



GORDON
COLLEGE

Department of History

Featuring History in Orvieto

Fall 2008



Gordon History Department in Orvieto

by Agnes Howard

In spring 2008 our family traveled to Italy to launch new offerings in the humanities track at Gordon in Orvieto, Gordon's program in the medieval Umbrian town. Gordon history majors joined students from Messiah, Azusa Pacific and Taylor for the spring term. The first course, Christianity in the Modern World, surveyed Catholic and Protestant experience with emphasis on ecumenism. Tal Howard led the group on several field trips to Rome, including a papal audience with Benedict XVI, who extended greeting by name to the Gordon College delegation. In the next course, I examined ways the Reformation affected women and family life, a topic brought home by our residence in a 13th century convent. In the final unit, Jennifer Hevelone-Harper led students to Rome and Ravenna to learn about medieval religious life as a spiritual journey.

Interactions with the religion and culture of this extraordinary region occurred outside the classroom too. Some students walked with Orvietani through the dark, ancient streets on Good Friday, reflecting on Christ's suffering. Others attended Easter services in the cathedral. In May students observed the costumed celebration attending the feast of Corpus Domini. Given my family's good memories of the place--one of our children even went to kindergarten there--we are looking forward to returning to Orvieto in spring 2009.

A Student's Perspective

by Lauren Nash '09

Studying and living in Orvieto, Italy, invigorated the history major inside me! I loved spending afternoons wandering the narrow cobblestone streets of Orvieto. These well-trodden paths led me to the many treasures of this Umbrian hilltop town, including the Duomo, the Gelateria Pasqualetti, the Etruscan ruins, Café Del Corso, and many other sites. Each of my Orvietani expeditions helped me appreciate the relaxed Italian lifestyle, their delicious food, and the beauty of their rich traditions.

The location of Orvieto was idyllic. So many sites I had seen in history books—the Colosseum, Michelangelo's David, and the Basilica of St. Francis—were only a train ride away. Going through the Gordon in Orvieto program was amazing because many such excursions were planned by the professors. This provided our group of 24 students with personal tour guides and inside connections. As history majors under the tutelage of Dr. Tal and Agnes Howard and Dr. Hevelone-Harper, we were able to see the earliest Christian art in the catacombs, have an audience with the pope, and see many beautiful Byzantine mosaics in Ravenna. Each of these field trips helped to highlight the themes of art, faith and culture that were emphasized in our classes.

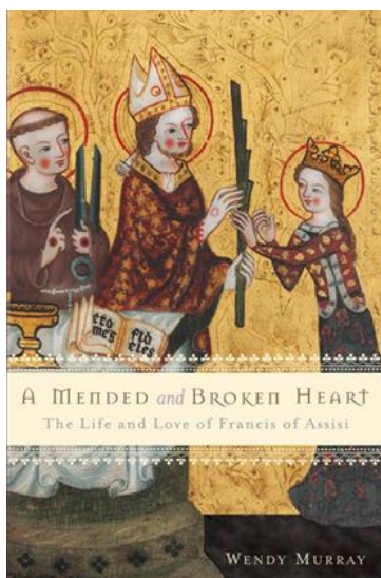
Oh, how I wish I could return to the quiet Italian streets to enjoy a cappuccino and gelato with a friend!

Monastero San Paolo

by Nick Hanlon '08

My decision to apply for the Orvieto Program last fall was a last-second whim. Influenced by a sudden yearning to get away and the program's promise of housing in an 800-year-old monastery, I figured why not Italy? But as my departure for Orvieto neared, that question became a nervous "Why Italy?" I'm not an art history buff, I'm not Catholic, and I even rooted against Italy in the last World Cup.

Fortunately, within a week of living in the program's 800-year-old monastery, I had an important realization. It dawned on me that the monastery I now called home predated the Reformation, the "birth" of my denomination. This simple thought immediately tied me to centuries of Christian history that I had previously known about but felt no real connection with. The lives of St. Benedict, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Catherine of Siena took on whole new meanings. They were no longer important historical figures to be studied and forgotten, but saints of the church whose words and actions offer deep insight into Christian spirituality. Over the course of the semester I was guided further along this path of discovery through the knowledge and hard work of my professors as well as the community of learning built by all of us who lived within the walls of Monastero San Paolo.



Francis of Assisi in Orvieto

by Wendy Murray

Teaching about Saint Francis of Assisi in Orvieto, as I did during fall 2007, dovetailed well with the completion of my book about him (*A Mended and Broken Heart, the Life and Love of Francis of Assisi*, Basic Books, 2008). I was at the revision stage by that point, and my students forced me to clarify my assertions. (One student, near the term's end, caused me to pause when she asked earnestly if Francis was a Christian.)

Orvieto shares the same geography as Francis' hometown of Assisi: the magical region in central Italy known as Umbria, the country's "green heart." The proximity of the two towns enabled me to take my students for three days out of Orvieto into Assisi to enter the world of Francis. (I was living in Assisi at the time, so knew well the back walkways and little-known relevant sites.) We trod the alleys and hills that Francis walked (he had very strong legs). We paused at the location of his childhood home. We hiked to the high fortress where Francis, as a warring youth, tore down its walls during Assisi's civil war. And we visited the few churches he later rebuilt in obedience to God. The friars at Assisi's Sacro Convento gave us a rare visit to the manuscript vault in the primary library there, where documents exist that were written by the hand of Francis' closest companion, Brother Leo. We also saw manuscripts whose gold-leafed illuminations had been pillaged by Napoleon's raiding bands—perfectly cut square holes eviscerating ancient hand-scripted pages.

History came alive during the days my class and I adventured to the place Francis called home. He came alive too. But, then again, he *is* alive, isn't he?

Noteworthy Guests of the History Department

In September Gordon College was visited by renowned historian **Wilfred McClay**. Dr. McClay has been a professor of history and the SunTrust Bank Chair of Excellence in Humanities at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga since 1999. His book *The Masterless: Self and Society in Modern America* (North Carolina, 1994) won the 1995 Merle Curti Award of the Organization of American Historians for the best book in American intellectual history published in the years 1993 and 1994. Among his other books are *The Student's Guide to U.S. History* (ISI Books, 2001) and *Religion Returns to the Public Square: Faith and Policy in America* (Woodrow Wilson Center/Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). While on campus, Dr. McClay addressed the question "Is there progress in history?" He gave an afternoon lecture on "Revisiting the Idea of Progress" and spoke in convocation on "Thoughts on Christian Citizenship."

Historians from Wheaton College (Timothy Larsen), the University of Notre Dame (Sarah Miglio) and Gordon College (Steve Alter) presented lectures at an event entitled **Good Book and Holy Land** held at Gordon College in late October. Topics included the Bible and the Church of England in the age of Florence Nightingale, American Protestants' response to the Armenian genocide of 1915, and American scholars' involvement in biblical archaeology in 1920s Palestine. Bruce Kuklick, an eminent historian and professor at the University of Pennsylvania, gave a response. The event was hosted by the History Department and funded by a grant from the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities.

Yet another famous historian made his way to Gordon College this fall. **George Marsden**, visiting Professor of American Religious and Intellectual History at Harvard Divinity School, professor of history at Calvin College from 1965 to 1986, and Professor of the History of Christianity in America at the Divinity School of Duke University from 1986 to 1992. From 1992 to 2008 he was the Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame. He lectures widely in colleges and universities and has written for many publications. Dr. Marsden's spoke at Gordon concerning the topic of his most recent book, entitled *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*. His lecture was entitled "Jonathan Edwards, Then and Now, or Rip Van Edwards: What if Jonathan Edwards Returned after 250 years?" This event was cosponsored by the History Department and the Jerusalem & Athens Forum.

Public History News

Last month Gordon College signed a five-year lease with the City of Salem, Massachusetts, to assume the management and operation of two city-owned historic sites, Pioneer Village: Salem in 1630 and Old Salem Town Hall. These two sites will be operated by the newly established Institute for Public History under the direction of David Goss and Kristina Wacome-Stevick.

The purpose of this new arrangement is to provide public venues for dramatic historical productions by History Alive (Gordon College's professional theatre company). Guided tours of Pioneer Village are offered by authentically costumed historic interpreters on a daily basis. Most exciting is the use of both sites as training laboratories for Gordon history students interested in pursuing careers in public history or museum work.

Recently a European media production company has arranged with the Public History Institute to lease Pioneer Village as a location for a documentary film on the founding of Plymouth Colony. Several Gordon College students will be featured as extras.



Christianity in the History of U.S. - China Relations

by Dong Wang

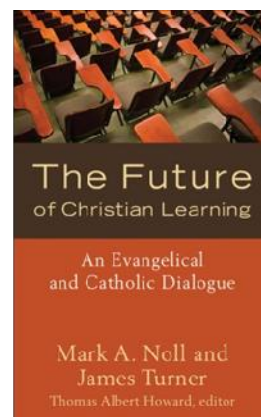
Dong Wang has edited a volume entitled *Christianity in the History of U.S. - China Relations*, which is published by the *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*. By bringing lesser-known aspects of Christianity to bear on the story, the six major essays in this volume underscore the significance of repositioning and expanding the study of Christianity and U.S. - China relations from both global and local perspectives.

Department of History

Sabbatical Reports

Tal Howard

I spent an enjoyable research leave at the Gordon in Orvieto program. One of the highlights was teaching a course with my wife, Agnes, entitled “Protestantism, Catholicism and Ecumenism.” As part of the course we took a series of trips to Rome. On the scholarship and research front, three developments are to be noted. I worked to finalize a paperback version of my book *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University*. An edited volume (with Mark Noll and James Turner of Notre Dame) was seen to completion. This is entitled *The Future of Christian Learning: An Evangelical and Catholic Dialogue*. But mostly during last semester I worked on a current project, *God and the Atlantic: America, Europe and the Religious Divide*, which will be published by Oxford University Press.



Jennifer Hevelone-Harper

On my sabbatical, away from Gordon students and classes, I focused on a new kind of students—those who are not in college. I want to take the resources of Christian history to ordinary lay Christians to help them better understand their own faith and the experiences of the global church. I was excited to consult on an issue of a popular magazine, *Christian History and Biography*, dealing with the development of Christian views of the Holy Land. An article I wrote on a 4th-century Spanish woman who travelled to Jerusalem led to a radio interview with Moody Broadcasting’s *Prime Time America*.

David Wick

In January 2008, while doing and presenting research in Athens, Greece, I was invited to represent Gordon College (as a writer on ancient Athenian tourists and service economies) at the ceremony in the small Attica town of Marathon, which started the Olympic torch on its run to Beijing, China. This little industrial community was the starting point for history’s first “marathon”—run to save Athens from the army its defenders had just defeated in the Battle of Marathon during the Greek-Persian wars.

Two months later I found myself telling the story of Greek and Hellenistic drama production in a theatre cut into a cliff-top at the edge of the ancient city of Pergamum, describing millennia-old stagecraft as a windstorm whipped the audience and a discussion of ancient theatrical “special effects” (including flying actors on wires) threatened to become real. These lectures were part of a project planned with my partner in Gordon’s student seminar in Greece (Dr. David Sparks) aimed toward a joint book to be used by travelers who want to add historical and biblical content to travels in Greece, Turkey and the Aegean.

During the course of my sabbatical, two articles (one on the economy of Roman Athens and one on an ancient Roman religious rite of cleansing) had to be readied for publication while I researched and wrote a new article on an ancient topic with a very modern feel. In the last generation of the Roman Republic, ancient Athens’ “Academy,” founded by Plato, found it had to market its “liberal arts” based courses to a new generation of customers who were most interested in whether they could make good money or gain political prestige from what they paid to learn. There is a striking parallel to modern liberal arts colleges trying to develop a “whole person and whole faith” approach to life in a world insistent on quick results.

