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The Undergraduate Historical and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies Journal at UC Merced

Volume 11

Special Issue in Honor of Professor Susan D.
Amussen – “Gender, Race, and Empire: Past
and Present”



An 18th century depiction of sugarcane processing in the West Indies. (Image Credit: [John Hinton, 1749](#))

**THE UNDERGRADUATE
HISTORICAL AND
CRITICAL RACE &
ETHNIC STUDIES
JOURNAL AT UC
MERCED**

Volume 11

Special Issue in Honor of Professor

Susan D. Amussen – “Gender, Race, and
Empire: Past and Present” (Spring 2026)

**The Undergraduate Historical and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies
Journal at the University of California, Merced**

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Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

This special issue is dedicated to Dr. Susan Amussen, an accomplished academic in the field of History. Dr. Amussen has devoted her career to understanding the impact of gender, class, and race in early modern Britain and the Atlantic world. In honor of Dr. Amussen's pioneering research and scholarly impact, the HCRES Undergraduate Journal editorial board curated this issue to focus on the social, political, and historical aspects of gender, race, and empire. In total, this special issue brings together seven essays and five book reviews, each engaging with at least one dimension of Dr. Amussen's scholarship while collectively spanning a wide range of geographical contexts and historical periods.

The current issue is a product of the hard work of our eight dedicated student editors – Ashley Cendejas, Isaac Gonzalez-Leon, Castner Hatanaka, Byron Hurte, Ruben Paredes, Katya Tapia Becerril, Katy Vargas, and Noe Rangel – and several of our HCRES professors who edited articles and helped get us across the finish line. Central to this effort, however, are the nine undergraduate authors and the two UC Merced alumni authors whose original research, dedication, and intellectual engagement have shaped and enriched this issue. I hope that the contents of this issue can start real conversations amongst those who take the time to read and understand why the topics of race, gender, and empire are so important to social and political structures and institutions that still stand today.

Overall, I am so humbled by this experience to serve as the editor-in-chief for the past two years and I am so excited to bring back the HCRES Journal for another edition! I hope you enjoy this issue and that it prompts you to think critically about the world around you.

Brooke Acebo
Editor-in-Chief
HCRES Undergraduate Journal

Faculty Forward

The History & Critical Race and Ethnic Studies department celebrates Professor Amussen on the occasion of her retirement with a journal issue in her honor. Professor Amussen has been the most generous colleague, professor, and friend to so many of us at UC Merced. We bid her farewell with our hearts full of gratitude for all that she has done for us. UC Merced is a far better place as a result of her many contributions.

We stand in awe of Professor Amussen's academic accomplishments. A pioneer in the studies of gender and culture in Early Modern Europe, her more recent work has led her to consider intersectional elements of race and class together with gender and culture. She has been a consistent and dogged engine of change for the visibility of women in her field, as both scholars and subject of research. She has published four academic monographs, edited two major anthologies, and authored more than twenty-five peer-reviewed essays in academic journals and anthologies. Her research is on gender in early modern England, specifically focusing on its connections to race and class. But her scholarly impact extends well beyond these temporal and geographic boundaries to inform scholarship on slavery in the Anglophone, Spanish, Lusophone, Danish, and Dutch Atlantic worlds into the Modern Period. Her important and groundbreaking books are: *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (1988, paperback ed.1993), *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640-1700* (2007), *Gender, Culture and Politics in Early Modern England: Turning the World Upside Down* (co-authored with David Underdown, 2017), and finally, *What's in a Name?: How Historians Know Shakespeare Was Shakespeare* (2026).

Over the entirety of her career, she has modeled the ways that women can pursue professional pathways and succeed in a field that has been heavily dominated by men (not just History but especially British history). As an accomplished, dedicated, and decorated teacher, Professor Amussen brought her innovative research and scholarly accomplishments into her classes. Her courses have focused on groups traditionally underrepresented in the field of European History. Students will remember how she enriched her courses by bringing dozens of samples from her own archival study into her classes. She was twice recognized for having "made a difference" by graduating seniors, who are asked to name professors having made a meaningful impact on their undergraduate experience. A sample of the courses that students had the privilege of taking include History 35: The Making of the Atlantic World; Spark: Shakespeare's London; History 100: The Historian's Craft; History 170: Law and Society in Early Modern England; History 179: Early Modern England 1500-1750; and History 106: Women and Gender in the Early Modern Atlantic World.

Additionally, the History & Critical Race and Ethnic Studies department is grateful for all of Professor Amussen's service to the university. In our department, she selflessly and frequently took on board service tasks in order to protect untenured and junior faculty from time-consuming service responsibilities. Her leadership on a campus that has had proportionally few female voices has had such an impact, as has her inclusive approach to leadership. She has chaired and served on numerous other system-wide, campus, and school committees and programs, including serving as chair of the Merced Division of the Academic Senate twice. She has also chaired the Interdisciplinary Humanities program and the Center for the Humanities. Her wonderful

contributions to the university were acknowledged when she won the Fred Spiess award for Senate Service in 2017. Professor Amussen's service extended to the profession, where she has held important leadership positions in the North American Conference on British Studies and the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women and Gender.

To these more visible aspects of Professor Amussen's work, we must add those daily activities that are otherwise invisible but that matter so much. She has been an incredible mentor to faculty in the HCRES department, especially untenured women. Whenever anyone sends a question to the department, whether via text or email, Professor Amussen is usually the first to answer, taking time from her own work to share with her colleagues her vast knowledge of the sometimes Byzantine-like inner workings of the university, saving us all hours of time that we would spend looking for the answer elsewhere. Her remarkable ability to read and comment on the work of colleagues and students working on topics and fields of study far removed from her own has helped so many of us with our own work. And she has been a great friend, always encouraging us, and cheering us on with a welcoming smile. She is someone we have always been able to turn to as a confidant and advisor. HCRES will miss her very much, and we wish her all the best in her future pursuits. We know she will remain an active scholar and a true friend.

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