



History Newsletter

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Chair's Corner

— Teresa Meade
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The history department is happy to welcome two new colleagues this fall. Kenneth Aslakson who completed his Ph.D. at the University of Texas, Austin, has been teaching courses in African American history. He will be offering the junior seminar in the winter term on "Race, Class and the Constitution." He brings expertise as a lawyer, as well as a historian to his classes. Mazin Tadros has been teaching courses on early modern Europe, and will be offering two new classes in the winter on the history of the Ottoman Empire, and East-West relations in Early Modern Europe. Professor Tadros is finishing his Ph.D. at the University at Albany.

The arrival last year of Brian Peterson, a historian of Africa, and Peter Bedford, the new director of the Religious Studies program whose courses on Judaism, Christianity and Islam have cross-listed with history, add to Professor Berk's classes in Middle Eastern and Jewish history. With the addition of a wider variety of classes on Islam and the Middle East, the department moves to a strong position on campus in the exciting and crucially important fields of Islamic, Middle Eastern, and African history.

During the winter term, we will be inviting candidates to campus for a position in South Asia and the Indian sub-continent. For many years we have been anxious to add a historian who can offer classes and direct senior theses in the rapidly expanding field of Indian Ocean commerce, women and gender studies, and religious studies pertaining to this extremely important area of the world. History majors will be invited to hear talks, meet for

lunch, and interact with candidates for this position. We hope as many as possible will participate in this important part of the decision-making process, since student feedback is very helpful in making decisions.

Personally, along with chairing the department, teaching my classes, and surviving the college-search and application process with my daughter (12th grade), I find my days full enough to keep me out of trouble, but not so busy that I don't have time to talk to anyone about our history program. In the course of the past year I have toured a number of liberal arts colleges similar to Union College, and I have always come away aware that our history department ranks with the best. My colleagues cover a range of fields, offer a tremendous wealth of information, and have a deep commitment to the education of our students. Stop by any time

Public History at Union

— Melinda Lawson

The History Department is in the early stages of an exciting new initiative: the creation of a public history program. Our ventures in this area include a museum history course that the department teaches in collaboration with the anthropology department and, more recently, a public history mini-term to South Africa. This winter will be the second year that we offer HIST 278T: Public History in South Africa. From November 24th to December 15th, Professor Andy Morris will take 22 students to the University of Cape Town. This miniterm, which gives priority to history majors and earns a history credit, focuses on public history and the ways that museums, monuments and other facets of the public arena exhibit the history of a nation. Because of its recent

transition from apartheid to a democratic government, South Africa is a particularly good place to study the creation of public memory.

History hosts John Skotnes' talk on South African Museums

As part of this developing initiative in public history and memory studies, we are also bringing speakers to campus. In early October we hosted Professor John Skotnes, one of South Africa's leading goldsmiths and sculptors.



Professor Morris and Professor John Skotnes

Skotnes, an activist in the struggle against apartheid and for a new South Africa, has been closely involved in historical and artistic exhibits in South Africa, intervening most often at the point where politics and art meet. Professor Skotnes founded or contributed to a number of museums chronicling the history of apartheid South Africa.

Skotnes spoke to a range of students while on campus: he delivered a talk to the Entrepreneurship Club and met with Sandy Wimer's "Design Fundamentals" class and Brian Peterson's "Africa to 1800" class. Skotnes' campus visit culminated in a lecture, "Overcoming the Legacy of Apartheid: Public History and Museums in South Africa since 1994."

Sponsored by the History Department in conjunction with the Africana Studies program, the Anthropology and Visual Arts Departments, and UNITAS, the lecture focused on the founding and development of four South African museums: the Museum at Robben Island, the Apartheid Museum, the Gold Museum, and the District Six Museum. A founding member of the latter two museums, Skotnes described the process of creating community memory through public history. His description of the creation of the District Six museum, which memorializes the forced removal of 60,000 people under apartheid, spoke to the ways in which museums not only interpret history for the

general public but can also work with and empower communities.

In February we are bringing another major figure in public history to campus. Spencer Crew is the director of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio. Before assuming that position, Crew was the director of the Smithsonian Institute's National Museum of American History.(NMAH) While at NMAH, Crew curated a now permanent exhibit, "Field to Factory: African-American Migration, 1915-40." (Article by Professor Melinda Lawson)

Oh! The places we will go News from Recent Grads

Nora Maginn: I will be teaching English in China next year. noramaginn@gmail.com

Michael Kissane: I'll be attending the Union Graduate School going for my MAT in secondary education.

Gretchen Olney: I will be moving to Boston in the fall. olny516@gmail.com

Lyndsey Jacobs: I will be living in New York City attending Bank Street College of Education where I will be getting my masters in Early Childhood Education. Eventually I might teach history. lyndsey.k.jacobs@gmail.com

Sara Weiner: I will be working at ANKASA in NYC as the assistant to the vice president. sarabethweiner@gmail.com

Rebecca Winnick: rebecca.winnick@gmail.com

Colleen Donlan: donlan.colleen@gmail.com

Emily French: emilyp.french@gmail.com

Mary Berkery: mberker1@binghamton.edu

Megan Dreimiller: I am a first year Spanish teacher at Crown Point Central School District.

Faculty News

Andrew Feffer: I have a chapter that just came out in Lori Marso's new book *W Stands for Women: How the George W. Bush Presidency Shaped a New Politics of Gender* (Duke University Press, 2007). The chapter is titled "W's masculine pseudo-democracy: Brothers-in-arms, suicide bombers and the culture of life."

I spent the summer in the archives in Albany, Buffalo and New York City, during which time I collected enough material to start work on a book on philosophy and politics in mid-twentieth century United States. I am reading documents, organizing notes and writing while here in France on sabbatical. I plan to visit some archives in England and possibly Poland this fall as well.

Melinda Lawson: I am thoroughly enjoying teaching the First Year Precept this fall. I am also busy continuing my research for my new project, "Imagining Slavery: Representations of the Peculiar Institution in the Antebellum North." In November I will be heading to New York to the archives at Columbia University and the New York Historical Society. While I am there, I will attend a book launch party for *Contested Democracy: Freedom, Race, and Power in American History*, in which I have an article, "Making it Fit: The Federal Government, Liberal Individualism, and the American West." It should be a lot of fun, as I hope to see friends from graduate school while I am there.

Joyce Madancy: After finishing up a lively seminar on World War II in Asia this term, my winter will be consumed with teaching about consumption – in this case, the consumption of opium. I will be teaching a sophomore research seminar entitled "Opium East and West" in which students will explore the evolution of popular attitudes toward opium and opiates in the US, Great Britain, India, China, and Japan. How did a narcotic that many valued (and still value) as a miraculous painkiller come to be regarded as an evil scourge? We will look at memoirs, films, visual images, and secondary materials to try to understand global hostility toward drugs. I will also

be working on several articles related to this topic, and continuing to advise several senior theses with students researching topics in History and East Asian Studies.

Teresa Meade: I have been working on a book, *The Concise History of Latin America from Independence to the Present* (Wiley-Blackwell Publishers) which is finally nearing completion. I finished the bulk of the project over the summer and have been going over the many comments from the copyeditor. The process of re-writing, and answering (sometimes very sharp, even painful!) criticisms from readers and copyeditors is intrinsic not only to the scholarly work of students, but to professors as well. It is sometimes hard to accept the criticisms of outside readers, copyeditors, and publishers, but such feedback is crucial to the scholarly enterprise, and permeates our lives both as students and as teachers. (At least that's what I keep telling myself as I pore over hundreds of pages of "delete this," "provide evidence here," "check date," "awkward—rewrite!" etc., etc.) Hopefully the book will be out in time for me to pass it off as Christmas presents to my relatives in December, 2008.

I have a couple other projects in the works, including a book on "Disability and History" which I am co-editing with David Serlin from UC-San Diego for Duke University Press, and a collection of articles for a special issue of *Radical History Review* on "The Role of Visual Culture in War, Resistance and Revolution." For this project I am working with a New York-based artist originally from Belfast, Northern Ireland, and a professor of art history from Chicago, long associated with the Art Institute. This type of collaborative work is both new and exciting, but a little intimidating as well.

Andrew Morris: I spend the summer and early fall working on revisions to my book manuscript, *The Limits of Voluntarism: Charity and Welfare from the New Deal through the Great Society*, which is under contract with Cambridge University Press. If all goes well, the book will come out in the fall of 2008. I have also started work on a new project on disaster relief, starting with an investigation of how mental health services became

part of the standard response to natural disasters in the 1970s.

One of my fall classes this year was my American Environmental History class, which I taught for the second time. As in many of my

classes, I try to connect my teaching to local issues and resources. Thus, in this class, we were able to visit the

collection of Hudson River School paintings at the Albany Institute of

History and Art; to take an "environmental history of Schenectady" tour, led by yours truly; to explore the history of suburbanization in Clifton Park; and to have a discussion about the origins of the wilderness movement at the headquarters of the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks in nearby Niskayuna. I enjoy the opportunity to have students see these larger historical trends through resources right outside our campus.



Professor Morris's American Environmental History discusses the history of wilderness preservation with David Gibson, Executive Director of the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks

Brian Peterson: This fall, my second year at Union is off to a good start, re-teaching Africa to 1800, and advising what should be five excellent senior theses on a wide range of intriguing topics. I'll be introducing two new classes this year: French Empire and Comparing Muslim Societies. I look forward to the class-room debates that will transpire in both of them. This winter term, I'll be teaching Africa since 1800 for the second time at Union and the French Empire junior seminar. In terms of research this fall, an article, entitled, "History, Memory and the Legacy of Samori in Southern Mali, c. 1880-1898" has been accepted at the *Journal of African History*, pending revisions, and should appear in early 2008. I'll also be doing book revisions.

Steve Sargent: I spent the summer doing research on European entrepreneurship before the Industrial Revolution, a project that I hope will turn into a book. I located about eighty people who might qualify as entrepreneurs, although for some

of them the available evidence is a little thin. I'm hoping to winnow the list to about forty entrepreneurs this Fall and work on them intensively over the next nine months. Among the people I found was the Italian who started the first European postal system, the Englishman who published the first price lists for the London Stock Exchange, and the Hollander who conquered the Spice Islands for the Dutch East India Company. My research student, Alex Handin, did research on Nicholas Barbon, a land developer who helped rebuild London after the fire of 1666 and was the first person to sell fire insurance. My personal favorite, however, is Johann Gutenberg, the inventor of printing with moveable type.

Mark Walker: I will begin two new projects in 2008. My colleague Dieter Hoffmann and I have received a grant from the Fritz Thyssen Foundation to organize a conference in March in Göttingen, Germany on the topic of "Alien Scientists under Hitler"--that is, non-German scientists who worked for the National Socialist government, either in Germany or in occupied Europe. I will also be serving on the advisory board of a project on the history of nuclear research in Austria during the twentieth century.

Robert Wells: This fall term I am at Skidmore on a faculty exchange. I will be back at Union in the winter, teaching a Sophomore Seminar and my course on colonial society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Petition Courses

HST 333: Hollywood Film
T,Th 1:55 pm – 3:40 pm

HST 401A: Sem: French Empire
T,Th 10:55 am – 12:40 pm

HST 411A: Sem: Race & the Constitution
MW 3:05 pm – 4:40 pm

300 AND 400 LEVEL COURSES FOR 2007-2008 YEAR

Winter 08

- HST 311:** Frontiers
HST 333: Hollywood film
HST 401A: Sem: French Empire
HST 411A: Sem: Race & the Constitution

Spring 08

- HST 340: Modern Italy
 HST 334: Comparing Muslim Cultures
 HST 411B: Sem: Am. Socialist Tradition
 HST 431B: Sem: Nazis
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New Courses Winter 2008

HST 243: Ottoman Empire: (Winter; Tadros). This course is an intensive survey of Ottoman political and economic history – of an empire that grew from a small principality in the Byzantine and Seljuk marches, to a powerful force in global political and economic affairs. The course will cover Ottoman history from the Byzantine world and its contraction beginning with the rise of Islam, through pre-modern imperialism and conclude with the weakening of the Empire and its final demise between 1914 and 1923. How the Ottoman's were able to rule and maintain a heterogeneous population of Eastern European Christians (Slavs, Greeks, etc.), Anatolian Kurds and Turks, and Arab Christians, Muslims, and Jews, is the central question in our investigation.

MWF 9:15 am – 10:20 am

HST 343: Europe & Islam: (Winter; Tadros). This course will trace the dynamic relationship between “Europe” and the “Middle East” from the rise of Islam to the Enlightenment. Through philosophical works and travel accounts from the Mediterranean region, students will examine how European and Middle Eastern views of the “other” evolved over time, as the domination of the

Mediterranean shifted from East to West. The course will examine the assumptions of the “Clash of Civilizations” theory, illustrating that the complex relationships between West and East depended on the political and economic balance of power between these two regions. CDAA

MW 3:05 pm – 4:45 pm

HST 401A: Sem: French Empire (Winter, Peterson). This course examines the history of the French empire in West Africa, North Africa, and Southeast Asia. The aim of the course is to introduce students to the history of the wider francophone world. Three main phases in this long history are explored: colonialism, decolonization and immigration. The course moves chronologically through these phases exploring each in diverse geographical settings, and drawing on readings pertaining to particular themes such as: the culture of empire, political economy of colonialism, women and gender, literature and expressive culture, colonial violence, and resistance.

T,Th 10:55 am – 12:40 pm

HST 411A: Sem: Race & the Constitution (Winter; Aslakson). “‘We the People...’ it is a very eloquent beginning. But when the Constitution of the United States was completed on the seventeenth of September 1787, I was not included in the ‘We the People.’ I felt for many years that somehow George Washington and Alexander Hamilton just left me out by mistake. But through the process of Amendment, interpretation, and court decision, I have finally been included in ‘We the People.’” This quote of the late African-American congresswoman Barbara Jordan illustrates the purpose of this course: to examine the various debates over the meaning of the United States Constitution and the methods by which it has changed from 1787 to the present. WAC

MW 3:05 pm – 4:45 pm

Winter 2008 Course Offerings

UNITED STATES

HST 113: Origins of American Society

(Winter; Wells).

MWF 9:15 am – 10:20 am

HST 125/WGS 53: Coming Apart (Winter; Feffer).

T,Th 9:00 am – 10:45 am

HST 311: Frontiers (Winter; Foroughi).

CDLA/LCC, WAC

T,Th 9:00 am – 10:45 am

HST 333: Hollywood Film (Winter; Feffer).

T,Th 1:55 pm – 3:40 pm

HST 411A: Sem: Race & the Constitution

(Winter; Aslakson). See new course listing

MW 3:05 pm – 4:45 pm

EUROPE**HST 148: Between Two Wars** (Winter; Berk).

MWF 9:15 am - 10:20 am

HST 157: Modern Jewish History (Winter; Berk).

MWF 10:30 am – 11:35 am

HST 194: Modern Middle East (Winter; Berk).

MWF 1:50 pm – 2:55 pm

HST 203: Judaism/Christianity/Islam (Winter; Bedford)

MWF 11:45 am – 12:50 pm

HST 242: The Scientific Revolution (Winter; Sargent).

MWF 1:50 pm – 2:55 pm

HST 243: Ottoman Empire (Winter; Tadros).

See new course listing for details.

MWF 9:15 am – 10:20 am

new**HST 343: Europe and Islam** (Winter; Tadros).

See new course listing for details.

MW 3:05 pm – 4:45 pm

AFRICA**HST 108: Africa since 1800** (Winter; Peterson).

CDAA/LCC

T,Th 1:55 pm – 3:40 pm

new**HST 401A: Sem: French Empire** (Winter; Peterson). See new course listing for details. WAC

T,Th 10:55 am – 12:40

SPECIAL TOPICS**HST 490-493:** Independent Study (Fall, Winter, Spring)**HST 498-499:** Senior Project in History (Fall, Winter, Spring)Teresa Meade, Chair meadet@union.edu

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