



THE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIANS OF
AMERICAN FOREIGN RELATIONS

18 November 2025

Dear Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor for the Faculty of Arts, and Members of University Council:

The Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR), the leading scholarly organization in the United States whose mission it is to explore the history of U.S. foreign relations, international history, and transnational history, is greatly dismayed to learn of the impending closure of the Department of American and Canadian Studies's degree programs. The closure of such a renowned department's degree programs will profoundly affect our membership. Further, at a time of great international tension and instability, it will send a pernicious signal about the priorities of leading institutions of higher education. To close these programs would be a serious mistake.

The University of Nottingham's Department of American and Canadian Studies has been a vital partner to SHAFR as it has evolved to its current preeminent position. Its faculty and their students attend SHAFR's annual conference regularly, distinguishing themselves with their outstanding scholarship. They have epitomized SHAFR's transition from a parochial to an international organization. Faculty like Bevan Sewell and Maria Ryan have organized multiple international conferences that feature SHAFR members.

What is more, the University of Nottingham has been pivotal in the integration of intelligence studies into SHAFR's portfolio. Compared to British scholarship, that of the United States was a backwater when it came to studying intelligence, despite its integral relationship to the History of American Foreign Relations. That changed in the second decade of the twenty-first century, and the catalyst was the "Landscapes of History: The CIA in History, Fiction, and Memory" conference that the University of Nottingham hosted in 2011. Organized by Matthew Jones and Paul McGarr of the Department of American and Canadian Studies, along with Richard Aldrich, SHAFR members from both the U.S. and the UK represented throughout the program. Several months later, Jones, McGarr, Aldrich, and other scholars of intelligence presented papers at the SHAFR annual conference. Intelligence History has been ubiquitous at SHAFR conferences ever since.

The history of SHAFR could not be written without acknowledging the salience of the University of Nottingham's Department of American and Canadian Studies. We urge that the decision to close it first be reconsidered and then be reversed.

Sincerely,

Jay Sexton
President

Richard H. Immerman
Executive Director

SHAFR Business Office

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