2020 RESEARCH SCHOLAR GRANT PROJECTS

The Hollys: Migration, Family, and the Forging of Diaspora (Research Scholar Fellowship)
College of Arts and Science: Brandon Byrd

The Hollys: Migration, Family, and the Forging of Diaspora offers a new history of the making of the modern African Diaspora. It begins with the migrations of the Hollys, a free black family, across the pre-Civil War U.S. North before re-telling the history of James Theodore Holly, a black nationalist who moved to Canada before leading a mass migration to Haiti in the 1860s. It does not stop with his death in 1911 but continues with the lives of his descendants in the Caribbean, Africa, and North America. In rejecting the traditional depiction of Holly's emigration movement as a failure and connecting his family's experiences across the nineteenth and twentieth-century Atlantic World, The Hollys builds on recent scholarship in diaspora studies. It demonstrates how the Hollys and Haiti became emblematic of and central to the processes of migration and identity formation that have made the modern African Diaspora.

Logistics Sits in Places: Port Ecologies in an Era of Mega-Ships and Rising Seas (Research Scholar Fellowship)
Peabody College of Education and Human Development: Ashley Carse

Logistics Sits in Places is an ethnographic and historical study of the new forms of environmental politics emerging around maritime transportation megaprojects. It is both an account of one controversial port expansion project—dredging Georgia's Savannah Harbor to accommodate mega-containerships—and a broader inquiry into how the economic rationality of global logistics articulates with the cultural and ecological specificities of place. The project title flags an intervention in globalization scholarship in the humanities and social sciences. Scholars use concepts like "flow" and "circulation" to characterize how commodities move around the world, and to what effect. What such concepts obscure is how places are modified to make cheap, rapid transportation possible.

SNAP Timing, SAT Scores, and College Attendance (Summer Stipend)
College of Arts and Science: Analisa Packham

Monthly government transfer programs produce cycles of consumption that track benefit receipt, creating periods in which many households experience food insecurity. In this project, state-level variation will be exploited in the staggered timing of nutritional assistance benefit issuance across households to analyze how this monthly cyclicality in food availability affects academic achievement. Using individual-level SAT data from the College Board linked to national college enrollment data, preliminary estimates suggest that taking this high-stakes exam in the last two weeks of the SNAP benefit cycle reduces test scores and lowers the probability of attending a 4-year college for low-income high school students.

Strategies of Low-Level Conflict and Competition (Research Scholar Fellowship)
College of Arts and Science: Peter Schram

How and why do political actors compete? This project will explore the nuances of the question by examining three distinct research clusters. First, what are the second-order strategic implications that occur after a state achieves improved military capabilities? For example, Western militaries can now conduct sophisticated low-level operations like the Stuxnet computer worm. How do competitor states strategically respond to these developments? Second, how do state or non-state actors undermine cooperation within targeted entities? To date policymakers and practitioners suggest that Russia has been supporting specific political entities within European democratic systems with the intent to undermine cooperation and sow discord; how to do this effectively is a sophisticated and previously unexplored political-economy problem. Finally, what is the historical political legacy of over three-hundred years of the conflict between Native Americans and settlers? These questions of competition will be examined utilizing game theoretic and statistical modelling.