

In addition to teaching existing courses, I propose to develop ones for the Core and new History curriculums with dynamic student opportunities based in my work. Classes such as “Oral History: Collecting *All* Voices,” “The Rulers and the Ruled: Colonialism, Authoritarianism, and Their Aftermath,” “The Holocaust's Global Legacies: Politics, Genocide, and Human Rights” and “GOOOAL!: Sport in World History” will attract students from History, International Relations, Museum Studies, Health and Exercise Physiology, Media and Communication Studies, and Latin American Studies. I welcome the chance to enable students to build archival collections in the “Oral History” course, which could be used for “Bears Make History.” Topics include Ursinus's women's field hockey legacy and our first students of color. Both collections will contribute to the diversification of the institution's history, and dovetail with the College's celebration of its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary and centennial of women's suffrage in 2020. By creating a podcast or a public event about the narrators' stories, students will participate in the entire historical process, from creating documents to public history. The topics in “The Rulers and the Ruled” course will change every semester, ranging from British India and the USSR, French Indochina and Vietnam, to Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran and Chile's dictatorship. I would like to work with faculty such as Glenda Chao on interview projects about Montgomery County's Korean and Indian communities for her “#AsianAmericanProblems” course. I am also eager to create a sport studies Linked Inquiry, by continuing to discuss linking “GOOOAL!” to Heather O'Neill's “Economics of Sports” class.

I would be thrilled to continue contributing to the Department's aims of increasing students' engagement with everyone's history as global citizens. I look forward to discussing my World history contributions to the College at a future date. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Johanna Mellis