

# DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

WASHBURN UNIVERSITY



*Fall 2014—Special Edition: Highlighting Our Students' Outstanding History 399 Projects*

## MESSAGE FROM DR. TOM PRASCH, CHAIR

You can tell it is finals week in the history department; the table in our commons area is laden with goodies, treats brought in by both faculty and students (and, as always, by Robin, the departmental secretary who keeps us in sweets) to fuel us all through the final phases of the term. Since this is the fall semester, those goodies have a longing-for-the-looming-break holiday cheer about them, heavy on the sweet: pumpkin bread, donut holes, caramel corn, lots of cookies, and, of course, rum balls (courtesy of Tony Silvestri, inheriting the mantle of Ken Cott and Hannah Thompson). The sound of every machine in the office—the hum of the copier, the clack of the printers, perhaps most of all the perk of the coffeemaker—seem a little more amped up for the season. All the people appear a bit more amped as well, students prepping for finals or fixing footnotes in final drafts, the faculty, of course, grading. With *Life of*

*Brian* slated for our finals-week Historical Film Series offering, the quota of Monty Python quotes heard in the office is way up.

It has been a busy semester, one that leaves us much to talk about. Students have accomplishments to brag about: Joshua Jackson received the Outstanding Secondary Education Student Teaching Award, and Mark Fancher and Nick Taylor were also recognized for their excellent student teaching. Our Phi Alpha Theta branch has had an unusually active semester, offering ten different programs over the course of the semester (see next page for details).

Our faculty has been busy as well, first of all in the classroom. This past semester, we have offered new courses (like my team-taught World War I course, commemorating the centennial), revamped core courses (most notably with the reworking Kelly Erby and Kerry Wynn are giving the U.S. surveys), and popular

revivals (like Tony Silvestri's Medieval Experience). We have taken our work into the community: Kerry Wynn speaking to the Business Office Workshop Management group of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Kim Morse presenting for the University of Kansas's Ecumenical Campus Ministries, Rachel Goossen and I traveling the Kansas Humanities Council's circuit.

We have also continued our varied research agendas, and continued presenting our work at conferences and in publications. This fall, Kim Morse gave a paper at the American Society for Ethnohistory, and I delivered papers at four conferences as well as Washburn's faculty colloquium. Rachel Goossen's major research project on Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder's long record of sexual abuse will provide material for articles coming out in the coming months in *The Mennonite*, *The Canadian Mennonite*, and *Mennonite World Review*. Most

and *Mennonite World Review*. Most importantly, her major article “Defanging the Beast: Mennonite Responses to John Howard Yoder’s Sexual Abuse” will be appearing in *Mennonite Quarterly* in January, and available in ebook form, and translated into Dutch and German. Kelly Erby has completed revisions of her book *Public Appetite: Boston and the Rise of Dining Out in Nineteenth-Century America* (forthcoming from University of Minnesota Press, but for those who just can’t wait to get a taste, the press’s Quadrant site offers a preliminary talk on one of the book’s subjects, “Johnnycake versus Escargot,” at <http://quadrant.umn.edu/post/projects/2010/public-appetite-dining-out-nineteenth-century-boston/presentation-jonnycake-versu> ). And Tony Silvestri , in his parallel-universe career as musical librettist, looks forward to the premiere of his opera *Pastry Prince* in January, a premiere for the San Francisco’s Gay Men’s Chorus in April, and a return to Carnegie Hall for another debut, also in April.

Our alumni continue to make us proud as well. Cara Burnidge has accepted a position in the Philosophy and World Religions Department at the University of Northern Iowa. On the museum front, Hannah Thompson has taken a position as Exhibits and Collections Intern at the Museum of World Treasures in Wichita (funded by the Americorps Vista program), and Jess Rezac, still at Kansas City’s American Jazz Museum, garnered a \$133,000 federal grant to promote the museum’s work. Brenda Kostner, having received her M. Div. in May, is now Associate Pastor at Stillwell UMC, working her way toward full ordination. And recent graduate Christian Gilbert has just this past week accepted a position as Assistant Administrator at Garden Valley Retirement Center in Garden City, well placed to dine on some of the best Vietnamese and Mexican restaurants in the state (with Somali doubtless soon to follow).

So there’s lots to keep up with in the History Department. These newsletters give us one means to pass along the news. But for those who want their updates more quickly, or who might be interested in advance notice of departmental events, check out the Clio Society of Washburn (details in the box below). And whatever is happening with you, keep us posted.

## Phi Alpha Theta’s Fall Activities

Washburn University’s branch of Phi Alpha Theta offered an unusually rich range of events in the fall semester. When senior Chase Sachs returned from a Wichita antique shop with an armload of Russian revolutionary panels, we organized a panel to analyze their content. As protests were erupting in Ferguson, Missouri, we invited Clarence Lang down from KU to discuss how his historical investigations of St. Louis’s civil-rights history inflected his understanding of events. As ISIS (or ISIL, or the “so-called Islamic State”) grabbed headlines for their actions in Iraq and Syria, Phi Alpha Theta sponsored a forum on the region’s conflicts. Professor Emerita of Art History Reinhild Janzen shared with us her exploration of popular visual arts in contemporary Congo. Sherrita Camp discussed the history of Topeka’s African American community, the subject of her recent book. At the fall initiation, department chair Tom Prasch discussed how Arthur Conan Doyle employed his fictional sleuth Sherlock Holmes to prepare England for World War I. And the Historical Film Series took us from Buster Keaton’s Civil War (in *The General*) to the trenches of World War I (in *All Quiet on the Western Front*), from blood-sucking cat demons preying on medieval Japanese samurai (in *Kuroneko*) to a Native American seeking treatment at Topeka’s Menninger Clinic in the 1950s (in *Jimmy P.*), before bringing us to the familiar finals-week destination of Monty Python (for a rollicking *Life of Brian*). But if you don’t just want to hear about all of this after it happened, join the Clio Circle of Washburn and get advance notice of future Phi Alpha Theta events.

## WHAT IS HISTORY 399?

History 399, Historical Methods and Research, is the capstone course required of all history majors. It requires students to immerse themselves in original historical research based in primary sources. Students first identify a historical topic or question they want to investigate. Then, working closely with a faculty member, they locate relevant source materials to use in their investigation. For the sake of convenience and cost effectiveness, these sources are typically published or digitized primary sources, or housed in archives close to Washburn like the Kansas Historical Society. However, students can apply for scholarships to travel to archives. In recent years, some of our students have visited archives in San Antonio, Texas; Chicago, Illinois; and New York City. By the end of the semester, students produce a paper of approximately 15-20 pages that contains an original historical argument, supported by evidence gleaned from primary sources. In other words, in History 399, students apply the critical thinking, research, and writing skills they have been honing throughout their careers as history majors. To further prepare students for History 399, students are required to first take History 395, where they conduct an historiographical analysis of the secondary works on their chosen topic. Finished 399 papers make excellent writing samples to accompany law or graduate school applications. The History Department also encourages students to share their 399 projects by presenting at regional and national conferences, or at Washburn's own Apeiron, an annual even held in April that showcases undergraduate research and creative endeavors. The following pages highlight some of the especially successful scholarship our students have produced.

Theresa Young's ('10) first idea for her 399 project was to study the Oregon Trail. That was until Professor Kerry Wynn, Young's advisor, suggested she look for a topic that was more original. Young started pondering the notorious phrase "rain follows the plow," wondering where it came from. In an article on the subject, Young came across another idea from the late 1800s intended to promote settlement of the Great Plains: rain follows trees. As Young began to look into this theory of climatology, she found that it had stimulated a surge of tree plantings across the grasslands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1873, one man, Richard Elliott Smith, an industrial agent for the railroad, had even created an experimental tree farm to show people what could be grown on the prairie following the addition of trees.



Young tracked down Smith's grandson and interviewed him about his grandfather's work. She knew she had found the perfect 399 topic. In her final paper, Young argued that railroad-booster, the budding Forestry

Bureau, and pro-tree legislators had convinced thousands of emigrants who relocated to the grasslands from eastern forested areas to plant millions of trees, assuring them that rainfall would follow their planting efforts. While these new trees did not, in fact, guarantee rain, they did forever change the Kansas landscape.

Young presented her findings at an environmental history conference held at the University of Missouri. She also won the Reikopf Prize for the best paper written on Kansas History. But as she wrapped up her

399 project, Young found that she still wanted to know more about the environmental history of the Great Plains. Dr. Wynn suggested she consider graduate school. Using her 399 paper as a writing sample, Young was accepted to the environmental history program at Kansas State University. She graduated from Kansas State with her M.A. Young is now an assistant archivist at Washburn's Mabee Library. She also teaches history classes for her alma mater.

## Amber Riviera ('11)



I majored in History and English Literature at Washburn. My capstone project focused on Kansas women who joined the General Federation of Women's Clubs, specifically those who used the club movement to achieve women's suffrage. I argued that Kansas women not only participated in the national club movement, but they pushed boundaries and anticipated positions and structures of the national movement:

joining clubs together, forming a state federation in the General Federation of Women's Clubs, and advocating suffrage. The history of Kansas women's clubs not only reveals key themes applicable to the Club Movement as a whole, such as the criticism of prominent men and conflict over True Womanhood, but also highlights the clubs' regional character and variety.

I was initially drawn to the topic in high school when I completed a History Day project on the Audubon Society, a society started by men that failed and was then reformed by women. The General Federation was interesting to me in its structure and organization and how it related to politics, especially women's suffrage.

To complete my research, I utilized the minutes Club women scrupulously kept of their meetings. These minutes, stored in densely packed file boxes, were donated to the Kansas Historical Society (KHS) in Topeka. I researched for about six hours a week while I was writing my thesis. I really enjoyed reading the minutes, although sometimes the day-to-day the clubs recorded was tedious to sift through.

Besides researching, I joined a General Federation Club in Lawrence and attended District and State Conventions with the group. I presented my paper at the State Convention in 2011. I also presented at a History Conference at Johnson County Community College that year.

My career goal in majoring in History and English Literature was to gain effective research and writing skills to aid me in law school. I attended Drake Law School, and was awarded a full tuition scholarship with stipend. I graduated in spring 2014, and passed the bar this summer in Iowa. I am currently the Assistant County Attorney for Mahaska County, and I handle all juvenile cases, misdemeanor offenses, and mental health commitments. I continue to use the critical thinking skills I honed in my history courses.

## Daniel Minde ('10)



When I was released from the US Air Force, I faced the huge decision of what to do next in my life. In high school, I had been inspired by a history teacher who made me love to learn about the past. When I came to Washburn, it felt like the right choice to become a

history major. My capstone project was about Irena Sendlerowa, a Polish nurse and social worker, who became part of the Polish Underground during World War II and courageously worked to save Jewish children from the Holocaust. Sendlerowa and her coworkers in Żegota, an underground-resistance organization in German-occupied Warsaw, visited Jewish ghettos under the pretext of performing sanitary inspections. They then smuggled around 2,500 children out of the ghetto, hiding them in trams and ambulances and even disguising them as packages. The Nazis eventually caught Sendlerowa, tortured her, and sentenced her to death for her actions. However, thanks to a bribe paid by the Żegota, she narrowly escaped execution.

In undertaking my research, I wanted to know more about her work and about the heart-breaking decisions the parents of the children she had smuggled had made to send their children to safety, knowing they would more than likely never see them again. To pursue answers to these questions, I visited Fort Scott, Kansas, which houses many primary sources about Sendlerowa.

I am not a person who seeks awards or accolades but I was encouraged by my advisor to apply for the Kansas Association of Historians Paper of the Year. I did apply for it and won, which was extremely inspiring because I was the first undergraduate student to win this award from Washburn University. I went and presented my paper and findings at the 2010 Kansas Association of Historians conference that year. After graduating from Washburn, I became a math teacher in Liberal, Kansas. My history education and this project in particular undoubtedly made me a better teacher.



## ANNOUNCING THE CLIO CIRCLE OF WASHBURN UNIVERSITY

The alumni organization we mentioned in our spring 2014 issue now has a name: The Clio Circle of Washburn University. Clio, of course, is after the Greek muse of history. This organization seeks to further connections between the history department and our outstanding graduates, and between past and present Washburn students. It is the department's hope that we can draw upon this organization to support the development of current history students by engaging with their projects, funding scholarships, and mentoring students before or after graduation; build the department by meeting with prospective majors and endowing positions; encourage historical study by facilitating internships; and, finally, engage with the community by participating in History Day, and suggesting programming. In return, we promise to keep you informed of events and opportunities (to that end, like us on Facebook!) and provide social events to form deeper bonds to the Washburn Department of History and its graduates. The Clio Circle's inaugural event will be held February 5, 2015 in conjunction with the annual Lincoln Lecture (see below for details). We hope you can join us!

### LINCOLN HARMAN 2015 LECTURE

This year's Lincoln Lecture will be given by Steven Hahn, the Roy R. and Jeannette P. Nichols Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania. Professor Hahn received his Ph.D. from Yale University and is a specialist in the history of nineteenth-century America, African-American history, the history of the American South, and the international history of slavery and emancipation. He is the author of *A Nation Under their Feet: Black Political Struggles from Slavery to the Great Migration*, winner of a Pulitzer Prize, and *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry*, which received both the Allan Nevins Prize of the Society of American Historians and the Frederick Jackson Turner Award of the Organization of American Historians.

At Washburn, Professor Hahn will speak on the subject of what slaves thought of President Abraham Lincoln. The lecture will be held on Thursday February 7 at 7 PM in the Washburn Room of the Memorial Union. It is free and open to the public.

SAVE THE DATE

The Clio Circle of Washburn University Department of History Presents




Photo by Jennifer Kucab

DINNER WITH AWARD-WINNING HISTORIAN  
STEVEN HAHN

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 5, 2015 AT 5 PM, WASHBURN UNIVERSITY

An exclusive invitation to History Department Alumni, join us for an evening with Steven Hahn, author of *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration*. Enjoy dinner and reconnect with other Washburn alumni and faculty. Stay as Dr. Hahn delivers the annual Lincoln Lecture at 7 PM. RSVP to Professor Kelly Erby at [kelly.erby@washburn.edu](mailto:kelly.erby@washburn.edu) or 785-670-2018.

## Evan Thomas ('12)

As I began my preliminary primary-source research for HI 399, I found myself pulled into investigating the history of Topeka during the Great Depression, a period in which the city's



population grew considerably as Kansans from rural communities moved in. Topeka's history is unique in this period, since the city's industries and use of federal funding allowed it to not only survive the Depression but actually thrive. Topeka's suburbs were especially intriguing

to me because of their rapid expansion during these years. In the historical literature on suburbanization, the Great Depression period is a black hole. I knew this topic was perfect for 399.

I found that as Topeka grew during the Great Depression, the neighborhoods of Moundview Acres and Highland Park provided a study in contrasts in pursuing suburbanization. illustrated both common and unique trends, the previous being an area which was marketed to those who were insecure, while the latter with its improving infrastructure attracted the secure and affluent." The developers of Moundview Acres marketed the area to lower-middle-class Topeakeans as a more economically-sound alternative to renting. They also suggested that in purchasing a home instead of living in an apartment, residents could plant a garden and grow food, further saving money. Both of these strategies built on economic anxieties during the Depression. On the other hand, the area of Highland Park was home to many of the city's professionals and was the fastest growing suburb at the time because the community was able to utilize Federal Works Progress Administration funds. This gave them new infrastructure like water lines and helped employ Topekans. The trends evident in these communities are most often associated with Post-WWII America, but here we see it nearly two decades earlier.

I followed primary-source leads in several different archives in order to write this history. My sources for the paper mostly came from the Kansas Historical Society Archive. I utilized advertisements, newspaper clippings, microfilm of newspapers, maps, local history publications, statistical rolls, and an extremely helpful Comprehensive Plan for Topeka. Nothing really compares to the struggles and rewards of primary-source research. It is completely up to the researcher to seek out and sift through material to find the most beautiful pieces that will complement each other so you can sew them together under the

watchful eye of a mentor into a majestic quilt of history. (Go ahead and laugh at that analogy if you want.)

Several months after I completed HI 399, I applied to present my findings at two conferences: the biennial national Phi Alpha Theta conference, and later the Kansas Association of Historians conference. Both experiences gave me an excellent perspective on the level of excellence that comes out of our history department. Particularly, at Phi Alpha Theta I got to see how impressive Washburn undergraduate history majors are compared to others across the nation. In addition, these conferences were very rewarding to me. I had worked hard on my project, and these opportunities to share my findings and get feedback from others were very gratifying.

Currently I am serving in the US Navy and have every intention to someday return to the sphere of academics that I enjoyed so much, this time as an educator. It has been almost impossible to recreate the enthusiasm for knowledge that comes from being an active participant in a community like the Washburn History Department.

### Fall I Phi Alpha Theta

#### Inductees:

On November 22, The Department was pleased to induct the following

Phi Alpha Theta members:

Christopher Bird, Trey Darr, Erin Finley, and Ashley Manrose.

Students are inducted into Phi Alpha Theta after completing a minimum of 12 semester hours in History and earning at least a 3.1 GPA. demonstrating excellence in the history coursework.

## Hannah Thompson ('12)

My history major was a bit of an accident. I'd intended to minor in history, but found myself hanging out with the fun history department secretary, professors, and students more



than I was in the Anthropology department (my first major). My original goals were to become an archaeologist, so History became a logical second major.

In my 399 project, I argued that later ancient Egyptian pharaohs systematically destroyed the monuments and memory of the eighteenth dynasty pharaoh Akhenaten because they perceived him to be impure

and dangerous for violating previously accepted social norms. I utilized anthropologist Mary Douglas's theories on purity and pollution and her descriptions of how people tend to deal with things that are seen as inappropriate in a given situation in order to explain the different forms that post-Amarna period iconoclasm took. For an obvious example: Douglas described abandonment or avoidance of something perceived as polluted as a mechanism for coping with pollution. Later rulers abandoned the capital city that Akhenaten founded and where he spent most of his reign and the city remained essentially unoccupied throughout pharaonic Egypt.

I presented my paper at the Midwest Regional Phi Alpha Theta history conference and won an award for best undergraduate paper at the Kansas Association of Historians conference. I also presented an early version of the paper at Apeiron. I intend to edit the paper and submit for publication, but life (and graduate school) keeps getting in the way.

For my research I utilized money from the Washburn Transformation Experience program to visit the University of Chicago to conduct research, although that was mainly secondary source research. While there were some written primary source records, much of it was vague. Few pharaohs wanted to publicly announce that they were the ones who had erased Akhenaten's name from monuments when they were trying to forget he had ever existed. Most of my evidence came in the form of artifacts, and I spent quite a bit of time pouring over publications and notes from archaeological digs. One book in particular reconstructed parts of buildings Akhenaten had built that were subsequently

archaeological digs. One book in particular reconstructed parts of buildings Akhenaten had built that were subsequently torn down—not only had the buildings been razed, but his name had been carved off of many of the blocks. Reading history through artifacts for this project gave me a chance to explore the intersection of anthropology and archaeology with history, which is an interest of mine that persists to the present day.

I am currently finishing a MA in Museum Science, so my career involves dealing with artifacts and translating them into something that the public can read and understand. My capstone project helped me develop the ability to find connections between multiple disciplines. This has proven immensely useful since on any given day I can't be certain if I will be handling and researching a letter written during WWII, a bone saw kit from 1870, or even a radioactive water jug (and yes, I've dealt with all three). The mental flexibility of being a historian who enjoys interdisciplinary studies lets me research things in ways that others may not think of, and at the very least, gives me a different perspective on how to teach history in a museum setting.

## Congratulations!

Congratulations go to Joshua Jackson, who won the university-wide Outstanding Secondary Teacher Award this fall.

The Department's two other student teachers, also Nick Taylor and Mark Fancher, won recognition from the Education Department for their excellence. Well done, future teachers!

## Spring 2015 Upper-division Course Offerings:

**HI 395: History Forum (MWF 8-8:50 AM)**

**HI 300: Early National U.S. History (MWF 11-11:50 AM)**

**HI 399A: Historical Methods and Research (MWF 12-12:50 PM)**

**HI 300C: Traditional Japan (M/W 1-2:15 PM)**

**HI 338A Victorian Britain (M/W 2:30-3:45 PM)**

**HI 300D: Witchcraft (M/W 2:30-3:45 PM)**

**HI 364A: History and Literature of Latin America (T/TR 11-12:15)**

**HI 311A: Cold War America (T/TR 11-12:15)**

**HI 322A: Kansas History (T/TR 11-12:15)**

**HI 300A: Women in World War II (T/TR 2:30-3:45 PM)**

**HI 397: Internship in Historical Agencies (arranged)**

**HI 398: Directed Readings (arranged)**

**HI 358: History of Modern China (online)**

## Stephen Potter ('13)

When I first became a student at Washburn, I was a declared English major with a business minor. I'd come with ideas of taking on writing projects, furthering my research skills, fine-tuning my ability to edit, while taking business classes that would lead to a lucrative career after graduation. Alongside three other courses, I registered for an introductory-level general education history course with Dr. Kim Morse. After completing my first essay, Dr. Morse approached me and said I should become a history major. I informed her that she was "a very crazy tiny woman" and said no.



Three weeks later I asked for the change of major form.

I became a history major because in her 100-level class, I began to learn how to critically think, read, and write in a way that has impacted me for rest of my life. Critically thinking and effectively writing are so important these days for any successful career. They are skills the History Department at Washburn demands of their students. Moreover, throughout my tenure as a history major I had the privilege of being trained to use, examine, and interact with hundreds of primary and secondary sources. This kind of hands-on, problem-solving approach to learning is unique. My 399 project entitled "Hong Xiquan's General Tao's Chicken Rebellion Topped with Jesus Seasoning: The Taiping Rebellion as a Southern Chinese Ethnic War, not Christian Ideological Bandstand" utilized over a hundred primary sources written by both eastern and western historians to reevaluate the Taiping Rebellion.

I studied Taiping ideology, religion, culture, socioeconomics, gender roles, military systems, and the ethnic ramifications of clan wars between the Han (group of northern Chinese descent) and Qing (Manchurian conquerors of the Han). My 399 challenged the standard view of the Taiping Rebellion as primarily a religious campaign and introduced the hypothesis that the Taiping Rebellion, although definitely influenced by religion, primarily occurred due to ethnic rivalry over the "right to rule" China. For over a decade, the Han and Qing fought for the Chinese throne. Although the Qing defeated the Taiping, the rebellion itself practically bankrupted the Qing dynasty and contributed to its collapse.

I had the unique honor of presenting my research to regional as well as national conferences, including the biannual 2013 Phi Alpha Theta national conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I also won a third-place paper prize at the graduate level (impressive for an undergraduate) at the regional Phi Alpha Theta conference in 2013. Further, my paper had the honor of being published in the history journal from Northern Kentucky University. I am currently applying to graduate programs and am using my capstone project as my writing sample. One day, I intend to teach Asian history at the university level.



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR FALL  
2014 GRADUATES!

MARK FANCHER (WITH HONORS),  
PAUL LACOUNT, RACHEL NORDGREN,  
ALEJANDRO SALOMAN RIVAROLA,  
NICHOLAS TAYLOR, LEE ROY WINKEL

GOOD LUCK IN YOUR FUTURE  
ENDEAVORS! STAY IN TOUCH!

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Attention Alumni & Friends!

Keep us current on your activities and contact information! Complete this form and send it to Dr. Kelly Erby, Department of History, Washburn University, 1700 SW College Ave, Topeka, KS 66621

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

News: \_\_\_\_\_

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General donations to the Department of History are always welcome to further the activities of students, faculty, and general program needs.

Checks can be made payable to "Washburn University Foundation—History Department" and mailed to 1729 SW MacVicar Ave Topeka, KS, 66604. We appreciate your support!

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