

**CAL Undergraduate Research Scholarships Scheme 2017
Project Proposal Form**

Project Proposer/s:	Dr. Nathan Cardon
School/Dept:	History and Cultures / History
Project Title:	Race and Empire on Two Wheels: The Bicycle and United States Empire, 1890-1920
Project Summary	
<p><i>Race and Empire on Two Wheels</i> trains the imperial analytic onto one of the late nineteenth century's most popular technologies: the bicycle. It investigates the international travels of the bicycle and cyclists to make clear the ways ideas of race, ability, and empire travelled the globe. It begins by reconceptualising the bicycle as an imperial technology. With steel tubing from arms manufacturers, rubber from the Congo and Brazil, and cyclists' demanded for Trinidadian asphalt, the bicycle was at the centre of a global trade in commodities tied to US and European empires. As one of the quintessential technologies of industrial modernity the bicycle was also embroiled within a global discourse over the suitability of colonized peoples to industry. African American racing cyclists' success, most notably the 1899 World Champion Major Taylor, needed to be explained. As a supposed primitive people whose "race traits" prevented them from becoming modern, African Americans travelled the globe winning races and proving their ability to not only master but excel at industrial technology. In doing so, they revealed the extent of a trans-imperial colour line extending from the United States to Europe and Australia. On the colonial frontlines of the Philippines and Cuba, US cycling corps revealed the extent and limits of this industrial technology to imperial control. Lastly, bicycle circumnavigations brought the bicycle directly to a wide expanse of humanity. White American explorers made use of foreign peoples' inability to ride or understand the bicycle as proof of their unfitness for self-government. In focusing on a relatively mundane and benign object such as the bicycle this project interrogates US empire and power as a process emergent in the everyday material practices of its citizens and subjects.</p>	
What the researcher will do	
<p>The successful researcher will be responsible for a close reading of digitized cycling periodicals from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. These include <i>Bearings</i>, <i>American Cyclist</i>, <i>Bicycling World</i>, <i>Outing</i>, <i>Referee & Cycle Trade Journal</i>, <i>Wheel and Recreation</i>, <i>Century Magazine</i>, <i>Fortnightly</i>, <i>Scientific American</i>, <i>Scribner's</i>, <i>The North American Review</i>, and <i>The Springfield Wheelman</i>. This amounts to hundreds of volumes and issues stretching across three decades and totals over 10gbs of material. There will also be the possibility for a student with the necessary language skills to investigate French-language source <i>La Vie Au Grand Air</i> as well as newspaper clippings in Italian and German. The aim of <i>Race and Empire on Two Wheels</i> is not to simply write another history of the bicycle rather the student researcher will need to train an analytical eye on the source material to identify items that will contribute to the project's reconceptualization of US empire. They will look for keywords and themes: looking specifically for references to African American racing cyclists, race politics, empire in the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, and other related topics. Over the course of the summer they will begin to build a database of relevant articles with concise summaries that are easily searchable and identifiable.</p>	
Skills required by the Scholarship holder	
<p>The skills required for this research project are skills that the student should have acquired over the course of two years of study in history. They should be able to read quickly with an ability to identify key material while disregarding information that is not related or tangential to the project. A familiarity with Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets would be an asset. Lastly, fluency in French, Italian, or German would be an asset but is not required for the project.</p>	
How will your Project benefit the Scholarship holder?	
<p>This project will benefit the scholarship holder in many ways. It will be an introduction to the quantity of material that historians must sift through and organize at the start of a research project. The student will learn the advantages of putting together a reference database for a large project. It will also further advance the student's critical reading skills and improve their ability to identify important pieces of historical information. Importantly it will be a significant introduction to both the benefits and difficulties of working with digitized historical sources. Most of the material is text-searchable which will help expedite the process. At the same time, the student will need to place emphasis on in- and cross-text contextualization. With more material digitized on a daily basis, a familiarity with searching and critically engaging with digitized sources is an essential part of the modern historian's toolkit. This project will be formative in building these skills. Lastly, because of the breadth of material there is an opportunity for the student to develop their own interest in turn-of-the-century United States history contributing to either an undergraduate dissertation or a Masters' project.</p>	
How will the Scholarship benefit your Project?	

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This scholarship will benefit my project in a number of ways. The student will contribute to a crucial moment as I begin to move through the gigabytes of material I've collected over the course of putting the finishing touches on my previous monograph. In essence the student will contribute by helping to lay the initial foundations of identifying, interpreting, and deconstructing primary material while constructing a database that will organize the material into key themes and centred around certain topics.