SUMMER 2012 AMS RESEARCH WINNERS:

**Olivier Burtin, Department of History.** Using archives from the American Legion headquarters in Indianapolis as a starting point, my project is to explore the many ways in which veterans influenced local and national U.S politics and society in the post-World War Two era. Virtually the single most important veterans’ organization, the Legion was involved in creating local community programs throughout the country, bringing together millions of veterans from different wars, ensuring their access to an efficient healthcare system, honoring the memory of those who had died in service via monuments and cemeteries, and last but not least, lobbying tirelessly the U.S Congress on topics ranging from the Department of Veteran Affairs to national security and “Americanism.” Through these various activities, I seek to understand, for instance, how patriotism became deeply embedded in the everyday life of Americans or the unique place of veterans in the expanding U.S welfare state.

**George Laufenberg, Department of Anthropology.** George works at the intersection of medical anthropology, political anthropology, and the anthropology of religion; he is interested in relationships between embodied practices of spirituality, healing, and community formation in contemporary North American life. His fieldwork explores modes of knowledge production and representations of experience in the teaching and learning of metaphysically-oriented practices of ‘Complementary and Alternative Medicine’, as well as the connections practitioners make between allopathic clinical mental health care, healing traditions in native North America, and European esoteric traditions.

**Ronny Regev, Department of History.** Ronny's dissertation, “It’s a Creative Business”: The Ideas, Practices, and Interaction that Made the Hollywood Studio System, seeks to reveal the day-to-day reality inside this industry during it’s golden age, c. 1930-1950, by examining the effect work relations and politics had on cinematic production and content. It is a social history of Hollywood that will recover the organization of both labor and the creative process through which movies were produced. Surveying the archives of producers, directors, writers, and actors as well as those of the studios, I aim to reconstruct the industry’s division of labor – the different roles created by it, how they were experienced by the people who occupied them, and to what extent this experience affected the on-screen result. It is an attempt to understand how everyday routines and interactions shape entertainment through the industry and time period that transformed this profession from a local experience to a national and global one.

**Beth Stroud, Department of Religion.** Beth spent two weeks in Minneapolis researching the influence of eugenics on Progressive-era social reform movements at the Social Welfare History Archives at the University of Minnesota. She investigated settlement houses, maternity homes, and anti-venerale disease organizations, using the SWHA’s extensive collections of the papers of social reform groups. She found that liberal Protestant reformers often exploited fears of “race degeneration” in their public discourse about reforming American sexual behavior. Even as they advocated for frank discussion of human sexuality, an end to the sexual double standard, and curbs on the exploitation of women, they framed those efforts in terms of protecting the reproductive power of the white, middle-class family.
Sean Vanatta, Department of History. “Filching the American Dream: Credit Card Fraud in Historical Perspective,” seeks to uncover and reconstruct the agency of credit card criminals, who sought by questionable means to procure the promises of American prosperity, while also detailing the efforts of credit card issuers and state authorities to meet the evolving challenges posed by these malefactors. Using archival evidence from the National Archives, the Library of Congress, and the New York City Municipal Archives, the project traces the cycles of crime, prosecution, and legislation which attended the rise of the bank credit card industry from the late-1950s through the mid-1980s. In doing so it explores how innovations in both credit card technology and criminal practice shaped the boundaries of card crime, and how prosecutors, along with federal and state politicians sought to police those boundaries.

Grant Wythoff, Department of English. The canonical story about Hugo Gernsback is that he launched the genre of science fiction as the founding editor of extensive archival research, I provide a new picture of modern science fiction as a genre that emerged out of what was more or less an electrical supply catalogue. In the 1910s and 20s, one could find in the pages of these publications a literary treatise on what the genre of “scientifiction” should look like alongside a blueprint for a homebrewed Nipkow disk television set or a pocket wireless receiver. Long before Gernsback founded Amazing Stories in April of 1926. Gernsback treated the magazine as merely a commercial venture, wrote in a “crude and heavy-handed” style, and now usually receives little more than a cursory, one-sentence nod in critical works on the genre. Focusing only on the period from Amazing and after, this inherited version overlooks the wider context of the genre's birth in Gernsback’s fleet of electrical experimenter magazines as well as his work as a pioneer in wireless technologies and amateur broadcast activist. The Perversity of Things, named after a Gernsback essay on the influence that objects exert on thought, will be a critical edition of these writings. Through Amazing Stories, writers used speculative fiction to find a language for emerging media such as radio, television, or the more exotic osophon and telegraphone. This collection occasions a reappraisal of both the “hard” technical roots of American science fiction and the highly speculative orientation toward media technologies in the period.