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Cindy R. Lobel, 1970-2018: Historian of New York; AHA Member

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IN MEMORIAM

CINDY R. LOBEL (1970–2018)

Historian of New York; AHA Member

Megan J. Elias and Timothy Gilfoyle | Feb 11, 2019

The history community mourns the loss of Cindy R. Lobel, who died on October 2 at the age of 48. She was killed by an aggressive form of breast cancer, first diagnosed only a little over a year before her death. Lobel earned her BA from Tufts University in 1992 and her PhD from the Graduate Center, City University of New York, in 2002. She was associate professor of history at Lehman College, CUNY, where she primarily taught the history of New York City and state. She also taught at the CUNY Graduate Center in the master of arts in liberal studies program, where her lively seminar on New York studies was a popular course. Lobel's scholarship brought together urban history and food history in exciting new ways, and there is no doubt that she would have continued to contribute meaningfully to this intersection.



Her book *Urban Appetites: Food and Culture in Nineteenth-Century New York* (2014) displays a strong and forceful analytical voice. Lobel offers much new material on the growth and evolution of New York City into a metropolis, particularly with the interplay between urban growth and changing foodways. She convincingly demonstrates how this interplay shaped New York's 19th-century public culture in ways that are informative and of interest to all urban, social, and food historians. *Urban Appetites* received the 2013 Dixon Ryan Fox Manuscript Prize, awarded by the New York State Historical Association, and the 2014 Herbert H. Lehman Prize for Distinguished Scholarship, awarded by the New York Academy of History.

For historians of food in particular, *Urban Appetites* serves as an important model for how to take William Cronon’s focus on the connections between metropolis and hinterlands to the table and even to the tongue. Building on the work of commodity historians, Lobel made an important contribution by considering the history of food as physical experience. Her work integrated material about sensations—the coolness of ice cream, the heat of kitchens—into her chronicle of food chains and urban life.

Lobel was a contributor to *Savoring Gotham: A Food Lover’s Companion to New York City* (2015). Her articles appeared in the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*, *History Now*, *NYFoodstory*, *Journal of the Culinary Historians of New York*, *Winterthur Portfolio*, *Clio in the Classroom*, *Entertaining from Ancient Rome to the Super Bowl: An Encyclopedia*, *Common-Place*, *The Encyclopedia of New York State*, and *The Big Onion Guide to New York City*. At the time of her death, Lobel had two articles forthcoming: “Not So Mean Streets: Community and Activism in the Neighborhoods of Postwar New York,” in the *Journal of Urban History*, and “Food in the Nineteenth-Century American City,” in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of American Urban History*. She was a member of the American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic, and the American Studies Association. She also served as membership secretary of the Urban History Association.

Lobel’s careful attention to the details of how markets attract and redistribute goods helped her to construct narratives that convincingly connect past and present. She had lately turned her attention to considering the role of an individual in this dynamic as she planned a biography of the renowned 19th-century New York oyster purveyor Thomas Downing. She was also working on a project that used food history to reveal connections between North and South in the antebellum era. Her biography of Catherine Beecher for the *Lives of American Women* series is forthcoming. Lobel’s well-honed research skills and appreciation for narrative made her as talented an editor as she was a writer. Many a manuscript will be the worse for the loss of her rigorous critique.

Family and friends are establishing a scholarship fund in her memory at Lehman College.

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