

Newsletter: Swarthmore College Department of History Fall 2017

Letter from the Chair

Dear Friends:

While Swarthmore's historians have no more cause to love the year 2017 than the rest of you, it still had its local satisfactions. Another group of majors have finished History 91 successfully, producing excellent research on topics as diverse as the early history of mercantile settlement of the island of St. Helena, the development of lesbian "couple channels" on YouTube, local memories of a devastating fire at the Brooklyn Navy Yard in 1960, and the career of an American cowboy and singer in East Germany. Our newest faculty have finished their first semester of teaching and are starting to craft the syllabi of their own Honors seminars for the future. We heard from some of the students who have interned with the National Security Archive, working with the library staff in McCabe and with **Professor Diego Armus**.

Looking ahead to the coming year, we're all finding it hard to believe that this semester features **Marj Murphy's** last Honors seminar. She'll continue to teach part-time for the next three years, but she has decided that this is the last round up for one of our long-time core seminars. Keep tuned to subsequent editions of this newsletter: it's not time quite yet to ask you all to join us in a celebration of her many contributions to Swarthmore, but we'll be planning something in the near-term future.

We continue to ponder about the place of historical study within higher education and in the wider public sphere—and we hope you will continue to [share your own insights and perceptions](#). The department faculty had a great conversation this past fall about our future courses, including a design workshop focused on two course ideas proposed by **Bruce Dorsey** and myself. We'll keep thinking about how history can and should matter to Swarthmore students.

Here's to 2018: may it be a satisfying and successful year for us all.



Tim Burke

INSIDE:

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Pictures from History 81 at Linvilla, alumni news from **Lisa Ubelaker-Andrade '06**, **Eli Rubin '97**, **Nicole Topich '11**, **Spriha Dhanuka '17**, **David Randall '93**, and **Ben Raphael '09**. Our Faculty News catches up with **Professors Armus** and **Allison Dorsey**.

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See what the Department's been up to for the past semester in our Events section, including the "History Matters" and a lecture by **Erin Corbett '99**.

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A feature on Marcus Rediker's Field Lecture by **September Porras Payea '20**

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A feature on one of our new faculty members, Megan Brown, by **September Porras Payea '20**

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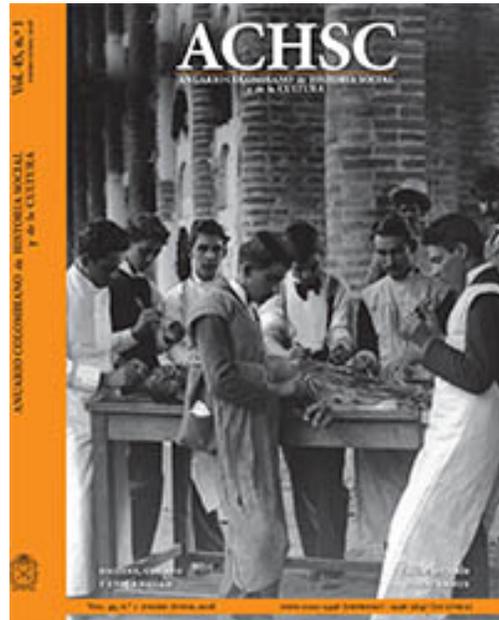
Check out our upcoming events, including a discussion on the future of archives.

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See if our faculty will be in your neighborhood in the Faculty Talks section.

Faculty News

Diego Armus is working on the Buenos Aires Reader from Duke University Press with **Lisa Ubelaker-Andrade '06**. He is also collaborating with current Honors Minor **Naomi Caldwell '19**.



Professor Armus will also be editing a dossier focusing on the history of disease, hygiene, and the body in Latin America. He also had an article published recently, article: "En los comienzos de la medicalización de la ciudad moderna. Buenos Aires 1870-1930". Girón, Álvaro, Oliver Hochadel, and Gustavo Vallejo, eds. *Saberes Transatlánticos. Barcelona y Buenos Aires: Conexiones, Confluencias, Comparaciones (1850-1940)*. Aranjuez (Spain): Doce Calles, 2017.

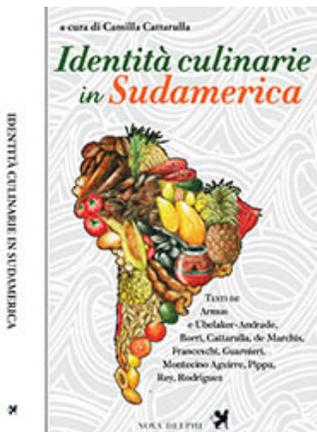
Professor Armus was also featured in the Daily Gazette in their new regular column, "[Research Spotlight](#)".

A few of our new professors were getting their footing this semester. Read about **Professor Megan Brown** in the feature on [page 5](#).

Allison Dorsey has been trekking down to D.C. to meet with the Alumni Book Club. The theme for 2017-2018 is "An Extended Stay in Gullah/Geechee Low Country."♦



Professor Allison Dorsey's History 81 students at Linvilla Orchards. Photo by Prof. Dorsey.



Lisa Ubelaker-Andrade's article, published with Professor Armus, was translated into Italian recently. In case you cannot read Italian: "Cultural Mixture and Food: From the Long Menu to the Pizzeria: Buenos Aires in the 20th Century." You can find a feature in a recent [Bulletin article](#) on **Eli Rubin '97**, who you may remember from **Pieter Judson's**

symposium in the spring of 2015.

Professor Allison Dorsey's History 81: A History of Food in North America class, which includes your 2018 soon-to-be History major graduates **Seonwoo Kim,**

Barbara Pham, and **Susan Whaley,** trekked out to Linvilla Orchards to learn about apples. They also



Professor Allison Dorsey's History 81 students at Linvilla Orchards. Photo by Prof. Dorsey.

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Student & Alumni News

[Professor Burke](#) began holding open discussion sessions in the Eldridge Commons in the Science Center, entitled “History Matters.” These sessions, meant to engage students of all disciplines to discuss current events and link them to history, occurred on September 13th, October 4th, and November 15th this semester. A wide range of topics was covered, including statues and monuments, the US national anthem protests, disaster relief, the bid for Catalonian independence, and the possibility of war with North Korea. Students and professors joined, and discussion was lively and informal.

Ben Goossen '13 returned to campus to [deliver a talk](#) about his new book, [Chosen Nation: Mennonites and Germany in a Global Era](#) (Princeton University Press, 2017) in early September.

On September 25th, the department co-sponsored – along with the Swarthmore College Democrats – an event organized by the Swarthmore Conservative Society entitled, “You Can’t Say That: Psychology and Free Speech at the Administrative University,” given by [History Professor Jonathan Zimmerman](#) of the University of Pennsylvania.

It feels like a cheat, but at this year’s formerly-known-as-Chocolates party, our student-worker won the quiz prize for most questions answered correctly. This year’s quiz centered on getting to know the department, and **September** managed to get three of ten questions correct, the most of any of the attendees. She snatched up the free tickets to the National Constitution Center as the prize.

An important event – [“What Happened in Charlottesville? How to Confront White Supremacy in All Its Forms”](#) – took place on October 5th. Our own **Professor Bruce Dorsey** participated to provide a historical background to the Confederate monuments and to detail how many of them portray the narrative of the Lost Cause. The panel was interdisciplinary and the conversation was rich. Hopefully, this kind of discussion can be a model for how we deal with difficult topics and current events.

The **James A. Field Lecture** took place this year, in October, and our student, **September Porras Payea**, wrote an article about it that you will find on **page 4**. Happily, I can say that **Vera Jones '58**, one of the founders of the lecture’s endowment, was able to attend, as well. She also was lucky to find a seat, as the room was packed! The [Friends Historical Library](#) had an exhibit through October on Lay, and they graced the lecture with their life-sized cutout of Lay. We had a very successful [book sale and signing](#) following the event, organized by the [Swarthmore Campus + Community Store](#).

The Library hosted a really cool event – Transcribathon – on October 25th. They invited anyone interested to come by and try to decipher early modern handwriting as part of Archives Month Philly.



Snacks with a Past! Photo by Prof. Burke.

On October 27th, The Writing Center’s idea of a Trotter Hall Crawl came to fruition. The third floor, where [Department of Political Science](#) is located, offered “Philly snacks” such as Tastycakes, soft pretzels, and Herr’s chips. The second floor, where we’re located, offered up “Snacks with a Past,” such as Rice Krispie treats, Spam and pineapple hors d’oeuvres, Jell-O salad, pimento cheese sandwiches, S.O.S, and apple crisp. The first floor is home to multiple hosts. The Writing Program faculty had fruit kabob fondue, while the [Classics Department](#) served up the classic cheese and crackers, and the [Writing Center](#) had music and mocktails going at the end of the hall. The event was very well attended, and it seems everyone had some good fun.

On November 7th, the [Russian section](#) of [Department of Modern Languages and Literatures](#) hosted a symposium – at which our own [Professor Bob Weinberg](#) spoke – to commemorate the Bolshevik Revolution. We also cosponsored “Afterlives of Revolution: Russia Today in Context.”

Professor Megan Brown represented the History Department when she was one of nine faculty to speak at the Faculty Showcase on November 10th. The Faculty Showcase was organized by [The Speaking Associates Program](#) and the [Center for Innovation and Leadership](#). It had faculty present their work in only one slide and in three minutes or less.

On November 13th, [Erin Corbett '99](#) visited campus to deliver a well-attended talk on recidivism entitled “Why do they return?: Deconstructing the Prison Recidivism Paradigm.” Erin has been working in education for years, receiving her Ed.D. from the University of Pennsylvania recently. She is founder and CEO of [Second Chance Education Alliance, Inc.](#) In her talk, Erin argued that the current research paradigm around recidivism and reentry is

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Marcus Rediker delivers captivating Field lecture

By September Porras Payea '20

In the late afternoon of October 11, the History Department hosted [Marcus Rediker](#) for 2017's James A. Field Lecture entitled "Benjamin Lay and the Surprising Origins of Revolutionary Abolitionism." Rediker is a pioneer in the study of Atlantic history, with focuses in naval accounts from slave ship rebellions to proletariat pirates. He works as a Distinguished Professor of Atlantic History at the University of Pittsburgh and a Senior Research Fellow at the Collège d'études mondiales in Paris. He has also been the recipient of numerous awards for both his books and his studies, including that which he came to speak on for the lecture.

An excellent presenter with a fascinating topic, it was impossible not to be drawn in by the story Rediker was telling. He began by introducing Benjamin Lay, a Quaker dwarf in the early 1700s, with a recount of "guerilla theatre." Lay had dressed in a military uniform and brought a book with an animal organ in it to a Quaker collection.

Then, moved to speak, he announced that slaveholding was the greatest sin in the world and stabbed the book, splattering the slave owners in



the room with animal blood. A dramatic event to be sure and a dramatic introduction to a lecture. Rediker then went into the broader details of Lay's life and views, calling him a "revolutionary abolitionist" as he paired his abolitionism with his anti-capitalism. Rediker broke the narrative here for a very important note: that slaves were the first abolitionists and from there, they acquired allies. His larger point is complementary to this: that Benjamin

Lay was one of the very first allies.

According to Rediker, Lay's revolutionary abolitionism formed through five different "strands of radicalism." The first was radical Quakerism. From burning Bibles on street corners to rejecting war, Lay found much to be admired in the religion, even if its community often rejected him. The second was seafaring, as Lay had been a well-traveled sailor and met with many different kinds of people. This allowed for the third strand, which was Lay's life in Barbados, allowing him to be a witness to the horrors of slavery. The next was vegetarianism that was spurred by a boycott of all slave-produced products. The last element of Lay's radical identity found origins in ancient philosophy, specifically the life of Diogenes.



"...and stabbed the book, splattering the slave owners in the room with animal blood."

Rediker concluded his recount of Benjamin Lay with a reflection on the obscurity of the man. How could a person so unavoidable in 18th century Pennsylvania be virtually unknown today? The answer is a mix, but mainly comes down to the intense nature of Lay's abolitionism. As a sailor, a lower class man, an anti-capitalist, and a dwarf, Lay simply did not fit the educated, middle class chronicle of the abolitionist movement as it would form over the next century. What he did do, however, was lay the foundations of a righteous fight for the equality of all people.

The lecture gave both insight and reflection on the life of a man so outside the normal historical narrative. A brilliant speaker with deep passion for his studies, the History Department was honored to host Marcus Rediker for the James A. Field Lecture. ♦

Introducing: Professor Megan Brown

By September Porras Payea '20

Megan Brown joined the History Department this fall with a background in Western Europe and a penchant for archival research. Her specialty is in twentieth century France and decolonization.

Professor Brown made the decision to pursue a PhD during her senior year at Northwestern University where she was studying journalism. She was taking a class on postwar Europe, which is incidentally a course she taught this fall. The final paper that she wrote for the class was on gendered understandings of collaboration and resistance in postwar France, and what that would mean specifically for a woman's interactions with Germans. After she had turned it in, she was in the airport on her way to visit family and, having no reading material, picked up a book that looked interesting. The book was *Suite française* by Irène Némirovsky, a draft of a novel written in the war years that the author had intended to publish but was unable to as she was killed during the Holocaust. While reading, Brown was fascinated to see the theorizing she had been doing for her class playing out in pages of the book – notably the interactions between women and German soldiers that she had written about in her final paper. It was in this moment that she realized she would have to pursue a PhD in History.

Paris Studies, an interdisciplinary French studies program. Afterward, she attended the City University of New York's graduate program with a Fulbright scholarship and a grant from the Council for European Studies Dissertation Completion Fellowship. It was at CUNY that she attained her PhD in twentieth century French history. She discovered her dissertation topic during that



Professor Megan Brown

time, writing about links between decolonization and European integration. "We're never only talking about continental Europe when we're talking about Europe... I argue that historians need to take that quite seriously when we're discussing how we understand Europe." During her last year of writing, she was teaching at Reims campus of Sciences Po in France.

From there, she studied at the University of London Institute in Paris, getting an MA in

Professor Brown has done most of her research in archives that are in France, but she has also completed research in the Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence, Italy, which is notably linked to the European University Institute where Professor Pieter Judson is now affiliated.

Swarthmore hired Brown in the early spring and she then defended her thesis in April of 2017. She was excited to teach at Swarthmore because she knew she would be working with undergraduates in a liberal arts environment. "I think that the small liberal arts college environment is an especially interesting way to engage with students," she said. An added bonus for her is that both Swarthmore and the larger Philadelphia area are both so rich in archives, something that she hopes to encourage her students to pursue. Her time in the classroom has been filled with interesting conversations that have taken many unexpected paths, and already she feels that there is so much excitement in interacting with Swarthmore's students. On an institutional level, she was "amazed by the welcome given not just to me, but to all new faculty."

In her free time, Brown is fond of listening to vintage radio podcasts of the noir and horror genres from the 40s and 50s. Since moving to Philadelphia, she has been enjoying the museums as well as the public art events such as Monument Lab. Recently, she has garnered an interest in silent films, her favorites being *The Unholy Three* (1925) and *Chicago* (1927). However, her "desert island movie" she admits, would have to be *Jurassic Park* (1993). ♦

Continued from "Events, Fall 2017"...



Erin Corbett '99. Photo by Lawrence Kesterson.

incomplete without a closer examination of the limited educational and post-prison employment opportunities that contribute to the phenomenon. **Dr. Dorsey** did her normal hustle and recruited a number of sponsors for the event, including the [Black Studies Program](#), the [Black Cultural Center](#), and the [Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility](#).

On November 20th, the [Department of Political Science](#) hosted [Sara Farris](#), a sociologist at Goldsmith's College, which we co-sponsored along with the [Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility](#), the [Department of Sociology and Anthropology](#), the [French and Francophone Studies section](#) of the [Department of Modern Languages and Literatures](#), the Programs in [Gender & Sexuality Studies](#) and [Peace & Conflict Studies](#), and the [Intercultural Center](#). Her talk, entitled "Islamophobia in the Name of Women's Rights," documented "the links between racism, feminism, and the ways in which non-western women are instrumentalized for a variety of political and economic purposes."

On November 30th, the [Library](#) and the Department of History hosted an event to invite students to learn more about the [NSA internship](#) that [Professor Armus](#) has put together in partnership with the Library. **Matthew Chaffinch '18** was on the panel, as he is an alum of the program, and he has written his History 91 paper using some of the methods and materials he utilized during that internship.

Dr. Allison Dorsey also managed to take her History 7b class to the African American Museum of History and Culture in Washington, DC on December 2nd. The [Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility](#) helped fund the motor coach to get there; the Deans' Division, particularly the [Dean of Diversity, Inclusion, & Community Development](#), helped fund the food; and Professor Stephen O'Connell of [Economics](#) came along, as well, to help with the chaperone duties.

ERROR: Omission

In our last newsletter, we neglected to include that [Wayne Patterson '68](#) came by to deliver a book talk, "Korea's 'Chinese Decade': 1880-1894: A New Look at Late Qing-Late Choson Relations" in March. The talk was organized by [Asian Studies](#) and co-sponsored by us. Wayne was in the area in 2016-2017 as a Visiting Professor and Scholar at the University of Pennsylvania while on leave from St. Norbert College. ♦

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provided some apple treats for the Trotter Crawl, which you can learn about on **page 3**.

After four years at Harvard as an archivist, **Nicole Topich '11** has moved over to SUNY Upstate Medical University in Syracuse to a tenure-track position as the archivist and special collections librarian. She was also elected to the Native American Archives Section for the Society of American Archivists.

Ben Raphel '09 appeared on *Jeopardy!* in December. Ben was an honors minor here in the Department. He joins **Arthur Chu '08** as the other history student on *Jeopardy!* and one of three Swatties on *Jeopardy!*

Spriha Dhanuka '17 moved to Bangalore and started work at The PRactice, a PR firm.

David Randall '93 recently had his book published in both the [US](#) and the [UK](#). *The Concept of Conversation: From Cicero's Sermo to the Grand Siècle's Conversation* "traces the way the rise of conversation spread out from the history of rhetoric to include the histories of friendship, the court and the salon, the Republic of Letters, periodical press and women." ♦

Upcoming Events

In the beginning of the semester, we will be getting ready to welcome the 2020 cohort into our major through the sophomore plan process.

Sometime during the semester, we hope to host a discussion about the future of the archives. We will speak with **Celia Caust-Ellenbogen '09**, Archives Associate at the Friends Historical Library, and **Nicole Topich '11**, Assistant Curator of Historical Collections at SUNY Upstate Medical University.

Of course, we look forward to our senior thesis presentations and our reception, both happening in May.

Be on the lookout for details of upcoming events on [our webpage](#) and [Facebook page](#). ♦

Faculty Talks, 2018

February

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|---------|-----------------|---|------------------------------------|
| 2/22 | Robert Weinberg | "Visual Depictions of Antisemitism in the Bolshevik Press" at The Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism | Birkbeck, University of London, UK |
| 2/25 | Robert Weinberg | "The Jewish Question in Soviet Film" at The Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism | Birkbeck, University of London, UK |
| 2/29-31 | Megan Brown | "The Algerian Question in France's European Aspirations (1957-1962)," Council for European Studies Annual Meeting | Chicago, IL |

April

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| 4/26 | Megan Brown | "Exits? Independent Algeria and the Future of Integrated Europe," French History Group Workshop | New York, NY |
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Join the conversation!

Go to [our Facebook page](#) and join the discussion on the article from the AHA: ["The Decline in History Majors: What Is to Be Done?"](#)

You can ["Like" us on Facebook](#) for more regular updates about the Department.

As always, you can find more information on our [department website](#).