



May 16, 2007 Awardees

At left (top to bottom) are Professor Frank Warren, Arnold Franco '43, and Dean of Social Sciences, Elizabeth Hendrey. Below are our Awardees.



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History Alumni News

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A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear History Alumni,
How quickly another year has passed. Again, it's later than I would have preferred. But that also means it's been a busy spring, with lots of activity going on in the department. I hope your year has been productive and pleasurable. The rest of the department and I continue to be deeply appreciative of your support.

The department has had a productive year. Two new hires will join us in September: Kristina Richardson in the History of Islam and Kate Antonova in Russian History. Thanks to the exceptional quality of our younger hires and our veteran faculty, we have a department that excels in both teaching and scholarship. We have also made an appointment in Sephardic Jewish History, Francesca Bregoli, who will start in September 2009. This gives her an opportunity to complete her post-doctorate at Oxford University. Sadly—both from a professional and personal standpoint—we are losing Professor Elisheva Carlebach. She has accepted the prestigious Salo Baron Chair in Jewish History at Columbia University. It is a great honor for her and we wish her all the best. She has been an exceptional teacher and scholar, as well as a colleague who has served the department with great dedication and integrity.

In this newsletter, Distinguished Professor Morris Rossabi describes some of his outside activities. Many members of our faculty have engaged lives beyond the campus, and I thought you would be interested to learn about someone who has contributed to the betterment of societies throughout the world. Next, I was going to issue a progress report on our World War II project. But then I thought that this project, initiated by and with the financial support of Arnold Franco, should receive the write-up it deserved. So I asked Professor Bobby Wintermute, who has done such a marvelous job with the students, to make a report. Professor Kristin Celello just completed her first year here; in these pages, she shares her impressions of Queens College. Finally, I invited one of our senior history majors, Jonathan Gilad, to note down some of his thoughts as he prepared to graduate. What he has written demonstrates the impact that professors and education can have on a student.

News of our retirees is for the most part good, though my fellow 1962er, Bob Haan, is seriously ill. I am in close touch with

Mike Wreszin and Vivian Gruder. I see Allen McConnell and Jon Peterson from time to time. I am in email contact with Ralph DellaCava. I have heard that Stuart Prall is doing well.

I hope you enjoy the articles and photos. I thank you once more for your support. Though I am a terribly delinquent correspondent, I always enjoy hearing from recent and past graduates, and so do my colleagues. To stay in touch with general happenings on campus, go to www.qc.cuny.edu/Alumni_Affairs.

Frank Warren

Extra-Academic Pursuits

Faculty members naturally focus on teaching and research, their most important responsibilities. Facilitating student learning and growth, and contributing to knowledge in their fields via publications and public lectures, are indisputably vital functions. I concur with this assessment and have devoted most of my career to academics.

However, I have also been drawn to other pursuits, including collaborations with museums, educational institutions, and cultural organizations to promote Asian Studies. As a specialist on a region that plays an increasingly significant role in the world, I have cooperated with others to develop curricula ("From Silk to Oil: Cross Cultural Connections Along the Silk Road," "Interweaving Cultures: Islam in Southeast Asia") and to foster teaching training programs for both secondary school and college faculties. Democracy requires an informed electorate. Until recently, the general public's knowledge of the area from Japan to Iran was limited, leading to misconceptions and misunderstandings. I believe that U.S. education, as well as U.S. government policies, will benefit as schools and colleges expand their curricula to include study and appreciation of Asian culture, history, and politics.

Another of my extra-academic interests has been collaboration with the Open Society Institute (OSI), a nongovernmental organization dedicated to the promotion of human rights and democratic principles in previously authoritarian states. In 1994, OSI commissioned me to travel to Mongolia to determine whether the Soros Foundation could play a role in fostering an open society in a country that had suffered almost three centuries of foreign or dictatorial rule. I wrote a report proposing support for arts and culture, the rule of law, women's rights organizations, educational exchanges, educa-

tional reforms, and many other activities.

In 1996, OSI decided to fund some of these initiatives and established an office to implement them. Shortly thereafter, OSI's president invited me to serve on the board of the Project for Central Eurasia, which supervised the foundation's programs in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. During my three years on the board, I helped evaluate grants, conducted on-site evaluations of funded projects, and commented on the strategies of various regional offices. Some of the programs were unsuccessful; indeed, on occasion, I disagreed with OSI's policies. But so many of the projects contributed to education and democracy that I valued my participation in these efforts and remained on the board until 1999.

A byproduct of my involvement was remarkable access to numerous levels of Mongol society—from the president to journalists to directors of women's rights organizations to herders to the director of the national opera and ballet companies—at a time of great stress and change. Thus I conceived of a book on post-socialist Mongolia, entailing an often-critical evaluation of the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and other international financial organizations that espoused and implemented neo-liberal policies in the country.

After I completed the book, OSI asked me to serve as chair of its Arts and Culture Board targeting Central Asia, the Caucasus, Afghanistan, and the Middle East. The board sought to promote artistic and cultural freedom and help reinvigorate artistic and literary production, which had suffered because of the decline of state support and funding. It offered grants to artists, theaters, and museums and, with the cooperation of the American Museum of Natural History, even mounted mini-Margaret Mead documentary film festivals in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

My biggest disappointment happened when three OSI program officers and I went to Afghanistan in December 2006. After a ten-day visit, we developed plans for a number of projects (offering art and music instructions to young girls who had been denied education during the Taliban era; sending expert restorers and conservators to the Kabul Museum, one of Asia's great repositories of Buddhist and Islamic art, which Taliban marauders had damaged; and providing equipment for budding filmmakers and pho-

History Honors Awards • May 16, 2007



Retired Professors Leo Hershkowitz and Jon Peterson



Pinson Prize Winner Michael Tabakslat and Professor Frank Warren



Professors Peter Vellon and Elena Frangakis-Syrett



Professors Mark Rosenblum and Elisheva Carlebach

tographers at Kabul University). However, OSI decided that security was too unstable to permit the dispatch of foreign experts and consultants. We could not dispute OSI's judgment. We feared for our own safety because of the lack of economic reconstruction, the poverty, and the profusion of weapons in the country. Since then, events have confirmed our concerns and our report to OSI, emphasizing the instability and insecurity, even in Kabul.

In conclusion, I still believe that teaching and research constitute the core of a faculty member's work, and I do not propose that other instructors undertake such extra-academic endeavors. Speaking for myself alone, I have found that collaboration with some advocacy groups has proved rewarding.

Morris Rossabi

Queens College History Club Brings QC WWII Veterans to Web

Thanks to a \$10,000 grant from State Senator Serphin Maltese, the Queens College History Club has been busy fulfilling the next stage of its project to honor the school's World War II servicemen: creating an interactive Web site. Since receiving the grant in January 2008, club members have worked hard under my direction to finalize details on the fifty-nine QC men commemorated in November 2006, at the dedication of the WWII memorial on campus. The data students are collecting and condensing into a narrative format will form the foundation of a much larger online resource.

The online project will comprise more than a mere database of names, dates, and other service-related information. In cooperation with the Computer Science Department, the History Club has hired a student programmer to create an interactive site incorporating a fully scalable, WWII-era global map. Push-pin style markers will provide access to detailed information on the men who died in the armed services, including photographs from QC archives and wartime images—now in the public domain—taken by United States Army Signal Corps photographers. Online forms will also be available for surviving family members and friends to offer more details



Alum Arnold Franco and former Phi Alpha Theta President Beth Ingram

about their deceased loved ones.

But this effort is only the first stage of a much larger initiative. The History Club recognizes that collecting stories from surviving World War II servicemen is a pressing task, its urgency exacerbated by the fact that veterans of this more than sixty-year-old conflict are passing away every day. After winning approval from the CUNY Institutional Research Board, the History Club started a comprehensive effort to identify all the WWII veterans in the QC alumni pool. The cornerstone of the project is a thorough veterans survey, first created by the Military History Institute of the United States Army Heritage and Education Center. As the survey is completed, data will be made available online to all interested parties.

When veterans get the survey, they are invited to participate in an oral history session and share their wartime experiences with a student interviewer. Last February, a group of History Club members attended a training program at the Military History Institute. There they received instruction in the same methods the National Archives and Record Administration employs in its own oral history program. This cadre of trained interviewers, who will be joined by a new group over the summer, will be available to interview all QC alumni who served in WWII. Ultimately, their transcripts—as well as digitized images of each participating veteran and any artifacts, photographs, letters, and materials he provides—will be posted on Queens College's World War II Veterans Commemorative Web site. In this way, the History Club is actively building an archive that will serve not only the QC community, but also researchers worldwide.

If you are a WWII veteran who attended QC, or if you know one, please contact us immediately for more information. We will send you a survey and invite you to schedule an oral history session with a trained student interviewer immediately. Reach out to the Queens College History Club, care of its advisor, at: bobby.wintermute@qc.cuny.edu.

*Bobby A. Wintermute, Assistant Professor,
History Club Advisor*



Professors Isaac Alteras and Frank Warren

My History Department Experience

Jonathan Gilad

As I am entering my last month at Queens College, I couldn't help but reflect upon the four years that I have spent here. As I reflect, I keep coming back to the same two classes and thinking of the same two professors who radically changed my life.

In my sophomore year I needed to fill my schedule, so I decided to take History of the Jewish People I. I figured that this class might not be interesting, but at least it would be relevant to me as a Jewish student. I didn't realize that the class, taught by Professor Elisheva Carlebach, would radically change my perception of Jewish history. I remember all the lectures, not just because they were fascinating and well researched, but because she would deliver them with grace and elegance coupled with a fluidness that could only be read as passion. This passion inspired me to change my major to history.

After this experience I became immersed in another class that would change my perspective on many things and, most important, challenge me to think for myself. I participated in Professor Mark Rosenblum's classes on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These classes put me in the "other side's shoes," and I immersed myself in another people's grievances. As an Orthodox Jew, I found this process to be an eye-opener. This experience forever changed my attitude and perspectives on not just the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also on everything from how I lived my life to my positions and outlook on other conflicts.

These two classes forced me to examine my own history and background in order to properly shape my future.

My First Year

Kristin Celello

As my first year at Queens College comes to an end, I still have moments in which I am overwhelmed by my good fortune. I cannot believe that in the midst of a high-supply, low-demand job market in my field, I have been able to secure a fantastic tenure-track job in New York, teaching U.S. women's history. Since 2004, I have moved more times than I can count, including stops in Virginia, Michigan, Ontario, and Georgia. While I am not a native New Yorker—I grew up in Delaware—landing at QC has been something of a homecoming for me.

At times, of course, the adjustment to my new position has not been easy. The highly touted laid-back collegiality of the history department, which I have come to appreciate as the year has progressed, posed some challenges as I tried to learn how the department and the school work. Not wanting to impose on my already busy colleagues, I struggled by myself to navigate the college's bureaucracy, from having to convince the bookstore manager to order enough books for my survey class, to trying to persuade the administrative assistant in Human Resources that despite my youthful looks I was, in fact, a professor who needed to fill out health insurance forms.

At the same time, I was trying to figure out the undergraduates, just as they were trying to figure me out. While it is perhaps a cliché to celebrate the racial, ethnic, and age diversity of QC students, I have to say that it was one of the things that attracted me to this position. During my time in Canada, I taught at the Mississauga campus of the University of Toronto, a place with a student population quite similar to that of QC. There, as now here, I enjoyed the refreshing lack of entitlement among the students and developed an appreciation of the sacrifices that they are making in order to be in school.

As any first-year professor would expect, I have had my frustrations in the classroom. I would like my students to spend more time on their assignments, to work on their writing, and to be more willing to ask questions about my interpretation of the historical narrative during class. I have learned not to take it personally if my students put other courses or aspects of their lives above my classes. The positives, however, have far outweighed the negatives when it comes to the students. They have responded positively to my high expectations and, I hope, to my enthusiasm and sense of fairness. I am surely a better teacher after spending a year at QC and I look forward to improving even further in the future.

All told, I am happy and proud to be a member of the QC history department. While I am thinking rather longingly about the upcoming summer break, I am also looking forward to the 2008–2009 school year. I have had a chance to write my lectures and my book is coming out next year, so I hope to become even more actively involved in the department and the QC community.

Franco Awards Luncheon November 7, 2007



Professor Carol Giardina and Wreszin Prize Winner Alisa Bodner



Alum Arnold Franco, Franco Award Winner Antonio Munoz, and Professor Julia Sneeringer

Share news via email:
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Professors Benny Kraut and Mark Rosenblum at the May 2007 Awards