



Historically Speaking

The Department of History Newsletter
A University Exemplary Department

Summer 2006
Volume 19

In This Issue:

- From the High Chair
- Faculty News
- Student News
- Alumni News
- Bertoti Conference Pictures



VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
AND STATE UNIVERSITY

From the High Chair

For those of you who graduated more than ten years ago, one of the biggest changes in the department since you left is how much bigger we've become. Not the faculty; that number has barely changed in the twenty-five years since I first came to Tech. What's grown has been the number of undergraduate majors, and what started as slow, steady growth has exploded in the past few years. When I first came to Tech, in the 1981-82 academic year, the department had about 100 majors, and at the first graduation I attended, in 1982, we graduated just 22 students. Today, we have some 600 majors, in May we graduated 102 students, and the next couple classes should be even larger.

In some ways this is a good thing. The quality of our students seems to have improved along with their number, and the number of honors students in the department has risen dramatically. More students also make it less likely, I think, that we'll be "restructured." Budget cuts are always a possibility at Virginia Tech, and smaller programs have been known to go from departments to concentrations (Religion) or to disappear entirely (Anthropology). And if Tech ever figures out a way to base funding on student numbers, we'll see a dramatic increase in our operating budget, which has barely changed since the early 1990s.

But the most visible signs of our recent growth are less obviously good for the department. Increased enrollment, for example, has made it much harder for students to get into history classes. For now, at least, we still have room for our majors, but fewer non-majors can enroll. Indeed, many of our



Daniel B. Thorp, Department Chair

classes are now open only to majors except during drop-ad. As result we have less intellectual diversity among the students in a particular class. I've always enjoyed having engineers or forestry majors in my classes because they often bring a very different perspective to the discussions. I miss that, but we have to be sure our own students can get the classes they need to graduate. As it is, though, they still might not get the classes they *want*. With more majors trying to take Arab-Israeli Conflict or History of England a growing number can't get in. They can usually get some other history course that meets the requirement for graduation, but that's small consolation to a major who really wanted to take a particular course. As demand has risen we have also increased the enrollment in some of our classes. If we go too far down that road, though, history majors will lose more and more opportunities to write or engage in serious discussion – the very things that distinguish our discipline from many others.

And all of this is without the university requirement that every student take American history in order to graduate! That requirement was suspended several years ago, but it's due to be re-evaluated next year. Stay tuned.



History Advisory Board
 L-R; Randolph Earnest, David Bertoti, Kathy Bertoti, McRae Banks, Deborah Young.
 Not pictured; Christian Henneke, Janine Hiller, Ken Noe, Ron Rordam, Phillip Shucet, Michael Snyder, and Wayne Tripp

★ Faculty in the News ★

Mark Barrow won a Certificate of Teaching Excellence and an Alumni Award for Teaching Excellence. The Alumni Award also led to his induction into Virginia Tech's Academy of Teaching Excellence.

Glenn Bugh's book, *The Cambridge Companion to the Hellenistic World*, was published this spring.

William C. Davis lectured before historical and alumni groups in Seattle, Kansas City, Savannah, Atlanta, Louisville, Sarasota, Williamsburg, Mary Washington University, Stratford Hall, Richmond, Arlington, and Virginia Tech. In addition, he served on the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission; filmed a one-hour documentary on railroads in the Civil War for PBS; published "Secret History of Confederate Diplomacy Abroad"; published in association with Dr. James I Robertson, Jr., *Virginia at War, 1861*; and hosted a 12-day steamboat trip on the Delta Queen from Pittsburgh to New Orleans on the theme of the early days of steamboating in the Ohio-Mississippi Valleys.

A. Roger Ekirch was featured in an article in *The New York Times* in February 2006 titled "Dreams Deferred." His recent book, *At Day's Close*, won this year's Sturm Award from

Virginia Tech's chapter of Phi Beta Kappa for "scholarship that contributes significantly to the advancement of liberal learning." *At Day's Close* has already appeared in Dutch and German and additional translations are forthcoming.

Tom Ewing's book, *Education in the Great Depression* (edited with David Hicks), was published this spring.

Heather Gumbert received her Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin. Her dissertation, *East German Television and the Unmaking of the Socialist Project, 1952-1965* examines the emergence of television service in the German Democratic Republic, and its role in reshaping the state's cultural nation-building project. One chapter, "Split Screens? Television in East Germany, 1952-1985," is forthcoming in *Mass Media, Culture and Society in Twentieth-Century Germany*.

Richard Hirsh was asked by the Office of the Vice President for Research to serve as a Faculty Administrative Fellow working with energy policy for the 2006-07 academic year.

Thomas Howard was invited to participate in the annual international conference of the Transatlantic Studies Association in Scotland in June 2006 where he chaired three panels and collaborated with colleagues on aspects of his current research project.

Kathleen Jones' book, *Taming the Troublesome Child*, was translated into Japanese.

Marian Mollin was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure this year. Her book, *Radical Pacifism in Modern American: Egalitarianism and Protest*, will be published in September by the University of Pennsylvania Press. She contributed two modules to the *Digital History Reader* project and received grants from the Curtis and Johnston Lucinian Funds for Virginia History to develop an oral history resource center for the Department of History and fund her current research project, "Battling Poverty, Building Dignity: New River Community Action's Forty Years of Leadership, Activism, and Community Uplift."

Amy Nelson's book, *Music for the Revolution*, received the 2005 Heldt Prize from the Association of Women in Slavic Studies.

William Ochsenwald reports a strong interest among undergraduate and graduate students in courses on the history of the Middle East. He presented a paper on religion in Saudi Arabia, “Wahhabism in the Hijaz, 1926-1939,” at a conference at Michigan State University, in April 2006, and received a Humanities Summer Stipend grant from Virginia Tech to conduct research on Saudi cultural history. He continues to make presentations to U.S. government agencies on the historical background of current issues. Ochsenwald is the editorial consultant for a series of six books on the modern Middle East, aimed at middle-school students, and expected to appear in print in 2006-2007.

Crandall (Randy) Shifflett spent a busy year at the University of Virginia as Interim Director of the Virginia Center for Digital History and teaching a course on Virginia history to 1865 and an undergraduate research seminar focusing on when slavery began in Virginia. During his “spare time” he organized Project NEMOS (new model scholarship), a collaborative project of scholars, digital archivists, and technology experts to produce a set of essays on seventeenth-century Jamestown in an Atlantic World context; received a South Atlantic Humanities Center fellowship to support a planning conference for Project NEMOS; and wrote an essay entitled “Seeing the Past: Visual History as New Model Scholarship.” He also gave lectures on Jamestown at the Roanoke Education Center for a Department of Education Teaching American History Award to the Center for Digital History, and led two-day seminars for other Department of Education Teaching American History awards in Southwest Virginia and Atlanta, Georgia.

Robert Stephens published an article in August’s edition of *The History Teacher* with one of our alumni, Josh Thumma (class of 2004), that focused on undergraduate-faculty collaboration on the Department’s *Digital History Reader*. In the spring semester, Robert gave public lectures at Susquehanna University and Roanoke College, organized and gave a paper at the European Social Sciences History Conference in Amsterdam, published a review of Arthur Daemmerich’s *Pharmacopolitics*, and received a Certificate of Teaching Excellence. Most of his year was spent finishing his new book *Germans on Drugs*, which will be published in January by the University of Michigan Press.

Thomas Watkins has written two lengthy articles on the Roman frontier in the late Republic and early Empire periods for the scholarly website “de Imperatoribus Romanis.” One,

which has been up for several months, was on the development of the frontier in the Danube valley. The other, which will appear in a couple of weeks is on the development of the frontier in North Africa.



Student News



The annual presentation of Undergraduate and Graduate Awards was held on March 31, 2006 at The Inn of Virginia Tech. Award winners were:

Rachel Martin – Phoenix Award

Adam Proctor – Curtis Award

John Cassara – History Prize

Peter Slonina – Patricia Gallagher Scholarship

James Gouger – James W. and Martha N. Banks Award

Laura Levi Alstaedter and Evan Noble – Graduate Student Exemplary Assistant Award

The Patricia Ann Gallagher Scholarship is the first endowed scholarship that the department has received. This scholarship recognizes an undergraduate history major whose scholarly record and application essay demonstrate the devotion to history that marked Patricia Ann Gallagher and was given by her daughter.

The 9th annual Brian Bertoti “Innovative Perspectives in History” Graduate Conference was held the weekend of March 31-April 1, 2006. There were sessions held in the areas of Military History, The Homefront, African-American History, Science and Technology, and European History. Papers were represented by graduate students from Virginia Tech, UNC-Greensboro, University of South Carolina, Winthrop University, Old Dominion University, University of Virginia, University of Pittsburgh, College of Charleston, and University of Tennessee. Awards were presented to the best papers. This conference continues to grow and be more successful each year. It is a unique opportunity for graduate students to practice the techniques of presenting papers at conferences.

Virginia Tech and the Department of History awarded Bachelor of Arts degrees to approximately 102 students on May 13, 2006. The valedictorian and speaker for the ceremony was Michael P. Grogan.

Pi Xi of Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society initiated 40 new members at the induction ceremonies in December and May. Congratulations to Micahael Bryant, Melissa Burgess, Miranda Canody, Erin Claussen, Jane Claterbos, Timothy Connolly, Elizabeth Dail, Suzanne Day, Anna DeSouza, Bridget Devlin, Mary Dibble, Jennifer Dorsey, Melinda Douros, Charles Evangelisti, Katelyn Gentile, Elizabeth Haberland, Kathleen Keenan, Desmond Kudji, Liza Jennelle, Christy Looney, Lindsey Loudermilk, Kelly Magathan, Mary O'Mara, Brian Peters, Karen Peterson, Peter Slonina, Kathryn Stanhagen, Stephen Waldron. New officers were elected for the 2006-07 term: Brian Peters, President, Suzanne Day, Vice President, Stephen Waldron, Secretary, Melinda Douros, Treasurer, and Desmond Kudji, Student Member of the Department Undergraduate Committee. Dr. Dean O'Donnell continues to serve as Advisor to this very active chapter.

Brian Peters, a member of Phi Alpha Theta, presented a paper at their state conference hosted by the Virginia Military Institute on March 25, 2006. The title of the paper was "Housing Segregation in Roanoke, Virginia."



History Award Winners

L-R: John Cassara, Rachel Martin, Evan Noble, James Gouger, Laura Alstaedter, and Adam Proctor



Alumni News



Jim Casada (M.A. '67) continues to utilize his background training as a "recovering professor" in his second career as a freelance writer. His most recent books include *Wild Fare and Wise Words* (Favorite Recipes Press), *The Remington Cookbook* (Live Oak Press), both co-authored with his wife, Ann, and *Beginner's Guide to Fly Fishing* (Barron's). He is currently completing two anthologies of the works of Archibald Rutledge and Horace Kephard, and a book on fly fishing in the Great Smokies. Jim's website is located at <http://www.jimcasadaoutdoors.com>.

George E. Rowand ('70) published a book, *Diary of a Dream: My Journey in Thoroughbred Racing*, which chronicles his 17-year career in horseracing.

Phillip Shucet ('72) wrote an op-ed piece for the *Virginian Pilot* in February 06 that was recommended reading by Governor Tim Kaine. The article was titled **'Do-Nothing' Roads Plan Is Most Expensive Of All.'** Phil explains in simple terms just how much it costs all of us to do nothing about our transportation problems. The article can be found at <http://news.movingvirginiaforward.com/news.jsp?key=2042>. Philip A. Shucet was the VDOT commissioner under former Virginia Governor Mark Warner. He now is president of Dragas Management Corp. in Virginia Beach.

Sherry Jean Willetts Eldred ('73) is presently teaching Advanced Placement US Government and Politics and American History Honors at Buchholz High School in Gainesville, Florida. She has been teaching for the 22 years. Sherry also sits on the state board of the Florida Council for the Social Studies and is involved with the legislative efforts of social studies teachers around the state. Since leaving Tech, she completed two more degrees, a M.Ed. in 1999 and an Ed.S. in 2001.

Brian R. Brown ('74) is a partner in the law firm of Parker Poe Adams & Berstein LLP in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Robert E. O'Harrow ('81) is a reporter for *The Washington Post* and an associate of the Center for Investigative Reporting. His new book, *No Place To Hide*, is about how the government is creating a national intelligence infrastructure with the help of private companies as part of homeland security.

Alumni News Continued...

Thomas D. Perry ('83) donated to Virginia Tech a teacher's guide for Laurel Hill, the birthplace of J.E.B. Stuart (P.O. Box 50, 4443 Ararat Hwy., Ararat, VA 24053).

Ross A. Weinstein ('83) is director of the newly formed business brokerage services department for Advantis Real Estate Co. for Hampton Roads and Richmond, Virginia.

Joey Showalter ('84) has been appointed circuit court judge for the 27th Judicial District which includes the Virginia counties of Bland, Grayson, Wythe and Radford.

Rick Dyson (M.A. '85) is the Information Services Librarian at Missouri Western State University. He has been busy writing articles for various publications over the last couple of years. Rick has already published: Dyson, Rick. "The Civil War on the Internet: A Selection of the Best Web Sources for Educators and Students." *Social Studies*; 2004, Vol. 95 Issue 5, p211-216; In the *Encyclopedia of Native Americans in Sport*. Ed. Richard C. King. Armonk : M.E Sharp, 2004 appear the following articles; Assimilation, Earl Woods, Gambling, Hoop and Pole and Ice Shiny. In addition he has numerous articles scheduled to appear in

Encyclopedia of Slave Resistance and Rebellions. Westport: Greenwood Publishing, 2006; Amistad Case, Haitian Revolution, Underground Railroad, and United States Colored Troops. and in the *Encyclopedia of North American Colonial Warfare to 1775*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006. Montcalm-Gozon de Saint Veran, Louis Joseph Marquis de, New England Confederation, Pequot, Smuggling, Spain and Spain-Army.

Robert Goetz (M.A. '88) received the Fondation Napoleon award for the best non-French Napoleonic book of the year for *1805: Austerlitz, Napoleon and the destruction of the Third Coalition*, London: Greenhill Books, 2005. As part of its mission to encourage research and public interest in the history of the two empires, every year a jury composed of some of the best First and Second Empire historians awards in the name of the Fondation Napoleon four Grands Prix. Bob and his wife, Helene, travelled to Paris, France to receive the prestigious award.

Sean C. Colbert-Lewis ('92) received a Ph.D. from the University of Virginia and is assistant professor in elementary

Please Help the Department Evaluate Itself

Every decade or so, the University engages in Outcomes Assessment – an attempt to measure the impact it has on students passing through its doors. As part of that process, the History Department has posted an on-line questionnaire and would like as many of our graduates as possible to respond to it. It will only take a few minutes and will help the department tremendously. We have few other ways of soliciting feedback from our graduates, but such feedback is critical to the state's understanding of what it is we do and how well we do it.

So please go to <https://survey.vt.edu/survey/entry.jsp?id=1132341816863> and take a few minutes to offer your assessment of the department and its program.

education and social studies at Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania.

Jeffrey D. Graveline ('95) joined Hand Arendall, L.L.C. in Birmingham, Alabama, as an associate.

Christopher M. Chown ('96) was selected to participate in the operational evaluation of the marine Corps' new UH-1Y and AH-1Z aircraft. Christopher resides in Oceanside, California.

Charlene Simmons ('97) recently completed her PhD in Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is now an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

Matthew Feret ('98) and family, Niki, Isabella and Lillian are pleased to announce the birth of their son/brother, Paul Nicholas. He was born on September 5, 2005.

Kathryn E. Muller ('01) received an M.D. from Jefferson Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Ellen Brown (M.A. '03), former director of the Radford Heritage Foundation and Glencoe Museum, in Radford, VA., has been appointed director of the Reynolds Homestead in Critz, VA. "This job will allow me to blend my scholarly interests – writing and historical research – with my enthusiasm for volunteerism, fund-raising, education, and community development," says Brown. "I am very happy to have a chance to be an administrator in a setting where the liberal arts can flourish.

Samuel Davies ('04) is presently an Account Executive for Apple Higher Education in Maryland, working out of Baltimore, MD.



Generosity begins at your academic home. . .

A gift to the History Department can be instrumental in supporting our undergraduate and graduate programs, particularly in these tight budget times. A modest contribution can fund student scholarships here and abroad, graduate student fellowships, and our exciting new program initiatives.

Please contact our chair, Daniel Thorp at wachau@vt.edu, when you submit information about your gift. With your permission, we will list the contributors under the following categories:

- Friends: Up to \$250
- Benefactors: Up to \$1,000
- Patrons: Up to \$5,000
- Philanthropists: Over \$5,000

If you are interested in contributing a larger gift, you should speak directly with Evan K. Bohnen, Director of Development for the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences (540-231-8734 or ebohnen@vt.edu)

★ 9th Annual Bertoti Conference ★



Graduate students at the awards reception



Dr. Larry Shumsky and Peter Slonina, winner of the Patricia Gallagher Scholarship



Department chair, Dan Thorp discusses history with Graduate students Jack Atkins and Leonard Lanier



A session at the Bertoti Conference
Presenter is Matthew Krogh

We Want To Hear From You!

Please send updates on your activities to jafranci@vt.edu or to the Department of History
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Our newsletter will continue to feature articles and notes about our History Department alumni/ alumae. We would appreciate information about what you have been doing since leaving Virginia Tech. Please send your name, degree, email, occupation and other related information to the Department of History, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0117.

The History Department



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