

# PAST AND PRESENT

## Newsletter of the CSB/SJU History Department

### Volume 3, Issue 1, November 2021

Greetings from the History Department!

Unfortunately, I have to begin this newsletter with sad news. Long-time history professor, Dave Bennetts, passed away on October 4. Dave taught in the History Department for 42 years before he retired in 2013. Over his long career, Dave shaped the lives of countless students with his always kind and calm character. We plan to honor Dave with a full tribute in our spring newsletter. In the meantime, if you have particularly fond memories of Dave that you would like to share, please submit them [here](#).



The academic year has started with something resembling normality. We are fully back to in-person classes and the traditional semester schedule. So far, the schools' vaccine and mask mandates have kept the Delta variant at bay on campus.

Covid has, however, forced the Tegeder-Berg Society to hold a webinar for its fall event. On October 11, National Coming Out Day, the Tegeder-Berg Society hosted "Marriage Equality in Minnesota in Personal and Historical Perspective." Professors Shannon Smith and Jonathan Merritt Nash participated in an interview with Tom Trisko, a '67 SJU alum. Tom and his husband, John, were one of three couples who sued the state of Minnesota in 2008 for the right to marry. If you missed the event, you can watch it [here](#) on the Tegeder-Berg Society website.

I hope we can return to an in-person event next spring. Until then, stay safe and keep in touch.

Brian Larkin

## Summary of the Tegeder-Berg Society Webinar—Fall 2021

### Marriage Equality in Minnesota in Personal and Historical Perspective

In honor of National Coming Out Day, the History Department's Tegeder-Berg Society hosted a talk on "Marriage Equality in Minnesota in Personal and Historical Perspective." Professor Shannon Smith offered historical context for the change in public support for gay marriage, increasing from a 27% approval rate in 1996 to 67% in 2020. Marriage conferred an immense range of government-sanctioned rights, protections, benefits, and obligations in both public and private life that were not available to everyone. After Professor Smith's introduction, Professor Jonathan Merritt Nash interviewed Tom Trisko, a 1967 SJU graduate in Economics who has been a leader in the Minnesota LGBTQ community and a pioneer in the movement for marriage equality. Tom shared his experiences living through the history that Professor Smith introduced. Tom and his husband John have advocated for LGBTQ rights since the 1960s and were one of three couples who sued the state of Minnesota in 2008 for the right to marry. When Minnesota voters defeated an anti-marriage amendment in 2012 and the Legislature approved same-sex marriage in 2013, they happily were able to withdraw their "Marry Me Minnesota" suit. They were married by Bishop Bruce Caldwell at Minnesota's Episcopal Cathedral Church of Saint Mark in Minneapolis in August 2013.



submitted by Professors Shannon Smith and Jonathan Merritt Nash

# Alumnae/I Spotlights



**Nicole Koonce, CSB '16**

**Financial Crime Investigator & Auditor**

Why History? I wanted a major that would prepare me for a variety of paths after college. I wanted options, and History majors get to choose from so many topics [and graduate] with a well-rounded education that can get you started in so many careers.

History may seem like an obscure major, but remember you are at a liberal arts institution where, no matter what you are studying, the skills you are honing are your marketable features! My History degree made me very good at looking at data and forming a thesis about what that information is saying, which is what I spend my working day doing as a financial crime investigator and auditor at a credit union in the Cities. I never would have thought that's what I'd do with a History major, but I truly don't think I'd be as prepared for it without one! Just to say: even if you don't work in history, it can always remain a hobby!

Favorite History Class? *Gender and Society in Western Europe* is a fond memory! We learned about gender and power, and the textbook we got, *Immodest Acts*, remains on my bookshelf and is one of the most exciting pieces of historical reading I've ever done.

submitted by: Cassandra Gronning



**Tom Peterson, SJU '76**

**Journalist, The Washington Post**

Why History? I came to SJU convinced that my future was in biology, specifically in limnology. But as a freshman I took a history class from Father Job Dittberner. Tremendous class . . . and what a staff the history department had back then! The staff opened new worlds to me, hitting that sweet spot of data and context. One [history] class that stood out was an upper-level medieval history class. It met once a week as a one-on-one with then-president Fr. Michael Blecker. I'd prepare and present one paper each week, mining the depths of Alcuin for research and defending my findings.

By my senior year, I was leaning towards journalism as a career. I did a January term at the St. Cloud Times and finished my final semester as a Governor's Intern with the Department of Education in St. Paul. My major not only made me a better writer and communicator, but it helped me develop critical thinking skills. I'm winding down a long career in journalism at *The Washington Post*. Journalism is often called the "first rough draft of history" and that is indeed true. The skills and perspectives I gained studying history at SJU have served me well.

Do you have a favorite quote? The 1976 SJU graduation speaker was Russell Baker, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist from *The New York Times*. He spoke of taking chances and looking for opportunities to grow. Before we headed out into the world, he offered us this: "*Don't let a 21 or 22-year-old determine what you will be the rest of your life.*"

submitted by: Cassandra Gronning

# Faculty Spotlight—Dr. Ken Jones



Meet Dr. Ken Jones, our longstanding Professor of History here at CSB/SJU. Dr. Jones specializes in US History, and teaches several interesting courses accessible to all students, including *The American Dream* and *US Since 1960*. His fascination with history began as a child, was nurtured by good professors through high school and undergrad, and ultimately cumulated in a Ph.D. from Cornell University. Interested in recent US history, and aware of the lack of classes on the subject, Dr. Jones arrived at CSB/SJU in 1976, and has since taught multiple generations of Bennies and Johnnies about contemporary topics in US history. Its not uncommon for students to say, “oh, you taught my mom/dad!”

In his knees’ younger days, he played and reffed collegiate soccer, and now enjoys watching sports, especially when he knows students on the team. He has been St. John’s Faculty Athletic Representative to the MIAC and NCAA since 1994. Now, however, you’re more likely to find him fishing or gardening in his free time, not chasing a ball, or players, down the pitch.

Dr. Jones’ advice for students considering history is: do it if you love history! Classes will be more enjoyable, and the skills you learn in the major are applicable in many careers outside of just the history field. On top of all that, because history helps us see things from different perspectives, you will have begun to expand your sense of empathy.

Dr. Jones recently published an article about the Black student experience at CSB/SJU in the 1960s and 1970s in the Spring 2021 Alumni Magazine, and is currently working on a long essay about the Black experience at CSB/SJU from the 1930s through the 1980’s. His research involves interviews with CSB/SJU grads and faculty/administrators, and aims to understand why the relatively high levels of diversity at the two schools in the early 1970s had largely disappeared by the end of the decade.

submitted by Cassandra Gronning

## Internship News

Nate Wright interned at the Stearns History Museum in Summer 2021. His job was to research and add to the historical files on companies and people and their ancestors by finding information from newspapers, photographs, and census records. Nate designed and completed many projects utilizing the resources afforded to him during his time there. He independently organized donation drives and interviews to aid him in the writing of a Crossroads Magazine article about the history of Tri-County Broadcasting (to be featured this November). He even created a display case in honor of Kiwanis Club's delayed (due to Covid) 100th anniversary. Nate used a combination of his German and History skills to not only aid him in the search and analysis portions of his duty, but in the process of helping with German patron requests as well! After completing his internship, Nate advises that current history students apply for internships because they allow students to create meaningful connections with professionals in their fields of interest and hone their skills through real world applications.



submitted by Josh Bashore

# Student Spotlights



Kayla O'Leary, CSB '22

Class of 2022 Senior Kayla O'Leary is one of many students graduating next year. Kayla has enjoyed all her history classes so far, but she mentions her French Revolution class as her favorite, commenting "I think the one that helped me grow as a student the most was *Debating the French Revolution* with Beth! It was so much fun to see history come alive!" While interested in all history, she has a great passion for 20th century US History, all Russian and British history, WWI, revolutions, and the Golden Age of Piracy. While her interests cover vast periods, the primary unifying theme is her interest in gender and how gender roles changed over time.

Kayla spent her summer working as a curatorial intern with Preservation Virginia. Specifically, she worked at Bacon's Castle, where she helped curate exhibits. On her experience, she commented: "I helped redesign an exhibit at Bacon's Castle, which included learning about the location itself and helping decide what main themes would be important for visitors to know. I even got to help pick what objects would be best for the display, which was so cool! I also helped write a label copy, informational panel copy and even wrote a blog post about my research."

Kayla had much to say on how her senior year so far is going. "I just want to make the most of the time left I have on campus, both in and out of the classroom." On her senior thesis, she is "excited to have a finished thesis at the end of the year that I'm super proud of! I feel like my thesis project is the culmination of everything I've learned at CSB/SJU, so it'll be such a nice way to wrap up my four years here." She has a good deal of advice for first-years as well. "I'll tell any first-year that the history major is the best on campus because it teaches you so many soft skills that are applicable to a wide variety of jobs." She added, "The professors are really what make the major so great as well because you can tell that they all care about you. The classes are also amazing - you really can't go wrong with any class you pick in the History major here!"

submitted by Josh Bashore

Cesar Luis is currently a senior at St. John's. Like many of our history majors, Cesar has been interested in history from the beginning. "I remember my first history class was in elementary school with a focus on Californian History," he said. "The most impactful event being the Gold Rush which brought many seeking a better life and gambling on finding gold and making it big. I ended up reading every single history textbook onward every year and the rest is history." He is especially interested in Mexican and Latin American history. He has been able to grow his knowledge in these areas, mentioning *Inventing the Conquest of Mexico* as his favorite class he's taken in the department so far.

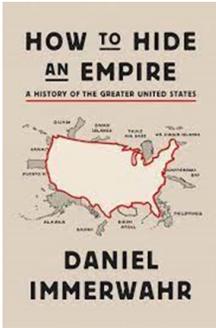
With such an interest in Mexico, many of his favorite travels are in the country. "One of the places I have fallen in love with is the a small city slightly south of the capital of Oaxaca named Tlacolula. It is a place where my father's family has resided for generations with their unique food and cultural traditions and even some language. A good example is 3 day weddings are a thing over there with the first day being at the fiancé's house. They are not allowed to meet until the 2nd day when the fiancé and his family walk to the fiancée's house with music and more. On the third day the wedding itself is celebrated. I would definitely love to visit there again." Another place of great importance for Cesar is Japan. Cesar plans to travel to Japan to teach English, get certified officially in Japanese N1, and then come back and possibly work for a Japanese company in Los Angeles.

Cesar has a lot of great words for incoming and current first-Years. "*Some tough papers out there but overall I definitely have learned a lot, especially working on my capstone. I regret not using the libraries more because they have a lot of books I never thought they would have. I have 20 or so checked out right now albeit capstone related.*" He is hoping to spend the rest of the year making his senior year one worth remembering.



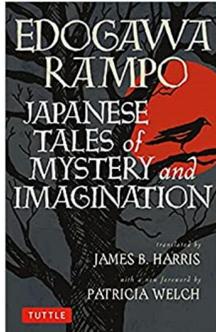
submitted by Josh Bashore

# Reading Recommendations



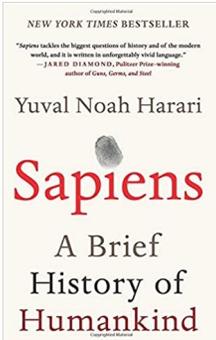
*How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* by Daniel Immerwahr, 2019  
Immerwahr reframes the history of the United States to include the US empire beyond the map of the fifty states, especially the territories and islands under US control. He shows how the US moved away from colonialism after World War II to use technology and cultural innovations to exert influence without requiring control of colonies. This book quickly changed how I teach about some familiar events. I learned something new in every chapter!

-Recommended by Dr. Shannon Smith



Just in time for Halloween (or after, depending on when this is published!), allow me to recommend this wonderfully creepy collection of Edogawa Rampo's (translated by James Harris). Edogawa Rampo (which is variably transliterated as Ranpo) is the pseudonym of Hirai Tarō, so chosen because it sounds a lot like a Japanese pronunciation of "Edgar Allen Poe," after whom Hirai modeled many of his stories. But Rampo perfects the Japanese aesthetic form of "ero guro nansensu" —an eerie combination of the erotic, grotesque, and nonsensical. If you can sit through "The Human Chair" (no pun intended) without feeling ill at ease, you're a braver soul than I. It gets under my skin (or upholstery?) and lingers . . .

-Recommended by Dr. Elisheva Perelman



For those who love history, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, by Noah Yuval Harari, provides a comprehensive but approachable narrative of human history from its emergence to current times. Harari's writing is accessible to all, you don't need to know the ins and the outs of the agricultural revolution to appreciate the theories he offers about humanity, capitalism, happiness and the power of our imaginations. If you've found yourself puzzling about how humans achieved the modern life we have, or longing for a lifestyle long forgotten, take a journey through human history with Harari. And, once you've understood where we come from, pick up his sequel: *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*, to understand where we are going.

-Recommended by Cassandra Gronning, CSB '22

## BRUCE'S Box

Bruce, our history spider, was a guest of honor at the department's annual "Haunted Halloween" party. He caused quite a fright, though many were excited to meet the little guy. Until the next party when Bruce meets Clio on a mystery date, he will continue to wander aimlessly around his terrarium, until he must travel back to Maryland for Winter Break.



## CLIO'S Corner



Clio the History Cat is currently on sabbatical, but her research into "the history of how to be the most annoying cat ever" seems to have reached a true apex. She'll now have to work on typing up her notes and publishing her analytical essay, which will be difficult when she lacks effective toe bean

keyboard skills. Dio is happy to make fun of her attempts to compose on the computer, but who will have the last laugh when his sister's work is assigned in all History and Biology classes, eh?