

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ASECS ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF 2024 GOTTSCHALK PRIZE

The American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (ASECS) awards the Louis A. Gottschalk Prize annually to an outstanding book-length historical or critical study on the eighteenth century.

The 2024 Gottschalk is awarded to **April G. Shelford**, *A Caribbean Enlightenment: Intellectual Life in the British and French Colonial Worlds, 1750-1792* (Cambridge University Press, 2023). One book has also been awarded honorable mention: **Katlyn Carter**, *Democracy in Darkness: Secrecy and Transparency in the Age of Revolutions* (Yale University Press, 2023).

With *A Caribbean Enlightenment: Intellectual Life in the British and French Colonial Worlds, 1750–1792* (Cambridge University Press, 2023), April G. Shelford, Associate Professor Emerita in the Department of History at American University, has written a compelling, in-depth examination of how European colonizers imported and adapted the Enlightenment culture of perfectibility and empirical epistemologies to the realities of the Caribbean colonies of Jamaica and Saint-Domingue. Her book covers new ground by investigating colonizers’ projects of agricultural improvements, botanical collecting, and experimental knowledge, using an extensive array of little-known archival records and primary sources from across the Caribbean and Europe. Deftly navigating the uneasy relations between the centers of Enlightenment knowledge culture and its margins, her book exposes the stark realities of colonial societies relying on the forced displacement, brutal exploitation, and endless enslavement of African populations. Dr. Shelford asks hard questions about the Enlightenment as a convertible set of practices that white male colonizers borrowed from the metropolises and reshaped according to their needs, interests, desires, and constraints. Drawing on history, material culture studies, and literary studies, Dr. Shelford not only develops her own methodological tools to study these complex entities, but she also brings new urgency to the well-worn question of what the Enlightenment could be. In writing this nuanced study, she commands her readers’ admiration by walking a fine line between dismissing the purported ambitions of the Enlightenment and acritically praising its ideals. For these

reasons, the Gottschalk Prize committee has decided to award its 2024 prize to April G. Shelford's impressive, subtle, far-reaching, and thought-provoking work.

The publication of University of Notre Dame assistant professor **Katlyn Marie Carter's** book *Democracy in Darkness: Secrecy and Transparency in the Age of Revolutions* could not have been timelier. Her transatlantic study provides a vivid account of the conflicting views of American and French revolutionaries on political representation, and their debates on the principles of transparency and accountability demanded by their democratic ideals. This comparative and interdisciplinary work, written in limpid prose, deserves honorable mention in the Gottschalk competition for its major contribution to ongoing conversations on political culture today and in the eighteenth century.

The American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies is a not-for-profit educational organization founded to promote the study of all aspects of the eighteenth century. It sponsors conferences, awards research fellowships and prizes, and publishes Eighteenth Century Studies and Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture.