Hart Chosen As New Chair

Professor James S. Hart, Jr., who has taught British history at OU for 25 years, was chosen recently to succeed Professor Robert Griswold, the Americanist who has been chair of history for sixteen years.

Hart is an expert on the politics of the House of Lords and the period of the Tudors and the Stewarts and has also taught popular courses on the histories of Ireland and Scotland. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge in England, a Master’s degree from Portland State University, and got his BA from the University of Oregon. He has held fellowships at Sydney Sussex College of the University of Cambridge and at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California.

Hart hopes to build on the successes of the department and to solidify its commitment to graduate training in the U.S. environment, Western History, and Native American History.

His books include Justice Upon Petition. The House of Lords and the Reformation of Justice, 1621-1675, The Rule of Law, 1603-60: Crowns, Courts, and Judges, and he is working on a history of a couple of British adventurers in a manuscript he calls “A Particular Friendship: Sir John Finch and Sir Thomas Baines 1620-1680.”

Hart was Professor of the Year for the University of Oklahoma Student Association in 1991 and Outstanding Professor for the Mortar Board Senior Honor Society. He is an affiliate of the Institute for American Constitutional Heritage and has served on the Provost’s Committee on General Education and the Faculty Senate and its Executive Committee.
New Hires

New this year is the new Travis Western History chair, Dr. Kathleen Brosnan, who comes to us after serving as an associate dean at the University of Houston. She is the editor of the Encyclopedia of Environmental History and is pursuing her research on the history of the wine industry in Northern California. She succeeds Professor Albert Hurtado who retired to California, and is still available at Ahurtado@ou.edu.

She is the author of Uniting Mountain and Plain: Cities, Law and Environmental Change along the Front Range and the co-editor of City Dreams, Country Schemes: Community and Identity in the American West (with Amy Scott) and the forthcoming Energy Capitals: Global Influence, Local Impact (with Joseph Pratt and Martin Melosi). Brosnan edited the prize-winning Encyclopedia of American Environmental History, which included some 365 authors, and has contributed articles to various edited volumes and journals, such as Environmental History and the Catholic Historical Review. As a public historian, she has worked on a Newberry Library exhibit and a National Park Service national landmark nomination and directed the creation of an online exhibit, To Bear Fruit for Our Race: the History of African American Physicians in Houston.

Also new this year, Dr. Bala Saho has his Ph.D. from Michigan State University in East Lansing, where he wrote about the remarkable history of Muslim courts under British colonial rule in West Africa; women and minorities felt free to consult these courts partly because their rulings were reviewed by British colonial officials who questioned the judges about consistency and fairness of their rulings.

Dr. Saho is a native of Gambia, where he served as an archivist in the national archives after having completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Helsinki in Finland. He and his wife have two children.

Dr. Saho replaces longtime Africa hand Prof. Jidlaph Kamoche, who has retired and moved to the Chicago area. He can be reached at his OU email, jkamoche@ou.edu. Dr. Saho will teach the history of Africa and hopes to pursue his research in West African archives and through oral history.
History Clichés

For easy reference. (please email other suggestions to dcsnell@ou.edu. No prizes, but credit will be given where credit is due [oops. A cliche.])

Vision without action is daydream. Action without vision is nightmare –Japanese proverb

When people are free to do as they please, they usually imitate each other –Eric Hoffer, American philosopher

We learn from history that we do not learn from history –Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, German philosopher

We as a people are starved for self-definition. And history is medicine. It has nothing to do with the past. It has everything to do with the present. –Ken Burns, film maker in USA Today September 26, 1997, p. 2D

When elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers. –African proverb

Possible Historians’ song:
Que sera, sera,
What will be will be.
The future’s not ours to see,
What will be will be.
Pero:
Que fue, fue,
Whatever was, was.
The past is ours to say,
Que fue, fue.

Alumni News  GIVE US SOME! (dcsnell@ou.edu)