



# CLIO

Department of History Newsletter—The University of Tulsa

## KoTawa comes to Gilcrease

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**The 2011 H. G. Barnard Lecture features Dr. Paul Tapsell of the University of Otago**

On Saturday, January 22, 2011 the History Department was pleased to host a public lecture by Dr. Paul Tapsell of the University of Otago in New Zealand. Before a nearly capacity crowd at the Gilcrease Museum, Tapsell delivered the 2011 H. G. Barnard Lecture, “Indigenous Perspectives at Traditional Museums: The KoTawa Exhibition Project, the Auckland Museum, and the Art and Science of Reverse Colonization.”

This lecture addressed challenges museums face when presenting native people’s cultural treasures. KoTawa, an exhibit curated by Tapsell and a team of Maori museum employees, challenged the Auckland Museum to reconsider exhibitions of Maori taonga (cultural treasures), by reconfiguring displays and directly involving Native Community members in questions of interpretation. The result was a radically different exhibition. Instead of glass cases arranged along gallery walls, KoTawa invited visitors to walk in and amongst taonga, experiencing their power directly. Rather than object labels, Tapsell and his team filmed community members interacting with the treasures themselves. And in the end, as Tapsell explained, KoTawa was as much about reconciliation and healing as it was about objects themselves. Augmented by slides and music, Tapsell’s presentation was informative, and as many visitors said, moving.

Dr. Tapsell is Chair in Māori Studies and Dean of Te Tumu, the School of Māori, Pacific, and Indigenous Studies at the University of Otago, Dunedin, Aotearoa/New Zealand. He is internationally known for his provocative views on museum exhibit design and is a strong advocate for including indigenous voices in the exhibits that present cultures.

This lecture is made possible by generous contributions from the Chapman Trust, the Gilcrease Museum’s department of Education and Public Programs, and the Kendall College of Arts & Sciences.

## New Courses

### HIST 2543 Africans in the Americas from Slavery to Freedom

Professor Kristen Oertel

This course charts the history of the African Diaspora to the Americas by examining the origins of the slave trade and slavery in Africa in the 17th century, the Middle Passages to the Americas, the birth of African-American culture in the context of slavery and plantation agriculture in the Americas, and by exploring the roots of resistance to slavery and the correspondent push toward emancipation in the 19th century, focusing especially on Reconstruction and migration in the United States.

### HIST 2553: War and American Society: From Korea to the Desert of Af-Pak and Iraq

Professor Jeremy Kuzmarov

This course will address America's involvement in wars since World War II from a critical and humanitarian vantage point. We will study the Korean War, Indochina Wars, Reagan's covert wars in Central America in the 1980s and the Iraq and Af-Pak wars of the 2000s. In all cases we will read books that address the political origins of the wars and experience of soldiers, covert warriors and guerrillas on both sides as well as the effects of the war on the civilian population and environment. Through it all, we will hope to gain a better understanding of the nature of 20th century warfare and character of the American empire.

### HIST/WS 3653: Bitten by Twilight: The Vampire in History and Culture

Professor Jan Wilson

This course examines American history and popular culture since the late nineteenth century through various and ever-mutating vampire tales. Using an intersectional lens emphasizing gender, race, class, and sexuality, the course considers the extent to which historically contingent vampire lore reflects the sociopolitical values and structures and the anxieties and frustrations of the generations and cultures that produce it—from nineteenth-century issues of colonialism and national identity to current concerns with youth sexuality, "family values," and national security. Drawing on a variety of materials—such as scholarly analyses, films, television series (including *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *True Blood*), and novels (such as Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* series and Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* saga), the course provides students with the conceptual and analytical foundations to think more deeply about themes such as gender, the body, race and white privilege, sexuality and heteronormativity, youth culture, and the rise of internet fandoms.

# CLIO

## From the Chair

After almost twenty years of service in the TU history department, I am reminded of a Chinese idiom, 物是人非, "the substance is the same but the people are different." Only one of the nine TU historians who were here when I first arrived in 1992 serves full time. (Five have retired, two have died, and one moved to a new position.) The most dramatic changes have taken place in the last three years. Five of our current faculty members have been at TU for four years or less. The "people" are decidedly different but the "substance" of the department, a diverse community of scholars dedicated to teaching and research remains the same. Similarly, while the basic requirements of the history major remain the same adjustments will be made to reflect the expertise of our new colleagues. We are committed to providing an array of intellectually challenging courses that edify, enlighten, and educate because we believe strongly that history matters.

History matters. Whether it is the American Tea Party Movement or the popular demonstrations erupting across the Arab world, the past is invoked to substantiate present day political agendas. The British historian, Eric Hobsbawm once wrote: "The past legitimizes." As historians we participate in the political discourse by providing accurate reconstructions of the past. While interpretations of the past are often controversial and always subject to debate, our obligation is to provide scrupulous accounts of the past. This is our essential task because political expediency often leads to bad history. Responding the nationalist movements that arose in post Cold War Europe, Hobsbawm also noted "If there is no suitable past, it can always be invented..."

- - -Thomas Buoye



## From the Director of Undergraduate Studies

After eight years of dedicated service, Jay Geller has departed for Cleveland, Ohio where he now holds an endowed chair in European and Judaic history. This is an impressive feat given the fact that for years the University of Tulsa has sought to break into the top 50 colleges and university in the nation while Geller seemingly made the leap over night. In all seriousness, we sincerely wish our colleague much continued success.

Although the history department has been able to replace departed or retired personnel in recent years, the recent loss of Jay Geller is truly unfortunate. As I write, our 2011-2012 University budget has not been finalized by the administration. Odds are, however, that the History Department will not receive funding to hire a new European historian. Somewhat embarrassingly, Jay represented our only department scholar entirely focused on modern European history. With his leaving, courses he previously taught will most likely not be offered until future notice. Complicating matters, Geller was also a major force behind the Judaic Studies Certificate. This is not to say TU will never again employ a modern European specialist. But, with the loss to Vanderbilt and subsequent non-replacement of Medieval and Renaissance specialist William Caferro in 1999, it may be a while. On the bright side, no one can today accuse the History department of being Eurocentric!

## From the Director of Graduate Programs

**Kelly Wadsworth** is writing a thesis on the role of gender in the TV show, "All in the Family."

**John Cope** and **Chris Smith** will receive Hennecke fellowships next year.

**Chris Smith** is enrolled in the BA/MA program.

**Jill Oglesbee** is writing her thesis on *The Contradictions of American Humanitarian Intervention in the 1990s: The Cases of Kosovo and Rwanda*.

**Donald Geesling**, former TU Masters' student and current PhD candidate at UMass Amherst, recently presented "Survival Kits on Wax': Gil Scott-Heron, The Black Arts Movement, and the Poetics of Resistance in the Age of Nixon" at the "Art and Power in Movement" a conference on Black Power the Black Arts Movement (BAM) at UMass Amherst.

### Current List of Graduate Students

**James Akin** (part time), US history  
**Stephanie Bailey** (MTA, part time), US history  
**Matthew Campbell** (part time), US history  
**John Cope** (full time, Hennecke), US history  
**Jared Eberle** (full time), US history  
**Tyler Garrett** (full time), European history  
**Natalja Gerber**, European history  
**Stephanie Grier** (full time), European history\*

**Lesley McCollough** (part time), US history  
**Jill Oglesbee**, US history  
**Timothy Orr** (full time), European history\*  
**Christopher Smith** (BA/MA), US history  
**Kelly Wadsworth** (full time), US history\*

\*graduate assistants

# Spring 2011

## New Courses, continued

### HIST 3903: History Colloquium—Intellectuals and Social Power

Professor Andrew Wood

This course will examine a wide ranging sample of intellectual practices in the service of/ or resistance to social power. After a series of readings, students will break out to develop their own in-depth research paper.

### HIST 4133/6123: Men and Women at War: A History of Europe in the Twentieth-Century

Professor Christine Ruane

Throughout the twentieth century it has appeared that men and women were "at war." World wars, revolutions, and civil wars ignited all over the European sides of the Iron Curtain. And, the women's movement challenged gender norms throughout the stormy years of the last century. The purpose of this class is to explore how men and women responded to these traumatic events and how their responses transformed Europe.

### HIST/WS 4383: Queer Theory/ Queer Lives

Professor Jan Wilson

This course investigates queer theory and the historical experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) people as addressed in historical and empirical studies, narratives, film and activism. It explores how queer sexual identities intersect with race, class, gender, ethnicity, age and disability. Areas of inquiry include identity, family, media representation, heterosexism and LGBTIQ social movements.

### HIST 4853: Topics in American History: The History of Sexuality in the United States

Professor Kristen Oertel

This course explores the variety of human forms of sexuality throughout American history from the colonial era to the present. Beginning with the ways in which English colonists perceived Native American sexuality and with the Puritans' approach to sex and ending with gays in the military during World War II and the "birth" of transsexuality in the 1940s, we will examine the myriad ways Americans and their history have been shaped by sex.

### HIST 4853-02: Topics in American History: The United States Confronts Revolution

Professor Jeremy Kuzmarov

This course will address one of the central paradoxes of recent American history: how the United States, a country born in anti-colonial revolution became a leading force allying against some of the major social and anti-colonial revolutions of the 20th century. In specific we will examine the history of the Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Cuban and Iranian revolutions and discuss the factors that led the US to employ all kinds of methods, including covert and military interventions in seeking to roll-back them back or in trying to channel them in a more moderate direction. The course on the whole provides an important window into American foreign policy ideology and conduct and into the social forces breeding revolutionary social change in the 20th century.

## History Club

- **Co-Presidents:** Matthew Toupal and Meghan Henderson
- **Secretary:** Rebecca Benson
- **Treasurer:** Paul Cassat and Chase Smith
- **Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Jeremy Kuzmarov

History Club held a meeting, Wednesday, February 16 at noon in Chapman Hall 123 to discuss plans for 2011 Spring semester. Pizza and soft drinks were served.

### Blood! Gore! Death! Adventure! Romance!

Movie Night was held Thursday, February 24 at 6:00 p.m. in Chapman Hall Lecture Hall. Movie Night and FREE PIZZA! The film was titled *Erik the Viking* which was created by Terry Jones of Monty Python with John Cleese, also of Monty Python.



## Senior Project

**History Majors** are required to take a 4000 level history course before graduating. If you are a double major, you may take the Senior Project course in the department of your choice. If you choose a history course, sign up now if you are graduating in December 2011 or May 2012..

Forms can be picked up in Chapman Hall 213.



## PHI ALPHA THETA INITIATION AND STUDENT AWARDS CEREMONY Spring 2011 Date and Time TBA

### Phi Alpha Theta: The History Honor Society

Think You Got What it Takes?

Find out more at [www.phialphatheta.org](http://www.phialphatheta.org)

- Certificate and life-long membership
- Scholarship opportunities at both graduate and undergraduate level
- Honor to list on a resume or curriculum vitae
- Honor cord to wear at graduation

**Faculty Advisor: Dr. Jonathan J. Arnold**

Phone: 918-631-3115

Email: [jon-arnold@utulsa.edu](mailto:jon-arnold@utulsa.edu)



**The Faculty of Communication** has recently completed a successful faculty search with the hiring of Dr. Benjamin Peters, a 2010 PhD from Columbia's School of Journalism and currently Gold Meir post doctorate fellow at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Dr. Peter's work to date has focused mainly on issues of communication and media history. His dissertation concerns the politics surrounding the development of computer network technology in the late Soviet Union. Other published work deals with the intellectual history of communication theory, both in the Soviet Union and Western Europe in the late 20th century.

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## Alumni News

### TU

Several graduates of the History program went on to get their Ph.D. and are now faculty at Institutions of higher education:

**Melissa Stockdale** (BA 79) went on to get her Ph.D. at Harvard and is now professor of Russian history at the University of Oklahoma.

**Brian Porter** (BA 86) got his Ph.D. at Wisconsin and is now professor of Polish history at the University of Michigan.

**Anne Airth-Kindrey Kelsch** (MA 87) got her Ph.D. at Texas A&M and is now professor of British history at the University of North Dakota.

**Paul Kelton** (BA 92) got his Ph.D. at Oklahoma University and is professor of American History and chair of the department at the University of Kansas.

**Anne Phillips** (MA 93) teaches at Tulsa Community College.

**Michael Stefany** (MA 94) got his Ph.D. at the University of Kansas and is now professor of Russian history at Shippensburg University.

**Amy Scott** (MA 99) got her Ph.D. at the University of New Mexico and is now professor of American history at Bradley University.

**Brian Steele** (BA 92, MA 94) got his Ph.D. at the University of North Carolina and is now professor of history at the University of Alabama-Birmingham.

**J. Brett Adams** (MA 97) teaches at Collin College, Preston Ridge Campus.

**Melinda Lee Pash** (BA 91, MA 96) got her Ph.D. at the University of Tennessee and now teaches at North Carolina State University at Fayetteville.

## Fall 2011 Course Schedule

**2053 European Women's History**, TT 9:30-10:45—C. Ruane

**2213 Latin America**, MWF 11:00-11:50—A. Wood

**2313 Ideas and Institutions in the Ancient World**, MWF 1:00-1:50—J. Arnold

**2543 Africans in the Americas from Slavery to Freedom**, MWF 11:00-11:50—Kristen Oertel

**2553 War & American Society**, TT 2:00-3:15—J. Kuzmarov

**3783 Greece & Rome in Film**, Tue 6:00-8:45—J. Arnold

**3903 History Colloquium: Intellectuals and Social Power**, MW 2:00-3:15—A. Wood

**4133 Men & Women at War**, TT 2:00-3:15—C. Ruane

**4383 Queer Theory/Queer Lives**, TT 12:30-1:45—J. Wilson

**4443 Soviet Russia**, TT 11:00-12:15—C. Ruane

**4813 Topics in Roman History: Late Antiquity**, MW 3:30-4:45—J. Arnold

**4853-1 Topics in American History: The History of Sexuality in the United States**, TT 11:00-12:15—K. Oertel

**4853-2 Topics in American History: The United States Con-**

**fronts Revolution**, TT 11:00-12:15—J. Kuzmarov

**6123 Men & Women at War**, TT 2:00-3:15—C. Ruane

**6473 Soviet Russia**, TT 11:00-12:15—C. Ruane

**6813 Topics in Roman History: Late Antiquity**, MW 3:30-4:45—J. Arnold

**7513 Readings in the History of the United States: America and the World**, T 6:00-8:45—J. Kuzmarov

**7523 Research in the History of the United States: History as Biography**, TT 3:30-4:45—J. Wilson

## Majors and Advisors

### Freshmen

Jordan Clarkson—J. Kuzmarov  
Randi Thesenvitz—K. Oertel

### Sophomores

Micah Bolin—K. Oertel  
Eric Harper—B. Hosmer  
Evan Humphreys—A. Wood  
Graham Parker—K. Oertel  
Joseph Christopher Proctor—A. Wood  
Natalie Stompoly—K. Oertel  
Puja Sztorc—K. Oertel  
James Tindle—A. Wood  
Charles Weaver—K. Oertel  
Lauren West—J. Bradley

### Juniors

Bryan Burnham—J. Kuzmarov  
Erin DeClue—A. Wood  
Cara Dublin—J. Bradley

Leanna Duncan—C. Ruane  
Phillip Fischhaber—J. Arnold  
Courtney Handy—A. Wood  
Katheryn Hazlett—A. Wood  
Adrian Klammer—J. Arnold  
Rhett Lange—J. Kuzmarov  
John Lepine—A. Wood  
Paige Miller—A. Wood  
Zachary John Skeeter—K. Oertel  
Jared St. John—B. Hosmer  
Sarah Szabo—J. Arnold  
Jason Vance—B. Hosmer  
Rebekkah Williams—K. Oertel

### Seniors

Kaitlin Bailey—T. Buoye  
Rebecca Benson—J. Arnold  
Cody Bookout—J. Bradley  
Gregory Butchello—A. Wood  
Paul Cassat—J. Arnold  
William Coats—A. Wood

Brittany Duke—A. Wood  
Jinan El Sabbagh—J. Bradley  
Mette Flynt—A. Wood  
Rose Frihart—A. Wood  
September Hamel—J. Arnold  
Stephen Haukaas—A. Wood  
Matthew Heinlein—J. Arnold  
Meghan Henderson—T. Buoye  
Steven Idlet—A. Wood  
Jana Jimison—A. Wood  
Kyle Johnson—J. Bradley  
Caitlyn Lincoln—J. Kuzmarov  
Jordan Moyer—A. Wood  
Meredith Nelson—K. Oertel  
Rebecca Row—A. Wood  
Christopher Smith—J. Kuzmarov  
Sarah Stokely—A. Wood  
Sara Swearingin—A. Wood  
Matthew Toupal—A. Wood  
Adrienne Tyrey—J. Arnold

## Summer 2011 Courses

**2283 History of Ancient America**, MTWTF 10:20-12:00—A. Wood  
Second five-week session, June 27—July 29, 2011

**2503 American Republic**, MTWTF 10:20-12:00—T. Buckley  
Second five-week session, June 27—July 29, 2011

**3653 History & Literature** - "Bitten by Twilight: The Vampire in History and Culture," MTWTF 8:30-10:10—J. Wilson  
First five-week session, May 23—June 24, 2011



## Faculty News

**Dr. Kristen Oertel** travelled to the Kansas City area February 18-20 for three book signings/readings to promote *Frontier Feminist*. On Friday, February 18th, she and her co-author signed books and gave a short presentation at the **Watkins Museum in Lawrence**; Saturday they signed books at the **Kansas Historical Society in Topeka**; and on Sunday they were featured guests at the **Missouri Valley Speaker Series at the Kansas City Public Library**. Kristen will return to the University of Missouri at Kansas City in April to participate in a roundtable workshop where she will share a working draft of an **article tentatively titled, “There is no manliness in a scoundrel’: Competing Visions of Masculinity at Mid-Century,”** with leading Civil War-era scholars; these papers will then be presented in abbreviated form at an October conference on the border wars and will be published in an anthology comprised of conference participants. Dr. Oertel also plans to travel to Mississippi this summer to begin research for her next book project, an extended family biography of the Hopkins clan, a Mississippi family with South Carolina roots that spans from the 1790s to the 1920s.

**Dr. Jeremy Kuzmarov** has presented papers at American Historical Association in Boston and the Asian Studies Association in Honolulu, with material drawn from his book, *The Myth of the Addicted Army: Vietnam and the War on Drugs* and his forthcoming book, *Modernizing Repression: American International Police Training and the Violence of Empire*. He will also be participating in a conference at NYU in the fall and contributing a chapter about the war in Afghanistan to a People’s History of Counterinsurgency, a critical examination of US military policy, to be published by the New Press.

**Dr. Christine Ruane** has begun working with Brill Publishers in the Netherlands to digitize Russian and Soviet fashion magazines to make these invaluable sources more available to scholars and students.

**Dr. Jan Doolittle Wilson’s** article on racial politics within the General Federation of Women’s Clubs will appear in the Summer issue of the *Journal of Women’s History*. Titled “Disunity in Diversity: The Controversy over the Admission of Black Women to the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, 1900-1902,” the article explores how a controversy over black women’s membership in the General Federation tested the organization’s rhetorical commitment to unity in diversity, deeply (and in some cases irreparably) divided individual clubs and state federations, and nearly resulted in the loss of the organization’s burgeoning membership. On March 5, Professor Wilson will deliver a talk on the history of the women’s suffrage movement in the United States as part of a colloquium sponsored by the Teaching American History grant program through the Tulsa Public School system. The talk will be at the Gilcrease Museum at 11:00 a.m.

**Dr. Jonathan Arnold** will be giving a paper entitled “Why not Stay Home? Sidonius and Ennodius on the Inconveniences of Travel?” at the 23rd Annual Medieval Studies Symposium at the University of Indiana. He will also be giving a paper entitled “Theoderic’s Invincible Mustache” at the 46th International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University.

**Dr. Andrew Wood** will be traveling to Mexico and Brazil for research this summer 2011.

**Dr. Brian Hosmer** is giving a talk titled “Working and Belonging, on Wind River,” at the Annual meeting of the American Indian Workshop, University of Graz, Austria, April 2, 2011. March 4, 2011, Brian gave a talk at the University of Oklahoma, “Indian Work is Cooperative Work.”

## Events

### Settle-Cadenhead Distinguished Lecture for 2011

The History Department is proud to announce that its 2011 Settle-Cadenhead Distinguished Lecturer will be **Dr. Sherry L. Smith, University Distinguished Professor and Associate Director, Clements Center for Southwest Studies, Southern Methodist University**. Professor Smith is the author of four books on various topics in Western American History, most recently *Reimagining Indians: Native Americans Through Anglo Eyes*. Her scholarship has earned wide recognition, from fellowships through Huntington Library, Yale University and the National Endowment for the Humanities, to the James G. Rawley Prize (awarded for Reimagining Indians), awarded by the Organization of American Historians. Professor Smith is a past president of the Western History Association.

Her lecture, on “Reconciliation and Restitution in the American West,” will take place at the Gilcrease Museum, on April 14, 2011.

### WOMEN’S AND GENDER STUDIES—2010-2011 Event Series

#### “Women and Incarceration”

Part of a five-year series on Women and Poverty  
(For details place cursor over event, right click and click “open hyperlink”)

**Women’s History Month Lecture - March 29, 2011 - 7:00 to 9:30 pm**

Location TBA

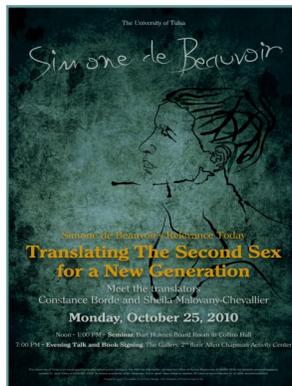
*Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Women’s Prison*

A talk by Women’s History Month Featured Speaker Piper Kerman is based on her book by the same title.

**Student Panels - April 18 and 20, 2011 - 12:00 to 1:00 pm - Location TBA**

Senior Seminar requirements for Women’s and Gender Studies will be discussed at these panels.

[Events Calendar Details](#) for changes in times, dates and locations



On Monday October 25, 2010, Paris based translators Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier did a noon seminar and an evening talk on their new translation of the iconic French feminist text, *Second Sex*. The talk, “The Relevance of Simone de Beauvoir Today: The *Second Sex* for a New Generation” was also accompanied by a book signing. This new translation is the only complete translation into English. It was first published in Britain by Jonathan Cape in 2009 and then by Knopf in the U.S. 2010. Tulsa was a lecture stop for the translators on a tour that took them to the University of Chicago and Northwestern, having already given talks at Berkeley, Stanford, and Harvard. Their old friend Michael Mosher (professor in political science) played a small role in the translation by providing help with philosophical language issues.

## The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of 1911

Jan Doolittle Wilson

March 25, 2011 marks the 100-year anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, which claimed the lives of 146 workers in what was the most calamitous workplace disaster in New York City history until the attacks on the World Trade Center ninety years later.

The Triangle Shirtwaist Company occupied the eighth, ninth, and tenth floors of the Asch building, which sat at the corner of Greene and Washington Streets in New York's Lower East Side. Most of the company's workers were young, female immigrants or the daughters of immigrants who toiled in unhealthy, unsanitary, dangerous workrooms for extremely long hours (sometimes as many as eighty a week) and very little pay. Such conditions were typical in sweatshops and factories that employed garment workers in the early twentieth century. While the Shirtwaist Strike of 1909, organized by the newly formed international Ladies Garment Workers' Union, brought some concessions from employers, few workers were granted union recognition or safer working conditions.

The fire broke out on the eighth floor of the Asch Building near closing time on March 25, 1911. The heaps of scrap cloth scattered about the workroom quickly burst into flames after the first spark; as managers commenced a desperate attempt to extinguish the rapidly spreading fire, workers frantically sought escape.

Most eighth and tenth floor workers survived by taking the Greene Street stairs or by cramming themselves into the Washington Place elevator before it broke down following two sluggish trips to the ground. Workers on the ninth floor were not as fortunate. Survivors recounted their helpless effort to open the ninth floor doors to the Washington Place stairs. They and many others afterwards believed that they were deliberately locked—owners had frequently locked the exit doors in the past, claiming that workers attempted to pilfer materials. The ninth floor fire escape in the Asch Building ended abruptly at the second story and loomed over a glass plate in the sidewalk below; after a few minutes, it simply melted from the heat of the fire and bent under the weight of the factory workers trying to escape the inferno. As they burned, workers tried to drop from the fire escape to the sidewalk below; most crashed through the glass plate and into the basement of the Asch Building creating a fire there as well. Others waited at the windows for the rescue workers



only to discover that the firefighters' ladders were several stories too short and the water from the hoses could not reach the top floors. Many chose to jump to their deaths rather than to burn alive. "It's the worst thing I ever saw," one veteran police officer told a *New York Times* reporter.



In what would be the most vivid and gruesome account of the fire, William G. Shepherd, a United Press reporter, described the horrors of witnessing workers "jammed up" at the windows literally burning to death and helplessly watching as body after body rained down from the building and hit the sidewalk below with a sound that Shepherd could only describe as "thud-dead." Amid the screams and the terror, Sheppard spotted what he poignantly described as a "love affair." A young man at the ninth floor window was lifting women onto the window ledge and dropping them one by one out of the building. The women, Shepherd wrote, "were as unresisting as if he were helping them onto a streetcar instead of into eternity. Undoubtedly he saw that a terrible death awaited them in the flames, and his was only a terrible chivalry."

He brought another girl to the window. Those of us who were looking saw her put her arms about him and kiss him. Then he held her out into space and dropped her. But quick as a flash he was on the window sill himself. His coat fluttered upward—the air filled his trouser legs. I could see that he wore tan shoes and hose. His hat remained on his head. Thud—dead, thud—dead—together they went into eternity. I saw his face before they covered it. You could see in it that he was a real man. He had done his best. We found out later that, in the room in which he stood, many girls were being burned to death by the flames and were screaming in an inferno of flame and heat. He chose the easiest way and was brave enough to even help the girl he loved to a quicker death, after she had given him a goodbye kiss.

Shortly after five o'clock, firefighters managed to extinguish the last of the flames, some twenty minutes after the first spark ignited. As the flood of water from the hoses mingled with the blood of the workers and spilled into the gutters, Shepherd watched as police officers began to sort and to tag the twisted, mutilated bodies heaped on the sidewalks. It was then that he recalled that "these girls were the shirtwaist makers. I remembered their great strike of last year in which these same girls had demanded more sanitary conditions and more safety precautions in the shops. These dead bodies were the answer."

For months following the fire, the public reeled at the unimaginable tragedy of the Triangle fire. Workers from the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union and other unions expressed outrage at employers' greed and lack of concern for the safety and welfare of workers that had led to the Triangle disaster. Angry cries calling for justice and action to improve unsafe conditions in workshops came from the mainstream conservative papers, as well as the progressive and union presses. The public was even more outraged when the owners of the Triangle Company, Isaac Harris and Max Blanck, were acquitted of manslaughter charges in December 1911.

Still, champions of the working class were determined that the loss of the 146 Triangle workers would not be in vain. At the behest of reformer Frances Perkins, who had spent the majority of her adult life fighting for protective labor legislation for women and children, the New York State Legislature authorized the formation of the Factory Investigating Committee headed by state senator Robert Wagner and assemblyman Alfred Smith. For the next two years, members of the committee investigated fire safety and building construction in New York's factories; studied and investigated 3,385 workplaces, including garment shops and tenement sweatshops; held fifty-nine public hearings; and heard testimony from 472 witnesses, including employers, workers, union officials and technical experts. Their efforts resulted in twenty-five new pieces of legislation that regulated workplace conditions and offered stricter standards of occupational safety and health. Laws in New York, importantly, set precedents for the formation of similar laws in other states and at the federal level and magnified public support for government regulation of the industrial workplace. Al Smith and Robert Wagner became leading advocates of Progressive reform; Smith went on to become governor of New York and Wagner, as a member of the U. S. Congress, authored the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, which guaranteed workers the right to unionize and to bargain collectively, among other things. And as President Franklin Roosevelt's Secretary of Labor, Frances Perkins became the first woman to hold a federal cabinet position, which she used to continue her fight for protective labor legislation.

Fifty years after the fire, Frances Perkins was asked to comment on the significance of the Triangle fire in a commemorative event held in New York City in March 1961. "The New Deal," she said simply, "was born that day."

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To commemorate the 100-year anniversary of the Triangle Fire, the TU Women's and Gender Studies Program is sponsoring a series of events from March 21 to 25. These events include a student art/document project, a screening of a documentary on the Triangle fire, and a public lecture. For further information, please contact Sarah Szabo, the commemorative project coordinator, at [sarah-szabo@utulsa.edu](mailto:sarah-szabo@utulsa.edu).