

# GGC History News

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## Military Student-Veterans Succeeding at GGC

### In Their Own Words: The Realities of Being A Veteran and a History Major at GGC

**Devin Vanwert:** "Attending Georgia Gwinnett College as a veteran has given me the opportunity to utilize a unique background. Being in the military, I was able to develop a strong work-ethic that I can apply to my educational career. And being a veteran of the war in Afghanistan, I have a valuable experience



that drives my interest in understanding the world. Most importantly, being a veteran allows me to share my experience with others, and show that veterans can provide a valuable contribution here at Georgia Gwinnett College." (Editor's Note: Mr. Vanwert served in the 3rd Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment. His unit belonged to the 1st Brigade 82nd Airborne Division, also referred to as 1 BCT 82nd 3-73 CAV. He served from 2010 to 2014, and his tour in Ghazni Province, Afghanistan was in 2012).

**James Rooks:** "Upon returning from my tours of duty, I found myself at a loss in an ever-changing society. My resume became an obstacle that hurt my chances for secure employment. Employers were very prejudiced toward my military service, and they often assumed the worst because of my combat experiences. I needed to find a niche



where people appreciated my work ethic and understood the value of objectivity. Eventually I decided to follow my passion of historical studies as I had nothing to lose at that point. I found what I was searching for at GGC with the assistance of the history faculty. I've yet to experience prejudice in my classrooms, and my professors value hard work. Because my professors gave me a chance to prove myself, I've been successful at GGC." (Editor's Note: Mr. Rooks served in the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines Kilo Company. In the Marines from 2001-2008, he served overseas deployments in Djibouti and in Al Anbar Province, Iraq).

## Veterans Adding to Campus Climate

Georgia Gwinnett College (GGC) contains a truly diverse student body. Not only is it diverse in ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds, but it is also diverse in another way: military veterans. "We are proud to have hundreds of veterans and active duty military personnel on our campus, both as students and as instructors," said Dr. Stanley Preczewski, Georgia Gwinnett College's President. "They are valuable assets to Georgia Gwinnett College and to Gwinnett County and the surrounding area."

Such veterans bring a wealth of experience, they face unique challenges, and they benefit the classroom environment. "I understand concepts and the importance of an education," said Brandon Watts, a senior majoring in history. "I also understand the difficulties of "the real world" and what is expected as a contributing member of society."

Some veterans have noted that transitioning out of the military can involve a lot of work and retooling. The military already gave them specialties, and completing new academic majors means new specializations. But, even where obstacles exist, veterans remain undaunted in pursuit of an education. "Once these men and women have served their country, they will need to find good-paying jobs, and they know that their chances improve greatly with the baccalaureate degree," said Preczewski.

To help its student-veterans, GGC opened a Military and Veterans Success Center in November 2015. GGC was named a Military Friendly School for 2014 and 2015 by Victory Media, the premier media entity for military personnel transitioning into civilian life.

Dr. Lia Schraeder earned an M.A. and Ph.D. from UC Davis, after completing her dissertation: "Sprints of the Times: Spiritism in Modern Mexico."

## Ex Libris: From the Bookshelves of GGC Historians



Dr. Lia Schraeder began working at GGC in Fall 2011. She teaches classes on world, Latin American, and Mexican history. Beyond the classroom she pursues research on religious movements in Mexico and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). Her interest in pedagogy and educational technology led her to complete a M.Ed. Degree in Learning, Design and Technology at the University of Georgia last year.

I knew little about Reacting to the Past (RTTP) when I joined their Facebook group, the "Reacting Faculty Lounge." But upon entering their "virtual lounge" I noticed posts by faculty that instantly piqued my curiosity:

- "Mark Antony read[s] an augury from a bag of chips? The omens were favorable for Dolabella to be consul suffect."

- "Future US Marine act[s] as a human pig sacrifice [in Athens game]. I haven't yet discovered why said marine-to-be has an adult sized pig onesie. I'm not entirely sure I want to know."

- "Just received a picture of a group of students plotting their Rwanda strategy in the library—five students who, I'm pretty sure, have never spoken to each other before this week." :)

As history professors we aspire to share our passion for history and to elicit genuine enthusiasm about learning from our students. We also know that "student engagement" can be elusive. Despite our best efforts, students may at times seem disinterested and we may at times accept some disengagement with resignation. What struck me about the comments by faculty on the "Reacting Faculty Lounge," is how regularly and vividly they describe successful student engagement in their classes using RTTP.

I wanted to know more about RTTP and the enthusiasm it seemed to generate among students and faculty alike, so I checked out the book *Minds on Fire* by Mark Carnes, innovator of RTTP in the late 1990s. For Carnes and the growing RTTP community, the secret to "a more stimulating classroom experience" for students and faculty alike lies in role-immersion games. By definition then, RTTP refers to games lasting about a month, in which students

assume historical roles based on primary texts, and then act out those roles within a game-based structure. Carnes addresses skeptics in an engaging defense of the pedagogy behind RTTP and its ability to promote learning. He shows that RTTP achieves learning outcomes that are common in higher education history courses: historical empathy, critical thinking, close reading, moral reasoning, teamwork, and leadership skills, among others. But for Carnes, the real "magic" of RTTP lies in its ability to promote affective learning outcomes, like creativity and fun, beyond what he had experienced in lecture-based and technology-based approaches.

RTTP is now used by faculty at over 350 colleges and universities.

At GGC too, a number of professors are incorporating RTTP games into their classes. History students interested in participating in an RTTP game this fall may consider U.S. history courses HIST 3200 and Hist 2111, in which Dr. Ribianszky includes a game on Frederick Douglass. For a world history option, consider taking my Hist 3507, the History of Modern Mexico, in which we'll be trying out the new RTTP game Mexico in Revolution, 1912-1920. You never know what you'll find in a bag of chips!

### Recommended Resources on RTTP:

Carnes, Mark. *Minds on Fire: How Role-Immersion Games Transform College*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014.

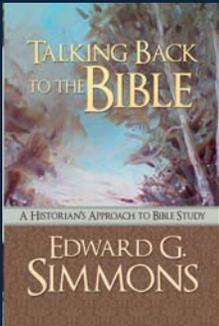
Harvard Website for Minds on Fire:  
<http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674735354>

RTTP Website at Barnard College:  
<https://reacting.barnard.edu/>

**"For Carnes, the real 'magic' of RTTP lies in its ability to promote affective learning outcomes, like creativity and fun."**

# Standing Ovations! History Faculty News & Accomplishments

## Edward Simmons



**Edward Simmons** (Left, part time history faculty), recently published *Talking Back to the Bible,* with Dorrance Publishing Co. Simmons earned his Ph.D. and M.A. degrees in history at Vanderbilt University, and has long had an interest in the intersection of religion and history. Dr. Simmons spent Spring 2016 recuperating from complications from surgery, but is recovering well. **Michael Gagnon** (right) was recently awarded a competitive spot at a National Endowment for the Humanities' funded summer institute, "Doing Digital History, 2016" at George Mason University.

## Michael Gagnon



**Nik Ribianszky** was the winner of the "Integrated Education Award," presented by the GGC Office of Student Involvement and the Student Center, April 21st, 2016. She also was a member of a panel for the Georgia Appleseed/ GGC Community Forum on Race, Law Enforcement and the Law held at GGC, on Tuesday, April 26, 2016.

## Michael Gunther



## Patrick Zander, Nathan Orgill, and Patrick Ludolph



fashioned and created a panel at the Georgia Association of Historians in February 2016, titled: "Imagining the Nation at War: The British Press and Military Conflict (1640-1940)." Zander presented "Aviation, War, and the Extreme Right Press in Britain (1932-1940)." Orgill presented, "Reawakening the Nation: British Journalists and the Interwar Debate on the Origins of the First World War." Ludolph presented: "Propaganda and 'Plain Narrative:' Censorship during the British Civil Wars."

**Seth Kendall** presented "Novus Factus Exercitus: the Roman New Model Army in Titus Livius' Book 4-8," at the Association for Core Texts and Courses Conference in Atlanta, April 16. He also chaired a session on Aristotle.

**Patrick Zander** signed two contracts for new books: 1) "Hidden Armies: The Resistance Movements of the Second World War," with Praeger Press; 2) "The Rise of Communism: History, Documents, and Key Questions," with ABC-CLIO. Anticipated publication is 2017.

**Brian Etheridge** published, "The Sister City Network in the 1970s: American Municipal Internationalism and Public Diplomacy in a Decade of Change," in Halvard Notaker, Giles Scott-Smith, and David Snyder (eds.), *Reasserting America in the 1970s: U.S. Public Diplomacy and the Rebuilding of America's Image Abroad* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

**Ryan Gaston** presented "Past Encounters: Understandings of History in the Multi-Cultural Classroom," on April 22, 2016, at the conference for the National Council for History Education (NCHE) in Niagara Falls, New York.



**Richard Rawls**, pictured with members of the Organization of Latin American Students, is club adviser. OLAS was awarded "The Outstanding Registered Student Organization of the Year" at the "ROAR" banquet, April 2016. Rawls also presented "Lived Experience Deconstructs the Liberating Arts: Langdon Gilkey's Shantung Compound, Story of a Community Under Pressure" at the Association for Core Texts and Courses Conference, in Atlanta, April 16, 2016. He additionally chaired and created the session "Community Tradition Under Pressure."

Michael Gunther presented a paper, "In Roads: The Logistics and Ecology of British Military Defeat and Victory in the New York Borderlands, 1758-1759," at the Society for Military History Annual Meeting in Ottawa, in April. He also received a GGC VPASA/ Provost "Seed Grant" for Academic Year 2016-2017. His grant project is titled, "In the Nature of War: Reciprocal Armies and Environments in Frontier New York." The grant will help him in researching primary source collections at the Clements Library in Michigan and the David Library of the American Revolution in Pennsylvania.

# Alumni/ae and Student News.

## Alumni News

**James Rooks** ('16), was admitted to Archaeological Field School through the University of Georgia. He will be digging at the Singer-Moye Indian Mounds in Columbus, GA, from June 3 to July 15. Following excavations, he will be presenting his findings within a team-oriented project. The purpose of the school is to evaluate daily communal activities within the Mississippian culture from roughly 1100 CE - late 1400s CE.

**Samantha Mihalak** ('11), recently transferred to Brookwood High School, where she will be joining the special education department, supporting the history department, teaching political science and economics. What makes this opportunity special for her is that she was a graduate of Brookwood High School.

## Commencement May 2016



Commencement photos, left to right: Graduating student James Dye, graduating student Stephanie Shivelhood, and senior Jordan Sanders, a history major, who sang the national anthem.

**Lawrenceville, Georgia.** The Spring 2016 commencement ceremony, held at GGC's campus on 12 May, graduated over 400 students. The History Discipline provided the 2nd largest number of graduating students in the School of Liberal Arts. The twenty-one graduates included: Matthew Brooks, Jonathon Brown, Michael Dunn, James Dye, Amanda Franklin, Eamon Frawley, Andrea Greenberg, Robert Harley, Richard Haynes, Mohamed Kassim, Naveed Khan, Branden Martin, Nicole Martinez, Alex Mendez, Raymond Miller, Matthew Nesbit, James Rooks, Raoul Saunders, Collin Scanlan, Stephanie Shivelhood, and Taylor Tabb. The commencement speaker, Aimee Copeland, gave an inspirational address about overcoming adversity.

## GGC Students present at GAH



Jessica Tatman, left, and Jay Jones, right, presented their research at the Georgia Association of Historians, in February 2016.

## History Honors Society Adds 6 New Members



Phi Alpha Theta, GGC's History Honors Society inducted six new members in April. Pictured left to right: Alex Mendez, Rachel Anderson, Meghann Kuehnel, Co-Advisor Richard Rawls, Advisor Carey Shellman, Lisa Mahshi, Bianka Anderson, Monica El-Amin, and Co-Advisor Nathan Orgill (photo by Michael Gagnon)

## CONTACTING GGC & HISTORY DISCIPLINE

### History Point of Contact:

**Dr. Seth Kendall:** skendall@ggc.edu

### GGC HISTORY Editors:

**Richard Rawls:** rrawls@ggc.edu, **Patrick Zander:** pzander@ggc.edu, and **Michael Gunther:** mgunther@ggc.edu

GGC School of Liberal Arts Phone: 678-407-5401