Greetings from the Chair

DEAR FRIENDS OF HISTORY,

Spring always announces itself around Smith Hall in a burst of cherry blossoms in the quad. ‘Tis the season when faculty members look forward to teaching one more quarter before they settle into a summer of research and writing - and course preparations. To date one of the high points of the year has been the 2016 History Lecture Series on “Excavating Seattle's Histories: Peoples, Politics, and Place.” Four of our colleagues - John M. Findlay, Quintard Taylor, Linda Nash, and James N. Gregory - held audiences of several hundred people spellbound on four consecutive Wednesdays in late January and early February as they highlighted the history of our great city from a variety of angles. Next year’s History Lecture Series will focus on an equally compelling topic: comparative revolutions, in a year marking the hundredth anniversary of the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Transitions continue to change the face of the Department. Last year, five of our faculty members elected to retire. So far this year we have had Richard Johnson step down after a forty-plus-year career as a distinguished scholar, teacher, citizen, and department chair. John Toews is also leaving after an equally long and illustrious career in History as well as in the Comparative History of Ideas Program (CHID), an interdisciplinary unit that he founded and led for almost thirty years. We hope before long to announce a couple of additions to our faculty roster: a German historian and a Japanese historian. And with so many departures in recent years, we look forward to other new hires to cover the many world areas, themes, and time periods that we no longer have expertise in.

April is also the month when we get ready to welcome a new class of graduate students who will be joining the Department in the fall and when some of our advanced graduate students move on to postgraduate lives in a variety of positions. History graduates, at all levels, increasingly embrace a variety of career paths. Soon we will also be bidding adieu to yet another graduating class of undergraduate History majors. As always, we will have plenty of reasons to celebrate their many accomplishments. (Please come to the History Awards Ceremony on May 18th at 2 p.m. and our Convocation on June 10th, tentatively scheduled for 2 p.m.).
Finally, a word of thanks to all of you for making my job as chair as easy and tranquil as it has been. I am especially grateful to my predecessor, Lynn Thomas, for her sage counsel and assistance. Without her and the splendid staff that History has, I could not possibly have eased into the position of chair. A special thanks to Josh Apfel, Wanjiku Gitahi, Tracy Maschman Morrissey, Lori Anthony, Jessica Claycomb, Nell Gross, Jeri Park, and Stephen Scheier.