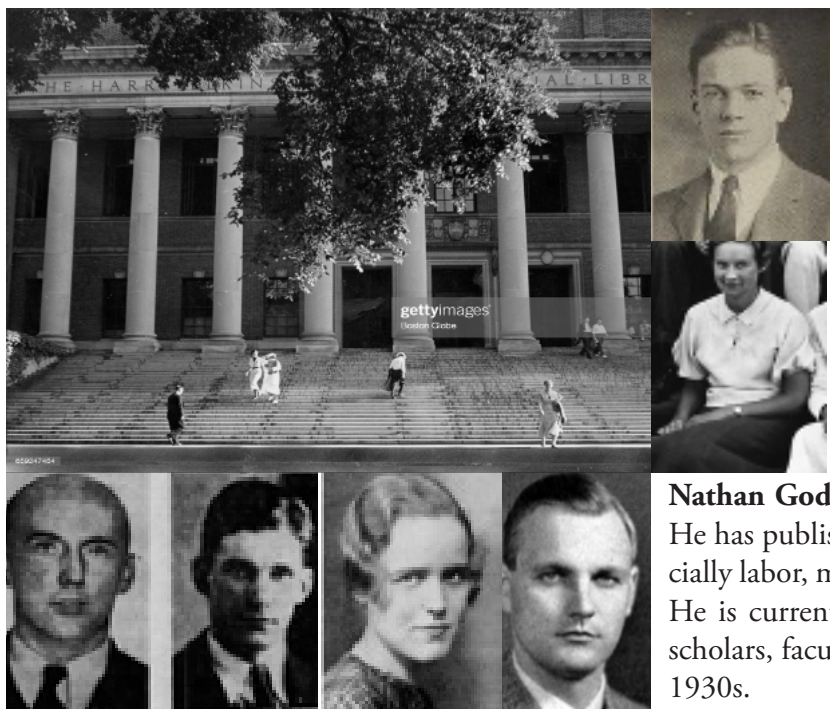


# “Radicals cannot be Scholars”: Scholar-Activists, Academic Freedom, and Harvard University, 1933–1939

Nathan Godfried (University of Maine)



**Monday, November 15  
(3:00–5:00 pm) via Zoom**



As the dual forces of economic depression and fascism threatened U.S. society during the 1930s, a debate raged about the value of social activism in the “ivory tower.” While giving lip service to the concept of academic freedom, administrators, trustees, and conservative faculty held firm to the “positivist” assumption that objective research and social advocacy were incompatible. Activists, on the other hand, urged scholars to become directly engaged in social justice issues. Nowhere was this debate more evident than at Harvard University. In 1937, officials dismissed two adjunct instructors who had been deeply involved in radical politics and activities on campus and in the broader community. This talk will situate the Harvard controversy within the context of scholar-activism during the interwar era, the contested concept of academic freedom, and the evolution of the corporatized university.

**Nathan Godfried** is professor of history at the University of Maine. He has published extensively on twentieth-century U.S. history, especially labor, mass media, foreign relations, and radical political history. He is currently writing a book on the relationship between activist scholars, faculty unions, and academic freedom during the 1920s and 1930s.

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