

CENTRAL HISTORY

SPRING 2017 • CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY • DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

Researching in the Caucasus

Rebecca Hastings, a former CWU history student and now a doctoral candidate in history at the University of Oregon, has spent the last several months in Baku, Azerbaijan, researching the Azerbaijani oil industry for her dissertation. Hailing originally from Shelton, Washington, Hastings received her BA in History with minors in Religious Studies and Spanish in 2009, and then returned to the CWU history department two years later to begin her MA degree. Rebecca completed her MA in 2013 under the direction of Roxanne Easley, and wrote her thesis about the connections between the Komsemol (the Soviet youth movement) and the anti-religious campaign espoused by Soviet authorities in the 1920s and 1930s.

Following her MA, Rebecca was accepted into the University of Oregon's history PhD program, working under the direction of noted Soviet historian Julie Hessler. In considering a dissertation topic, Rebecca decided she wanted to study the Caucasus. "My interest in the historical role of resource extraction, as well as my inclination to look beyond Russia proper, led me to Azerbaijan," she said. "The Baku region's abundant hydrocarbon resources made Azerbaijan a valuable possession of both the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, and have long drawn the attention of other states and foreign companies." After finishing her coursework and passing preliminary exams, Rebecca left for Baku this February. A grant from the State Department's Title VIII program, which facilitates scholarly work on Eastern Europe and Eurasia, helped to defray some of the costs of the trip.

While in Baku, Rebecca is researching the development of the oil industry in Baku from the late nineteenth century through the twentieth century. Although Baku was the seat of the Shirvanshah rulers through the sixteenth century, and an important part of the Persian Safavid Empire afterwards, its history over the last 125 years has been dominated by the development and expansion of the oil industry. Rebecca's research takes a holistic view of this industry. She says, "I focus particularly on the social impact of this largely foreign-developed industry, including demographic change stemming from labor migration and urbanization, transformation of the urban and industrial landscapes, and social dynamics among and between workers, ethnic groups, industry, and the state." Her research has taken her to the Imperial Russian and Soviet archives in Baku, in which she has spent the bulk of her time so far. "I am primarily interested in the records of local administrative bodies, such as courts and soviets, which indicate the character of the community surrounding the Baku oil industry, as well as the profound changes that it has undergone in the past century and a half," she says. "I also utilize personal writings, including memoirs and journals, to access individual perceptions of these changes." She also is furthering her study of the Azerbaijani language while in Baku, and notes that even after leaving the archives after a long day of research, she still cannot escape the shadow of the oil industry. "Oil company employees from around the world are still a noticeable presence in Baku, and the appearance of the city itself changes daily as a result of incessant construction and reconstruction driven by oil revenues." When completed, Rebecca's dissertation promises to make a major contribution to the study of imperialism, economic development, the oil industry, and Russian/Soviet energy policy as seen through the history of a now independent post-Soviet state.



Rebecca Hastings in Baku, 2017



Oil Fields in Baku

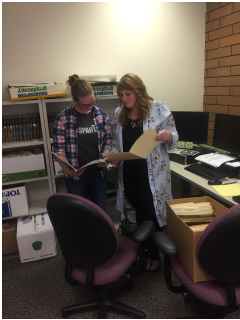
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NEWS

Student

- 2017 history BA graduate **Micah Murphy** will begin law school at the University of Oregon in the fall.
- History graduate students **Liz Seelye** and **Thomas Hull**, along with undergraduates **Sophia Andarovna**, **Kyle Scott**, **Anna Morris**, **Omar Manzo** and **Rane Tenerelli**, presented papers at the University's annual SOURCE (Symposium of University Research and Creative Expression). **Sophia** also won the College of Arts and Humanities outstanding student research award.
- 2017 history graduate **Sam Young** will start graduate school at Kansas State University in the fall, studying North African and Ottoman history.



Amanda Widney (right) works in the archives of the Douglas Honors College.

- New history MA student **Amanda Widney** has received a graduate assistantship at CWU's Douglas Honors College for spring 2017 and the 2017-18 academic year. At the DHC, Amanda is researching and writing a history of the Honors College, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary next year. She is undertaking the research mostly in the College's numerous uncataloged boxes of files, as well as in other university records. Amanda's MA work in the history department focuses on the eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment.

Faculty

- **Lacy Ferrell** has been selected to attend a summer institute sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The institute's focus is "Beyond East and West: Exchanges and Interactions Across the Early Modern World 1400-1800," and it will be held over three weeks this summer at Indiana University in Bloomington. Information and perspectives gleaned from the summer institute will help Lacy as she prepares a new course for the department on Global Islam.



*Indiana University
Not pictured: Lacy Ferrell*

- **Chong Eun Ahn** travelled to Vancouver BC last month to present her work at the Northwest China Forum hosted by the University of British Columbia. Her paper discussed ethnic Korean participation in the Chinese Civil War of the late 1940s, and how that participation has been remembered and commemorated since that time.
- **Jason Knirck** delivered two research presentations at Eastern Oregon University in May. The first was a public talk entitled "The Irish Revolution and World History." That talk drew from an ongoing article project that analyzes how various groups of Irish revolutionaries invoked examples from elsewhere in the world to both

justify and assess Ireland's claim to independence, level of civilization, and future economic path. The second talk discussed female politicians and the gendering of Irish political debate during the Irish civil war of the early 1920s, a subject Jason wrote about in his first book *Women of the Dail*. This talk was part of an Irish history class offered at EOU by Mandy Link.

- **Roxanne Easley** is soon to finish a successful four-year run as president of the United Faculty of Central, our campus faculty union. She looks forward to returning to teaching and to her ongoing research project on nineteenth-century Russian writers and reform.
- **Mandy Link**, a visiting history lecturer at CWU last year and a former PhD student of Jason Knirck, recently accepted a tenure-track job at the University of Texas at Tyler. She will start at UT-Tyler in the fall and we wish her the best of luck.

Alumni

- **Patrice Laurent** (BA 2004; MA 2007) is currently an assistant professor of history at Montgomery County Community College outside of Philadelphia. She is also working on her dissertation at Temple University.



The triumph of the Emperor Titus

- **Alyson Roy** (BA 2006) recently defended her dissertation at the University of Washington. Alyson's research studies the Roman military celebration known as the triumph, focusing in particular on its representations in material culture and its displays of personal or state power.



Oral History and the Chinese Revolution



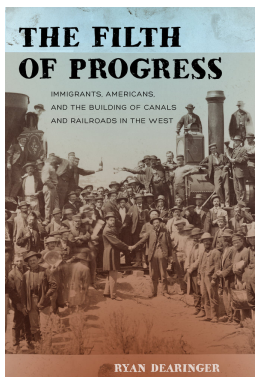
Marilyn Levine interviewing Li Xin, the Director of Modern History at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

History professor Marilyn Levine is continuing her research into a generation of Chinese students and activists who traveled to Europe in the 1920s. While there, these students formed political movements, with many of the students later returning to China and participating in the events that ultimately led to the Chinese Revolution in 1949. These students were the focus of Marilyn's first book *The Found Generation: Chinese Communists in Europe during the Twenties*, published in 1993. Now, after serving as a dean at Eastern Oregon University and a provost at CWU, Marilyn has returned to the faculty and to her work on this generation of Chinese students. She is now re-engaging with the raw materials of her research: nearly 60 hours of taped interviews from 1985 and 1990, many of which were conducted with Chinese students who had lived in Europe in the 1920s or with Chinese historians and social scientists who had studied the massive upheavals that marked twentieth-century Chinese history. Marilyn is now working on making these oral histories, along with accompanying photographs and notes, available to interested scholars through digital audio files and interview transcriptions. In June, Marilyn will travel to Tsinghua University in Beijing to discuss further ways of collaborating with Chinese scholars on this project. While there, she also will present an overview of the materials in her oral history collection and suggest possible future

directions for research in the collection. This research also informs Marilyn's teaching, as she is offering a new course for the history department called "Biography: The History of One," which looks at the use of individual and collective biography as a lens to analyzing historical events and epochs. The course will be offered during the next academic year.

The Building of the American West

The Department of History welcomed Dr. Ryan Dearing to campus in April for a fascinating presentation on the construction of canals and railroads in the American west across the nineteenth century. The talk focused on material from his book entitled *The Filth of Progress: Immigrants, Americans, and the Building of Canals and Railroads in the West*. Dearing's book sought to move beyond the traditional lionization of canals and railroads as feats of engineering and progress, and to instead look at the lives of the workers involved in these construction projects. Dearing's spirited talk, delivered before a packed classroom of faculty and students, highlighted the often violent and poverty-stricken lives of the various Irish, African-American, Chinese, Mormon, and other workers employed by individual foremen and subcontractors to carry out the dangerous work of canal and railroad construction. To tell their story, Dearing drew on variety of prints, diaries,



photographs, and newspaper accounts that revealed accounts of life in the construction camps that were often at variance with the romanticized images of progress that characterized standard depictions of the west. After the talk, Dearing answered questions from the audience on the development of labor history, the use of Marxism by previous generations of labor historians, and the role of women in these construction efforts. The talk was sponsored by the CWU History Club, the Department of World Languages and Cultures, and the Douglas Honors College. Dearing is a professor of history at Eastern Oregon University.



For more news on the department, please check out our [Facebook](#) page, [Twitter](#) feed, and webpage.

The department continues to want to connect with our alumni. We would very much like to hear from you and to add features on alumni to future editions of the newsletter.

Please send us an update on your current whereabouts and activities to Jason.Knirck@cwu.edu

HISTORY STUDENT SOURCE PRESENTATIONS MAY 2017

Undergraduates

Sophia Andarovna

"Fake Science: Vavilov's Persecution in Stalin's Manipulated Reality"

Omar Manzo

"The Masculinities of Man in Mexican Cinema"

Anna Morris

"The Breakup of the Soviet Union and Russia's Foreign Policy"

Rane Tenerelli

"The Cheka's Role in the Russian Revolution and Beyond"

Graduate Students

Thomas Hull

"The Volga Germans: 1917 to 1941"

Elizabeth Seelye

"Everything is Going According to Plan': KGB Oppression of Soviet Punk Rock"

CWU Students Shine at Phi Alpha Theta Conference

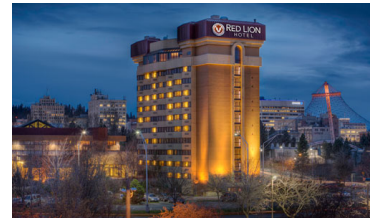
Five CWU undergraduate history majors and one history graduate student, along with club advisor Brian Carroll, traveled to Spokane in early April to take part in the Northwest Regional Phi Alpha Theta history conference. This regional conference brings together undergraduates and graduate history students from institutions in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Alaska to present their original historical research in a format mirroring that of a faculty history conference. This year's event was at the Red Lion in Spokane and was hosted by Eastern Washington University. CWU has a long tradition of participation in and success at Phi Alpha Theta, and this year was no exception. Our presenters and their topics were as follows:

Undergraduates

- Aria Colewater, "The Shining Path of Lutheranism: Why the Shining Path Failed"
- Darian Gray: "Physical and Social Expectations of Men on the Oregon Trail, 1851-1854"
- Luke Pearsons, "Borscht Belt Boot Camp: Tracing the Origins of Success of the Writers and Performers of *Your Show of Shows*"
- Kyle Scott, "The Death of a Revolution: An Examination of how the Kornilov Affair was the last best chance to save the February Revolution"
- Samuel Young: "'Lest we Perish': The United States and the Armenian Question"

Graduates

- Jennifer Crooks, "'No Other Agency': Public K-12 Education in Washington State during World War I and the Red Scare, 1917-1920"



The Spokane Red Lion rising as if into the clouds near the banks of the Spokane River.

We are pleased to note that Luke Pearsons won an award for the Best Undergraduate Paper at the conference and Jennifer Crooks won the Harry Fritz award for Best Overall Paper. All of these papers were written for history classes here at CWU, and we congratulate all the students on their fine research and their faculty mentors for assisting them with these projects.

2017-18 Upper-Division Courses

- Gender and History in Modern Asia (Dr. Ahn)
- Africa to 1800 (Dr. Ferrell)
- American Indian History since 1795 (Dr. Herman)
- The Era of World War One (Prof. Munsell)
- Medieval Europe (Dr. Easley)
- Ancient Egypt (Dr. Ferrell)
- American Military History (Dr. Herman)
- Biography: The History of One (Dr. Levine)
- Pacific Northwest History (Dr. Moore)
- Renaissance and Reformation (Dr. Easley)
- Vietnamese History (Dr. Levine)
- US History 1919-45 (Dr. Moore)
- History of Food and Drink (Dr. Morgan)
- US Cultural History: Suburbia and the 50s (Prof. Munsell)

