

Faculty Spotlight



Julie Greene, Professor of History and Founding Director Center for Global and Migration Studies

Julie Greene’s interest in labor and immigration is rooted in an unlikely place: rural Nebraska. Growing up in the small farming town of Greenwood, her childhood was shaped by experiences on her grandparents’ working farm, which had been part of her family since the 1880s. Like most American families, Julie’s is an immigrant story, the product of German migration four generations before her. “Once in a while, my grandmother would speak German with my great-aunt when they didn’t want little ones to understand what they were saying.” During Julie’s early work as a labor historian, she saw the diverse cultural threads that make up the fabric of the American workforce in dramatic context. She was eager to tell their stories. Now a Professor of History at the University of Maryland and Founding Director of the [University’s Center for Global and Migration Studies](#), Julie has written numerous articles and a book on labor, the working class, and the intersection of immigration. She is currently working on two more books. As the country navigates the complex immigration and labor issues of the 21st century, her work as a teacher and historian takes on renewed importance. Below, Julie talks about the history of immigration bias, her favorite immigrant stories, and how diverse communities enrich us as a university:

The United States is, in essence, one big immigrant story. Yet historically, it’s been a subject of contention. Why do you think that is? What facets of our history can we reflect on today, in an age where migration is regularly front-page news? I’m fascinated by the ways Americans celebrate immigrants and yet also hold them responsible for all kinds of perceived problems. History shows us that, from very early on, there existed anxieties about who is an American; there were very strong opinions by some, particularly Anglo-Americans, that the U.S. must be a

white, Anglo nation. Thus, U.S. national identity became bound up with notions of race and ethnicity. One of the first actions of Congress in 1790 was to limit which immigrants could become citizens: only “free, white, persons.” After the Civil War this was changed to allow the naturalization of people of African descent, but some groups—e.g., Asians—could not become citizens until 1943! Historians observe that those immigrants who seem the most ‘different’ from the white, Protestant norm typically face the most hostility or xenophobia. And that xenophobia becomes more severe when native-born Americans feel threatened by social or economic transformations. So today, when people say only those who will “assimilate” should be allowed to enter the country, this is actually a racial and ethnic conversation with echoes going back centuries.

You are currently working on a book that follows the journey of a handful of Caribbean workers who helped build the Panama Canal, based off actual memoirs. You have written about canal workers before—was there anything you learned from these memoirs that surprised you? This project has involved finding novel ways to bring the lives of ordinary Caribbean workers to life. I have about 110 brief memoirs by the workers, and then I tracked down several dozen of them in the personnel records of the U.S. government. This allows me to explore how diverse archives capture different aspects of life. One of the surprises involved a man who lost his leg while working on the canal due to a railroad accident. Such tragedies were common in the Canal Zone. This man wrote movingly in his memoir about the sad experience, and I assumed he had to quit work at this point to return home. Yet I learned from the personnel records that the U.S. government found work he could do despite his disability and fitted him with an artificial leg. He worked another forty years or so and helped keep the canal running all those years.

You are a leading expert on the history of labor and immigration. What immigration story is most intriguing to you and why? It’s hard to list just one! I often use the story of prominent immigrant families to bring history to life for my students. We might explore for example the family of Bridget Kennedy, an impoverished Irish immigrant whose son rose to modest fortune after buying his first saloon, and whose great-grandson became the 35th President of the United States. Another favorite is the story of Wong Kim Ark, the man whose Supreme Court case upheld birthright citizenship for people of any ethnic or racial group. When Wong Kim Ark went to court to demand that he, too, should benefit from the 14th Amendment, he changed U.S. history forever.

You recently spoke at a faculty forum about immigration and touched upon issues and policies that might affect the university community in the future. What sort of things concern you that might not be on the top-of-mind here on campus? The thriving immigrant communities on and around our campus—from Latin America, especially El Salvador, but increasingly from across Africa and Asia as well—enrich the University of Maryland in so many ways. I’d love to see more attention to that. The Year of Immigration has brought much needed attention to those contributions. I hope our campus can find new and even better ways to connect with and

support the immigrant communities around us, particularly now when uncertainty about the future of DACA and TPS are creating great anxiety.

You are the director of the [University's Center for Global and Migration Studies](#), which you co-founded in 2011. What was the impetus for creating the center? How do you hope the center impacts the University? To be honest, the idea for the Center came from my colleague and Co-Director Ira Berlin. He said to me one day, "Don't you think the biggest challenge the U.S. will face in the next decades is immigration?" I agreed, and so we began building the Center with tremendous support from the university administration, particularly the Provost, the Vice President for Research, and Deans of the Colleges of Arts and Humanities and Behavioral and Social Sciences. We work to build more and better understanding of immigration and global migration through research, teaching, and community outreach. The Center has made the University of Maryland into a renowned global leader on the experience of immigration and the socio-political challenges it generates.

What do you enjoy most about teaching? Teaching immigration history is exciting because one way or another the issue affects every student personally. My course begins by exploring how Native Americans confronted the early influx of migrants. As the course moves through history, we cover everything from forced migration of Africans, to English, Germans, and Irish, then Italian and Jewish migrations, and up to the present day when Mexican, El Salvadoran, Vietnamese, or Ethiopian immigrants take center stage. It profoundly changes how students think about immigration as they encounter their own family's place in the vast pageant.

What's an interesting fact not many people know about you? At the age of 22 I hopped a freight train across the Midwest.

When you're not on campus, how do you like to spend your time? I enjoy playing piano (Chopin nocturnes rule), hiking, and reading novels.

Article by Maggie Haslam

Awards| Recognition| Leadership Development

2019-2020 Distinguished Scholar-Teacher Award Recipients



Sharon Fries-Britt
Counseling,
Higher
Education, and
Special
Education



George Hurtt
Geographical
Sciences



Daniel Lathrop
Physics



Derek Richardson
Astronomy

Congratulations to the 2019-2020 Distinguished Scholar-Teachers!
During the fall semester, each DST will present a public lecture on their faculty career and scholarly interests. Presentation dates will be posted by late summer.



Big Ten Academic Alliance Leadership Development Programs

We are now accepting nominations for the 2019-2020 Big Ten Academic Alliance [Academic Leadership Program](#) & [Department Executive Officers](#) program. Submit a nomination for the [ALP](#) or [DEO](#). For additional details, click [here](#).



Faculty and Staff Accolades

Congratulations to UMD faculty and staff members who are being recognized for their research, performance, service and creativity. [Read on](#) for some of the awards and honors earned this semester.

Courtesy of Maryland Today.

Faculty Development

Faculty Forum: Immigration

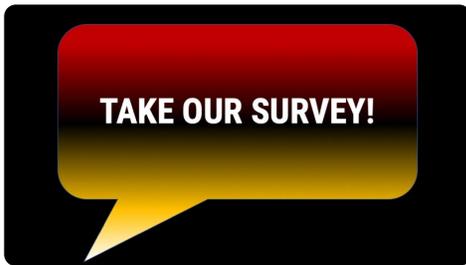


On February 25, participants engaged in a lively and informative discussion focused on issues surrounding immigration, and the intersection of research with faculty members [Sharada Balachandran Orihuela](#), English and [Julie Greene](#), History, and Associate Vice President, Office of International Affairs, [Ross Lewin](#).



Plagiarize-Proof Your Writing Assignments

Plagiarism may flag instances of knowledge gaps or poor writing skills rather than malicious intent. In order to avoid academic conduct hearings involving your students, consider how the design of writing assignments can detect writing issues... [Read more](#) from Faculty Focus.



We want to hear from you!

If there were a faculty tour at the [Phillips](#), would you attend? [Take our brief survey](#) to let us know. Responses are anonymous. Last month's survey results indicated that future newsletters should include details on initiatives and events happening in colleges and schools.

UMD EMERITUS/EMERITA ASSOCIATION (UMEEA)



Insights into the Dynamics of Aging

On February 26, emeritus/emerita faculty members gathered for a discussion of new insights into the aging process. The event featured research projects by [Samira Anderson](#), Hearing & Speech Sciences; [Amanda Lazar](#), College of Information Studies; and [J. Carson Smith](#), Kinesiology.

Diversity & Inclusion

Answering the Call



Running UMD's Hate-Bias Response Program calls for generous measures of empathy, resilience and persistence, and colleagues of Neijma Celestine-Donnor say she embodies all three. [Learn about](#) the core mission of the Program, which is focused on providing responses and support. Courtesy of Maryland Today.



UMD Department of Psychology Diversity Conference

The [Department of Psychology](#) is hosting its 7th annual conference on diversity Friday, April 26. The event will feature cutting edge presentations from local researchers and a keynote speaker. View details [here](#).

Program & Events

[April 9](#) - Faculty Forum: Academic Freedom & Free Speech

April 16 - Chair Workshop: Research Integrity+

April 25 - Chair Workshop: What Chairs Need to Know about Security and Conflicts of Interest+

+ Registration sent via Google Form.

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suggestion for
content ideas?**

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