Greetings from the Department of History

My three-year term as department chair seemed to go by very quickly, but I am gratified that the department has reelected me to a second term of office. The Department of History continues to handle its many responsibilities collaboratively and effectively, even as the university copes with lower enrollments and shifting resources. Among the highlights this past year are career milestones reached by several of our faculty members. Jonathan Truitt was this year’s recipient of the College of Humanities and Social and Behavioral Sciences (CHSBS) Maroon Excellence in Teaching award, the second consecutive person from our department to win this award. Tara McCarthy, Jonathan Truitt, and Benjamin Weinstein all received tenure. Newly promoted are Professor Kathleen Donohue and Associate Professors Lane Demas and Greg Smith.

The department experienced a number of temporary additions and subtractions this year. Solomon Getahun was away on sabbatical for the entire year conducting research in Ethiopia. Doina Harsanyi spent a month during the spring semester as a Visiting Professor to the École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris. Tom Benjamin and John Robertson were on leave during the fall semester, while Jennifer Green was away during the spring. During Dr. Getahun's sabbatical, we were fortunate to have Lindsey Gish, a doctoral student from Michigan State University, cover some of his courses, while Jeff DuPont and Kevin Nehil stepped in on short notice for Drs. Robertson and Benjamin. One of our former MA students, Dr. Lemont Dobson, taught a course on the Vikings for us as a visiting scholar of the CHSBS. Four of our doctoral students studied abroad this year: Andrew Dietzel and Shannon Brown Kirkwood at Strathclyde University, Donna Sinclair at Friedrich Schiller University, and Wade Johnston at Erasmus University.

For the first time in three years, the CMU history department hired a tenure-track faculty member. Brittany Fremion, who arrived last year on a post-doctoral appointment, will be joining the department in the fall as our new assistant professor in environmental and public history. We are also pleased that, after serving this past year on an interim basis, Tim Hall has been appointed as the associate dean of the CHSBS. He will continue to teach one course per year, but his daily presence will be missed.

As part of a trip organized by the dean's office, Greg Smith, Ben Weinstein, and I spent time this spring evaluating some of our existing exchange programs in the Netherlands and Great Britain and investigating potential new partners. Our experiences were uniformly positive, and the department will be discussing how we might improve opportunities for both students and faculty in the coming year.

Several distinguished scholars spoke as guests of the history department this year. Among them were Patrice Gueniffey (École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris, France) who presented “Modern Hero: Bonaparte and the Culture of Heroism”; Ingrid Wuerth (Martin Luther Universität, Wittenberg, Germany) presented “Late Medieval Heresy in Central Germany—the Flagellants”; and Mark Carnes (Barnard College), whose presentation “Educational Play: What Plato, Rousseau, Dewey, Piaget and All the Rest Got Wrong” was part of last summer's Reacting to the Past Conference.
Faculty and Retired Faculty News and Publications

Thomas Benjamin conducted research in the U.S. National Archives in the summer of 2012 for his book project about how Mexicans killed and died in “Death and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920.”


Kathleen Donohue published an edited collection entitled Liberty and Justice for All?: Rethinking Politics in Cold War America in 2012. She also organized a conference entitled “From Watergate to Wikileaks” at the Heidelberg Center for American Studies in Germany and presented a paper on the press and the public’s right to know.

Carrie Euler’s article “Faculty Recruitment and Retention in the Early Modern Era: The Zürich Lectorium, c. 1560-1610” will be published in the journal Zwingliana this September.

Mitch Hall is working to complete a book manuscript entitled “The Emergence of Rock and Roll: Music and the Rise of American Youth Culture.” In April 2012 he visited the Netherlands, Scotland, and England to evaluate partner institutions for the Joint Ph.D. program.

Doina Harsanyi taught at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales, in Paris, France, in March and April 2013. Professor Harsanyi is conducting research on Napoleon in Parma, Italy.

Eric Johnson was interviewed in April 2013 by noted French documentary filmmakers William Karel and Blanche Finger and their production crew. His interview will be part of an eight-hour documentary television series to air in France on the subject of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz concentration camp. His article “Murder and Mass Murder in Pre-Modern Latin America”, written in collaboration with Pieter Spierenburg and Ricardo Salvatore, was published in the 2012 special issue of Historical Social Research.


Jay Martin contributed to “Sustainability and Public History,” a paper prepared for the National Council on Public History Board. He was awarded a contract for 2013 fieldwork creating a preliminary cultural resource study for Emmet County, Michigan and is collaborating with Professor Brittany Fremion on an oral history of Central Michigan University.

Tara McCarthy’s article “Woman Suffrage and Irish Nationalism: Ethnic Appeals and Alliances in America,” will be published in Women’s History Review in 2014. She presented “Woman Suffrage and Irish Nationalism” at the Historical Symposium in Memory of Lynn D. Gordon at the University of Rochester.

John Robertson’s momentum was briefly interrupted with a 2012 fall semester medical leave for double hip-replacement surgery. However, he climbed back into the saddle with two new academic contributions: “Social Structure and Mobility, Ancient Near East,” published in the new The Encyclopedia of Ancient History and “Leptis Magna,” in the World Book Encyclopedia. He is completing final revisions on his book, Iraq: A Short History, which will be published by OneWorld Publications. And this May, he proudly joined a delegation of CMU supporters in the audience as his wife, School of Music professor Nina Nash-Robertson, conducted the CMU concert choir in a performance at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

Retired Faculty News


Joint Ph.D. Program Fun Facts

1st Joint Ph.D. in History awarded to Wendy Gordon, August 1999

Dr. Gordon is currently professor and department chair at SUNY-Plattsburgh, Plattsburgh, New York.

10th Joint Ph.D. in History awarded to Frank J. Klackle, IV, December 2012

Dr. Klackle is an instructor of history at Dixie State College, St. George, Utah.

Thomas Benjamin and Mitchell Hall have each advised two graduating Ph.D. students. Professor Emeritus James Schmiechen leads all faculty. He advised four Ph.D. students.

cmich.edu, keyword:History
The 2013 International Graduate Historical Studies Conference (IGHS) has come and gone and by all accounts this one was another great success. On April 5 and 6, graduate students from around the nation and across the globe were in Mt. Pleasant to present their research and listen to comments from professors and advanced doctoral students.

Typical of the international flavor of the conference, whose theme was History without Borders, was the panel on “Women, Work and Family in a Transnational Perspective.” Chaired by CMU doctoral student Robert Borrelli, the panel brought together presenters from Hong Kong, Toronto and Indianapolis and a commenter from Michigan State University, newly minted PhD Jennifer Marlow. Like many of those in attendance, Marlow was struck by how much graduate students learn from the IGHS experience. “I think sometimes it is hard for grad students to make that transition from the mentality of being a student to being a professional academic,” she observed, “and this is one activity that makes students push themselves a little and to step out of that 'I'm just a student' comfort zone.”

Dr. David Armitage, of Harvard University, delivered this year’s keynote address. His talk, “History without Borders: The Transnational and the Transtemporal,” stressed the need for young scholars to undertake “the long view of history” while conducting research into transnational topics.

IGHS participants also had an opportunity to attend a two-hour roundtable on Reacting to the Past (RTTP), an innovative role-playing pedagogy, which originated at Barnard College and is now in use at colleges and universities around the country. Those at the roundtable session not only heard about the pedagogical strengths of the RTTP approach but also experienced an RTTP game as Adrian College professor Stephanie Jass, Eastern Michigan University professor Mark Higbee and CMU’s own Jon Truitt led participants through The Threshold of Democracy: Athens in 403 B.C.

The 2013 conference sadly marks the end of an era. What has been an extremely successful partnership between Conference Director Professor Kathleen Donohue and Conference Assistant Thomas Darragh will end as Darragh, who is graduating, moves on to begin life as a professional academic. He will leave the next Conference Assistant some very big shoes to fill.

2013 History Conference Awards

“President’s Award”
(best conference paper sponsored by the CMU President’s Office)

Athan Biss, University of Wisconsin-Madison
See For Yourself Sambo:
The Global Politics of African American Travel, 1900-1945

Best CMU Graduate Paper
(sponsored by the CMU Graduate School)

Jennifer Vannette, Central Michigan University
Beyond the Rhetoric of Pluralism:
The Jewish American Experience in the Early Cold War
Honorable Mention: Jonathan Klauke, Central Michigan University

Best Paper by a non-CMU Student
(sponsored by the CMU History Department)

Scott Brantner, California State University, Northridge
Posttraumatic Stress and the Roman Soldier: A Research Framework
Honorable Mention: Philip Gooding, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, UK

Best Paper in Transnational History
(sponsored by the CMU History Department)

Gregory Jones-Katz, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Between the Constance School of Reception Theory and the Yale School of Deconstruction: The Secret Pasts of Hans Robert Jauss and Paul de Man

“CMU’s Women and Gender Studies Program Award”
(best paper in Women’s history, history of sexuality or gender studies, sponsored by CMU’s Women and Gender Studies Program)

Andrea Christmas, Eastern Michigan University
Masculinity in the Nineteenth Century Paris Opéra Ballet: Ballet Criticism and the Construction of Bourgeois Masculine Identities

Best Undergraduate Paper
(sponsored by CMU Honors Program)

Brett Linsley, Central Michigan University
Fabricated Landscapes: European Perceptions of Landscape and the Shifting Contours of Land Alienation in British East Africa, 1895-1920
Honorable Mention: Andrew Shaw, Central Michigan University
Benjamin Daniel Alonso (BS 2011) is attending Thomas M. Cooley Law School in Grand Rapids. He states that majoring in history gave him a great foundation and preparation for pursuing his juris doctor degree.

Jeffrey Braisie (BSED 1970, MA 1976) is executive director for the Michigan Primary Care Consortium, a statewide, non-profit corporation leading Michigan's transformation efforts to assure a sustainable, quality, and accessible primary care system.

Dr. Laura Dull (BS 1993) was one of 60 historians chosen nationally to participate in the American Historical Association's Tuning Project, a nationwide, faculty-led project to articulate the disciplinary core of historical study and to define what a student should understand and be able to do at the completion of a history degree program. Laura was also the recipient of the Community Colleges Humanities Association Bridging Cultures grant to help globalize the western civilization survey courses at Delta College, where she is an Associate Professor and History Discipline Coordinator.

Captain Ben Feril (BSED 1980) has enrolled in the Master of Arts in Theology program at St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore, MD.

Dan Forbes (MA 2007) teaches American History by the Decade--beginning with the 20th Century, then proceeding to the 19th, 18th, etc.--for high school students at Calvary Baptist Academy, Midland, MI. In July 2010, Dan taught Western Civilization (in English) at Sichuan University Foreign Language Institute in Chengdu, China.

Kari Ann Green (BS 2010) graduated with a Master's of Education in Library Sciences in 2012 from Ashford University, Clinton, Iowa, where she was inducted into the Golden Key International Honor Society.

Becky Haase (BSED 2001) is in her 12th year of teaching and is presently teaching U. S. History and World Cultures at Northview Middle School in Ankeny, Iowa.

Carol Wright Hess (BSED 1971) has traveled extensively since graduation. In 1998, Carol received a MAEd from St. Leo University, Florida. She currently teaches 7th grade civics and can't see herself retiring, as Carol loves what she does.

Renee L. Hickey-Niezgoda (BS 1977) has practiced law for 31 years and is the longest practicing female attorney in Isabella County, MI.

Robert Hill (BSED 1993) has just completed his 19th year of teaching and 18th year as a baseball official for the MHSAA. He currently teaches in Mt. Morris, MI.

Donald R. Robison (BSED 1967) retired in 2010 following a 42 year career teaching the subjects of history, German, and Spanish. Donald spent the last 20 years of his career at Marquette Senior High School and as an adjunct instructor in the Northern Michigan University Modern Languages and Literature Department. Before that Donald taught at North Farmington (MI) High School, Frankfurt (Germany) American Junior High, and Rosemont (MN) High School.

John T. Smith (BSED 1970) retired after a career in banking at First Federal of Michigan, now known as Charter One Bank, and at Independent Bank. John's wife, Valerie E. (Porter) Smith (BSED 1970), retired after a career in teaching at the Royal Oak Public Schools. The Smith's have two children, one grandchild, and another on the way. John enjoys golf and both enjoy camping in their travel trailer, which they live in during the winter months in Arizona.

Gary J. Stodelle (BSED 1975) retired in 2009. His last job was as a personal assistant in Illinois. Gary also worked in social services, was a chef, and taught school. He enjoys worship leading, singing special music, and reading medieval and ancient Christian fiction.

Ron Van Dette (BSED 1964) was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Adjutant General Corps of the United States Army after graduation and served 2 years of active duty at the Presidio of San Francisco; HQ XV Corps as an Administrative Officer. After active duty, he returned to Bay City, MI, working first as a substitute teacher and social worker before beginning a 34 year career in information technology. Now retired, Ron is president and hiking guide for the Contra Costa Hills Club, El Cerrito, CA. He and his wife have been married 40 years.

Michael J. Wall (BSED 1972) moved back to Michigan in 2008 to be president of the Sparrow Health System Foundation and semi-retired in October of 2010. Since then he has been consulting with non-profits about their fund raising programs. Mike has served on the Victor Township Board, Clinton County, MI. He and his wife, Elaine (Savery) Wall, (BS 1972) reside at Lake Victoria and have been renovating their dream home.

Thomas S. Wilbur (BS 2010) is congressional press aide for the Energy and Commerce Committee chaired by Representative Fred Upton of Michigan's 6th district.
Student News


Wade Johnston studied abroad this year at Erasmus University in Rotterdam under the supervision of Dr. Robert von Friedeburg. For the culmination of his study, he is writing a thesis entitled, “These Adiaphoristic Devils: Matthias Flacius Illyricus in Statu Confessionis, 1548-1552”, that examines the theological disputes and Adiaphoristic Controversy that developed after Martin Luther’s death and the defeat of the Schmalkaldic League.

Jonathan Klauke is writing his Ph.D. dissertation “Sharing the Heavens: A Systematic Study of Medieval Scientific Translation and Cross-Cultural Interaction, 750-1650.” He will present papers at the Eleventh Biennial History of Astronomy Workshop at the University of Notre Dame in June and at the Society for the Medieval Mediterranean Conference at the University of Cambridge in July.

Dallas Michelbacher is writing his Ph.D. dissertation on forced labor during the Holocaust in Romania. He published “The Economic Impacts of the Deportation of the Jews from Cernauti,” in Studia Historica Gedanensia. He presented papers at the Central Slavic Conference in St. Louis, Missouri and the Romanian Studies Conference in Bloomington, Indiana.

Dale Moler is writing his dissertation on American and British television discourses to explain television’s relationship to social and cultural changes in the immediate postwar era. He presented papers at the Southwest Popular Cultural Association and the American Culture Association’s Annual Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico and the History Center of Traverse City, Michigan.


Donna Sinclair found her year at Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, Jena, Germany to be priceless. Her time in Jena cemented her academic interests and provided invaluable access to scholars and archives. Donna feels the year expanded her perception of the universality and interconnectedness of people while adding an invaluable depth to her respect for cultural differences and forging personal and professional relationships that will last a lifetime.

2013 Scholarship Recipients

Duane Bouliw Scholarship
Brittany Hild

Howard Evans Study Abroad Scholarship
Rachel Groters

Thavenet History Department Study Abroad Award
Ben Harris

2012 CHSBS Student Paper Competition Recipients

Undergraduate Award Winner
Hannah Faleer
“Erin Go Bragh”: The Alienating Effects of the Civil War on Irish Immigrant Communities in America
Sponsor: Catherine Tobin

Graduate Award Winner
Jonathan Klauke
A Linguistic Analysis of Identity in Cross-Cultural Scientific Translation: A Comparison of Medieval Islam and Tudor England
Sponsor: David Rutherford

Fulbright Scholarship

Master of Arts student Kevin Hall was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to teach English in a German high school. He will also continue his research on his master’s thesis. Hall graduated from CMU in 2012 with a double major in history and German. He has completed three internships in Germany and is fluent in the language. Professor Eric Johnson stated that “there have only been about five people in the university’s history who have been awarded this scholarship. It’s a big deal.”

Hall noted that his goal is to become a professor of modern German history, an archivist, or to work in international relations between Germany and the United States.

National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship

Joint Ph.D. student Robert Borrelli has been selected as a fellow to attend the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Summer Institute during the summer of 2013 entitled “African-American History & Culture in the Georgia Lowcountry: Savannah and the Coastal Islands.” Bob is one of twenty-five scholars selected to participate in an intensive collaborative study of African-American history, life and culture in Georgia’s Lowcountry and the larger Atlantic world. He is the first CMU graduate student to be invited to an NEH Summer Institute.

Borrelli is researching and writing his doctoral dissertation, “Slaves to the Marketplace,” on how the slaves’ economy was formally and informally connected to the developing consumer market and how this relationship affected slave culture and slave notions of freedom.
Giving Something Back

While a student, did you benefit from department scholarships, assistantships, work-study appointments, or simply enjoyed good teaching, advising, and the fellowship of favorite teachers? If so, you may welcome the opportunity to give something back so that future students can enjoy similar benefits. Here are some opportunities to participate:

**George M. Blackburn Endowment**
Endowment income funds an annual lecture on the American Civil War and Reconstruction in honor of George Blackburn, a greatly admired teacher and scholar during his thirty years as a member of CMU's history faculty.

**William T. Bulger Endowment**
This endowment funds a lecture series in the field of American Biography in honor of William T. Bulger, who served the CMU history department for thirty-five years.

**Howard Evans Study Abroad Scholarship**
This endowment supports a junior or senior student studying abroad with a minimum GPA of 3.0. It honors former history professor Howard Evans.

**J. D. Smith Award**
The cash award recognizes one of the department's outstanding graduate students. It is named for our former colleague, Dr. J. D. Smith.

**Dennis Thavenet Study Abroad Awards**
The department, especially Professor Emeritus Dennis Thavenet, has been very active in fostering study abroad. If you enjoyed an overseas experience, your contribution can help the next generation to share similar benefits by contributing to one of these two awards.

**Mae Teeter and Duane Bouliew Scholarships**
These cash awards are given to outstanding undergraduate history students. Each award requires a GPA of 3.25 or higher and letters of recommendation. The Teeter scholarship requires the composition of an outstanding essay in a CMU history seminar.

**Gabriel Chien Memorial Fund Essay Prize**
This fund was created to honor the memory of former CMU history professor Gabriel Chien. The $1,000 scholarship is awarded for a written essay that focuses on an aspect of Chinese culture, Sino-American relations, or a comparative study of China.

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Enclosed is my(our) gift of

___$25  ___$50  ___$75  ___$100  _______Other

This gift is for:
___ History Department Development Fund
___ Joint MA/PhD Program Development
___ George M. Blackburn Endowment
___ Duane Bouliew History Prize
___ William T Bulger Endowment
___ Gabriel Chien Memorial Award
___ Howard Evans Study Abroad Scholarship
___ Mae Teeter History Prize
___ Dennis Thavenet Study Abroad Scholarship
___ J.D. Smith Graduate Student Award
___ Other ____________________________

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Account # ________________________ Expiration Date ____________

Signature __________________________

Many employers match an employee's gift. Please check with your personnel office for information on requesting matching funds. When making your gift, complete a matching gift form from your personnel office and return it with your gift to CMU.
Maroon Excellence in Teaching Award

Dr. Jonathan Truitt, assistant professor of Colonial Latin America and World History to 1500, received the 2013 Maroon Excellence in Teaching Award. Dr. Truitt has also been instrumental in introducing the Reacting to the Past pedagogy to the History Department and CMU as a whole. Excellence in Teaching recipients are selected by the College of Humanities and Social and Behavioral Sciences Excellence in Teaching Committee. The annual award recognizes faculty members who go above and beyond what is expected in creating exceptional learning opportunities for our students. The Maroon Award is presented annually to a tenure-track faculty member from the College of Humanities and Social and Behavioral Sciences. This is the second consecutive year that a faculty member from the Department of History has won the award.

Professor Timothy Hall

named Associate Dean for the College of Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

History Department member and former department chair Timothy Hall has been named Associate Dean for the College of Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences. Tim served as assistant to the dean for the 2011-2012 academic year and has been interim associate dean in 2012-2013. In addition to serving six years as department chair, Tim has served as graduate coordinator and has been instrumental in developing pedagogy for history teachers. The department wishes Tim well in his new academic position. Dr. Hall will not be leaving the department entirely as he will be teaching HST 511 - Colonial British America this fall.

Reacting to the Past Game Development Conference

In July of 2012 Central Michigan University, the College of Humanities and Social and Behavioral Sciences, the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, the Faculty Center for Innovative Teaching, and the Department of History hosted the first annual Reacting to the Past Game Development conference. Reacting to the Past (RTTP) consists of elaborate games, set in the past, in which students are assigned roles informed by classic texts in the history of ideas. Class sessions are run entirely by students; instructors advise and guide students and grade their oral and written work. RTTP seeks to draw students into the past, promote engagement with big ideas, and improve intellectual and academic skills. RTTP has been in use at CMU since 2009.

CMU’s Reacting to the Past Game Development Conference had twenty-three different presenters from universities across the United States (including two from Hawai’i) and one from Sophia University in Tokyo, Japan. Each morning attendees played a prototype game to see how it worked and to help provide critical feedback on improving it for classroom use. The afternoons were focused on discussions surrounding completely new game ideas. The success of the conference was such that numbers are up for the second annual conference in July at CMU. For more information on RTTP at CMU see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcyI9tvUCHg.
To keep in touch with you, as well as to enable the Department of History to better advise its students and serve their career counseling needs, we ask you to complete the following survey.

Send completed survey to:
Department of History
Powers 106
Central Michigan University
Mount Pleasant, MI 48859

or email survey information to: jorda1rr@cmich.edu

Name _____________________________________________________________________________ Degree ____________
Street _____________________________________________________________________________
City, State, Zip _____________________________________________________________________ Year of Graduation ____________

News for next Department of History Newsletter
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Alumni Survey 2013