

Special Points of Interest:

- History Department hires two new tenure track faculty.
- Grinnell welcomes a new assistant professor.
- Students complete exciting research in a summer MAP and the Newberry.

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Grinnell College

Kaiser Goes on Senior Faculty Status

by **Becky Bessinger '09**

It's been a productive year for Professor Daniel Kaiser, who went on sabbatical last spring and then assumed senior faculty status this year. Kaiser has been busy developing three projects. His first project is a study of local architecture, in which he has been especially interested in Grinnell's Merrill Park and the Ricker House on Broad Street.

Kaiser's second project involves a micro history case on his family roots—particularly on his mother's immigration from Russia. He has spent the

last few years trying to find out where she was born and where her parents were from. In doing so, he hopes to track the process of transition for immigrants, while he considers the blending of home with a more public face.

He has spent most of his time, however, researching domestic life in early modern Russia. Kaiser considers diaries, court cases, and other materials in this exciting project.

Ultimately, he hopes to explore the ways in which we might "re imagine" the value

of historical sources, in addition to the way we think about them.

Prevost Publishes on Women's Missions in Africa

by **Lindsey Wheeler '10**

In exciting news for the Grinnell History Department, Professor Elizabeth Prevost's manuscript, "Feminizing the Word: British Women's Missions to Colonial Africa and the Globalization of Christianity, 1865-1930" has been accepted for publication by Oxford University Press.

Professor Prevost rejoins us on campus after taking a year's leave of absence to complete the manuscript, a work culminating approximately ten years of study on the confluence of gender, colonialism, and Christianity in women's mission communities in colonial

Africa. Professor Prevost's dissertation focused on the work of British female missionaries in colonial Africa. Her book expands on that study by examining the ties between missionary movements and feminism in Britain. She also follows the history of missionary women back to Britain, exploring how the missionaries themselves were impacted by their contact with African women.

Prevost spent the summer in London completing her book, and says she is happy to be settling back into the rhythm of campus life. When asked about her goals for future research, she says she is

interested in pursuing how gender and Christianity operate in anti-colonial and national movements.

Prevost sees strong ties between her research and her students at Grinnell, as Grinnell graduates have a rich history conducting missionary work, often combining evangelical efforts with medicine, public health, and social work. Her research has also inspired seminars on the Civilizing Mission of the Nineteenth Century and Gender and Empire in Britain.

New Class Lets Students Explore Faculty Research

by Ari Anisfeld '09

"This unique class was the brainchild of the History SEPC."

While in Russia learning about the personal lives of Khrushchev-era communists, Professor Ed Cohn had also to learn about which brands of vodka had to be offered in order to gain access to particular archives.

Such were the backstage lessons faculty shared with ten students who enrolled for the fall semester's one-credit "History Proseminar." This unique class was the brainchild of the History SEPC. It was organized as a series of weekly meetings at which different members of the history faculty shared their research and discussed the methods and concepts that made that research come to fruition. Students read one faculty member's text—a book or dissertation chapter, an article, a conference paper, an oral history, a literature review, a textbook chapter—and then gathered to ask questions and engage in discussion about both the historical

content and the historical process that informed the text.

Over the course of the semester, particular questions and themes turned up repeatedly. "How to ensure that sources actually back up the claims made?" "Are the available sources adequate? Are they representative of broader trends?" "At what point in the research do you realize that your sources won't answer the question you are asking, but they will answer another question?" And, "how do non-text sources—like paintings or technical drawings—fit into historical arguments? Can they be used on their own?"

These last questions were evident in the discussion with Dan Kaiser about a historiographical article on recent claims about the role of the Orthodox Church in promoting the tsarist government. They popped up again when Michael Guenther presented

a section from his dissertation focusing on the significance of "projection drawings" in the Anglo-American Enlightenment. Both Kaiser and Guenther expressed skepticism about too much reliance on images, but both argued for their value to bolster text-based arguments.

George Drake presented a different sort of methodological problem. He shared his work on oral histories with World War II veterans in Poweshiek County. Proseminar students read the transcript of an interview with Professor Ken Christiansen, Biology, and discussed how they would edit the interview to optimally present the story.

History Proseminar promises to be a new tradition in the department. The faculty hope to offer it every three or four years, with time in between to produce new scholarship for discussion.

Katie McMullen '09 Delves Into Gender Relations Among California Native Americans With MAP

by Soleil Ho '09

When Katie McMullen signed on to work on a Mentored Advanced Project (MAP) with Professor Albert Lacson this past summer, she was not quite sure what she was getting into. "I knew it had something to do with Native Americans," she said, "and it was vaguely about gender, but the topic wasn't really set." As it turned out, she and Professor Lacson focused their efforts on researching cloth distribution from Franciscan missionaries

to California Native Americans. Though they began their study assuming that the distribution was simply another example of traditional colonial power plays, they came to the conclusion that, since the Franciscans were forced to accept Natives' decidedly non-European tastes in clothing in order to ease the civilizing process, those encounters were much more negotiated than they thought. For example, Katie found

illustrations of Native Americans adapting the Franciscans' cloth offerings into somewhat un-Christian designs that "looked like g-strings." Their findings are part of Professor Lacson's research on California Native Americans as savvy consumers in the late 18th to early 19th centuries.

Cohn and Maynard Take Over Europe by Soleil Ho '09

The History Department has hired two tenure track faculty this year: Ed Cohn, for Modern Russian history and Kelly Maynard, for Modern European history.

Professor Cohn has already been teaching at Grinnell for the past two years in a temporary position, so he fortunately doesn't have very much catching up to do. He definitely plans to continue playing with the department in the yearly Trivial Pursuit tournament, and hopes to "avenge our ignominious defeat from last year." Luckily for us, Professor Cohn was supposedly a Quizbowl superstar as a student at both Swarthmore and the University of Chicago. His planned courses for next year will principally concern "genocide, war, dictatorship, and mass death," with World War II as the main focal point. He is also excited to bring back the seminar on Stalinism in the fall. Beyond this

year, he plans on teaching a 200-level "Film & Historiography" course and classes focusing on Russia as an imperial nation.

Professor Maynard is a newcomer to Grinnell, coming from Scripps College in Claremont, California. Her bachelor's degree is in Bassoon Performance, and she received her M.A. and Ph.D. in Modern European History from UCLA. In the fervent hope that she may actually have some spare time at Grinnell, she plans to see the sights in Poweshiek County, play chamber music, and make pottery in the campus studio. She will be bringing along two cats—named Fidelio and Montesquieu—and a rare book librarian.

As her academic emphasis is on cultural history, Professor Maynard will be teaching a 200-level special topic course which she calls "Tyrants and Tunesmiths" next fall. It will incorporate theater history, visual culture studies, and music history in

the contexts of modern France, Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union. In addition to that, she will be teaching 200-level courses focusing on modern European countries that will change with each year.

Grinnell Welcomes New Assistant Professor

John Wei by Stephen Hoff '10

Hailing from Connecticut, John Wei has tried to bring enthusiasm to the classroom as one of the History Department's new assistant professors.

A graduate of Princeton and Yale, Wei specializes in medieval history with a focus on Christianity and legal theory in 12th century Europe. He offered courses in European medieval history this year, and he is currently teaching a new seminar on the Crusades. "So far, so good,"

he says when talking about his transition to Grinnell.

"The only thing that's been kind of a pain is correcting exams."

Outside of work, Wei spends his free time reading, cooking, and playing Scrabble. He also dabbles in ping pong and tennis when he gets the chance, and has a fancy for Bichon Frises.

The Grinnell History Department happily accepts his arrival with open arms, and looks forward to having his talents put to good use.

"John Wei has tried to bring enthusiasm to the classroom as one of the department's new assistant professors."

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Have History Department questions or concerns? The SEPC wants to hear from you! Please contact one of us:

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“War is a complex thing and people have complex emotions about it that are all too lost in ... ‘the myth of mass bellicosity.’”

Purcell Takes on Research and Rosenfield Program

by Justin Erickson '10

There are relatively few, if any, people in the Grinnell College community who are as involved as Professor Sarah Purcell '92. And after taking a year sabbatical to study the Politics of Mourning and the U.S. Civil War, Purcell is back and as busy as ever.

During her sabbatical, Purcell conducted research on how “large funerals for politicians and activists allowed people to work through political issues through a ceremonial outpouring of grief.”

To answer this question she travelled to places like the Newberry Library in Chicago and the American Antiquary Society in Worcester, Massachusetts. While there, she viewed materials such as Henry Clay’s coffin, trade catalogs promoting the sale of coffin replicas, and a gigantic scrapbook the size of a chalkboard!

Despite her various travels, Purcell did make a few appearances on campus last year. Most notable was her Convocation address in Herrick Chapel in February. In an address to the college community, Purcell considered how mourning the first two martyrs of the Civil War fueled enthusiasm on both sides of the conflict.

Although Purcell is now making finishing touches on her research, she has now embarked on another project of great importance. After serving as a member of the Rosenfield Program in Public Affairs, International Relations, and Human Rights Committee during her time as a student, Purcell has now taken over for Professor Wayne Moyer as the Rosenfield Program director.

Even though she now has a large office in Macy House due to her position as director, Purcell

has not forgotten the rest of the History Department in Mears Cottage. “I haven’t forgotten the History Department,” Purcell said. “You can still find me wandering the halls of Mears!”

Look for Purcell to continue her work in the History Department and as director of the Rosenfield Program. Although, “Don’t expect a Rosenfield Symposium on Henry Clay’s coffin any time soon,” Purcell said. “No matter how great it would be.”

Purcell is also currently part of a seven-author team working on a textbook for College U.S. history courses. The textbook considers U.S. History from a global perspective.

Tommy Jamison Participates in Newberry Program

by Becky Bessinger '09

Senior Tommy Jamison spent the fall semester participating in the prestigious ACM Newberry Seminar in the Humanities—an experience that he calls “pretty terrific.” During this time, he got his hands dirty in the “deepest, dustiest of archives” and explored one of the Newberry’s vast uncatalogued series of boxes: the Driscoll Collection.

Upon the conclusion of his research, Tommy produced a major paper, titled “Will no one tell me

what she sings?: Allegorical Women in First World War Sheet Music and the Debate Over American Interventionism.” Tommy explained, “War is a complex thing and people have complex emotions about it that are all too often lost in, what Niall Ferguson called re: Europe, ‘the myth of mass bellicosity.’ A close examination of sheet music in America offers a glimpse onto competing emotions and understandings of the European War that are lost in traditional analyses of

government propaganda and mass culture.” Tommy then presented his findings to students and faculty in a presentation.

Tommy decided to write a paper on the First World War after he learned that his relative (Jim Mead, 32nd Infantry) died in it. He did not, though, in his wildest dreams think that he would do so by examining sheet music. Tommy concluded with, “Such is why the Newberry rocks.”

History is . . . History by Victoria Brown

The History Department has, at long last, completely revised its 100-level course offerings. We have eliminated History 101, History 105, History 111, and History 112 from the college catalog of offerings. Alums who took Basic Issues in European History, Cultural Encounters in History, Early U.S. History, or Modern U.S. History now own syllabi that have historical significance and will, one day, be of great value on the artifact auction block.

We will now offer History 100, which is called "Making History." Every section of "Making History" will include readings on how historians DO history, what it means to "think historically," and what the standards of evidence and the practices of argument are in history. Every section will acquaint students with different approaches to history, from intellectual to social, from cultural to diplomatic, from local to national to global. Above all, every section will train students in the skills of analyzing primary sources and comprehending other historians' arguments.

Every faculty member will offer his/her own section of History 100, combining the department's common readings on how we do history with the faculty member's own readings and assignments on a particular topic. For example, in our

trial run this spring, Professor Purcell offered a section of History 100 on "The U.S. in the Age of Transatlantic Revolution," in which students were introduced to issues of historical causation, argumentation, and evidence through a comparative study of the American, French, and Haitian revolutions. Also this spring, Professor Prevost offered her section of History 100 on "Europe After the Great War," which introduced students to historical methods by examining how Europeans coped with a "world undone" between 1919 and 1933.

Both of these sections of History 100 will be offered in the coming years, along with sections on "Europe Under the Great Dictators," "The Rise and Fall of New World Slavery," "Peter Abelard and His World," "1968 Around the World," and other engaging topics.

Department members are very excited about this change in the History offerings at Grinnell College. We feel this shift to a more standardized methodological focus alongside a shift to more international and global approaches to topics reflects the direction of the field of history and better prepares our students for the academic and political world of the 21st century.

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