

History Section

The mission of the History faculty is to promote advanced research and undergraduate teaching in a broad range of fields, including American, ancient, East and South Asian, European, Latin American, Middle Eastern, and Russian history. The faculty includes joint appointments with the Department of Urban Studies and Planning and the Program in Science, Technology, and Society, and it participates in the joint doctoral program in History, Anthropology, and Science, Technology, and Society (HASTS).

This past year has witnessed two major personnel changes in the section. John Dower, professor of modern Japanese history and (among his many honors) a Killian Award recipient, retired from his full-time faculty appointment at the end of spring term 2010. Although he will continue to teach the occasional course associated with his Visualizing Cultures project, the section will commence a search for a new Japan specialist in fall 2010. We also welcome to campus Christopher Leighton, assistant professor of Chinese history, who was hired a year ago but who has been on leave completing a postdoc at Stanford University for AY2010. He brings to the program a specialization in the history of China since 1949, with secondary study fields in Chinese history between the 8th and 17th centuries and American history since 1800. He earned his PhD at Harvard University with a dissertation titled "Making Capitalism Red: Cares, Capitalism, and Culture in China, 1949–58." We are very excited to add a modern Chinese focus to our curriculum.

We have been cognizant of the need to rethink both our undergraduate curriculum and participation in the HASTS doctoral program in light of staff changes, as well as recently adopted changes in the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS) General Institute Requirements. Department leadership continued to assess the curriculum, a process begun at our planning retreat in June 2008. We continued to feel a strong commitment to the specialized doctoral training offered by the joint HASTS program, which was recognized for the first time a year ago as among the nationally ranked doctoral programs in history, listed at 28th. Yet we also still wish to become a full and equal partner in the administration of the program. In addition, we began work we intend to continue this fall on reordering and renumbering subject listings to better reflect the requirements for our undergraduate major and minor and to better highlight the full range of our geographical specialties. Finally, we have been in dialogue with other programs in the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences that have course offerings in South and East Asian topics to change the concentration program in East Asian Studies to Asian Studies more broadly. This change will potentially incorporate the growing strength in South Asian studies at MIT into the program for our students. Furthermore, we hope that, as broader changes are made in the organization for the study of other national languages and literatures at MIT, History will be able to cooperate with other units to strengthen various Area Studies programs at every level, concentration, minor, and major.

One other personnel change of note was the promotion of Jeffery Ravel to full professor. An historian of *ancien regime* France, with particular interests in the culture of the theater and theatrical representations of public affairs, Jeff had new work

accepted for publication in *Seventeenth-Century Studies* titled “How to Assassinate your Husband and Become a Christian Heroine: The Tiquet Affair, 1699.” He continued his influential digital humanities project cataloging the records of the Comedie-Francaise in collaboration with the archives of the theater in Paris. His service to the Institute over this past year has been especially exemplary, with his having become chair of the Committee on the Undergraduate Program Subcommittee in the HASS Requirement and its attendant work restructuring the undergraduate curriculum to meet the newly adopted HASS requirements.

Professor William Broadhead neared completion of his book manuscript, *Migration and Power in Roman Italy*. He also completed several smaller writing projects for *The Blackwell Companion to Roman Italy*. He actively participated in the development and teaching of a new introductory course in Ancient and Medieval Studies at MIT and worked to further the visibility of the program among specialists in ancient history elsewhere. He contributed a profile of MIT’s undergraduate offerings in Ancient and Medieval Studies to the publication of the Classical Association of New England.

Professor Chris Capozzola published an article, “The Military and the US Imperial State,” in *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (Alfred McCoy and Francisco Scarano, eds., 2009). He authored several book reviews, gave numerous talks in both academic and public settings, and continues to polish his book manuscript, *Brothers of the Pacific: Soldiers, Citizens, and the Philippines in the Pacific Century*. For his consistently superior scholarship he was elected a fellow of the Massachusetts Historical Society in 2009. His classroom teaching was also recognized with the James A. and Ruth Levitan Award for Excellence in Teaching in the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences in 2009.

Professor John Dower’s newest book, *Cultures of War*, was just published by W.W. Norton, and he had another manuscript nearing completion. He continued to give numerous lectures and digital presentations to both academic and public audiences. Moreover, his commitment to the expansion of the Visualizing Cultures project into new subject areas continued to be supported with a major grant from the Mellon Foundation.

Professor Eric Goldberg completed his first year teaching in our section, having contributed (along with Will Broadhead and Arthur Bahr of the Literature section) to the first installation of our new introductory course in Ancient and Medieval Studies. He published an article, “The Hunt Belongs to Man: Some Neglected Treatises Related to Hunting and Falconry from the Court of Louis the German,” in *Discovery and Distinction: Festschrift for John J. Contreni* (2009).

Professor Meg Jacobs completed her book on the “Reagan Revolution” with coauthor Julian Zelizer, to be published in fall 2010 in the Bedford St. Martins series on history and culture. She continued to work on her manuscript for a book on the American energy crisis of the 1970s.

William Rand Kenan, Jr. professor of American history Pauline Maier completed her book *Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution, 1787–1788*, published by Simon and

Schuster in 2010. *Publishers Weekly* called it “an unsurpassable achievement.” It is the first book dedicated to telling the story, state by state, of the US Constitution’s ratification. She continued to serve the profession as a trustee of the Massachusetts Historical Society, as a member of the board of advisors for the new American Revolution Center being built in Philadelphia, and as president-elect of the Society of American Historians.

Professor Harriet Ritvo saw publication, to wide acclaim, of her new book, *The Dawn of Green: Manchester, Thirlmere, and Modern Environmentalism*. She was invited to give numerous talks both locally and abroad, particularly in the context of the recently published book. She also completed the manuscript of her first collection of essays, *Noble Cows and Hybrid Zebras: Essays on Animals in History*, to be published by the end of 2010. She served as the president of the American Society for Environmental History. She continued to co-organize the MIT Seminar on Environmental and Agricultural History, as well as advise numerous doctoral students in the MIT HASTS program and in other doctoral programs in the Boston area. Finally, she served the profession as an instructional guide on the role of science and technology in US history for TeacherServe, a project of the National Humanities Center, and as a faculty associate at the Harvard Center for European Studies

Professor Haimanti Roy’s article, “A Partition of Contingency. Public Discourse in Bengal, 1946–47,” appeared in *Modern Asian Studies* in November 2009. Professor Roy also cohosted an international conference held at MIT in April 2010 called “Group Violence, Terrorism, and Secularism in India.” She served on dissertation committees for several graduate students, both at MIT and in the Boston area.

Professor Craig Wilder completed his manuscript titled *The Academic Invasion of America*, forthcoming with Bloomsbury. He was awarded a Fulbright Senior Scholars Fellowship in Israel and was invited to give numerous lectures both on his work on higher education in America and on the history of New York City. An exhibit for which he served as historical and curatorial advisor (“Lincoln and New York”) opened in October 2009 at the New-York Historical Society.

Professor Elizabeth Wood published “The Woman Question in Russia: Contradictions and Ambivalence,” in Blackwell’s *Companion to Russian History*. She served as a visiting professor in the Harvard Summer School Program in St. Petersburg, Russia. She also was instrumental in organizing and securing funding for the development of a new course on “Gender and Technology” to be aimed primarily at freshmen under the auspices of the d’Arbeloff Fund for Excellence in Education.

Professor and section head Anne McCants published two articles. The first, “Historical Demography and the Crisis of the 17th Century,” appeared in a special invitational edition of the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (2009), and the second, “Christian Charity and the Politics of Orphan Care in the Dutch Republic,” was published in *The History of Orphanages Reconsidered* (2009). Professor Cants also coordinated a special section on “Debating Gender, Work, and Wages” for the journal *Social Science History* (2009) and contributed work on the history of the sugar trade and the spice trades to an encyclopedia being developed on the history of consumption. She presented her current

research project on the financing of Gothic cathedral construction at conferences in the US and abroad. She also was honored to present the 2010 Phi Beta Kappa distinguished lecture for the Xi chapter of MIT. Her talk was titled “Cloth, Cloister, Cathedral: A Medieval Puzzle.”

Professor McCants also completed her third year teaching in the MIT Portugal Program with Susan Silbey of the Anthropology program, co-teaching the Engineering Systems Research Methods course for the current cohort of 17 Portuguese doctoral students in Engineering Systems Design. This teaching collaboration has led to a new research project, based in Portugal, on the economic history of 19th century railroad development, for which she will serve as an expert consultant. She also served in a leadership capacity with both the Economic History Association and the Social Science History Association.

History enrollments totaled 400 in the fall and 371 in the spring. One history major graduated in June 2010. Thirty undergraduates submitted major research papers or long essays in the annual Bruce Mazlish History Prize contest and three were selected to win prizes: Sukrit Ranjan for “An Exploration of the Standard of Living in Roman Egypt,” Kim Huppert for “Mission 66, the Wilderness Act of 1964, and the Rise of Environmentalism in the 1960s,” and Alex T. Vai for “The Russian Invasion of India from a British Perspective: From 1800 to the First Anglo-Afghan War.”

During Independent Activities Period (IAP) we offered a number of our most popular activities, as well as some new offerings for 2010. Eric Goldberg and Steve Ostrow led another group of 10 undergraduates to Rome and Pompeii for the IAP in Ancient Italy trip. Anne McCants taught both her Old Food cooking class as well as her week-long historical textile technologies workshop. For the first time Haimanti Roy concocted a History Mastermind Quiz competition, which was much enjoyed by the students who participated. Finally, Chris Capozzola sponsored a film series on “the New South Africa.” We also enjoyed an informal gathering with students to hear from Arthur Goldhammer, an MIT alumnus whose love of all things French took him on an unusual career path from mathematics to translator to distinguished observer of French political life.

The Sahin Lecture Series for 2009–2010 was especially active, with distinguished lectures given by a number of scholars from outside MIT (Peter Heather of University College London and Libby Thompson of the University of Virginia), as well as by a number of our MIT colleagues. We dedicated much of our time this past year to exploring the research links between faculty in our own section and those who have historical interests elsewhere at the Institute. We heard from Nasser Rabbat from the program in History, Theory, and Criticism in the School of Architecture and Planning; from Anne Whiston Spirn and Diane Davis of the Department of Urban Studies and Planning; and from Craig Wilder, Pauline Maier, and Chris Capozzola in History. In the spring term we extended an invitation to the Literature faculty to join us for a special workshop on digital humanities projects, in which Jeff Ravel spoke about his work with the Comedie-Francaise, Elizabeth Wood presented her new project on a digital timeline of the Russian

Revolution, and Jim Buzzard of Literature talked about his work digitizing 19th century serial novels.

Harriet Ritvo, along with dean Deborah Fitzgerald, continued to host the MIT Seminar on Environmental and Agricultural History. They invited six speakers this past year, including Sterling Evans of the University of Oklahoma, Thomas Dunlap of Texas A&M University, Ellen Stroud from Bryn Mawr College, Joseph Taylor III of Simon Fraser University, Anne Secord of the University of Cambridge, and Donna Haraway of the University of California, Santa Cruz. The seminar continued to attract a large and lively audience from all over New England.

The section also hosted two very special one-day symposiums in spring 2010. In March we cosponsored, along with the MIT Center for International Studies, the Office of Religious Affairs and the Program on Human Rights and Justice, a number of speakers from across the United States on the subject of "America's Response to the Armenian Genocide: From Woodrow Wilson to Barack Obama." In May we enjoyed another full day of distinguished speakers who gathered to honor John Dower on the occasion of his retirement. The symposium was titled "Re-Visualizing Japan," and the event elicited a broad audience of those who have followed and benefited from John's long and distinguished career as an historian of Japan and Japanese-American relations in the 20th century. The occasion was a fitting send-off for a colleague whose wisdom and dedication to the profession will be sorely missed, not least here in the department where he has worked for the past two decades.

Anne E.C. McCants
Department Head
Professor of History