

The Sextant

Volume II, Issue I



Fall 2008

Program Changes Curriculum

By Suzanne Moore

This fall semester brought a change to the history graduate program. Program director Dr. Christopher DeRosa initiated a move to lower the required amount of credits for a masters diploma. Originally, the total amount stood at 36; now students need only 30 to graduate.

Why the change in the program? Reading the responses of student surveys, the students within the program had suggested the change. Dr. DeRosa referred to them in his email about the change: "It is in part due in part to your feedback on our program surveys. According to the surveys, your three biggest concerns are the cost of the program, the length of time to complete your de-

gree, and the variety of courses that are offered. The number of courses we offer is a function of the number of students in the program, but if by addressing your other two concerns with a 30-credit program we can attract more students, then hopefully we can offer more classes in the years to come as well."

Furthermore, the department has done some research in comparing the program's competitiveness with other universities: "We have been looking at a large number of schools with history programs similar to ours, and have found that the great majority of them require 30 credits for the M.A. degree, and that at 36, we were an outlier. In making this change, our only regret is that your stay with us will be a little shorter,

because we do like to know you and watch you grow as scholars as long as we can. But because our courses are already a good deal more demanding than courses in our competitors' programs, we have no doubt that your degree will reflect the absolute strongest master's education in history it is in our power to provide."

The program announced the change back in the spring, and many of the students had the time to think about their own curriculum. Should they continue on towards 36 credits or take the opportunity to graduate earlier with 30 credits? The new curriculum programs did not just pertain to incoming graduate students; current students were not necessarily grandfathered into the old 36 program. As a result,

change of program forms were filled out and sent to the registrar as many foresaw an earlier graduation date. That will further result in an inundation of prospectus and thesis defenses and comprehensive exams administrations within the first year of the change.

The department will be sad to see everyone leave earlier, but it has changed the curriculum in the best interests of the students. The department looks forward to every graduation as each student accomplishes all required.

Faculty Profile: A Cup of Coffee with Dr. Maryanne Rhett

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By Bill Marsch

Having a cup of coffee with Dr. Maryanne Rhett convinced me that the recruiting committee made the right selection. She is an asset to Monmouth University's History Department - - she is enthusiastic, focused and engaged. World history is her focus, and fortunate are those who take one of her classes.

Dr. Rhett comes to us from the University of South Carolina (undergraduate), University of Arizona (MA with a focus on Near Eastern studies), and Washington State University, Pullman (PhD). Her dissertation brought the Bal-four Declaration beyond Middle Eastern history to make it a global event involving Indians, the Irish and so many others in the

Commonwealth. (She will work on refining her dissertation for publication.) Coming to Long Branch is an important opportunity for her, making historic resources in England, New York and Washington DC immediately available.

Continued onto page 2

Coffee, cont...

From front page

But why Monmouth? First and foremost were the sensitivities she felt and the attitudes of her colleagues in the History Department which surfaced immediately during the interview process. Class size was also a benefit to teaching. She noted that her last teaching assignment was a class of 120, but here it was 35 at most. But most important were the opportunities to make her personal interests in world history and globalization an integral part of Monmouth's curriculum.

There was a practical side to conversation with Dr. Rhett. She spoke of the current job market for PhDs and, for that matter, academia in general. With so few opportunities, many PhDs have focused on community colleges and preparatory schools. "Don't think you have to go to an Ivy League school or enroll in a traditional program," she noted. "You don't have to take a traditional path, just one that has meaning." And then she added, "you need enduring enthusiasm." She spoke of teaching high school students as a vehicle to bring world history and globalization to an important level of understanding and appreciation. Training the high school teacher as a historian and communicator should be a primary focus for programs such as Monmouth's.

Dr. Rhett's philosophy of teaching world history relates back to the chair of the world history program at Washington State. Her focus at WSU was to orchestrate classroom discussion without making you feel you were being directed. It

worked, but Dr. Rhett has taken this teaching style a few steps beyond to what she calls "talk based." "You need to create a communication," she believes. Engagement in working through a question or problem is most important." And very much to the point, she remarked, with a smile, that "teaching world history was more than a classroom."

We talked about world history as an expanded discipline at Monmouth. Dr. Rhett's primary interests is in Arab and Israeli history, but expands beyond a localized



and narrow study. In its broadest sense it brings British imperialism into play and expands to include, for example, Indian, Irish, Kenyan and commonwealth nationalism. This totally underscores her excitement in world history - - that all history is tied together in the stream of what has happened previously. Why, for example, is there a Russian Orthodox church in Spokane, Washington? Or what did immigrants from all parts of the world bring to the United States? It was intriguing when she talked about "coffee, tea, sugar and chocolate" as global in scope. Think about each and how they influenced and impacted localized history throughout the world. "It all goes back to world history," states Dr. Rhett.

I asked her who was her favorite fictional writer and was surprised that she gave me two: Jane Austen and Patrick O'Brian. Interesting. She explained that both authors' work, while they lived in different centuries, focused on the early half of nineteenth century England, at a time that has been romanticized but is far from romantic in a historical sense. Then I asked about her favorite quote. She thought long and hard to come up with a family quote: "In the end it will be alright. If it's not all right, it's not the end." Think about that for a minute.

I encourage you to have a cup of coffee with Dr. Rhett and to get her to talk. She is enthusiastic about world history, teaching and the opportunities available at Monmouth for students.

At the end of our one hour, and with the coffee getting cold, Dr. Rhett spoke of her family's connection to the South. (Her family goes back many years in South Carolina history.) Yes, Rhett, the family name, has a definite history in the Confederacy. She mentioned that there is a family story that talks about Margaret Mitchell asking if she could use the family name for a character in a book she was writing. Family history remembers that they approved, and Rhett Butler became a name for all generations. As Mitchell's Rhett exclaimed to Scarlet as he stormed out of Tara that "he didn't give a damn," this definitely is not Dr. Maryanne Rhett. Most definitely, she gives a damn.

Alumni Profile: Gilda Rogers Opens Frank Talk in Red Bank

By Leo Zaccari

I recently had the chance to talk with Gilda Rogers, Monmouth University alumnus, and owner of

Frank Talk Art, Bistro, & Books. I had no idea what to expect from Gilda Rogers or her newly opened establishment. Is it a book store? Is it a bistro? Is it both? If ever there were a place in

search of an identity, this seemed to be it.

Continued on page 4

Student Profile: **Out in the Field—Digging for the Past**

By Sean McHugh

After graduating in the winter of 2002 with a Bachelor's Degree in History, I was hired to work part-time as an archaeological field technician at Cultural Resource Consulting Group (CRCG). CRCG is a cultural resource consulting firm that does historic preservation and archaeology. At first, my job was simply to dig the holes, whether they were shovel tests or excavation units. I didn't know much about archaeology or the artifacts that we would find so digging was the safe choice. Even though archaeology and history are very similar, they in fact are very different and there was little my education could help me, I had to start learning from the beginning.

After a couple of months working on and off as part-time I was officially hired as a full-time field and lab technician. This allowed me the opportunity to learn more about the profession that I had chosen. As full-time I was able to take on more re-

sponsibly than just digging. When in the lab I learned how to do an analysis of artifacts, prehistoric, which pertains to Native American sites and historic sites. While full-time, one of the many office tasks that I was quickly drawn to dealt with maps.

Maps play a vital role in archaeology. Prior to any field work on any project historic documents are studied. Historic maps play a large part in determining the need for an archaeological survey. Archeology is all about location, and maps are used and made by archaeologists to show where shovel tests or excavation units are located in order to determine the location of sites. In the field, which despite many people's belief, New Jersey still has large wooded areas. The ability to read maps is equally important so one doesn't get lost, and the need to accurately plot where testing has taken place can possibly determine whether or not part of the proposed development can be moved, thus preserving the site.

It has been six years now since I was first hired at CRCG, now I am the Crew Chief and Draftsman as well as having served as an instructor for Monmouth's field school under the direction of Dr. Viet. Presently, I am in the middle of writing my Master's Thesis on Charles Rau and his work at Keyport. Once I have graduated with my M.A. I can further my advancement within my chosen career, and gain professional credentials as a Registered Professional Archaeologist (RPA).

Joseph Bonaparte Symposium

By Suzanne Moore

On October 11, 2008, the Divine Word Missionary (Bordentown, New Jersey) opened its property to the public for a very special event. Deep within the soil of the backyard lies some history belonging to both the United States and France. Joseph Bonaparte, elder brother of Napoleon, held the deed to this property close to 200 years ago. Only recently within the past two summers had Dr. Richard Veit and his archaeological field school students uncovered the foundations to a palatial mansion.

Tour guides, such as myself, led the visitors around the campus to visit the sites from Joseph Bonaparte as well as some prehistoric Native American sites Dr. William Schindler and his students unearthed. After

lunch, the visitors sat in the gymnasium of DWM and listened to lectures from Drs. Veit and Schindler as well as a speech from His Excellency Pierre Vimont, ambassador from France to



the United States (see picture). On this beautiful sunny day amongst worldwide economic problems, the French ambassador took time to travel from D.C. to view the history that linked France and the United States (and, as he joked, ostracized Great Britain). In the meantime, artifacts

were displayed from the dig as well as from the personal collection of Peter J. Tucci, Esq., resident of Pennsylvania and one of the organizers of the event.

This had been a great experience for me. I am currently writing my thesis on the subject of Joseph Bonaparte in America, and I had the opportunity to share my knowledge with the people that day. They were amazed that this was a little-kept secret amongst the quiet grounds of DWM, and I answered their questions about the times of Bonaparte. Every thesis writer should have this opportunity to further envelope themselves in the subject. It is rewarding when you can share your interest with others.

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This issue of *The Sextant* is dedicated to

Professor Frank Dooley

Thank you for all the lessons in history!

Wishing you all the best and a happy retirement,

The Students and Fellow Faculty of the
Monmouth University History Graduate Program

BOX SCORES

Fall 2008 Defended Theses

Howard Benkov: "The Mythical Jew in English Literature."

Kurt Peluso: "New Jersey: The Suffrage State."

Leo Zaccari: "The Origins of the Sixteenth Amendment: The History of the Income Tax in America."

At press time, comprehensive exams had not been administered. Those names will be published in the next issue of *The Sextant*.

Frank Talk., cont...

The cozy little shop is tucked away on the west side of Red Bank, located at 163 Shrewsbury Ave near the fire house. It boasts an impressive array of books that are mostly from Gilda's private collection. The walls of Frank Talk are covered by African American art, multi-colored sun catchers, stained glass with a panoply of designs that include Ankhs and other Egyptian symbols.

Rogers took the name Frank Talk from the pseudonym of South African activist Stephen Biko. The name was later taken as the title of a publication of the Azanian People's Organization, part of Biko's Black Consciousness Movement. Much like the ideas that launched the movement, which intended to mobilize and empower black youth, Rogers intends Frank Talk to a place where ideas can be can talked about freely and openly, where ideas can empower and unite us all.

Books on topics such as feng shui and costume and fashion sit beside books on the French Revolution. You are just as likely to find *The Autobiography of Quincy Jones* as you are *John Adams* by David McCulloch. You can also find *Albion's Seed*, by David Hackett Fischer, a book that is very special to Rogers. She came to own that book as a result of taking Colonial History with Dr. Dooley, whom Rogers called "very inspiring".

"School changed my life." She told me. "It opened me up to be all that I could ever be. It made me aware of the world around me and what role I play in that world."

You can also find Gilda's book *Arrested Development: The State of Black Achievement and Education in Hip Hop America*. The book was born of Roger's quest to find out what went wrong in the education of the black youth of today.

"When I started teaching," she explains, "I was taken aback with how bad the state of black education was. I had to ask 'how did things go so awry?'"

As we spoke, two customers who had met Rogers at the grand opening on November 1st stopped by to say hello. Gilda greeted them as warmly and invited them to stop by later that evening for her Mix n Mingle Fridays, a weekly gathering of friends old and new held every Friday night at 7PM.

At the conclusion of our interview I was surprised to find that more than two hours had passed. Gilda and I spoke about everything from politics to the problems facing today's youth, to philosophy, to the study of different cultures. Rogers has the rare gift to be thought-provoking and insightful without being brash or offensive. After our talk I knew the answers I had been seeking when I came in. Frank Talk is a place where one can come to read and be alone or to talk about anything that comes to mind. It's not a place in search of an identity; it's a place where one can find their own identity, a place where you can be yourself.