

# SWARTHMORE COLLEGE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY



Professor Tim Burke. Image by Laurence Kesterson.

## Letter from the Chair

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Spring 2019 sees us at flood tide. Every tenured member of the department is teaching this semester, so we're offering more courses on a wider range of topics than we ever have before. To those riches, we add one more course from this year's **Cornell Professor, Nafisa Essop Sheik**, who is visiting us from the University of Johannesburg in South Africa.

But this semester is also the end of an era. While **Professor Marjorie Murphy** will teach part-time for us for two more years, she has officially retired from her tenured position. Spring 2019 is also **Professor Stephen Bensch's** last semester teaching at Swarthmore, as he has also announced his retirement from the College. When the fall semester starts, we will be a significantly changed department.

It's hard to say just how different: we are hoping to have at least a few conversations this spring about whether our major and departmental curriculum need some form of redesign. Swarthmore students continue to take history courses

and to recognize the importance of historical knowledge to a liberal arts education, but we want to be sure the way we structure our course offerings makes that as available and accessible as possible to our current students.

This spring, after all, we're offering a course that not only explains the divisive history of "culture wars" in the United States but how history itself has been one of the battlegrounds in those struggles. We're teaching histories of water, of the struggles of black women, and Middle Eastern nationalists. We're

offering a window into what happened after the Soviet Union fell and how Europeans travelled and settled in their modern empires. We're looking at pirates, at war, at panics, and at the history of college education itself. We know history matters, and we'll keep working to make sure that Swarthmore students have a chance to see that for themselves.

*"...we're offering more courses on a wider range of topics than we ever have before."*

Timothy J. Burke  
Professor and Chair

# JENNIFER SESSIONS EXPLORES FRENCH MONUMENTS' MEANINGS IN 2018 PAUL H. BEIK LECTURE

*By: Daniel Pantini*

On Tuesday, October 23rd, the History Department hosted [Dr. Jennifer Sessions](#) for the 2018 Paul H. Beik Lecture. Sessions is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Virginia, where she specializes in the fields of Modern France and the French colonial empire. Her research focuses on France's relationship to former colonies in North Africa, concentrating on Algeria. The Beik Lecture, entitled "Must the Duc d'Orléans Fall? Contesting a French Colonial Monument in Algiers and Paris," highlighted how this relationship fits into the context of the global movement to remove monuments deemed as symbols of racism and colonialism.

From the start of the lecture, Sessions' enthusiasm captivated her audience and she spoke passionately on her subject. The audience matched this enthusiasm, filling up seats in the Scheuer room and standing in the back once they had all been

*“. . .France may be further ahead in working through issues of colonialism than others.”*

taken. Sessions began with a brief discussion of the movement to remove Confederate statues in the American South, then moved her focus across the Atlantic. She labelled France "strikingly absent from the global story" of monument removal and discussed how anti-statue movements resonate little with the modern French people. She spent the rest of the lecture diving

into her explanation as to why, despite its well-documented colonial history, France is so removed from the current movement. Sessions pointed out three factors contributing to the apparent lack of enthusiasm for French iconoclasm in a nation with such a rich revolutionary history.

The first factor Sessions argued is that France may be further ahead in working through issues of colonialism than others. Sessions pointed out a law passed



in 2001 where France formally recognized slavery as a crime against humanity, along with efforts to include slavery and colonialism in the French education system and a Day of Remembrance holiday to commemorate the lives lost through French colonialism.

The next factor Sessions argued relates to the mindset of activism in France and a focus on adding memorials to public spaces rather than removing existing ones. While some monuments glorifying the slave trade have been attacked, there is a far greater push to construct new memo-

rials that honor indigenous or abolitionist heroes.

The third factor, taking up the bulk of Sessions' discussion, is that imperialism is so intertwined with French political and cultural history that it's difficult to isolate monuments as solely imperial. She labelled this phenomenon the "entanglements of French imperial monuments," and used an example of the forgotten Duc d'Orléans statue to prove her point.

Sessions then brought the audience through the story of the Duc d'Orléans, a member of the French royalty involved in France's conquest of Algeria. Upon his untimely death, a group of Algerian colonial elites proposed an equestrian statue be erected in his honor. Through this statue, the elites hoped to advocate for further French expansion into Algeria and symbolize French power over Algerian natives. It remained in Algiers until the Algerian Revolution (1954-1962), at which point it was whisked away to the Versailles gardens in France for safekeeping.

Upon rediscovery in 1971, the confusion over who had rights to the statue demonstrates the conflicting histories of many French imperial icons. French veteran groups believed the Duc d'Orléans to be a military pioneer and claimed rights to the statue. French royalist groups saw the statue as a symbol of royal power and claimed their own right. The former Algerian settler community in France saw the statue as a tribute to the Algerian colony and also claimed it.

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# FACULTY NEWS

**BuYun Chen's** book is due out in July, but you can preorder [Empire of Style: Silk & Fashion in Tang China](#) now!

**Professor Chen** also participated in a gathering in India bringing together handloom weavers and scholars, among others, called "[Rethinking Indian Industrialization of Crafts](#)."

**Megan Brown** is the recipient of a [2018-19 Mellon Grant](#), along with three other folks on campus, for the program *Unexpected Homeland*. **Professor Brown** is also busy coordinating the 2019 Alliance to Advance Liberal Arts Colleges Workshop entitled "[Empire on the Move: Teaching and Researching Colonization and Mobility](#)" and organizing the first-annual Philadelphia Area French Historians Meeting in May.

**Dr. Allison Dorsey** spoke at Villanova on October 29th as part of their [Histories of Democracy](#) series. During "American Perspectives: Promises and Shortcomings," and much to her chagrin, **Dr. Dorsey** was quoted on Twitter.

The [Swarthmore Summer Scholars Program](#) has been cited as one of the reasons Swarthmore "has been honored with the [INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine's Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award](#)." It was no small feat that **Dr. Dorsey** got S<sup>3</sup>P up and running, and **Jen Moore** took part in organizing it at various points in time. You can also find **Dr. Dorsey** mentoring in our [Richard Rubin Scholar Mentoring Program](#) also mentioned in the same article.

**Nafisa Essop Sheik** joined us on campus this year as our Cornell Visiting Professor. Be on the lookout for her public lecture, taking place in early April.



Borrowing [Dr. Kathryn Riley '10's](#) bat, our very own **Jen Moore** was featured in the [Bulletin](#) for her devotion to the [department](#), the [softball team](#), and the school in general. In fact, this year,

Jen can also be found mentoring new AAs at the College and working on the ad hoc committee searching for the new [Vice President of Communications](#).

**Marj Murphy** will be teaching Irish History this semester—likely for the last time—and is slowly retiring from campus life.

**Ahmad Shokr**, along with Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science Osman Balkan, has co-organized [Contending Visions of the Middle East through the 2018-19 Mellon Grant program](#). **Megan Brown** is also participating in the program by teaching a course which will contribute to it.

# STUDENT & ALUMNI NEWS

**Rob McNeil '75** was elected president of the [American Historical Association](#) for 2019, our discipline's organization in the U.S. He was also awarded the [Heineken Prize](#) in 2018.

**Mike Dennis '93** and **Kimberly St. Julian-Varnon '12** were named to the Alumni Council.

**Kimberly St. Julian Varnon '12** was also featured in the [Bulletin](#) this summer and was one of the inaugural [Frank 5 Fellows](#) of the [Aydelotte Foundation](#).

Honors major **Naomi Caldwell '19** will be receiving one of two Forum on Education Abroad's 2018 Award for Academic Achievement Abroad for her project, "History and Evolution of Monuments: Buenos Aires." The research for this project was done while abroad and while being mentored by **Dr. Lisa Ubelaker Andrade '06**. **Naomi** will be transforming this project into her senior honors thesis, which will be presented to the community on May 7th.

Minor **Zelda Bank '19** was named [Centennial Conference Defensive Player of the Week](#) in the early part of the

Field Hockey schedule this year for two non-conference games, one of which was a 15-save shutout against Susquehanna University. The team finished the season with their best conference finish in seven years. **Bank** finished her career with over 400 saves in goal. You'll find **Zelda** in **Prof. Armus'** honors seminar on Reform and Revolution in Latin America next semester.

Quite a few of our majors have been participating in the mass actions of the Sunrise Movement down in DC, and you can find Honors Major **Jissel Becerra Reyes '20** wearing a no-nonsense countenance while pushing for the [#GreenNewDeal](#).

**Michael Alexander '68** has recently published [Roman Amoralism Reconsidered: The Political Culture of the Roman Republic and Historians in an Era of Disillusionment](#).

**Adam Bisno '06** not only finished his dissertation but was also awarded the [Fritz Stern Dissertation Prize](#) awarded to the best doctoral dissertation on German history by a student at a North American university. Adam's dissertation, completed at Johns Hopkins University, is titled "Hotel Berlin: The Politics of Commercial Hospitality in the German Metropolis, 1875-1945" and the committee for the award [had many good things to say about it](#), including that Bisno "crosses the lines between urban history, social history, and political history in a unique and exemplary way."

Honors minor **Cameron Wiley '19** is working with Donny Jones and Louis Laine '16 on a [2018-19 Mellon Grant](#) as they will be *Reimagining Black Narratives: Considering the Dominant Archetype of the African-American Male*.

Congratulations are in order for **Phil Weiser '90**, who won Colorado's Attorney General's race.

**M. Kelly Tillery '76** had his *continued on page 5...*

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*Want to send us updates? Post to the community on our [Facebook page](#), reach out to us on [Twitter @swathistory](#), or email us!*

# CRAFTING NATIONAL MEMORY IN THE WAKE OF 9/11 EXHIBIT

*By: Daniel Pantini  
photos: Murtaza Ukani*



Anyone who has found themselves on the second floor of McCabe Library

this semester has likely encountered the exhibit "Crafting National Memory in the Wake of 9/11." Put together by September Porras Payea '20, this exhibit presents a number of *New York Times* articles and pieces of "remembrance art" released directly following the attacks. The goal of this project, displayed on the wall above the exhibit, is to "understand how national memory was forged in the wake of September 11th, and how that memory affects us today."

To better understand this emotional and powerful exhibit, I sat down with the curator and asked her a few questions about her inspirations and hopes for the project.

She recalled her first experience finding a collection of articles written after the attacks that [James C. Hormel Professor in Social Justice and History Marjorie Murphy](#) had brought in to the Department Office, where September works as an Office Assistant. As she looked through the articles, she was surprised at the way a supposedly "liberal" newspaper would write about such an attack.

"Some of the stuff [the *New York Times*] said was pretty Islamophobic. It helped to craft an image of an enemy and propagate a war," said September, commenting on



the collection of articles she encountered.

The most striking thing September saw within the *New York Times* articles was a spread that featured an emotional tale of firefighters in New York on one side and a group of Palestinians firing so-called "celebratory gunshots" on the other. Although many Arab leaders sent condolences, the media perpetuated an image that "the streets show[ed] something different."

"You're so emotionally drawn in and connected to these people who experienced this terrible tragedy and you feel so much passion and love. Then you're immediately brought to 'here's the enemy, here's what they did. Even the people who say they're sorry aren't really sorry,'" remarked September.

September also noted the contrast the newspaper made between European countries and Middle Eastern countries in a "Reactions From Around the World" article. Countries in the Middle East offered some of the most money for support and recovery and were often the first to offer condolences. Yet, the paper tended to present European countries as more sorrowful while Arab countries' apologies appeared much less sincere.

"The way that it was framed was really shocking to me, especially from the *New York Times*."

Although September was



**Photo: Daniel Pantini**

young during the tragedy of 9/11, it was a frequent topic of discussion in her family while growing up. Her parents met in New York, and she herself feels a connection to the city.

"My godfather is on the bomb squad in a town in Northern New Jersey. He was one of the second-wave of responders that came in to help when the towers fell," said September when asked about any ties her family has to the event.

Despite these family ties, it wasn't until stumbling upon the collection of articles that September felt the need to create an exhibit such as this one.

"[The project] started out as an interest. There was no clear goal to it. I think it quickly became...showing people how to understand national memory and understanding how memory of a collec-



tive group and of individuals is crafted through things like media and art."

September pointed out that while many people may critique things like the Iraq War or Islamophobia in the present day, people always didn't feel that way. The articles serve as a reminder of the way that

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# EVENTS, 2018

**Amanda Beebe '15** came back to campus along with four other tri-College alumni on September 13 to present perspective to our current students in terms of their careers. Most folks don't think of a liberal arts education leading to finance, but Amanda was, in fact, a history major and is in finance. Amanda's been active in giving back to the Swarthmore community in a multitude of ways, with this panel being just one of them.

Peace and Conflict Studies asked for an assist for one of their big events of the fall, [Resisting Anti-Semitism: Past and Present, Local and Global](#).

The History Department started off the fall with a slew of fantastic events. On September 24th, **Ahmad Shokr** teamed up with Osman Balkan of [Political Science](#) to screen [In the Last Days of the City](#) and then [hosted a Q&A with the director](#) afterward.

On September 27, co-hosting **Ja'Dell Davis, Dr. Cecilia Márquez,** and **Ana Rosado** with the [Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellows](#) for an event called: "[Progress in the Pipeline?: Women of Color Reflect on Academia](#)." The event was co-sponsored by many, many groups and departments on campus, including: [The Black Cultural Center](#); [Black Studies](#); [Career Services](#); [The Office of the Dean of First Year Students](#); [The Office of Diversity, Inclusion, & Community Development](#); [English](#); [Gender & Sexuality Studies](#); [The Intercultural Center](#); [The Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility](#); [Latin American and Latino Studies](#); [Modern Languages and Literatures](#); [Sociology & Anthropology](#); [Spanish](#); and [The Office of Student Engagement](#). The majority of the work bringing these alumna back to campus and conception of the event was done by **Dr. Dorsey**, and the three women pulled no punches. They were honest

about the challenges of graduate work and provided examples of solutions and networks they've formed in order to thrive.

On September 25th, the department hosted History Matters once again in Eldridge Commons. **Professors Burke** and **Essop Sheik** were joined by a few students for an enthusiastic discussion.

Office Assistant and Staff Writer **September Porras Payea '20** presented "[Crafting National Memory in the Wake of 9/11](#)" at McCabe this semester. Conceived while **Professor Murphy** was cleaning her office in preparation for retirement, September put the exhibit together over the course of a year. A number of librarians suggested books, as well, to enhance the exhibit. You can read about it on [page 4](#).

The [Responses to Gee's Bend Reception and Curator's Talk](#) took place on October 23rd. **Alicia Nock's** work over



the past two semesters can now be shared with you now that the larger community has seen it. We greatly appreciate her contributions!

On the same day, we had our [Beik Lecture](#), which you can read about on [page 2](#).

The Trotter Hall Crawl took place on Friday, October 26th. Thanks to the Writing Center for organizing it again this year. The History Department had items "baked with booze," including a chocolate whiskey cake, and "winter is coming" snacks like pickled vegetables and lox.

On November 8th, we joined the [Peace Collection](#) and the [Friends Historical Library](#) in commemorating the end of World War I with authors [Caroline and Charles Todd](#).

We were pleased to co-sponsor an event with the [French and Francophone](#)

[Studies](#) section of [Modern Languages and Literatures](#) that brought novelist Gerty Dambury to campus to speak about her novel and the riots on Guadeloupe on November 13.

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While the statue was ultimately resurrected in a wealthy French suburb and largely forgotten about, its storied history reveals the complexity of monument activism in France. The History Department thanks Jennifer Sessions for sharing her insight into this issue and was honored to host her for the annual Paul H. Beik lecture.

*...continued from Student & Alumni News on page 3*

proposal approved by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission to have a marker placed in Abington to commemorate Benjamin Lay. It was placed on September 22nd, just outside of Abington Friends Meetinghouse.

**Miles Skorpen '09** married Kathleen McGuirk last summer out in California. [Congratulations!](#)

Finally, in some sad news, you may have heard of the passing of former Vice President **Ken Landis '48**. You can read the [letter President Smith wrote to the community here](#).

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tragedy impacts public opinion and can distort our judgement.

When asked what she thinks we, as a collective, can learn from 9/11 and the subsequent media reaction, September had this response:

One of the biggest things [we can learn] is to understand why you feel the way you feel. I think that a big problem following great tragedies is that people tend to react extremely strongly and we tend to immediately create 'good people' and 'enemies.' I think it's very important to look back to understand how emotions and politics can come together and how the collective really is so powerful.

# FACULTY TALKS

## SPRING 2019

### JANUARY, 2019

1/15	BuYun Chen	Guo Pei: Couture Beyond	Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, CANADA
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### MARCH, 2019

3/7-3/21	Timothy Burke	<a href="#">The Pride of Africa: Namibia, Bostwana, &amp; Zimbabwe -- Chobe River Safari</a>	
3/12	Diego Armus	“Smoking in a modern urban periphery. Buenos Aires throughout a long 20th Century” at <a href="#">Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas</a>	Barcelona, SPAIN
3/15	Nafisa Essop Sheik	“Engendering Difference: Marriage, Reproduction and the Law in Colonial Natal”	<a href="#">Institute for African Studies, Carleton University</a> , Ottawa, CANADA
3/22	Marjorie Murphy	“Teachers as public workers: the complexity of work, service, and unions in the public sector” at the Public Worker Conference	<a href="#">Heyman Center for the Humanities, Columbia University</a> , New York, NY, USA
3/29	Megan Brown	“ <i>Le Rallye Alger-le-Cap</i> . Racing Towards Eurafica?” at the “French Decolonization in Global Perspective” workshop	<a href="#">Institute of French Studies, NYU</a> , New York, NY, USA

### APRIL, 2019

4/2	Nafisa Essop Sheik	Cornell Lecture	Swarthmore, PA, USA
4/4-4/6	Megan Brown	“‘Two Ladies at the Wheel’: The <i>Rallye Alger-le-Cap</i> and Trans-Saharan Tourism (1951-1961)” at the <a href="#">Society for French Historical Studies</a>	Indianapolis, IN, USA
4/26	Nafisa Essop Sheik	“‘A Curse and Wrong to Women of any Nationality’: The Public Politics of Universal Sexual Reform in Nineteenth Century South Africa” at the North Eastern Workshop on South Africa	Burlington, VT, USA

### MAY, 2019

5/11	Megan Brown	Philadelphia Area French Historians Meeting	Swarthmore, PA, USA
5/23	Nafisa Essop Sheik	“‘Eating with Both Sides of His Jaw’: Native Marriage and the Problem of Legal Simultaneity in Colonial Natal” at the Stanford African Studies Seminar	Palo Alto, CA, USA

### JUNE, 2019

6/14-6/15	Robert Weinberg	“Rumor and Ritual Murder in Late Imperial Russia,” at the <a href="#">Third National Conference of Historians of the Nineteenth Century</a>	<a href="#">University of Warsaw</a> , Warsaw, POLAND
6/25	Diego Armus	“The case of Pedro R.: Individual memory and socio-cultural history of disease” at the <a href="#">Third Annual Memory Studies Association Conference</a>	Madrid, SPAIN
6/28-6/29	Robert Weinberg	“Representing Jewishness in the Soviet Union in the 1930s,” at the Conference on <a href="#">Picturing the Russian Empire</a>	<a href="#">University of Tyumen</a> , RUSSIA
6/29	Diego Armus	“The global and the local in the culture of smoking in modern Buenos Aires” at <a href="#">The International Society for Cultural History 2019 Conference</a>	Tallinn, ESTONIA