

History Happenings

*A newsletter published by the Department of History
The University of Memphis*

Vol. 6, no. 1

September 2009



Greetings from the Chair

This is my sixth year as chair of the History Department, and I am so proud to lead such an amazing group of people. As I tell everyone that I meet, the department's faculty is full of extraordinarily creative and productive scholars, accessible and caring teachers, and willing participants in the service of keeping this department thriving. It is a joy to work with them.

Over the past few years, we have hired new faculty members at the rate of two per year. They have brought to us their fresh ideas, energy, and commitment. This year, given the worsening economic situation, we hired just one new faculty member: Dr. Susan O'Donovan, a senior scholar who specializes in 19th-century Southern history, slavery, and emancipation. She has several books to her credit and an extraordinary resume of achievements, including eight years at Harvard University. On her way to our department this fall, she won a very prestigious fellowship to pursue her research at the Newberry Library in Chicago, so we will have to wait until next fall before she joins us in Memphis.

Two of our esteemed senior colleagues, Dr. Abraham Kriegel and Dr. Kell Mitchell, retired. For the next four years, they are only partially retired because of the university's post-retirement program, which allows us to have their services and expertise part-time.

Last fall we launched our History Online degree program. Students can now earn a B.A. in History from The University of Memphis from anywhere in the world. We are absolutely committed to supplying a quality education, whether in the classroom or in the online environment.

We have a broad array of students taking our classes. For many whose jobs prevent them from taking their courses on campus, it is their first opportunity to complete their degrees on their own time schedule and

from anywhere in the world. We have students who are serving in the military in Iraq and Afghanistan. Under a dual enrollment partnership between the University of Memphis and Three Gorges University in Yichang City, China, the students in China are taking their required American History courses online in our program.



The online environment gives us incredible flexibility. Faculty can teach online courses from anywhere in the world or from home while caring for young children. As we brace for a possible H1N1 flu epidemic, we are using the online environment to post class materials in the event that students (or faculty, for that matter) are unable to come to campus.

It is a wonderful time to be at The University of Memphis, despite budget woes. Our students seem to be brighter and more engaged every year; our graduate students make us proud to have trained and nurtured them; our alumni's accomplishments continue to reflect positively upon us; and our faculty members keep distinguishing themselves, the History Department, and the university.

In the pages that follow, you'll read about some of our great stories: the success of our esteemed alumnus Thomas Appleton; the awards for Beverly Bond, Bob Brown, and Jonathan Judaken; the experience at the Army War College for Doug Cupples; another fabulously successful conference in African American History put on by our graduate students; and the challenges and triumphs of one of our recent Ph.Ds, Horace Houston.

On a personal level, I am nearly halfway through the manuscript of my biography of aviation pioneer Phoebe Fairgrave Omlie, and Beverly Bond and I have begun work on two volumes about the history of The University of Memphis, which will be released in time

for our centennial celebration in 2012. One will be a paperback crammed with photographs; the other will be a large format, full color, coffee-table book containing the narrative history of the university, lavishly illustrated.

So many of our faculty members and graduate students have won awards, prizes, fellowships, and the like, that I urge you to consult this newsletter for the latest news and to frequently visit our terrific website: history.memphis.edu/. Better yet, make it your home page! Webmaster Dr. Maurice Crouse does an excellent job of keeping it constantly updated with all the news from the History Department.

We'd also like to feature you! Please send us your triumphs, announcements and personal stories.

If you are reading this online, please e-mail me, sherman@memphis.edu, with information about yourself and your contact information (especially your e-mail address) so we can keep in touch.

Sincerely,

Janann Sherman

An Outstanding Alumnus

Thomas Appleton, Jr. (B.A., Honors, 1971)

Dr. Thomas Appleton Jr., Professor of History at Eastern Kentucky University, will receive one of the Outstanding Alumni Awards from the College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Memphis at their annual awards dinner on October 1.

Dr. Appleton is being honored by the College of Arts and Sciences for his many distinguished achievements as a teacher, editor, and scholar. Best known for his work in southern history, especially on Kentucky, Appleton has contributed numerous essays, articles, and reviews to books and professional journals over a career that spans three decades. Mainstream media outlets like



Dr. Thomas Appleton Jr., winner of one of the Outstanding Alumni Awards from the College of Arts and Sciences

radio, television, and newspapers have also frequently turned to him over the years for his expertise and insights into regional history.

Dr. Appleton, a Memphis native, graduated from East High School and began his undergraduate studies at what was then Memphis State University in 1967. A double major in history and modern foreign languages, he received his Bachelor of Arts degree with honors in 1971. He considers his rigorous training at Memphis State instrumental to his later success in the doctoral program at the University of Kentucky, where he received his Ph.D. in history in 1981. Appleton remembers advanced courses he took with Dr. James Chumney and Dr. Edward Skeen as particularly important to focusing his interests on southern and early American history.

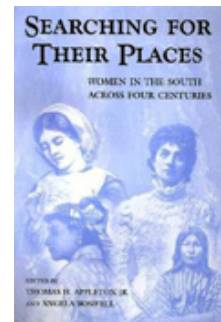
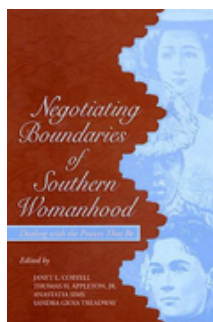
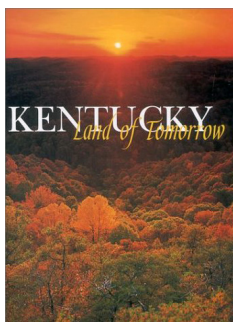
The co-editor of five books on southern history, as well as of the ongoing project *The Public Papers of the Governors of Kentucky*, Appleton served for over a decade as editor-in-chief of the Kentucky Historical Society's Publications Department. Prior to that, he was the long-time managing editor of the state's historical journal, the *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*.

Most of the time he was working in these capacities, Appleton was also teaching history in local colleges, including the University of Kentucky, as a lecturer or visiting professor. In 2000 he was appointed professor of history at Eastern Kentucky University, which is a short drive from his home in Lexington. For many years, however, editorial work was his "bread-and-butter." Appleton fondly recalls the time he spent in his various editorial capacities, now saying of that wide-ranging service that "I became a 'public historian' just as the term was registering on most people's radar."

Dr. Appleton has been active in regional and national historical organizations during his career, such as the Social Science History Association, the Ohio Valley History Conference, the Society for Historians of the Early Republic, and the Southern Historical Association (SHA). He has been especially active in the SHA, serving it on numerous committees over the years. He remains a determined champion of the organization, which he encourages graduate students to join. Appleton himself joined the SHA while doing his graduate work in history at the University of Kentucky. Not only does the SHA subsidize sharply reduced rates for student memberships, he notes, but its lively annual conferences are a great way for young scholars to network with peers and meet new colleagues. "Most of the real fun goes on in the corridors," he says of the meeting, "not in the program sessions." He went to his first SHA meeting in 1979 and was disappointed when his twenty-five-year attendance streak was interrupted in 2004.

Dr. Appleton has also been notably active in southern women's history, which was the focus of two of his edited volumes for the University of Missouri Press. Besides such scholarship, Appleton has worked for many years to help bring more women into the profession, particularly through his service to the Southern Association of Women Historians, a group he joined soon after its founding in the early 1980s.

Several current and former faculty members will be on hand at the awards dinner on October 1 to represent the entire Department of History in extending their sincere congratulations to Dr. Appleton for his well-deserved receipt of the Outstanding Alumni Award.



Teaching Greatness

What makes a great teacher? Is it an ability to inspire students, to make them envision new possibilities? Is it to provoke them, to push them beyond their comfortable boundaries? Is it to lend them role models, to provide them templates for success as thinkers and citizens? Our department is endowed with a variety of talented teachers. They may adopt different approaches, but they find effective ways to engage students and our broader intellectual community. The University of Memphis has recognized the Department of History's particular talents with a spate of recent awards.

On April 3, 2009, Dr. Beverly Bond won the Martin Luther King Jr. Human Rights Award. This annual honor, selected by a committee after examining multiple nominations, goes to a person who has benefited human relations at the university and in the community, embodying the ideals of Dr. King. Dr. Bond received her plaque from the previous year's winner, Memphis community activist Ms. Velma Jones.



Dr. Bond and Ms. Velma Jones, the 2009 and 2008 winners of the Martin Luther King Human Rights Award

In her remarks, Dr. Bond enlightened the audience with tales of growing up in Memphis, recalling the ways that her family resisted the indignities of a Jim Crow society. She also recognized her many family members, friends, sorority

sisters, students, and colleagues who came to wish her well. Dr. Bond is an associate professor and the director of the African and African American Studies Program. She received her Ph.D. from The University of Memphis in 1996, finishing a dissertation that investigates African American women in the Memphis region from 1820 to the early 1900s. She is the co-author of such books as *Memphis in Black and White* and *Images of America: Beale Street* (both with Janann Sherman); and *Tennessee Women: Their Lives and Times* (with Sarah Wilkerson-Freeman).

Most important, Dr. Bond enriches the community as a teacher of courses in African American History, as a mentor to graduate students, and as a university leader. "Dr. Bond is a very supportive and readily accessible teacher and advisor. I have grown so much under her tutelage," says Le'Trice Donaldson, a Ph.D. candidate in the department. Hope Smith, the assistant director of Interdisciplinary Studies, adds that "Dr. Bond has taught me to acknowledge and cherish our differences, while finding common ground upon which to stand." Through her friendship with Dr. Bond, she has found the courage to accept Dr. King's plea: "You cannot walk alone."

On August 27, 2009, at the College of Arts and Sciences faculty meeting, the Department of History racked up another honor: Dr. Jonathan Judaken won a Dunavant Professorship, a three-year financial award to support a professor's research. The program is endowed by a generous donor, Memphis entrepreneur William Dunavant. Dr. Judaken is an associate professor of history who specializes in Modern Europe, intellectual and cultural history, and theories of prejudice and anti-racism.

Dr. Judaken is among the university's sharpest and most prolific scholars. He is the author of *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question: Anti-antisemitism and the Politics of the French Intellectual* and editor of two essay collections: *Race After Sartre: Antiracism, Africana Existentialism, Postcolonialism* and *Naming Race, Naming Racisms*. A third edited work (with Robert Bernasconi) is currently in press at Columbia University, entitled *Situating Existentialism*. He recently served as a scholar in residence at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, where he worked on his next monograph, *Critical Theories of Antisemitism*. He is

also the consulting editor for the journal *Patterns of Prejudice* and co-president of the North American Sartre Society.



**Dr. Judaken, Dunavant University Professor
of the Humanities**

A colleague in modern European history, Dr. Dan Unowsky, notes Dr. Judaken's impressive scholarly output. He points out how Dr. Judaken has assumed the directorship of the Marcus Orr Humanities Center, launching an ambitious series of lectures and conferences designed to stimulate cross-disciplinary, community-wide dialogue about intellectual matters that shape everyday life. "At the same time," Unowsky reminds us, "he has not forgotten the central mission of the department and the university: educating students in the skills they will need in our increasingly interconnected world." Indeed, Dr. Judaken teaches challenging, stimulating courses on such topics as anti-Semitism, modern France, genocide, globalism, and European cultural and intellectual history. Michael Lejman, a Ph.D. candidate in modern European history, particularly admires how "Dr. Judaken possesses the rare ability to produce highly complex scholarship while working closely with graduate students and teaching clearly to undergraduates."

At the same meeting where Dr. Judaken won the Dunavant Professorship, Dr. Walter "Bob" Brown won the W. Russell Smith Award for Teaching Excellence, the highest honor for teaching distinction in the College of Arts and Sciences. Established in 1981, the award is based primarily on nominations by seniors who are asked to nominate up to three of their professors who have taught for at least three years in the College.

Dr. Brown teaches courses in early modern European history, and despite his own research on the decorative arts

and material culture, his courses often blur the boundaries separating cultural, political, social, and intellectual history. A man of consummate grace, he also demands high standards. He devotes considerable, personal attention to each student and each piece of submitted written work. Will Love, a current graduate student at Emory University who earned his M.A. at The University of Memphis, believes that "in an age where scholarship is king and teaching is secondary, it is refreshing to work with a teacher who embodies both qualities so well. He demands academic excellence without personally attacking the student who falls short of excellence. He takes a personal interest in students without sacrificing pedagogical merit." He calls Dr. Brown "the true embodiment of a mentor."

Dr. Brown is also the assistant chair of the department and the undergraduate coordinator. He serves as adviser for hundreds of majors in the Department of History. His fellow adviser, Dr. Kell Mitchell, admires not only his colleague's impeccable record-keeping, but also his sense of humor and generous spirit: "I know firsthand having the office next door that at times he will spend hours talking with an advisee. His advice is considered, careful and infused with experience. He clearly is one of the best advisers on campus."

Drs. Bond, Judaken, and Brown make this campus a better place, because they enhance the experience of so many students, colleagues, and community members. We salute them.



**Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Henry Kurtz with Dr.
Brown, winner of the W. Russell Smith Award for Teaching
Excellence.**

Breaking Bread, Sharing Knowledge

By Douglas W. Cupples

This summer I was invited and privileged to attend the 55th National Security Seminar at the United States Army War College. Although I do not know why I was selected, I learned that most new members are nominated by alumni or other individuals associated with the college. Invitations to new members (approximately 170) are offered annually to a diverse cross-section of American society. The Army War College was founded in 1901 by Secretary of War Elihu Root. Root's goal was not to promote war, but to preserve peace through intelligent and adequate preparation to repel aggression. From its beginning the College focused on preparing senior army officers to serve in upper leadership positions. The goal was to educate the senior officer corps for high command and strategic planning.

I left Memphis on May 29 for Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on Amtrak via Chicago and Pittsburgh. The day-and-a-half journey gave me time to rest and catch up on some reading. During my layover in Chicago I visited the Art Institute, which was only a mile from Union Station. A civilian representative from the War College was at the Harrisburg station to meet me. I also met two fellow New Members, a New York investment banker and a New Jersey community college history teacher. Upon our arrival and check-in, I began meeting other members as we gathered for dinner. Most of us did not know how we came to be nominated, but we were all eager for the venture. The diversity of our group was striking. Among them was the press secretary for Congressman Patrick Kennedy, *Newsweek* contributing editor Eleanor Clift, and *Wall Street Journal* columnist Peggy Noonan.



Colonel Patricia Frost and Dr. Cupples

The Seminar began early Monday morning, when we were transported the short distance to Root Hall on the Carlisle Barracks campus. Waiting to meet me was my escort, Colonel Patricia Frost, a ROTC-commissioned second-generation army officer branched in military intelligence. The New Members were assigned to one of the twenty seminars already in progress for ten months. Each seminar consisted of the faculty lead and approximately sixteen students (either lieutenant colonels or colonels) from the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. There were also civilian government employees and two international officers of comparable rank. For the resident students this was the capstone week in the program, resulting in the Master of Strategic Studies degree. I was assigned to Seminar 13 along with five other New Members. My colleagues consisted of a high school guidance counselor, an attorney, an orthopedic surgeon, an independent businessman, and a retiree. The faculty lead, an army colonel, holds a Ph.D. in Colonial American History.

After introductions and an orientation to the program, we reconvened with the other seminars for the keynote address of the day. These major presentations always allowed ample time for questions and answers, and they set the theme for seminar discussions in the late morning and afternoon sessions. Four different noontime lectures by resident faculty members were available following lunch, from which we could choose one to attend. At one of the noontime lectures I reconnected with a former professor who served on my M.A. degree comprehensive examination and thesis committees, Dr. Max G. Manwaring.

The Monday presentation was by General Barry McCaffrey on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Subsequent presenters included Dr. Richard Betts of Columbia University, ACLU president Susan Herman, and a former Democratic Congressman from Indiana, the Hon. Lee Hamilton. Each presentation was timely and informative. The evening

hours were reserved for social activities in which all seminar members often continued to discuss the day's topics. An outdoor reception at the commanding general's residence offered entertainment by the U.S. Army Chorus. At the semi-formal dinner on Thursday evening the Army Jazz Band performed. Another highlight of the week was a guided tour of the Gettysburg Battlefield by a certified guide.



Dr. Cupples (front row, second from left) with his seminar group

Prior to our departure on Friday afternoon, the National Security Seminar Director, Colonel Walter F. Leech (USAF), made personal contact with each of the new members and solicited their input for future development of the seminar. In summary, my visit to the Army War College National Security was an enlightening and educational experience. It was well

organized and the presentations were topical, stimulating and, at times, provocative. Another benefit for me was the opportunity to make new friends and colleagues. During the week our knowledge was expanded through our discussions of their life experiences in addition to the scheduled topics. As we said our “goodbyes” there seemed to be a common theme most of us shared, and that was we looked forward to the next time we could break bread and share a glass of wine, and resume the discussion where we had left it.

Local Conference, Global Significance

For the past eleven years The University of Memphis has hosted a unique event: an academic conference designed especially for graduate students, focusing especially on African American history. It has attracted budding scholars from prestigious institutions throughout the nation and the world, and it has showcased renowned keynote speakers such as the historians Carol Anderson, John Dittmer, Wilma King, and Dan Littlefield. The conference is organized by the Graduate Association for African American History, a registered student organization that also hosts a film festival and various charity endeavors every academic year.

The University of Memphis hosted the eleventh annual Graduate Student Conference in African American History on September 9-11, 2009. The panels, held in

the Entertainment Lobby of the Rose Theatre, featured such diverse topics as “Labor, Rights, and Resistance”; “Identity in the Black Diaspora”; “Myth, Memory, and the African American Past”; and “African Americans in the Military.” Participants hailed from such institutions as Vanderbilt University, the University of Pennsylvania, Louisiana State University, New York University, the University of Georgia, and the University of Wuerzburg in Germany.

The highlight of the conference was the keynote address by Dr. Clayborne Carson, Professor of History at Stanford University, Founding Director of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute, and Distinguished Professor and Executive Director of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Collection at Morehouse College. Dr. Carson

entitled his lecture “The Global Significance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.” He emphasized King’s international stature by starting with a short film about staging a play about the great leader in China, an endeavor that included a trip to the key sites of the civil rights struggle by the play’s Chinese participants.



Dr. Clayborne Carson and GAAAH President Sheena Harris

Dr. Carson related his own unusual journey as director of the King Institute. The author of a groundbreaking 1980 study on the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, he had concluded that King factored little into grass roots change in the South during the civil rights era. He believed that the movement’s contours would have looked similar if Dr. King had never lived. So when Coretta Scott King asked him to man the massive undertaking of editing King’s papers, he replied, “I don’t think you’ve got the right person.”

Yet over time, Dr. Carson has developed a deep and sincere appreciation for King’s centrality – not just to the civil rights movement, but to a broader struggle for human justice. As early as his iconic 1955 address to kick-start the Montgomery Bus Boycott, King saw global significance in the African American struggle. As he told the enraptured audience at the Holt Street Baptist Church: “Right here in Montgomery when the history books are written in the future, somebody will have to say ‘There lived a race of people, black people . . . who had the moral courage to stand up for their rights.’ And thereby they injected a new meaning into the veins of history and of civilization. And we’re gonna do that. God grant that we will do it before it’s too late.”

Another highlight of the conference was the concluding session, a roundtable discussion about graduate school and the historical profession, moderated by the department’s own Dr. Dennis Laumann and featuring two alumnae of the graduate student conference: Dr. Deirdre Cooper Owens (Assistant Professor, University of Mississippi) and Dr. Sowande’ Mustakeem (Mellon Post-Doctoral Fellow in History, Washington University in St. Louis). The willingness of Drs. Cooper-Owens and Mustakeem to give back to the conference speaks to the value of this unique event.

Ultimately, however, the conference centered around the graduate students themselves. It concluded with the presentation of the “Memphis State Eight” prize, given to the best papers in the conference, in honor of the eight courageous African American men and women who integrated the university in 1959. The first-place prize went to Kimberly Sambol-Tosco of the University of Pennsylvania for “The Dilemma of Black Families and Households: A Reconsideration of the Transition to Freedom among African-Americans in the North before the Civil War.” Second prize went to Kevin Boland Johnson of Mississippi State University for “Taking It to the Streets: Garbage Men, the Memphis Crises of 1968, and Problems with Trash Collection.” Third prize went to Kyle Ainsworth of the University of Southern Mississippi for “The Harbinger of White Supremacy: The Clarke Courier, 1869-1877.”



Sheena Harris, Dr. Sowande’ Mustakeem, Shirletta Kinchen, and Dr. Deirdre Cooper Owens

Reflections on Finishing

By Horace Houston

Upon finishing my dissertation, I was surprised to experience less of the traditional wild elation and more of an unexpected sadness. During the last nine months of my program, spurred on to finish by the encouragement of my upbeat chairman, Charles Crawford, I had worked with great intensity. I was blessed to have a wife and children willing to tolerate the inordinate demands on my time and energy. After I finished, another member of our faculty generously shared that he had wept almost uncontrollably the day he turned in his dissertation and all the final paperwork for his degree. Perhaps my initial reaction was not that unusual after all. Teaching as an adjunct has helped me enjoy a new focus as I explore future possibilities.

I cherished the way my dissertation topic engaged some of my ultimate concerns and deepest beliefs. My work on the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 connected with my core values about human dignity, human freedom, and social justice. I was also fascinated with the way men and women in the nineteenth century, especially those in the church, struggled to come to terms with a law that was profoundly unjust. My original mentor, Ed Skeen, was extraordinarily patient and supportive as I wrestled my way towards a deeper appreciation of my subject.

We all need our “Aha!” moments of discovery. Once, during an early research project, I finally located the crucial text of a Vermont statute on a microform in our library. I was so excited that I jumped up from my chair in front of the mechanical microform reader and did a victory dance. Having been trained to “shelf-snoop” in a research course by Maurice Crouse, I discovered in the Rhodes College library an older, once definitive, two-volume biography of Webster I had overlooked in my computerized searches. The author identified a letter written by Webster, one among hundreds that I had seen but ignored, as the senator’s formal defense of his position on my topic. This time I was rendered speechless with delight and gratitude. Such successes helped build my confidence and kept me going.

During my last year, two breakthroughs occurred. Robert Gudmestad, my non-resident dissertation committee member, helped me recognize the close connection during the nineteenth century between attitudes about slavery and attitudes about the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. I concluded it was impossible to appreciate the opposition to the new law without understanding the pro-slavery and the pro-rendition arguments. The result was four new chapters. During my final year, I also became profoundly uncomfortable with the meager attention I had managed to give the many important black abolitionists. In the life and works of Frederick Douglass, I discovered the firsthand testimony of a former fugitive slave and the fiery rhetoric of a passionate activist, a gifted editor, and a preeminent orator. When I discovered Douglass’ direct link with the violent resistance at Christiana, Pennsylvania, I felt confirmed in the new path I had charted.



Dr. Horace Houston (at left in photo) wrote his dissertation on “The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850: Reaction and Resistance” under the direction of Dr. Charles W. Crawford. He is pictured with fellow Ph.D. Joshua Gorman, who wrote his dissertation on “Museums and the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma” under the direction of Dr. James E. Fickle.