

IAN KUMEKAWA

Center for History and Economics
Harvard University
CGIS South 422, 1730 Cambridge Street
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

kumekawa@fas.harvard.edu | kumekawa@mit.edu

iankumekawa.com
scholar.harvard.edu/ikumekawa
history.mit.edu/people/ian-kumekawa

EMPLOYMENT

2025- Lecturer in History, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

2023- Anniversary Fellow, Center for History and Economics, Harvard University and MIT

2020-2023 Economics, History, and Politics Postdoctoral Fellow, Center for History and Economics, Harvard University and MIT

Visiting Lecturer, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2022-2025

Lecturer, Harvard University, 2022-2024

EDUCATION

2020 (November) Harvard University. PhD, History. Dissertation: “Imperial Schemes: Empire and the Rise of the British Business-State, 1914-1939”
Committee: Emma Rothschild, Maya Jasanoff, Charles Maier, Jon Levy

- Finalist for the Herman E. Krooss Prize for Best Dissertation in Business History

2013 University of Cambridge, Clare College. MPhil, Historical Studies, Distinction. Dissertation: “A.C. Pigou and Personal Reactions to Paradigmatic Change in the Economics Profession, 1908-1959”

2012 Harvard College. AB, History, Magna Cum Laude with Highest Honors

BOOKS

The Business-State: Empire and State Capture in the 20th Century, forthcoming under contract with University of Chicago Press.

Empty Vessel: The Story of the Global Economy in One Barge. New York: Knopf / London: John Murray, 2025.

Also under contract with:

- HarperCollins in German translation as *Beliebige Fracht*, 2026
- Hayakawa Shobo in Japanese translation
- Volante in Swedish translation
- CITIC in Chinese (simplified) translation
- Book21 in Korean translation
- Kotob Khan in Arabic translation
- Krytyka Polityczna in Polish translation
- Selected Reviews and Coverage: AudioFile Magazine (Earphones Award); Bloomberg, Booklist, CapeTalk Radio; *The Information*, Kirkus (starred review), *Library Journal*, *Literary Review*, *London Review of Books* (forthcoming), *The Nation*, *The Nation Podcast*, *New York Review of Books* (forthcoming), *New York Times*, *Publishers Weekly*, *The Spectator*, *La vie des idées* (forthcoming), *Wall Street Journal*

The First Serious Optimist: A.C. Pigou and the Birth of Welfare Economics. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017.

- Winner of the Joseph Spengler Prize Best Book Prize, awarded by the History of Economics Society
- Selected Reviews: *Alternatives Economiques*; *CHOICE*; *Contributions to Political Economy*; *Economic History Review*; *Finance and Development*; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*; *History of Economic Ideas*; *History of Political Economy*; *International Review of Social History*; *Journal of Consumer Policy*; *Journal of Economic Literature*; *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*; *Law and Society*; *Open Magazine*; *Public Choice*; *The Times Literary Supplement*.

JOURNAL ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS

“Between Empire and Nation-State: Flags of Convenience and Sovereignty in the Emerging Offshore World,” in preparation.

“From Expansion to Protection: Interwar British Business Elites and the Empire,” in *Business Elites and the Organization of Capitalism 1900-1945: Creators of Democracy, Captains of Industry, or Extractors of Value?*, ed. Patrick Fridenson and Knut Søgne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025), forthcoming.

“Black Economists and the Great Migration: Considering the Meaning of the Federal Division of Negro Economics,” *Modern Intellectual History*, forthcoming in print, available online (2024) at <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244324000453>.

“Measuring the Cost of Pollution: Economic Life, Economic Theory and the Origins of Environmental Economics,” *Journal of Modern History* 96, no. 2 (June 2024): 332-361.

- Winner of the Craufurd Goodwin Prize Best Article Prize in the History of Economics (2025)

“Imperial Schemes: Empire and the Rise of the British Business-State,” *Enterprise and Society* 23, no. 4 (December 2022): 928-937.

“Historical Network Analysis” in John Scott, Peter Carrington, John McLevey, eds., *SAGE Handbook on Social Network Analysis* (London: Sage Publishers, 2023).

“Meat and Economic Expertise in the British Imperial State During World War I,” *The Historical Journal* 62, no. 1 (March 2019): 171-194.

“The Early Reception of Ludwig von Mises in Britain,” *Tufts Historical Review* 3, no.1 (2010), pp.109-130.

REVIEWS AND REVIEW ESSAYS

Review of *A Brief History of Equality* by Thomas Piketty, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, in preparation.

“Offshore Infrastructure,” (Review Essay), in preparation.

“Measuring Up,” (Review Essay), *History of Political Economy*, forthcoming.

“Lessons from Environmental and Economic Crises,” (Review Essay), *Enterprise and Society*, forthcoming in print, available online (2023) at <https://doi.org/10.1017/eso.2023.54>.

Review of *Free Market: The History of an Idea* by Jacob Soll, *History of European Ideas*, forthcoming in print, available online (2023) at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01916599.2023.2171467>.

“Reconsidering the History of Political Economy” (Review Essay), *Modern Intellectual History* 20, no. 3 (September 2023): 985-995,
<https://www.doi.org/10.1017/S147924432200049X>.

Review of *A.C. Pigou and the Marshallian Thought Style* by Karen Knight, *History of Political Economy* 53, no. 1 (February 2021): 166-167.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

“A.C. Pigou and Intellectual Biography,” *Australian Journal of History and Biography*, under review.

“The VCBC Archive by Sean Vegezzi,” *Reader* by Storefront for Art and Architecture, 2025.

“Reading A.C. Pigou,” *Royal Economic Society Newsletter*, October 2022.

“Imperial Legacies and World Heritage,” Visualizing Climate and Loss, Center for History and Economics, 2021, <https://histecon.fas.harvard.edu/climate-loss/peat/index.html>.

“We Need to Revisit the Idea of Pigou Wealth Tax,” *Financial Times*, June 8, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/fe3abaa6-a5ab-11ea-a27c-b8aa85e36b7e>.

with Charles S. Maier. “Responding to COVID-19: Think Through the Analogy of War.” Safra Center COVID-19 Rapid Response White Paper. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics, Harvard University, April 2020. <https://ethics.harvard.edu/war-analogy>.

“Economists at Cambridge,” Visualizing Historical Networks, 2013, <https://histecon.fas.harvard.edu/visualizing/graphing/economists.html>.

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- 2025 Craufurd Goodwin Best Article Prize, History of Economics Society
- 2024 Visiting Scholar, Australian National University
- 2022 Finalist, Herman E. Krooss Prize, Business History Conference
- 2019 Summer Research Grant, History Department, Harvard
- 2019 Center for European Studies Dissertation Completion Fellowship
- 2019 Derek Bok Center Certificate of Distinction in Teaching
- 2018-2020 Member, Senior Common Room, Kirkland House, Harvard
- 2018 Summer Research Grant, History Department, Harvard
- 2018 Canada Program Research Grant, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs
- 2017-2018 Center for European Studies Krupp Foundation Graduate Dissertation Research Fellowship

2017 Clive Fellowship, History Department, Harvard
2016 Derek Bok Center Certificate of Distinction in Teaching
2016- Center for European Studies, Harvard, Graduate Student Affiliate
2016 Weatherhead Center for International Affairs Pre-dissertation Grant
2016- Weatherhead Center for International Affairs Graduate Affiliate
2015 Center for American Political Studies, Harvard, Research Grant
2014- Harvard Center for History and Economics Graduate Research Associate
2014-2016 Weatherhead Center for International Affairs Graduate Student, Harvard
2013-2014 Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard, Visiting Fellow
2013 History Project Grant
2012 Henry Knox Fellowship (yearlong fellowship for studies in the UK)
2012 Cambridge Centre for History and Economics Prize Research Grant
2012 Thomas Temple Hoopes Prize, Harvard College
2012 Colton Award, Harvard College
2011 Krupp Foundation/Center for European Studies Award

INVITED TALKS

“Empty Vessel: One Barge and the Growth of the Offshore World,” Vanderbilt Law School, Nashville, Tennessee, September 9, 2025 (upcoming).

“From Imperial to Global Offshore: Flags of Convenience and Units of Analysis,” Vanderbilt History Seminar, Nashville, Tennessee, September 8, 2025 (upcoming).

“Empty Vessel: One Barge and the Growth of the Offshore World,” Sciences Po, Paris, France, May 21, 2025.

“n.18: One Footnote and Three Economic Intellectual Biographies,” Workshop on Intellectual Biography, School of History, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia, December 6, 2024.

“The Micro and the Global, Offshore,” Capitalism Network, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia, December 9, 2024.

“Imperial Schemes: Empire and the Rise of the British Business-State, 1914-1939,” Business History Conference, Mexico City, Mexico, April 9, 2022.

“Externalities and A.C. Pigou’s Politics,” History of Economics Association Annual Conference, Chicago, Illinois, June 15-17, 2018.

“The First Serious Optimist: A.C. Pigou and the Politics of Welfare Economics,” Core Seminar in Social and Economic History, Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK, November 9, 2017.

CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

“Expansion and Protection: Tariffs and Interwar British Business Elites,” Business History Conference, Atlanta, Georgia, March 14, 2025.

“One Barge and the Offshore World,” AHA Annual Conference, New York, New York, January 2025.

“Measuring the Cost of Pollution,” Climate, Environment, and Economics, Conference at Harvard University, April 2-3, 2024.

“Seeds of Empire,” Natural Resources, Sovereignty and Markets, Conference at Harvard University, June 2023, June 14-15, 2023.

“Our Little Alcatraz: HMP *The Weare* in Dorset,” Northeast Conference on British Studies, Bates College, Lewiston, Maine, October 22, 2022.

“Industrial Export Assistance and State Growth in Interwar Britain,” Business History Conference, Mexico City, Mexico, April 8, 2022.

“‘A British Deutsche Bank’: Imperial Business Competition and the End of Laissez-Faire,” Social Science History Association, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 11-14, 2021.

“Histories of Economic Life and the Environment” Workshop (organizer), Center for History and Economics, Harvard University, Virtual Meeting, May 4, 2021.

“Protecting Business, Protecting the Empire: The Politics of Protectionism in the British Empire at the End of Free Trade,” Social Science History Association, Washington, D.C., November 19-22, 2020 (cancelled).

“Inventing the British Egg,” North American Conference on British Studies, Virtual Meeting, November 12-15, 2020.

“The Irish Origins of British Gun Control: Colonial Violence and the Firearms Act of 1920,” part of the panel “Policing Guns and Violence,” (organizer), Northeast Conference on British Studies, Virtual Meeting, October 10, 2020.

“Imperial Shelter: Big Business and the End of Free Trade,” History and Economics Workshop, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, February 13, 2020.

“Networks of Corporate Influence on the Interwar British State,” Social Science History Association Annual Conference, Chicago, Illinois, November 21-24, 2019.

“Imperial Seeds and British Forests,” part of the panel, “Imperial Networks of Scientific Knowledge and the State,” (organizer), North American Conference on British Studies, Vancouver, BC, Canada, November 14-17, 2019.

“Selling Empire, Projecting Britain: The Empire Marketing Board, 1926-1933,”
Capitalism Workshop, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, November
7, 2019.

“‘A few millions were neither here nor there’: Credit, Exports, and an Empire of
Commerce,” Capitalism Workshop, Harvard University, Cambridge,
Massachusetts, April 16, 2019.

“The Imperialism of More-than-Free Trade: Business and State Growth in Interwar
Britain,” Center for History and Economics Workshop, Harvard University,
Cambridge, Massachusetts, March 14, 2019.

“The Firearms Act of 1920 and the Imperial Origins of Modern British Gun Control,”
Center for European Studies Workshop, Harvard University, Cambridge,
Massachusetts, November 29, 2018.

“Imperial Seeds and British Forests,” Conference entitled Situating Empire: The Great
War and its Aftermaths, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts,
November 15-16, 2018.

“The Effect of Empire on the British Civil Service, 1912-1925,” Cultures of Imperialism
Workshop at the North American Conference for British Studies, Denver,
Colorado, November 3, 2017.

“Economists and the Management of Red Meat in World War I,” New England Historical
Association Annual Conference, Salem State University, Salem, Massachusetts,
April 22, 2017.

“Crisis and Management: British Economic Planning of Food in World War I,”
Conference entitled “Contexts of Crisis: Danger, Opportunity, and the Unknown,”
UCLA, Los Angeles, April 14, 2017.

“Refrigeration, Rations, and Red Tape: Meat and Economic Expertise in World War I,”
Center for History and Economics Workshop, Harvard University, December 1,
2016.

“A.C. Pigou, War, and the Concept of Economic Welfare,” Center for History and
Economics Workshop, Harvard University, November 17, 2015.

“The First Serious Optimist: A.C. Pigou and the Concept of Welfare,” INET Conference
on the History of Economic Thought, Université de Lausanne, Lausanne,
Switzerland, May 29, 2014.

OTHER EVENTS

Empty Vessel Book Tour

- University Club, New York, NY, January 28, 2026
- National Book Festival, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, September 6, 2025
- Parkside Bookstore, Boston, MA, June 11, 2025
- Magdalene College, Cambridge, UK, June 4, 2025
- R.J. Julia Booksellers, Madison, CT, May 14, 2025
- Launch/Talk in conversation with Maya Jasanoff, Harvard Book Store, Cambridge, MA, May 6, 2025

Empty Vessel Media Appearances

- The Roundtable (NPR); Smarty Pants Podcast (*The American Scholar*); Who Makes Cents Podcast; Toynbee Prize Foundation Interview; *Director Journal* interview; The Forum (KSFR); MIT News; Intelligence Squared Podcast (upcoming); A Song Called Life Podcast; New Books Network Podcast

History and Political Economy Project Meeting, Commentator, Boston University, December 14, 2024.

“*Toward a Free Economy* Book Roundtable with Author,” Moderator, Harvard University, September 8, 2023.

“Hirschman’s The Passions and the Interests,” Talk at Harvard Law and Political Economy Spring Dinner Meeting, Harvard Law School, Online Event, February 10, 2021.

“The First Serious Optimist,” Interview with Mark Klobas for the New Books Network Podcast, October 5, 2020.

“The Price of Health: Keynes and the Economic Crisis,” a conversation with Zachary Carter for *The Ballot*, Online Event, July 23, 2020.

TEACHING

Spring 2026 Course head, “The Offshore: A Global History,” Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Instructor, “Compass: Love, Death, and Taxes: How to Think – and talk to Others – about Being Human,” Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Fall 2025 Co-Lecturer, “Economics and Economic History / Classics of Economics,” with Anne McCants, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

	Co-instructor, “Economics and History Proseminar,” jointly listed at MIT and Harvard, with Abhijit Banerjee (MIT Economics), Jacob Moscona (MIT Economics), and Emma Rothschild (Harvard History)
Spring 2025	Co-Lecturer, “Economics and Economic History / Classics of Economics,” with Anne McCants, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Spring 2024	Course head, “The Offshore: A Global History,” Harvard University
Fall 2023	Co-Lecturer, “Economics and Economic History / Classics of Economics,” with Anne McCants, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Fall 2022	Lecturer, “Classics of Economics,” Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Spring 2022	Lecturer / Instructor of Record, “Introduction to the History of Economics,” Harvard University; Awarded a Derek Bok Center Certificate of Distinction in Teaching
Fall 2018	Head Teaching Fellow, “Introduction to the History of Economics” (Prof. Emma Rothschild), Harvard University Awarded a Derek Bok Center Certificate of Distinction in Teaching Guest Lecture: “Economics in the 20 th Century”
Fall 2017	Teaching Fellow, “The World Wars in Global Context, 1905-1950” (Prof. Charles Maier), Harvard University Guest Lecture: “The League of Nations and International Cooperation”
Spring 2017	Teaching Fellow, “What is the History of History?” (Prof. Ann Blair), Harvard University; Awarded a Derek Bok Center Certificate of Distinction in Teaching
Fall 2016	Teaching Fellow, “Medical Ethics and History” (Prof. David S. Jones), Harvard University

ADVISING

2024-2025	Senior thesis advisor for Katia Soares dos Santos, “Offshore Finance: Vestiges of Empire or Capitalizing on Anglo-American Hegemony?” Social Studies, Harvard University
	Senior thesis advisor for Matthew Allana, “Scrambled Signals: The Marconi Scandal, 1912-1913,” History, Harvard University
2025-2026	Senior thesis advisor for Alex Carlin, Social Studies, Harvard University

MANUSCRIPT REFEREE

Journal of Historical Network Research
Journal of the History of Economic Thought
Modern Intellectual History
Oeconomia
Polity Press
Social Networks

ACADEMIC SERVICE

2020-present Co-Coordinator, Joint Center for History and Economics Seminar Series

2014-present Coordinator, [Visualizing Historical Networks Program](#), Harvard University

2020-2022 Co-editor, Visualizing Climate and Loss Website

2018-2020 History Advisor, Kirkland House, Harvard University

2019-2020 Steering Committee, Center for European Studies, Harvard University

2015-2020 Co-Coordinator, History and Economics Workshop, Harvard University

2014-2020 Co-Coordinator, Center for History and Economics Undergraduate Prize Research Program

RESEARCH EMPLOYMENT

2013-2014 Institute for New Economic Thinking: Research Associate
2012 New Haven Legal Assistance Association: Research Intern

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Historical Association
Business History Conference
History of Economics Society
North American Conference on British Studies

RESEARCH LANGUAGES

French (spoken and reading)
German (reading)
Python