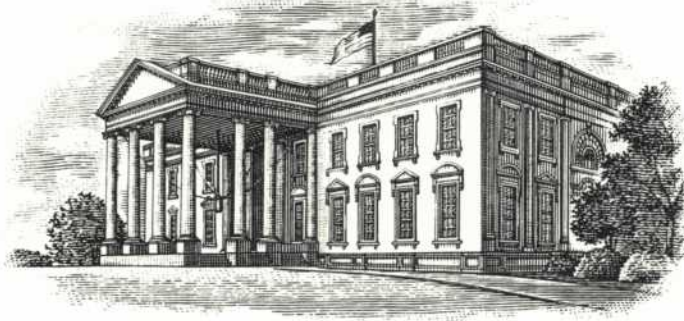


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*THE WHITE HOUSE
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION*

Dr. Joseph Genetin-Pilawa
Department of History and Art History
George Mason University

October 31, 2019

Dear Dr. Genetin-Pilawa,

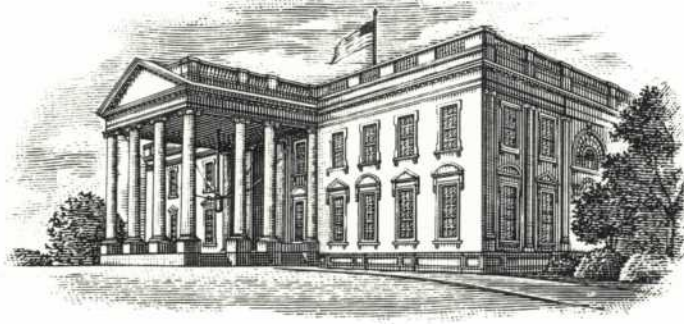
I write to apply for the professorship in Public History. I am currently the White House Historian at the White House Historical Association where I focus on public and United States history. I received my Ph.D. in American history from the University of California, Davis in 2017, after which I completed a two-year postdoctoral fellowship at the Center for Presidential History at Southern Methodist University. I am excited by the prospect of bringing my passion for public history and experience in the Washington, D.C. history community into the classroom at George Mason University. I would also welcome the opportunity to use my network to facilitate student internships and experiential learning opportunities for George Mason students.

Through my work at the White House Historical Association, I have firsthand experience with many aspects of public history, including exhibit creation, museum education, public engagement, fundraising, and nonprofit management. In my current position, my primary focus is the Slavery in the President's Neighborhood initiative—intended to tell a more diverse and inclusive history of the White House—by focusing on the enslaved people who built the White House, worked within it, and lived in the surrounding neighborhood. Building upon best practices in the field, this initiative seeks to engage descendent communities as shareholders of the history and prioritize collaboration with local historical organizations, presidential paper projects, and historic sites across the United States. In addition to this curatorial work, I am responsible for researching and writing content for multiple WHHA media platforms, serving as a public face for the organization, engaging donors, and fostering community ties with partner organizations and scholars. My responsibilities also extend to historic site management, including drafting annual budgets for my department, crafting outreach strategies, and devising a long-term business plan for a non-profit organization. On a daily basis, I draw upon traditional history, public history, and general professional skills—skills that would serve as core components of my courses at George Mason University as I engage students in both the theory and practice of public history.

I have also cultivated relationships with numerous historical institutions in the Washington, D.C. area. Most recently, I established a paid fellowship program with Georgetown University's history department, in which the WHHA will employ a graduate student to research and write for the Slavery in the President's Neighborhood initiative. Using my experience and contacts, I have also built ties with local history sites including Gadsby's Tavern Museum, Lee Fendall House, Octagon House, the Freedom House Museum, Ford's Theatre, and the Apothecary Museum, and explored possibilities for further collaboration. I am committed to fostering similar public history and academic relationships at the national level as well. For example, I am currently working with colleagues to plan the WHHA's annual colloquium and symposium series, which convenes scholars from across the country to discuss different aspects of White House history and present their work for a public audience.

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In addition to my public history scholarship, my book, *The Cabinet: George Washington and the Creation of an American Institution*, is forthcoming from Harvard University Press on April 7, 2020. *The Cabinet* changes how we understand political history in the Early Republic by illustrating the cabinet's contributions during political, diplomatic, and constitutional crises in the 1790s, and by considering how gender and material culture shaped the cabinet's development. Finally, the book reveals that while political institutions have greatly transformed in the last 220 years, Washington established cabinet precedents and a model of executive power that continue to influence the way presidents govern in the modern era. My next book project, *Clash of Cabinets*, will continue my exploration of government origins, presidential precedents, and the material culture of executive governing spaces. While many scholars have explored the lives of Presidents John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, this book will be the first to examine the central role of their cabinets in the executive branch. These two administrations offer examples of the best and worst cabinets in American history and analyze how presidents grapple with power and the egos of their department secretaries—issues that presidents continue to face today.

As a public historian, I am particularly interested in bringing my scholarship to broader audiences through digital media platforms. I have partnered with graduate students at SMU to produce a three-dimensional rendering of the President's House in 1790s Philadelphia. This digital representation of cramped physical spaces revealed new historical insight into the intimacy of the era's politics. I am now leading an interdisciplinary team applying for national grants to produce a website and mobile application that will enable scholars, students, and teachers to consider how physical space shaped executive precedent, social life, and domestic relationships in the Early Republic. In the future, the project will expand to include the early White House, displaying the physical space of governing in the Early Republic and accompanying my second book. These grants would employ George Mason students and provide them with both digital and public history experience. I would welcome the chance to continue my digital work with the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media.

Based on my teaching experience and my public history background, I am confident in my ability to teach graduate and undergraduate courses in the best practices of public history as outlined by the National Council of Public History. For example, I could offer a course on slavery in Washington, D.C that would include research and site visits, or a digital public history course on the American Revolution that would require students to create their own website and online exhibit. I also developed and taught courses on the presidency in the Early Republic while a postdoctoral fellow at SMU, and I could offer similar courses at George Mason. In my current position, I have taken an active role mentoring graduate students from George Washington University, American University, and Georgetown University. I am eager to continue this work with George Mason students by helping them navigate the public history program, as well as the D.C. public history community.

I would welcome the opportunity to teach diverse audiences, work with the Rosenzweig Center, and share my passion for public history with George Mason students and faculty. Letters of recommendation from Drs. Joanne Freeman, Douglas Bradburn, and Jeffrey Engel will arrive separately. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Lindsay M. Chervinsky, PhD