



Viewed Historically

The e-Newsletter of the Department of History
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The Emerging Contours of an Academic Year

Columbia's harshest winter in at least the past decade is finally starting to come to a close, and after months of trudging to work bundled up against the cold and carefully evading the icy patches on the sidewalk, we can think about some general contours of the 2009-10 academic year. One is that enrollments were unusually high this semester. Typically, we see a fall-off in enrollments during the second semester, as compared to the first, particularly in the US history surveys (1100-1200 level courses). This fall-off has not occurred; all our surveys this semester are completely filled, and our overall enrollments for this semester are at an unprecedented high point. I am not entirely sure why this has happened; whether it is just a one-year quirk or the beginning of a new trend.

Looking at the entire academic year, total enrollments in history department course offerings reached almost 6,600, an increase of over 400 students from last year. The numbers are still a bit below the record levels of 2007-2008, but consistent with the figures throughout the now departed decade of the "zeros," and a good 10-15% higher than in the 1990s. These enrollments are a testimony to the strength of the department's teaching, the student interest it attracts and the substantial—and growing—number of undergraduates who are serious about the study of history. In terms of student interest and involvement, the history department is well prepared to begin a new decade, in a new century and a new millennium.

The department is preparing for future challenges in another way, with its search for an environmental historian. The announcement

of the opening was greeted with substantial interest; the environmental history position here at MU was, until a few weeks ago, the only one in its field available this year in the entire country. There were an unusually large number of applications—and quite a number of very good ones in the group. The search committee whittled down the initial 60 to a group of ten, and the committee interviewed them at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, held this year in San Diego, at the beginning of January. While the search committee members were in balmy San Diego, the mercury plunged to -10° F in Missouri; there were a number of comments from jealous colleagues about this state of affairs. Of course, the search committee members did not get out into the southern California sunshine as much as they might have liked, since they had to sit in a hotel room for hours over two days, interviewing the applicants.

The committee drew up a list of four finalists, who visited the MU campus at the end of January and the beginning of February. The interviews dragged on somewhat longer than we expected; weather problems meant that some of our finalists could not get here when planned, and so their visits had to be re-scheduled. As I write this, the department has completed its interviews, made its choice and is negotiating about the job offer. We'll have definitive information about the outcome in the May issue, by which time the employment contract should be signed, sealed and delivered.

If the history department is looking with some confidence toward the future, the question arises whether the same can be said about the

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university. As has been the case since the stock market crash and international financial crisis of the fall of 2008, the answer to this question depends on the university's finances and the funds available to support higher education in the Missouri state budget. Right now, it is looking like state higher education funding will be cut by 5% in the 2011 fiscal year beginning in July 2010. That is a blow, but one that the university can manage. It is certainly less than what other institutions of higher education—both public and private—across the country have had to endure.

If the state's financial position continues to deteriorate, the cuts to the university budget may be greater. In the fiscal year 2012, beginning in July 2011, when the stimulus funds given Missouri by the federal government run out, cuts may be larger still. Of course, by then, the economy may be better and state revenues more abundant. Right now, the situation is, more than anything else, very uncertain.

It is a relief to turn from this very difficult subject to some more pleasant ones. This month's special feature is a description of the history department's annual student recognition ceremony. This is one of the nicest events of the academic year; it is a real pleasure to be able to praise the accomplishments of the department's very best students.

Teaching is perhaps the most important way that the history faculty reach a broad public audience, but there certainly others: writing textbooks and popular history books, working on film and video documentaries, blogging or writing newspaper op-ed pieces, for instance. Professor Ian Worthington has found a quite different way—and one that can reach a very large audience. He has recorded a series of lectures on Ancient Greece, for the Teaching Company, a firm that produces and sells DVD's of academic lectures. (You may have seen their ads in airline in-flight and sales magazines.) His

very interesting experiences working with the Teaching Company are the subject of this issue's "Historical Perspectives" section.

We'll see you again with the annual book issue in May; in the meantime, remember you can always look at the department's web site, <http://history.missouri.edu>, or contact us at history@missouri.edu.

Jonathan Sperber
Chair, Department of History

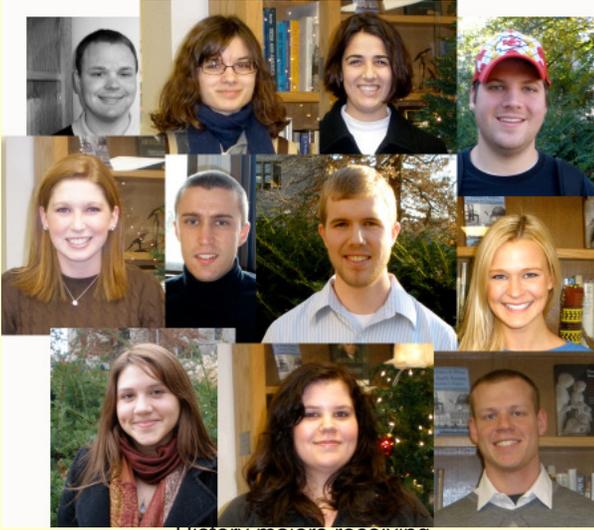
The History Department's 2010 Annual Student Recognition Ceremony

The history department held its annual student recognition ceremony at mid-day on Thursday, February 18, in the luxurious surroundings of room S304 of the Memorial Union. (Our readers may remember this room, tucked away in the far corner of the south tower, as a large, pleasantly furnished hall, more like a large living room than the austere seminar-style rooms elsewhere in the Union.) The ceremony was followed by a reception and light lunch in Read Hall.

There were four categories of students being recognized. The first, and largest, was the scholarship recipients. Eleven history majors received scholarships from the College of Arts & Science, among the most of any department in the college. The history department has its own [scholarships](#), awarded from six different endowments.

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History majors receiving College of Arts & Science scholarships.

Following the scholarship recipients were the students writing a senior thesis, most of them participants in the department's honors program. These students are among the very best undergraduate majors and topics of their theses, ranging from a study of the Union Army's anti-guerilla activities in Missouri during the Civil War, to a comparison of the American president Andrew Jackson with the Mexican counterpart, Antonio de Santa Anna, to a study of the Vice-Royalty in Norman England, to an account of how Germans remembered after 1945, the allied air bombardments of the Second World War, are a testimony to their wide-ranging interests and the enormous diversity of courses offered by the faculty.



Some of the students writing history B.A. honors theses this year.

The third group of students recognized were from the history department's [internship program](#). Undergraduates involved in this program have an opportunity to work at an archives or a museum, doing what we call "public history," making historical sources available to the public and preparing exhibitions and shows on historical events. Among the institutions cooperating with the department in offering these internships are the Missouri State Historical Society, the Boone County Historical Society and the University of Missouri Archives here in Columbia, the State Archives and Missouri State Museum in Jefferson City, and the Grand [Masonic] Lodge of Missouri in St. Louis. There were also special internships, thematically rather than institutionally based, for National History Day and preparations for the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. Interest in history internships has been growing and the department's internship program has been steadily expanding. Sixteen undergraduate majors took advantage of the opportunity to do an internship last summer and during the current academic year. These internships offer them some example of what it is like to work in a public history job, and, also, we would like to hope, develop skills in research, writing, consulting and exhibiting, that will stand them in good stead, in wherever their careers may take them.



Summer 2009 and Fall Semester 2009 History interns.

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New to the ceremony this year was a recognition of the achievements of the history department's graduate students, including the six students receiving an MA, and two receiving their Ph.D. this year. Also recognized were six graduate students who have received fellowships research grants, and prizes for outstanding research.

Historical Reflections

"Lights, Camera, Action"? On The Set with the Teaching Company

The Chair asked me to write about my recent experiences developing and filming a course (*The Long Shadow of the Ancient Greek World*) for the Teaching Company, a private company that produces serious, in-depth courses (as the reviews on its web site show) and sells them worldwide.

The phone rang in my office one morning in fall 2005. The call came from a "scout" from the Teaching Company, who told me he was visiting campus the following week and could he tape one of my lectures. If the company liked what it heard I would be flown to its studio in Chantilly, Virginia for a test shoot. If that went well, I could be contracted to develop, write, and film a lecture course on the ancient Greeks. I said yes for two reasons: I didn't think all of that would be too onerous since I've been teaching and working on the Greeks for years and, (more importantly?), the money the company offered was too good to turn down as my wife wanted a new kitchen.

The Teaching Company's customers are usually professionals with higher degrees who want to learn and be challenged rather than sit through the sorts of popular things that say the History Channel produces. It boasts of using only the top 5% of teachers nationally, and there are (I found out) teams of its scouts who periodically

tour numerous university and college campus in America to sit in on certain classes – I still don't know how it got my name.

The selection process is rigorous, so perhaps the company's claims are not entirely rhetorical. A team at the company vets the initial taping and decides who is to be culled at that point. Somehow I got through and was invited to give a "test" lecture at the company's studio. That lecture was sent out to the company's customers for their reaction, people who (unlike the company) are not concerned about whether a course will make money but how well the guy on camera can deliver the goods and keep attention. Somehow I survived that process as well, and then the real work began!

I decided on a big, 48-lecture course (each lecture of 30 minutes) covering the Archaic and Classical periods of Greek history. Rather than the "usual" try-to-fit-everything-in-about-the-Greeks approach I focused on three major themes – democracy, law, and imperialism – and by exploring these I wanted to make comparisons with our times and so ask what we have learned and not learned from the Greeks' lessons. Thus was born what came to be called *The Long Shadow of the Ancient Greek World*.

Any thoughts I had about recycling undergraduate lectures went out of the window as each lecture had to be properly written and about 3,000 words long as the scripts are turned into an accompanying text book of sorts to whatever version of the course (CD or DVD) the customers buy. On top of that each lecture had to have a "statement" of some 125 word and a longer "outline" of 1,000 words. Add to those things various other blurbs, a glossary of terms, an annotated bibliography, and biographies of the major figures and by the time I was done I'd written over 215,000 words! Then there was

the illustrative material, and everything had to be delivered well before shooting began in summer 2008. I was given an “academic content manager” who worked with me on all written materials and a director who helped with putting together what turned out to be over 700 visual elements, from battle maps to illustrations of pots and what-not to on-screen quotations. Halfway through all this proofs arrived of my biography of Philip II of Macedonia and I had to start writing papers for visits later that year to Poland and Japan.

The actual shooting took place over three (non-consecutive) weeks in summer 2008, four lectures per day, mid morning to mid afternoon, and working with my director on visuals before and after. That does not sound like a busy day but by the time I was taken back to my hotel I was ready to knock back more than a few drinks with dinner. The studio setup is pretty straightforward: two cameras, teleprompter, a little dais on which you stand, backdrop and props, that sort of thing. The trouble is I am used to pacing around in class but could not move more than 2-3 feet either side of my stand because of camera angles. I wear trifocal glasses, so looking from teleprompter to camera, from camera one to two, and so forth took a while to master. I usually dress smart casual to downright terrible, so wearing a tie and jacket was a tad restricting. I tend to gesticulate a lot in class and assume different positions to get points across but couldn’t do any of those things because I was “miked”. In class I am informal, crack jokes, and make what might seem odd analogies (Eminem to Greek lyric poetry for one), but was told to be “proper” for the company’s audience. And I had to wear makeup on not only my face, which I expected, but also the top of what I normally don’t see – my shiny bald head. Talk about a reality check.

Once past the first few lectures, however, I got into the swing of things and deviated from my scripts to inject more of the real “me” (including singing a line or two of Homer in Greek, which with my voice makes an onion cry) without the director ordering (too many) retakes. Despite all the work and unanticipated amount and

level of writing I enjoyed the entire experience but was relieved when we wrapped. I had one more visit to Chantilly when all the editing had been done to fix some illustrations, and the course was released in spring 2009. I think it is great and I’ve been pleased with its reviews (if you’re curious, go to www.teach12.com, click on “courses,” click on “L,” click on “Long Shadow of the Ancient Greek World,” click on “read reviews” – some of the earlier ones really get stuck into what I’ve done).

I’m making it sound like *The Long Shadow of the Ancient Greek World* serves only me and my reputation as a teacher. But given how selective the Teaching Company is, the quality of its courses, and its reputation in this country and overseas, what I did also add to the teaching strength and reputation of the History department, and I take pride in that. And I also think every household should have a copy of the course (hint hint) . . .

[Ian Worthington](#)

Considering making a donation to the history department? For information on doing so, click on this [link](#). The department chair and the development office of the College of Arts and Science will be pleased to discuss any plans you may have to help the Department of



