

## ***Intervals - Episode 11***

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Pandemic of 1918"

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## **Introduction**

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Hi everybody and welcome back to the *Intervals* podcast, a public humanities initiative of the Organization of American Historians - OAH for short. Season 1 on the history of public health was underwritten by the generous support of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and I'm your host, Christopher Brick, here once again on behalf of the OAH's fantastic Committee on Marketing and Communications - my wonderful colleagues on MarCom.

For this episode, our eleventh feature-length guest lecture of the series, the *Intervals* pod is

delighted to welcome Dr. Christian Anderson. Christian is joining us today from the University of South Carolina, where he's currently an Associate Professor of Higher Education. He's done work in the past in particular on cross-cultural and transnational models for comparative higher ed, particularly with respect to universities in Latin America.

This is also I should mention the first of two lectures on the very infamous 1918 influenza pandemic and the impact it had on American society, in Christian's case on the impact it had on the field of higher education. And this is one of those lectures where you can gain something by looking back, first by taking a moment to take stock of the present and even to look ahead a little bit.

From the outset of widespread public health mitigation efforts in early 2020, it was clear that the virus's impact would be felt throughout American higher education and while its long-term effects remain only hypothetical at this point, we can certainly speculate. And what is clear is that the short-term effects have already been dramatic enough to accelerate some disruptive trends, introduce others, and appear to stage American higher education for something of a reboot - and perhaps plenty of reckoning too.

Something similar occurred to American higher education in response to the influenza pandemic of 1918 and its aftereffects. Christian is here to

share some of that story with us today, and here he is, Dr. Christian Anderson on American Higher Education and the Influenza Pandemic of 1918.

### **Lecture**

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: In the spring of 2020, as the COVID-19 crisis began to take over and close down the country, and indeed the world, we heard comparisons to the flu pandemic of 1918, often referred to as the 'Spanish Flu.'

As a historian of higher education, I wondered, how did the 1918 pandemic affect colleges and universities? My name is Christian Anderson, I'm an Associate Professor of Higher Education in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policies at the University of South Carolina.

My main area of research in teaching is the history of higher education, especially in the era between the civil war, including reconstruction and World War II. Given that much of my research has been in the era in which the pandemic happened, I've examined the first investigation by the American Association of University Professors, or AAUP, in 1915.

The threats to academic freedom during World War I, and the creation of a university in France to keep soldiers occupied after the war until they could get shipped home, are just a few examples of

research I've done during this period, so I was surprised that I knew almost nothing about how the pandemic affected colleges and university campuses, so I went looking. I started with the general histories of higher education.

I thought I must have read about it in these and just forgotten it. But much to my surprise, it wasn't there. Histories of higher education are silent on the 1918 pandemic. The classic texts by Brubaker and Rudy from 1958 and Fredrick Rudolph from 1962, say nothing. Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz's 1987 study of undergraduate culture is also silent. And more recent histories such as those by Roger Geiger in 2015, Paul Mattingly in 2017, and John Thelin in 2019, do not discuss or even mention the pandemic.

I soon discovered that this is true for the journals on the history of higher education. One short article appeared in the History of Education Quarterly in the summer of 2020, but otherwise the historiography on the subject is silent, and there is no cohesive history available about the effects of the 1918 pandemic on American higher education.

The same applies to the histories of college sports, such as Ronald Smith's 1988 book. And histories of the pandemic are similarly silent about the effects on higher education. For example, in 2004, John Barry published 'The Great Influenza', and other books have been published more recently. Barry and others discussed

contributions of doctors at the medical schools of Columbia, Johns Hopkins, Harvard, and others, but provide no detail on how the pandemic affected these and other campuses.

The silence is surprising, given that the earlier decades of the twentieth century are very important in the history of higher education. Roger Geiger explains that the time between the world wars was the first period of mass higher education, where enrollment doubled within that decade. During the pandemic of 1918, young people were most affected, including those who were college aged. It is therefore even more surprising that so little has been written about the effects of the 1918-1920 pandemic on institutions of higher education.

I was surprised to find that the first comprehensive history of the 1918 pandemic was not available until 1976, when Alfred Crosby published 'Epidemic and Peace, 1918'. As such, it is understandable that the effects of the pandemic on higher education were ignored, just as that pandemic had been ignored more generally until Crosby's history was published in 1976. It has since been republished in 1989 and 2003 as 'America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918'. I think that is a much better title, and the book stands as a classic today.

Given my curiosity of how the 1918, and really it is the 1918-1920 pandemic affected higher education, I embarked on a project to help examine

these questions. How did the 1918-1920 pandemic affect institutions of higher education, colleges and universities, in the United States? How did the individual campuses respond to the pandemic of 1918-1920? And of course, how did WW I affect this response?

After looking at the general histories of higher education, I realized I would need to look to institutions to see what I could find in their histories and digital archives. According to the Biennial Survey of Education of 1918-1920, published by the U.S. Department of the Interior in 1923, there were 670 institutions and 521,000+ students in 1920. I've been hunting down information on as many of them as possible.

Given that my campus's library is closed due to the pandemic, and still has limited services, I knew I unfortunately couldn't go browse the rows of institutional histories on the shelves. So I started with those on my own shelves. I also looked at biographies I had of leaders from that era, such as university presidents. And then I started looking online at digitized student newspapers and yearbooks, and other digital archives.

Of course, it's very uneven what is available in each of these sources. Hopefully soon I can make some trips to the university archives that hold the most promise for useful information. Students in my History of Higher Education course also found materials as part of an assignment about the

pandemic. I am trying to get a sample of institutions that is representative by size, geography, institutional control, public, private, religiously affiliated, and so on, and I especially want to find information about as many HBCUs as possible, given that the African-American population has been disproportionately affected by these pandemics.

In the end, I hope to be able to discern patterns along these lines. For example, did private institutions, often referred to as 'endowed' colleges or universities at that time, respond differently than public ones? Did geography make a difference because certain states and cities handled the pandemic better than others, or because of other environmental factors that played a part? One thing that has been clear since I started this research is that World War I complicated both the pandemic situation and response, and how we untangle it's history today, as it relates to higher education.

The Student Army Training Corps, or SATC, similar to today's ROTC, was created in 1918 as a way to train future soldiers at American colleges and universities. This increase in numbers of young men on campus clearly affected the number of infections and deaths. What I will discuss in this podcast are my preliminary findings about this study.

In the end, I hope to be able to write a comprehensive story about how campuses were

affected by the pandemic of 1918 and how they dealt with it, documenting in a comprehensive way the extent of the effects on institutions, such as the number of student and faculty infections and deaths, cancellation of classes and events and so on.

And it will allow us to discover if there are systematic policy and public health changes, resulting from that pandemic related to higher education that we have not to date recognized or understood. Furthermore, the parallels to the COVID-19 crises are obvious. What can we learn from this history, both about how it compares to responses to the COVID-19 crisis, but also about how it can inform how campus leaders deal with future pandemics or emergencies.

Let's look at the front page of The Ohio State University student newspaper, The Ohio State Lantern, from Friday, October 11th, 1918, as a guide to understanding and unpacking how college campuses dealt with the pandemic in the fall of 1918. It illustrates on a single page the nature of the problem of a pandemic on a campus and the role of the war effort within the university, the effects on students, how it influenced the curriculum, and how football had special status on campuses.

Here are the main headlines from the Ohio State Lantern on October 11th, 1918.



'GIVE INSTRUCTIONS SO INFLUENZA MAY BE HELD IN CHECK'  
'WORLD WAR PROBLEMS SUBJECT OF NEW COURSE'  
'C.E. SEDDON'S DEATH CANNOT BE CONFIRMED',  
'UNIVERSITY CLOSES TODAY TO STOP SPREAD OF INFLUENZA'  
'MARGARET TEACHNOR TO GO OVERSEAS SOON'  
'QUARANTINE RULES WILL NOT AFFECT FOOTBALL GAME'

Let's start with the first one, 'GIVE INSTRUCTIONS SO INFLUENZA MAY BE HELD IN CHECK' This story reports that the present epidemic of influenza has been traveling westward from its origins in the orient, and that it hit eastern cities, such as Boston and Philadelphia, around September 1st. Both of these points we now know are wrong. The flu, most likely began in Kansas, and was present on the eastern seaboard by spring.

The story further elucidates how to stop the spread. One should avoid direct contact and stay out of 'breathing range', four or five feet, of a person with the disease. Similarly, in the Columbia student newspaper, the campus physician published the following list of epidemic DOs and DON'Ts.

Epidemic Don'ts:

Number one, 'Don't not travel unnecessarily. Avoid large public gatherings, congested shops, etc.'

Number two, 'Do not visit the sick unless necessary.'

Three, 'Do not eat in public places where the dishes are not sterilized.'

Four, 'Do not use public telephones if you can avoid it.'

Of course, everyone today with a phone in their own pocket can easily avoid that.

Number five, 'Do not permit social engagements to interfere with ample periods of sleep and recreations.'

Six, 'Sleep with the windows open, keep your room well ventilated during the day. Do not sit in a cold room, nor in the draft.'

It goes on to tell students to dress sensibly and take their medicine as prescribed, but to not take medicine unless it is prescribed.

Number nine reads 'If you have even a slight temperature, stay in bed until it has been normal for at least 24 hours. Do not think that you are an exception to the rule, and that you cannot, and that you are immune to the influenza, pneumonia, or any other communicable disease.'

The other guidelines he gives are that cleanliness of the body and clothing are important, that regular exercise each day, such as brisk walking, is helpful, and that students should remember to

eat at regular intervals. And then finally, number fifteen on his list of epidemic don'ts reads, 'If you have a cold, cough, or fever, put yourself under a doctor's care immediately. Most of the serious cases of influenza are due to neglect in the early stages.'

This was published on the front page of 'The Spectator' at Columbia University on February 6th, 1920, indicating that even after two years, campuses were still wrestling with how to deal with the pandemic.

The biggest headline on this top right of the Ohio State student newspaper reads 'UNIVERSITY CLOSES TODAY TO STOP SPREAD OF INFLUENZA.' Acting president John J. Adams ordered the campus closed, even though he claimed in his notice on the student newspaper, "The situation at the university is not alarming." He warned that the disease was spreading throughout the state, so the university would be closed as a precautionary measure. Student Army Training Corps cadets were exempt from the order to return home, and indeed, most of those teaching SATC students were required to stay. Similarly, Adams declared that this order in no way affects the administrative stenographic or clerical forces of the university. In other words, the staff had to stay on campus and continue working.

Closing the campus was a common response across the country. For example, at the University of Utah, President John A. Widtsoe closed the university

just weeks after the opening of the fall quarter of 1918, just as everything else in Salt Lake closed, even churches, to spread the halt of the disease.

The football season was cancelled in its entirety. Faculty members at the university proposed a statistical study of the influenza situation in Utah to, according to the report, "deduce from the data obtained by some of the conditions surrounding the development and control of the disease." However, the state government refused to endorse the study, much to the dismay of the faculty and President Widtsoe.

The university reopened in January of 1919 and students were permitted to register for more than the usual number of credits to make up time, in order to not work an injustice against the students. By the fall of 1919, there were still more cases of the influenza, and President Widtsoe cancelled all social activities on campus and warned students to stay home if they felt "even slightly indisposed."

As happened with many campuses, the presence of the SATC affected the number of cases of the influenza, and the institution's ability to respond. In all, 28 student cadets and 15 other University of Utah students died. In his autobiography, President Widtsoe mourned deeply over his own son's illness and the deaths of the 43 students. He lamented the position of the government, that the government had forced upon the university, and wrote "The local

military officers, our own citizens in uniform, might have avoided the catastrophe."

In South Carolina, various institutions were affected by the pandemic, but to varying degrees. Like many other institutional histories, the history of the medical college of South Carolina is surprisingly silent, as are other histories of medical universities I looked at. The Citadel closed in September.

In Columbia, three buildings at the University of South Carolina were converted into hospitals, due to the lack of hospital beds. This is similar to what happened during the civil war, when the campus was also used as a hospital for both Union and Confederate soldiers. By October 1st 1918, there were 86 cases at the University of South Carolina, and the total eventually swole to more than 300. The institution was temporarily quarantined, and for at least one week, classes were not held.

The most serious cases were sent to nearby Camp Jackson, now known as Fort Jackson, and in all, six student cadets died. At Clemson College, the number of cadets coming to campus for SATC training made it "nearly inevitable that the influenza would break out." Students, faculty, and others became sick and a few died. They considered closing the college until they realized that the result would spread the illness state-wide and beyond. The Clemson Tiger Basketball Team was having its most successful season to date in 1918-1919, when it was

forced to cancel the rest of its season due to the pandemic.

Administrators at SC State, the public HBCU in Orangeburg, were alarmed about the impact of the growing epidemic and how it would affect the campus. In their annual report, they wrote, "The influenza epidemic threatens the whole institution because of the lack of a proper health conservation facility." And the trustees pleaded to the general assembly for \$25,000 to build a hospital on campus.

I mentioned earlier that general histories of higher education are silent on the pandemic of 1918-1920, and this is true of many institutional histories as well. Surprisingly, histories of Harvard, such as Samuel Eliot Morison's 1936 history, or Schlesinger's from 2005, say nothing of the pandemic. Similarly, the 1947 history of Columbia also ignores it, as do many others. Recently, in the wake of the hundredth anniversary of the pandemic in 2018, and in light of the current COVID crisis, campus newspapers and magazines have produced accounts of how their institutions dealt with the 1918-1920 pandemic.

For example, the Harvard Crimson published a detailed account of how President A. Lawrence Lowell made the controversial decision to keep classes open after the pandemic started, even knowing that other institutions would look to Harvard's example.

That fall, sixty students were treated in the campus infirmary and five died. Radcliffe, on the other hand, cancelled classes and all twenty-seven women who had fallen ill recovered. Recently, the Vassar alumni magazine published a retrospective of how that college dealt with the pandemic, and many others have done similar publications.

Back to our Ohio State newspaper from October of 1918. Another headline reads 'WORLD WAR PROBLEMS SUBJECT OF NEW COURSE'. Faculty in the college of arts at Ohio State proposed a new course on the problems of world war to fill a general desire of information on the causes and the problems of war, which was accepted as a new one credit course, according to the story. The approved course description reads "The problems of the world war. One credit hour, the year, no prerequisites, two lectures a week. Credit for attendance only.

Open to all students at the university, visitors admitted without credit." The course would be taught by a variety of professors in the social sciences. The creation of this course highlights that faculty were responding to student interests. It was, in fact, created upon a petition from the history club to make the curriculum relevant to their lives and world events. It also shows the public outreach efforts by the university.

Part of the petition was that the course be available to "civilians and women students." Further, it demonstrates that even as the

institution was closing its doors due to the pandemic, it clearly saw this as temporary. The course would not have existed, of course, if not for The Great War.

While the Ohio State faculty seemed to be open to the curricular innovation because of the war, at least according to this news story, we know that at many campuses, the faculty grew weary of presidents pushing for changes in the curriculum to accommodate SATC students.

The presence of the war is evident in other stories, such as the one about Margaret Teachnor, a class of 1917 alumna, who was traveling to New York to set sail for France to work with The Red Cross. And the story about a certain C.E. Seddon's death further shows the relationship of the war and the influenza pandemic.

Seddon, class of 1918, was reported to have died in the war; a casualty of the flu, but not of the warfare. His brother had died the previous day at Camp Taylor in Kentucky. The rest of the story details those associated with Ohio State who have either died in the war or from the flu, including one private who died "as a result of the pneumonia, following an attack of the Spanish influenza." Of course, many universities later built stadiums that they called 'memorial stadiums', memorials to the veterans of The Great War. What is not indicated often is the fact that many of those who died at war died of the flu and not in battle.



Two final notices in that October 1928 student newspaper at Ohio State are worth mentioning. Both are in the top right and left corners of the front page. One reads, 'WITH THE UNIVERSITY CLOSED, IT'S A GOOD TIME TO DO WORK YOU HAVE BEEN PUTTING OFF', and on the other side, it reads 'FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS ON THIS PAGE AND HELP THE CHECK OF THE SPREAD OF THE INFLUENZA'.

And now for the final headline, 'QUARANTINE RULES WILL NOT AFFECT FOOTBALL GAME'. One very visible aspect of how institutions of higher education dealt with the influenza pandemic of 1918, is by looking at their football schedules. The report under this headline reported in the Ohio State Lantern states that the director of the student health service gave his approval for the football game to proceed as planned.

The next day, Saturday, October 12th, the Buckeyes hosted Denison College and beat them 34 to nothing. But the next week's game against Northwestern was cancelled. Ohio State would not play again until November 9th, a time when many schools began, or restarted after a delay of their football seasons, in 1918. The case of Ohio State was typical.

In its conference, known as the Western Conference and then the Big 10, most teams played about six games. Amos Alonzo Stagg's Chicago, a school fixated on football at the time, played eleven games that year, compared to the average of 6.7

games per team for the conference as a whole, 6.2 if Chicago is excluded. Stagg's son made his debut as a player on his father's team that year. Michigan's record of 5-0 was enough to give it a share of the national title, along with Pitt, which was 4-1. Some sources blame the curtailment of the football season on the war effort.

For example, a history of gamecock football declares that "The shadows of The Great War loomed over the South Carolina campus", which was the cause of the abbreviated season of only four games. This same kind of rationale for a shortened 1918 season is given for other schools as well. However, the flu is a much more likely cause. The war ended November 11th 1918, and most teams had games scheduled in September and October that were cancelled. In 1916, there were 291 college football games in September and October.

In 1917, there were 253. And then , the year after the pandemic, the main part of the pandemic in 1919, there were 287 games in September and October. But in 1918, only 87 football games were played in September and October, a 70% decrease from the other seasons. At Penn State, for example, the football season was reduced to only four games, all played in November. State College, isolated in the center of the state, fared better than other parts of the commonwealth, though six students and six townspeople died.

Meanwhile, at the University of Pittsburgh, in September of 1918, SATC cadets were quarantined for forty days, and could do nothing except stay in barracks on campus and drill outdoors. The pandemic had affected nearly 24,000 people in Pittsburgh alone. Its football season was also curtailed, but as mentioned, Pitt was crowned co-champion with Michigan.

On average, teams played 2.63 games fewer in 1918 than in 1916 and 1920, two seasons that were unaffected by the war and pandemic. The Missouri Valley Conference cancelled football altogether. Some teams played only one or two games, while others played a nearly full schedule. In 1920, after the war was over and after all soldiers had returned, and after the great influenza had ended, the football season returned as it had beforehand.

For example, in the Rocky Mountain Conference, teams played 6.38 games in 1916 and 7.22 in 1920, but only 4 in 1918. Eastern independent schools, which included the powerhouse schools such as Harvard and Princeton, played 8.43 games in 1916 and 8.14 games in 1920, but just over 5 games in 1918. Across all conferences and schools, the average went from 7.62 in 1916 down to 4.96 in 1918 and then back up to 7.56 in 1920. Not included in these figures are the military teams that played during the 1917 and 1918 seasons. These teams were formed at Army and Navy bases, and were made up of players with a mixture of backgrounds.

Some had played in college before enlisting or being drafted. Some had little experience playing, and some were much older than the traditional college student. President Woodrow Wilson, a former college professor and president, wrote a letter to Walter Camp Spalding Guide. The following, in support of troops playing football, he wrote "It would be difficult to overestimate the value of football experience as part of a soldier's training.

The Army athletic directors and officers in charge of special training schools in the cantonments have derived excellent results from the use of elementary football and other personal contact games as an aid in developing the aggressiveness, initiative, and determination of recruits, and the ability to carry on in spite of bodily hurts or physical discomforts." These qualities, as you well know, were the outstanding characteristics of the American soldier.

In 1917, there were eighteen military base teams, and in 1918, there were twenty such teams. The military teams played between one and ten games in 1917, with each playing about five games in that season. In 1918, teams played between one and eleven games, and each team played almost six games, 5.8 games for that season. The Rose Bowl, known then as the 'Tournament East West Football Game', was the only bowl game at the time. At the conclusion of the 1917 and 1918 seasons, it was played by military teams.

On January 1st, 1918, the Mare Island Marines of California defeated Camp Lewis 19-7, finishing the 1917 season undefeated, 8-0, having outscored opponents 200 to 10. The Mare Island Marines returned to the 1919 Rose Bowl, again undefeated, and again having run up enormous numbers against opponents, blanking one team 89 to nothing, but lost to the Great Lakes Navy, which was 6-0-2 before the bowl game of Chicago by a score of 17 to nothing. That Great Lakes won is not surprising if you look at their schedule.

Great Lakes played what would be regarded in any season as a tough schedule. Four Big 10 schools, Iowa, Illinois, Northwestern, and Purdue, as well as Rutgers, Navy, and Notre Dame. Mare Island, on the other hand, played only other military based schools except for a contest against St. Mary's of Moraga, California, and the University of Idaho. Military team schedules reveal how the pandemic affected them as well.

For example, the Mare Island Marines had to cancel all of their October games due to the great influenza, as did several other military teams. Interestingly, Army only played one game in 1918, beating Mitchell Air Service 20 to nothing. The parallels of the current COVID-19 pandemic and the experiences of the 1918 pandemic are palpable. The 2020 football season has been controlled chaos with a scrabble of shortened schedules, cancelled games, rescheduled games, sometimes with less than 48

hours' notice, and players missing games due to infection.

The Ivy League cancelled football altogether, waiting to see if it might be possible to play in the spring. Several schools opted out of playing in bowl games, even if they were bowl eligible, forcing several bowl games to be cancelled and several teams with losing records will play in bowls. Looking back at how colleges and universities tried to keep football going in the midst of a terrible pandemic in 1918 illustrates that the American obsession with the game is nothing new.

Throughout this podcast, I have mentioned the effects on campuses of the great influenza of 1918-1920, including that students, student cadets, and professors died. I do not yet have a total count of the toll on campuses, but we can close by looking at the case of Washington State College in rural Pullman as an example of how dire the situation was. At that campus there were 3,000 students and 1,325 student cadets in the fall of 1918. Of the 3,000 students, 150 were infected and died. Of the 1,325 cadets, 600 contracted the flu and 42 died.

One of those who died was Roger Sanborn. His father called for an investigation into the death of his son and accused both the college and the military of negligence. In the Washington State archives, I found an 11-page affidavit from the father,

detailing the kind of care his son received. Let me read a few excerpts.

He writes,

About October 23rd, 1918, I received a letter dated October 21st, 1918, from my son, Roger P. Sanborn, an SATC student at Washington State College in Pullman, Washington, stating that he was not feeling well and expected to be in the hospital the next day. Sunday, October 27th, I went to Pullman on the morning train., arriving there a few minutes before noon. I immediately went to President Holland's residence to see if he could procure me a pass, as the college grounds were picked by soldiers and I could not be allowed to go there without a pass. President Holland was not home. I went back to the hotel and asked Colonel May, commanding the SATC students at the Washington State College if he would give me a pass, telling him that I had a sick boy. He refused to give me a pass.

He reports that he finally found his way to his son, and this is what he reports that he found. "He was lying on a cot directly in front of an open window, in direct line with a terrific draft. He reported that his lungs hurt him. I saw that his temperature was marked at 104 and a half degrees."

He details the poor conditions he found his son in and says that he asked multiple times to be able to move him. He was told that he would be responsible

for any extra expenses for a special nurse. He continues in his affidavit to write,

I had a talk with Colonel May the first Sunday I was there, in the hotel office. And subsequently, other conversations with him over the situation. Among other things that he told me, were that he had to fight for everything he got from the college authorities, that Holland was doing a little better then because he was afraid that he would lose his job in June. That he had asked the college authorities to turn over the domestic sciences building for a hospital when the college opened, but they refused to do so at the time. I asked President Holland if he wouldn't send the girls home, and thus release that building for hospital purposes for the boys. He said he wouldn't do it.

Mr. Sanborn then writes,

I charge that it was a dereliction of duty on the part of the military authorities not to have guarded the boys in the convalescent ward. That they could not have secured improper food or needlessly exposed themselves during their convalescent stage. They had guards posted around the campus to keep the well boys in, but failed to take such precautions as were reasonably necessary to protect these young boys in their ignorance and carelessness from needlessly exposing themselves and eating food which was dangerous to them in their sick



conditions. That first Sunday evening I was there and talking with President Holland, he told me that he expected to start classes in a few days. The epidemic was then at its worst. Colonel May told me, in one of the conversations I had with him, that President Holland had formally said that he was going to open classes on a certain day. Colonel May says, 'I told him he could open his classes if he wanted to, but no SATC students should attend.' I wish further to charge that in view of the failure of the college and military authorities,

- said, to put these boys in buildings when taken sick, where they could have remained until they got well and died, when such buildings were available as they were on the college campuses, and their failure to provide the best ambulances, which the circumstances would have permitted, amounted to criminal negligence on their part.

He then talks about finally removing his son from the campus to take him to the Northwest sanitarium, and that he had to do so in a doctor's car, and was told that no ambulance was available to take his son. And his son died on November 1st, 1918. The Seattle Times, on November 24th, 1918, reported that no further investigation into the Washington State College epidemic will be ordered by Governor Lister. And quoting the governor, The Seattle Times writes, "In conclusion, I may say that no further investigation of this matter will be ordered by me, as I feel that the record made causes me to say

that all those that took part in the rendering services during the epidemic are entitled to words of commendation for their splendid, sympathetic, and helpful services rendered by them."

Clearly, the pandemic of 1918-1920 took a huge toll on institutions of higher education and their students and faculty, complicated on no small part by The Great War. As we live through the COVID-19 crisis, we can certainly understand, at least to some degree, the events that took place 100 years ago.

#### **Q + A**

[segue from lecture]

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: I had a lot to think about after listening to Christian's lecture, and some questions as well. Kariann Yokota was with me for this one. Enjoy.

[beginning of group conversation]

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Christian Anderson, welcome to the podcast.

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: Thank you. It's good to be here.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: And I want to extend a very warm welcome to our illustrious chair of the Marketing

and Communications Committee, Kariann Yokota.  
Welcome, Kariann.

KARIANN YOKOTA: Hi. Nice to be here. Can't wait to hear the conversation.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: It's great to have you back with us again. Christian, you come to this -- this is where I kind of wanted to start -- you teach as a professor of higher education, right? So is it your practice? Is it specifically historical humanities when you teach higher ed, or is it broader than that?

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: I teach a number of courses about higher education. My main area is the history of higher education, and the purpose of that course is not really to prepare future historians, even though some doctoral students do historical dissertations. And some master's students decide, oh, wow, this is something I want to do, and pursue it further. But the bulk of the students take this as a required course so that they are oriented to the history of higher education, the history of colleges and universities in the United States with a little bit of European antecedents to it. So that they understand where they work, what they do, the environment that they're in.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: That's incredibly cool, and it helps me understand as well, which is also why I asked the question ---what it is that brought you to this particular topic and this inquiry?

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: Well, generally, just in terms of the influenza of 1918, variously called the Great Influenza or erroneously called the Spanish flu -- it should more accurately be called the Kansas flu, because we believe that's where it originated. There's a real dearth of histories, there was a real dearth of histories about it up until recent decades. And then finally, there was stuff more recently. And it's even more so in the history of higher education.

If you look at all of the general histories of higher education, and I scan them all, none of them say anything about the 1918 pandemic. And I thought, well surely someone's written an article about it, or some kind of study about it, and no. Not until this past summer was there any kind of overview, study. And it's a great start, what was published in the *History of Education Quarterly* last summer, but I think even those authors would admit, it's just a start.

So the question is, why? You know, some have theorized that we didn't deal with the pandemic historically because of the pain. There was so much pain that they decided, collectively just said, well, let's ignore it. Some think that it's because it's so interwoven with World War I, so I'm still grappling with that and trying to figure out, well, why -- I mean, this era for higher education is a crucial era. It's one of the first real mass movements of higher education. We think of post-

World War II as being the massification of higher education, but it really happened earlier than that, too, and yet there's very little written about it.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: There has been, I've noticed, a conscious effort to curate or preserve some degree of memory about the campus community, and how each campus community has been affected by this, by the COVID-19 moment.

It seems like in the 1918 episode that you're talking about, it's almost like the opposite seems to be happening, where's there's an effort to forget, or to not remember. To disremember. And maybe that's because of the war, maybe that's because of this pain. You used the word pain, right, that you're describing. Is your work responding directly to that absence? And as you go through these sources, are you seeing that, as opposed to the production of memory, more, the production of forgetfulness or amnesia?

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: Yeah, so as you mentioned, lots of campuses, my own included, have some kind of documenting COVID-19 project of one type or another. And I've actually used that in my History of Higher Education class, where I've had the curators of that program come in and do a short presentation about what they're collecting, what they're documenting. And then I tell my students: okay, now imagine, in 1918, 1919, there had been some similar committee at the various universities

that documented. What would you hope that they had collected back then? And that will give you some ways to think about doing your searches when you start looking at yearbooks, and student newspapers, and public newspapers, and trustees' minutes and whatever else it is that you can find.

But, yeah, the impetus behind this, of course, was COVID-19. I had never really thought about the Great Influenza of 1918. I'm not a health historian, and like I said, it's not mentioned in histories, hardly at all, so it's not the sort of thing where you're, like, oh, this was a key moment in the history of higher education, everyone knows about this. And so, of course, as COVID-19 takes off, people ask me, oh, well, what happened last time we had a pandemic? And I said, I have no idea. So that was the impetus to start asking and start finding out.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Right, so that's the question that got asked, and you didn't have an adequate answer to it at that moment. So you said -- like a good researcher -- you said, I'll go find out.

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: Let's find out.

KARIANN YOKOTA: Well, for those of us who are less familiar with your field of study, could you tell us what things would typically be covered? What things would be talked about in terms of, talking about the institution, and I guess the response of

institutions to different political, social, health events? What is covered?

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: In the history of higher education generally?

KARIANN YOKOTA: Yeah.

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: Yeah, so, the course I teach on the history of higher education is probably fairly typical of what you would see in most higher ed programs that have a history course. And not all of them do. But it's basically a soup-to-nuts kind of survey of the history of higher education. So I start with the European Medieval roots, a little bit about the Oxford, Cambridge models and how they were imported into the founding of New College, which became, a few years later, Harvard College. And the colonial colleges.

And we kind of march through history, looking at the key gestalts, you know, changes in the landscape. And we look at institutions; what are the types of institutions that we have, what are the nature of the institutions. Faculty, who's teaching and why, and what's the nature of what they teach. How do the faculty change in terms of the scope of their responsibilities, their specialization?

KARIANN YOKOTA: Right.

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: The way they teach. The curriculum, students, student life. So, yeah, kind of march through all that.

KARIANN YOKOTA: I guess what I was curious about, was whether the reason why the pandemic wasn't covered in these institutional histories, was that, you know, is it more like community studies, thinking about a campus as a community? Or is it more like a business history? I'm sure it's both, but I'm just trying to get at where the gaps, why this particular event falls through the cracks.

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: So where it really fell through the cracks is in the general histories of higher education. You look at a book called *The History of Higher Education in America*. There's several versions or histories like that, and in those it's almost completely absent.

In the institutional histories, which are the histories of particular institutions, that's where you actually do find some stuff. And that was one of the biggest surprises, is where there are big holes and where there are rich detail. So in one institutional history, campus X, there's nothing, and in another institutional history, campus Y, there's a whole chapter. And why none of that then got translated into the general histories, that's another question.

Surprisingly, some of the institutions that you would expect to have at least something -- you



know, the Harvard, Yale, Columbia, the oldest institutions -- have nothing. And then, other places have varying amounts. Some might have just a little bit, and some have quite a bit.

And then one place that I've looked is at football. Because we all know football is king in American higher education, and how was the football season affected gives us a lens of what happened. And that's where it does get mentioned a few times, the shortened season, but a lot of times they attribute that to the war, not to the pandemic. Erroneously, I think.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: You teach your students this history of higher ed class, that tracks a lot of transformations in classroom instruction and pedagogical technique and approach. Do you think, I mean, are you seeing any impact of the 1918 pandemic on pedagogical choices thereafter? And is that something that's going to be part of the work that you do?

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: Yeah, didn't you know everyone got on Zoom in 1918 when campuses closed?

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Well, we've definitely seen... Yeah, it's had a tremendous impact on 2020, 2021 pedagogy.

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: Yeah. No, that's one thing I've looked for and haven't seen as much as I would have expected. Basically, they just closed campuses when

the flu outbreaks got bad. And then opened back up and kind of resumed things as normal. I didn't see... You would think that you would have seen more courses about public health or something like that, and maybe I'll still uncover that as I continue to research this. But I haven't found it so far. One course that I did see, was at Ohio State, the Student History Club petitioned for there to be a course about war, because they're in the middle of World War I. And so the faculty responded and created a course about war. And it was a team-taught course, with multiple faculty members teaching different aspects of the history and sociology of war, I guess.

So, I saw that, but I didn't see as much that affected, from the flu side of things. I've seen some of the social practices that were affected during the pandemic, some of the same kind of advice that we see today, of keep your distance, wash your hands, all that kind of stuff. But I haven't seen so far, and maybe it'll still come out, any kind of permanent changes. You know, like higher ed permanently, or at least for some period of time, said, oh, we're going to be better about public health. Maybe I'll still find that, but I haven't seen that so far.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: You have a bunch of different types of institutions that come up in this talk as well. There's public colleges, there's private colleges, elite, non-elite. You bring up the Citadel at one point. HBCUs. All of these different

formats for higher ed that existed in 1918, 1919. As you go through each of the sources, the source categories that you described, so, you know, those yearbooks, the student newspapers, the institutional histories, are you seeing differences in the sources that reflect the discrete identities of each of these unique places?

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: That's definitely something I'm keeping an eye out for and want to do more analysis of. One example I can think of is Harvard and Radcliffe, Radcliffe being at the time the women's sister institution to Harvard. Harvard did not close down at first. Had, I think, don't quote me, I've got the number somewhere, a number of student deaths, a lot of students in the student infirmary. Radcliffe, the women's college, said, well, we're going to be cautious, we're going to close down. And I think twenty-seven or something women got sick, but no one died. So that was sort of an interesting.. Well, here they are, right next door to each other, a men's and a women's college, responding differently and having different outcomes.

But, yeah, I haven't noticed, you know, that's one of the things that I'll continue to look at as I go through this. Did bigger colleges respond differently than smaller? Or did public and private respond differently? Were public institutions more apt to follow public health regulations, whereas private went their own way?

KARIANN YOKOTA: What about parents, and their input in what these institutions should do? In the case of today's pandemic, we hear a lot, as educators, about the opinions of parents who are concerned about, not only their children's health, but also the tuition fees that they're paying. And I was wondering if in this period that you're studying and writing about, there was any evidence of parents weighing in.

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: Well, I end the podcast episode with a tragic story at Washington State University, where a father... Roger Sanborn, well, a student, Roger Sanborn, who died. And his father traveled by train to come and try and help him. He was still alive when he got there and tried to get access to his son. The college didn't really respond in the way that we might expect they should have. And tragically, the student died, and the father sued the university. There was an inquiry with the legislature and everything. So it was incredible to be able to uncover all of these legal briefs and everything about that case, and I still need to read up on it more.

I would imagine that I'll find other things like that, where parents got involved. How are you treating my son or daughter? Some colleges sent student homes. Some said, well, if we send students back, wherever, then that's just gonna' increase the spread, so there were kind of different responses to how they decided to deal with it.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Do you... Do we have any sense about what kinds of long-term effects became evident by virtue of the disruptions that were introduced into higher education at this time?

I'm just curious about, tracking those kinds of, second, third, fourth-order aftereffects, the things that come downstream from the original dislocation of higher ed. Do you have any insight into that?

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: That's, again, on my list of questions. I am very curious about that question. Right now, most of my research is centered, kind of, in the 1918 to 1920 period, so I'm looking at documents from that... The immediate effects of what was going on and immediately how they were dealing with it. But that's definitely on my list, is to look at, okay... Two, four, six, eight, ten years later, what were the effects?

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Because I would think, too, the war, the fact that this is overlapping so closely in time with the war, might introduce some challenges. I, mean, obviously, they need not be analytically indistinguishable from one another, but the disruption that's occurring is going to be very closely connected to that event as well.

Has that been a challenge, to separate out the one from the other?

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: Yeah, they're going on at the exact same time, and in fact, one thing that we don't recognize as much as we should just in the memorialization of World War I is, how many soldiers died from the flu, not from battle injuries? Not from being killed on the battlefield, but from dying in the hospital of the flu? It's a significant number. And the war complicates this story in a lot of ways. The biggest is that there were these SATC, student training corps, basically the forerunner of the ROTC on campus. And they.. There might be dozens or hundreds of cadets on campus that would not have otherwise been there.

So how do we tease that apart? Well, you know, it's impossible, but we do know that they contributed significantly to the spread on these campuses, because of course, they're all in close quarters. They're in barracks together. They're marching together. They're in classes together. They're, basically, they're training to go to war, and so, it's not as easy to send them home. And in fact, some campuses sent their students home, but kept the SATC cadets on campus, and in some cases, lots of cadets died.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: It sounds like you're putting together a book proposal or thinking about putting together a book proposal for this. How many institutions do you hope to survey as part of this research? And are you getting a sense that there'll be some that are more difficult to investigate than others?

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: Well, of course, with any kind of historical research, there's limits to what we can do, to how many we can see. Depending on how you count an institution of higher education, there were somewhere between 670 and a thousand institutions in the United States in 1918, 1920. And of course, I can't look at all of them, but I do want to have at least some representation of all types. You know, big, small, public, private, religious, women's colleges, et cetera.

I think the one that will pose the biggest challenge is HBCUs. Just because they have historically been under-resourced, understudied, and are less likely than others to have their own institutional histories as a starting place. And we have two HBCUs here in Columbia, just a mile from the University of South Carolina, and both of them have hard-to-access archives. Just using them as one example, I know that getting a broader swath of information about HBCUs is going to be difficult. Now there are going to be a few exceptions. Fisk and Morehouse, probably I can find stuff. But other smaller, less well-resourced ones, it probably is going to be more difficult. But I will make a concerted effort.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: I guess this might be a good place to leave us, if you'll permit me with one additional question. When you look to parallels between 1918 and the current moment, what are the two or three most significant or meaningful or

valuable for us to keep in mind, as we continue to process what's happening?

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: Well, the first one is just the obvious physical manifestations that we see. The masks. I've uncovered all these pictures of students in masks. I've found some clever editorial cartoons by students in yearbooks and student newspapers. Editorializing about masks. This one that was in the University of Michigan newspaper has a woman with a mask, and she's holding her make-up. And she's like, you know, what to do? How do I put my make-up on? Kind of, having a little fun with that. Another one from another student newspaper that had, like, six different masks and having a little fun with different styles. So, you know, there's that outward similarity.

But then a lot of the same kind of public health things that we see today happened back then. On the front page of the Columbia student newspaper, there was a notice by the campus physician with, like, fifteen or so tips for living safely during the pandemic. And all of them read just like stuff that we would read today. Wash your hands, don't travel, don't congregate, be in well-ventilated rooms. Of course, a few of them would not make any sense to our students today. Like, don't use the public phone. Our students today all have a phone in their pocket. They don't know what a public phone is. But yeah, so all of those similarities happen.



We mentioned football before. You would think that, at the time, they would have just said, okay, let's just cancel football and get on. And they did cancel most of the games that would have happened in October. There was a big dip. Some games in September, October was mostly cancelled.

But then they all tried to restart in November, so some teams only played two or four or six games for the whole season. The devotion of the American public to college football was every bit as strong in 1918 as it was in 2020. We've all seen the critiques on ESPN and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Ed* and everywhere else about... Well, shouldn't we just take a break from football this year? This seems crazy. And all of the outbreaks we had on football teams. But yet, we pushed through and had, a somewhat curtailed, but still pretty robust football season, including a national championship and everything.

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: Christian K. Anderson, I want to thank you for the wonderful talk and the great Q and A. Madame Chair, I want to thank you again for joining us. And with your permission, I'm going to wrap this up.

KARIANN YOKOTA: Bye!

CHRISTIAN ANDERSON: Thanks a lot. It was great to be here.

KARIANN YOKOTA: Thanks for the conversation.

## **Conclusion**

CHRISTOPHER BRICK: And that's a wrap. Please join us again next time for the second lecture of the series on the influenza pandemic of 1918. That's with Susan Breitzer who will talk about the impact on American religious practice and American religious politics in particular. We'll catch you then.