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About

The focus of my research is on post-war American history. I have published on women's history, the cold war, civil rights and gender and international relations.

Qualifications

- BA, University of Birmingham
- PhD (1998) University of Nottingham

Biography

I gained my first degree in Medieval and Modern History at the University of Birmingham and my Phd at the University of Nottingham. I have taught American and Canadian Studies at Birmingham since 1998. I have published in my chief research areas, **Gender and International Relations**, **Civil Rights**, and **Cold War Film.** I am also the Head of the School of English, Drama and American & Canadian Studies.

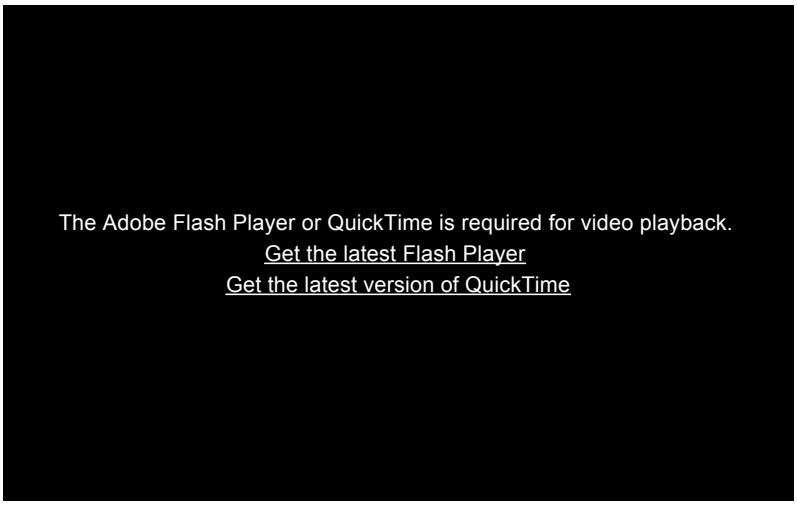
Teaching

- The African-American Experience
- Cold War Film
- American History since 1890

Postgraduate supervision

I have supervised postgraduate students on topics such as the history of oral contraceptive, the representation of gender in American musicals, Higher Education in the United States and the role of political machines in American politics.

Research



Video transcript (/accessibility/transcripts/artsandlaw/acs/laville.aspx) Helen talks about her research into investigating the role of white women in Southern United States communities in the civil rights era.

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Gender and International Relations

My PhD investigated the role of American women's associations in the Cold War. This research was included in my first book,

Cold War Women published in 2002. I am currently interested in the internationalization of women's rights which took place through the foundation of the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nation. I am currently writing two articles on different aspects of the work and the early years of the Commission. I am interested in the way in which some women attempted to create international, or universal standards for the status of women, and the way in which this aim was challenged by some nation-states. In particular I am interested in the conflicted US position, which was torn between the desire to appear modern and democratic, and the desire to protect the special interests and needs of women.

Civil Rights

My interest is specifically in American women's role in the implementation of Civil Rights. My research examines the activities of women's groups as community leaders and as political lobbyists, investigating their beliefs and strategies through the civil rights years. My research demonstrated the inherent conservatism of women's organizations who sought to preserve peace and community stability, even at the expense of ignoring the moral imperatives of the Civil Rights movement and the need for real change.

Cold War Film

My research in this area looks at the representation of gender in films in the cold War period. I am interested in the way in which constructions of American womanhood were contrasted with stereotypes of Soviet women in films such as Ninotchka and Silk Stockings, in order to make broader points about the differences between the two nations' politics, society and economy.

Publications

- 'From Ends to Means: Women's rights and Us Foreign Policy' in Bevan Sewell and Scott Lucas (eds) Projecting American Foreign Policy (Palgrave, Forthcoming)
- '"Women of Conscience" or "Women of Conviction"? The National Women's Committee on Civil Rights', Journal of American Studies 43;2, August 2009.
- 'Gender Apartheid'? American women and women's rights in American Foreign policy' in Helen Laville and Andrew Johnstone (eds) We the People: Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy Routledge, March 2009.
- 'A New Era in International Women's Rights? American women's associations and the Establishment of the UN Commission on the Status of women' Journal of Women's History 20:4, Winter 2008.
- 'The Importance of being (in) Earnest: The Irony of the State-Private Network in the Early Cold War', Freedom's Crusaders: State-Private Networks in America's Cold War, Helen Laville and Hugh Wilford (eds) (Frank Cass, London, 2005)
- ''If the time is not ripe, then it is your job to ripen the time!.' The transformation of the YWCA from segregated association to interracial organization 1930-1965.' Women's History Review (Accepted, publication 2005)
- Cold War Women: American Women's Organisations in the Cold War (Manchester University Press, 2002) Shortlisted for the Gladstone Prize in History
- 'The Memorial Day Statement: Women's Organizations in the 'Peace Offensive', The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe 1945-1960, Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam (eds) (Frank Cass, London, 2003)
- 'Spokeswomen for Democracy: The International work of the National Council of Negro Women in the Cold War,' Crossroutes: The meaning o.f Race for the 21st Century, Paola Boi and Sabine Broeck (eds), (Muenster and Hamburg: 2003)

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