

Oakland University

HISTORY DEPARTMENT

NEWSLETTER *Spring 2018*

DEPARTMENT HONOR ROLL

The Department of History has a well-established track record of success in winning the most coveted prizes awarded by Oakland University.

University Distinguished Professor

2007 Ronald Finucane

Research Excellence Award

1985 Charles Akers
1992 Richard Tucker
1998 Ronald Finucane
2007 Linda Benson
2017 Craig Martin

Teaching Excellence Award

1989 Carl Osthaus
1991 Anne Tripp
2001 Todd Estes

New Investigator Research Excellence Award

1996 Geoffrey Wawro
2008 Matthew Sutton
2011 Craig Martin

President's Colloquium Award

1999 Geoffrey Wawro
2001 Linda Benson
2003 Sean Farrell Moran
2006 Sara Chapman
2009 Todd Estes

College of Arts and Sciences Engagement Award

2013 Dan Clark

Marian P. Wilson Award

2017 Elizabeth Shesko

Outstanding Thesis Award for Graduate Students

2008 Jennifer Laam
2010 Ann Marie Wambeke

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR'S DESK

This is my final note in this space since my term as department chair ends in August after six years in the chair's office. Under the circumstances, I hope readers will permit me a more personal message than usually fills this column. As a historian of the early United States, I am tempted to follow the mode of departure of one of the historical figures I study, George Washington, upon his departure from a much higher office after two terms and issue my own Farewell Address as Washington did in 1796. In that famous message, Washington denounced the emergence of political parties and urged the nation to avoid permanent alliances with any foreign nation. I could paraphrase him and warn against factional politics in the department and entangling alliances with other units on campus—or some such thing. Or, alternatively, I could painstakingly document a long list of achievements and honors earned these past six years by the department and our talented scholars and teachers and students.

Instead, I think I will take a different tack and simply note that it has been an honor to serve the department as its chairperson these past six years. I appreciate the fact that my colleagues have elected me twice to

be their chair and that two different Deans appointed and then reappointed me to the position. I thank my colleagues for the hard work of so many hands in helping to keep the department running smoothly and efficiently: all the colleagues who pitched in to do the important if unsung committee work that keeps things moving; the various administrative offices across campus who make the chair's job easier; and most of all, Janet Chandler and Johanna McReynolds, our superb administrative professionals, who cheerfully and effectively kept the department office working to help students, assist faculty, and make my job as chair infinitely easier than it might have been otherwise with less capable assistance.

I am proud of the things we have been able to accomplish together as a department since 2012 and pleased to have served in this position of leadership. Being chair has not been without its challenges. But I am deeply grateful to have had the opportunity to serve my colleagues and the university. And I trust that I have fulfilled a great many of the goals and objectives that faculty members told me they wanted for our unit during the "listening tour" I conducted in the months before I took office, chatting and listening to colleagues talk about their hopes and aspirations for themselves and the department.

The only thing that George Washington wanted to do once he stepped down was to retire—finally—to his home at Mount Vernon. I don't have anything like a Mount Vernon to escape to, and I am still many years away from retirement. However, I do have the next best thing to an estate overlooking the Potomac River in my future: a well-earned sabbatical leave coming in the fall semester which, it seems to me, is pretty much the perfect way to transition from chairing the department to making a soft landing when I return, in 2019, back to the ranks of faculty. It has been a privilege to chair this department—and sometimes, even a pleasure. But even when it was not much fun, I remain grateful to all those who supported my leadership and helped me along the way in trying to make the history department a better place.

By: Todd Estes

14th YEAR OF HISTORY COMES ALIVE LECTURE SERIES DRAWS NEAR-RECORD CROWDS

The 14th season of the history department's acclaimed lecture series, "History Comes Alive," was another great success. With two lectures drawing nearly 200 patrons each and three talks attracting over 100 people, the total attendance at this year's six lectures was 722 people. On average, that worked out just over 120 per lecture.

The attendance for 2017-18 was slightly higher than last year's average of 115 per lecture, and just a tick below our record attendance year of 2015-16 when we averaged 122 people per talk. Our audience routinely includes Oakland students and alumni, faculty and administrators, classes from local high schools and community

colleges, and lots of community residents who come from all across the tri-county area to attend these presentations.

This series provides a great forum to showcase our outstanding history faculty. This year, as always, we drew on six colleagues who presented work drawn from their teaching or research and presented in an engaging, accessible, and crowd-pleasing manner. Each talk drew enthusiastic and interested questions from the audience and the question and answer period gave our lecturers a chance to expand on points they made and provided the audience with a forum for raising other, related issues as well.

Thanks are due to all the historians who participated this year (see the list of lectures below). A special thanks to Johanna McReynolds for all her behind the scenes work on publicity, signage, reservations, refreshments, and arrangements and to Janet Chandler for her valuable contributions to this project. The popularity of our series requires lots of work on logistics and supplies and Johanna and Janet do so much work to ensure that the programs run smoothly. And thanks also to all of our sponsors: the Knudsen Family Foundation, the office of the Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Provost, and the Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences for their support and encouragement of this program.

At each lecture without fail, patrons comment on how much they appreciate this series and how grateful they are to our department for sponsoring these talks for our history-minded public. Our audience looks to Oakland University and the history department specifically, to engage with them in these lectures. It is clear that this is a meaningful series and it is always nice to hear from our audience how much the lectures and the experience mean to them.

Here were the lectures presented in 2017-18:

De Witt Dykes, "The Underground Railroad: Legend vs. History", Tuesday, September 19, 2017

Dan Clark, "An Oral History Workshop", Wednesday, October 18, 2017

Erin Dwyer, "Poisoned Heart: Poison, Slavery and Intimacy in the Atlantic World, 1670-1861", Tuesday, November 14, 2017

Liz Shesko, "What Difference Did A Revolution Make? Military Service in Post-1952 Bolivia", Wednesday, January 17, 2018

Yan Li, "One World, One Alphabet? Foreign Influence and China's Script Reform in the Twentieth Century" Tuesday, February 13, 2018

Derek Hastings, "The Fatal Attraction of Nationalism: The Politics of Identity and Belonging in Modern Europe", Wednesday, March 21, 2018

DEPARTMENT TO GAIN TWO NAMED LECTURE SERIES THANKS TO DONORS

The Carter family, the children of our founding sponsors for the History Comes Alive series, has made a very generous endowment gift to name and support that lecture series in honor of their parents. This gift will allow the family to recognize their parents by naming the series in their honor. Once the endowment becomes fully funded, the series will become known officially as "The John W. Carter and Annette C. Carter History Comes Alive Lecture Series" and the department will draw on this endowment in perpetuity.

In a related development, the department will also be gaining a

second named lecture program. Our primary current sponsor of History Comes Alive, Judy Christie, on behalf of the Knudsen Family Foundation, has enthusiastically agreed to redirect her support to fund a separate additional lecture each spring which will be called "The Knudsen Family Foundation Lecture in History." This gift will enable us to bring in an outside guest lecturer to deliver a talk on campus. We have been able to do this sporadically in the past as in the case of Jonathan Phillips in 2016 and Matthew Sutton in 2017. Now, we can make this a regular event. The Knudsen Lecture will provide for a generous honorarium for the speaker in addition to travel and hotel expenses, printing and publicity costs, refreshments, and other incidental costs. The department will have the pleasant task of deciding which outstanding scholar to invite to campus each year to deliver the lecture.

We are deeply grateful to our sponsors for their strong support of the department. Their generosity will allow us to continue the practice of bringing history lectures to our public, delivered both by Oakland historians and by special guest lecturers as well. Not only will this be a treat for our audiences, it also speaks well of the department and our efforts at scholarly outreach and community engagement. These and other programs have become a visible and attractive opportunity for donors looking to support the work of the history department.

PHI ALPHA THETA CHAPTER HAS ANOTHER BANNER YEAR

Oakland's chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, the national history honor society, has just concluded another extremely successful and active year. Meeting weekly throughout the school year, the chapter members sponsored a number of guest lecturers and programs. Some of

these happenings included talks about the Detroit Uprising of 1967, modernization theory, and the recent controversies about the role of medieval history in white nationalist movements. Other programs debuted a new initiative, a recurring feature called "The Historian's Toolbox" that introduced students to four different methodologies: oral history, mapping, public history, and biography.

At their annual induction dinner in April, the chapter welcomed thirteen new inductees as members. Additionally, the chapter also hosted a department holiday dinner, raised funds for the induction dinner through a book sale, and collected several boxes of donations for the HOPE Shelter in Pontiac as part of a friendly competition with the Political Science honor society.

As usual, a highlight of the year was the participation of ten students who presented papers at the regional PAT conference held at Ferris State in March. Three Oakland students won best paper prizes claiming half of the six total prizes awarded for the whole conference. The award-winning students were Brian Quinn for "Nation of Volksgenossen: Ideology, 'Ordinary Germans,' and the Formation of the Volksgemeinschaft;" Gabrielle Schwartz for "The Silencing of Puerto Rican Women: The Viewpoint of Puerto Rican Medical Professionals on the 1956 Birth Control Pill Trials;" and Richard Williamson for "An Incompatible Policy?: Lincoln Gordon and the Alliance for Progress in Brazil."

2017-2018 PHI ALPHA THETA LIST OF INDUCTEES

Samantha Herdman, Emily Phipps, Ajaypal Gill, Nicolas Chretien, Sabrina Reinhard, Gabrielle Schwartz, Devon Conklin, Nicholas Holevar, Marissa Morey, Rosemary Bilan, Aaron Greb, Fred LeRoy Gibson III & Evan Marymee.

DEPARTMENT SELECTS NEXT CHAIRPERSON

James Naus, Associate Professor of Medieval European history, has been appointed to serve a three-year term as department chair beginning August 15, 2018. Dean Kevin Corcoran of the College of Arts and Sciences appointed Naus to the position in March after conferring with department members following their vote last November to recommend him for the position. Naus joined the department five years ago and he will be one of at least four new chairs in the College to take the reins next year in what will be a time of significant change. In addition to the transition in the history department, there will be new chairs in Political Science, Modern Languages, and Sociology/Anthropology.

ALUMNI INTERVIEW

In each newsletter we try to feature an interview with an Oakland history graduate who is doing interesting things since their time on campus. This year, it is a treat to catch up with **Nancy Lenoil**, who graduated from OU in the late 1970s, went on to graduate school, and is today the State Archivist for the State of California. She is the first woman to hold that position and she has some thoughtful comments to share on her days at Oakland, her career path, and her present work. Nancy's story shows just another of the many uses to which a history degree may be put.

Q: Tell us how you found Oakland University and why you chose to enroll here?

I knew of OU because I had two teachers, one in junior high school and one in high school, who were OU graduates. OU was appealing because I liked that it was a state university, but smaller, both in the size of the campus and the number of students. It was a better fit for me.

Also, it offered an opportunity to live away from home but be close to home at the same time.

Q: How did you become a history major? Why?

For as long as I can remember, I have always been interested in history. I'm interested in how people lived in the past, and particularly in the stories about the past that history tells us. My father had a great interest in history and I believe that he sparked my interest.

Q: What memories do you have of the department, its faculty, and the campus from your time here?

I have great memories of the department, its faculty and the campus. I liked that classes were small, and the faculty members knew the students by name. I always appreciated how supportive and approachable all the faculty members were. The faculty members and their classes were always interesting and challenging, even for those subjects that I did not have great affinity. I loved the campus. It was, and is, beautiful. I appreciated how easy it was to get involved in campus activities. My regret is not having taken advantage of the many opportunities to attend more of OU's outstanding theater, music and other similar offerings.

Q: Where did you go after graduating from OU?

I struggled with "what do I do with a history degree?" At the time, it seemed that the only choices were teaching, law, or becoming an historian. Teaching, or my concept of it at the time, K-12, didn't appeal to me. Much as I love history, research and studying history, I like variety rather than focusing on one subject area. So, I chose law school for a year. It wasn't for me. It was a valuable experience, however, as it gave me some great legal research skills that became valuable later when working as a reference archivist at the California State Archives. For example, the State

Archives gets many requests for state Appellate and Supreme Court cases and for records that can provide the history of state statutes.

I took a semester off to explore my options and OU or, an OU professor, helped me find my path. Professor John Barnard suggested that I talk with Professor Philip Mason, then the head of the Labor Archives at the Walter Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs at Wayne State and director of the Archival Administration Program. I met with Dr. Mason for about forty minutes. He told me about the program and what archivists do. I walked out of his office and realized that there was no decision. Becoming an archivist combined my interests in history, research, historic preservation, and would provide the variety that I like. I also discovered how fascinating that documents, photographs, maps, and other things that record history can be.

Q: You are now the State Archivist of the State of California--how did you rise to this position?

At the end of my graduate program at Wayne State, I was selected for a ten-month Fellowship for Advanced Training in Archives Management funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), a part of the National Archives. There were only three Fellowships in the country, and one was going to be at the California State Archives. I was selected for that Fellowship three months out of graduate school, even though it was intended for "mid-career" archivists. When the Fellowship ended, I was hired for a position as an archivist the State Archives. I rose through the ranks, working in different State Archives programs, working in (and later coordinating) the Reference Program. Assisting researchers was a favorite part of the job. In 2006, I was appointed by the California Secretary of State to be the State Archivist. (The State Archives is a

division of the Office of the Secretary of State and has been since the first law was enacted in California in 1850.) I have the distinction of being the first woman in state history to serve as State Archivist, a position created in 1889.

Q: What kinds of work does a State Archivist do? What is a typical day like for you?

Most of what I do is administrative. There is a lot of time spent working on planning for the State Archives and working on budgets and personnel matters. I also work on legislation, writing analyses of pending legislation that may have some impact on the State Archives, sometimes proposing new legislation. I do some outreach by leading tours of the State Archives or giving talks. I also periodically am the on-camera face of the State Archives when a television crew does a story about the State Archives or an archives event. While I do not process archival collections anymore, I do still take shifts at the Reference Desk a couple of times a month to keep up my research skills and to stay in touch with what is being requested by researchers. Where I once rejected the idea of teaching, one of my favorite things to do now is to teach workshops on various aspects of archives administration.

Q: Are there aspects of your study and time and Oakland that help you now and that you still use on a regular basis in your job?

I think that OU gave me a great foundation of research skills. While I was at OU and taking Professor Barnard's class on labor history, I had my first opportunity to do archival research (at the Labor Archives at Wayne State where I later studied and worked). At the time, it was unusual for an undergraduate student to do research there. But, it was that exposure to primary research and the research skills that I gained that I still use today. While the State Archives has a number of archivists,

and I could ask any of them to locate information in the State Archives for me, it is always a great pleasure when I can do my own research.

Q: You had the chance to visit Oakland last summer--what changes did you notice the most? How had the campus and the community changed since the time you were here? How did it seem to you?

It was an awesome experience to be back at OU and to share it with my husband and children. It was so special to show them around and share my many wonderful memories of OU. The most obvious change I noticed are the many new buildings, and I could barely recognize Oakland Center from what I remembered. I also noticed the great expansion in the OU programs and degrees.

Q: What words of advice would you give to someone who is thinking of a career in the archival world? How would they get started?

I would suggest someone start by visiting archives, talking to archivists, and learning what archivists do. To enter the profession, there are many programs across the U.S. and Canada offering graduate education in archives administration. Within colleges and universities, those programs often are in schools of information studies. A master's degree with specific coursework in archives administration is necessary. At the same time, I would urge someone to join professional archival organizations such as the Midwest Archives Conference or some other regional association or the Society of American Archivists. Making connections with other professionals is essential to continuing education and becoming known and involved in the profession. After completing a master's degree, I would encourage someone to become a Certified Archivist through the Academy of Certified Archivists. I became a Certified Archivist early in my

career and have found it to be useful. It is an exciting time to be entering the profession because it is really undergoing a transformation as the focus has shifted a lot, though not entirely, from paper records to digital records.

FACULTY UPDATES

De Witt S. Dykes, Jr. has been active as a speaker to a variety of audiences. He presented "The Underground Railroad: Legend vs. History" as part of the "History Comes Alive" Series at Oakland University in September and also to audiences at the Bloomfield Township Public Library in October and to the Bingham Woods Condominium in March.

He has also been a participant in panel discussions on a variety of topics:

"The 1967 Rebellion in Detroit," sponsored by Phi Alpha Theta; "Why Detroit Rebelled: The Intersection of Racism and Social Control in The City," at the Journal of Law in Society Symposium at Wayne State University Law School; "Slavery in Detroit Before 1830," at the Detroit Public Library's Main Branch; and "Muslims and Civil Rights," in the Oakland Center, sponsored by the Oakland University Center for Religious Understanding.

De Witt served as a member of the Advisory Board, Great Lakes Book Series, Wayne State University Press and, on campus, as Coordinator of the Urban Studies Concentration. He attended the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association in Washington, DC, in January; the Historical Society of Michigan's "Local History Conference," in Sterling Heights, Michigan, in March; and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Conference at Oakland University in April. He also authored a book chapter, "Race Relations in Detroit, 1860-1915," in Joel Stone, (Ed.) Detroit 1967, (Wayne State University Press, 2017). The book is a companion to the Detroit Historical Museum's exhibit on the 1967 civil

disturbance and was displayed at Kresge Library's Annual "Authors at Oakland" program in March.

In addition to finishing out his last year as department chair, **Todd Estes** was active on a variety of fronts. He presented an invited lecture on the ratification of the Constitution at Goucher College in Maryland, and he was an invited panelist for a program on early U.S. foreign policy at the University of Wisconsin. Closer to home, he delivered the annual Thomas Jefferson Lecture at a gathering of local private school teachers held at Detroit Country Day School. His book reviews were published in *The American Historical Review*, *The Journal of the Early Republic*, and *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. Todd also reviewed book manuscripts for the University of North Carolina Press and the University of Massachusetts Press as well as article manuscripts for *American Political Thought* and *The Journal of the Early Republic*. He directed a Liberty Fund, Inc. conference on "Markets, Banks, Panics, and Nineteenth-Century American Economy" and participated in other colloquia on topics ranging from Wordsworth and J.S. Mill to American Founder Roger Sherman. These conferences took him to St. Petersburg, Florida, Arlington, Virginia, Monterey, California, and Indianapolis. Finally, he presented work across a variety of media platforms including two webinars for high school teachers, a podcast for the Omohundro Institute's acclaimed "Doing History" series (on "Pauline Maier's American Revolution"), and he authored a textbook chapter on U.S. history from 1800-1828 for a forthcoming online Advanced Placement U.S. history textbook.

Yan Li had a fruitful year in 2017-18. Her first book, *China's Soviet Dream: Propaganda, Culture, and Popular Imagination*, was published with Routledge. The book explores the Chinese introduction of Soviet socialist culture in the first three decades of the People's Republic of

China. She welcomes anyone interested in Sino-Soviet relations, international socialism, modern China, cultural studies, and mass communication to read and comment on her book. Meanwhile, she has embarked on her second book project tentatively titled "*For Internal Use Only: Restricted Books in the People's Republic of China*," which is funded by a URC Faculty Research Fellowship and the University of Chicago's Center for East Asian Studies' Library Travel Grant. Professor Li has also been awarded a grant from the Office of International Education to develop a new China study abroad program. She looks forward to working on the new program this summer.

Don Matthews' article, "The Kennedy Administration and Arms Transfers to Ba'athist Iraq" is forthcoming in the journal *Diplomatic History*, and his review of Sherene Seikaly's *Men of Capital* appeared in *American Historical Review* in February. He is now integrating the research that he conducted last summer at the Lyndon Johnson Presidential Library and at the University of Arkansas into his current book project on the United States and Iraq in the 1960s.

The University of Pittsburgh Press recently sent out **Liz Shesko's** book manuscript, *Conscript Nation: Coercion and Consent in the Bolivian Barracks*, for peer review. Liz also presents papers at the annual meetings of the American Historical Association in Washington, D. C., and the European Social Science History Conference in Belfast, Northern Ireland. This academic year she became the undergraduate adviser for the department; in the position, she meets individually with students to help plan their careers at OU and beyond. Liz also organized majors meetings each semester to help students get to know the department and its requirements. Liz enjoyed advising OU's chapter of the Phi Alpha Theta history honors society

and accompanying students to the regional conference at Ferris State. She was also honored to be recognized for her service contributions at the annual Faculty Recognition Luncheon in April.

LIST OF GRADUATES

Congratulations to the following history students who earned degrees the past year:

History Bachelor of Arts degrees

Summer 2017: David James Fritch & William Karl Northey.

Fall 2017: Mara J Armstrong, Benjamin D Bird, Myles Keenan Harper, Patrick M Lloyd, Evan D Marymee, Brian Paul Murray, Wesley Polston, Caroline Frances Schaltz, Rose F. Walsh & Kenneth Glenn Zaetsch-Childers.

Fall 2017 STEP Majors:

Jordon Christopher Leto

Winter 2018: Mikayla Marie Benton, Bradon Blouse, Danielle Renee Bridges, Andrew A Cupolo, Griffin P. DiMaggio, Luke Caleb Dushaj, Alicia Nicole-Mansker Frank, James J Lenox, Anastacia Helen Maurer, Aaron David Randall, Max Ian Rohtbart, Ashley Linette Rotarius, Melissa L. Turonek, Valentina Diana Vushaj, Alex M. Walker, Timothy E. Walton

Winter 2018 STEP Majors:

Megan C. Joyce

FULL-TIME FACULTY 2017-18

Bekele, Getnet (PhD Michigan State 2004; assoc. prof.) Africa
bekele@oakland.edu

Chapman Williams, Sara E. (PhD, Georgetown 1997; assoc. prof.) Early Modern Europe, France
chapman@oakland.edu

Clark, Daniel J. (PhD, Duke 1989; assoc. prof.) US Labor

djclark@oakland.edu

Dwyer, Erin (PhD, Harvard University 2012; asst. prof.) 19th-Century U.S., African-American History, Civil War and Reconstruction
dwyer@oakland.edu

Dykes, De Witt S. (MA, Michigan 1961; assoc. prof.) African American, US Urban, Family and Gender
dykes@oakland.edu

Estes, Todd A. (PhD, Kentucky 1995; professor) Early National US, Revolutionary US, Political Culture
estes@oakland.edu

Hastings, Derek K. (PhD, Chicago 2003; assoc. prof.) Modern Germany
hastings@oakland.edu

Li, Yan (PhD, Northeastern University, 2012; asst. prof.) Modern China, Sino-Soviet Relations, East Asia
yanli@oakland.edu

Martin, Craig (PhD, Harvard, 2002; professor) Renaissance Europe, History of Science & Technology
martin@oakland.edu

Matthews, Weldon C. (PhD, Chicago 1998; assoc. prof.) Modern Middle East
matthews@oakland.edu

Miller, Karen A. J. (PhD, Columbia 1992; assoc. prof.) US 1877-present, Diplomatic, Political
kjmiller@oakland.edu

Milne, George E. (PhD, Oklahoma 2006; assoc. prof.) Early American and Native American History
milne@oakland.edu

Moran, Seán Farrell (PhD, American 1989; assoc. prof.) Modern Britain, Ireland, 19th- and 20th-century European Intellectual
moran@oakland.edu

Naus, James (PhD, St. Louis University 2011; assoc. prof.)
Medieval Europe History
naus@oakland.edu

Shesko, Elizabeth (PhD, Duke University 2012; asst. prof.) Latin American History, Race and Ethnicity
shesko@oakland.edu

PART-TIME FACULTY 2017-18

Greenspan, Ian (PhD, University of California (Berkeley) 2006; lect.)
Early Modern and Modern Europe.
greenspa@oakland.edu

Londo, William (PhD, Michigan 2004; lect.) East Asia, Japan, Religion & Society
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Miles, Mary Jo (MA, Detroit 1991 & Oakland 1992; lect.) US
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Powell, Jeffrey (PhD candidate, Wayne 2006; lect.) US
powell2@oakland.edu

Prentiss, Dale (PhD Stanford 1990; lect.) US
prentiss@oakland.edu

Shelly, Cara L. (MA, Michigan 1990; lect.) US
shelly@oakland.edu

Zellers, Bruce L. (MA, Clark 1978; lect.) US
zellers@oakland.edu

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If you have information about yourself to contribute to the next newsletter please send it to estes@oakland.edu. We especially love to have the latest news from our alumni.