

GGC History News

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GGC History Graduate Establishes Nonprofit for American Veterans



Brandon Watts

In continuing our goal of apprising our History Major graduates, current students and faculty of the research and career activities of alumni, we recently had the opportunity to interview Brandon Watts (2016, Western Civilization concentration). Watts provided insights into his philanthropic activities as chief

executive of *Operation: Rally Point*, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization focused on the immediate needs of veterans and their families in preventing homelessness and providing life-skills mentoring.

Watts enlisted in the United States Army just four months before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on New York and Washington D.C. He then served in the second Iraq War, where he was part of the main infantry forces in the invasion of 19 March 2003. He served with the 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry, 3rd Regiment, the first regular army units in Iraq.

Mr. Watts's combat experience led to the development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and a skin disease whose treatment remains elusive. It is this experience and his fundamental empathy for the people he served and serves that compel him to selflessly work long hours and sacrifice time with his family to help others. For Mr. Watts, this is "a social contract, a duty, and an honor" to fulfill his "responsibilities to others."

Watts has helped many veterans and their families. After his return to civilian life, he began with visiting homeless veterans in downtown Atlanta, walking the

streets at midnight with his best friend Johnny with rucksacks full of items for hygiene, clothing, and food. The purpose "was not to just give those items away, but to connect with various homeless men and women veterans and let them know someone cares."

With the support of his family and friends, Mr. Watts founded *Operation: Rally Point* to focus on the needs of the Gwinnett County community. To date, his organization has received several



Watts in Iraq in 2012

grants and donations that have helped to support the purchase of six vehicles for families so one parent can commute to work, provide 10 families with nearly three months of food and housing support, two families with housing deposits, and mentor several veterans to return to college. The organization has three full-time volunteers and a grant writer.

Watts provided valuable advice for individuals or groups who would be interested in establishing a non-profit organization. First, "have a plan—a formal business plan" and "spend a lot of time developing relationships [with people] who believe in your cause or organization, be patient." Second, "find a good grant writer" and utilize "free on-line sources to help develop" these items.

For more information, please visit the website: <http://oprallypoint.org>.

By Mazin Tadros, Assistant Professor of History

Ex Libris: From the Bookshelves of GGC Historians

Dr. Patrick Zander earned his Ph.D. and M.S. degrees from Georgia Tech, and his M.A. degree from Georgia State University.



Dr. Zander began working at GGC in fall 2011. He is a specialist in British history. His recent publications have focused on fascism in European history and resistance movements in World War II.

One area of 20th century history that attracts interest among students is the development of fascist dictatorship. The fascist system created inhumane regimes in places like Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, France, Hungary, Croatia and several other countries. The role of the dictatorships in the Second World War, the horrors of the Holocaust and other aspects of this development demand study and explanation. And

much of that study is conducted with an implicit objective – we want to understand it thoroughly in order to prevent another such development in the future.

But, precisely because fascism was practiced in so many places, figuring out the phenomenon is quite challenging. Fascist groups in numerous nations created their own unique variants with their own particular priorities and practices. Not surprisingly, then, we find that scholars over the decades have created numerous interpretations regarding fascism.

I have tackled this frustrating problem in my own scholarship and in my teaching. I have taught “The Fascist Era: A Comparative History” twice. In teaching that course I conduct the first half as narrative history, but in the second half we dissect this challenging subject in the form of a graduate reading seminar. Students read several competing interpretations in different aspects of the phenomenon. Many have found this to be an intellectually stimulating exercise, and a few others have found it frustrating. We examine whether fascism was an anti-modern movement or a modernist movement. The Marxist view generally clings to the position that fascists were

reactionaries trying to hold back the modernist wave of the left. Other scholars, myself included, have argued that fascists used high-modernization to create their own version of a totalitarian future. We also look at the question of racism and anti-Semitism. Particularly those studying Nazism have emphasized the central place of race in fascist ideology, but others have insisted that this was true only in a few cases. We look at the work of

“Because fascism was practiced in so many places, figuring out the phenomenon is quite challenging.”

scholars like Robert O. Paxton, who shows us in his book *The Anatomy of Fascism*, how fascist regimes change form over time. From origination, to the struggle for power, seizing power, and exercising power, fascist movements tend to change character - yet another reason why forming a firm definition of fascism is so elusive.

Other issues regarding fascism involve the place of women, the question of territorial conquest, and the place of violence.

I use Stanley Payne’s book titled *A History of Fascism, 1919-1945*, which takes a full inventory of these many competing interpretations and includes explanations. I produced a book *The Rise of Fascism: History, Documents, and Key Questions*, which is designed to help students sort through the forest of different fascist variants and scholarly interpretations. It wrestles with these many questions and arguments and will be included the next time I teach the class. Maybe it will help us edge closer to a firmer definition of this extreme right wing political creed that caused so much destruction and anguish throughout the world – and which is once again rearing its head across the globe.

Bibliography:

Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (2004); Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1919-1945* (1995); Patrick Zander, *The Rise of Fascism: History, Documents, and Key Questions* (2014).

Standing Ovations! History Student News and Accomplishments

GGC Student Receives Recognition in “GGC’s Got Talent” Competition



Olivia Schlueter with her speed-painting of Prince

GGC history major Olivia Schlueter competed in and won “third place” recognition in “GGC’s Got Talent” competition. The show, sponsored by the student club *Organization of Latin American Students*, was held in March 2018. Schlueter speed-painted a portrait of Prince in under five minutes to a mix of Prince’s songs *Purple Rain, Adore, Kiss, and 1999*.

Student Club with History Connections Named “RSO Student Club of the Year”



Dr. Richard Rawls and Alfredo Corona Jr, OLAS winners

The Organization of Latin American Students won the Registered Student Organization of the Year Award for the third consecutive year. History major Alfredo Corona Jr, served as the organization’s president. Richard Rawls was the faculty advisor. The ceremony occurred in April, and was sponsored by the Office of Student Involvement.

History Major Presents Research at Georgia Association of Historians



James Thompson and Dr. Michael Gagnon at the GAH

History major James Thompson gave a poster presentation at the Georgia Association of Historians conference in Macon, Georgia, on February 17, 2018. The poster presented research on Georgia’s reaction to the Selective Service during WW1. Thompson showed how conscription remained unpopular in the South, but how southern Democrats fell in line in support of the Wilson administration’s Declaration of War.

History Major Presents Paper at Intersections Conference



Psychology major Mara DiGiovanni and History major Michelle Samson

History major Michelle Samson presented “Gender Roles in the music of Bob Dylan and Joanna Newsome,” at the Intersections Conference, held at GGC, on March 23, 2018. She was joined on the panel by psychology major, Mara DiGiovanni, who presented “Gender Representation in Video Games.” Session moderator Richard Rawls observed, “Both students reflected their discipline’s rigorous backgrounds.”

Alumni and Faculty News

Alumni and Student News

Jessica Tatman received in May 2018 the “New Teacher of the Year Award” at Discovery High School, in Lawrenceville, Georgia, where she teaches world history.

Meghann Kuehnel is working at the Georgia Aquarium as an environmental educator. Her duties include teaching students visitors, assisting in building STEM curriculum programs, and leading and teaching summer camps.

Jason Stafford works at Bethlehem Christian Academy in Winder, Georgia. He has taught A.P. honors, and college prep world history, A.P. government, and geography. He was recently promoted to history department chair for grades K-12.

Juan Vera was commissioned as an active duty infantry officer in the U. S. Army in May 2018, after completing the ROTC program at GGC.

Commencement May 2018



Dr. Ryan Gaston, Lauren Beelen, Ronald Higgins, Tiffany Coker, Connor Jelks, Robert Myers, Dr. Ellen Rafshoon, Andrew Moeller, and Dr. Seth Kendall

On May 17, 2018, GGC history majors were among over 530 graduates to receive degrees at the Infinite Energy Arena. Graduates with a B.A. in history included Lauren Beelen, Tiffany Coker, Ronald Higgins, Connor Jelks, Andrew Moeller, Robert Myers, and Juan Vera. Those receiving the B.A. in history with teacher certification were Steven Ashe, Kaleigh Cauble, Samuel Meers, Chandler Smith, and Jacob Van Yush. The commencement address was given by Dr. Daniel J. Kaufman, GGC president emeritus.

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History Faculty Changes in 2018



Drs. David Cason, Erica Metcalfe, and Robert Findlay

Georgia Gwinnett College’s historians said their farewells to one assistant professor while welcoming two into the ranks of assistant professor.

Dr. David Cason departed GGC for the University of North Dakota at Grand Forks, where he will serve as assistant professor of history. Cason taught U.S. history and teacher certification history courses at GGC from 2014-2018. He earned his Ph.D. at Georgia State University. “Dr. Cason will be missed both as a colleague and a professor in the classroom,” said Dr. David Mason, professor of history.

Dr. Erica Metcalfe came from Texas Southern University in Houston. She earned her B.A. and M.A. degrees at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and her Ph.D. from Howard University in Washington D.C.. She teaches U.S. history, specializing in African-American history.

Dr. Robert Findlay earned his B.A. and M.A. at Portland State University and his Ph.D. at the University of Hawaii, Manoa, in Honolulu. He teaches world history, with a specialization in U.S. foreign relations in Asia.

Button Gwinnett Day 2018

Dr. Michael Gagnon, associate professor and chair of the college’s Speakers Committee, organized the April 11 Button Gwinnett Day. Events included panel discussions by the School of Business, the School of Education, and the School of Health Sciences. The event included a performance of “Button Gwinnett Then and Now” by Gwinnett Environmental and Heritage Center director, Jason West, and a Gwinnett Bicentennial History Panel Exhibition.