

Application Summary

Competition Details

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Application Information

Submitted By:	Eric Schatzberg
Application ID:	3031
Application Title:	Johnny Smith
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Primary School or Department

School of History and Sociology

Primary Appointment Title:	Professor and Chair
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Application Details

Proposal Title

Johnny Smith

Geoffrey G. Eiccholz Faculty Teaching Award

Nomination Packet

Johnny Smith

J.C. “Bud” Shaw Professor of Sports, Society, and Technology
Assistant Professor of History
School of History and Sociology
Georgia Institute of Technology

Table of Contents

Nomination from School Chair Eric Schatzberg..... 2

Reflective Teaching Statement..... 5

Evidence of Teaching Excellence..... 7

Letter of Support from IAC Associate Dean John Tone..... 11

Letter of Support from Georgia Tech graduate Hannah Joy Gebresilassie..... 14

Letter of Support from Georgia Tech student Nick Franco 16

Letter of Support from Georgia Tech student Joe Buschman 17

January 31, 2019

Selection Committee
Geoffrey G. Eichholz Faculty Teaching Award
Georgia Institute of Technology

Dear Committee Members:

I am extremely pleased to nominate Assistant Professor Johnny Smith for the Geoffrey G. Eichholz Faculty Teaching Award. Quite simply, Smith is an amazing teacher. He is probably the best teacher I have ever encountered at the assistant professor level in my 30-odd years in higher education. His dedication and enthusiasm come through clearly in his own teaching statement as well as the comments of his students and peers. Smith does not succeed just by telling interesting stories, though he certainly tells a good story. More importantly, he uses these stories, whether about sports, politics, or social history, to get students excited about fundamental historical concepts. Issue of race, social class, and politics infuse his teaching as well as his research. He uses historical narrative to get students to think deeply about these issues.

Smith is especially effective in large introductory lecture courses, including the second half of the American history survey, History of the United States since 1877, which fulfills the legislated Constitution and History Requirement as well as Core Area E. Motivating students in a required course can be difficult, especially a course far from the main interests of most students at Georgia Tech. Smith takes students who couldn't care less about U.S. history and turns them into citizens who can grapple with complex historical problems. Smith's consistently high CIOS scores for this required course speaks volumes about his effectiveness as a teacher. For the engineers, computer scientists, and natural scientists who fill his courses, Smith not only make them better citizens but also better engineers and scientists.

Smith's other large lecture course, History of Sports in America, is likewise a triumph. This is a course that Smith created himself, in a field that does not have a wealth of existing textbooks and model syllabi. One could easily imagine a course like this catering to student-athletes looking for an easy class and sports-history buffs just interested in learning about their favorite players. But Smith teaches as much about core issues in America history in this class as he does in the American history survey. In particular, it is hard to understand the history of American sports without engaging with issues of race, masculinity, and class, which are at the forefront of his approach to the course material. Smith clearly makes his classes both fun and rigorous.

Smith is also highly effective in teaching small classes. In these classes, he trains students to understand how to do history, not just how to read about it. Historical research has its own methods and practices, much laboratory methods in scientific fields. In his teaching statement, Smith describes this process using the example of Jackie Robinson. He has his students read a standard secondary source about Robinson, but also a selection of primary sources, helping them

understand how historians weave narratives from disparate primary sources. This is the essence of the historian's craft.

Smith's dedication to teaching is also apparent in his involvement in pedagogy and advising. He serves as the advisor for the Sports, Society, and Technology minor in Ivan Allen College. He also participated in the Class of 1969 Teaching Fellows program in the Center for Teaching and Learning. As a teaching fellow, Smith developed new material around the life of boxing legend Mohammed Ali, material design to help students learn the fundamentals of historical research.

Smith has repeatedly been recognized for his effectiveness as a teacher. He has won six separate teaching awards, including Ivan Allen College's Teacher of the year award for 2014. His students clearly love him, overwhelming giving him the highest possible rating for the CIOS survey question on teaching effectiveness. He scores well in both large lecture courses and small classes. His interpolated median has never fallen below 4.8 of 5.0 in five years of teaching at Georgia Tech. His teaching was observed this past September by Professor John Tone, who sat in on a lecture in one of Smith's core courses, HTS 2015, History of Sports in America. Tone provides a detailed description of Smith's thrilling lecture on Jack Johnson, the first African-American to hold the heavyweight boxing title. As Tone makes clear, this lecture was about the history of race in America as much as the history of boxing.

When it comes to teaching, Johnny Smith excels in almost every way. And brilliance as a teacher does not come at the expense of his research. Already as an assistant professor, Smith has produced one single-authored and two co-authored books in sports history. All three of these books have been widely reviewed and praised for their scholarship.

These days, teaching awards are often given to faculty who excel in the innovative use of instructional technology. While new technology has its place, it only makes sense when it can really enhance learning. Smith excels as a teacher by using current technologies effectively, such as PowerPoint. He is already an amazingly effective and inspiring teacher. I know there are many great teachers at Georgia Tech, but I have no doubt that Johnny Smith is one of the best.

Sincerely,



Eric Schatzberg
Professor and Chair

Reflective Statement on Teaching
Johnny Smith
J.C. “Bud” Shaw Professor of Sports, Society, and Technology
Assistant Professor of History

When I first came to Georgia Tech as a postdoctoral fellow in 2012, the Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts and the School of History and Sociology (HSOC) asked me to help create a new interdisciplinary initiative: the Sports, Society, and Technology (SST) program. Typically, postdoctoral fellows prioritize their research and work for one to two years at a university before moving on to a new academic home. Yet what excited me most about coming to Georgia Tech was the opportunity to build a new program and leave a lasting imprint on the curriculum, even if it meant leaving after two years. As a historian, I hoped to shape a curriculum that challenged undergraduates to think about sports not as mere play, but rather for them to investigate sport as a significant social, cultural, and political institution. I could hardly imagine that in a year’s time my position would be converted to Assistant Professor, and I would become one of the two main faculty leaders of an initiative that is establishing Georgia Tech as one of the premier academic programs in Sports Studies. In recognition of my leadership, teaching record, and research achievements, in 2017 Georgia Tech named me the inaugural Julius C. “Bud” Shaw Professor of Sports, Society, and Technology.

When I first joined the School of History and Sociology as a fellow, there were no faculty members teaching courses in Sports Studies, and the Ivan College had not yet hired a director for the SST program. My task, therefore, was to build interest in the program among students and faculty, and establish two core undergraduate classes that would ultimately become the cornerstones of the SST minor: Foundations of Sports Studies and History of Sports in America. The Foundations course, limited to 35 students, was created to introduce students to the interdisciplinary field of Sports Studies and provide a gateway into the minor. It required me to develop a class that would captivate a diverse group of undergraduates, and recruit experts from different departments on campus and the Atlanta area who could speak to the class about a variety of subjects related to sports and its relationship to education, the economy, technology, politics, and media. Emphasizing communication skills and critical thinking, I built the course around close student-teacher interaction, discussions, student presentations, and class debates. The students responded positively to the structure of the course, so much so that many of them became the first SST minors, and subsequently three postdoctoral fellows have adopted the class model I created.

The second class, History of Sports in America, a large lecture course that regularly fills with one hundred students, quickly became a popular offering among undergraduates. As a historian, this course became central to my academic mission of expanding the audience of history students. In a time of declining enrollments in history courses, my sports history class consistently attracts students who rarely take other history courses. Such interest offers an important opportunity to engage students in discussions about serious social, cultural, and political topics. Although the history of sports has a substantial historiography, there remains a wide gap between what scholars do and what

the larger public consumes and considers “sport history.” My class, therefore, is designed to challenge students’ assumptions about what *is* history, and how we can study sports to better understand the past and the world around us. From the first day, I stress that the course is not about sports trivia. Rather, the main goal is to use sports as a tool to better understand American history and how sports have shaped American culture.

In my seven years at Georgia Tech I have developed five courses that explore the relationship between sports and society: Foundations of Sports Studies; History of Sports in America; Boxing, Race, and American Culture; an undergraduate research seminar on modern American sports; and an undergraduate research seminar on the history of African American athletes and the civil rights movement. I have constructed each of these classes around the broader themes in modern American history, including race, religion, gender, ethnicity, class, politics, urbanization, and globalization. Using this framework, students learn to think about the complex meanings of sports in American society and historical methods. I am especially pleased that my sports history course, which fulfills students’ social science requirement, draws students from diverse backgrounds, most of whom are not Liberal Arts majors. The result is that many students outside the Ivan Allen College take this class and gain a greater appreciation for history.

In all of my courses, I teach students how to become active readers and the importance of historical context. For example, in my undergraduate seminars, students learn how to investigate the past rather than passively memorize facts and accounts written by others. In these courses, students discover that writing serious sports history requires using the tools of a historian, studying athletes, teams, and events in their proper cultural context. In the process of writing a substantial research paper, students collect a variety of secondary and primary sources, “decode” documents, and make connections between their own research and historical scholarship. In the Fall of 2014, while I taught the seminar on modern sports history, I participated in the Class of 1969 Teaching Fellows program. Working with the CETL seminar leaders, I developed lesson plans using my own research on the life and times of boxing icon Muhammad Ali. Discussing my own research process, from reading background material to using electronic databases, helped students see how they too could conduct historical research. Afterwards, students told me that this research modeling helped them develop their own research and writing strategies.

This experience reinforced my belief that history is best taught when students learn by doing. A successful history teacher most effectively helps students learn when the students themselves are active participants. With this basic idea in mind, as a Teaching Fellow, I developed a pilot teaching initiative for History of Sports in America. Although student feedback indicated that they were learning the content, I realized that they knew very little about history as a discipline. Although one of the central learning objectives of the course is for students to develop critical thinking skills through various assignments, I sensed that students still lacked an appreciation for how historians actually study the past and the kinds of questions that they ask. Therefore, I decided to create a lesson plan that teaches students *how* historians interpret the past using diverse secondary and primary sources. Applying a scaffolding technique, I designed a series of assignments where

students studied the life and times of Jackie Robinson, an ideal subject for students to learn about race, civil rights, and the integration of American sports.

First students read a secondary source, Jonathan Eig's *Opening Day: The Story of Jackie Robinson's First Season*. Students read this book not only to learn about Robinson's life and the history of integration in Major League Baseball, but also to learn how authors like Eig conduct historical research. In class, we discussed how he collected various sources, his main argument, and writing style. Then students were given a prompt to write a 3-4-page essay about how Robinson's life helps us better understand the role of sports in the Civil Rights Movement.

After establishing foundational knowledge about Robinson and the civil rights struggle, students were given three primary sources and a series of study questions related to each document. The three different documents were selected to show students how different groups of Americans—team owners, managers, players, sportswriters, and fans—responded to Robinson breaking Major League Baseball's color line. Then, in our class discussion students were asked how black and white citizens debated the social, political, and economic implications of integration in professional baseball.

After examining the primary sources and engaging the class in discussion, students were assigned a short reflection essay. Students were asked the following questions: Why are primary sources essential for historical research? How did examining the sources help you better understand how history is written? If you were Jonathan Eig's editor, how would you suggest that he incorporate our primary sources into his book? What interpretations can we make from the primary sources?

This process led me to a few conclusions: (1) reading primary sources gave students a greater appreciation of how history is written and a glimpse into historians' analytical process; (2) students also reported that the primary documents helped them better understand how context influences our views about race, sports, and history; and (3) comparing primary sources helped students integrate what they already knew about the subject with new knowledge. Since I developed this pilot initiative, I have continued to incorporate this scaffolding technique in class and use more primary sources during lectures and discussions.

Since my appointment as Assistant professor, every year, I teach two large core curriculum classes: History of Sports in America and History of the United States since 1877. The latter class, typically filled by freshmen and sophomores, meets the Core Area E: Social Sciences requirement and attracts nearly two hundred students, many of who come to Georgia Tech from outside the United States. In a given semester, when I teach sports history and the U.S. survey, I can have more than two hundred and seventy-five students. On a number of occasions, I have opened these classes to students in the Excel Program, a four-year college project for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Creating an inclusive learning environment is central to my educational mission.

Teaching these foundational courses carries great responsibility, one that truly energizes me to share my enthusiasm for history and interacting with students. I take great pride in my teaching and view student engagement as central to my role on campus. My teaching philosophy is built on the idea that a good teacher models an enthusiasm for learning and inspires intellectual curiosity. As a history teacher, I strive to cultivate an open classroom environment where students learn from diverse viewpoints. Whether I am teaching a large lecture or a seminar, I want my students to know that I am available to help them. As a past member of the HSOC undergraduate committee, I have worked with faculty to improve student engagement, classroom instruction, and various curricular policies. I have also advised students on independent research projects, and recruited students to the SST and History minors.

I truly value my relationships with students and see myself as a mentor beyond the classroom. As the faculty adviser for the SST minor, I regularly meet with students to discuss their educational and professional goals, and often help them develop networking strategies to secure internships. In a similar capacity, since 2015, I have also served as the academic adviser to the Sports Business Club. During the past three academic years, as a Grand Challenge Faculty Fellow, I have supported the Grand Challenge Program, a learning community where undergraduates develop creative solutions to larger problems on campus and in their own communities. This past fall semester, I met with two Grand Challenge students who happened to be interested in sports analytics. They expressed interest in attending the Sloan Sports Analytics Conference at M.I.T., but neither student could afford the cost. Recognizing an important educational and professional opportunity, I offered to fund each student's conference trip using discretionary funds from my Shaw Professorship. I will never forget the students' excitement when they found out that I planned to fund their trip to M.I.T. It was one of the most memorable moments of the year, a reminder of why I teach at Georgia Tech.

My enthusiasm for teaching has helped me earn numerous honors. In addition to being named a Class of 1969 Teaching Fellow, I have won the Ivan Allen College Teacher of the Year Award, the CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award, and the Class of 1940 Course Survey Teaching Effectiveness Award (three times). Across large and small classes, my teaching effectiveness rating averages 4.92/5.0. One reason I have had success connecting with students is because they know that I genuinely enjoy teaching. One student observed, "He loves what he does and cares about his students." I could not imagine a higher compliment.

Evidence of Teaching Excellence

Anonymous CIOS Student Comments

“Dr. Smith is a great lecturer, and never failed to keep me engaged with the material throughout the class. I wish all of my teachers would have the lecturing ability that Dr. Smith has. Keep up the great work Dr. Smith! You're one of the best teachers I've had at Tech.”—HIST 2112, Fall 2016

“Honestly, the whole course was amazing. I would leave class seeing the world a whole different way. I did not know history could be so fun.”—HIST 2112, Fall 2016

“Professor Smith was extremely enthusiastic and made every class entertaining and extremely informative. I did not have much interest in History before taking his class, however, I loved his teaching style so much I am considering taking another class with him.”—HIST 2112, Fall 2016

“I thought that all the lectures were phenomenal, and Professor Smith's genuine enthusiasm for the subject made the class that much more interesting and I was always excited to attend his lectures.”—HIST 2112, Fall 2016

“Dr. Smith was one of the best history professors I have ever had. He made history into a narrative, and he made me want to listen and understand a real progression of events instead of simply memorize for a test. He has a knack for what he does, and he loves the material which really brings in the interests of his students. He cares immensely for his class, and he is very relatable. The expectations for the course were clear and enforced, and the class was structured in a way that encouraged long-term learning and interaction between the professor and the students.”—HIST 2112, Fall 2016

“Dr. Smith knows so much about the course and he really knows how to make it fun. I hang on every one of his words. He makes the subject so captivating and so easy to remember. It's like a big storybook. Every single time he ends class I am just amazed by how much I have learned . . . By far my favorite class.”—HIST 2112, Fall 2016

“Dr. Smith is organized, knowledgeable, clear with his communication, and has structured a class that is easy for students to engage with. I've had several (even many) great professors at Tech, but there are few that I look to as a guide for my own teaching methods (as a senior TA in another class) and Dr. Smith is one of them. I literally watch him closely to see how he explains concepts, uses the whole stage to pace, answers questions, and expects the best from his students... to imitate in my teaching. Everything he does brings you into the lesson in an outstanding way . . . Thank you Dr. Smith for 2 great classes.”—HTS 2015, Fall 2017

“He is an exceptional lecturer at Tech. He knows history and sports forwards and backwards. And he is making significant contributions to the field. When we read his book "Blood Brothers," I Googled it to get more background on Muhammad Ali, and I was surprised to see that NPR, NY Times, and other BIG news places had interviewed

him!!”—HTS 2015, Fall 2017

“This class is one of the best classes I have taken at Georgia Tech. I left every lecture feeling curious about the subject in a way I hadn't before.”—HTS 2015, Fall 2018

“This is the second time I've taken Dr. Smith. He's still the best professor I've had at GT.”—HTS 2015, Fall 2018

“Thank you; I learned a lot from this course, and I will never forget your passion for this subject and for us to do well.”—HIST 2112, Fall 2018

“I came into Georgia Tech disliking history and after taking Professor Smith's class, I have gained an appreciation for US History in the Modern Era. This is something that I wish I found earlier, but I am glad that I finally found this appreciation after taking this course. I loved this class so much that I am contemplating taking Professor Smith's History of Sports course sometime during my career here at Georgia Tech.”—HIST 2112, Fall 2018

“I'm not always the most enthusiastic during a morning course, but Dr. Smith was always on his A game during the morning- even when he was sick. He came with the biggest enthusiasm for the material he was teaching which was truly infectious. It was a joy to take a class from him.”—HIST 2112, Fall 2018

“He was clearly prepared for every class and I appreciated his knowledge of the material. Dr. Smith was able to answer any and every question (happily) and provided any support necessary. He would even stop and reiterate concepts he knew were complicated or that he went through quickly.”—HIST 2112, Fall 2018

“Dr. Smith's greatest strength is his ability to explain the major concepts really well. He is really good at breaking down major concepts so that students can understand the concepts easily.”—HIST 2112, Fall 2018

Thank You Notes and Letters From Students

“I found myself going home for breaks and just talking to my parents about what I'd learned in history . . . My favorite lecture was the Gilded Age one where you ended with an explanation of how “the Wizard of Oz” is a story of the politics of the Gilded Age. I used to love that movie as a kid, then hearing this completely new insight on the topic blew my mind more than any other lecture I've ever had. I loved it! I just really wanted to thank you for the effort you put into the class, and I hope many other students are lucky enough to have you!”—TVN, HIST 2112, Spring 2014

“I just wanted to thank you for an awesome semester. I'm going to be completely honest - history was never my favorite subject in high school, and I was not sure what to expect out of a college history class. However, your class was definitely my favorite class that I took last semester. Your lectures are extremely interesting and engaging, and I looked

forward to your class every Tuesday and Thursday. (Whenever we did not have class, I was actually quite upset). Thank you so much for being so invested in the success of your students . . . Thank you so much for everything that you've done for us students. I am definitely going to miss you and your class next semester.”—MW, HIST 2112, Fall 2015

“I wanted to take the time to thank you for teaching history to me this semester. I took AP U.S. History in high school but did not enjoy the class at all. That completely changed once I took your class. Your enthusiasm and emphasis on details for topics really grabbed my attention and as a result I have a greater understanding of U.S. history . . . I hope to take your Sports History course sometime in the coming semesters.”—SB, HIST 2112, Fall 2018

Sample Nomination Letters From Students for the CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award (2015)

“Dr. Smith is a well-rounded professor as he is innovative and strives to be an excellent teacher. He is able to lead and instruct a large lecture hall and small seminar discussions.

Dr. Smith cares for us as students. He does not just wish for us to excel in our academics but also in our personal and professional lives. Students are aware of this as he engages with us in more relaxed conversations before and after class.

As he is a passionate and well-rounded professor, Dr. Smith is a positive influence to the Georgia Tech community. He is accessible to all students, which is highlighted in how he scheduled an appointment with me last week to discuss the thesis I wrote last semester. I am no longer in any of his classes but his desire to encourage learning continues.”—A.O., February 1, 2015

“As a student in three of Dr. Smith’s classes, including a special topics course, a survey history course, and a seminar in American sports history, I have had the privilege of experiencing his teaching abilities at every level in the undergraduate curriculum. He has gone above and beyond any professor I have had in his capacity to not only enrich my knowledge of American history, but also improve my skills in researching, analyzing, and writing.

Dr. Smith’s teaching abilities are not limited by class size. In my survey of American History, he kept students engaged and excited about learning. It is rare that a large lecture has high attendance throughout an entire semester, but Dr. Smith was able to make history fascinating for students of all majors. He connected with individual students even when there were 200 of us in one room. It was not an option to miss Dr. Smith’s class, not because of an attendance requirement, but because it would be a disservice to your education.”—A.A., February 1, 2015

An Unsolicited Letter from an Ivan Allen College Graduate Student Who Observed HTS 2015: History of Sports in America (April 23, 2013)

Dr. [Steve] Usselman and Dr. [John] Tone,

Today I dropped by Dr. Smith's History of Sports in America lecture class to take pictures to accompany the IAC story. I caught the tail end of class while students were deep in discussion about the social implications and motivations of the baseball movie '42.' I was blown away by how quick students were to comment, build upon or kindly critique their peers' statements, and how insightful their thoughts were. Dr. Smith has clearly created an open environment where in minutes students brought up racism, homophobia, and minority presence in sports with historical citations indicating retention of concepts learned in past classes. They seemed well-prepared for the future of conscientiousness and applied thought [for] careers even outside of sports studies . . .

Well done to you all at HTS for moving forward on such a relevant program, and excellent choice in Dr. Smith! We can never have too many faculty members with the skills to help students find their voices and become self-aware critical thinkers.

Rebecca

Rebecca Rolfe
GRA, Dean's Office
Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts

To: Geoffrey G. Eichholz Faculty Teaching Award Selection Committee
From: John L. Tone, Professor and Associate Dean
Subject: Letter of Support for Nominee Johnny Smith
Date: December 14, 2018

Greetings:

I am writing to support Johnny Smith's nomination for the Geoffrey G. Eichholz Faculty Teaching Award.

I had the pleasure of sitting in on a class taught by Johnny on September 4, 2018. The course was HTS 2015, History of Sports in America. The subject for the day was "Unforgivable Blackness: Jack Johnson and the Color Line." I will comment on how the course fits into the Georgia Tech curriculum and how effective Johnny is as an instructor based on his CIOS scores and my observations.

HTS 2015 is a critical part of the SST minor-degree. It is also aligned closely with the HTS curriculum and the spirit of the Ivan Allen College. By this I mean that, based on the syllabus for this course and on the one class I witnessed, the material being taught engages subjects embraced by people in the humanities and social sciences, subjects like social justice, race and ethnicity, and gender studies. This is also a class taken by a lot of students simply due to the stellar reputation of the instructor and the inherent importance of the subject matter for all students at Georgia Tech.

Johnny has taught this course four times under its present designation. His CIOS scores for effectiveness range from 4.9 to 5.0 in classes with robust enrollments between 73 and 99. In spring 2015 Johnny taught the course to 99 students, with 89 completing CIOS and giving him a 5.0 for effectiveness. This is remarkable.

In this particular class, Johnny started by asking a question related to material from the previous week on Irish-American heavyweight fighter John L. Sullivan. He asked "why is the heavyweight boxing title important for understanding the history of the United States?" Students eagerly answered and they understood that boxing can be a lens for examining such topics as class, ethnicity, race, masculinity, social Darwinism, and the ideology of white supremacy. These same themes also ran through the day's lecture and discussion about Jack Johnson.

Johnny spent some time developing the context in which Johnson operated. He discussed Plessy v. Ferguson and discussed several examples of Jim Crow legislation designed to prevent African-Americans from voting, using services, etc. He displayed a map developed at Tuskegee showing frequency and location of lynching over time. Johnny's teaching style is very effective. He has the good sense to interrupt his own presentation frequently to elicit responses, definitions, and other information from the students. It was only the beginning of the third week of class, but his students had clearly bought in to this style and participated as active learners.

The subject then moved to Johnson, the first black man to be crowned heavyweight champion. The law prevented him from fighting a white man, but he managed to pull off a fight with the white champ, Tommy Burns, in Sydney, Australia, in 1908. He destroyed Burns, and produced an immediate backlash in America. The "color line," which Johnny defined very carefully with the participation of the students, had been violated egregiously and white Americans wanted to reestablish it at any cost, looking for the "Great White Hope," who could teach the "uppity" Johnson a lesson. In 1910, a challenger was found, but Johnson destroyed him as well, in what was labeled the "Fight of the Century." Johnson took a huge purse, and became not just the champ again but a wealthy man. The victory produced jubilation among blacks, but their joy spawned race riots, in which white mobs attacked black people and murdered dozens. The riots of 1910 have been compared to those following upon the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Meanwhile, Johnson seemed to flaunt his success. In the ring, he fought with an unorthodox style, taunting his opponents and "getting in their heads." Outside of the ring he drove fast cars and spent wads of money. He liked to sleep with white women, an obvious taboo in racially segregated America. But Johnson was a complete and free man. Johnny discussed DuBois's notion that a black person in the early 1900s had to have two personalities: one in public that was deferential and crafted to avoid trouble, another in private, where one's true persona was expressed. What Johnson did was bring his private persona into the public sphere, challenging white folks and setting an example for black Americans.

White America responded by outlawing the transportation of films of fights across state lines in order to keep as many people as possible from seeing Johnson beat up a white man. The government even considered a federal law against all prize fighting, simply to get Johnson out of the ring. What they finally settled on was a bogus charge that Johnson had transported a white woman across state lines for immoral purposes. This was a violation of the 1910 Mann Act, designed to combat "white slavery." He was wrongly convicted in 1913, but fled the

United States rather than face a prison sentence. Du Bois blamed this unfair treatment on Johnson's "unforgiveable blackness." With Johnson out of the picture, boxing was "saved" for a while and returned to what it had been, a sport that glorified the white male body and reinforced the ideology of white supremacy in America, the message Johnson had turned on its head.

Johnny is an extraordinarily gifted teacher. The material was interesting and at times enthralling. His presentation was well planned and organized. Johnny doesn't assume pre-existing knowledge on the part of his students, but explains everything carefully and thoroughly and doesn't present more material than they can digest. I have no doubt that the students in that class left having learned a great deal. I know I did. Johnny respects his students, constantly asking them questions and getting them involved in learning. In turn, the students clearly respect Johnny. The room was absolutely engaged with the material. Now I know why Johnny gets CIOS scores of 5.0 even in large classes. He would make a fine selection to receive the Geoffrey G. Eichholz Faculty Teaching Award.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Lawrence Tone".

John Lawrence Tone
Professor of History, School of History and Sociology
Associate Dean, Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts

January 23, 2019

Dear Joyce Weinsheimer,

I, Hannah Joy Gebresilassie ('14), would like to support the nomination of Professor Johnny Smith for the Geoffrey G. Eichholz Faculty Teaching Award.

Let me start off by saying that any student who takes a course with Professor Smith is a lucky student. Professor Smith is a selfless, caring, dedicated and inspiring educator who uses his platform to empower students. I first met Professor Smith in 2012 at a panel discussion regarding the introduction of a brand new Georgia Tech program: Sports, Society and Technology. Unfortunately, I could not fit the classes into my schedule or budget, however, I still decided to attend the event to gain perspective. At the end of the discussion, Professor Smith took the stage and shared his passion for sports, history and educating students. Something urged me to approach him at the end of the program and take a long shot at asking a professor I had never met to conduct an independent study on sports journalism. He said YES, and the next semester I was working one on one with him in a class that became my all-time favorite and most rewarding class during my time at Tech. He challenged me in ways like never before. He provided me with honest and helpful feedback on all my writing samples and projects. Thanks to Professor Smith, I wrote my first 20-page research paper and truly developed a new perspective on the sports journalism industry. The course helped prepare me for future opportunities working for the Atlanta Falcons, Chicago Bears, Georgia Tech Athletics, Atlanta Dream, IMG College, Big Ten Network and other sports organizations.

Beyond getting to know Professor Smith as an enthusiastic educator in the 5 months of our independent study, I had the privilege of developing a mentor-mentee relationship with him. During my senior year at Georgia Tech, I faced several challenging moments in which I needed encouragement and support. Professor Smith welcomed me to his office with open arms and I could always count on him to give me a shoulder to lean on or words to lift my spirit. I found that every time I visited Professor Smith's office when I was struggling, I left with reignited fire and hunger to succeed. He constantly reminded me of my potential and why I should always believe in myself. We also kept in touch beyond our years at Georgia Tech. When I applied for graduate school at Northwestern University to pursue journalism, he was right by my side cheering me on. He encouraged me to reach for the stars, offered me helpful guidance and served as one of my references. With his support, I was admitted into the program and finished strong. I was selected to deliver the graduation speech and I recall Professor Smith

congratulating me and telling me how proud he was while tuning into the live stream of my speech. That really meant a lot. He continued to support me while I launched my career as a television reporter then an entrepreneur. To this day, Professor Smith and I get together every couple of months and we keep each other updated on what's going on in our worlds. I will forever cherish his genuine support.

Professor Smith displays excellence in his teaching and leadership on and off the campus of Georgia Tech. He is dedicated to seeing his students develop and thrive in whatever career path they follow. He generously invests his time in those around him. He constantly brings a new sense of innovation to his teaching style and I experienced it first hand as I was fortunate to complete a never-been-done independent study course at Georgia Tech. Professor Smith challenged me to achieve my greatest potential as a student at Georgia Tech and I carried that mentality into the "real world."

Professor Smith sets an outstanding example of how a professor can be an educator, mentor and friend. I strongly recommend him for the Geoffrey G. Eichholz Faculty Teaching Award, as I know he will continue to impact his students in the way he has inspired me.

Sincerely,
Hannah Joy Gebresilassie
Journalist | Media Personality
hannahjoytv.com

January 9, 2019

Nick Franco
Undergraduate Student, Georgia Institute of Technology
H. Milton Stewart School of Industrial & Systems Engineering

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of Dr. Johnny Smith's nomination for the Geoffrey G. Eichholz Faculty Teaching Award. Over the past 3 years, I have taken two courses with Dr. Smith (U.S. History, History of Sports in America), and can honestly say that both have helped develop and ultimately shape the way I see the world and history today. Throughout this time, I have also been able to interact with Dr. Smith outside the classroom, which has allowed me to witness, firsthand, the passion and inquisitiveness he brings to teaching and his own work, as well as his genuine interest in the lives and well-being of his students.

Through my experience at Georgia Tech, now in my 4th year, I have found the most impactful classes to be those in which professors employ techniques to maintain an actively engaged class and also take steps to ensure students understand the real-world impact of what they are learning. Dr. Smith does exactly that in his courses. Each of Dr. Smith's lectures focused on the facts, the societal landscape of the time, what came before to influence it, and what arose from it. Then, each of the midterms had a piece of literature to go along with the class material which served to provide background about iconic people of the time period, and build a deeper understanding of a society's thought process, which lead to specific events we remember in history. I firmly believe that taking Dr. Smith's courses has been most influential in shaping the way I interpret issues that arise in my lifetime. I learned to always ask another question and dig beneath to surface to understand why things are as they are.

As was aforementioned, Dr. Smith employs one of the more engaging teaching styles among professors at Tech, so much so that he makes sure that each student is actively taking notes in his class, and frequently takes time to understand students' thoughts on different topics. This was what drove me to seek to spend time with Dr. Smith outside of class. Over the last few years I have met with Dr. Smith simply to get his take on a topic in sports, a political event, or even controversial incident in society. I have long valued his feedback because of his knowledge and explanation of the facts, as well as his genuine interest in the interpretations of others.

Dr. Johnny Smith is a professor who embodies the motto of Georgia Tech through progress and service. The progress he provides the Georgia Tech student community is one of imparting not only knowledge, but skills and passion that have allowed numerous students, like me, discover a love for topics like the role of sports in race relations in the United States. On the service side, Dr. Smith is a professor who always keeps his door open for students, and concerns himself both with students' success in and outside the classroom. From the first time I walked into his office, he was interested in knowing more about my passions, my family, and how I was doing on a personal level. For the last 3 years, knowing that I have a professor who knows who I am, and cares about my success in the classroom, and growth as a person has been one of the highlights of my time at Tech.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have had Dr. Johnny Smith as a professor, and I believe, with complete conviction, that Dr. Johnny Smith is a perfect candidate for the Geoffrey G. Eichholz Faculty Teaching Award.

Sincerely,



Nick Franco

Johnny Smith Award Letter

Liberal arts students or those with liberal arts degrees are always trying to convince me of the importance of that field of study in contrast to my chosen field of engineering technology. They encourage me to broaden my view and consider a minor in the liberal arts field. In the past few years, there has been my mom who is an English teacher, my brother who has his master's in International Relations, and my high school AP Government teacher who tried to convince me that engineering may not be as important as I thought. History and politics never held my interest until I took U.S. History Since 1877 my freshman year with Professor Smith. For the first time in my life, a history teacher made me not only understand and care about those topics, he made them relevant, and I found myself becoming passionate about what we were learning in class; so passionate, in fact, that I took Dr. Smith's History of American Sports course in my sophomore year.

Professor Smith does not teach in any unorthodox way or try any flashy techniques. His go to is PowerPoint to which he lectures. Sometimes teachers bog down the PowerPoint with too many words, but Professor Smith usually shows one picture and then builds a whole story around it. He then proceeds to create a very intricate story book which draws students into not just the history—names, dates, places—but more importantly into intricate details. He tells the story behind the story. In fact, at the beginning of every semester he tells students that for every lesson they must be able to do three things: 1) Tell what happened 2) Tell why it happened 3) Tell why it is important. For example, often when teachers lecture on Civil Rights they begin with the same cast of topics/characters: Brown vs. the Board of Education to Rosa Parks to MLK. Instead, Professor Smith assigned *The Blood of Emmett Till*—a man none of us had heard of—which enlightened and even embarrassed us because it was such a big event that had energized the Civil Rights movement and helped to unify both black and white Americans in opposition to racial inequality.

Professor Smith always tells the students that he is available and to stop by his office. He would stay after class and just hang out with us and answer questions. He sends out notifications of different seminars or events at Tech or in Atlanta and encourages us to attend. For example, students could get extra credit for attending a seminar with an Olympic medalist who was also an equal rights activist. He wants our learning to be authentic and wants us to not just fill a seat and get a grade but also to understand the broader significance of an issue.

Because I was “woke” my media intake literally changed. I began to pay attention to racial issues in the country but especially how they were connected to sports. In History of American Sports, Professor Smith connected many of the power dynamics within sports to societal and political issues at concurrent times. I sympathize with Colin Kaepernick and his outspoken position because he recognizes the heritage and challenges an institution that benefits from a dichotomy between white sports owners who have ultimate control over athletes. This class made me recognize the importance of what athletes such as Kaepernick and LeBron James are doing because throughout history most Civil Rights activism or moments had direct connections to sports due to the value of the “black body” in American culture.

As you can tell, I'm getting fired up just reflecting on the class and what I now know. I was engaged, challenged, and supported by him as he acted as guide rather than a bestower of knowledge. Through these liberal arts classes, I broadened my perspective and feel a deeper commitment to the principles of this nation such as equality and standing in the trenches for my fellow man. Of all the classes I have taken so far, Dr. Smith's are the two that have made the most impact on me and his are the stories that continue to provoke and guide me.

Nick Franco
Georgia Institute of Technology
Industrial and Systems Engineering '19