The Department of History is fortunate to be joined this autumn by Giovanni Costigan Visiting Professor Christopher Browning. A leading expert on the history of the Holocaust, Browning delivered a public lecture to a packed audience on Thursday, November 5th, entitled "Holocaust History and Survivor Testimony: The Case of the Starachowice Factory Slave Labor Camps."

Perhaps best known for his 1992 book, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, Browning has sought throughout his career to make sense of the human motivations that underlay the tragic and horrifying events of the Nazi genocide. Browning’s talk drew on his most recent book, *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave Labor Camp*. It reveals another side to the Final Solution, detailing the extensive system of commercial slave-labor factories that existed alongside the better-known death camps. Though no less malign, this was a very different form of genocide, guided as much by a shockingly brutal corporate logic as by purely anti-Semitic ideology.

Browning has found this line of research rewarding, not only because it brought to light an important piece of Holocaust history, but also because it provided an opportunity to explore the possibilities of human memory in writing history. After World War II, corporate Germany went to great lengths to cover up the slave-labor system. With most of the relevant documents having been destroyed, Browning had to rely on the memories of 292 survivors of the labor camps. Exploring their stories, and learning how to weave a reliable historical record from subjective human memories, has made for a compelling journey.

Browning’s appointment as visiting professor offers the faculty, students and friends of the History Department a special opportunity to learn from a true groundbreaker in the study of the Holocaust. In addition to his public lecture, he is teaching two classes this quarter: an undergraduate lecture course on the History and Memory of the Holocaust, and a graduate seminar on Modern Germany.

In return, Browning is enjoying the opportunity to spend a quarter at UW. He has appreciated the level of engagement and interaction that he has had with his UW students. And returning to the Pacific Northwest was also a big draw. Before moving to the University of North Carolina, Browning spent 25 years teaching at Pacific Lutheran University. Being introduced to the Northwest at the beginning of his career was “a stroke of luck” for Browning, and he still has daughters living in Seattle and Vancouver, BC—among them Anne Browning, director of the Center for Learning and Undergraduate Enrichment at UW. So when he was presented with the opportunity to return to “this wonderful place” and be close to family, it was an easy decision to make. For that, and for his presence and
contributions here, the Department of History is very grateful!