
GU-Q Historian Trish Kahle Wins National Award for Groundbreaking Book on Democracy



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Assistant Professor of History, Dr. Trish Kahle of Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) has been awarded the prestigious Merle Curti Award for Best Book in Social History by the Organization of American Historians (OAH) for her debut monograph, *Energy Citizenship: Coal and Democracy in the American Century*, published by Columbia University Press.

Presented at the 2025 OAH Conference on American History, the award recognizes Dr. Kahle's powerful retelling of American democracy from the coalfields up—centering the lived experiences, struggles, and political power of coal miners in the United States.

“In this book, I tried to treat the political thought and activism of ordinary workers with the same seriousness as is normally accorded to politicians, and I believe that approach shows us something distinctive about the political and energy history of the United States,” said Dr. Kahle. “It is an honor to have the committee recognize this book in the tradition of ‘history from below’ that motivates my work as a historian, but even more, it is an honor to the lives and struggles of the people who fill the pages of the book and a testament to their significance in U.S. history.”

The award committee, comprised of four esteemed historians, praised the book as a “signal achievement,” noting how *Energy Citizenship* reframes American political history by showing how miners “effected their own transformation from the margins of the nation’s political community into a uniquely powerful group of energy citizens.” Drawing on union archives, government reports, press coverage, and firsthand accounts, Dr. Kahle’s work provides new insight by combining social, labor, energy, and political history “in a gripping narrative with compelling analysis,” said the committee.

In unflinching detail, the book documents not only the rise and fall of the coal economy, but also the toll it took on human lives and entire communities. From catastrophic disasters to the daily dangers of underground labor, *Energy Citizenship* tells a deeply personal story of resistance and survival.

The book was also a finalist for the 2025 Hagley Museum and Library Prize in Business History at the annual Business History Conference.

These recognitions come during GU-Q's 20th anniversary year in Qatar, a milestone that underscores the university's dedication to nurturing pathbreaking research and supporting scholars whose work sheds new light on urgent global questions.