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*History Department*

*75 University Ave W.*

*Waterloo, Ontario, Canada*

*N2L 3C5*

*Tel: (519) 884-0710 x3389*

*<[www.wlu.ca/arts/history](http://www.wlu.ca/arts/history)>*

## Words of Welcome

Welcome to the eighth issue of *The Owl*, the annual newsletter of the History Department at Wilfrid Laurier University's Waterloo campus. Thanks to all who have contacted us in response to previous issues; please keep those letters and e-mails coming in. We especially love to hear from our former students.

Owl Trivia #8: Did you know that Archimedes, Merlin's owl in Disney's animated film *The Sword in the Stone* (1963), was voiced by Junius Matthews, better known as the voice of Rabbit in the Winnie the Pooh films?

## Interview

**Dr Mary Chaktsiris** joined the History Department this year as the first Cleghorn Fellow in War and Society, a two-year appointment that involves teaching in the History Department and contributing to the activities of the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies (LCMSDS). Her research interests include gender, the First World War, veteran's experiences, and identifications of "the enemy" in wartime Canada. The Owl sat down with her recently to ask her to reflect on her first year at Laurier and discuss her future plans.




: *What did you do before coming to Laurier?*

**MC:** When I began my undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto, I majored in Political Science, not History. Like many other students, I changed my major; the courses I took about early modern history, gender and sexuality, the French Revolution, and even renaissance Florence captivated my interest and imagination. I vividly remember many of the primary sources I worked with in those classes – including early modern woodcuts! I then completed an M.A. at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) in Toronto, where I pursued new research interests. My Master's thesis examined student publications during the Great War to better understand gendered expectations during wartime and societal pressures – including student reactions to them. I was part of a vibrant community of educators at OISE and learned about history education and pedagogy in new and interesting ways. I then went on to Queen's University in Kingston where I completed a Ph.D. in History; my thesis examined the city of Toronto during WWI. I was president of the History Students' Association and received a teaching award for a course I designed and taught on Canadian military history.


*(cont. on pg. 2)*

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I also spent two terms studying abroad at Birkbeck College, University of London. After finishing my Ph.D. in 2015, I worked at the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) on outreach, research communications, and policy.

 : *What have you found to be the major differences between working in the public sector and the academic world?*


**MC:** The two sectors are connected, and perhaps that's why I see more similarities than differences. A firm grounding in history — and an understanding of the ways the past influences everyday life — has helped shape both my academic research and career experiences. Building familiarity with the broader policy mandates and strategic mandate agreements that influence higher education helped me better understand the sector and its unique challenges and opportunities at this time. Many of our students will end up in the fields of policy and government relations — and hopefully contribute to lively debates about the future of higher education and, specifically, the important impacts of the arts.

 : *So, what is it that especially interests you about Canadian military history?*

**MC:** Relationships between war and society, and the ways societies militarize in different ways and at different times, is as fascinating as it is contradictory. The pressures of war, which in Canada often included and includes changing legislation and increasing the emergency


powers of the state, provide rich context to discuss impacts of war on civil liberties, freedom of the press, and everyday life. In the contexts of the First and Second World Wars, for example, how do we balance the complications that a war fought in the name of freedom also introduced restrictive measures at home — and even taxation, in the case of the Great War? If you drop the descriptors from Canadian Military History it becomes just “History.” As Margaret MacMillan reminds us, History can have both its uses and abuses.



 : *What did you teach this year, and what will you be teaching next year?*

**MC:** I designed and taught four new courses this year in the areas of war and society and digital humanities. These included “Warfare from Knights to the Thin Red Line” (HI220), which charted changes in societal and military organization in Europe from medieval forces and the crusades to regimented imperial armies and the colonization of North America. I also taught “The Great War and Its Aftermath” (HI 360) and “War and Society” (HI 346B) that focused on Canadian

experiences with war both at home and overseas. Lastly, I taught a Digital Humanities course: “Digital Editing and Online Publishing” (DH 300) where, in partnership with the Laurier Archives and with the assistance of **Dr Chris Nighman**, students digitized historical texts using the WordPress platform. Next year, I will teach several of these courses again, as well as a new course on “War and Society in the West” (HI 230).

 : *What are your current research interests and what are you working on now?*

**MC:** I am currently preparing a manuscript for publication based on my doctoral research about Toronto, gender, and the First World War, and I'm also undertaking new research on veterans and their families using veteran's pension files digitized by the Through Veterans' Eyes project at the LCMSDS. These files and the letters from employers, friends, and family that often accompanied them, provide insight into the impacts of war throughout a veteran's lifetime — a context that will help inform current debates about necessary state supports for veterans and their families.

I am also interested in researching innovative methods to teach history and develop strong critical thinking skills in students. In partnership with the Laurier Writing Centre, I am exploring how students can best develop their writing skills within history courses by using scaffolded assignments that build up to a final research paper in stages with feedback from the instructor and peers.

## Bright Job Prospects for History Graduates!

Over the past few years the History Department has hosted a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/LaurierHistoryDepartment/>), managed by **Dr Amy Milne-Smith** and **Dr Dana Weiner**, where we provide information of interest aimed especially at our History majors and alumni.

For example, in April we posted Paul B. Sturtevant's article "History is not a useless major: fighting myths with data," in *Perspectives on History*, the news magazine of the American Historical Association. Here are some excerpts from that article:

*"Over the past 20 years, warnings from a variety of sources—from career counselors to administrators to government officials—have convinced many prospective college students (and their*

*parents) that the only safe path to a well-paying job is through a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) major. [Yet] members of the academy—including STEM faculty themselves—have repeatedly challenged assertions that majoring in the humanities is useless.... In advising students, talking to parents, and listening to the priorities articulated by state legislatures, we continue to encounter widespread myths about the lives of people who graduate with history BAs. These myths are largely based on misinformation about the prospective lives of those who major in history. They paint life with a degree in history as a wasteland of unemployment and underemployment.... A potent way to combat these myths is with concrete data. Thankfully, a massive repository of data, the American*

*Community Survey (ACS), tells us much about the lives of history majors.... Overall, the ACS data suggest that the picture for history majors is far brighter than critics of the humanities would have you believe...."*

Here is the URL for the full article, which provides much concrete information to back up these conclusions: <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/april-2017/history-is-not-a-useless-major-fighting-myths-with-data>.

In the same vein, we also posted on our Facebook page a blog from The Canadian Historical Association that highlights many cases of diverse career outcomes for History graduates: <https://historydegreediplomehistoire.blog/>

## High School Students Visit Laurier's History Department

The History Department is very pleased to host groups of local high school students who visit the campus with their teachers for lectures and other activities.

In December 2015 several teachers and a group of about 75 students from the "Choose to Lead" program at Bluevale C.I. in Waterloo came for lunch at the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies, a campus tour, and short lectures by History faculty **Prof. Alicia McKenzie**, **Dr. Susan Neylan**, and **Dr. Mark Humphries**, on key examples of leadership in history.

In March of this year two teachers at Southwood S.S. in Cambridge, including one of our own alumnae, **Jessica Cornel**, brought a class of about 40 Grade 12 History students to campus.

After a welcome message from our Undergraduate Advisor, **Dr Jeff Grischow**, who also provided an overview of Laurier's History and Ancient Studies programs, they viewed a screening of *12 Years a Slave* (2013) and then heard a lecture presented by **Dr. Dana Weiner** on the history of slavery in the American colonies and the U.S.

Over the years we have also had smaller groups of students, such as the History club from a local high school with their faculty advisor, come on campus to sit in on an actual course lecture, meet some of our students, and get a private tour of the campus, including lunch in the cafeteria.

If you are currently a high school history teacher and would like to arrange for a class or club visit, please contact Dr. Grischow ([jgrischow@wlu.ca](mailto:jgrischow@wlu.ca)) until 30 June 2017 or his successor, **Dr. Amy Milne-Smith** ([amilnesmith@wlu.ca](mailto:amilnesmith@wlu.ca)) after July 1st.

## History Travel Courses

In recent years a growing number of Laurier History students have had many diverse opportunities to enhance their study of the past through experiential learning in travel courses.

For well over a decade, hundreds of History students and alumni have gone to France and Belgium on War and Memory Battlefield Tours hosted by the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies (LCMSDS), led by **Prof Terry Copp** (retired), **Dr Roger Sarty**, and **Dr Mark Humphries**, as well as affiliated faculty from the University of Waterloo, the Royal Military College, and elsewhere.

We have also offered a number of summer travel courses for credit. For example, in 2011 **Dr Len Friesen** took 15 students in his senior seminar (HI411) to Russia, in 2014 **Dr Blaine Chiasson** led 10 students in his third-year course (HI399) to China and Taiwan, and in 2016 **Dr Gavin Brockett** took 12 students to Israel/Palestine as part of a second-year course.

This year, **Dr Eva Plach** is taking students to Poland for the last two weeks of May as part of HI 388: "Into that Darkness: Poland, WWII and the Holocaust." Ten Laurier history students are going along with ten students and a professor from Nipissing University in North Bay. They will spend a week in Krakow before moving on to the Lublin region and Warsaw.

Another mode of student travel courses is connected to Laurier's Residence Learning Community (RLC) program. Our first RLC, Vimy Hall, was in 2014/15 and



The 2016 Puerto Rico travel course, including mostly students from the History Department's 2015/16 Residence Learning Community: "Pirates' Hall"

was followed by a travel course to France and Belgium led by **Dr. Mark Humphries**. Last year our second RLC was on the subject of the history of piracy. Under this program, 25 first-year History majors lived in a common dormitory ("Pirates' Hall") during the year and participated in various social events organized around the theme of piracy (nothing illegal or violent, of course!), and all took HI127: "Pirates! A World History" with **Dr Jeff Grischow** in Winter term. Then Dr. Grischow and **Dr. Dana Weiner** co-taught a second-year travel course (HI299) to Puerto Rico (see photo above).

The Pirates' Hall RLC and Puerto Rico travel course proved to be so popular that they were repeated in 2016/17. This year's HI299 course is already underway and the travel portion of the course will take place soon. While they are in Puerto Rico the 17 students who are enrolled in this travel course (plus the RLC residence don) will visit historical sites and museums in San Juan and elsewhere on the island that are relevant to piracy and the slave economy during the age of the Spanish Empire.

For 2017/18 the History Department's Ancient Studies program will team up with the Medieval & Medievalism Studies program to host a new RLC entitled "Camelot Hall" on Ancient Roman Britannia and Early Anglo-Saxon and Viking England. The common course for the RLC students will be HI121: "Ancient History in a Global Context", to be taught in Fall term by **Professor Alicia McKenzie**. She will also supervise the RLC's various social and learning events that will culminate in a planned travel course to England in Summer 2018, which will include visits to Roman sites like Bath and Hadrian's Wall, and Anglo-Saxon sites such as Sutton Hoo, as well as the British Museum in London and several regional museums.

There have also been other travel opportunities available in Canada and the US, such as **Dr David Monod's** research trip in 2016 to New York City, where a number of students who had taken his third-year course on American cultural history worked for him as paid research assistants for his current project on the history of Vaudeville.



## Teaching & Research Symbiosis

*We are often asked to explain how our historical research informs our teaching and how our teaching influences our research. In this column we showcase one of the many examples from Laurier's History Department where our teaching and research intersect.*

**Dr. Mark Humphries** holds the Dunkley Chair in War and the Canadian Experience and serves as the director of the **Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies**; he also teaches at both the undergraduate and graduate level in the History Department.

This year he taught a new second-year course entitled **"Plagues & Pestilence"**, which examined the history of epidemic disease and public health responses, from the Black Death in the ancient and medieval periods to the eradication of smallpox in the 1970s. Taking a thematic approach, the course focused especially on the patient experience of disease and the ways in which health professionals, the state, and

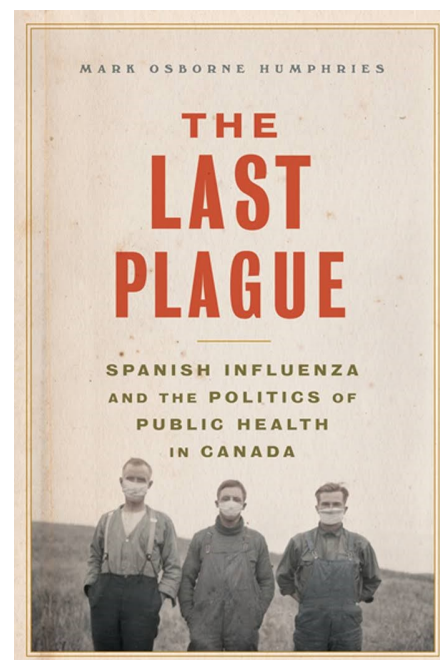
ordinary people tried to mobilize to protect themselves from history's most virulent plagues.

This course grew out of one of Dr. Humphries' major research interests, which also include Canadian military and social history of the 20th century.

As a historian of medicine and public health, he has established himself as a leading expert on the greatest plague of the 20th century, the so-called **"Spanish Flu"** of 1918, which killed more people worldwide than died in the Great War.

His scholarly reputation on this topic is based upon four published papers in academic journals and books, as well as his own book: *The Last Plague: Spanish Influenza and the Politics of Public Health in Canada*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013, 323 pp. (ISBN 9781442610446).

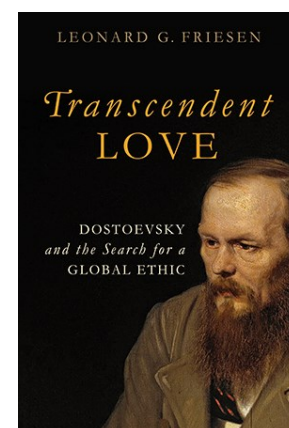
As a book reviewer for the *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* has stated, "Humphries makes a significant contribution to scholarship of the 1918



influenza epidemic in Canada with this book, a fine example of the masterful harnessing of primary sources and statistics to debunk old narratives and present refreshing new perspectives." And a reviewer for the journal *Canada's History* commented that "This fine book chillingly dissects the disease as it burned through Canada, as well as the failed attempts by authorities to stop it."

## Congratulations

Just as this issue of *The Owl* was about to go to press, we learned that **Dr. Leonard Friesen** has been promoted to full professor. An expert in modern Russian history, Dr. Friesen came to Laurier's History Department in 1994 after teaching for several years at Conrad Grebel University at the University of Waterloo. The author of two books and numerous chapters in academic books and articles in refereed journals, Professor Friesen has taught courses on Imperial Russia, the Russian Revolution, and the Soviet Union, as well as 20th-century Europe and International Relations (1891-1991). He was also the founder of Laurier's Global Studies program in 2002 and served for several years as chair of that program, teaching its introductory course five times. Finally, he has led five non-credit study tours to Russia and the Ukraine since 2007, as well as his fourth-year History seminar on War and Memory in Summer 2012. Congratulations, Len!



# The History Students' Association (HSA)

*Report from the 2016/17 President of the HSA, Braeden Suggitt:*

The end of the 2016-17 school year marks three years in which I have been involved with the HSA, with this past year as president. I am honoured to have had this opportunity and am looking forward to continuing to work with the club as VP: Academic for the 2017-18 year.

This year kicked off in its usual fashion, with the recruitment of incoming students at the get-involved fair, and the election of new year representatives.

Throughout the fall semester, we hosted both academic and social events which brought students and faculty together. The annual Remembrance Day ceremony featured **Dr. Roger Sarty**, who reflected on his experiences prior to coming to Laurier, when he administered the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, as well as **VP of Student Affairs David McMurray**, who carried on his tradition of reading *In Flanders Fields*, with our own **Stephanie Plante** reciting the French version of the poem.

One of the most successful events that we hosted in the Fall was a combined movie night and guest lecture, which featured **Dr. Eva Plach** discussing the history and significance of *The Pianist*, followed by a screening of the film.

At the beginning of Winter semester, we hosted a second Meet the Profs night, which was very well attended by both faculty and students.

Throughout the month of March, we offered a series of three lectures which were all well attended. **Dr Daniel Heidt** (see poster below) of Trent University gave a visiting speaker presentation on his



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digitization project for the Confederation Debates. This was followed two talks by faculty members in Laurier's History Department: **Dr. Leonard Friesen**, speaking on "Is Putin another Stalin? Which Means What?", and **Dr. Douglas Petrovich**, who discussed his exciting new research on the origins of the Hebrew language in Egypt.

To finish off another great year, we partnered with the **Medieval Students' Society** to organize a trip to Toronto to visit the Royal Ontario Museum and Medieval Times.

Overall the year has been quite successful for the club. I and the other executive members have all gained valuable connections

and experience to put into practice next year. I am very thankful for having had the opportunity to serve as president and for all of the support that the club has received from the faculty. I am looking forward to returning for my fourth year and continuing to help run events that bring students and faculty together.

B. Suggitt

*Prospectus for the coming year from the 2017/18 President of the HSA, Cameron Baer:*

As president of the Wilfrid Laurier History Students Association for 2017/2018, I am honoured to offer a few short words on the past term and goals for the coming year.

This past year has proven to be an insightful and rewarding one for the HSA as we experimented with new events while also reviving some tried-and-true favourites. Perhaps the most successful of these new events were lectures from Laurier's own History faculty and other guest speakers; it is my intention that such efforts will continue in the coming year. I would describe the HSA's main concerns for the coming year as improving outreach to students and assisting with skills development.

Working with the faculty, we hope to build interest in the program among declared and prospective history students and form a community to sustain that interest; to this end we hope to begin hosting general

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meetings allowing students to voice their opinions on events and the overall course of the Association.

We also plan to help students improve on skills critical to their field of study. Besides writing workshops, there are plans to revive the Undergraduate Conference as a workshop for presentation skills. In light of the success of our faculty lecture



series, we may also host lectures led by students as another opportunity to practice these skills.

I am thankful for the opportunity to lead the History Students Association into the new year and I look forward to working with our executive team, the faculty, and the student body to strengthen the program and the community.

C. Baer

## 2017 Teaching Award Winner in History!

Laurier's History Department has long been recognized for excellence in teaching, and ranks consistently above most other Faculty of Arts departments in student course evaluations. Our most recent recipients of teaching awards have been **Dr David Smith** and **Dr Gavin Brockett** in 2015, and **Professor Alicia McKenzie** and **Dr Kevin Spooner** in 2016 (see issue 7 of *The Owl*, p.6, for details).

This year **Dr. Debra Nash-Chambers**, a social historian specializing on families and the law in 20th-century Canada, was awarded the Sustained Excellence in Teaching award, having been nominated by students in the History Departments at both the Waterloo and Brantford campuses, the North American Studies Program at the Waterloo campus, and Brantford's Criminology Program. In the words of the selection committee, this award recognizes her "enthusiastic commitment to community-engaged pedagogy and the development of community service-learning courses that promote high-impact teaching practices, ... encouraging student achievement through mentoring and experiential learning opportunities...." Prof. Nash-Chambers noted that "The award is tremendously gratifying because the nomination was initiated by my students. It confirms that my students value our shared educational experiences as much as I value teaching and mentoring them."

## Student RAs in Laurier's History Department

Qualified History students at Laurier can gain not only valuable experience but also income working as Research Assistants on a faculty member's funding research project. Currently, two such projects are underway with the help of History student RAs.

**Dr Amy Milne-Smith** received an Insight Development Grant (\$64,752) from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) in 2015 for her

research project "Ripper's Whitechapel: the Digital Humanities and Perceptions of Space in late-Victorian England." Now in the second year of this 2-year grant, two History students, **Katelyn Leece** and **Matthew Hargreaves** are working as research assistants on this project, compiling data on crime, poverty, and prostitution from Victorian newspapers. In total, Dr. Milne-Smith has hired five History students to work on

this project.

**Dr Chris Nighman** was awarded a SSHRC Insight Development grant in 2016 (\$38,372) for the "Chrysostomus Latinus in Iohannem Online (CLIO) Project," and this summer two History student RAs will be hired to transcribe Latin texts from books published in 1470 and 1728 for publication on the project's website (<http://web.wlu.ca/history/cnighman/CLI/index.html>).



## Current Full-Time Faculty

*The History Department at the Waterloo campus currently has 22 active tenured professors, including three who are cross-appointed to other departments or programs:*

**Dr Gavin Brockett**, Associate Professor & Associate Dean of Arts for Student Affairs (cross-appointed to Religion & Culture): Middle East & Islamic History, Modern Turkey

**Dr Blaine Chiasson**, Associate Professor: Modern China, Sino-Russian relations

**Dr Cynthia Comacchio**, Professor: Canadian History; Gender, Family & Class; Health Care

**Dr Adam Crerar**, Associate Professor & Director of the Tri-University Graduate Program: 20th-Century Canada, Rural Ontario

**Dr Darryl Dee**, Associate Professor: Early Modern France, Early Modern Europe

**Dr Judith Fletcher**, Professor: Ancient Greece & Rome; Gender, Law & Culture

**Dr Leonard Friesen**, Professor: Russia & the Soviet Union, Global Ethics

**Dr Karljürgen Feuerherm**, Associate Professor: Ancient Near East, Digital Humanities

**Dr Jeff Grischow**, Associate Professor & History Undergraduate Advisor: Africa (especially Ghana), World History, Comparative Development

**Dr Mark Humphries**, Associate Professor & Director of the LCMSDS: Canadian Military History, Epidemics

**Dr Amy Milne-Smith**, Associate Professor: 19th-century British Social History, British Empire

**Dr David Monod**, Professor, Modern American Cultural & Social History

**Dr Darren Mulloy**, Professor & Chair of History: Post-1945 U.S. history, Political Extremism

**Dr Susan Neylan**, Associate Professor & Graduate Officer: Canadian Indigenous Peoples, Cultural History

**Dr Chris L. Nighman**, Associate Professor & Co-ordinator of Medieval & Medievalism Studies: Medieval & Renaissance Europe, Digital Humanities



The Tri-University Graduate Program in History combines the faculty and resources of three of Canada's premier universities: Laurier, the University of Guelph, and the University of Waterloo. Since 1994 our program has been educating students in innovative ways while providing them with a solid grounding in traditional historical methods.

The Tri-University program integrates the scholarship and experience of over seventy graduate faculty, making it one of the biggest graduate history programs in the country. Some 130 History graduate students are currently enrolled in the program and each year we accept up to 20 new Doctoral students and 60 new Master's students. Because of its impressive size and scope and because of student mobility among the three campuses, we are able to provide courses and supervise research in the widest possible range of areas.

For more information, please visit our website:  
<http://www.triuhistory.ca>

**Dr Eva Plach**, Associate Professor: Modern Europe, Poland, Women's History

**Dr Roger Sarty**, Professor: Canadian Naval History, Canadian Military History

**Dr Michael Sibal**, Professor: Modern Europe, French Revolution & Napoleon, History of Sexuality

**Dr David Smith**, Associate Professor: Early Modern Britain, Law & Society, Europe & the New World

**Dr Kevin Spooner**, Associate Professor (cross-appointed to North American Studies): 20th-century Canadian Foreign Policy

**Dr Dana Weiner**, Associate Professor: Pre-1877 US; Women's, Gender & African-American History

**Dr Suzanne Zeller**, Professor: Canadian History, Science in Victorian Culture & Society

**Editor:** *Chris Nighman*

**Editorial Assistant:** *Heather Vogel*

**Contact:** *cnighman@wlu.ca* or

*Heather Vogel, Administrative Assistant,  
hvogel@wlu.ca*

*History Department*

*75 University Ave W.*

*Waterloo, Ontario,*

*Canada, N2L 3C5*

*Tel: (519) 884-0710 x3389 <[www.wlu.ca/arts/history](http://www.wlu.ca/arts/history)>*