

HISTORY NEWS

HISTORY DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

Fall 2019



Dr. Tera Hunter

Stallworth Lecture: “Can Marriage Save the Race?”

The thirteenth N. Jack Stallworth Lecture in Southern History took place on October 29 before a full house at Laidlaw. Dr. Tera Hunter, of Princeton University, posed the question, “Can Marriage Save the Race? Ideas about African-American Marriage from W.E.B. Du Bois to Our Own Times.” Her talk was most illuminating.

Focusing first on Du Bois, Dr. Hunter suggested that he was too accepting of the “social pathology thesis,” according to which, the African-Americans in his turn of the century studies of family life fell short of Victorian standards of domestic stability. However, his assumption that African-Americans needed to marry more in order to lead more stable lives was uncorroborated by his own findings, which showed African-Americans marrying as much as whites. A closer examination of family structure might have revealed more of the deviation from Victorian norms that Du Bois was looking for, as remarriage and serial monogamy were more common among African-Americans than whites; but for the most part, Du Bois’s hypotheses about African-American marriage remained vague, and marriage would not always translate into greater

success for African-Americans. Generations later, the Moynihan Report on “The Negro Family” incorporated many of Du Bois’s postulates concerning marriage, and the issue continues to dominate current discussion and policy concerning race. However, the marriage question, after all, may be little more than a red herring.

For the balance of her talk, Dr. Hunter developed her contention that “Marriage alone has never been a cure for poverty.” She employed a striking graphic to illustrate the trend of downward economic mobility among African-American men from wealthy – and two-parent – families, and she also blamed the social pathology thesis itself for creating obstacles for African-Americans: Often, the belief that single-parent African-American families spell trouble has led to draconian measures directed against them by police and the courts.

An engaging question and answer session followed, and the audience was very intellectually stimulated. The Stallworth Lecture continues to play a positive role in the life of the University and in the Mobile community.

INSIDE:

- Letter from an Alumna
- Research Tips
- Grad Student Spotlight
- Confederate Monuments
- Personal History
- Fall Courses

History Faculty Lead Study Abroad

History faculty continue to spearhead the University’s effort to provide students with overseas experience.

Dr. David Meola has developed a “USA History & Jewish Studies in Germany” program, to run from July 12 to 29, 2020. Students will visit Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Berlin and learn about the Jewish experiences of medieval and early modern times. Then the focus will shift to the Holocaust and how it is remembered. Six upper-division history credits are included in the package.

Dr. Harry Miller will reprise his “USA History in Japan” experience, from May 27 to June 18, 2020. Participants will explore the northern city of Hakodate, an early treaty

port, and will become acquainted with the history of Japanese Westernization and other facets of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This is also a six-credit package.

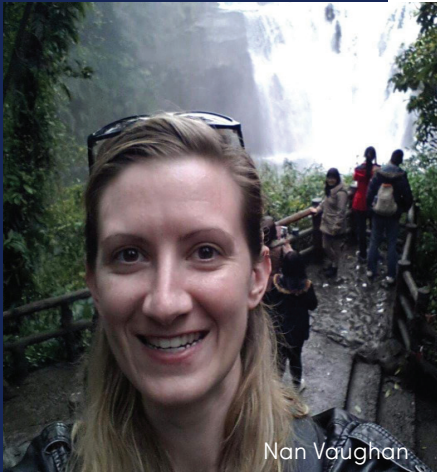
Dr. Tim Lombardo will join faculty from other departments on the “USA in the UK” tour, which takes students to several cities from June 13 to July 9. Three classes are offered, including Dr. Lombardo’s “Roll over Beethoven” course on rock music, which will draw on the auras of London and Liverpool.

Study abroad is a life-changing experience that all college students should have. Look for the nearest smiling face, and you will find a history student returned from overseas. The world awaits.



UNIVERSITY OF
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Letter from an Alumna: Nan Vaughan



Nan Vaughan

Full disclosure: I was pre-med. Then I had a history class with Dr. Nigota. It was grounding. He brought modern issues into perspective by putting everything into context and sprinkling it with humor. It made the world less scary.

Several history classes later and I was ready to travel the world, so I did. Fifteen countries later, and I'm still at it. I even lived in Taiwan for a while. As for work, I haven't picked a career yet, but my history degree has helped in all my jobs so far (well, at least my research and writing skills have.) Antique restoration? Research materials and techniques and make it happen. Event coordinator? Research this wedding

tradition and accommodate it. New acquisition at the museum? Research it, write a report and a docent blurb. Anxious parents at the preschool? Research and present context and a plan. No training manual at the cram school? Research and write it.

My point is, nearly every job has at least a small part of "take all this information and condense it to something useful." So if you have to get those skills anyway, take a few history classes. Take a few more. History Minors are cool. Take a few more, you know you want to. History Major it is then. Pre-med was overrated. Now to call your parents.....

The Best Research Tool is Your Brain

Computers make research easier. However, they also trick us into believing that they will do our research for us. Like a slot machine, we think, the computer will spit out the sources for our term papers, as soon as we type in the lucky search term.

The whole point of a history education is to train yourself to develop leads that will help you to solve any kind of puzzle. The next time you are assigned a term paper, before you sit down in front of the computer, go to the library and browse the shelves where the pertinent books are gathered. There, you will find not only background information

but the names of historical actors, footnotes that can lead you to related sources, and interpretations developed by leading historians in the field. This should give you a good idea what you are looking for (as well as what questions you should be asking of your topic), before you ask the computer to find it for you.

Remember, a historian is a detective and an explainer, not just a keyboard jockey. Use your time in USA history classes to train your mind, not just to type in search terms!

"History is written by the victors."

- Winston Churchill

"Only the vanquished remember history."

- Marshall McLuhan

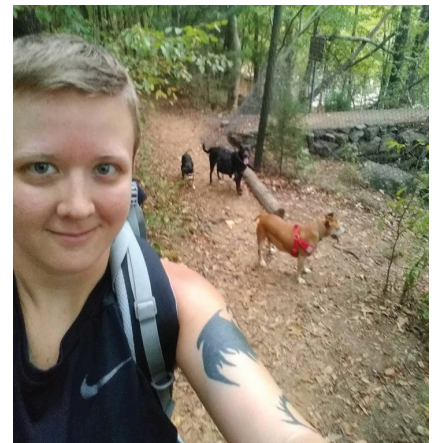
Grad Student Spotlight: Shelli McCoy

History has made a positive impact in my life. Entering the field of history, I had no idea what was in store.

Not only did the study of history allow me to interpret my life experiences, but it helped me build a comprehensive social, economic, and political understanding of how the world works. I entered the program in search of the meaning of life and to sort out where I belong in this world, and I am happy to say I got more than I bargained for.

I want to take what I have learned and the confidence I gained through the study of history and help people in insecure mental states. My research interests are in the History of Science and Women, Gender, and Sexuality. In the spring, I plan to take

comprehensive exams in European and United States history to complete the history graduate program at USA.



The Problem of Confederate Monuments

On September 19, Dr. Hilary Green of the University of Alabama spoke of “Confederate Monuments De-bates in Black and White” to an engaged audience in the Marx Library Auditorium.

While the story of how the various Ladies Memorial Associations put up Confederate monuments to enshrine the Lost Cause is relatively well known, less familiar is the 1913 boast of Julian Carr that he had “horse-whipped” a black woman within yards of the Confederate soldier’s statue at the University of North Carolina that he was then dedicating. Noting that the erection of Confederate monuments spiked in the 1910s and 1960s, Dr. Green suggested that such activities coincided with Klan activity and reaction against the Civil Rights Movement. The white supremacist agenda of Confederate commemoration is not difficult to unveil.

Dr. Green also described acts of resistance to Confederate monuments, such as black children singing “John Brown’s

Body” whenever passing them. Statues were sometimes pelted with rocks, prompting newspaper editorials to threaten vandals with lynching. Simultaneously, the Grand Army of the Republic and other groups sought to create monuments of their own, to honor the sacrifice of black troops who fought for the Union. Dr. Green has found a case of a Union widow in Hertford, North Carolina who dedicated private land for such a commemoration in 1910. During the lively discussion that followed, Dr. Green considered possible resolutions to monument controversies, which range from education, to the creation of more monuments to counter the Lost Cause narrative, to the gathering of Confederate monuments in designated places. Dr. Green’s very successful talk exemplified the historian’s unique ability to contextualize current events.



The Touching History of the USS Monitor

Personal History: Dr. Harry Miller

During a 2004 visit to Virginia to see my grandma, I dropped in at the Mariner’s Museum in Newport News and stumbled onto the USS Monitor turret in a desalinating pool in the back. I knew the turret had been raised two years earlier but didn’t know where it was.

It was very odd to behold the storied artifact that I’d seen countless times since childhood in paintings or primitive photographs. In such contexts, it was History. Now, it was a nondescript hunk of metal in an oversized kiddie pool in a junkyard. The weather was gray and misty, and there was no one around. I had the Monitor all to myself, and I tried to commune with it, to sense the History emanating from it, as it always did in books.

However, I felt nothing. With no long-dead naval officers posing around it for a long-dead photographer, enshrouded in no oil-painted smoke from its battle with

the Merrimack, the Monitor turret was stripped of its ancientness. It wasn’t really History. How could it have been? It was right in front of me, part of the mundane present tense. I could even take this cheap picture of it.

So of course, I went and did it: After looking around to make sure no one was watching, I reached into the tank and put my fingers on the rusted metal, hoping that the thrill of transgression would approximate the elusive thrill of touching the past. Maybe it did, because it sure felt icky. In fact, after only one second of contact, I became terrified that a skeleton hand would grab me by the wrist and pull me in, and I yanked my hand out of the water as fast as I could.

I shuddered. My teeth chattered. Was that the sensation I’d wanted?

I wiped my hand on my jeans and went in to the gift shop.



Spring 2020 History Courses

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| 101..... | HY of Western Civilization I (9 sections) |
| 102..... | HY of Western Civilization II (3 sections) |
| 104..... | HY of Asian Civilization II (Miller) |
| 135..... | US History to 1877 (11 sections) |
| 136..... | US History since 1877 (9 sections) |
| 228..... | Latin America (Urban) |
| 346..... | The Second World War (Messenger) |
| 357..... | Europe Since 1945 (Messenger) |
| 364..... | Islamic Civilization to 1453 (Williams) |
| 384..... | Japanese Film (Miller) |
| 390..... | Special Topics: The American Presidency (McWilliams) |
| 429..... | Studies in Latin American History: Black in Latin America; Slavery, Racism and Nation (Urban) |
| 433/533..... | The American Revolution (Hamilton) |
| 435/535..... | Civil War and Reconstruction (McKiven) |
| 441..... | Research Seminar in US History (Lombardo) |
| 457/557..... | Studies in European History: Gender and Society in Early Modern Europe (Cage) |
| 461/561..... | Studies in Asian History: The Westernization of Asia (Miller) |
| 498..... | Internship in History (Hamilton) |
| 499..... | Senior Honors Paper (Strong) |
| 555..... | History of Travel and Tourism (Strong) |
| 594..... | Directed Studies: Franco and Spanish Dictatorship (Messenger) |
| 594..... | Directed Studies: Contemporary Europe (Messenger) |
| 597..... | Professional Studies: Directed Field Research (Hamilton) |
| 598..... | Comp and Thesis Preparation (Hamilton) |



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