Professor John Toews Retires
Submitted by Alyson Roy on May 11, 2016 - 10:45pm

Professor of intellectual history and former director of the Comparative History of Ideas Program (CHID), Professor John Toews has been a crucial member of the College of Arts and Sciences for thirty-five years. The recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, a Giovanni Costigan Endowed Professorship in History, and the Joff Hanauer Distinguished Professorship in Western Civilization, John Toews has been a significant force in his field for decades. At the University of Washington, though, Professor Toews is best known for his contributions to the CHID Program. While Professor Toews's role in developing the CHID Program was of great importance, for many of his former students, his ability to teach them how to think critically, his desire to give them agency both in the classroom and in their future careers, and his emphasis on public citizenship are more memorable than his role as a professor or as a program director. “A degree should not be about the potential return on investment,” he stated. “Students enter college to create their position in society, to build an identity. It’s not an easy thing to do these days.” In his recent course on the corporatization of higher education, Professor Toews noted that he learned a lot from his students about how they struggle to stake a claim on their own degrees while dealing with rising tuition costs and what they see as a lack of freedom to choose their own paths. Professor Toews's dedication to helping his students explore such difficult questions is legendary. Those same students recently honored John Toews with a humorous video called “The History of John Toews.” Professor Toews’s impact on his students is best summed up by a few lines from this video: “John is gifted at nurturing and championing others intellectually, artistically, and professionally. ...John Toews has influenced a generation of the University of Washington's leading intellectuals.” We wish him the best of luck in the future.