



**COLLEGE OF
LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES**

Department of History

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Dear Friends of the UI History Department:

As we approach the end of the spring semester, I'd like to take a few minutes to send an update on Departmental happenings – and to thank you once again for your support.

We were thrilled to be able to hire several new faculty members in collaboration with other units this year. Ashley Howard and Simon Balto are both finishing up books on the African American Midwest in the 20th century: Prof Howard on 1960s urban rebellions in the Midwest, and Prof. Balto on policing in Chicago. Both have a lively media presence, contributing to such outlets as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *TIME* magazine; both will be jointly appointed with African American Studies. Alberto Ortiz Diaz specializes in health, healing, and spirituality in the Caribbean. Prof. Diaz will be jointly appointed in History and Global Health Studies, deepening our relationship with one of Iowa's fastest-growing majors. Dr. Ari Ariel, who specializes in the history of the Middle East and the history of food, has taught well-received classes on such themes as the Israel-Palestine conflict as well as the Introduction to International Studies. He'll join our permanent teaching staff as a lecturer, where he'll contribute immensely to our program in world history. On a more bittersweet note, we mark the retirement of Stephen Vlastos, who taught Japanese history to generations of Iowa students. Former students came from three continents to honor him at a day-long symposium this spring. We also bid farewell to Jen Sessions, historian of France, who has resigned to take a position at the University of Virginia.

Our undergraduate program flourished this year. The History major is growing: we've had to add new sections of the "Introduction to the History Major" to accommodate demand. Twelve students completed honors theses, with a new cohort set to go for 2018-19. Many students took up internships at sites including the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, the Lincoln Presidential Library, the Old Capitol Museum, and the Johnson County Historical Society. Even in "ordinary" classes, history students shined, for example tapping brand new collections at the Iowa Women's Archives to produce digital exhibits on refugees and survivors from Nazi Germany who found their way to Iowa.

Students in our graduate program continue to make their mark. Several won Fulbright, Mellon, and other fellowships to conduct their dissertation research. Others are digging into public history projects such as *Iowa Native Spaces*, a collaboration with the Meskwaki and Iowa tribal nations. One intrepid group of grad students is organizing the Midwest Labor and Working Class History Colloquium, which will be held in Iowa City later this month. Students completing PhDs in the last year have won postdocs at institutions such as the University of Alabama and the University of Erfurt (Germany); one will take up a teaching position this fall at Harvard University.

In addition to their scholarly work and their activity in the classroom, our faculty continue to make an impact on campus and in the larger public. Our new *Rapid Response History* lecture series brings historical perspective to issues in the news. Thanks to our collaboration with the Iowa City Public Library, we are able to make the series available to a larger public via ICPL's video and youtube channels. Here are just a few examples of individual faculty who are making a difference:

- **Doug Baynton** is advisor and commentator on the upcoming documentary film, *Becoming Helen Keller*, part of the PBS American Masters series. Doug has long been a national figure in Disability Studies, for example via his work on the award-winning documentary *Through Deaf Eyes*. This year, he won the award for Distinguished Achievement in Publicly Engaged Research, presented by the Vice President for Research.
- **Jim Giblin**, who specializes in African history, has had a truly international impact. His Ph.D. students are now training the next generation of Africanists not only in the United States but also in many locations in Africa. The Graduate College recognized him this year with its award for Outstanding Graduate Faculty Mentor.
- **Leslie Schwalm** collaborated with UI's ArtShare program to develop a play based on her research. *Cross-Examined* focuses on two African American mothers in Keokuk, Iowa, who brought a successful suit in 1875 to integrate Iowa's

schools. The play has been performed in schools and community groups across the state. This fall, Leslie will begin a term as Departmental Executive Officer of Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies.

- **Jacki Rand** remains committed to public history and the history of indigenous people. She's working with a team funded by the Mellon Foundation to study the shifting environmental, political, economic, and racial climates that define the Mississippi River's course, meanings, and relation to Native peoples.
- In addition to teaching courses for History, **John McKerley** is lead oral historian at the Iowa Labor History Oral Project. This year, ILHOP won two major national awards recognizing it as a leader in the collection and preservation of oral histories: one from the National Endowment for the Humanities and one from the American Library Association.

Our students continue to excel. Here are some tidbits from this academic year:

- **Mila Kaut** (B.A. 2018) won a History Scholar award from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History – one of only fifteen such awards made to college juniors and seniors nationwide.
- **Brian Miner** (B.A. 2018) won a Fulbright fellowship to teach English in Indonesia.
- **Megan Ryan** (B.A. 2018) won a Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowship to begin work on her M.A. in Russian and East European Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- **Julian Rohn** (B.A. 2018) will attend the Mediaeval Studies Programme at the University of St. Andrews (Scotland) in the fall.
- **Janet Weaver** (Ph.D. in progress) won the 2017 Award for Significant Achievement in Women's Studies Librarianship, awarded by the Association of College and Research Libraries. The ACRL recognized her website *Migration is Beautiful*, which focuses on Iowa's Latina immigrants. Janet is also assistant curator at the Iowa Women's Archives.
- **Noaquia Callahan** (Ph.D. in progress) is founder and CEO of the *Colored Bird Institute*. Named after the subject of her dissertation, transatlantic African American feminist activist Mary Church Terrell (who referred to herself as a "rare colored bird"), the Institute aims to equip US students of color to prepare for the global economy by expanding opportunities for them in international education.
- **John Eicher** (Ph.D. 2016) won the Spreistersbach Prize for best dissertation at the University of Iowa. After holding a postdoctoral fellowship in the history of migration at the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC, in 2016-17, he's now an assistant professor at Penn State at Altoona.

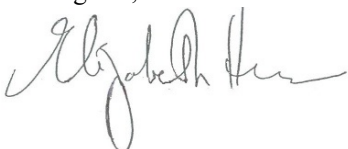
And of course, our graduates continue to shine over the course of their careers. **Robb Hogg** (B.A. 1998) served as Minority Leader in the Iowa State Senate. **Brenda Child's** (Ph.D. 1993) memoir, *My Grandfather's Knocking Sticks*, won the Jon Gjerde Prize for outstanding work in Midwestern history. **Gesine Gerhard** (Ph.D. 2000) has been named Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Drake University.

Donor activity has been enormously helpful to us this year. A generous gift enabled us to extend our stipend for unpaid undergraduate internships into a second year, giving students hands-on experience in historical societies, museums, law offices, and more. Graduate students have tapped donor-sponsored fellowships to do research as far away as Tanzania, and as close to home as Burlington, Iowa. And we're happy to announce that our program for faculty development, announced last year as a pilot, has now been made permanent. With alumni frequently relating memories of their favorite classes, we want to be sure the next generation of students is equally well served – and enabling our faculty to develop new courses on cutting-edge topics is just the ticket.

After four rewarding years of serving as History's Departmental Executive Officer, I'll be stepping down this summer. Next year you can look forward to hearing from Landon Storrs, specialist in US political and women's history of the 20th century – and incoming departmental chair.

We're always very glad to hear from our graduates, so please do send updates on your activities. You can send us a note or an email, or click the "Alumni" tab on our departmental webpage and submit your news there. In the meantime, if you'd like to catch up on departmental activity, please browse our website, <http://clas.uiowa.edu/history/>. Thanks again for your support.

Best regards,



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