Alumni news

For the past 30 years, Cecilia Gill Wetzberger (77C) writes, she has “worked as a defense contractor at five different companies performing configuration management, quality assurance, system engineering, computer support activities, and now system and integration testing.” In one of her more recent positions, which she held for some eight years, she managed a staff of up to 50 engineers performing numerous and varied tasks on contracts across the world. After retiring from that position in 2010 . . . she then returned to work just a week later for another company! She says, “What did I learn at Berry that enabled me to work so far afield of both my bachelor’s and master’s degrees? I learned critical thinking and writing skills, I learned to deal with a wide variety of personalities, both professors and other students, and I learned to stand up for myself and take responsibility and to take charge when I needed to. The most important skills and assets that students today need when they graduate from college are critical thinking, strong writing skills, humility and the ability to say that they goofed and will do better next time.” She added that students need to learn to be financially responsible, that life is not always fair, and that they need to take charge of their own lives. “Berry provides the opportunity to learn all of these skills and to develop these assets.”

Frank Nuckolls (79C) currently serves as the State Director of Missions for the Georgia Baptist Convention. In October 2012, he presented the white paper “Historical Foundations of Georgia Baptist Associations” at the Georgia Baptist Legacy Conference, a conference on Georgia Baptist history.

Jeff Cavender (90C) joined Troutman Sanders LLP as a partner in its Atlanta office in September of 2011. Troutman Sanders LLP is an international law firm with more than 600 lawyers and offices located throughout the United States and China. Jeff represents corporate debtors, indenture trustees, secured lenders and official court-appointed committees and trustees in large Chapter 11 reorganization bankruptcy cases, Chapter 7 liquidation bankruptcy cases and out-of-court restructurings. Jeff’s practice also includes representation of banks, indenture trustees and commercial and residential mortgage lenders in all types of litigation.

Mary Anne McGorpy (90C) teaches Middle School in Pocatello, Idaho, and will soon be changing schools and joining the inaugural staff of a new middle school in Pocatello. She writes, “I have written curriculum for a class that is currently being taught in a local high school and I have worked for three years on a committee to correlate the standards and curriculum for geography in southeast Idaho.” She adds that she is currently divorced and that her oldest is beginning college next year at Boise State University.

Rob Harber (92C) just completed his twentieth year at CNN in Atlanta. He is currently a writer, copy editor, and producer for both weekday and weekend news programs. Rob writes that, “Dr. Gordon Carper was my adviser, my College Bowl coach and also a great friend. . . . My history and political science studies at Berry were great preparation for writing about politics and world events.” Rob and his wife Wendy (Quagliano) Harber, who also graduated from Berry in 1992, have two daughters and live in Peachtree City, Georgia. Wendy teaches elementary school in Fayette County.

In January of this year, Doug Hyche (95C), Senior Solutions Engineer at Blackboard Collaborate, received the Solutions Engineer of the Year Award for 2012 from Blackboard Collaborate, a division of Blackboard Inc. Doug earned his Project Management Professional (PMP) designation from the Project Management Institute (PMI) in March of 2013.

Tollie Banker (02C) has relocated once again and is now the Faculty Librarian at Hillsborough Community College SouthShore Campus in Tampa, Florida. She writes, “I am a full-time tenure track faculty member happily working only a 9 month contract (for the first time in my career I will get summers off)!” She is happy to be living in Florida and working in the Florida Community College system. She says, “The students are awesome, my colleagues are the best and the school as a whole has been one of the most supportive places I have ever been!”

Sherri Thomas (04C) is a lawyer in Mobile, Alabama.

Melanie (Blanchard) Morris (05C) has a new job as Collections Management Specialist at the Office of Collections Documentation Services at the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.

Logan Edwards (06C) continues work toward the PhD at Florida State. She tells us that her article “Is There Room at the Cross” has been accepted for publication and will appear in an upcoming volume of the journal Southern Historian.

Taylor Cook (07C) got married in October, 2012, in Augusta, Georgia, to Hazel Langrall (now Hazel Cook). The couple lives in Augusta and is doing well.

Shawn Darling (09C) is teaching and coaching volleyball at Pope High School in Marietta, Georgia. Shawn finished her master’s in behavioral sciences at Cameron University in a program specializing in the impact of marriage and family therapy on the realm of education. Her husband Zach Darling (09C) is teaching and also coaching basketball and football at The Westminster Schools in Atlanta. Zach is finishing up his master’s degree in social studies education. The couple now have two sons, Brooks Daniel (11 months) and Aidan Christopher (2 1/2 years old).

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The Department of History was active on the Berry College campus in a number of ways in 2012-13. In November, Associate Professor Matt Stanard gave several “talk backs” at Blackstone Hall following performances of Letters to Sala, a play based on Sala Garncarz Kirschner’s experiences in Nazi labor camps during World War II. Visiting Assistant Professor David LaFevor showed an exhibition of his photographic work, “Latin American Margins: Images of the Public Sphere” at the Moon Gallery in December. In January, department Chair Christy Snider served as a moderator when the Civil Rights Keynote Speakers Dr. Beverly Smith and Ms. Evelyn Hamilton—two of the first African American students to attend Berry—spoke on campus. During the spring semester history faculty participated in the showing of two films: Dr. LaFevor introduced and discussed the Cuban film Fresa y Chocolate in conjunction with the Latin American and Caribbean Studies (LACS) program, and Dr. Snider organized a social for history majors that included a film screening of The Young Victoria (co-sponsored by Women’s and Gender Studies).

Also this spring, the department was very happy to welcome alumna Dr. Charity Rakestraw Carney back to campus. Dr. Carney gave a talk in April titled “Ministers and Masters: Methodism, Manhood, and Honor in the Old South.” Dr. Carney’s presentation was based on her recently published book, Ministers and Masters: Methodism, Manhood, and Honor in the Old South, which was published by Louisiana State University Press in 2011. The book explores the way that Methodist ministers constructed a unique version of manhood within the honor culture of the region. Carney graduated with Honors from Berry with a B.A. in History in 2003 and received her Ph.D. from the University of Alabama in 2009. She teaches History at Western Governors University and is working on a second book with LSU Press on the historical roots of modern southern megachurches.

History major and public relations minor Kelsey Taylor (13C) has held an internship this spring at the Chieftains Museum (http://chieftainsmuseum.org/). The museum is located in what was once the home of Major Ridge, a Cherokee leader born sometime around 1771. Located on Riverside Parkway in Rome, Georgia, the museum contains different exhibits including clothing from the time period in which Major Ridge lived as well as information about his life and the Cherokee Nation in Georgia. The museum enlisted Ms. Taylor to help with their public relations by creating a new brochure for the museum, publishing news releases, and helping get the word out about diverse events held at the museum. From Kelsey Taylor’s Chieftain’s Museum internship, to Bobby Tuttle’s (12C) work at the National Infantry Museum in Columbus, Georgia, to Meg Ratliff’s (15C) work on the Martha Berry Digital Archives Project on campus, Berry history majors continue to engage in a diverse range of hands-on experiences on campus, in Rome, and in nearby communities.

One of the most significant developments for the Department of History this year was the search for a fifth permanent full-time member of the Department. After a full national search, the Department hired Jennifer Hoyt, who took her Ph.D. in Latin American History from the University of Texas at Austin in 2012. Dr. Hoyt’s research delves into the history of Argentina, especially urbanization and environmental issues under Argentina’s authoritarian regimes of the latter half of the twentieth century. Dr. Hoyt will begin at Berry fall semester 2013. Dr. David LaFevor, who has been Visiting Assistant Professor of History at Berry since fall 2011, has accepted a tenure-track position in Latin American History and Digital Humanities at the University of Texas, Arlington.

The Berry College chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, the national history honors society, also was active in 2012-13. Berry’s chapter of Phi Alpha Theta held a spring initiation to
The Future of History in General Education

During my four years as chair of the history department, I’ve recruited and advised dozens of talented history majors, helped develop campus jobs that allow students to research Berry history, and worked with some of the most engaged and productive members of the faculty. While these duties are the most rewarding part of my job, the issue that consumes an inordinate amount of time is the college’s discussion of general education reform and the place of history within it.

Berry adopted the basic structure of its current general education program in the late 1970s. It is often referred to as the ‘distribution model’ or ‘cafeteria model.’ In this model students take one history class from a number of different options offered by the history department, one literature class from several options offered by the English faculty, two or more science courses from the biology, chemistry, or physics faculty, and so forth. The benefits of such a structure are that it ensures students have been exposed to a wide variety of disciplines, methodologies for evaluating evidence, and ways of viewing society while still having some choice over the specific classes they choose in each category.

Over the last couple of decades, there have emerged two main strands of criticism about the distribution model. The first strand comes from supporters of a ‘skills’ or ‘competency model’ of general education. Supporters of the skills model criticize the distribution model by arguing that it isn’t assessable, that it is too focused on content, that it doesn’t provide students with enough flexibility in pursuing their interests, and that general education courses should belong to the entire college not to individual departments.

The skills model attempts to address the failings of the distribution model by requiring students to take classes that teach specific skills like ‘effective communication’ or ‘mathematical inquiry’ or ‘historical analysis’ rather than classes in those skills. If we believe that the skills acquired through studying the past are important, shouldn’t those skills be taught by someone trained in the discipline of history, rather than by a faculty member who may have taken only one history class during their entire undergraduate and graduate career?

I am also concerned that the shift towards a skills-based general education curriculum compounds one of the most compelling criticisms of the distribution model – that it can result in an obscure and disjointed education. As departments compete with each other to fill their general education seats, course offerings might focus on popularity over substance.

Whatever the outcome of the faculty’s general education vote, the history department is committed to providing Berry students with a broad understanding of the past and the world we and others live. The history department is committed to providing Berry students with a broad understanding of the past and the world we and others live.
Next fall, the History Department will institute its first major curriculum change in years. Throughout its existence, the Department has offered History 205 and 206—the American History survey courses—as general education courses as well as requirements for majors. But starting in Fall 2013, a new course—History 120—will replace the American surveys.

Several reasons brought about this change. Dr. Snider and I teach the American surveys, and we have long expressed frustration because only a small number of students could take both halves of the surveys. Moreover most majors come to Berry with a good foundation in American history, and the two-semester structure of the surveys convinced many non-majors—wrongfully—that their college courses merely reviewed what they took in high school. Then, in fall 2010, an external review team recommended that Berry follow the practice of other small-college History programs: we should no longer require majors to take the American surveys, and we should rethink how the department offers its general education courses. After several careful discussions, the department decided to keep the World History surveys but to replace the American surveys with History 120, Themes in American History.

History 120 will present a one-semester, thematic overview of American History. Through this approach, the faculty can focus on presenting what we consider the most important information, topics, and problems—that is, what every college graduate should know about American History—without worrying about trying to cover everything. Focusing on themes such as American political and social development, the United States’ position in the world, and the role of African Americans, Native Americans, immigrants, and women in American history will also allow us to help students develop their analytical reasoning skills. Most importantly, the course can provide a better way to encourage students to “think historically.” By linking lectures with more readings, writings, and discussions, the course can better show students that History isn’t about memorizing names, dates, and facts, but instead is about asking questions of the past and developing interpretations that have meaning for the contemporary world. As a result, the course should entice more general education students to pursue further study in the department’s advanced courses.

I will begin offering HIS 120 in Fall 2013. Dr. Snider will offer HIS 205 and HIS 206 for the last time through 2013-2014 and then teach HIS 120 as well. We’re excited about the change. As long as the College’s general education program will require only one history course, we think we’ve come up with a better way to introduce students to an advanced study of American History, and to ensure that History will have a significant role in every Berry student’s program.

Facultynews

Professor Jonathan Atkins continues to work on the final chapters of his Early American Republic textbook and the Economic Collapse of the Late 1830s will be published in A Companion to the Antebellum American Presidents. Professor Larry Marvin’s book chapter “Atrocity and Massacre in the High & Late Middle Ages” appeared in Theatres of Violence (Berghahn Press, 2012). He presented a paper in March 2013 at the Medieval Academy of America conference in St. Louis, Missouri. He published book reviews in The Historian and The Canadian Journal of History as well as five reviews in Choice. Associate Professor Christy Snider won the 2012 Vulcan Teaching Excellence Award and was elected in January 2013 as president of the Peace History Society. She presented a paper titled, “Historical Consciousness: The Future of History in General Education,” at the 2013 American Historical Association Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Associate Professor Matt Stanard has several forthcoming articles and book chapters on European imperialism in Africa. He is on sabbatical fall semester and the legacies of empire in Belgium after 1960 as well as state controls over people and information in the Belgian Congo 1945-60.

Visiting Assistant Professor David LaFevor presented papers in Puerto Rico and California and continues to work on his dissertation manuscript. He also published three reviews of scholarly works on colonial and modern Cuba and Mexico. He has accepted a position starting in the fall as Assistant Professor of Latin American History and Digital Humanities at the University of Akron, Ohio. He writes that he will undoubtedly miss the wonderful students, faculty, staff and campus at Berry!

by Professor Jonathan Atkins

DEPARTMENT NEWS continued from page 4


Welcome new members who had qualified for the honors society: Haley Batchelor, Chris Connor, Garrett Hollis, Sarah Milway, Rachel Quillin, and Marissa Lindsey (in absentia). The Phi Alpha Theta chapter held a business meeting after the induction ceremony, electing Auriel Glass President, Haley Fortune Vice President, Ryan James Secretary, Amanda Marbut Treasurer, and Rachel Quillin SGA Representative.

The Department of History presented a number of awards to high-achieving students this year:

• As a result of the generosity of the late Professor Gordon Carper and his family, the Department of History continues to be able to support history majors by means of the N. Gordon Carper Scholarship. The 2012-13 recipients of the Carper scholarship were junior Daniel McLendon and senior Kadylyn Pierce.

• History minor Kasya Haessler won the Jennifer Dickey Scholarship, which is awarded to a student with a strong interest in public history.

• There were two winners of this year’s History Alumni Book Award. Thanks to the generous support of Berry College history alumni, the Department of History is able to grant this award to a deserving history major each semester of the academic year in order to pay for a significant portion of that student’s textbooks for that semester. The two winners this year, for the fall and spring semesters, were Meg Ratliff and Amanda Marbut.

• The N. Gordon Carper and Noel and Todd Carper Awards are presented each year to the senior history major with the best academic record in American history and the junior history major with the best overall academic record in history, respectively. The N. Gordon Carper Award winner this year was graduating senior Elise Masciantonio and the Noel and Todd Carper Award went to junior Haley Fortune, who was studying abroad this spring in Scotland.

• The Department presented this year’s History Faculty Award to graduating senior Kathlyn Pierce. The History Faculty Award is handed out to an outstanding graduating senior history major who has demonstrated her or his commitment to and love of the discipline through their academic work and service to the Department.

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Dusty Marie Dye (09C) works at the University of West Georgia as Assistant Director of the Center for Public History and as an instructor in the History Department. She will continue at the University of West Georgia for the 2013-2014 academic year and then will enter the University of Maryland to pursue her PhD beginning in the fall of 2014.

Sarah (Foreman) Reeves (11C) will graduate this summer from the University of West Georgia with a masters in history with a focus in public history and a certificate in museum studies. Her current graduate student assistantship has her working with the National Park Service on two separate National Register of Historic Places nominations. She married Berry College alumnus (and fellow former Berry runner) David Reeves in October 2012.

Anna Nelson Bennett (11C) has been accepted into M.A. programs in history at the University of Akron, Middle Tennessee State University, and the University of Rhode Island. She and husband Brady Bennett (12C), who also will begin graduate school this fall, will be making decisions in the next few weeks as to where they’ll end up next fall.

Amber Rickman (12C) married Batts Adams (12C) last June at beautiful Frost Chapel on the Berry College campus.

Don’t forget to Write

Do you have news you would like to include in next year’s Department of History newsletter? If so, please send it to mstanard@berry.edu.