



FROM THE CHAIR'S DESK

News from the History Department at Boston University

Greetings from Bay State Road! For more years than I care to admit, ever since I started Kindergarten way back in the previous century, the start of September signals a familiar round of rituals: students unloading their belongings, finding their way to new classes, reconnecting with old friends. The renewal of old traditions, we historians understand, forms an essential part of the human experience. It's a way we measure out our finite time on this planet and, especially, a way that we tie ourselves to generations before and after. But amid the cooling temperatures and falling leaves, this Autumn I'm reminded of that other essential feature of modern life—rapid, tenacious change. The past few years have been challenging times for Liberal Arts education and the BU History Department has not escaped the decline in enrollments and majors afflicting the humanities across the nation.

I'm proud to report, however, that BU students and faculty have addressed these challenges with great verve and ingenuity, developing a series of new programs. This Fall, we launched a new introductory course. Taught by Metcalfe Prize winner [James Johnson](#), "Making History" takes students out of the classroom and into the city of Boston. Class members will pore over manuscripts and rare books at the Massachusetts Historical Society, examine paintings at the Museum of Fine Arts and architecture in Boston's Copley Square, and visit the city's neighborhoods as they learn the techniques of practicing historians. We hope this class not only attracts freshmen to the study of history, but also equips students majoring in other fields with a set of analytic and research skills useful in so many other vocations. At the same time, on October 11, the Undergraduate History Association will host "History Beyond BU," our first alumni career night. Five recent alumni, working in a wide range of professions, will return to campus and share their experiences with current students.

As proud as I am of our students and faculty's response to challenging times, we can't do it alone. Nothing assists us more than your lives and careers--tales of what studying history at BU meant for your career and your life as an adult. So please keep in touch! Send your news to us at history@bu.edu.

LANDMARKS

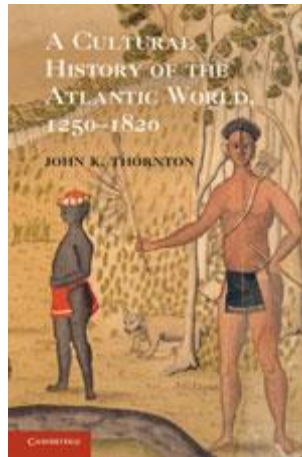
Last spring we inaugurated a new series of public events. Marking significant anniversaries of pivotal moments in history, Landmarks assembles leading scholars and thinkers to reconsider how such events have shaped the modern world. The series kicked off last spring when Pulitzer Prize winning author Alan Taylor reconsidered the War of 1812. The series continues with three big events—open to the public—for 2012 & 2013. On Wednesday, October 17, 2012, at 7pm, a distinguished panel will discuss the Cuban Missile Crisis fifty years after the world was on the brink of nuclear war. In February of 2013, a panel including Edward Muir of Northwestern University and Michael Ignatieff, former leader of Canada's Liberal Party, will consider the influence of Nicolo Machiavelli five hundred years after the publication of *The Prince*. And in March, Professor David Chappell of the University of Oklahoma will investigate the legacy of Martin Luther King. For details on these events, please visit our [History Department web site](#).

Three Students Win Robert Shotwell Dissertation Fellowship

Named after Robert Shotwell, father to one BU alumnus and grandfather to another, the Fellowship brings the quality of persistence to this scholarship. Graduate students are known for procrastination, taking longer and longer to complete their dissertations. Bob Shotwell's notable tenacity has illustrated how being persistent can lead to the satisfaction of completion. Born in Los Angeles during the 1920's, he almost finished college at the University of Southern California before WWII recruiting officers enlisted his skills as a photographer leaving him a semester short of graduation. Almost 60 years later, he returned to receive his degree, the oldest graduate in the history of the Marshall School of Business. In between the war and graduation, he was an entrepreneur in the printing and copier industry and is now engaged in several projects relating to history, his favorite subject. In Camden, Maine, where he resides, he leads a project to refurbish a historic theater and has established the Cole House for history teachers at Montpelier, General Henry Knox's house in Thomaston, Maine. This year's winners are: Seth Blumenthal for *Bridging the Gap: Nixon, New Politics and the First Youth Vote, 1968-1972*; Michael Holm for *America in the World: Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Early Cold War*; and Jonathan Koefoed for *Cautious Romantics: The Transcendental Trinitarians and the Transatlantic Romantic Discourse*.

John Thornton Publishes Cultural History of the Atlantic World

Cambridge University Press recently announced the publication of Professor [John Thornton's](#) latest book, *A Cultural History of the Atlantic World, 1250–1820*. Exploring the linkages in the histories of Africa, Europe, and North and South America, Thornton traces the backgrounds of the populations on these three continental landmasses brought into contact by European navigation and the political and social implications of the encounters, excavating the origins of a variety of Atlantic societies and showing how new ways of eating, drinking, speaking, and worshipping developed in the newly created Atlantic World. According to Ira Berlin, the author of *Many Thousands Gone*, "John Thornton captures the moment Africa, Europe and the Americas came together and the new world that was created. *A Cultural History of the Atlantic World [1250–1820]* will be a foundation stone in the study of the Atlantic, simultaneously an entry point for novices, a reference for established scholars, and a guide for future studies. An extraordinary achievement."



All the News that Fits

Founded by recent BU History graduate Kyle Pronko, CAS'09, and two of his classmates, a new publication from the Boston University School of Medicine Historical Society is seeking submissions for its inaugural issue next fall.

"Aceso: The Journal of the BU School of Medicine Historical Society" is looking for contributions in the fields of Medicine in Antiquity, History of Medicine, Public Health, and related fields. If you're interested, contact the editors at aceso@bu.edu.

Finally, Professor Phil Haberkern proudly reports that Brendan Conrad Haberkern was born on July 29 at 8:24 a.m., and weighed 7lbs. 6oz. He's doing great, as is mom and his big sister!



That good news should wrap up my fall report, but I promised another historian joke, so here it is (in the best tradition of Milton Berle, I stole this from an archaeologist and revised it a bit): Why should you marry a historian? Because the older you get, the more interesting your spouse will find you.

Best wishes for the autumn! Keep keep in touch! Send stories, jokes, adventures, misadventures, cautionary tales, and any other material to history@bu.edu.

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