Dear Friends:

The members of the History Department and I want to express our thanks for the many contributions you have donated to support academic excellence. As state support for higher education dwindles, your gifts become ever more meaningful. In this issue of the History Newsletter we bring you articles about the many ways in which we are maintaining standards of excellence, foremost in teaching because students come first, but also in the way of scholarship. In addition to recognizing the achievements of our active faculty and students, we also honor our emeriti, of whom we are very proud, and we remember with fondness those who have passed on.

Andrew Bell Appleby Memorial Lecture

“American Jews, the Holocaust, & the Post-War World”
By Pablo Ben

On April 13, 2012, the SDSU Department of History’s annual Andrew Bell Appleby Memorial Lecture was presented by Hasia R. Diner, the Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Professor of American Jewish History and the Director of the Goldstein Goren Center for American Jewish History at New York University. Her lecture, entitled “American Jews, the Holocaust and the Post-War World,” presented a new and insightful understanding of historical memory among Jewish-American organizations and the community at large. Debating with historians who claim that the memory of the Holocaust in the United States did not become publicly prominent until the late 1960s, Prof. Diner presented ample evidence of the extensive breadth of the Jewish-American condemnation of the Holocaust in the immediate post-war era. In presenting her argument, Prof. Diner criticized the views of authors like Peter Novick and Norman Finkelstein. In *The Holocaust in American Life*, Novick argued that before the late 1960s American Jews only reflected on the genocide within the privacy of the domestic sphere. Prof. Diner challenged this view, which she claimed was manifested first by young American Jews during the late 1960s and later by academic authors. She also challenged the views of Norman Finkelstein, author of *The Holocaust Industry*.

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Historian and teacher Clare “Bud” McKanna died from chronic heart disease in his San Diego home on March 25, 2012. He was 76 years old.

A working man’s intellectual, Bud was a preeminent scholar of the American West who taught classes in US, California, Native American, and Latin American history at local community colleges and at San Diego State University in a career that spanned forty years. Bud was a widely published “New Western” historian whose many articles and reviews appeared in such publications as the *Journal of San Diego History*, the *Western Historical Quarterly*, the *Journal of American Ethnic History*, the *Pacific Historical Review*, and *American National Biography*. A recipient of numerous grants and honors, Bud was awarded a major grant from the National Science Foundation as well as multiple fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities. A Phi Beta Kappa, Bud was also twice named the Most Outstanding History Teacher at San Diego State University, where he was a member of the History Department for thirty years.

Bud’s teaching career in San Diego, which began in 1971 at Mesa College, was interrupted for several years when he was accepted into the doctoral program in history at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, from which he earned his PhD in 1993.


One such trial was the sensational 1892 double murder trial of José Gabriel, who following his arrest was descriptively referred to as “the Indian” or “Indian Joe” both in the courtroom and in the San Diego press. Judged guilty from the moment he was charged with killing an elderly farming couple in Otay Mesa, Gabriel was tried and convicted in San Diego with marked speed. Gabriel’s sole request upon learning that he was sentenced to die was that he “be hanged in the day time, not at night.” Just months after the trial ended, Gabriel became the first prisoner to be executed in San Quentin. Regarding Gabriel’s death, McKanna wrote, “It was José Gabriel who was executed on March 3, 1893; ‘Indian Joe,’ like all caricatures born of and thriving on prejudice, lives on.” Reviewing this book for the *LA Times*, Jonathan Kirsch aptly commented that this monograph “reads sometimes like a who-dunit and sometimes like a courtroom thriller.”

Judith Keeling, editor-in-chief at Texas Tech University Press, which published Bud’s most recent books, pays eloquent tribute to his life and work: “Bud McKanna was a force for clarity and justice, his prime directives as a historian of the American West. His passion for setting the record straight was equaled only by his compassion for the disenfranchised, his enthusiasm for all compelling works that dare to turn misinformation on its ear, and his unflagging humor as a chronicler of the history unfolding all around him.”

At the time of his death, Bud McKanna and Richard W. Crawford were completing a book on San Diego’s historic Stingaree district. A recent tour of that district Bud organized for friends drew upon his expertise in homicide and his passion for local history. Bud liked to describe himself as a frustrated comedian, a view his friends would dispute. He called his memorable tour “A Walk on the Wild Side: Booze, Bawds, and Murder in the Stingaree.”
At SDSU when someone thinks of British History they more than likely think of Professor Edward Beasley. Professor Beasley in an accomplished researcher and has authored three books: *Empire as the Triumph of Theory: A Study of the Founders of the Colonial Society of 1868;* *Mid-Victorian Imperialists: British Gentlemen and the Empire of the Mind;* and *The Victorian Reinvention of Race: New Racisms and the Problem of Grouping in the Human Sciences.* Also, Professor Beasley is currently working on a biography of General Sir Charles Napier. Aside from his published accomplishments, Professor Beasley is an outstanding teacher, the faculty advisor for Phi Alpha Theta, and volunteers to mentor and judge at the Student Research Symposium.

I have British Century with Professor Beasley. This class is both educational and entertaining. Professor Beasley uses primary sources to tell a story and I can attest that this makes the class productive and interesting. Personally, my era is American History, yet every week I enjoy navigating the streets of London meeting characters like Ebenezer Scrooge or great thinkers like John Stuart Mill. Every class is filled with laughter and learning from start to finish. As students, we are encouraged to pursue original arguments and the topics that interests us. Professor Beasley also encourages students to participate in the History Honor Society.

Professor Beasley was vital in the revival of Phi Alpha Theta. He explained that he saw students who were eager to participate and he wanted to give them the opportunity. Professor Beasley humbly credits himself as the catalyst and credits the "creative and motivated" members as the true reason the club is so successful. With all due respect to Professor Beasley, he sells himself short. While it is true that Phi Alpha Theta members are motivated, creative, and fun, we would be lost without Professor Beasley. He encourages us, lends advice, and is always there to tell us if our ideas are too crazy (or not crazy enough). Phi Alpha Theta would not be what it is without Professor Beasley.

As if the aforementioned accomplishments were not outstanding enough, Professor Beasley also encourages students to participate in the annual Student Research Symposium. When asked why the Symposium is so important, Professor Beasley says that a lot of students get excited about their papers and the Student Research Symposium is a great place to present these papers and develop public speaking skills. However, the Symposium is focused on science, and the humanities do not have a large number of participants. In order to encourage students to participate, Professor Beasley himself acts as a mentor and as a panel judge. Unfortunately, Professor Beasley will be on sabbatical next year during the symposium and will not be able to participate. He still has hope that the History Department will have a growing presence at the Symposium.

Andrew Bell Appleby Memorial Lecture …..Continued from Page 1

Finkelstein associated increasing awareness of the Holocaust with American support for the state of Israel, especially during and after 1967. Both Novick and Finkelstein, Prof. Diner argues, have failed to thoroughly explore primary sources. In the archives they would have found profuse information on the numerous activities of grassroots Jewish organizations launching a “spontaneous and amorphous” remembrance project at a stage earlier than they had imagined.

The attempt to educate the American public about the Holocaust was part and parcel of the Jewish-American effort to help survivors after WWII, the largest humanitarian fund-raising project in world history. Raising funds, Prof. Diner explained, was a goal that could not be achieved without retelling the tragedy. The Holocaust was not only condemned in the arena of politics and intellectual life, but also on the famous TV show “This is Your Life” in 1953. American Jews were seriously concerned about bringing the perpetrators of the Holocaust to justice. Their efforts were so prominent that they became an inspiration for the nascent Civil Rights movement in the early 1960s. In fact, the 1963 March on Washington where Martin Luther King pronounced his most famous speech also witnessed the speech by Rabbi Joachim Prinz who condemned racism by warning the audience about the perils of silence in Nazi Germany. Prof. Diner discussed the relevance of this and other important historical events in a fascinating and eloquent presentation of her research.
When I came to San Diego State University as an undergraduate in the history department, I had one goal: finish my Bachelor’s and begin working immediately on my Master’s degree focusing solely on Julius Caesar. Before my first semester began, I found my way to Carolyn Roy’s office hoping to make an academic plan that focused mainly on Western Civilization and Classics courses. Carolyn explained to me gently that the history program at SDSU involved taking courses in history focusing on multiple regions of the world. I would not be allowed to focus solely on Europe. I was crushed. Left with no other choice, I figured out which other area of the world I wanted to study. I ultimately decided on a course called “Asia’s Dynamic Traditions,” and the rest, as they say, is history. While I will always hold a special place in my heart for Julius Caesar, I changed my research focus entirely to a far more complicated and rewarding field: comparative and trans-regional history of women in the ancient world. Although I never had the opportunity to study with him, I know that I owe this in no small way to the efforts of Professor Ross Dunn and his incredible influence on the focus and goals of the SDSU Department of History.

Ross Dunn earned his Ph.D. in 1968 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, focusing on African and Islamic history in a Comparative Tropical History program. So, starting in graduate school, Dunn was exposed to a different way to examine history than the traditional, Western approach, and he brought this unique view of history to San Diego State University as a newly-hired Assistant Professor. Upon arrival, he was disappointed that world history courses were not offered at SDSU. Once he made tenure, he became determined to include world history into the program, so he drew up proposal for a lower-division world history course. In 1974 the course was put on the schedule, but it would take a decade of Ross fighting the old guard to have it officially included into the General Education program. Dunn created a proposal for another new course, “World History for Teachers,” in which he sought to enlighten teacher trainees in world history as well as to make them rethink the curriculum framework for California schools. By questioning the way history was taught at every level of education, Ross Dunn set an example that students and faculty are still following today. Because of his determination, World History became not only an area of emphasis within the SDSU Department of History, but by the early 1990s, became its primary focus.

Dunn’s passion for world history has extended far beyond his influence on the SDSU history department, however. He was the first president of the World History Association, and through the WHA he was able to direct summer institutes for world history teachers at Princeton in 1991 and 1993 and contribute to the National Standards of History in 1994. He is currently the director for World History for Us All, a web-based model curriculum for middle and high school world history, and an Associate Director of World History Projects for the National Center for History in the Schools at UCLA. In 2013 he will publish, Panorama: A History of Humankind, in collaboration with Laura J. Mitchell or University of California, Irvine. His research in world history has spanned more than four decades and has focused not only on world historical topics, such as his book, Adventures of Ibn Battuta, a Muslim Traveler of the Fourteenth Century, but has also focused on developing and reshaping the way world history is taught and examined through works such as World History: The Big Eras, A Compact History of Humankind for Teachers and Students, with Edmund Burke III and David Christian, and Bring History Alive!: A Source Book for Teaching World History, with David Vigilante.

Due to all of these contributions and more, Professor Dunn will be receiving the Pioneers in World History Award at this year’s World History Association Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico, June 27-30, 2012. According to the WHA website, “The WHA Pioneers in World History Award recognizes the extraordinary contributions of individuals to world history studies that have advanced the field in a significant way.” My own personal story and the story of the SDSU history department are but a couple of examples that highlight the way that Professor Dunn has been changing the field of World History throughout his career. Through his research and his work with various world history organizations, he has been advancing the field one student at a time, one teacher at a time, and one department at a time, for more than forty years. And since it may not be possible for all of us who have been inspired through his tireless efforts to reach out to him directly, I am beyond thrilled that I get this opportunity to say congratulations, and thank you, Ross. I would not have done it without you.
Professor Lawrence Baron: A Pioneer and Legend
By Amber Tiffany

Heroines and Heroes of film imprint upon the hearts and minds of the viewer that they too can make a difference someday. Here at SDSU’s History Department, we liken Lawrence Baron with the hero of a classic film—not only has he analyzed many heroes of film through his research, but Baron himself is a legendary figure to us. Through his pioneering and skillfully crafted research, writing, and teaching, Prof. Baron has made a major impact on the Department of History and he will be sorely missed upon his retirement this May. Prof. Baron received his Ph.D. in modern European cultural and intellectual history from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. After receiving his Ph.D. Baron worked at St. Lawrence University where he fostered teaching of the Holocaust to predominantly non-Jewish students. Before wrapping up his experience at St. Lawrence University, Baron established ground-breaking work in the field of Oral History which culminated in the publication of an article in New York History in 1983. The Paul Kerr Prize for the best article appearing in the journal was awarded to Prof. Baron for this work. The article was then transformed into a radio documentary which Baron scripted and co-produced himself in 1987. He went on to win the Ohio State Award for Educational Broadcasting in 1988 for this pioneering endeavor.

Baron entered the SDSU scene in the 1980s. He became the Director of the university’s Lipinsky Institute for Judaic Studies between 1988 and 2006. He has held the Nasatir Chair in Modern Jewish History since 1988. He has authored four books including Projecting the Holocaust into the Present: The Changing Focus of Contemporary Holocaust Cinema (Rowman and Littlefield: 2005). After the release of the movie Schindler’s List Baron found a new lens through which to teach the Holocaust. Most impressively, in 2006 he delivered the keynote address for Yad Vashem’s first conference devoted to Hollywood and the Holocaust.

The Department of History at SDSU has been fortunate to have a professor of this caliber. He is just as devoted to students as he is to his research. As the Graduate Advisor, his star-like qualities are translated through his gripping song parodies and omniscient lectures. Baron has also been active in tracking graduate students’ success and continuation, undergraduate enrollment, and most recently the detrimental effects of budget cuts. He did acknowledge that “I am proud that the History Department has resisted attempts to enlarge the size of graduate seminars and that it insisted it would only offer the jumbo lecture classes if there were discussion sections run by teaching associates.” But in regards to his concern for the future of the department he said “I find it increasingly difficult to teach undergraduate classes whose enrollment keeps growing while funding for graders, teaching assistants, and lecturers keeps shrinking. I would like to think of this as a momentary product of the recession, but I realize that the financial commitment of state government to public education has consistently declined.” Although he thinks the future of higher education in California is a preview to a horror film, Baron optimistically states “I hope that the university will reverse the trends I’ve described when the economy improves. But then again, I’m a Chicago Cubs fan and believe in miracles despite abundant evidence to the contrary.”

One thing is for sure, Baron is a classic professor. As Paul R. Bartrop, author of Fifty Key Thinkers on the Holocaust and Genocide said “In a number of ways, for nearly four decades Lawrence Baron has shown himself to be a leading thinker on the Holocaust – first through biography, then through explorations of altruism and rescue, and, most importantly, through the role and impact of film and popular culture on memory and education. Simultaneously pioneer and practitioner, Baron’s influence on the development of thought and awareness about the Holocaust has been extensive. As a senior member on a number of advisory boards and committees relating to Jewish Studies and the Holocaust, as well as an active participant at scholarly conferences around the world, his influence continues.”

Professor Baron is a legend, because for those of us fortunate enough to have taken one of his classes, read his work, sat in his office and discussed our future as graduate students, or received his helpful suggestions by email, his legacy will stick with us as we move on from this institution. Cheers to you Professor! You will be missed.

NEW FACULTY

Dr. Pablo Ben holds his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago (2009). He came to San Diego State in the Fall of 2011 from the University of Northern Iowa, where he was an assistant professor. His research focuses on the history of sexuality and urban social history, and his dissertation was a study of male same-sex sexual relationships in the city of Buenos Aires from 1880 to 1955. This was a period of massive European immigration to Argentina, bringing significant demographic change that impacted family life and sexual relations in Buenos Aires particularly as Argentina sought to pursue modernizing policies. Dr. Ben teaches courses in modern Latin American history and the history of the Atlantic world.
Putting the SDSU History Department on the Map:  
Mathew Kuefler and the Journal of the History of Sexuality  
- By Kim Stiles

Professor Mathew Kuefler earned his master’s degree in women’s history from the University of Alberta in the 1980s. At that time, the field of history of sexuality was relatively new. Matt earned his doctorate at Yale studying under John Boswell, one of the pioneers in the field, who wrote a groundbreaking book on the history of medieval sexuality in 1980. Matt moved between the fields of history of sexuality and history of gender, with one of his exam fields being the history of sexuality. His dissertation on early Christian and late Roman masculinity became his first book, *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity.*

Matt became a member of the *Journal of the History of Sexuality*’s editorial board in the mid-1990s, and became editor of the journal in 2005.

The *Journal of the History of Sexuality* began in 1990 and was the first to specialize in the scholarly study of sexuality. While today there are more journals on the topic of sexuality, this is still the only one that deals specifically with the history of sexuality. Matt deems the *Journal* to be important to SDSU and the History Department. He feels that it helps to make the department known within the broader scholarly community. The fact that there is a journal and that the editorial office is in the SDSU History Department illustrates, among the other scholarly accomplishments of the History faculty, that serious research occurs at SDSU. The *Journal* is particularly good for SDSU because so many scholars here specialize in gender and sexuality. Within the larger university, SDSU is a leader in sexuality studies. SDSU has the second LGBT major in the United States and was the first university to have a Women’s Studies Department. SDSU is always in the forefront and helps keep the momentum going in the field. The *Journal* has long-term impacts on the community as well, according to Matt. We have assumptions about sexual values and through research we can learn whether or not these assumptions are based on facts. Larger social discussions about sexuality can always benefit from an historical perspective. Matt finds the editorialship to be rewarding. He says that it is incredible to see so much of the current scholarship. Being editor allows him to see the books coming out and the topics that people are researching. Matt will be editor of the *Journal* until 2014.

Kim Stiles is the Editorial Assistant of the *Journal of the History of Sexuality* and is currently enrolled in the M.A. Program in History at SDSU.

Remembering Paul Vanderwood (1929-2011)  
By Joanne Ferraro

The members of the History Department remember with fondness their friend and former colleague Paul J. Vanderwood, a renowned scholar of Mexican history. Paul died on October 10, 2011 in San Diego at the age of 82.

Dr. Paul J. Vanderwood joined the History Department at San Diego State shortly after obtaining his PhD from the University of Texas-Austin in 1969. He had already had an accomplished career as an investigative journalist before becoming enthralled with Latin American culture, particularly popular religion in Mexico and Guatemala. At San Diego State Paul taught and mentored a number of outstanding history students. Among them was Dr. Rosalie Schwartz, who went on to earn a PhD in Latin American History at UCSD and to author several scholarly books herself. Paul had the talent of engaging his students in his subject and inspiring them to pursue the life-long love of learning that he exemplified.

Paul brought the vividness and verve of his journalistic style to his scholarly writing. He authored many widely-read books still used in college classrooms. His publications included *Disorder and Progress: Bandits, Police, and Mexican Development; Religious Upheaval in Mexico at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century: The Power of God Against the Guns of Government; Juan Soldado, Rapist, Murderer, Martyr, and Saint; Night Riders of Reelfoot Lake; Border Fury: A Picture Postcard Revolution and US Border Preparedness; and Satan’s Playground: Mobsters and Movie Stars at America’s Greatest Gaming Resort.*

To those who knew him here in the History Department, Paul will be remembered for his sparkle, his inquisitive mind, his sense of adventure, and his generous interest in the research that the rest of us were doing. He maintained his friendship with us after retirement in 1994, and also had a wide net of scholarly contacts in the San Diego academic community.

On May 9 at the annual Student Scholarship Award Ceremony we will remember Paul. At that event his friends will award a graduate and an undergraduate scholarship to History Department students who hold promise in the Latin American field. Friends of History are warmly welcome to attend.
Professor Joanne Ferraro Receives Prestigious Phi Beta Kappa Award
By Walter Penrose

Last October, our own chair, Joanne Ferraro, was honored for her lifetime achievements by the Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society. An award was presented to Prof. Ferraro by William Rogers and Nick Genovese, and then she gave an extremely interesting lecture entitled “Binding Passions and Shielding Virtue in Early Modern Venice.” From prostitutes to saints, Ferraro wove an enticing fabric that showed the breadth and scope of a scholar who has completely mastered her field. She brought together diverse elements of Venetian social and cultural life to life, tying them with issues of politics and health/medicine. The auditorium was overflowing. Prof. Ferraro graciously thanked the Department of History staff members present that day, Adriana Putko and Jan LeBlanc, for being her “left and right hands.” A warm thank you was also given to Bonnie Akashian and the faculty, staff, and administration of the university. A wonderful reception topped off the day’s activities, and the Department of History is grateful to Dean Paul Wong for providing this rich spread.

Joanne Ferraro’s numerous publications include Nefarious Crimes, Contested Justice: Illicit Sex and Infanticide in the Republic of Venice 1557-1789 (2008), Marriage Wars in Late Renaissance Venice (2001), and Family and Public Life in Brescia (1993). Her comprehensive study of the whole of Venetian history, Venice: History of the Floating City will be published this year by Cambridge University Press. Joanne has served as the Chair of the Department of History since 2003. Her impressive service to the university and scholarly community at large in many other aspects, in addition to her contributions to scholarship, were mentioned as leading to the award. Ferraro also received the “Monty” award last year for her contributions to the university in terms of research, teaching, and service. Kudos Joanne!

Joyce Appleby - By Mary Leathead

Joyce Appleby is a professor emerita from the University of California Los Angeles who has dedicated much of her life to her students at SDSU and UCLA while contributing many scholarly works to the field of modern American history; but there are few that know this brilliant and dedicated professor’s story.

Her long journey started in Omaha, Nebraska where she was born and spent the first seven years of her life. Her father was a businessman involved in the sale of building materials, which had her family continuously on the move. She lived in several cities across the United States, staying in no single city for longer than two years. This most certainly effected Joyce’s school life as she became a “stranger in school” but this worked to her advantage, as she became an outgoing and energetic young woman that developed a real passion for learning. Her parents were both surprised, yet pleased, when she announced her intentions to further her education at Stanford University. Unlike the other Ivy League schools across the U.S., Stanford maintained a system that allowed one quarter of their applicants admitted to be female. This opened up the opportunity for Joyce to further her education and really develop a love for writing. Upon completing her bachelor degree at Stanford in 1950 Joyce became a reporter for Mademoiselle Magazine in New York City but quickly realized that journalism was not her calling. It was then that she returned to California where she married and had her first three children; she continued her education there, at Claremont Graduate School where she received her PhD in history in 1966. Joyce excelled through graduate school, really enjoying the opportunity to learn as she described herself as an “intellectual that really found the experience satisfying.” Although graduate school was something she was determined to do, married and with three children this was not an easy task, she attributes her success through graduate school to her strict dedication to her studies. Her hard work and dedication proved to be beneficial to Joyce’s career, as she has received numerous awards and positive recognition for both her scholarly works as well as her aptitude for teaching. Of them, the most memorable was the favorable reader’s report that she received from a well-known early modern historian from Oxford University, Christopher Hill.

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RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Joanne M. Ferraro: Venice: History of the Floating City. (Forthcoming July 2012)

This book is a sweeping historical portrait of the floating city of Venice from its foundations to the present day. Joanne M. Ferraro considers Venice’s unique construction within an amphibious environment and identifies the Asian, European and North African exchange networks that made it a vibrant and ethnically diverse Mediterranean cultural centre. Incorporating recent scholarly insights, the author discusses key themes related to the city’s social, cultural, religious and environmental history, as well as its politics and economy. A refuge and a pilgrim stop; an international emporium and centre of manufacture; a mecca of spectacle, theatre, music, gambling and sexual experimentation; and an artistic and architectural marvel, Venice's allure springs eternal in every phase of the city's fascinating history.

Lawrence Baron: The Modern Jewish Experience in World Cinema

This remarkable anthology brings together 54 new and classic essays by 49 scholars in 8 countries to analyze the Jewish presence in world cinema. The book spans the history of cinema, from Yiddish silents through “A Serious Man” (2009), in 54 chapters. In so doing, it builds on earlier studies, such as Patricia Erens’s “The Jew in American Cinema” (1984) and Lester D. Friedman’s “Hollywood’s Image of the Jew” (1982), updating and widening their foci beyond the borders of the United States.

Elizabeth Cobbs-Hoffman: Broken Promises (A Novel of the Civil War)

In 1861, Charles Francis Adams, son of deceased president John Quincy Adams, embarks for England on a spy mission for Abraham Lincoln. There, he gathers information about the empire’s reaction to America’s growing conflict. As Charles embarks on a high-stakes game of espionage and diplomacy, Henry reconnects with his college friend Baxter Sams, a Southerner who has fallen in love with Englishwoman Julia Birch. Julia’s family reviles Americans, leaving Baxter torn between his love for Julia, his friendship with Henry, and his obligations to his own family. As tensions mount, irrevocable choices are made—igniting a moment when history could have changed forever.


The first guide to American religious history from colonial times to the present, this anthology features twenty-two leading scholars speaking on major themes and topics in the development of the diverse religious traditions of the United States. These include the growth and spread of evangelical culture, the mutual influence of religion and politics, the rise of fundamentalism, the role of gender and popular culture, and the problems and possibilities of pluralism. Geared toward general readers, students, researchers, and scholars, The Columbia Guide to Religion in American History provides concise yet broad surveys of specific fields, with an extensive glossary and bibliographies listing relevant books, films, articles, music, and media resources for navigating different streams of religious thought and culture.

Farid Mahdavi-Izadi: Our World: A Global history of Humanity Volume I

This book views world history as a developing and evolving story, showing that the events of today are related to our past actions. Emphasis is placed on connections across space, time, and topics, in order to show how connections and intercommunications have shaped regional economy, politics, and social changes of peoples of our past, as well as reshaping the global patterns of the present. This book deals with early world history from the time of hominids to 1500 C.E.

Edward J. Blum: The Color of Christ

The Color of Christ uncovers how, in a country founded by Puritans who destroyed depictions of Jesus, Americans came to believe in the whiteness of Christ. Some envisioned a white Christ who would sanctify the exploitation of Native Americans and African Americans and bless imperial expansion. Many others gazed at a messiah, not necessarily white, who was willing and able to confront white supremacy. The color of Christ still symbolizes America's most combustible divisions, revealing the power and malleability of race and religion from colonial times to the presidency of Barack Obama. (Forthcoming in September 2012)
These days it is often a struggle to keep the past relevant and practical. Fortunately there are innovative scholars who constantly reinvent the way we think about the Humanities, and how we can apply the examples of the past to the needs of the present. This semester the Department of History worked with both the Department of Classics and Humanities and the School of Public Affairs to embark upon a truly interdisciplinary venture aiming to highlight the use of and appreciation for the classics in a unique, modern environment: prison.

A little-discussed phenomenon of recent American history is the total defunding of education in our prisons. Some scholars and activists have sought to correct this lack through volunteer work. In February, Professor Nancy Rabinowitz of Hamilton College, accomplished classicist and noted activist, spoke to us about her experience with The Medea Project, an organization offering a unique form of classical education in some very unexpected places, California’s women’s prisons. The project was founded by artist and activist Rhodessa Jones, and Dr. Rabinowitz told of how a few neglected women have found a new strength in the lessons of ancient literature.

Named for the tragic figure of Euripides’ drama, The Medea Project uses the characters and themes of classical theatre to help female convicts cope with their situation and find the confidence and direction to break the cycle of recidivism. The women learn about the myths and legends of ancient Greece, often focusing on the tragic female characters Medea, Pandora, and the mother-daughter pair Demeter and Persephone. The students identify with the character’s struggles with rape and abuse, racial and gender inequality, and addiction. The tragedy is turned to triumph, however, when the women take these themes and write and perform their own plays. Persephone’s stay in Hades, for example, becomes time spent in a crack-house or brothel. But, as their traditional heroines are liberated from their ancient patriarchal context, the new actresses find liberation from their own confines. In the process, the students find the motivation to fight the conditions in their own lives that have placed them behind bars.

Dr. Rabinowitz demonstrated that The Medea Project is one organization that will not accept defeat, but fights a real world tragedy with the tools of Antiquity in the country with the highest population of inmates, a flourishing private prison industry, and among the worst recidivism rates worldwide. Prison education is criminally underfunded, and most convicts are given little chance at rehabilitation, but with efforts like The Medea Project empowering one of the most neglected groups in our society, at least hope remains in the box.
If you would like to join our e-mail list to receive notification about upcoming events, please send a note to:
bakashia@mail.sdsu.edu

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