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Stallworth Lecture Sounds “Dark Note of Freedom”

Freedom often means the freedom to oppress, as Dr. Jefferson Cowie, of Vanderbilt University, reminded an audience of over one hundred, at the fifteenth N. Jack Stallworth Lecture in Southern History, on October 25 in Laidlaw Hall. Dr. Cowie’s talk, “Freedom’s Dominion: A Saga of White Resistance to Federal Power,” sounded what he called a “dark note of freedom.”

As Dr. Cowie explained, the slave society of ancient Athens bequeathed a conception of freedom as privilege, in which the right to subordinate others was a central part. Turning to US history, as seen through the lens of Barbour County, Alabama, Dr. Cowie showed such a conceptualization to be well in evidence. When President Andrew Jackson, in execution of a treaty, sought to protect the Creek Indians from white encroachment upon their lands, the cry went up in Barbour County that his actions were “destructive of liberty,” for the

Federal government had, in Dr. Cowie’s words, denied whites’ “freedom to dominate others.”



Dr. Jefferson Cowie

Later, in the lead-up to the Civil War, southern firebrands “argued essentially that ‘If you cannot enslave, then you are a slave’”; and during Reconstruction, which in the town of Eufaula in 1874 precipitated what Dr. Cowie termed a “coup d’état against a functioning biracial democracy,”

white recalcitrance was couched in terms of “personal liberty and free government.” Informed by such logic, even lynching was presented as an act of freedom.

Barbour County was the home of George Wallace, whose 1963 speech calling for “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever,” mentioned segregation only four times while invoking freedom twenty-four times. Wallace’s appeal to the “sons of free fathers” rang especially ominous in this context, leading Dr. Cowie to quote Ta-Nehisi Coates in his skeptical assessment of “a Confederate freedom, a conqueror’s freedom.” The general import of Dr. Cowie’s talk was that we would do well to emulate this skepticism.

In fact, leaving the audience with what he called “the horrible thought to go home with today,” Dr. Cowie opined that “If fascism comes to America, it will come under the banner of freedom.”

History Faculty Earn “Top Prof” Honors

Drs. David Meola, David Messenger, and Kelly Urban received Top Prof awards from the Mortar Board Society, during a well-attended ceremony on October 30. We cannot help but observe how unusual it is for three professors from the same department to earn the honor!

All three award-winners were praised by students for

their “consideration and effort,” receptivity to questions and concerns, and help outside the classroom, in the securing of internships, for example. Not only are their classes “engaging and interactive,” but their general mentorship prepares students “to go into the world and be a force for good.” All three have taken pains to improve their students’ writing.

The Mortar Board Society is a national honor society for college seniors. The Top Prof award ceremony is a tradition of USA’s local chapter. History faculty are proud of our Mortar Board students and glad to be able to make a difference in their lives.

The Many Facets of Zionism



Dr. Anne Perez

On November 2, adjunct lecturer Dr. Anne Perez gave a talk on “Understanding Zionism: History and Perspectives,” based on her new book of the same name. The main theme of her presentation was the remarkable diversity of opinion and policy that has always existed under the rubric of Zionism.

Following the chapters of her book, Dr. Perez distinguished between Zionism’s various threads, from cultural Zionism, religious Zionism, and labor Zionism, to more recent revisionist and binational approaches. One interesting thinker Dr. Perez discussed was Ahad Ha’am (1856-1927) who theorized that Jews need-

ed a geographical center in ancient Israel that would function as a headquarters but not as a homeland, much as Vatican City serves as the center of Catholicism without the expectation that Catholics live there. Zionist heavyweight Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) preferred a Jewish homeland in Palestine but would have accepted one elsewhere.

Dr. Perez addressed the issue of Palestinian displacement in her description of the policy of revisionist Zionist Ze’ev Jabotinsky (1880-1940), who advocated the use of military force to create a territorially maximalist Jewish state in its ancient setting, under which Palestinians would hold indi-

vidual but not national rights. She discussed also the sub-strain of revisionist Zionism that calls for Palestinian expulsion. The contrasting viewpoint, Dr. Perez demonstrated, is that of the binational Zionists, such as the contemporary writer Peter Beinart (b. 1971), who envisions Jews and Palestinian Arabs living together as equals in a binational Israel.

Dr. Perez touched on Israel’s recent constitutional crisis as well as on the events of October 7. Her survey of Zionism was quite educational and provided just the perspective on current events that history is supposed to provide.

History Society Visits New Orleans

BY ANASTASIA FETCU

The History Society’s Fall Break trip to New Orleans was an educational journey that helped us understand the intricacies of the past. Our three-day expedition offered a terrific blend of history and culture that I’ll long treasure.

Our first day was spent at the National WWII Museum where we immersed ourselves in the history of the most destructive war. We were moved by the heroism and bravery of the soldiers and civilians who stood up to the specter of fascism.

On day two, after indulging in the famous beignets and coffee at Café du Monde, we embarked on a series of walking tours that included Jackson Square and the French Market. These walking tours provided us with an immersive sense of the

older part of the city and a keen grasp of the history behind each area.

Our third and final day was spent on the historical Creole

Queen paddle cruise, which showed us New Orleans’ unique military history and the strategic importance of the Mississippi River. During the cruise, we were able to disembark and explore the Chalmette battlefield. Returned to town, we walked a bit more around the city and finally decided to enjoy some world-famous gumbo and other traditional foods from one of the oldest restaurants in the city.

Our New Orleans trip was a thought-provoking blend of historical discovery, cultural immersion, and culinary exploration. We have returned with enriched perspectives on the city’s history and look forward to sharing these insights with our fellow history enthusiasts in the coming months. I encourage everyone to take the opportunity next year to continue our tradition and visit New Orleans!



With Anne Frank Statue
at the World War Two Museum

In Remembrance of Dr. Tennant S. McWilliams, 1943-2023

BY AMBER SMITH-FILLINGIM

In the spring of 2023, I had the honor of having Dr. McWilliams as my professor for HY436, Modern U.S. History 1877-1945. As Dr. McWilliams walked into class and began to speak, I knew this class would be unlike any other. He handed us a paper syllabus, asked us to make any correction as we see fit and return to him to edit if necessary. He explained how he was retired, yet felt he had more knowledge to spare for students and teaching was his passion.

When weather permitted, we would meet in an outside area for class that he referred to as “Rome.” This was one of my favorite things about his teaching style and grace. Many of my younger peers did not understand the sincere and unconven-

tional professor that Dr. McWilliams was, but I certainly did.

At 38 years old, I have yet to meet a more knowledgeable person. He was al-



“We’ll Always Have Rome”

ways an email, phone call, or coffee break away if his students needed assistance. He pushed me to my limits and made an impression on my life in many areas. Thank you, Dr. McWilliams, for your snarky, dry sense of humor, your love for your students, sharing your words with the world, and making my time at the University of South Alabama a memorable one. You will be missed.

Dr. McWilliams was a Professor of History, Chair of the History Department and Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Alabama, Birmingham. He retired to Fairhope, AL and began teaching part-time for History at the University of South Alabama in 2017. He passed away in October 2023.

History Faculty Plan Study Abroad

Two History professors are offering study abroad opportunities next summer.

Dr. Harry Miller will be taking a group to Japan from May 29 to June 12, 2024. The theme will be “Japanese Fashion Old and New” and will introduce students to the classical aesthetic of the ancient capital of Kyoto before delving into the pop culture of modern Tokyo. Six credits at the 400 level are included.

Dr. David Meola will lead a trip to Berlin, Warsaw, and Krakow, from May 12 through the 23rd (after a week’s prep in Mobile). This program will focus on the Holocaust and the sites and institutions of memory in these three cities — how they came to be, what they have meant, and how those meanings continue to change, including, among other sites, the Schindler Factory.

Both Drs. Miller and Meola have designed trips in the past, focused on Japan and Taiwan (Miller) and on Europe (Meola). Covid put a damper on overseas travel, but USA students may

now make up for lost time.

Many scholarships are designed to help students cover the costs of study abroad, and financial aid may also be used. The Office of



International Education (OIE) typically offers discounts of up to \$500 to students who commit to programs early. Dr. Meola’s program is also supported by several outside donors, reducing the cost for travelers.

Most study abroad programs do not include international airfare, to allow students to embark from their home cities or perhaps to use airline loyalty awards. Some study abroad classes arrange optional group flights, for students who would prefer to travel together.

International education and study abroad are both part of USA’s mission. USA students should make every effort to create an overseas experience, sometime during college. Consult with your professor or with the Office of International Education, to plan a trip that’s right for you. But the important thing is to go abroad, somewhere. It’s a life-changer!

Spring 2024 Courses

HY 101 – History of Western Civilization I (7 sections)

HY 102 – History of Western Civilization II (3 sections)

HY 104 – History of Asian Civilization II (Miller)

HY 122 – World Civilization II (Messenger)

HY 135 – US History to 1877 (10 sections)

HY 136 – US History Since 1877 (10 sections)

HY 356W – European Civilization, 1815-1918 (Messenger)

HY 390 – Special Topics: Global Health History (Urban)

HY 401/501 – Colloquium in History: Animals in History (Cage)

HY 415/515 – Studies in Military History: Japan at War, 1931-1945 (Miller)

HY 431/531 – Studies in US History: Capitalism, Socialism, and the Global Cold War (Vaughn-Roberson)

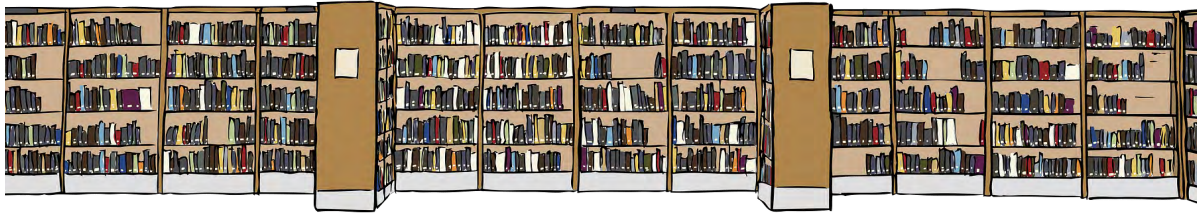
HY 441 – Drugs and Alcohol in Modern America (Lombardo)

HY 444/544 – Research Seminar: Digital History (Kozelsky)

HY 461/561 – Studies in Asian History: Japanese Pop Culture (Miller)

HY 477/577 – The Old South (McKiven)

HY 540 – Modern European Historiography (Strong)



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“Historians can process information in a systematic way. They recognize patterns that other people cannot.”



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