

HISTORY ★ in the making

Department of History newsletter
Spring 2014, Volume 8

Educational Zombies

Popular culture's fascination with zombies is a well-documented phenomenon. While stories portraying men returning from the dead to consume the flesh of the living date back to the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, written around 2000 BC, starting in the late 1990s there has been a significant increase in the number of books, movies, TV shows, and video games that address humanity's fear of a possible zombie apocalypse.

Zombies are now so prevalent that they have infiltrated institutions of higher education. I am not talking about the campus tag game of humans versus zombies, rather the educational zombies who claim that the only purpose of a college degree is a job. He or she insists on viewing education as the completion of a checklist of skills that will take them directly from the classroom to the boardroom. The educational zombie views classes in poetry, literature, art, ancient history, theater, anthropology, and philosophy as wastes of time since no potential employer will ever ask them to quote Robert Frost or explain the fall of the Roman Empire at a job interview or in the workplace.

While some defenders of the liberal arts try to justify the study of history, philosophy, and literature through allegedly measurable competencies such as critical thinking or analytical reasoning, educational zombies know there are more efficient ways of acquiring such skills than having to slog through the real human

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



content of history. Educational zombies are focused on the quickest and cheapest way to get ready for the workforce.

Those of us who study history, however, tend to believe that a college education should not be solely a résumé-building experience, but also a chance to indulge your intellectual curiosity, seek out new cultural opportunities, and embrace artistic beauty. Studying a core liberal subject will make you no less employable than a task-centered education, and ultimately prepares you better for an uncertain future where the skills learned today could become obsolete tomorrow.

Some might argue that educational zombies hurt no one but themselves with their reductionist view of education. I believe, however, that viewing college education as job training is actually a threat to all who strive for academic excellence. Educational excellence cannot be obtained by completing a course's or major's requirements in the fastest or

easiest method possible. Academic excellence requires habits of mind obtained through vigorous and diligent effort – effort that does not translate automatically into higher incomes or any obvious practical advantage.

It means sitting down and reading the required books even when they might not show up on an exam. It means walking over to the library and searching for scholarly sources rather than relying on Google. It means staying up late and revising a paper for a presentation at a Phi Alpha Theta conference even through you aren't getting any extra credit.

Supporters of academic excellence, however, need not despair. Berry College and the Department of History continue to serve, for now, as safe havens from the walking dead. As long as high faculty standards and rigorous academic programs continue to be the foundation of the school's educational mission, Berry will remain a rewarding path for those intent on pursuing academic excellence and educating their heads and hearts, as well as their hands.

Dr. Christy Snider
Associate Professor and Chair
Department of History

Editor's Note: *This is a revised and abridged version of a talk that Dr. Christy Snider gave at Honor's Convocation in the spring of 2013.*

We're on the Web and Facebook!

The Berry College Department of History is on the web at <http://www.berry.edu/academics/humanities/history/>. Also, you can now find us on Facebook! Just search for Berry College Department of History at facebook.com.



Yes, I would like to support Berry College history majors!

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Mail this form in an envelope to: Berry College, P.O. Box 495010, Mount Berry, GA 30149-5010. Thank you for supporting Berry College history majors and the Department of History!

Billy Townsend: Vocation Becomes Avocation

Editor's Note: Billy Townsend graduated from the Mount Berry School for Boys in 1962 and from Berry College in 1966. He wrote in to tell us just how varied and fun the field of history can be.

Sometimes an aspect of our historical vocation can become a lifelong avocation. It happened to me after dealing with the safety of muzzle loading firearms on state parks and historic sites.

Public history is often much more than reading and writing history. As Chief Historian with the Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites Division, I often attended special programs on weekends. Once, when I attended a Civil War reenactment at Fort McAllister near Savannah, I noted some potential hazards. The main problem I noted was that the artillery demonstrations were in the hands of a volunteer who went by the nickname "Boom-Boom."

Our director at the time, Henry D. Struble, had a policy that if you brought him a problem, bring him a solution. The solution I offered was to request safety training from the National Park Service (NPS). The NPS offered the services of their district safety officer and experts in 18th and 19th Century small arms and artillery. Their training led to a core of safety officers who would be at each activity that involved

black powder, which is a low explosive. I became the Chief Black Powder Safety Officer and led training sessions bi-annually until I retired in 2001.

Safety procedures are stringent, especially those dealing with artillery where a column of exploding gasses from even a blank charge can easily sever limbs. Blank charges from small arms at close range can cause severe injury and burning powder can disfigure and blind. Coupled with these dangers, some state parks and historic sites offered live shooting matches with civilian-type small arms. The NPS had no manuals that dealt with this, so I wrote the manuals and developed associated tests. The courts are always willing to point out where an agency has not done everything that is reasonable and prudent to maintain safety for employees and visitors. Tort liabilities are always a consideration when planning any park or historic site activity. Tests were on file in case proof was needed that safety was a concern. After I offered a session on demonstrations at the Southeastern State Parks Programs Seminar, the manuals and examinations I created ended up being used by the state park systems in Florida, South Carolina, Missouri and Maryland as a basis for their own regulations.

As historians do, I sought more information. I joined the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association and



Bill Townsend, Berry College Class of 1966

my growing interest led me to take an adult education class from the Cobb County School System. As an indicator of the changing times, the course was on building a southern style long rifle using equipment in the East Cobb Middle School industrial arts shop. Since that class I have been building and competing with muzzle loaders for more than 30 years. Competitive shooting is a lifelong sport and incidentally the safest high school and collegiate sport. I have enjoyed the sport and meeting the people involved, many of whom, like me, have no interest in hunting. We enjoy the study of muzzle loaders, the people who built them, and the artistry involved in this historic occupation.

Remembering Dr. Amy J. Johnson

This coming December marks ten years since the untimely passing of our colleague Dr. Amy Johnson. Amy died on December 2, 2004, shortly after a car accident on Interstate 75, as she was returning from a conference.

Amy came to Berry after earning her Ph.D. in Modern Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University and an undergraduate degree from Emory University. She had just been given tenure and promoted to Associate Professor the year of the accident. Amy was an excellent scholar, the author of *Reconstructing Rural Egypt: Ahmed Hussein and the History of Egyptian Development* (Syracuse University Press, 2004), among other works. But she was even better known for her challenging and engaging courses. Dr. Johnson's classes were tough, but she pushed her students

to achieve their best. Outside the classroom she was an active mentor and advisor, serving as the faculty advisor for the Berry College Model Arab League and Amnesty International. What is more, Amy was a fine colleague, and we still miss her.

Following her death, Amy's family established a number of scholarships. They include the Amy J. Johnson Scholarship at Berry College, which provides \$1,000 per year to a female student studying in Egypt, another country in the Middle East, Africa, or in a developing country. Over the past ten years, more than a dozen students have benefited from the scholarships Amy's parents set up in her honor. In this way, Amy's enthusiasm for Middle Eastern history and affairs lives on in those students who have won these awards.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: ROBERT LANG

Editor's Note: Robert Lang graduated from Berry with a B.A. in History in 2009. The few short years since have taken him from the U.S. Southeast to the American West to Eastern Europe. He's now back in the Southeast, having just accepted a position with the Social Security Administration in Columbia, S.C.

History has been my passion for a long time. My dad taught Georgia History to eighth graders for nearly thirty years, and so we had many conversations about local history, and I had access to textbooks and historical works from our home library. When I came to Berry College in 2005, I knew immediately I would major in history. In the five years since I graduated college, I have periodically wondered what might have happened had I chosen another major, like writing or Physics. But I have never stopped loving history.

It's easy to imagine having taken different paths, but even the slightest tweak to the past would completely change the present. In November 2013, I returned to America after

completing twenty-six months as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ukraine. Although I struggled with self-doubt and worries about the value of teaching English, serving as a Peace Corps volunteer is the most valuable experience of my life to date. Studying history at Berry led me in that direction, both directly and indirectly.

I first considered joining the Peace Corps during my senior year. Beginning in the fall of 2008, I began applying to graduate programs in history with the encouragement of my two advisors, Drs. Christy Snider and Laurence Marvin. Because of my interest in the history of the American West, Dr. Marvin advised me to apply to his alma mater, the University of Wyoming. But during the spring semester, I briefly looked into volunteering. I consulted with Drs. Snider and Marvin, who assured me the Peace Corps was a worthy undertaking, should I choose to serve. In the end, however, I decided to enter the master's program at Wyoming.

Not long after beginning my master's degree, I realized I really did want to

serve in the Peace Corps. At times, I felt like graduate school was not the right place for me; after my first semester, I "knew" I should be doing something more productive. In January 2010, I began working on my Peace Corps application, with a first available date of departure of September 2011. I considered dropping out of Wyoming so that I could be available to volunteer at an earlier date. But Dr. Marvin, with whom I shared my concerns, persuaded me to finish at least my second semester. Throughout the sixteen month application process, I continued to consult with Dr. Marvin, who I asked to be a reference. In the meantime, I completed a master's degree in American Indian History and Studies, graduating from Wyoming on May 7, 2011. A week later, on May 14, I received my invitation to serve in Ukraine.

Thanks to the advice and guidance I received from all my Berry professors, I now possess a master's degree and am a successfully Returned Peace Corps Volunteer. These are two accomplishments I am very proud of and that I believe will benefit me greatly in the future.

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Rights at the 1936 Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Peace" at the 2013 Peace History Society Conference in Carbondale, Illinois.

Associate Professor Matt Stanard was on sabbatical in the fall and spent a month in Brussels carrying out research. He published a number of book reviews and essays this year, including "Violence and Empire: The Curious Case of Belgium and the Congo" in *The Routledge History of Western Empires* (2013).

Assistant Professor Jennifer Hoyt's chapter "The Other Dirty War: Cleaning Up Buenos Aires during the Last Dictatorship, 1976-1983" appeared in December 2013, and she presented a paper at the American Society of Environmental Historians conference in March 2014.

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focusing intensely on Buenos Aires, I have expanded my knowledge of the region by traveling throughout Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil.

As part of my responsibilities at Berry College, I teach classes on World history since 1550, Colonial Latin America, and Modern Latin America. I have also added two new courses to the department's offerings. In Fall 2014, I will teach Environmental History, exploring how the environment has been an actor in human development throughout history. In Spring 2015, I will offer Modern Mexico. This course will examine Mexico's history from independence to the present day.

I am pleased to be a part of the history department faculty. My colleagues have been very supportive and have helped me as I begin to find my place at Berry. I look forward to many years of service and a productive career here.

Alumni news

Giles Chapman ('66) writes that he is "involved in organizing a patriotic commemorative program on September 14, 2014, honoring the 200th anniversary of the Star Spangled Banner. I am a member of the Exchange Club of Rome and the Project Coordinator for the event. We have placed a special order for a replica of the Star Spangled Banner flag measuring 30' x 42' and plan to fly that flag on Sunday, September 14, 2014."

Bridgette S. Boylan ('80) tells us that her firm, Bridgette Boylan Interiors, celebrates its 30th year in business this year and was voted "Best in Gwinnett 2012." She writes, "I also serve on the board of a non-profit here locally called Partners For Care (www.partnersforcare.org) whereby I travel to East Africa, living there one month out of each year, partnering with and serving alongside our African partners to address the needs of those in abject poverty through many of our established self-sustaining programs."

John Gentry ('90) received a Master of Arts in history from American Public University, Charles Town, West Virginia, in May 2013. He is currently Curriculum and Staff Development Coordinator for Georgia Northwestern Technical College in Rome, Georgia, where he is also an adjunct history instructor.

Charles Freeman ('92) writes to tell us that now that he is retired he is able to spend more time reading books that he loves, including, most recently, *The War*

Lovers: Roosevelt, Lodge, Hearst and the Rush for Empire, 1898 by Evan Thomas and *The Bully Pulpit* by Doris Kearns Goodwin. Charles recalls that Dr. Gordon Carper was his advisor while at Berry and says that he misses "the rigors of history classes; the reading, research (especially), even the writing of the papers."

Having earned her MA and Ph.D. in history from Auburn University, **Dr. Sheri Shuck-Hall** ('94) is currently Associate Professor of History at Christopher Newport University (CNU) in Newport News, Virginia, where she teaches American Indian history, colonial American history to 1776, and public history with a focus on museum studies. Dr. Shuck-Hall also is director of CNU's Public History Program. Her recent book publications include *Journey to the West: The Alabama and Coushatta Indians* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2008) and *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The European Invasion and Regional Instability in the American South*, co-edited with Robbie Ethridge (University of Nebraska Press, 2009). She writes that she "enjoys trekking through historical sites in and around her home in Yorktown with her husband, Tom, and her two children, Lochlan (6) and Freya (3)."

Catherine Glenn Foster ('02) is an attorney serving as litigation counsel with Alliance Defending Freedom's sanctity of life team. Foster has worked on key legal cases involving abortion, healthcare fraud, end-of-life matters, freedom of conscience, and hormonal contraception issues. Before working at Alliance Defending Freedom, Foster was a legal fellow for Americans United for Life, where she participated in congressional and coalition meetings in addition to her legal work, and an Edmund Burke

Fellow at the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, representing C-FAM at the United Nations and international non-governmental meetings. Foster earned her J.D. at Georgetown University Law Center. She, her husband Steve, and daughter Hannah welcomed their youngest, William, in September.

Joy Deaton Barresi ('05) and her husband Matthew moved to Charlottesville, Va., in January and welcomed their second child, Miles Andrew Barresi, on January 28, 2014. Joy enjoys primarily raising their two children while continuing to work part-time at Freedom Partners in Arlington, Va.

Jenice (Nations) Grzeszczak ('07) is leaving her profession as a Flight Attendant at Delta Air Lines to begin graduate school for a Masters of Arts in Teaching at The University of North Georgia.

Wesley Warren ('09) is an attorney with The MetroHealth System in Cleveland, Ohio.

Kelsey Taylor ('13) has been accepted into the Higher Education Administration Department at the University of Alabama (UA), where she is working towards her master's degree, with a planned graduation date of May 2015. She writes, "While I am going to class, I am also a Community Director for Housing and Residential Communities at UA. This summer, I will be heading back to Georgia to fulfill my internship at Dalton State College as the Marketing and Special Projects Intern in their Office of Residence Life."

Don't forget to write! If you have news to be considered for inclusion in next year's newsletter, please send it to Matt Stanard by email at mstanard@berry.edu.

Facultynews

Professor Jonathan Atkins is finishing up his book manuscript *The American Union, 1789-1848*. His chapter "Martin Van Buren & the Economic Crisis of the 1830s" was published in 2014, and he has committed to write a chapter on "The Age of Jackson" for a new history of Tennessee.

Professor Larry Marvin's article "The Albigensian Crusade in

Anglo-American Historiography, 1888-2013" was published in *History Compass* (2013). His book reviews appeared in *The Historian* (2), *History: Reviews of New Books*, *The Medieval Review*, *Michigan War Studies Review* and *Choice*.

Associate Professor Christy Snider published two essays, "College Equal Suffrage League" and "The International Congress of Women" for the American Women's History Online Database. She presented the paper "Women's

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Department news



New Phi Alpha Theta members during the induction ceremony.



Current and new Phi Alpha Theta chapter members following the ceremony.



2013-14 and 2014-15 officers of the Berry College chapter of Phi Alpha Theta. Front row, left to right: Jessica Landry, Avriel Glass, Ryan James and Amanda Marbut. Back row, left to right: Meg Ratliff, Rachel Renaud, Rachel Quillin, Haley Fortune and Marissa Lindsey.

The Berry College chapter of the national history honors society Phi Alpha Theta (PAT) held an induction ceremony on March 12, 2014, at which the chapter welcomed nineteen new members. The initiates brought the chapter's membership to thirty students, with fourteen graduating in the spring. The faculty advisor for Berry's chapter of PAT is Dr. Jonathan Atkins.

Several high-achieving History majors won awards this year:

- The late Professor Gordon Carper and his family generously funded two major scholarships that the Department of History awards each year, one for a junior history major, the other for a senior history major. The 2013-14 N. Gordon Carper Scholarship recipients were junior Jonathan Risley and senior Daniel McLendon.
- Thanks to the ongoing support of Berry College history alumni, the department is able to grant the History Alumni Book Award each spring and fall to a deserving history major.

The award pays for a significant portion of that student's required textbooks for the semester, for any classes. Junior Meg Ratliff won the award in the fall semester and senior Garrett Hollis won the award this spring.

- At the 2014 Berry College Honors Convocation, the Department of History awarded the N. Gordon Carper Award to Haley Fortune and the Noel and Todd Carper Award to Rachel Quillin. The N. Gordon Carper and Noel and Todd Carper Awards are presented, respectively, to the senior history major with the best academic record in American history and the junior history major with the best overall academic record in history.
- The Department was pleased to present this year's History Faculty Award to Ryan James. The History Faculty Award is awarded to an outstanding graduating senior history major who has demonstrated her or his commitment to and love of the discipline through their academic work and their service to the Department.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: INTRODUCING DR. JENNIFER HOYT, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF LATIN AMERICAN HISTORY

Editor's Note: *This year the Department of History welcomed a fifth full-time member, Jennifer Hoyt, Ph.D., University of Texas at Austin, 2011.*

As the newest member of the history department at Berry College, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. I am originally from Savannah, Georgia, and I attended the University of Georgia as an undergraduate. While there, I majored in history and minored in Spanish. I became interested in Latin American history when I took a course on U.S.-Latin American relations. The period of militarism in the region from roughly 1960 to 1980 fascinated me. I realized that I wanted to continue exploring this part of the world and the topic, so I applied to graduate schools. I wound up at the University of Texas at Austin, which has the highest ranked program for Latin American history in the nation.

At Texas, I specialized in Modern Latin America with Cold War history as my supporting field. My dissertation research focused on the last military dictatorship in Argentina, which was in power from 1976 to 1983. Instead of examining the human rights violations of the regime, I explored its less overtly violent attempts to remake the nation. I conducted extensive research on the military's ambitious urban reform agenda and found a fascinating story of life during this period. The generals in charge used the built environment as a way to control society and reaffirm the state's power. At the same time, the residents of Buenos Aires challenged the regime's actions and the reforms. What emerged from my research was a story not of absolute repression, but of vocal dissent indicating a limit to the military's power. While

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