



FROM THE CHAIR'S DESK

Greetings from Bay State Road! We have enjoyed an unusually mild Autumn along the banks of the Charles, warm enough to deceive the roses into bloom and the cherry trees into buds (not to mention my eyes to start watering like it's May). Yet somehow the strange blossoms seem appropriate as the work of our students and faculty has flourished this past semester. Among the strangest pieces of news, my colleague Jim McCann became director of [BU's Pardee Center for the Study of the Long-Range Future](#). His appointment gave me a chuckle, not because I doubt Jim's abilities (he will bring his formidable leadership skills to that important center), but only because historians tend to be such terrible prophets. We can't even agree on what already has happened, how can we predict what's next?

I suppose that means it's time for my latest (and not very good) historian joke: How many historians does it take to change a light bulb? Only one, but to explain it you need an entire department: the historian of science to describe the development of electricity; the economic historian to describe the rise of power companies; the environmental historian to talk about the relationship between replacement bulbs and landfill issues; the political historian to describe the decision-making process in light bulb replacement; and the labor historian to argue about who really replaces the bulbs. I know you can do better! So please keep in touch! Send stories, jokes, adventures, misadventures, cautionary tales, and any other material to me at bjschulm@bu.edu or just email history@bu.edu.

A SEASON FOR PRIZES

We have had ample reason to break out the champagne as the fall has marked a season of awards for the department (so please forgive me if I crow a little). [Jim Johnson's](#) new book, *Venice Incognito*, won the George L. Mosse Award of the American Historical Association.



Professor Jim Johnson's book, *Venice Incognito*, and Professor Arianne Chernock's book, *Men and the Making of Modern British Feminism*.

The award honors the year's "outstanding major work of extraordinary scholarly distinction, creativity, and originality in the intellectual and cultural history of Europe since the Renaissance." Meanwhile, [Arianne Chernock](#) received the 2011 John Ben Snow Prize of the North American Conference on British Studies. The prize committee praised Chernock's book, *Men and the Making of Modern British Feminism*, for presenting "a new vision of the Enlightenment adoption of the philosophies of toleration and equality that finally brings the debate on women's status among eighteenth-century intellectuals out of the shadows."

Also donning top hat and tails is Professor [Jonathan Zatlín](#), the recipient of the Prize for Distinguished Scholarship in German and European Studies awarded by the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service). The prize will be presented December 13, 2011 in a black-tie affair in New York City. Last but not least, [Jim Schmidt](#) was selected as a Bogliasco Fellow and will spend this coming February in residence at the Liguria Study Center for the Arts and Humanities completing *The Question of Enlightenment*, a that traces the history of debates about the nature, purpose, and implications of the Enlightenment between 1784 (the date of Immanuel Kant's famous response to the question "What is enlightenment?") and 1984 (the date of influential reflections on Kant's answer).

THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST

The new issue of the Department newsletter, *The Presence of the Past*, is available on line at the [department website](#). It features updates on students, faculty, and alumni as well as timely "feature" stories. This month, you can learn about a fascinating collaboration between senior Alyssa Winter and Professor Arianne Chernock and take in economic historian Lou Ferleger's explanation for the success of the New England Patriots.



Boston University senior Alyssa Winter and History Professor Arianne Chernock.

Of course, you need not wait through the long intervals between newsletters. If you're a BU History news junkie—and we hope you are—you can subscribe to the Department's RSS feed and get the latest news as it breaks. To sign up, [visit the department's news page](#).

In this season of giving, I'm hoping that you'll consider making an annual gift to support the History Department. While a small gift will enable a student to present original research at a conference, a slightly larger gift lets a professor take students into the field, or sends a student to an archive. You can rest assured that your donation will go directly to the department and help us to maintain its record of excellence in scholarship and community service. Particularly in these times of tightened budgets, we rely more than ever on your generous gifts to be able to do the extraordinary and extracurricular things that often have a tremendous impact on our students. If you want to join us in enhancing the student experience, please visit or [online giving form](#) and indicate that you'd like to support the History Department in the designation box.

Thank you for supporting excellence in the History Department.

Best wishes to you and your family for a healthy and happy New Year.

All best,

Bruce

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