

Dr. Megan Birk
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Current Position

Associate Professor of History, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX, 2014-present
Assistant Professor of History, University of Texas Pan American, Edinburg, TX. 2008-Sept. 1, 2014
Graduate Program Coordinator, Department of History, University of Texas Pan American, Edinburg, TX, 2014-present
Faculty Development Grant Leave – Spring 2018

Education

Ph.D American History, Purdue University, 2008
MA American History, Iowa State University, 2004
BA History, Mass Communications, University of Evansville, 2001

Book Manuscripts

Fostering on the Farm: Placing Out Dependent Children in the Rural Midwest, 1865-1920, 2015, University of Illinois Press. 2017 Vincent P. DeSantis Winner, Best First Book. Paperback, 2019.

Sick and Tired: The Realities of Life, Death, and Social Welfare at County Poor Farms, in progress.

Book Chapter

“Rural Life” in *A Companion to U.S. Agricultural History*, Wiley Press, forthcoming 2021

Peer Reviewed Articles

- “Poor Placed-Out Girls: The Rural Household Economy and the Value of Girlhood in the US”, *Journal for the History of Childhood and Youth*, 12:3, Fall 2019
- “The Better the Farm, the Better the Food: Institutional diet, agricultural practices, and nutrition in US almshouses,” *Food, Culture, and Society*, forthcoming June 2020
- Poor Farm Women: Laboring and Living in an Institutional Setting, in progress.
- “Lyman Alden: Setting an Institutional Example,” *Indiana Magazine of History*, June, 2013.
- “The Farm, Foster Care, and Dependent Children in the Midwest, 1870-1920”, *Journal of the Progressive Era and Gilded Age*, 12:3, 2013. (Nominated for the 2015 Dorothy Schwieder Article Prize from the Midwestern History Association)
- “Supply and Demand: The Mutual Dependency of Children’s Institutions and the American Farmer,” *Agricultural History*, 66:1, Winter 2012.

- “Playing House: Training Modern Mothers at Iowa State College Home Management Houses, 1921-1951.” *Annals of Iowa*, 64:1, 2005. (Winner of the Throne Aldrich Award for best article, 2006)

Reviews

- *Raising Government Children: A History of Foster Care and the American Welfare State*, by Catherine Rymph, for the *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 12:2, April 2019
- *Harvest of Hazards: Family Farming, Accidents, and Expertise in the Corn Belt, 1940-1975*, by Derek Oden, *New Mexico Historical Review*, 94:1, Winter 2019
- *The Takeover: Chicken Farming and the Roots of American Agribusiness*, by Monica Gisolfi, *Journal of Southern History*, 84:3, August 2018
- *The British Gentry, The Southern Planter, and the Northern Farmer: Agriculture and sectional antagonism in North America*, by James Huston, for the *Canadian Journal of History*, 51:3, June 2017
- Review Essay: *Dining Out in Boston; Restaurant Republic*, by James O’Connell, Kelly Erby, for the *New England Quarterly*, June 2017
- *Down on Mahans Creek: a history of an Ozarks neighborhood*, by Benjamin Radar for *Choice*, July 2017
- *Food, Control, and Resistance*, by Tamara Levi for *Choice*, September 2016
- *Farmers Helping Farmers*, by Nancy Berlangue, *Choice*, Fall 2016
- *Blood Oranges: Colonialism and Agriculture in the South Texas Borderlands*, by Timothy Bowman, for *Western Historical Quarterly*, August, 2016
- *The Crops Look Good: News from a Midwestern Family Farm*. By Sara DeLuca. *Agricultural History*, April, 2016.
- *A Sister’s Memories: The Life and Work of Grace Abbott From the Writings of her Sister Edith Abbott* ed. John Sorenson, for *Choice*.
- *Civilizing the child: discourses of race, nation, and child welfare in America* by Katharine Bullard for *Choice*, June 2014.
- *The lost region: toward a revival of Midwestern history* by Jon K. Lauck for *Choice*, May 2014.
- *The Midwest During the Civil War* by J.A. Anderson and Ginette Aley for *Kansas History*, June 2014.
- *How the other half ate: a history of working-class meals at the turn of the century* by Katherine Leonard Turner for *Choice*.
- *The Charleston Orphan Home* by John Murray for *The Journal of Southern History*.
- *The Miracle Worker and the Transcendentalist* by David Wagner for *Choice*, April 2013.
- *How America Eats: A Social History of U.S. Food and Culture* by Jennifer Jensen Wallach for *Choice*, forthcoming.
- *Forty Acres and A Mule: African American Landowning Families Since Reconstruction* ed. Debra Reid, Evan Bennett for *Choice*, January 2013.
- *Turning the Tables: Restaurants and the Rise of the American Middle Class, 1880-1920* by Andrew Haley for H-Net, Progressive Era, January 2012.

- *The rights of the defenseless: protecting animals and children in gilded age America* by Susan Pearson for *Choice*, November 2011
- *The Forgotten Generation: American Children and World War II* by Lisa Ossian for *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains*, Fall, 2011.
- *Small Wonder: The Little Red School House in History and Memory* by Jonathan Zimmerman, *Agricultural History*, 84:4, Fall 2010.
- *Cuyahoga Valley National Park Handbook* by Carolyn V. Platt (Kent, Kent State University Press, 2006), *Ohio History*, (v. 115, 2008).

Presentations

- From Labor to Languish: Men, Masculinity, and Poor Farm Residency,” Agricultural History Society, Washington, DC, June 2019
- “Local Homes for Local Children,” Orphan Train Colloquium sponsored by the NEH, Kearny, Nebraska, October, 2018.
- Shelter and Security: The County Poor Farm as a Women’s Resource, Organization of American Historians, Sacramento, April 2018.
- “From Farm Work to Famous Faces: Twentieth Century Placement Practices for African American Children” Society for the History of Childhood and Youth, Camden, New Jersey, June 2017.
- “The Agricultural Roots of Midwestern Social Welfare” Midwest Historical Association, Grand Rapids, Michigan, June 2017.
- “An historical foundation for urban gardening and reclamation of deserted lots: remembering the Pingree Plan” Agricultural History Society, New York, New York, June 2016.
- African American Children and Placing Out: Examining Race in Home Finding, Society for the History of Childhood and Youth, Biennial Meeting, Vancouver, BC, June 2015
- Not Enough to Meet the Demand: The Significance of Placed Out Girls on American Farms, Rural Women’s Studies Association Biennial Meeting, San Marcos, TX, Feb. 2015
- “Learning by Doing: Food History and Service Learning in the Rio Grande Valley,” Agricultural History Society Meeting, Provo, Utah, June 2014.
- “Poor Farm Inc.: Did the Poor Farm Really Farm?” Agricultural History Society Meeting, Banff, AB, Canada, June 2013.
- “Rural Women’s Lives through the Lens of the Life Cycle” Commenter, Agricultural History Society Meeting, Banff, AB, Canada, June 2013.
- “Personalizing the Institution: How the Rose Orphan’s Home Became the Nation’s Leading Example of Institutional Care” Society for the History of Childhood and Youth at the American Historical Association, New Orleans, Jan. 2013.
- “Youth, Labor, and Citizenship in the United States”, Panel Commentator, Generations: Rethinking Age and Citizenship Conference, Wayne State University, March, 2012.
- “Teaching Food History as Agricultural History,” Agricultural History Society Conference, Springfield, IL, June 2011.
- “Fighting Over the Future: Social Reformers and Childhood in Nineteenth-Century America,” Organization for American Historians, Washington D.C., April 2010.

Other Publications

- “Anthony Comstock” and “Homestead Act” for *Encyclopedia of Populism*, ABC-CLIO, Spring 2013.

Classes Taught at Graduate and Undergraduate Levels

- American Heritage I, II, seated, online, reduced seat
- Emergence of the Modern Era, seated, online
- American Food History
- Family and Childhood in the U.S.
- Senior Research Seminar Capstone Class
- Graduate Seminars in Food, Childhood and Family, 19th Century America, Social History, Teaching History at the College Level
- Quality Matters Certified for Online Teaching

Select Professional Service

- Member, editorial board *Middle West Review* – 2018 – present
- Secretary, Midwestern History Association – 2018-present
- Chair, DeSantis Prize Committee, Society for the Historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, 2018-19
- Chair, department annual review and P/T committee, 2018-2019
- Organizer of South Texas Dual Enrollment History Conference, February 2016
- Search Committee Member, Dean of Liberal Arts, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, 2015
- Judge, KRGV Masterminds trivia program – 2015-2018
- NEH participant, program committee, Gender and Women’s Studies Program, UTRGV, 2017-19
- NEH participant, program committee, Public Heritage Degree Design, UTRGV, 2019-2020
- Grant reviewer: National Historical Publications and Records Commission, 2016-2017
- Project Sin Fronteras Cohort Member for Sustainability in the Classroom, Spring 2015
- Secretary, University Graduate Council, 2014-2015; member 2013-2014
- Program Committee, Agricultural History Society Meeting, 2013
- Parliamentarian, College Council Representative, 2011-2013
- Policy, Personnel, Executive, Graduate, and Undergraduate History committee member
- Academic Computing and Affirmative Action university committee member
- Grant Reviewer, UTPA
- New Faculty Mentor, 2014-2016
- Peer Reviewer, *Kansas History*, *Agricultural History*, *The Middle West Review*, *Sociological Forum*, *The History Teacher*, *Oxford University Press*, *Wiley Press*

- Thesis committee member and advisor, various students

Select Continuing Education and Local Participation

- Guest speaker, Rehabilitation and Counseling PhD Program, Fall 2018
- Guest speaker, Edinburg Rotary Club, Spring 2017
- Guest speaker, Women's History Month – UTRGV, spring 2019
- 2018-2019 Associate to Full NSF Grant participant - UTRGV
- Guest speaker, Center for Teaching Excellence service learning, Spring 2016
- Grant Administrator for Gear Up: Master's Education Program for History
- Service Learning Cohort, Undergraduate Research and Service Learning, 2013-14
- Women's Writing Across Curriculum Group, 2010-2012
- Certified Quality Matters online learning reviewer, Spring 2014
- Center for Online Learning and Technology online learning and Quality Matters cohorts
- Hybrid Learning Seminar with UTSA, 2011
- Speaker at Donna ISD Social Studies Day
- Speaker for Region One Social Studies Sessions
- History Day Judge, 2009-2014
- Faculty Research Council Grant Award, 2009
- NEH Summer Grant Award Finalist, 2011

