Introducing the Frank and Joan Conlon Endowed Graduate Student Fellowship.

Submitted by Emma R Hinchliffe on November 20, 2018 - 8:59pm

The Department of History Graduate Program is a hub for innovative research, and this past year an unprecedented number of students were awarded fellowships and prizes to aid them in their work. Much of this robust scholarship is supported by departmental grants made possible through the gifts of generous donors.

Frank and Joan Catoni Conlon both have a long history of support of and service to the University of Washington. A historian of India and South Asia, Frank Conlon first joined the Department of History in 1968. He went on to spend the rest of his academic career here, teaching Indian history, before retiring in 2001. During his time at the UW he also taught for the South Asia program in the Jackson School, and played a supporting role in the creation of their comparative religion program. Joan Catoni Conlon entered the UW as a freshman in 1957 majoring in piano. She went on to obtain advanced degrees in the history and conducting of choral literature. After teaching at various area schools, she was appointed to the music faculty in 1976. She directed choral ensembles and taught choral literature until 1995, when she was offered a position at the College of Music at the University of Colorado, Boulder, where she was director of graduate choral studies for 14 years.

Both know the trials and tribulations that come with earning a PhD and how helpful fellowship support can be.

Frank Conlon explained: “From my own experience and talking to others, I think that for most graduate students it is in the nature of the enterprise that there will be challenges in the final stages—when the goal is near yet often seems so far. Anything that might reduce those challenges is a good thing. . . . Over the years a lot of people and many institutions helped me to study and, later, to teach. Knowing that, I wanted to make a small contribution to helping another generation of emerging historians to progress past a few of the early milestones of their career.”

He also offered some sage advice for students in this final phase: “In the Hindu text the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna counsels his
human student who is unnerved by daunting tasks that await him, ‘Concentrate upon the work; not upon the fruits thereof.’ (Krishna goes on to urge that one should do one's duty and dedicate the work in devotion to the deity.) Within a secular realm I have often stressed that this insight applies to anyone, whether a student or not. It is hard to complete tasks when one's consciousness is partially focused on the results of that completion. Anxiety concerning the final result will drain positive energy and insight."

By reducing some financial anxiety, this fellowship will help its recipients keep their focus on writing, and completing, their dissertations. We thank Frank and Joan Conlon for this gift and their continued support and friendship.

Eligible students will be considered for this award as part of the annual graduate student funding applications due in February. More information about graduate funding can be found here.

To learn how you can support our graduates and undergraduates, please visit the department's Support History page.

People Involved: Frank Conlon

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