

"Bringing War Home"

04/16/2021

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Photo: Dr. Susan R. Grayzel, a Professor of History, and Dr. Molly Boeka Cannon, a Professional Practice Assistant Professor of Anthropology.

NEH FUNDS CHASS FACULTY FOR TWO-YEAR PROJECT: "BRINGING WAR HOME"

The National Endowment for the Humanities has awarded two Utah State University College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHaSS) faculty members \$99,891 for a two-year, community-facing project "Bringing War Home: Object Stories, Memory, and Modern War," one of 11 such projects funded by its Dialogues on the Experience of War program this cycle.

Dr. Susan R. Grayzel, a Professor of History, and Dr. Molly Boeka Cannon, a Professional Practice Assistant Professor of Anthropology who directs both the Museum of Anthropology and the Mountain West Center for Regional Studies, will lead the project. The funding will also provide support for graduate and undergraduate students to assist the two faculty members.

According to Grayzel, "Americans live with the material artifacts of war--knitted socks produced by our grandmothers at home, postcards sent from war zones. We might have a family memento that originated in France or Laos, but no way of placing this object in context. Through our project, we aim to provide students, veterans, military family members, and the general public with an opportunity to gain access to the tools to contextualize, preserve, and analyze these objects and the stories that surround them." For Cannon, this project will bridge "the

approaches that historians and anthropologists take to material objects," allowing the team "to show how ordinary things embedded in family life can transform our collective understanding and discussions of war."

Grayzel adds, "Community is at the heart of our project.

A key part of the project will be a co-taught class where we will help students learn to guide community collections of wartime objects and discussions of related war experiences, affording an opportunity to deepen understanding of the service and the diverse experiences of veterans and their families."

In addition to running workshops and digitally collecting objects in partnership with the Hill Aerospace Museum and Fort Douglas Military Museum, the project will also establish an ongoing digital database of objects and object stories housed at the USU libraries. Cannon says that by "creating the source base for future community-based discussions, we will help Utahns create a living digital archive not only of the objects of war but also the stories that convey their personal meaning. The digital archive will preserve this legacy for generations to come."

The project will begin with state-wide discussions groups focusing on a community read of Vietnam Veteran Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*. Cannon says that the team hopes "to partner with various student groups especially veteran students, Utah Public Radio, and the Utah Department of Veterans and Military Affairs to encourage residents and especially veterans living in Logan, where USU has its main campus, as well as those near our state-wide campuses from Blanding to Price, to gather in small groups (in person or via Zoom) to discuss this work of literature," and be inspired to participate in learning more about the material artifacts of war. Planning is underway for a community read program for the fall supported by the Logan Library. Cannon and Grayzel are very grateful for the support of the NEH and so "excited to be working with our campus and community partners to bring this project to life."

Find out more at: mountainwest.usu.edu/bringing-war-home.

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