

The Historian



C A R L E T O N H I S T O R Y D E P A R T M E N T N E W S L E T T E R

Upcoming Events



[Thabiti Willis, "Mother Chiefs and Husband Researcher: Gender, Power, and Masquerade in Nigeria"](#)

Tuesday, May 10th, 12:00 pm, Athenaeum

[Liz Lerman, 'MacArthur Genius' public lecture on choreography](#)

Thursday, May 12th, 4:30 pm, Boliou 104

["Unquenchable: America's Water Crisis and What To Do About It"](#)

Robert J. Glennon, Professor from the University of Arizona College of Law will deliver a lecture about U.S. water politics.

Monday, May 16th, 5:00 pm, Boliou 104

[Russ Shafer-Landau, "Problems for Moral Relativism"](#)

Professor Russ Shafer-Landau will give a talk entitled Tuesday, May 17th, 12:00 pm, Leighton 304

[History Department Picnic!](#)

Come nosh on sandwiches with department faculty, staff, and fellow majors, old and new.

Tuesday, May 17, 5:00 pm

[Terrance Wiley, "Christianity and Pacifism"](#)

Thursday, May 19th, 12:00 pm, Leighton 305

[Family and Monarchy: Stuart Concepts of Dynastic Reproduction](#)

Malcolm Smuts, Professor of History at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, on the themes of royal marriage, reproduction and children in Stuart court culture.

Thursday, May 19th, 5:00 pm, Boliou 104

[Coming Back: New Visions of New Orleans Photo Exhibit](#)

Photographs from New Orleans service projects by Kim Smith's Environmental Studies students. The exhibit runs until the end of the year in the Athenaeum and Rookery.

[Pre-law Advising](#)

Wednesday, May 18th 5:00-6:30 Leighton 304

Pre-law advisor Kim Smith will answer all your questions about law school.



IN THIS ISSUE

- Upcoming Events
- Kudos to Professor Williams and Katie Thompson Newell '05
- A special article from editor Rachel Schwartz about the decline in number of history majors
- Fun facts: This day in history and trivia
- Departmentally themed cross word puzzle

Kudos



Professor Harry Williams has been awarded a 10-month Fulbright Lectureship in China for 2011-12, in the Study of the United States. He will teach graduate and/or undergraduate courses in African-American social, cultural, and intellectual history, advise on curriculum development and possibly on graduate theses, and conduct tutorials and informal meetings with students outside of class. Congratulations, Harry, we will miss you!

Katie Thompson Newell '05 was recently awarded the University of Tennessee History Department's 2011 Susan Becker Award for Excellence in Teaching. Katie, who studies late medieval chivalry and identity, is currently wrapping up her PhD coursework at UT and will be taking her comprehensive exams this fall.



Where Have All The History Majors Gone?

Rachel Schwartz, Investigative Journalist to *The Historian*

Northfield, MN—

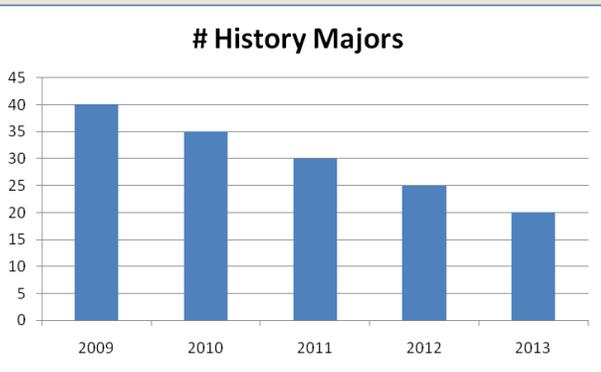
Recently, there has been some concern within the History Department about the decrease in declaring majors. Years ago, History used to be one of the most popular majors at Carleton, numbering around 40 or 50 per class. Over the past few decades, with the development of more and more alternative majors, that number has gradually shrunk. However, the past few years have witnessed a more rapid decline: in the Class of 2010, there were about 35 majors; this year's senior class has 30. Last year, when the Class of 2012 declared, there were only about 25 majors. This spring, only 20 members of the Class of 2013 have declared History.

So what's going on? Isn't History still a worthwhile subject? Classes are still heavily enrolled, the professors are still well-liked and respected, and seniors are still vocalizing enthusiasm for their experiences. So why this distinct decrease in majors? After talking to several members of the faculty, majors from all three years, as well as Nikki Lamberty, our trusted Administrative Assistant, I've come up with a number of possible theories and suggestions.

The first, more obvious explanation is the recent development of new majors. Students can now major (or concentrate) in subjects like Environmental Science, American Studies, Cinema and Media Studies, Area studies like Latin American, Asian or African Studies, as well as a number of different languages. Individuals who may have been History majors several years ago now have the option to study things more tailored to their specific tastes. In addition, the current economic crisis may be persuading students to choose a major that

seem to have a more "useful" function after graduation. The popularity of subjects like Economics and Computer Science particularly, is due to the fact that they are more conveniently geared towards professional paths and have a better "market value" than the humanities.

Yet, the assumed disadvantages of finding a job cannot be the only reason for the decrease in History majors. First of all, twenty-four members of this year's sophomore class declared an equally "useless" major – Studio Art. Secondly, a degree in History actually offers a great amount of flexibility as well as thoroughly prepares students in a number of different ways for the professional world – equipping students with very strong written, oral, analytical and communication skills. David Tompkins, the Department Career Advisor, reminds us that History alumni have gone on to pursue a wide array of careers after graduating, entering fields of business, art, city planning, medicine, law, politics, AmeriCorps, social work,



script writing, journalism and education (to name a few).

A second pressing issue seems to be the comps process. History, along with other Leighton Majors like Sociology/ Anthropology and Religion (who have also witnessed a dip in majors), only offers one comps option: a forty page research paper. The prospect of writing this comps seems to deter individuals who enjoy studying history, but would prefer to merely take some History courses and major in another subject. Many other departments have recently revamped their comps, creating a variety of choices. English, for example, now has four options – including a Creative Project option – which gives students some more freedom. However, the idea of offering another comps option is not novel to the History Department; according to Department Chair, Annette Igra, History actually used to offer a test option for many years. But they decided to do away with that choice because no one ever used it. Students preferred to pursue their own lines of original research rather than study for an exam. Ideas are now circulating for other potential comps projects, like a Public History comps, or something more creative involving media. The problem is that the History major as it is now does not adequately prepare students for those kinds of projects. The required courses – 298 Junior Colloquium and the 395 Research Seminar— are really designed to put students on track for writing research papers. If the department does decide to explore those alternative comps options, changes would have to be made to the rest of the major.

Another concern that students have expressed is the current lack of Off-Campus Study programs led by the History Department. Nearly all other departments have at least one opportunity for its students to study abroad with a Carleton professor for a trimester, and many of these programs have been integral in helping students declare their majors. Students feel that History would be an ideal department to sponsor an OCS program because one could study History almost anywhere! Until now, Professor Williams' winter break program in Ghana was the only option students had. While David Tompkins does teach on the Berlin program, it is a German trip, not a History one. The department also is fairly flexible in accepting credits from students who take history courses while on non-Carleton abroad programs.

The department is aware of this complaint and is making efforts to create desirable programs. An Italy program led by Professors Bill North and Victoria Morse is in the works for the Spring of 2013, and is scheduled to take place every two-three years after that. David Tompkins is working towards making the Berlin trip a joint German and History program. Another, proposal has been made by Thabiti Willis to go to Southern Africa. Students feel that even trips within the US would be exciting and worthwhile – perhaps one that focused on Native Americas.

(Continued pg. 4)

This Day in History: May 6

- 1536 – KING HENRY VIII ORDERS ENGLISH LANGUAGE BIBLES BE PLACED IN EVERY CHURCH.
- 1682 – LOUIS XIV OF FRANCE MOVES HIS COURT TO VERSAILLES.
- 1877 – CHIEF CRAZY HORSE SURRENDERS TO UNITED STATES TROOPS IN NEBRASKA.
- 1882 – THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS PASSES THE CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT.
- 1889 – THE EIFFEL TOWER IS OFFICIALLY OPENED TO THE PUBLIC.
- 1935 – NEW DEAL: EXECUTIVE ORDER 7034 CREATES THE WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION.



- 1937 – HINDENBURG DISASTER: THE GERMAN ZEPPELIN *HINDENBURG* CATCHES FIRE AND IS DESTROYED WITHIN A MINUTE, THIRTY-SIX PEOPLE ARE KILLED.
- 1954 – ROGER BANNISTER BECOMES THE FIRST PERSON TO RUN THE MILE IN UNDER FOUR MINUTES.
- 1960 – MORE THAN 20 MILLION VIEWERS WATCH THE FIRST TELEVISED ROYAL WEDDING WHEN PRINCESS MARGARET MARRIES ANTHONY ARMSTRONG-JONES.
- 1994 – THE OPENING OF THE CHANNEL TUNNEL.
- 2010 – FLASH CRASH THE SECOND LARGEST INTRADAY POINT SWING IN DOW JONES AVERAGE HISTORY.

Trivia

Trivia

Plebian Painless

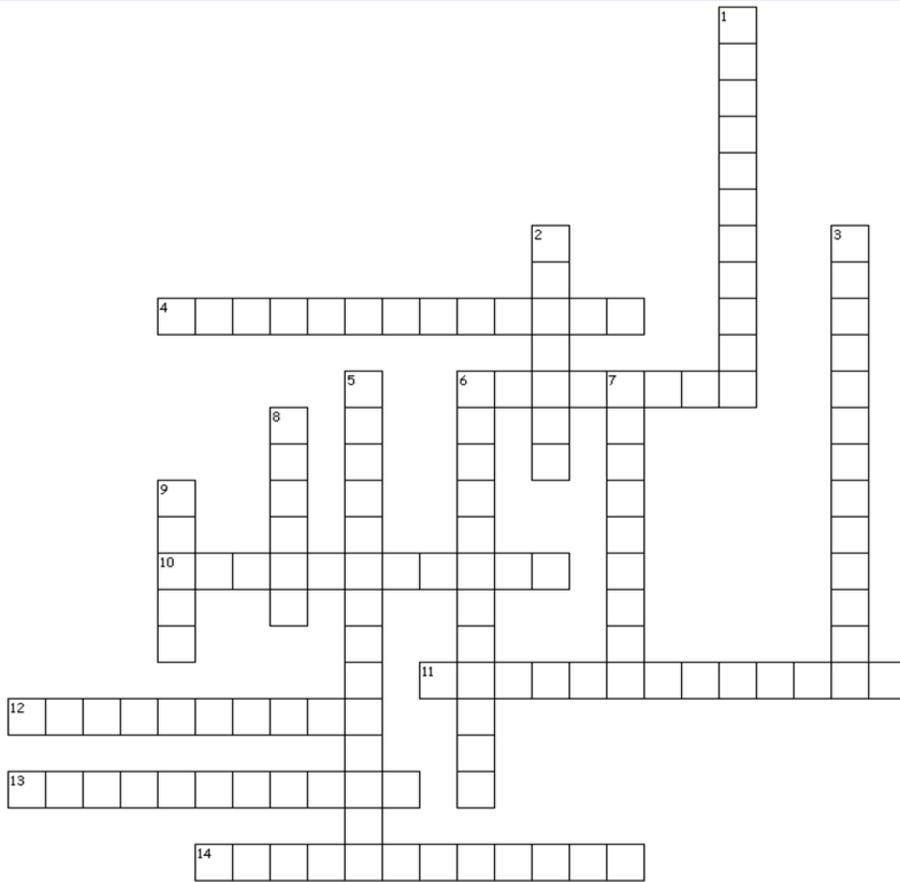
1. The addition of which territory resulted in the first major change to Canada's map since 1949?
2. Which country won the War of the Pacific?
3. What are the two official languages of Chad?
4. Who is the current Emperor of Japan?
5. The Cook Islands are in free association with which country?

Patrician Problematic

1. In which year did the first governmental Red-Green coalition in Germany occur?
2. What is the traditional Imperial House of Ethiopia?
3. Which former monarchy was incorporated as an Indian state in 1975? (flag pictured right)
4. In 2000, the Uzbekistan national football team suffered its biggest defeat against which country?
5. What is the national animal of Bangladesh?



HISTORY NEWSLETTER CROSSWORD



Across

4. The powerhouse of the History Department :)
6. Hall of chemistry?
10. Two dept. workers are in this a cappella group...
11. They fix the electronics that we break
12. Revolution following the French Revolution
13. The fear of palindromes
14. The woman central to Mira Alecci's comps

Down

1. A German pop band but also a famous leader
2. Throwing sport, puking?
3. The man with the Fulbright Lectureship
5. Director of Intelligence of the IRA
6. A junior, red-headed History major
7. Declaration of Independence was written on...
8. Two professors now possess this last name...
9. A German cheese, normally a quantum physics term...

(Continued from pg. 2)

More general concerns have been vocalized about how “major friendly” the History department – and the discipline in History more generally – really is. Its visibility on campus seems to be shrinking, especially in comparison to other majors like Women and Gender Studies or International Relations. These majors offer more campus-wide events like lectures and guest speakers. Some departments have collaborated with student organizations to sponsor more nighttime events. Similarly, the department doesn’t seem very committed to “recruitment.” Junior major Lily VanderStaay feels that she was never really wooed by the department. “No one ever took me aside and said, ‘you know what, you should really think about becoming a History major.’” This kind of personal attention and invitation is conducted often by professors in Psychology, SoAn and English. Alternatively, the kinds of introductory courses that History offers are not always as “catchy” as some other departments. International Relations has Comparative Political Regimes; Economics has Introduction to Macro/Micro; Studio Art has Observational Drawing. These classes draw students in, hook them and get them on track for the major. History offers a number of introductory survey courses as well as Freshman Seminars. But it is almost impossible to teach these far ranging topics in just ten weeks, and they don’t seem as indicative of the major’s subject matter as some of these other introductory courses.

A last explanation could merely lie in a change of Carleton’s student body. The dip in the humanities majors in general, and the increasing interest in areas like Biology or Studio Art seem to point to different kinds of intellectual curiosity. Rachel Feinberg, a sophomore major who is very enthusiastic about History, feels that it is actually the potential moral and intellectual challenges that History as a discipline asks that is pushing students away. “Some of the questions that History raises aren’t ones that people really want to address” she says. While students can pursue problems of inequality, injustice and identity in Political Science or Environmental Science, those disciplines approach these questions very differently, and perhaps more pro-actively, than subjects like SoAn, Religion and History, which ask more pervasive questions about the causes of these problems. Students now seem to be more content in “being a good person” individually rather than challenging themselves on issues of wider concern. The recent failure to renew WHOA House for Student Activism may speak to this general trend.

But have no fear! The major isn’t going anywhere. Nikki is optimistic about the number of majors increasing as more members of this sophomore class change their majors or add History as a second major. Four individuals of the Class of 2012 added History since original declaring last spring, bringing its number up to 29. And again, all the classes have been heavily enrolled by the student population in general, so clearly there is still great interest. The department is aware of many of these issues and is actively engaging in a dialogue about the major, making several attempts to modify it in such ways that will make it even more appealing to future classes.

Trivia Answers

Plebian:

1. Nunavut
2. Chile
3. Arabic and French
4. Akihito
5. New Zealand

Patrician:

1. 1985
2. The Solomonic dynasty
3. Sikkim
4. Japan
5. The Bengal tiger

Crossword Answers

- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Down | 1. Genghis khan | 4. Nikki Lamberty |
| 2. Hurling | 3. Harry Williams | 6. Leighton |
| 3. Harry Williams | 5. Michael Collins | 10. Accidentals |
| 6. Lily Sacharow | 7. Hemp Paper | 11. Rapid Response |
| 8. Khalid | 9. Quark | 12. Industrial |
| | | 13. alBophobia |
| | | 14. Mary Somerset |