



Viewed Historically

The e-Newsletter of the Department of History
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In Transition

Although universities call it commencement, it has always seemed to me that the end-of-the-academic-year graduation ceremonies, and the end of the academic year more generally, are actually about transition, about going from one point in a life to another.

Certainly the 105 undergraduates who received their history bachelor's degrees this year (yet another new record for the department), most on Saturday, May 16, but some at the August and December 2008 graduations, are in transition. They are going from their time at the university to graduate and professional school, the armed forces, volunteer work with the Peace Corps or Vista, or, for most of them, on to the job market. 2009 has turned out to be a difficult year for young people, or anybody else, to look for work, but we all wish them the best of luck in their searches.

Looking at our graduate students, the department awarded four master's and seven doctorates this past year. Not all of our recipients of advanced degrees are seeking university positions, but of those who are, three secured tenure-track jobs. Dawn Gilley will be starting next year at Northwest Missouri State University; Kris Lawson at Pittsburg State University, in Pittsburg, Kans.; and T.J. Tomlin at the University of Northern Colorado. It is a mark of the quality of our graduate program and the excellence of these students that they had such success in a year of economic crisis, when universities were canceling job searches right and left, and the already-very-competitive academic job market became almost unbearable. Congratulations are definitely due to these outstanding students and to their advisers, Professors Ian Worthington, Catherine Rymph, and John Wigger, respectively.

There are transitions at this time of year for faculty as well. When the last issue of this newsletter appeared,

the history department was in the process of completing its east Asian history search after a long period of suspension because of the uncertain future of the university's budget. Most of that uncertainty has now been resolved, in a generally favorable way, and we are happy to announce that the search has concluded with an equally favorable result. The department has hired a very impressive applicant, Professor Soon Keong Ong, a recent Cornell University doctorate, who has been teaching at the University of North Florida. Ong is a specialist in the history of the "overseas Chinese," the emigrants from southern China who settled across southeast Asia. Our November issue will feature a profile of Ong.

Many of the department's alumni will remember Professor Charles Nauert, who taught the history of the Renaissance and the Reformation here for almost 40 years. Charles and his wife Jean, after a decade of retirement in Columbia, moved to an assisted-living community in Kansas City. You can get in touch with them, and offer them your best wishes on this new stage in their lives, via Professor Nauert's university of e-mail address, NauertC@missouri.edu.

The history department's specialist in African history, Professor Abdullahi Ibrahim, is retiring this year. Unlike many retirees, though, he is not planning to spend his time playing golf, gardening, or fishing. Instead, he is running for office — campaigning for the presidency of his native Sudan. You can see a brief video about his candidacy by clicking on this [link](#). [This link](#), and [this one](#) connect to news reports about his candidacy. Faculty, staff, and students of the history department suggest our friends and alumni join us in offering Ibrahim and his tormented native country our hopes for a better future.

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The May issue of this newsletter is the annual book issue, and I am pleased to report that the history faculty was unusually productive this year. At the end of April, the department's annual book reception honored authors who have published books in the previous 12 months. No less than seven currently active faculty members were represented. Among them, they had published eight books.

It is not just the quantity that is remarkable, but the broad diversity of intellectual interests represented by these publications. The books ranged from a commentary on a medieval optics manuscript, to a history of the rise of Islamicism in 20th-century Sudan, to a biography of one of contemporary America's most-prominent entrepreneurs of pleasure. You will

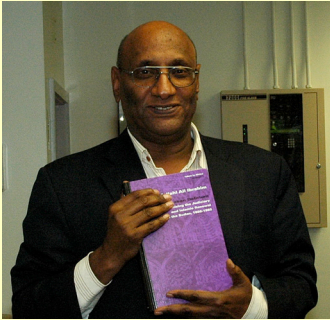
find below a brief description of each of these books, and a link to a Web site with further information for each. Perusing this section should give you an idea of the intellectual vitality and diversity of the history department faculty.

Let me conclude by wishing our friends and alumni all the best for their summer. We will return with another issue in November. In the meantime, you can keep up with developments in the history department by going to the department Web site, <http://history.missouri.edu>. Send your communications to history@missouri.edu.

Jonathan Sperber
Chair, Department of History

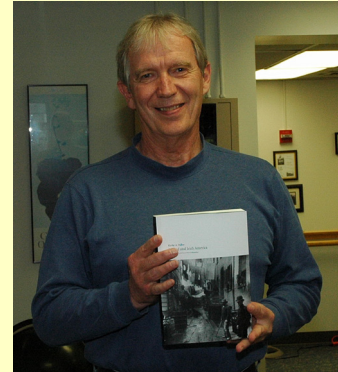
Books by History Faculty

Abdullahi Ibrahim



Professor Ibrahim has published *Manichean Delirium: Decolonizing the Judiciary and Islamic Renewal in the Sudan 1898–1985*. Leiden: Brill, 2009. The book investigates the Islamic renewal in Sudan as symptomatic of a larger postcolonial predicament. Studies, in particular, the dual judiciary — the distinction between civil and Islamic courts — dubbed “Manichaeic” by Fanon, whose laws have been at the center of Islamic renewal.

Kerby Miller



Kerby Miller's latest book, *Ireland and Irish America: Culture, Class and Transatlantic Migration*. Dublin: Field Day, 2008, is a representative collection of his award-winning research in Irish and Irish-American history, written between the 1980s and 2006. The essays in the book offer trenchant analyses of Irish migration's causes; of its consequences; and of its popular and politicized interpretations, which challenge conventional sectarian and liberal interpretations of Irish and Irish-American history.

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A. Mark Smith



Professor Smith has published two books over the past year. One, *O Tratado dos olhos de Pedro Hispano* is a study of the background to Petrus Hispanus' 13th-century treatise on the cure and prevention of disorders of the eye. A professionally trained physician and author of several basic medical manuals, including this one, Petrus Hispanus served as physician to Pope John XXI in 1276–77. The other is *Alhacen on Image-Formation and Distortion in Mirrors*, published by the American Philosophical Society, which is a critical edition and translation of the sixth and penultimate book of the medieval treatise on the theory of optics, Alhacen's *De aspectibus*. The edition and translation of book seven on refraction is slated to appear in 2010 and will complete the edition and translation of the entire treatise.

Jonathan Sperber



Jonathan Sperber's new book is a general history of Europe from the middle of the 19th century to the outbreak of the first world war: *Europe 1850–1914: Progress, Prosperity, and Apprehension* (Harlow, UK and New York: Longman/Pearson Publishers, 2009). It is the sequel to a previously written history of an earlier period, *Revolutionary Europe: 1780–1850*.

Together, the two books form a history of Europe in what historians call the “long 19th century,” from the onset of the French Revolution to the beginning of the age of total war.

Steven Watts

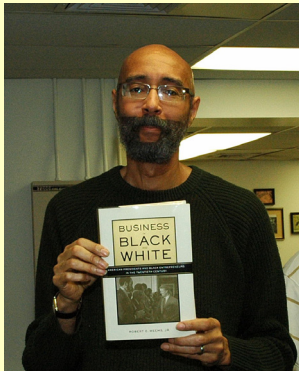


Steven Watts's *Mr. Playboy: Hugh Hefner and the American Dream* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2008) offers a compelling analysis of the publisher's important role in shaping American mainstream culture in the last half of the 20th century. Based on exclusive access to Hefner's private papers, a host of interviews with the man and his associates, and exhaustive research in the public commentary on him and Playboy magazine, the book argues that Hefner was a crucial figure in promoting America's modern culture of self-fulfillment and consumer abundance.

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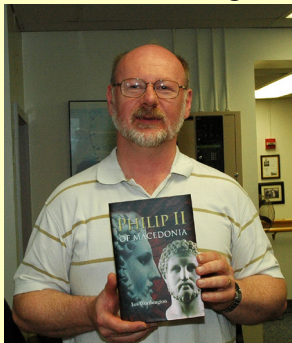
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Robert Weems



Professor Weems's latest book, *Business in Black and White: American Presidents and Black Entrepreneurs in the Twentieth Century* (New York: NYU Press, 2009) provides a panoramic discussion of various initiatives that American presidents have supported to promote black business development in the United States. It represents an original contribution to African-American history, presidential studies, and American business history.

Ian Worthington



Ian Worthington's *Philip II of Macedonia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008) is the biography of a man who is usually in the shadow of his son, Alexander the Great. But Philip changed the course of Greek history forever, making Macedonia into a superpower in the ancient world. Taking into account recent archaeological discoveries and reinterpreting ancient literary sources, the book brings Philip out of Alexander's shadow and places him where he properly belongs: in the center stage of Greek history. For an in-depth interview with Worthington about his book, [click on this link](#).

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 with you any plans you may have to help the Department of History.



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