



Department of History

THE OWL



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History Department

75 University Ave W.

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

N2L 3C5

Tel: (519) 884-0710 x3389

<www.wlu.ca/arts/history>

Words of Welcome

Welcome to the tenth issue of *The Owl*, the annual newsletter of the History Department at Wilfrid Laurier University's Waterloo campus. Thanks to all who have contacted us in response to previous issues; please keep those letters and e-mails coming in. We especially love to hear from our former students.

Owl Trivia #10:

Did you know that the collective noun for a group of owls is a "parliament"?

Interview

Dr Kandace Bogaert joined the History Department this year as the second Cleghorn Fellow in War and Society, a two-year appointment that involves teaching in the History Department and contributing to the activities of the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies (LCMSDS). Her current research focuses on soldier deaths by suicide during and following the First World War as well as soldier mortality during the 1918 influenza pandemic. The Owl sat down with her recently to ask her to reflect on her first year at Laurier and discuss her future plans.



: *What did you do before coming to Laurier?*

KB: My path to the History Department and the LCMSDS started at the University of Toronto in Scarborough, where I majored in Anthropology. At UTSC I was fortunate to have an extraordinary mentor in Dr Lawrence Sawchuk, whose research focused on health and disease in Gibraltar's colonial past. I blame Larry for getting me hooked on one of his favourite disease outbreaks – the devastating 1918 influenza pandemic. After a number of summers studying the 'flu as Larry's research assistant, I too was captivated. Larry was able to track down a huge array of archival records – held in national archives and small local parishes – to create amazingly detailed reconstructions of life and death in Gibraltar, in part because of the fact that it was a British garrison for so long. My attention was already starting to turn to the wealth of historical data collected on military populations. This experience led me to explore the 1918 influenza pandemic among soldiers in Canada in my graduate studies with Dr Ann Herring at McMaster University. I then became a post-doctoral research fellow at the LCMSDS with Dr. Mark Humphries, where I utilized the skills I had developed from examining the 1918 influenza pandemic to look at First World War veterans' pension files and the post-war challenges they faced.

(cont. on pg. 2)

(cont. from pg. 1)

 So, what originally got you interested in Canadian Military History?

KB: I never thought I would pursue military history, but like the 1918 influenza pandemic, it pulls you in. There is such a wealth of data collected on soldier populations that are often not available for civilian populations. During the First World War, the Canadian military maintained detailed, nominal administrative records on each soldier, including hospital admissions, medical board reports, letters, and even pension applications after the war, creating a paper trail that followed individuals in some cases from enlistment to death. Since the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) was comprised of civilians, studying soldiers and their families can also provide a window into society at large.

 What did you teach this year, and what are you scheduled to teach next year?

KB: This year I taught a number of courses close to my research interests, including a third-year course exploring war trauma in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) from the First World War to Afghanistan, a third-year digital humanities course on electronic editing and publishing, and a fourth-year reading and research seminar on the history of infectious disease. A few highlights include field trips to the Laurier Library and Archives, exciting guest lecturers, and watching students develop and hone their own research skills.

For next year I am especially looking forward to teaching a truly awesome new third-year



course called “From Cradle to Grave: Historical Demography,” where students will explore long term changes in patterns of human mortality, disease, and fertility, and investigate the history of the Kitchener-Waterloo region through historical census data and exploring local cemeteries. In lectures, we will also work on honing our skills in Microsoft Excel by mining and analyzing historical data from Stats Canada.

I am also looking forward to teaching two second-year courses covering broad stretches of military history, including HI220: “From Knights to the Thin Red Line” and HI230: “War and Society in the Modern West.”

 What are your current research interests and what are you working on at the moment?

KB: Right now I am working on two areas of research, including soldier deaths by suicide during and immediately following the First World War, and soldier deaths from the 1918 influenza pandemic. I want to answer a number of questions including the following: How were soldier deaths by suicide understood by soldiers, medical practitioners, and family

members in the early 20th century? What does this conceptual framework reveal about Canadian society, and the history of psychiatry and mental illness? What happened to families when a soldier died from influenza? Why were some soldiers more at risk of dying during the 1918 flu pandemic than others? Both of these lines of inquiry rely on first identifying soldier deaths through mortality registers compiled by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), so they actually are fairly complementary projects. And with the digitized pension files of soldiers at the LCMSDS, I can dive even deeper into individual lives in the past.

 Can you tell us more about the LCMSDS’ collection of digitized soldiers’ pension files?

KB: Yes – I am so glad you asked this question, since these files form such a wonderful collection, and more people should know about them! Over the past few years Laurier historians Mark Humphries, Cynthia Commachio and Terry Copp — assisted by numerous student research assistants — have digitized more than 200,000 Canadian veterans’ pensions as part of their SSHRC-funded “Through Veterans’ Eyes” project. These files cover First World War veterans’ experiences from enlistment, to military service and discharge from the army, and to death in many cases. They often contain letters and statements made by veterans themselves and offer an unparalleled glimpse into veterans’ lives and experiences. For more information you can check out their website <http://www.throughveteranseyes.ca/>.

I feel so lucky to have ended up at Laurier. Go Golden Hawks!

Bright Job Prospects for History Graduates!

Over the past few years the History Department has hosted a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/LaurierHistoryDepartment/>), managed by **Dr. Amy Milne-Smith** and **Dr. Dana Weiner**, where we provide information of interest aimed especially at our History majors and alumni.

For example, in April we posted a link to a recent article by a History graduate, Amanda Ruggieri at the BBC, who argues for the value of a liberal arts degree in today's economy by citing a number of experts in business, journalism and education. One of these experts is George Anders, an American business journalist and bestselling author.

Here are some excerpts:

George Anders is convinced we have the humanities in particular all wrong. When he was a technology reporter for "Forbes" from 2012 to 2016, he says Silicon Valley "was consumed with this idea that there was no education but STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering, Math] education". But when he talked to hiring managers at the biggest tech companies, he found a different reality. "Uber was picking up psychology majors to deal with unhappy riders and drivers. Opentable was hiring English majors to bring data to restaurateurs to get them excited about what data could do for their restaurants...."

"I realised that the ability to communicate and get along with people, and understand what's on other people's minds, and do full-strength critical thinking – all of these things were valued and appreciated by everyone as important job skills, except the media."

For more, see Anders' 2017 book *You Can Do Anything: The Surprising Power of a "Useless" Liberal Arts Education* (Little, Brown & Company).

We also regularly post a blog on our Facebook page from The Canadian Historical Association that highlights many different career outcomes for History graduates: <https://historydegreediplomehistoire.blog/>

Exciting New History Courses for Next Year

Who says historians are stuck in the past?! Laurier's History Department faculty are continuously developing new courses. For example, two new third-year courses will debut in Winter term of 2020:

HI357: "Selling History: Business & Corporate Heritage" with **Dr. David Smith** — Why are many businesses interested in their own histories? Students will use case studies to investigate how corporate heritage and historical knowledge shape business behavior and strategy. These investigations will lead to a deeper understanding of how historical meaning creates value for customers, employees, and local communities, as well as familiarity with the ethics of using historical research for

corporate purposes. The course will include experiential learning components with a private sector partner to provide real-world insight into how corporate history is transformed into corporate heritage.

HI358: "The Afterlife in Ancient and Medieval Thought" with **Dr. Judith Fletcher** — A survey of historical beliefs in the afterlife, covering the Ancient Near East, the Greco-Roman world, and Medieval societies. Topics may include the geography of the underworld.

We will also be offering a number of new Special Topics courses that are expected to become regular offerings as well:

HI299j: Aztecs, Inca, Maya" with **Dr. Karljürgen Feuerherm**

— This course will study pre-contact ancient Meso- and South American cultures, with prominence given to one or more of the following: Aztecs, Inca, and Maya. Emphasis will be placed on architecture, religion, social organization, and values.

HI347g: "Pirates of the Caribbean" with **Dr. Jeff Grischow** — Who were the real pirates of the Caribbean? This course seeks to provide an answer by surveying the history of Caribbean piracy from the French corsairs of the 1500s to the last of the pirates in the 19th century. Through a combination of primary and secondary sources, films and other media, we will examine the roots of piracy, the motivations of the pirates, and their impact on Caribbean and world history.

History Travel Courses

In recent years a growing number of Laurier History students have had many diverse opportunities to enhance their study of the past through travel courses.

For well over a decade, hundreds of History students and alumni have gone to France and Belgium on War and Memory Battlefield Tours hosted by the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies (LCMSDS), led by **Prof. Terry Copp** (retired), **Dr. Roger Sarty**, and **Dr. Mark Humphries**, as well as affiliated faculty from the University of Waterloo, the Royal Military College, and elsewhere.

We have also offered a number of summer travel courses for credit. For example, in 2011 **Dr. Len Friesen** took 15 students in his senior seminar (HI411) to Russia, in 2014 **Dr. Blaine Chiasson** led 10 students in his third-year course (HI399) to China and Taiwan, and in 2016 **Dr. Gavin Brockett** took 12 students to Israel/Palestine as part of a second-year course.

This year **Dr. Eva Plach** is repeating the very successful travel course she organized and taught in Spring 2017: “Into that Darkness: Poland, WWII and the Holocaust.” Ten Laurier history students will soon be going with Dr. Plach to Poland along with ten students and a professor from Nipissing University in North Bay. They will spend a week in Krakow before moving on to the Lublin region and Warsaw, visiting a number of museums, cemeteries, memorials, and camps.

Another mode of student travel courses is connected to Laurier’s Residence Learning Community (RLC) program. Our first RLC, called “Vimy Hall,” was followed



The 2018 travel course to England, including students from the 2017/18 Ancient Studies/Medieval Studies Residence Learning Community: “Camelot Hall”, at the Corbridge Roman Ruins, Northumberland

by a travel course to France and Belgium that was led by **Dr. Mark Humphries**.

That RLC was followed in 2015/16 and 2016/17 by “Pirate Hall,” whose students took **Dr. Jeff Grischow’s** HI127: “Pirates! A World History” and then had the opportunity to take his second-year travel course to Puerto Rico to study slavery and piracy in the Spanish Empire.

In 2017/18 the History Department’s Ancient Studies program teamed up with the Medieval & Medievalism Studies program to host an RLC entitled “Camelot Hall” focusing on Ancient Roman Britain and Early Anglo-Saxon and Viking England. The required course for the RLC students was HI121: “Ancient History in a Global Context”, taught in Fall term by **Prof. Alicia McKenzie**, who then led a travel course to England in Spring 2018, which included visits to Roman sites like Bath and Hadrian’s Wall (see photo above), and Anglo-Saxon sites such as Lindesfarne and Jarrow, as well as the British Museum, the Museum of London, and the Ashmolean.

This year’s History Department RLC was on the subject of Great Battles in History. Students in “Battle Hall” all took **Dr. Darryl Dee’s** HI123: “Great Battles in History” and then had the opportunity of taking his travel course to France and Belgium in Intersession 2019: “Great Battles in History and Memory”. The itinerary for Dr. Dee’s class will include the actual battlefield where Napoleon literally “met his Waterloo” and Normandy for visits to the D-Day landing sites and the Bayeux Tapestry, an 11th-century artifact that recounts the Norman invasion of England in 1066, as well as Paris, where they will visit a number of key memorials and museums for the study of military history.

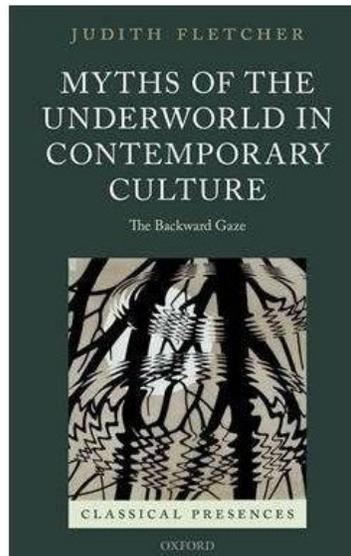
The History Department has also sponsored travel opportunities within Canada or in the US, such as **Dr. David Monod’s** research trip in 2016 to New York City, where a number of students who had taken his third-year course on American cultural history worked for him as paid research assistants for his research project on the history of Vaudeville.

Teaching & Research Symbiosis

*We are often asked to explain how our historical research informs our teaching and how our teaching influences our research. In this column we showcase one of the many examples from Laurier's History Department where our teaching and research intersect. In the last two issues of *The Owl* we highlighted the work of **Dr. Mark Humphries** and **Dr. Darren Mulloy** in this column.*

Dr. Judith Fletcher, who teaches in the History Department's Ancient Studies program, recently published her new book on ancient visions of the underworld and how they still resonate in today's culture.

Published by Oxford University Press, *Myths of the Underworld in Contemporary Culture: The Backward Gaze* connects with two of Prof. Fletcher's courses, HI261: "The Ancient World in Contemporary Culture," and her new course, HI358: "The Afterlife in Ancient and Medieval Thought." (See course description on pg. 3.)



In her new book Dr. Fletcher examines a series of fictional works of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that are based upon Greco-Roman *catabasis* myths which relate the journey of a hero to the underworld. Covering a range of genres such as novels, comics, and children's stories written by major authors including A.S. Byatt, Elena Ferrante, Neil Gaiman, Toni Morrison, Anne Patchett, and Salman Rushdie,

Fletcher demonstrates how the concept of life after death, and stories involving the living visiting the dead, continue to fascinate modern readers as authors re-imagine the ancient descent myths in various creative ways.

Beginning with a detailed overview of how the descent myth was presented by such major ancient authors as Homer, Aristophanes, Vergil, and Ovid, Dr. Fletcher then explores the ways their narratives of visits to Hades by the heroes Odysseus, Aeneas, Orpheus, and Persephone have been adapted by contemporary storytellers to appeal to modern readers, including themes such as social marginalization and the precarious lives of exiles and refugees.

She also argues that the revival of classical stories of the underworld can pose a challenge to the traditional literary canon by employing popular media such as comic books, children's literature, and even rock music.

Student-Faculty Bowling & Lasertag Nights

Last Fall the History Students' Association (HSA) hosted this social event for students and faculty (see pg. 6). **Dr. Blaine Chiasson** & **Dr. Roger Sarty** (pictured below) had so much fun that they came once again along with 5 or 6 other faculty when the HSA reiterated this successful event in Winter term.



The History Students' Association (HSA)

Report from the President of the HSA for 2018/19, Cameron Baer:

I am confident in saying that this past year has been one of the most successful for the Association. Member engagement and turnout has been the highest I've ever seen, no doubt in answer to the wonderful catalogue of events the HSA executive has worked tirelessly to see through to the end. Probably our most popular event of the year was our double feature of bowling and laser tag at Kingpin Bowling, featuring some of Laurier's own professors from the History Department (see photos on pg. 5).

Popular as that event was, my own personal favorite would have to be our V-E Day Dance, hosted in the newly-renovated Turret Nightclub, in association with Hepcat Swing Dance and Music Studio. Our second attempt at a dance formal after last year's Dance with Dragons, the combination of venue, song,

and dance, as well as the scale of the event, made it one of the most gratifying experiences of the year.

Other events included tried-and-true favourites like Meet the Profs, always a well-received chance for students to engage with the faculty outside of the academic setting. Academic events of the year included "Truth, Reconciliation, and Archaeology," a lecture from **Paul Racher**, past president of the Ontario Archaeological Society. Thanks goes to Association executive **Catherine Racher** for facilitating this talk on an increasingly crucial part of the field!

And, of course, I cannot neglect mentioning our annual Remembrance Day ceremony, which included words from **Dr. Kandace Bogaert**, as well as bilingual readings of "In Flanders Fields" by **Stephanie Plante** and **David McMurray**, Vice-President of Student Affairs.

2019 marks not only the end of my undergraduate experience at Laurier, but also the end of my time with the History Students' Association, as it does for most of my teammates. I have been involved with this club from my first year at Laurier and it has been an irreplaceable part of my university experience. It is through the Association that I have made longstanding friends.

I have had the honour of representing the Association, the department, and the student body. I have had this fantastic opportunity to bring Laurier's history student community together to enhance their Laurier experience. To all my teammates, from this and years past, and to the faculty: working with you was an honour and a privilege. To the incoming president, **Stephanie Plante**, and executive: I wish you all the best, and I am certain you will do the Association, the department, and the student body proud.

C. Baer

Student Research Assistant Opportunities in History

Qualified History students at Laurier can gain not only valuable experience but also income by working as a Research Assistant (RA) on a faculty member's funded research project. This year four History faculty were awarded either a major research grant from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and/or an internal grant, that all include funding for RA positions for Laurier students.

Dr. Amy Milne-Smith won a SSHRC Insight Grant for her

project: "Before Shell Shock: Madness and Mental Health in the British Army, 1857-1914."

Dr. Chris Nighman also won a SSHRC Insight Grant for his digital humanities project: "Completion of the First Phase & Launch of the Second Phase of the *Chrysostomus Latinus in Iohannem* Online (CLIO) Project."

Dr. Jeff Grischow won a SSHRC Partnership Development Grant as a co-applicant for a multi-university project called "Fostering

Equitable Education Systems for those with Disabilities: A Canada-Ghana Partnership for Addressing Indicators of Inclusive Education and Building Training Networks."

Dr. Milne-Smith also won an internal research grant from Laurier's Office of Research Services for her project "Policing in the Shadow of Jack the Ripper," and **Dr. David Smith** won an internal grant for his project: "Using Machine-Learning Software to Digitize the Records of Britain's Smuggling Inquiry of 1733."

In Memoriam

Since the last issue of *The Owl* Laurier's History Department has lost two dear colleagues and friends who will be long remembered and sadly missed.

Dr. George Urbaniak was born in England in 1952, moving to Canada in 1966. He received his PhD from the University of Toronto in 1985 and joined the Department of History at Wilfrid Laurier University in 1987 from the University of Windsor.

He was promoted to associate professor in 1993, and chaired the History department, with great distinction and good humour, from 2000 to 2005. Urbaniak was a specialist in European international relations in the years 1890 to 1948, with a particular interest in the histories of Poland, Belarus, Ukraine and the Baltic States, and all aspects of the history of World War One.

He was an extraordinarily gifted and committed teacher, who inspired both his colleagues and generations of students. Urbaniak's rigorous, entertaining and deeply-informed courses *Europe Transformed: Empire, Revolution and War, 1870-18* (HI108), *the Age of Extremes: Europe's 20th Century* (HI109), and *the History of International Relations* (HI348 & HI349) were among the most highly sought after undergraduate courses in the Faculty of Arts.

George also supervised and taught a great number of graduate students. He was the kind of professor that, for those who took his classes, never forgot and he was invariably delighted to run into old students (most of whom he remembered and could still name).



Dr. Michael Sibalis was a prolific historian with a remarkable range of scholarly interests, making significant contributions to the histories of homosexuality, the police under Napoleon, and the early nineteenth-century French working class. Born in Montréal in 1949, he graduated from McGill University in 1970 and took a doctorate from Concordia University in 1979. He taught at numerous universities across Canada before joining Laurier's History Department in 1991.

A student of the great social historian George Rudé, Sibalis first broke into print with a series of articles on French laborers, workers' organizations, and Fourierism — a set of economic, political, and social beliefs developed by Charles Fourier. A life-long fascination with Napoleon led him to produce studies of the development of a police state during the First Empire. In the late 1990s he made yet another scholarly shift to become one of the pioneers in the history of French homosexuality. At the time of his death, he was working on a book on gay Paris.



Sibalis' range as a scholar was matched by the exceptional breadth of his teaching. At Laurier, generations of history students passed through his survey of modern European history. He also taught courses on the history of Paris, Napoleon and Napoleonic France, Vichy France, sex and sexuality, and war and society.

Not just a French historian, Michael was also a Parisian. He arrived as a young doctoral student in the middle of the 1970s, first settling in Montparnasse before moving to his beloved Marais, where he lived for almost twenty-five years. During this time, he did not just chronicle the profound transformations in gay life occurring in the city; he participated in them. Sibalis was never happier than when wandering the streets of Paris, preferably with a friend, as a long summer day softly gave way to night.

Current Full-Time Faculty

The History Department at Laurier's Waterloo campus currently has 21 tenured professors, including two who are cross-appointed to other departments or programs:

Dr. Gavin Brockett, Associate Professor & Associate Dean of Arts for Student Affairs (cross-appointed to Religion & Culture): Middle East & Islamic History, Modern Turkey

Dr. Blaine Chiasson, Associate Professor: Modern China, Sino-Russian relations

Dr. Cynthia Comacchio, Professor: Canadian History; Gender, Family & Class; Health Care

Dr. Adam Crerar, Associate Professor & Director of the Tri-University Graduate Program: 20th-Century Canada, Rural Ontario

Dr. Darryl Dee, Associate Professor: Early Modern France, Early Modern Europe

Dr. Judith Fletcher, Professor: Ancient Greece & Rome; Gender, Law & Culture; representations of the Ancient World in modern culture

Dr. Leonard Friesen, Professor: Russia & the Soviet Union, Global Ethics

Dr. Karljürgen Feuerherm, Associate Professor: Ancient Near East, Digital Humanities

Dr. Jeff Grischow, Associate Professor: Africa (especially Ghana), World History, Comparative Development

Dr. Mark Humphries, Associate Professor & Director of the LCMSDS: Canadian Military History, Epidemics

Dr. Amy Milne-Smith, Associate Professor and History Undergraduate Advisor: 19th-century British Social History, Crime in Victorian England

Dr. David Monod, Professor, Modern American Cultural & Social History

Dr. Darren Mulloy, Professor & Chair of History: Post-1945 U.S. history, Political Extremism

Dr. Susan Neylan, Associate Professor & Graduate Officer: Canadian Indigenous Peoples, Cultural History



The Tri-University Graduate Program in History combines the faculty and resources of three of Canada's premier universities: Laurier, the University of Guelph, and the University of Waterloo.

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For more information, please visit our website: <http://www.triuhistory.ca>

Dr. Chris L. Nighman, Associate Professor & Co-ordinator of Medieval & Medievalism Studies: Medieval & Renaissance Europe, Digital Humanities

Dr. Eva Plach, Associate Professor: Modern Europe, Poland, Women's History

Dr. Roger Sarty, Professor: Canadian Naval History, Canadian Military History

Dr. David Smith, Associate Professor: Early Modern Britain, Law & Society, Commerce in Europe & the New World

Dr. Kevin Spooner, Associate Professor (cross-appointed to Political Science & North American Studies): 20th-century Canadian Foreign Policy

Dr. Dana Weiner, Associate Professor: Pre-1877 US; Women's, Gender & African-American History

Dr. Suzanne Zeller, Professor: Canadian History, Science in Victorian Culture & Society

Editor: *Chris Nighman*

Editorial Assistant: *Heather Vogel*

Contact: *cnighman@wlu.ca* or

*Heather Vogel, Administrative Assistant,
hvogel@wlu.ca*

WLU History Department

75 University Ave W.

Waterloo, Ontario,

Canada, N2L 3C5

Tel: (519) 884-0710 x3389 <www.wlu.ca/arts/history>