

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Contact:** Katherine M. Finley, Executive Director  
Office: 812.855.7311 | E-mail: oah@oah.org



## **RÜDIGER GRAF, LEIBNIZ-CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY HISTORY POTSDAM, RECEIVES DAVID THELEN AWARD FROM THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN HISTORIANS**

BLOOMINGTON, IN—During its annual meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Organization of American Historians (OAH) announced that **Rüdiger Graf, Leibniz-Center for Contemporary History Potsdam**, received their prestigious **David Thelen Award**, which is given every two years for the best article on American history written in a language other than English.

**Rüdiger Graf, Leibniz-Center for Contemporary History Potsdam, “Truth in the Jungle of Literature, Science, and Politics: Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* and the Food Control Reforms during the U.S. Progressive Era”** (*Historische Zeitschrift* 301(1), De Gruyter Oldenbourg) [“Wahrheit im Dschungel von Literatur, Wissenschaft und Politik: Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* und die Reform der Lebensmittelkontrolle in den USA der ‘Progressive Era’”].

According to a widespread belief, Upton Sinclair’s novel *The Jungle* (1906) about the working and hygienic conditions in the Chicago stockyards was responsible for the new food regulation in the United States during the Progressive Era. This article tries to determine the precise role that the knowledge of the slaughtering processes played in the passage of the Meat Inspection and the Pure Food and Drugs Acts. During the scandal and the debates in Congress, many actors with different intellectual resources claimed to have authoritative knowledge about the conditions in the stockyards. The truth about meat production was journalistically disclosed, scientifically established, or juridically determined. Knowledge claims derived from personal observation, scientific expertise, or the judgment of trustworthy individuals. Explicitly, participants discussed the heterogeneous truth claims and the importance of knowledge for policy making.

This essay argues that Sinclair’s truth claims could not be translated into the political process as he uttered them in a sensationalist manner. Competing claims to scientific knowledge devalued formal expertise and made trust in the knowledge producer more important. The ascendancy of sciencebased policy making in the twentieth century did not render trust in the figure of the knowledge producer obsolete. Despite attempts to depersonalize knowledge by scientific means, it continued to depend on faith in its producer’s character.

The award was announced on April 5 by OAH’s 2019–20 President Joanne Meyerowitz.

For more information, visit [oah.org](http://oah.org) or call 812.855.7311.

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### **ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN HISTORIANS**

Founded in 1907, the Organization of American Historians (OAH) is the world’s largest professional association dedicated to American history scholarship. With more than 7,500 members from the U.S. and abroad, OAH promotes excellence in the scholarship, teaching, and presentation of American history, encouraging wide discussion of historical questions and equitable treatment of history practitioners. It publishes the quarterly *Journal of American History*, the leading scholarly publication and journal of record in the field of American history for more than a century. It also publishes *The American Historian* magazine. Formerly known as the Mississippi Valley Historical Association (MVHA), the association became the OAH in 1965 to reflect a broader scope focusing on national studies of American history. The OAH national headquarters are located in the historic Raintree House on Indiana University’s Bloomington campus.