

TCU History Department Graduate Program Newsletter



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Spring 2009

Graduate Seminars offered Fall 2009

Spain & Atlantic World

Dr. Campbell

Historiography and Bibliography

Dr. Gilderhus

Social History of Colonial Latin America

Dr. Ramirez

Modern Mexico

Dr. Coerver

American West

Dr. Kerstetter

Early American History

Dr. Cantrell

American Presidency

Dr. Stevens

China in Revolution

Dr. Worthing

TCU Department of History

Reed Hall 302

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The TCU History Department Graduate Program Newsletter is designed to keep students, faculty and friends of the Department apprised of graduate student accomplishments, important events, deadlines and opportunities. It will appear once each semester.

Prominent Middle East Scholar to visit TCU. Dr. Juan Cole, Richard P. Mitchell Collegiate Professor of History at the University of Michigan, will be on campus from February 22-25. Dr. Cole is the author of several books on the Middle East and a regular guest on the News Hour with Jim Lehrer, ABC Nightly News, CNN, MSNBC and other media outlets. His visit will include a public lecture and meetings with smaller classes and groups on campus. For more information see **Dr. Ken Stevens**, Chair of the History Department.

Symposium on Texas Women.

Dr. Rebecca Sharpless will host an academic symposium entitled "Texas Women/American Women: New Historical Scholarship and Fresh Approaches," on February 27-28, 2009, at Texas Christian University. The Friday night keynote speaker, Elizabeth Hayes Turner (University of North Texas), will focus on Texas women during the 1930s. The Saturday morning plenary sessions will feature Juliana Barr (University of Florida) speaking on women in the borderlands, Laura Edwards (Duke University) considering southern women before 1880, and Marjorie Spruill (University of South Carolina) discussing southern women after 1880. Afternoon workshops will explore various topics relevant to Texas women, including ethnicity, race, class, education, social and political movements, and public life.

The History Department will host Dr. Juan Cole of the University of Michigan in February.



New Graduate Advisor

- In May 2009, **Dr. Todd Kerstetter** will be taking over as Graduate Advisor for the Department of History and Geography. Many of you know Dr. Kerstetter from his graduate courses on the American West, American Indian, and Environmental history. He is also on the program committee for the Western History Association annual conference at Lake Tahoe in 2010. Graduate students interested in the WHA or its conference should contact Dr. Kerstetter.
- On February 5 and 6, 2009 the Graduate Committee will **meet individually with graduate students**. There is a sign up sheet in the History Office and each student should sign up for a specific time slot. Students must complete and submit a [progress form](#) to the graduate advisor prior to Feb 5. These forms have been e-mailed to all graduate students.

From the Tenure Track

David Johnson earned his PhD in Latin American history from TCU in 2005. He is now assistant professor of history at Elmhurst College in Elmhurst, Illinois. He sent in this piece which reflects on the importance of mentoring and networking in academia.



I was a “non-traditional” graduate student because I had two prior careers before going back to grad school. I enrolled in the PhD History Program at Texas Christian University August 2001 because they had the preeminent Central American historian, Ralph Lee Woodward. Dr. Woodward has placed close to 40 doctoral students in tenure track positions throughout the U.S. and Central America (he was at Tulane University for many years). I had already chosen a dissertation topic before I came to TCU (how the international coffee trade affects domestic production of coffee in Guatemala) based on a historiographical essay by Steven Topik of UC Irvine in *Hispanic American Historical Review*.

Although Lee Woodward had never met Steve Topik, they both knew each by reputation and through mutual friends. Lee recommended that I contact Steve, use his name as a means of introduction, tell him about my dissertation, and ask him for advice. In August 2001, Steve and I had a pleasant exchange via email; he sent me a piece he was working on, asked for my edits, and told me to stay in touch.

I obtained my PhD in May 2005 but without actually having the PhD when I interviewed I was at a substantial disadvantage. The best I could do was to get an adjunct position at the school where I got my MA (UNC Charlotte). Just prior to the fall 2005 semester, I found out about a teaching fellowship at Fordham University. Lee Woodward knew the two Latin Americanists who were conducting the job search, as did a mentor of mine from UNC Charlotte, Lyman Johnson. I contacted Lee and Lyman and they both placed calls to Christopher Schmidt-Nowara and Héctor Lindo-Fuentes at Fordham. I not only received the fellowship, but I got my current tenure track job at Elmhurst College because of the letters of recommendation from the two historians at Fordham.

Back to Steve Topik. One day in November 2005, while I was at Fordham, I sent Steve Topik an email re-introducing myself and telling him about my fellowship and my plans for publishing my dissertation. He immediately replied, congratulated me for obtaining the PhD and the fellowship, and told me that he was editing an edition of *Latin American Perspectives (LAP)* about coffee but he still needed one more article. He asked me if I would contribute a piece and my article in *LAP* is coming out this year and is my most important publication to date. I met Dr. Topik at a conference in 2008 and he agreed not only to help edit and place my manuscript, but to write me future letters of recommendation.

In addition to those whom I have already mentioned, I also have mentors in Susan Ramirez (TCU), Mark Gilderhus (TCU), Donna Gabaccia (U Minnesota), and Jürgen Buchenau (UNCC). I control the volume and the quality of my work. However, I feel optimistic about my future because of the network of support that I have cultivated. Each of the nine historians from the five different schools has a national reputation. I go to each person and ask for advice and/or help depending upon his or her strengths. I use each of their names to gain entrée with other historians who are familiar with their work. To succeed as a historian, you need contacts that invite you to contribute to their research projects and who can pick up the phone and help you find employment.

Thesis and Dissertation Deadlines for Spring 2009

M.A. or Ph.D. students planning to graduate this semester must file an intention to graduate form with the Dean's office. Forms are available in the history office. The following deadlines should be observed:

February 13 File an “Intent to Graduate” form in the Dean's office. A non-refundable fee is required.

February 27 Final draft of theses/dissertations should be available for committees.

April 13 Oral exams for all degrees should be scheduled. Students should notify the Dean's office of the date.

**The final copy of the thesis or dissertation should be brought to the dean's office for approval at least two days before the oral defense. It should be carefully proofread and in its final form, except for any changes suggested at the oral defense. Be sure to consult the *Manual for the Preparation of Thesis and Dissertation*.

April 20 Final orals must be completed by this date and the report sent immediately to the Dean's office.

May 1 Electronic submission of final version of thesis/dissertation must be completed by 5:00 pm.