

“Let’s Have at It”:
The Shelby Cullom
Davis Center for
Historical Studies
at Fifty

by Sean H. Vanatta and Randall Todd Pippenger

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To the memory of
Shelby Cullom Davis '30 and
Lawrence Stone, and in
honor of Natalie Zemon Davis

Acknowledgments

This “small” pamphlet has been more than one year in the making. It was made possible by the vision and commitment of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies’ eighth director, Professor Angela N. H. Creager, and was conceived as part of a broader effort to commemorate the history of the Davis Center on its fiftieth anniversary. The larger project, nearing its final completion, has been dedicated to documenting and preserving the first fifty years of the Davis Center’s history. Under its auspices, the authors have undertaken an extensive oral history and collections project, interviewing former directors, executive secretaries, managers, department chairs, and long-term participants in the Davis Center’s seminar; compiling surveys of past fellows; and gathering annual reports, programs, memoranda, private correspondence, and newspaper, magazine, and journal articles.

Many people have helped to bring this pamphlet into existence. We would like to thank every person who participated in the oral history project, including David Bell, Angela Creager, Robert Darn-ton, Natalie Zemon Davis, William Deringer, John Elliott, Jennifer Houle Goldman, Anthony Grafton, William Chester Jordan, Richard Kagan, Stanley Katz, Kevin Kruse, Philip Nord, Gyan Prakash, the late Theodore Rabb, Daniel Rodgers, John Talbott, Robert Tignor, Keith Wailoo, and Sean Wilentz. The former fellows who completed our survey questionnaire, sent pictures, and provided sketches of their experiences of the Davis Center were incredibly helpful in the production of this essay, as were the staffs of the Department of Special Collections and Mudd Manuscript Library at Princeton University. A debt of special gratitude is owed for the able, indeed magical, assistance of the Davis Center’s veteran manager, Jennifer Houle Goldman, as well as the support of the Department of History’s wonderful administrative staff, including Judith Hanson, Jennifer Loessy, Pamela Long, Deborah Macy, Judith Miller, Kristy Novak, Max Siles, and Carla Zimowsk. It is doubtful the pamphlet would have been finished without their support and encouragement. The current authors cer-

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Finally, both authors would like to thank especially Angela Crea-ger for her support, generosity, encouragement, and occasional nudging over the past fifteen months. As with so many of the fellows in the past fifty years, our experience working under the auspices of the Davis Center has been productive, stimulating, rewarding, and congenial because of its leadership.

In its first half century of existence, almost four hundred scholars have been formally connected to the Davis Center for Historical Studies as fellows, executive secretaries, and directors. Thousands more, including both of us, have received financial support from the Center for academic research. It is impossible to do justice to the rich history of such an institution in a mere fifty pages, but we tried. Thank you for reading.

Sean H. Vanatta and Randall Todd Pippenger

Princeton, New Jersey

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The “Hot History Department”

A good portion of the Princeton History department usually turns up on Friday mornings in the seminar room deep in the bowels of the Firestone Library. But one Friday last October, the place was jammed and the air was alive with anticipation. Jean-Christophe Agnew, a Yale professor, had ventured into the weekly Shelby Cullom Davis Seminar, a lion's den in which many a historian has been torn apart.¹

In its first twenty years, the weekly seminar of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies developed a reputation for conducting tenacious, occasionally vicious, interrogations of precirculated papers organized under biennial themes ranging from the history of professions and university education to popular religion and culture. It was a reputation that gained the notice of the *New York Times*. Lawrence Stone, the Dodge Professor of History and first director of the Davis Center, between 1969 and 1990, was known for his rough-and-tumble approach to academic and intellectual debate. This style often left participants with a choice only of “the method by which they [could] commit intellectual suicide.”² Stone once compared the director of a social history project presenting at the seminar to the last dinosaur “devouring all of the remaining provender that might otherwise sustain dozens of smaller but better conceived studies.”³ And though he was supposed to have “mellowed” in his later years, Stone opened a seminar in the final year of his directorship by claiming that a paper presented by an eminent French historian “made me gag.”⁴ Unfortunately, the French historian had to ask for clarification: “C’est quoi, ‘gag’?”⁵

Stone was not alone in strident critiques and stinging asides. Describing the atmosphere of the seminar in 1977, Bertram Wyatt-Brown claimed that “Lawrence Stone was noted for sometimes encouraging a gladiatorial atmosphere. It was as if the presenter were suddenly

¹Mark Silk, “The Hot History Department,” *New York Times*, April 19, 1987.

²John M. Murrin, “The Eminence Rouge?,” in *The First Modern Society: Essays in English History in Honour of Lawrence Stone*, ed. A. L. Beier, David Cannadine, and James M. Rosenheim (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 28–29.

³Murrin, 29.

⁴Susan Amussen, Fellows Survey by Randall Todd Pippenger, 2018, 8.

⁵Philip Nord, Interview by Sean Vanatta, July 27, 2018, transcript, 8–9; and David Bell, Interview by Sean Vanatta, October 29, 2018, transcript, 10–11.

thrust into an arena to face both bloodthirsty spectators and snarling beasts.”⁶ French historian Roger Chartier described the early seminars as both friendly and frightening—friendly because of the intellectual community the Center created for its participants, frightening because of the “harsh comments generally made by Lawrence Stone” as well as the “very critical attitude of some (younger) participants in the seminar.” For Chartier, the posture of the aggressive junior faculty seemed to be “necessary for affirming expertise and authority in the competitions that characterize the American academy.”⁷ Stone likely would have approved of Chartier’s characterization. In an interview given to the *Princeton Weekly Bulletin* in 1981, Stone claimed:

The Davis seminars have a reputation of being ferocious. Some paper-givers whose presentations have not been up to par have been roughed up (in a manner of speaking, of course) pretty badly, but on the whole we try to avoid getting personal. The better-known historian can hold his own, but if young people are before us, we’re usually pretty gentle. These papers will generally form the basis for a future book, so we try to be helpful and make suggestions which tighten the presentation.⁸

The stories of academic combat from the early seminars are legendary, made believable only by their volume and the frequency with which they are repeated by participants and eyewitnesses. However, the final sentence of Stone’s statement points to the underlying purposes of the Davis Center and the research seminar it has sponsored for the last fifty years. The goals of the Davis seminar, then as now, were not to savage presenters and their papers, nor to function as one of the history profession’s many gatekeepers. Instead, the Davis Center was meant to keep the department on the “frontier” or the “cutting edge” of historical research—to look toward the future of scholarship and to hasten its coming.⁹ As Stone later stated in the interview with

⁶Bertram Wyatt-Brown, “Preface to the 25th Anniversary Edition,” *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), xiii. Wyatt-Brown was a visiting fellow at the Davis Center from 1977 to 1978 under the theme *History of the Family*.

⁷Roger Chartier, Fellows Survey, 2–3.

⁸Stone as quoted in Cynthia Furlong Reynolds, “Davis Seminars Probe Historical Studies,” *Princeton Weekly Bulletin*, December 7, 1981, 3.

⁹Lawrence Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1969–1970,” Annual Reports to the Pres-

the *Princeton Weekly Bulletin*, “We have always tried to focus on what appeared to be a theme on the verge of take-off in academic circles.”¹⁰ The foundational goal of the research seminar was to produce, in the words of John Murrin, “intense intellectual engagement with a problem that truly matters.”¹¹

On December 8, 1968, the president of Princeton University, Robert F. Goheen, announced the establishment of a new center for historical research at Princeton University: the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies. The Davis Center, named in honor of Shelby Cullom Davis '30, who had donated \$5.3 million to the university and the Department of History in 1964, was founded in order “to continue Princeton’s development as a leading center for historical research, to facilitate innovation and experiment in teaching, and to stimulate intellectual interchange within the Department of History, between members of the Department and scholars in other disciplines and between members of the Department and visitors from this country and overseas.”¹²

From the beginning, the Davis Center engaged in a wide range of activities designed “to stimulate excellence in scholarship and the teaching of History” at Princeton and beyond.¹³ Five percent of the Center’s annual budget was allocated to the purchase of books in the library. In its first year, the Center funded the “Statistical Survey of Universities in the West and the Biographical Dictionary of Princeton Alumni.” For the faculty of the History department, the funds of the Center supported two endowed chairs in American and European history, allowed six members of the faculty to teach halftime, supported the first summer research grants awarded to junior faculty, and subsidized their xeroxing needs. The Davis Center financially sup-

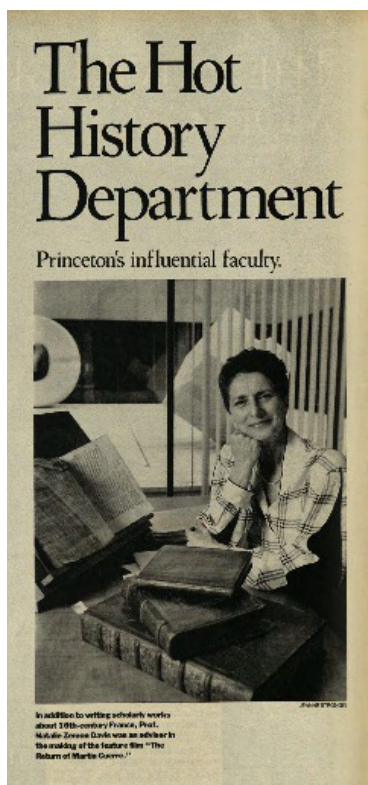
ident, ACo68, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library, 2; Reynolds, “Davis Seminars Probe Historical Studies,” 3.

¹⁰ Reynolds, “Davis Seminars Probe Historical Studies,” 3.

¹¹ Murrin, “The Eminence Rouge?,” 28.

¹² Press Release, Department of Public Information, Princeton University, December 8, 1968, Office of Communications Records, Series 3: Faculty and Staff Biographical Files, 1886–1987, Folder: Lawrence Stone, AC168, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

¹³ “The Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies Charter Document, 1974,” Annual Reports to the President, ACo68, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library, 1.



The first page of "The Hot History Department" by Mark Silk, featuring Professor Natalie Zemon Davis. Published in the *New York Times Magazine* on Sunday, April 19, 1987, "The Hot History Department" is the most well-known profile of Princeton's History department in the 1980s. Davis succeeded Lawrence Stone as the second director of the Davis Center in 1990.

Source: Mark Silk, "The Hot History Department," *New York Times*, April 19, 1987.

ported one-quarter of all the graduate students in the department, provided them small grants for travel expenses and research outside of Princeton, and established a number of postdoctoral fellowships for the department's recent PhD recipients. In these early years, the Center under Stone also made serious efforts to engage the undergraduate student body. The Center supported two public lectures on campus addressing "The History of Academic Freedom" and "The History of Student Activism" in the United States, both of which spoke to the overriding concerns of the university community in 1969–1970. It subsequently funded an undergraduate's oral history project to collect and preserve materials related to the student protests that rocked Princeton's campus in May 1970.¹⁴

The centerpiece of the Davis Center in 1969, as it has remained for the past fifty years, was the research seminar. Though the location, timing, and style of the seminar has changed in the intervening years, the format of the Davis seminar has remained remarkably stable. Beginning with four visiting fellows, since 1969 the research

seminar has taken place on a weekly basis—almost always on a Friday morning. The visiting fellows, in addition to History department members and invited scholars from around the world, present precirculated papers on the seminar's prevailing theme. Following prelim-

¹⁴The materials were deposited at Mudd Library and can now be found in *Subseries 2F, Reference Department*, Princeton University Library Records, AC123, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

inary comments from the presenter, the director, and often a formal commenter, the seminar consists of one-to-two-hour discussions between a few dozen participants. In Stone's words, the Davis seminar was a "major innovation," in terms of both the precirculated paper and its theme-driven agenda.¹⁵ While he acknowledged the models of the Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History at Harvard and the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford in his first annual report, and also likely drew inspiration from the long-standing research seminars at Johns Hopkins and the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, as well as the themed-conferences sponsored by *Past & Present* and the large-scale, multiparticipant research projects organized by *Annales*, subsequently Stone would claim that "we had no role model when we designed this seminar."¹⁶

The Davis Center's initial mandate was provisional, with a plan for five years, but Stone hoped that the Davis Center would become a permanent fixture on the university landscape, and the showpiece of the History department. The seminar was to be its beating heart, hosting the most interesting historians and thinkers in the world; serving as testing ground for the newest trends, theories, and methods in historical scholarship; and providing the main intellectual meeting place of the department. Though the realization of these early dreams has ebbed and flowed, been modified, adapted, and refitted over time, Stone's central ambition endured. As Stanley Katz observed, the Davis Center "did a tremendous amount to enhance the reputation of the History department, because if you said Princeton History, the next two words out of your mouth were Davis Center."¹⁷

The Davis Center is now celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. This commemorative essay endeavors to document the history of the Center over its first half century, but it is about more than the founding and evolution of the Davis Center itself. By necessity, it is also a history of the department and the people who have formed it since 1969.

¹⁵ Stone, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1969–1970," 2.

¹⁶ Stone, 2; Richard Kagan, Interview by Sean Vanatta, October 9, 2018, transcript, 18–21; Theodore Rabb, Interview by Sean Vanatta, August 3, 2018, transcript, 14; Reynolds, "Davis Seminars Probe Historical Studies," 3.

¹⁷ Stanley Katz, Interview by Sean Vanatta, July 19, 2018, transcript, 44–45.

The 1987 *Times* article began with an anecdote about the Davis Center, but the History department was not “hot” because of the elevated temperatures or the high emotions of the Davis seminar room. The department was “hot” because of its position of leadership in the field, and the exciting work being done by its own faculty, scholars like Natalie Zemon Davis, Peter Brown, Carl Schorske, and Robert Darnton. In 1987, toward the end of Stone’s tenure as director, the reception of Jean-Christophe Agnew’s paper in the Davis seminar was the natural point of departure for understanding the significance of Princeton’s department to the professional study of history in the United States and the world beyond. As Stone would have wished in 1969, it remains as impossible to separate the achievements, and the trials, of the Davis Center and the Department of History today as it was thirty, or fifty, years ago.¹⁸

The Gift

*A marvelous pledge of five million dollars from Shelby Cullom Davis 1930. His family and his firm has boosted the \$53 million campaign to \$56,347,290. Let's try now for a new high record in annual giving to give Princeton its greatest year ever. Thanks and best wishes, Gilbert Lea, Annual Giving Chairman.*¹⁹

The legacy of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies was not secure in the mid-1960s, and its foundation followed a circuitous, and at times, unseemly path. In January 1961, Shelby Cullom Davis, a prominent New York investment banker, wrote Harold H. Helm, chairman of the executive committee of Princeton’s Board of Trustees, declaring his intention to “do something tangible

¹⁸ Importantly, however, Stone took exception to the *New York Times* article, pointing out that Mark Silk did not attend Jean-Christophe Agnew’s seminar but a rather more mundane one on Renaissance culture. Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1986–1987,” 7: “It should be emphasized that the account of the Davis Seminar given recently in *The New York Times* was far from providing an accurate portrait, not least since the author had not attended the particular session he so vividly described. He did attend a quite different session on the dissemination of Renaissance high culture, but this did not suit his purpose, which was to stress the anthropological orientation of the Center. The moral is that it is unwise to believe all that one reads in *The New York Times*.”

¹⁹ Western Union Telegram from Gilbert Lea to Arthur J. Horton, 63 College Rd. West, Princeton, NJ, January 19, 1962, folder 1, box 37, Historical Subject Files Collection, AC109, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

for the History Department.”²⁰ Davis, a graduate of the class of 1930, had earned highest honors in history at Princeton before pursuing an MA at Columbia (1931) and a doctorate at the University of Geneva (1934), where he wrote a thesis on the history of French West African troops in World War I. After he began his career in banking, Davis served as head of the department’s advisory council beginning in 1941 and was also active in alumni affairs.

Davis intended to make a sizeable gift to the department, but that process initially proved embarrassing for him and the university. Beginning with an initial investment of \$4,000 in 1938, Davis had contributed steadily to a trust fund in the name of his twenty-two-year-old daughter, Diana Cullom Davis. By 1961, the fund amounted to more than \$2 million. “Since our daughter has been otherwise provided for,” Davis explained to Helm, “we are seriously considering turning over this trust fund to Princeton University for the express benefit of the History Department.”²¹

As a legal matter, however, Shelby Davis was not entitled to simply turn the funds over to the university, Princeton’s lawyers explained. Rather, that authority lay with Diana, as beneficiary of the trust. To ensure her consent and the unimpeachable legal propriety of the transaction, Princeton’s fundraising officers conceived of a plan they deemed a “master stroke,” a public signing ceremony, where Diana would sign the trust over to Princeton.²² The university’s attorneys implored Davis to make very clear to his daughter that the money, which on further accounting actually totaled \$3.8 million, was entirely hers, and that she had no obligation to sign it over.²³ Davis thought it “unfortunate that lawyers and accountants had to complicate the whole matter.”²⁴

The master stroke did not go off as planned. Diana Davis, as it turned out, was unaware of the existence of her trust, and when her

²⁰ Shelby Cullom Davis to Harold H. Helm, January 20, 1961, folder 17, box 481, Office of the President Records: Robert F. Goheen Subgroup, AC193, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library (hereafter: Goheen Papers).

²¹ Davis to Helm, January 20, 1961.

²² Ricardo A. Mestres to Robert F. Goheen, May 17, 1961, folder 17, box 481, Goheen Papers.

²³ William Pell Jr. to Mr. & Mrs. Shelby Cullom Davis, May 29, 1961, folder 17, box 481, Goheen Papers.

²⁴ Ricardo A. Mestres to Robert F. Goheen, June 5, 1961, folder 18, box 481, Goheen Papers.



As the saga over the Davis trust played out in the national press, alumni grew concerned. A self-described “fundraiser emeritus” from Savannah, Georgia, mailed this clipping to the administration, requesting the university’s “official position” on the matter.

Source: Freeman Napier Jelks Jr. to Office of the Treasury, Princeton University, June 5, 1961, folder 18, box 481, Goheen Papers.

parents explained their plans for this part of her patrimony, Diana refused to sign over the funds.²⁵ Shelby had informed the university that the transfer was entirely a “family affair,” but he had not been fully forthcoming about the internal complexities involved.²⁶ In one version of events, Diana had not been aware of her trust’s existence because Davis never intended the trust to come to her. Rather, by creating a trust in her name, Davis constructed a tax shelter in which to incubate a philanthropic nest egg secure from federal tax authorities. Diana, Shelby Davis later lamented, could not well appreciate these careful designs. “The reason for securities to be registered in the name of someone who is not really the owner,” Davis explained to the editor of *Newsweek*, “might be too obtuse for the young female mind.”²⁷

While careful tax avoidance was how Shelby Davis spun the embarrassment in private correspondence, the press offered another version of events in the days after Diana refused

to attend the signing ceremony. In a front-page story in the *New York Times*, Diana Davis accused her father of applying financial “pressure” because he disapproved of her fiancé, a high school history teacher.²⁸ Shelby, for his part, was sorely disappointed in his daughter. “Nothing more heartbreaking has occurred to my wife or to myself since our

²⁵ Mestres to Goheen, June 5, 1961.

²⁶ Mestres to Goheen, May 17, 1961.

²⁷ Shelby Cullom Davis to Osborn Elliott, June 26, 1961, folder 18, box 481, Goheen Papers.

²⁸ Charles Grutzner, “Girl Refuses to Yield 3.8 Million to Princeton as Father Planned,” *New York Times*, June 2, 1961, 1.

daughter Priscilla died in 1942,” Davis confided to Princeton president Goheen.²⁹ Disappointment soon turned to anger. After news broke that Diana had hired a lawyer to ensure that the trust came to her, Shelby Davis, on a business trip in Scotland, fired a hot telegram across the Atlantic: “I fear what Diana needs is a good spanking.”³⁰

Shelby Davis’s animated displeasure was cringe-inducing for Princeton’s fundraising officers, but it reflected a deep, patriarchal loyalty that was a foundational motivation for Davis’s intended gift, whatever Davis’s other intentions may have been. In the planning discussions before the aborted signing ceremony, Davis sought to shape the gift to honor his own father, George Henry Davis, Princeton class of 1886. Although Shelby intended Diana to sign her trust over in June 1961, weeks before her intended marriage, the final transfer to Princeton would come in September 1964, on the one-hundred-year anniversary of George Davis’s birth. The gift would then establish named professorships in American and European history, along with a variety of subsidiary honorary fellowships and research funding.³¹

In early June 1961 these plans had stalled, but Shelby Davis was certain his daughter would eventually come around. “It is by no means dead, Harold,” Davis assured Helm after the signing ceremony fell through.³² Shelby’s optimism was warranted, and by late June he had reconciled with Diana.³³ Diana agreed to donate the proceeds of her trust, less \$1 million that she would keep, for the purposes her father intended. Throughout the summer, Davis and his daughter continued to dispute how the trust would be distributed, even as the assets held by the trust continued to accumulate.³⁴ Princeton’s fundraising officers did their best to stay out of the conflict. “There’s a lot of money involved,” one member of the administration wrote, as Diana’s lawyer floated a complex tax scheme strongly opposed by

²⁹ Shelby Cullom Davis to Robert F. Goheen, June 1, 1961, folder 18, box 481, Goheen Papers.

³⁰ John Van Doom, “Spanking New Idea Hits Father of Balky Heiress,” *Newsday*, June 5, 1961, 4.

³¹ “Draft of Proposed Purposes to Be Included in the Shelby Cullom Davis Trust,” n.d., ca. May 1961, folder 17, box 481, Goheen Papers.

³² Shelby Cullom Davis to Harold H. Helm, June 1, 1961, folder 18, box 481, Goheen Papers.

³³ Shelby Cullom Davis to Robert F. Goheen, June 27, 1961, folder 18, box 481, Goheen Papers.

³⁴ Diana Cullom Davis to the Trustees of Princeton University, June 22, 1961; and Ricardo A. Mestres to Robert F. Goheen, Harold H. Helm, James F. Oates, and Edgar E. Gremmel, September 18, 1961, folder 18, box 481, Goheen Papers.

Shelby Davis, “but the University’s reputation is also involved.”³⁵ The final closing came on December 19, 1961. From the trust, Diana chose stocks that had a value of \$1 million as of June 7, 1961, but whose market value had since increased to \$1.42 million. Shelby threw a fit, and “a rather bitter wrangle ensued,” but the parties, perhaps exhausted by months of conflict, finally signed.³⁶

The remaining assets in the trust totaled more than \$4.8 mil-

lion, and they continued to appreciate under Shelby Davis’s trusteeship pending the final transfer to the university in November 1964.³⁷ As the date approached, university investment officers were concerned that the trust’s assets, primarily insurance company stocks that Davis specialized in, would pose a problem for the university’s investment arm. But in the month before the ceremony marking the centenary of his father’s birth, Davis liquidated all of the trust’s holdings.³⁸ He arrived at the celebration, held at the Princeton Inn (now Forbes College), with a check in the amount of \$5,306,903.17.

The university’s accountants were certainly impressed by Davis’s showmanship and eager to see a totem of financial potency up close. But such a large check presented unique logistical

challenges: each day Davis’s gift spent passing through the university bureaucracy meant \$600 of lost interest. University officers bypassed the usual channels and whisked the check to New York for deposit, leaving the staff sorely disappointed. “Shouldn’t the check have come through this office?” Frederic E. Fox of the Recording Secretary’s of-



Shelby Cullom Davis and Robert F. Goheen pictured in the *Daily Princetonian*. “I am happy to present this fulfillment of my pledge to Princeton,” Davis remarked at the banquet honoring his gift, continuing, “a fulfillment which by good luck and perhaps some good management is even ... greater than originally anticipated.”

Source: John Kretzmann, “Goheen Accepts Davis Gift; \$5 Million Bolsters History,” *Daily Princetonian*, November 11, 1964, folder 1, box 37, Historical Subject Files Collection, AC109, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

³⁵ Ricardo A. Mestres to William Pell Jr., September 8, 1961, folder 18, box 481, Goheen Papers.

³⁶ William Pell Jr. to File [2], December 27, 1961, folder 2, box 482, Goheen Papers.

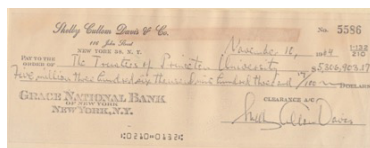
³⁷ William Pell Jr. to File [1], December 27, 1961, folder 2, box 482, Goheen Papers.

³⁸ Ricardo A. Mestres to R. F. Goheen, October 30, 1964, folder 3, box 482, Goheen Papers.

fice complained. “Our girls would have loved to see it. Me too.”³⁹ In consolation, Financial Vice President Ricardo A. Mestres sent along a xerox copy for the “girls” to see.⁴⁰ A copy of the check—perhaps the same one—now hangs in the Davis Center conference room.

The Davis gift was steeped in ironies. The first was that the field of history, and in particular the department at Princeton, was poised on the brink of significant transformation, away from entrenched elite-driven political history, and toward new social and cultural methods that emphasized the lives and experiences of ordinary people. At the celebratory dinner, President Goheen expressed his continued adherence to the idea that “the individual man, the Great Man, is still a prime factor in human affairs.”⁴¹ “That is how Princeton teaches it, and,” Goheen continued, “I believe that is what gives Princeton men their drive and morale—their sense of individual worth and potential.” However, in the audience were newer and younger faculty members who would soon pursue very different lines of inquiry. Foremost among them was Lawrence Stone, new to the department and seated at a back table.⁴²

Second, Davis conveyed his gift to a university on the cusp of transformations that would profoundly alienate Davis and other conservative alumni. Here, Goheen’s invocation of “Princeton men” was important. In November 1964, coeducation was at most a topic of muted discussion on campus.⁴³ Students, faculty, and alumni were divided on the issue, and Goheen initially opposed the idea. Princeton’s leadership also recognized the wider currents of social change and the



The copy of Shelby Cullom Davis’s \$5,306,903.17 check, which, until Angela Creager and Sean Vanatta pried it out of its frame to obtain this copy, hung in the Davis Center conference room. The check will be restored as soon as practical.

³⁹ Frederic Fox to Ricardo A. Mestres, November 17, 1964, folder 2, box 482, Goheen Papers.

⁴⁰ Ricardo A. Mestres to Frederic Fox, November 19, 1964, folder 2, box 482, Goheen Papers. (Fox’s reference to “girls” was to his assistants in the office, not to children.)

⁴¹ Draft for the President, “Shelby Cullom Davis Day,” November 10, 1964, folder 3, box 482, Goheen Papers.

⁴² “Seating Tables,” November 10, 1964, folder 3, box 482, Goheen Papers.

⁴³ Nancy Weiss Malkiel, *“Keep the Damned Women Out”: The Struggle for Coeducation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 89–93.

specific fact that Princeton was increasingly losing talented young men to coed peer institutions. After thorough study, influential trustees, including Harold Helm, came around, and in January 1969 the trustees embraced a coed future for Princeton.⁴⁴ Davis, whom Richard Nixon



At the banquet celebrating Davis's gift, President Goheen presented Davis with a portrait of Davis's late father, George Henry Davis. The portrait, which can be seen in the background, subsequently hung in room 211 of Dickinson Hall, where the Davis seminar has met since the early 1990s.

Source: Pamphlet, Princeton University, "The Establishment of the George Henry Davis '86 and Shelby Cullom Davis '30 Fund in Support of the Department of History," November 10, 1964, folder 1, box 37, Historical Subject Files Collection, AC109, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

appointed ambassador to Switzerland in April 1969, became an indefatigable critic of coeducation and what he perceived as the leftward turn of his beloved university. From the Ambassador's residence in Bern, Davis fired off complaint letters at a rapid clip, often inviting the recipients of his pique to visit him in Switzerland to discuss the matter in person. As Richard Challener, the chair of the History department, wrote in a letter to President William Bowen in July 1973, "if every Princetonian he has invited to the Residence showed up at the same time, he would be putting us up in tents."⁴⁵

Davis was sincere about entertaining visitors. In the early 1970s,

⁴⁴ Malkiel, 174–77.

⁴⁵ Richard Challener to William G. Bowen, July 12, 1973, folder 6, box 142, Office of the President Records: William G. Bowen Subgroup, AC187, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library (hereafter: Bowen Papers).

Robert Darnton spent a sabbatical year working at the archives in Neufchatel, Switzerland. As he recalled, “somehow [Shelby] heard I was there. And he invited my wife and me to a dinner at the residence of the American Ambassador in Bern.” The dinner was “very splendid.” Afterward, Darnton wrote to thank Davis and offered to return the favor. “Well, to my amazement, he said, ‘Sure, I’d love to.’” The response was unexpected, to say the least. Darnton and his wife were renting what he described as a cold, simple place in a remote village in the Jura Mountains, so remote that the Davises’ “limousine actually got stuck on a hair-turn bend” on the way up. The hiccup did nothing to slow Davis, who bounded from the car. “We really hit it off. He was absolutely charming ... I was a little worried about how we’d get along, but we got along fine.”⁴⁶

Darnton was especially worried about their deep political differences. “At one point I said to him—he insisted on being called Shelby—‘Shelby, I must tell you that I was on the left during the Vietnamese agitation’... And he said, ‘Look, I understand. There were people in Wall Street who were anti-war.’” There was, however, one issue on which Davis could not contain himself. “Everything was perfect until somehow the subject of co-education came up. And then he just exploded. I mean, he pounded the table ... it was clear that it touched a nerve deep in him. He absolutely felt that the university was ruined.”

Ultimately, Shelby Davis had the misfortune of giving generously to an institution that he idolized just as that institution embraced something he detested. In response, Davis cofounded the Concerned Alumni of Princeton (CAP), an insurgent alumni group.⁴⁷ He remained an active participant in History department affairs, but CAP activism consumed his interest. In a letter typical of his views, Davis raged about “a student population approximately 40% women and minorities, a faculty approximately 90% permissive, liberal-radical and quite clearly out of touch with the mainstream of America, an atmosphere of learning in which conservatives feel ill at ease.”⁴⁸ Lawrence Stone, the recipient, sought vainly to dull Davis’s temper and counter his wilder assertions. Although Stone confidentially conclud-

⁴⁶ Robert Darnton, Interview by Sean Vanatta, April 26, 2019, transcript, 8–9.

⁴⁷ Malkiel, “*Keep the Damned Women Out*,” 293–95.

⁴⁸ Shelby Cullom Davis to Lawrence Stone, December 13, 1973, folder 6, box 142, Bowen Papers.

ed, “Shelby is hopeless, I give up,”⁴⁹ in a postscript to his reply, Stone asked Davis if he could dedicate the first volume of essays produced by the research seminar to Davis himself.⁵⁰

Perhaps a third irony of the Davis gift has been that its significance, to the university and the wider profession, proved entirely distinct from its founding purpose. The research seminar—the centerpiece of the “Hot History Department”—was not part of the original design, nor was the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies that supports it. Rather, as originally conceived and administered, Davis’s gift largely supported the existing activities of the department. In addition to the two named professorships, Davis’s bequest provided funds to support faculty research, graduate stipends, and library purchases.⁵¹ While these awards were generous, they largely offset existing university commitments to the department’s operating budget, freeing up university funds to benefit other units.⁵² The Davis name was emblazoned on department activities, but life went on in the department as it had previously.

Stone and the Founding of the Davis Center

Lawrence Stone would change that. Although he was consigned to a back table at the Davis celebration, Stone was ascendant within



Portrait of Lawrence Stone, 1974.

Source: folder 1, box 37, *Historical Subject Files Collection*, AC109, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

the department. Forty-four years old at the time of the gift, Stone had joined the department in 1963 after a tumultuous early career at Oxford. By 1967, the “formidable” Stone was chair of the department and an increasingly influential figure within the higher echelons of the university.⁵³ From this new perch, Stone sought to transform the Davis gift, drawing it out of the bowels of the

⁴⁹ Lawrence Stone to William G. Bowen, March 21, 1972, folder 6, box 142, Bowen Papers.

⁵⁰ Lawrence Stone to Shelby Cullom Davis, September 6, 1972, folder 6, box 142, Bowen Papers.

⁵¹ Ricardo A. Mestres to John F. Merk, December 2, 1966, folder 2, box 482, Goheen Papers.

⁵² Murrin, “The Eminence Rouge?,” 27.

⁵³ Robert Tignor, Interview by Sean Vanatta, October 30, 2018, transcript, 8.

Provost's office and using it to advance historical teaching and scholarship at Princeton and in the Atlantic academy more broadly. "The first task I set myself when I was appointed Chairman," Stone wrote in December 1969, "was to propose the establishment of the Center."⁵⁴ Over "hard-fought squash matches"⁵⁵ with Provost (and later President) Bowen, Stone lobbied for more direct departmental control of the Davis gift, arguing that such had been Davis's intention. The deed itself was flexible enough to withstand Lawrence's interpretation, and malleable enough to adjust with Shelby Davis's approval.⁵⁶ By April 1968, Stone and Bowen had reached a compromise, which shifted the administration of the gift from the central university to the newly christened Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies, headed from its founding by Lawrence Stone himself.⁵⁷

Stone was a force for change in a department that, in the 1960s, largely embodied Goheen's admiration for elite political history. As Theodore Rabb said, "other than Lawrence, this was not a group that was terribly interested in ordinary people, or in social history, or in any of the new kinds of history."⁵⁸ The department "was pretty much committed to a political narrative," recalled Robert Tignor, who arrived at Princeton in 1960.⁵⁹ Stone, who had been at the Institute for Advanced Study in 1960–1961, before being hired by Princeton's History department in 1963, was determined instead to chart a new course, pursuing social history and developing methodological approaches that drew upon the theories and practices of social scientists.

Stone came to Princeton from Oxford, where he received an MA in history in 1946 and then held positions as Lecturer in University College (1946–1950) and Fellow at Wadham College (1950–1963). Oxford's intellectual culture centered on vigorous debate, and Stone thrived in that environment.⁶⁰ Through much of that time, Stone en-

⁵⁴ Lawrence Stone to Ricardo A. Mestres, December 2, 1969, folder 5, box 11, Goheen Papers.

⁵⁵ Anthony Grafton, Interview by Sean Vanatta, August 21, 2018, transcript, 106.

⁵⁶ Mestres to Merk, December 2, 1966.

⁵⁷ Charter, "The Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies," April 10, 1968, Davis Center Files (thanks to Shelby Cullom Davis Jr. for providing a copy of this document to the Center); Press Release, December 8, 1968, Office of Communications Records, Princeton University Library.

⁵⁸ Rabb, Interview, 12.

⁵⁹ Tignor, Interview, 14.

⁶⁰ "Lawrence Stone—As Seen by Himself," in *The First Modern Society: Essays in English*

gaged in what came to be known as the “Gentry Controversy,” a bitter academic dispute over the causes of the 1640 English Revolution. Early in his career, Stone was deeply influenced by Richard H. Tawney, who argued in 1940 that the revolution was caused by the simultaneous decline of the feudal aristocracy and the rise of a new class of bourgeois gentry.⁶¹ Stone advanced the aristocratic decline argument further in a 1948 article in the *Economic History Review*, claiming that the decline came not from poor land management, as Tawney had contended, but from overexpenditure.⁶² The article unleashed a firestorm. Fellow Oxonian and Stone’s former tutor Hugh Trevor-Roper savaged Stone in, as Stone would recall, “an article of vituperative denunciation which connoisseurs of intellectual terrorism still cherish to this day.”⁶³

Looking back on the decades of exchange that followed, Stone would later strike a conciliatory tone, acknowledging his own mistakes in methodology and interpretation.⁶⁴ But the controversy jeopardized Stone’s career. Trevor-Roper was a persistent and powerful enemy, describing his attacks on Stone in private correspondence as an imperialist expedition:

I am also delighted that you approve of my article on *the Gentry*. So far there has been no squeak from the opposition—indeed, I feel almost ridiculous, having advanced, thus armed and equipped, into the heart of the enemy’s territory only to find it not only undefended but even unoccupied. There has not been so much as a blow-pipe or an assegai visible among the bushes, or a fugitive black bottom flickering among the jungle trees; and the Old Man of the Trees, Tawney himself (who refused even to see the article before publication), being totally invisible, inaudible and even unmentioned, is now being dismissed, by the advanced anthropologists of my expedition, as a myth. However, perhaps

History in Honour of Lawrence Stone, ed. A. L. Beier, David Cannadine, and James M. Rosenheim (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 584; Rabb, Interview, 10.

⁶¹ Lawrence Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 1976), 26–27.

⁶² Lawrence Stone, “The Anatomy of the Elizabethan Aristocracy,” *Economic History Review* 18 (1948): 1–53; and Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution*, 27.

⁶³ Hugh Trevor-Roper, “The Elizabethan Aristocracy: An Anatomy Anatomized,” *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 3 (1951): 279–98; “Lawrence Stone—As Seen by Himself,” 582; and William Palmer, *Engagement with the Past: The Lives and Works of the World War II Generation of Historians* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2001), chs. 4 and 10.

⁶⁴ “Lawrence Stone—As Seen by Himself,” 582; and Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution*, 27.

they are all cooking up some slogan of defiance in some oracular cave in the unexplored depths of their country!⁶⁵

Trevor-Roper offered no quarter. He considered Stone a “charlatan” and set out to destroy him. Stone was increasingly marginalized at Oxford, while Trevor-Roper blocked his appointment to a professorship at York.⁶⁶ For Stone, the offer from Princeton in 1963 was a welcome one.

Nevertheless, Stone was not bowed by the encounter. Instead, as he surveyed the ink-soaked field of historical combat, now joined by J. E. C. Hill and J. H. Hexter among others, Stone recognized that for all its fury, the gentry debate lacked archival depth. At just that moment, the postwar decline of the English aristocracy forced many titled families to part with their records, making available the very primary sources that could shed new light on the controversy.⁶⁷ In 1965, after fifteen years digging through musty manorial records, Stone published the results of this work, his monumental *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*. The book was important for three reasons. It was deeply immersed in archival research, cementing what one historian has called “the archival revolution” in postwar historiography.⁶⁸ It embraced Weberian sociology, drawing distinctions between wealth, status, and power and using those distinctions to explain the crisis. And it embraced quantitative methods, using Stone’s archival findings to drive forward the statistical analysis that was at the heart of the gentry debate. In this way, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy* embodied the fruitfulness of new historical methods and the energizing postwar optimism which promised, as Stone later recalled, that “the most intractable problems of history would soon fall to the assaults of qualitative social and economic investigation.”⁶⁹

Stone epitomized this optimism and, as chair of Princeton’s History department, sought to infuse its energy into the department

⁶⁵ Hugh Trevor-Roper to Bernard Berenson, November 8, 1953, reprinted in *Letters from Oxford: Hugh Trevor-Roper to Bernard Berenson*, ed. Richard Davenport-Hines (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006), 130.

⁶⁶ John Elliott, Interview by Sean Vanatta, November 15, 2018, transcript, 2.

⁶⁷ “Lawrence Stone—As Seen by Himself,” 586–88.

⁶⁸ Palmer, *Engagement with the Past*, ch. 11.

⁶⁹ “Lawrence Stone—As Seen by Himself,” 584–85.

through a variety of new initiatives. With Arno Mayer, Stone developed History 500, the first introductory course for all history graduate students.⁷⁰ The first syllabus heavily weighted to social science and included weeks on census data, demography, statistical analysis, and other cliometric techniques. He also arranged an exchange program, from 1967 to 1970, between the History department and the VI^e Section of the École pratique des hautes études in Paris, the heart of the Annales school of French historical scholarship.⁷¹ The program established a “French connection” that would later be a hallmark of the Davis seminar under Stone’s leadership. And Stone also recruited

a number of new faculty, including Carl Schorske, Robert Darnton, and the department’s first female faculty member, Nancy Weiss Malkiel.⁷²

The focal point of these changes, however, was the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies, which began full operation in the fall of 1969 with Stone as director. According to a university press release, the new center was designed to pursue “cross-cultural and interdisciplinary study of historical problems of critical importance to the past and to our own times.”⁷³ Upon its foundation, the Center became the vessel for the entire Davis gift, administering faculty subventions, graduate stipends, and library purchases, while also serving as the vehicle for a variety

Veysey lectures on academic freedom

By JOE LOCKE

Prof. L. R. Veysey, author of *The Emergence of the American University*, addressed about 50 people at the Woodrow Wilson School yesterday on the topic of “Academic Freedom, the Long-Term Stalemate.”

The lecture was the first in a series sponsored by the newly-founded Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies.

“We live in a mediocre society,” observed the professor. “We should realize we’re in a strong society for academic freedom but a weaker one for academic freedom.”

“We are for academic freedom,” Veysey said. “We are for academic freedom.”

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Veysey speaks out

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The first event hosted by the Davis Center was a public lecture entitled “Academic Freedom: The Long-Term Stalemate.” The lecture was delivered by Laurence R. Veysey, Professor of History at the University of California, Santa Barbara, in 5 Woodrow Wilson School at 4:30 PM on Thursday, October 2. The public lecture series that year was pitched at undergraduates, and according to Stone, the lectures were presented “by distinguished visitors on themes thought to be relevant to the University community, and which also coincide with the special theme of the Research Seminar.” (Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1969-1970,” 2.)

Source: *Daily Princetonian*, October 3, 1969, 1.

Records, Princeton University Library. The agreement was also included as an appendix in the “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1970-1971.”

⁷² Murrin, “The Eminence Rouge?,” 25-26; Malkiel, “Keep the Damned Women Out,” 226.

⁷³ Press Release, December 8, 1968, Office of Communications Records, Princeton University Library.

⁷⁰ Tignor, Interview, 15.

⁷¹ Lawrence Stone, “Exchange Agreement between the Department of History, Princeton University, and the VI^e Section of the École pratique des hautes études for 3 years, 1967-1970,” May 16, 1967, Department of History

of innovative projects.⁷⁴ “In its first full year of operation,” Stone wrote in the first annual report, “the Center was still in an experimental stage, feeling its way towards the form in which it will eventually crystallize.”⁷⁵

At the heart of this experimentation was the research seminar, “the major innovation of the year.”⁷⁶ To advertise the seminar, John E. Talbott, the Center’s first executive secretary, placed brief notices in *Past & Present* and *Annales* (in French).⁷⁷ Stone also recruited scholars directly. After serving as an examiner for Richard Kagan’s dissertation in August 1968, Stone invited Kagan over lunch at a riverside pub in Oxford to apply for a postdoctoral fellowship at the Center. “I had no idea what it was,” Kagan recalled. “I don’t think Lawrence, at that point, had any idea, except that they were going to give post-docs.”⁷⁸

The seminar’s first theme, *History of Education*, was timely. Stone had already begun to examine the changing role of the university in English society as part of his own work on social mobility in the years before the English Revolution.⁷⁹ In a review article, Talbott elaborated further. “Historians began to recognize that education touches upon nearly all aspects of a particular society,” he wrote. “The historical study of education came to be seen not only as an end in itself but as a promising and hitherto neglected avenue of approach to an extremely broad range of problems.”⁸⁰

In its first year, the seminar was properly a research seminar, dedicated simultaneously to critiquing works-in-progress submitted by fellows, faculty, and outside visitors and to reading recently published scholarship connected to the theme. It met every two weeks, usually convening around two works or works-in-progress. Initially, access to the seminar was rather limited. As Richard Kagan recalled,

⁷⁴ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1969–1970,” 1–2.

⁷⁵ Stone, 1.

⁷⁶ Stone, 2.

⁷⁷ “Editorial Notes,” *Past & Present* 41 (1968): 212–13; “Back Matter,” *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 23 (1968): n.p.

⁷⁸ Kagan, Interview, 18–19.

⁷⁹ Lawrence Stone, “Educational Revolution in England, 1560–1640,” *Past & Present* 28 (1964): 41–80.

⁸⁰ John E. Talbott, “The History of Education,” *Daedalus* 100 (1971): 133–50.

aside from his cohort of fellows, which also included Sheldon Rothblatt, Robert Church, and, in the fall, Patrick Alston, no department faculty were present except Stone and Talbott. Donald Light, of the Sociology department, and Thomas Laqueur, at the time a graduate student, were occasional outside visitors.⁸¹ By the end of the first year, Stone recognized that the fellows could not be “fully integrated into the Department,” unless the department was also fully integrated into the seminar. “In light of this year’s experience,” he wrote, “it is intended next year to open the seminar rather more widely to interested faculty and students.”⁸²

At this early stage, the research seminar, while important, was only part of a much larger investigation into the *History of Education*. In its as-yet uncrystallized form, the Center undertook several large-scale research projects related to the theme. The first was a “Statistical Survey of Universities in the West,” a project backed by a matching grant from the Committee on Basic Research in Education and encompassing three case studies: an examination of Princeton by Talbott, of Oxford and Cambridge by Stone, and of Spanish, French, and Italian universities by Kagan. “It is hoped by so doing to establish some facts about the changing role universities have played in society, as intellectual centers, as instruments of social mobility or social stability, and as training centers for professional elites,” Stone wrote.⁸³ Stone’s goals were ambitious. He intended the Center to finance data collection and then use nascent computer technology to test correlations across societies. The Center’s first annual report even included a preliminary code book for organizing the data.⁸⁴ In connection with this statistical project, moreover, the Center also sponsored a biographical dictionary of Princeton alumni, focused on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The university archives were in shambles, while Princeton’s history, compared to rivals Harvard and Yale, was unexplored.⁸⁵ The biographical project complemented Stone’s interest in the university as an institution of social mobility, while also dovetailing with the uni-

⁸¹ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1969–1970,” 3 and 5; and Talbott, “The History of Education,” 147n1.

⁸² Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1969–1970,” 3.

⁸³ Stone, 3.

⁸⁴ Stone, appendix III, 3.

⁸⁵ Stone, 3–4.

versity's alumni developmental goals.

Yet Stone's concern about the place of the university in society was not merely a historical one. As John Elliott observed, "Stone's study of the past was consistently shaped by a profound engagement with the present."⁸⁶ Part of what had made the gentry controversy so spirited was its relevance to postwar British society. So too the history of education and the university found its critical moment in the late 1960s. Stone was in Paris in the early summer of 1968 and "experienced the sense of revolutionary intoxication" embodied in the student-led upheaval.⁸⁷ Stone then took a central role participating in and documenting the unrest that broke out on Princeton's campus in May 1970.⁸⁸ The Center collected and archived material related to the May protests, hiring an undergraduate, John Slifko, to collect the material, including posters, fliers, radio broadcasts, publications, and interviews. The following year, another undergraduate, John McEnany, used the material to write a comprehensive thesis on the events.⁸⁹

The Center's ambitions, however, may have outrun its financial foundation. With its existing commitments dictated by the terms of Davis's original gift, the Center's sponsorship of the seminar and other theme-related projects, and new initiatives, including postdoctoral fellowships for recent department graduates "of the highest promise," the Center's finances began to appear increasingly unsteady.⁹⁰ "The Center this year, and probably for another two years, has sufficient financial resources at its disposal to meet every request made to it by the Department," Stone wrote at the conclusion of the Center's first year of operation. "Whether this situation will continue beyond 1972 is very uncertain."⁹¹ Stone's uncertainty only grew when the Committee on Basic Research in Education suspended the additional funding it offered to the Center. The success of the seminar, too, was hardly guaranteed. In a 1971 memo to the Davis Center Executive Committee, Stone was "very anxious to increase the participation of the Department in the Seminar, so as to make a greatest possible contribu-

⁸⁶ John Elliott, "Lawrence Stone," *Past & Present* 164 (1999): 5.

⁸⁷ Lawrence Stone, "Two Cheers for the University," *New York Review of Books*, August 22, 1968.

⁸⁸ Lawrence Stone, "Princeton in the Nation's Service," *New York Review of Books*, June 18, 1970.

⁸⁹ Stone, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1970-1971," 8.

⁹⁰ Stone, 1.

⁹¹ Stone, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1969-1970," 4.

tion to the intellectual life of the Department."⁹² His initial efforts to open the seminar more widely had not yet yielded the desired results.

While Stone's concerns about participation and the seminar's contribution would continue, by the 1973–1974 academic year the seminar appeared to hit its stride. Drawn from across campus and surrounding universities, "attendance was larger and more diverse than in any previous year," Stone observed. "The problem mentioned in last year's report of improving the integration of the Seminar and the Visiting Fellows with the Department seems to have solved itself."⁹³ By then, the seminar was meeting every week and was almost entirely dedicated to critiquing precirculated work. The thematic approach, meanwhile, found enthusiastic supporters. "I cannot praise too highly the bringing together of people working in areas of related endeavor," wrote fellow Lionel Rothkrug.⁹⁴ Finally, the edited volumes—the first of which, *The University in Society*, Princeton University Press published in two volumes in 1974—were receiving wide and enthusiastic reviews.⁹⁵

The resolution was timely. The 1973–1974 academic term

⁹² Lawrence Stone to Davis Center Executive Committee, October 12, 1971, Department of History, Princeton University Library.

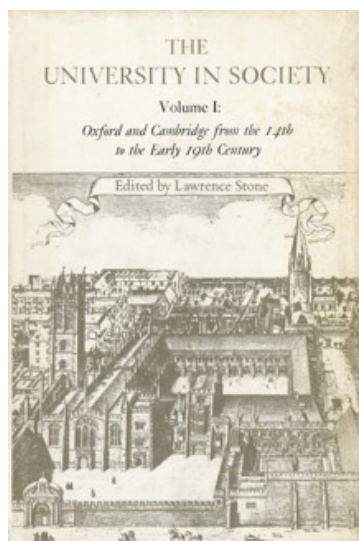
⁹³ Stone, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1973–1974," 2.

⁹⁴ Lionel Rothkrug, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1973–1974," appendix IV, 5.

⁹⁵ John E. Craig, "Review of *The University in Society. Vol. 2: Europe, Scotland, and the United States from the 16th to the 20th Century*, by Lawrence Stone," *School Review* 84 (1975): 170–72; Seymour Martin Lipset, "History of Lessons," ed. Lawrence Stone, *Change* 7 (1975): 56–57; Delno C. West, "Review of *The University in Society*, by Lawrence Stone," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 6 (1975): 116; Margaret Bowker, "Review of *The University in Society*, by Lawrence Stone," *Higher Education* 5 (1976): 475–79; Alan W. Jones, "Review of *The University in Society*, by Lawrence Stone," *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 12 (1976): 111–12; Michael B. Katz, "Review of *The University in Society: I, Oxford and Cambridge from the Fourteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century; II, Europe, Scotland, and the United States from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, by Lawrence Stone," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 7 (1976): 319–22; Charles E. McClelland, "A Step Forward in the Study of Universities," ed. Lawrence Stone, *Minerva* 14 (1976): 150–61; Roy Porter, "Review of *The University in Society. Vol. I: Oxford and Cambridge from the 14th to the Early 19th Century; The University in Society. Vol. II: Europe, Scotland and the United States from the 16th to the 20th Century*, by Lawrence Stone," *Historical Journal* 19 (1976): 550–52; Daniel Roselle, "Review of *The University in Society*, by Lawrence Stone," *American Historical Review* 81 (1976): 573; W. R. Ward, "Review of *The University in Society*, by Lawrence Stone," *English Historical Review* 91 (1976): 378–81; and Michael D. Gordon, "Review of *The University in Society; Students and Society in Early Modern Spain*, by Lawrence Stone and Richard L. Kagan," *Journal of Modern History* 49 (1977): 298–301.

marked the final year of the Davis Center's five-year experimental phase. To evaluate the experience of the Center and to plot its potential future, Stone suggested the university conduct a formal review of the Center's activities, leading President Bowen to appoint a three-person committee of visitors. The committee, composed of Franklin L. Ford, O. Meredith Wilson, and C. Vann Woodward, was initially scheduled to visit campus in the fall of 1973, but Stone suffered a mild heart attack, delaying the "inquisition," as Provost Sheldon Hackney joked, until February 1974.⁹⁶ The visitors ultimately offered two principal recommendations. First, they strongly endorsed the research

seminar. "If one considers our primary task to be that of assessing the actual and potential value of the Center to history at Princeton, to the University and to the profession," they wrote, "our most important finding clearly is this strong endorsement of the Seminar's intellectual contribution."⁹⁷ But, they insisted, it would also likely be best if the seminar was the Center's "one special activity." Indeed, in their conversations with faculty, the committee encountered "certain misgivings ... concerning the budgetary arrangements between Department and Center" and urged Bowen to cleanly separate the seminar and the administration of the remainder of the Davis gift. In implementing these recommendations, Bowen committed 33 percent of the income from the Davis fund to the seminar and placed control of the remainder with the department.⁹⁸



Dustjacket of the first of two volumes of *The University in Society*, edited by Lawrence Stone and published by Princeton University Press in 1974.

⁹⁶ Sheldon Hackney to C. Vann Woodward, September 21, 1973; Sheldon Hackney to William G. Bowen, November 2, 1972, folder 6, box 30, Office of the Provost Records, AC195, Princeton University Archives, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

⁹⁷ Franklin L. Ford, O. Meredith Wilson, and C. Vann Woodward to William G. Bowen, February 19, 1974, Department of History Records, Princeton University Library.

⁹⁸ William G. Bowen to Richard Challener, April 5, 1974, Department of History Records,

The Miller

Arguably, the 1973–1974 academic year fostered one of the most significant projects produced by a Davis fellow. “In the semester I spent at the Davis Seminar I wrote a first draft of a study begun some years earlier,” Carlo Ginzburg wrote in his fellowship summary, describing the origins of what would become *The Cheese and the Worms*, a pioneering work in micro-history. He presented this early version of the landmark book to the Davis seminar in French and entitled it “Le fromage et les vers: Le cosme d’un meunier du XVe siècle.” “The subject of this study,” Ginzburg wrote, “is a miller of Friuli ... called Menocchio, who lived in the second half of the sixteenth century, and who was burned as a relapsed heretic by the Holy Office of the Roman Inquisition.” “By means of an analysis of the miller’s responses to the inquisitors’ questions,” Ginzburg explained, “and by means of a reconstruction of his books, and above all of the way he read them, I believe it is possible to make contact with a deep and still largely unknown stratum of artisan and peasant culture.”

In the course of the months I spent at the Davis Center the general approach of my work changed considerably. My discussions with friends and colleagues, both within and outside the seminar, induced me to try for a better understanding of the social context within which my miller absorbed, worked out and spread his ideas. At the same time, I became aware of the importance of the problem of the “representativeness” of the miller: in what sense can his ideas, his culture, be considered expressions of a class or a social stratum—and of which one?

John Elliott, in a 1980 review in the *New York Review of Books*, was also concerned about this problem. “Was Menocchio any more representative of the Italian peasant than was Don Quixote of the Castilian hidalgo?” Elliott asked. “Dr. Ginzburg is prepared to concede that Menocchio ‘cannot be considered a ‘typical’ peasant of his age, but he also thinks that

Menocchio's distinctiveness had 'very definite limits,' and that 'a few soundings confirm the existence of traits reduceable to a common peasant culture.' In fact, he presents Menocchio to us not just for the intrinsic fascination of his story, which he amply proves, but also because he believes that the miller's tale can tell us something of importance about the nature of 'popular culture' itself."ⁱ

ⁱ John H. Elliott, "Rats or Cheese?" *New York Review of Books*, June 26, 1980.

As a part of this arrangement, Bowen recommended that Stone retain the directorship for an additional three-year term.⁹⁹ After Stone had another heart attack in early 1975, the sinecure became unofficially permanent.¹⁰⁰ In a February 1978 memo to Bowen recommending Stone's reappointment for another three-year term, History department chair Robert Tignor praised Stone's leadership of the center. "He is a very broad gauged, catholic historian and can lead research and discussion on a wide variety of subjects," Tignor wrote. But, Tignor also confided, "under ordinary circumstances the directorship of the Center ought to rotate among members of the department." Circumstances were not ordinary. "Lawrence's health is always a matter of concern and he is protected to some extent by being Director," Tignor explained. "Nonetheless I am troubled by the precedent being established of having one person in charge of this important historical endeavor for such a long time and I want to go on record as favoring a more rapid rotation of the directorship in the future." For the time being, Tignor concluded, "I am inclined to favor the idea that Lawrence continue to serve as long as he likes."¹⁰¹

For Stone, the directorship of the Davis Center became a significant base of institutional power, one complemented by his position on the editorial board of *Past & Present* and his prolific scholarly and

Princeton University Library.

⁹⁹ Bowen to Challenger, April 5, 1974.

¹⁰⁰ Murrin, "The Eminence Rouge?" 29.

¹⁰¹ Robert L. Tignor to William G. Bowen, February 24, 1978, folder 2, box 15, Bowen Papers.

critical output. Indeed, beginning with Richard Kagan's article "Universities in Castile 1500–1700," Stone became, as John Elliott phrased it, "*Past & Present's* talent-scout in the United States," soliciting the best Davis seminar papers for publication in that journal.¹⁰² By his next reappointment, in 1979, the Davis Center was well on its way to becoming the setting of the "Hot History Department."¹⁰³

The Research Seminar

The Seminar will normally meet on a weekly basis throughout most of the academic year, to discuss papers prepared by Visiting Fellows, by Princeton faculty and students, or by visitors invited from elsewhere for the occasion.

*The Seminar will be open to all members of the Princeton History Department, whether faculty, graduate students or undergraduates, and to all other members of the University who are interested in the problem. It is also open to all members of the Institute for Advanced Study and to all qualified scholars from neighboring universities who wish to attend.*¹⁰⁴

The description of the research seminar provided by the 1974 charter of the Davis Center has remained remarkably stable in the intervening forty-five years. Stability has not meant stasis, however. Like the Center itself, the culture of the seminar and the practices and customs surrounding it have evolved through periods of experimentation and retrenchment over the past fifty years. Even the basic structure and format of the seminar took time to coalesce. The precirculated paper, which has often been identified, in the reports of visiting fellows and the recollections of participants, as the most important innovation of the seminar, only gradually became the accepted norm. Even so, the "crystallization" of the seminar's format Stone sought was never perfectly achieved. Although the seminar may seem to junior faculty and graduate students an institution unchanged since time immemorial, in a number of ways it has been the seminar's flexibility that has enabled it to remain a thriving site of intellectual work.

¹⁰² Richard L. Kagan, "Universities in Castile 1500–1700," *Past & Present* 49 (1970): 44–71; Elliott, "Lawrence Stone," 5.

¹⁰³ Robert L. Tignor to William G. Bowen, August 16, 1979, folder 2, box 15, Bowen Papers.

¹⁰⁴ "The Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies Charter Document, 1974," 2.

Changing the Format

Since 1974, the Davis Center has met on a near weekly basis, in the face of national catastrophes and financial crises, to discuss article-length, precirculated papers on that year's theme presented by visiting fellows of the Davis Center, invited scholars, faculty members, and on rare occasions, graduate students. The internal format of the seminar has also followed a seemingly similar, set trajectory over time. A short opening comment and assessment of the precirculated paper is offered by the director, another faculty member, or an invited guest. The presenter is allowed an equally brief period of time to give a few introductory remarks and respond to the opening comment. The seminar then settles down to a prolonged discussion of the paper, and it is concluded by the director's summation of the discussion and the paper itself, a summation that has received universal praise in all eras. However, this short summary is misleading and obscures the innovative character of the seminar, and Stone's own experimentation with its format. For example, the third and fourth meetings of the seminar in 1969 coupled papers by Robert Church and Sheldon Rothblatt (on October 31) and papers by James McPherson and Patrick Alston (on November 14). In these early years, previously published books, rather than article-length papers, were occasionally precirculated for discussion by the seminar. In the seminars of October 31 and November 14, 1969, both Rothblatt and Alston presented their most recently published monographs, *The Revolution of the Dons* and *Education and the State in Tsarist Russia* respectively.¹ Throughout most of his directorship, Stone personally delivered an opening comment, or perhaps more aptly, a critical evaluation, of the precirculated material. Beginning in 1978, Stone experimented with

¹ Stone, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1969–1970," appendix II, 1; Sheldon Rothblatt, *The Revolution of the Dons: Cambridge and Society in Victorian England* (New York: Basic Books, 1968); Patrick Alston, *Education and the State in Tsarist Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969).

that format by inviting other regular participants with expert knowledge of the subject area to open discussion with a prepared statement. Though he thought the experiment “seemed to work well” and “intended to continue this practice next year whenever it seems appropriate,” the outside commentator remained rare throughout the 1980s and only became a standard feature of the seminar in 1990, when Natalie Zemon Davis succeeded Stone as director of the Davis Center and adopted a less interventionist approach as seminar leader.ⁱⁱ

Furthermore, the seminar, originally two hours in length—and often spilling into a third—was also shortened in 1979 to one and a half hours. One fellow from the previous year was certain that this was a “sound” decision. He described the terrible calculus: “If we give ourselves two hours, there is inevitably the feeling that we must *fill* two hours.”ⁱⁱⁱ In the forty years since 1979, the length of the seminar has continued to fluctuate between one and a half and two hours. Although not universally popular among the fellows, particularly those of a sleepier disposition, the seminar customarily has been held on Friday morning, starting anywhere between 9:00 and 10:30 AM. Stephen Botein, another fellow in 1978–1979, pointed out the benefits to an early morning start: “There is more challenge and stimulation in the interchange encouraged by a program that schedules meetings before and during lunch, instead of before and during the cocktail hour.”^{iv} The current start time of 10:15 AM was another innovation of Natalie Zemon Davis in 1990—a change considered worthy of inclusion in the annual report.^v The one significant, though temporary, departure from these general practices occurred under the directorship of Gyan Prakash (2003–2008), who moved the seminar to Thursday afternoon as part of a broader effort to rejuvenate,

ⁱⁱ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1978–1979,” 7.

ⁱⁱⁱ Robert Fox, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1978–1979,” appendix II, 6.

^{iv} Stephen Botein, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1978–1979,” appendix II, 3.

^v Natalie Zemon Davis, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1990–1991,” appendix I, 2.

reenergize, and remodel the activities of the Davis Center and its seminar. The decision proved controversial among some senior members of the faculty and complicated the department's internal schedule, and so the seminar reverted to Friday morning beginning in the fall of 2008.^{vi}

^{vi}Gyan Prakash, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 2003–2004," 1–2; Gyan Prakash, Interview by Sean Vanatta, December 3, 2018, transcript, 23–24.

Themes

The Executive Committee will recommend allocations of funds between support of the Department for its own internal research uses on the one hand, and on the other for the support of research activities which will involve some members of the Department together with visitors from outside. These latter activities will normally center around a specific "theme" or "field" or "problem" and will find their common focus in a discussion group. The group will meet as often as it thinks fit throughout the academic year, and will be known as the Davis Research Seminar.

If the Center is to make a significant contribution to historical scholarship, it must concentrate its resources rather than disperse them randomly throughout the profession. On the other hand, the Center should not become a permanent vehicle for the special advancement of any one field or methodology. It should therefore concentrate on a single field or methodology at any one time, but should change its focus of interest periodically. The membership of the Executive Committee should therefore change, no one member holding consecutive office for more than five years.¹⁰⁵

At its founding in 1969, the Davis seminar was part of a small constellation of fellowship-granting institutions. It pioneered a novel approach to scholarly inquiry through its commitment to the precirculated paper, and especially through its thematic approach, which provided an organizing set of problems to unite and propel the seminar's activity. "It was that sense of cumulative interest in theme that was so striking," Daniel Rodgers recalled. "What I remember is the intensity with which Lawrence went after the big theme, the way in which

¹⁰⁵Charter, "The Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies," April 10, 1968.

he imagined the seminars as cumulative, the ways in which it began to be clear that everybody in the room knew certain texts and they had certain key arguments, that they were within that discourse.”¹⁰⁶ For Stone, the theme provided the basis for interrogating significant historical problems within the seminar and then broadcasting that work outward through multiple channels of publication and scholarly discussion. Stone's ambition was, as the Center's charter made explicit, “to make a significant contribution to historical scholarship” by choosing themes in the “middle range,” those developed enough to sustain collective examination, but also those where further promising work was likely to occur. Over time, however, the capacity for the seminar to shape an increasingly large and diffuse profession waned, and successive directors have sought to reimagine the role of the themes and their audience. Nevertheless, the ambition—perhaps audacity—to identify and pursue themes that cross temporal, geographic, and methodological boundaries remains deeply imbedded in the seminar's culture.

The thematic emphasis fundamentally reflected Stone's approach to history, bred of the midcentury optimism that with the right tools and the right methodologies the big problems of history could be solved. For Stone, and for many of the younger scholars in the department, new methods were vital to moving beyond the profession's long-standing emphasis on political narratives and providing more durable explanations for historical transformation. “If history is not concerned with change, it is nothing,” Stone wrote in *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*.¹⁰⁷ Through the seminar, Stone sought keys to unlock that change wherever he could find them.

Thus, for Stone, the themes were always both topical and methodological. Stone sought out areas of inquiry, like the histories of education, the family, or the professions, with broad social implications, but where historians had done only limited work. He then sought new methodological approaches to shed light on the topics. For *History of Education*, Stone encouraged the collection of vast longitudinal data on the social backgrounds and later careers of European university

¹⁰⁶ Daniel Rodgers, Interview by Sean Vanatta, August 20, 2018, transcript, 13.

¹⁰⁷ Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 4.

students over many centuries. For *History of the Family*, Stone dove deep into demography. For *History of the Professions*, seminar participants whittled down Max Weber's definition of a profession until there was virtually nothing left. The seminar's theme, participants concluded, gave the meetings their intellectual energy and created sustained opportunities to identify and clarify historical problems. Stone, for his part, was particularly keen to find concrete answers. "Was this the moving force?" was his constant refrain.¹⁰⁸

At first, Stone focused the seminar's methodological attention on quantitative social sciences, like demography, economics, and sociology, but over time he also embraced anthropological approaches. To some extent, this transformation was guided by larger trends Stone detected in the field. In a 1971 review of recent works in the history of popular religion, a theme the Center took up two years later, Stone observed: "For some years now historians have been conducting successful raiding parties into sociology, and have brought back valuable loot from Weber and Durkheim ... It was only a matter of time before some enterprising young historians would lead a search party into anthropological territory to see what men like Malinowsky and Evans-Pritchard might be made to contribute."¹⁰⁹ *Popular Religion* and *Popular Culture* opened space for anthropological approaches within the seminar, an attention that deepened through the participation of anthropologists like Clifford Geertz, then at the Institute for Advanced Study, and department members such as Robert Darnton and Natalie Zemon Davis, who made use of anthropological methods in their own scholarship.

Stone's examination of popular religion in the *New York Review of Books* was also part of a continuous effort to contribute to, and guide, the course of historical scholarship through his critical writing, elevating themes and approaches he thought most appropriate.¹¹⁰ Stone's own scholarship reflected the changing approaches developed in the seminar, especially the anthropological tools he brought to his

¹⁰⁸ Rodgers, Interview, 14.

¹⁰⁹ Lawrence Stone, "The Disenchantment of the World," *New York Review of Books*, December 2, 1971.

¹¹⁰ For other theme-related contributions to the *New York Review of Books*, see Stone's "The Massacre of the Innocents," *New York Review of Books*, November 14, 1974; and "Walking Over Grandma," *New York Review of Books*, May 12, 1977.

Themes of the Davis Center Seminar

Lawrence Stone

- 1969-1973 *History of Education*
- 1973-1974 *Popular Religion*
- 1974-1976 *Popular Culture*
- 1976-1978 *History of the Family*
- 1978-1980 *History of the Professions*
- 1980-1982 *Political Power and Ideology*
- 1982-1984 *War and Society*
- 1984-1986 *Charity and Welfare*
- 1986-1988 *The Transmission of Culture*
- 1988-1990 *Power and Responses to Power*

Natalie Zemon Davis

- 1990-1992 *Colonialism, Imperialism, and the Colonial Aftermath*
- 1992-1994 *Proof and Persuasion*

William Chester Jordan

- 1994-1996 *Business, Enterprise and Culture*
- 1996-1998 *Animals and Human Society*
- 1998-1999 *Corruption*

Anthony Grafton

- 1999-2001 *Conversion: Sacred and Profane*
- 2001-2003 *Migration*

Gyan Prakash

- 2003-2005 *Cities: Space, Society, and History*
- 2005-2007 *Utopia/Dystopia: Historical Conditions of Possibility*
- 2007-2008 *Fear*

Daniel T. Rodgers

- 2008-2010 *Cultures and Institutions in Motion*
- 2010-2012 *Authority and Legitimation*

Philip G. Nord

- 2012-2014 *Belief and Unbelief*
- 2014-2016 *In the Aftermath of Catastrophe*

Angela N. H. Creager

- 2016-2018 *Risk and Fortune*
- 2018-2020 *Law and Legalities*

David A. Bell

- 2020-2022 *Revolutionary Change*

own history of the family. And, when the hope that quantification would solve the problems of history faded, both within the seminar room and through the larger profession, Stone accepted the shift. His 1979 article, "The Revival of Narrative," was, in its way, a paean to the work of his colleagues who had been using the seminar to plot new approaches through cultural anthropology and literary theory (even if some of these colleagues thought that Stone did not always fully grasp what they were trying to achieve).¹¹¹

While the search for new methods was undoubtedly fruitful, individual themes often proved inconclusive or unworkable. *History of the Family*, which the seminar tackled from 1976 to 1978, was especially difficult. "Given the diversity of approaches to the topic in the papers, and the diversity of time and space covered, there was not much opportunity to develop any systematic sense of progress in understanding the underlying problems inherent in the field," Stone lamented at the conclusion of the theme's second year in 1978. "Despite a clear inclination towards a cultural rather than, say, economic underpinning of the subject, there is no common set of problems, shared questions, or mutual aim among the members," one fellow complained.¹¹² All agreed, however, that the 1977–1978 seminar had improved significantly the previous year's work, when, as a fellow from the earlier cohort recalled, "no new ideas were generated in the discussions."¹¹³

The process of selecting themes evolved gradually over the life of the Center. During his long tenure, Stone invited the faculty to propose themes, which the department then voted on. This process continued through the first few post-Stone directorships, though it was never purely democratic. The directors' view carried significant weight. As William Chester Jordan observed, "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."¹¹⁴ Eventually the formal

¹¹¹ Darnton, Interview, 24–25; Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History," *Past & Present* 85 (1979): 3–24.

¹¹² Stone, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1977–1978," 3; Alan C. Dawley, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1977–1978," appendix II, 3.

¹¹³ Lutz K. Berkner, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1976–1977," appendix II, 3.

¹¹⁴ William Chester Jordan, Interview by Sean Vanatta, September 7, 2018, transcript, 18. Although Jordan's statement is accurate, it is also a clever pun since he directed the *Animals and Human Society* theme between 1997 and 1998. Like his cherished rustics, Jordan's animal

process fell away, so that directors had a great deal of discretion in selecting themes. Some directors continued to seek suggestions from faculty colleagues. *Utopia/Dystopia: Historical Conditions of Possibility* was suggested by two assistant professors (regular attendees of the seminar) who went on to coedit the resulting volume. Directors regularly consulted with the Davis Center Executive Committee in refining a theme, but, in the final accounting, "it's the director who lives with the topic for a two-year period, and the committee's not going to cause trouble."¹¹⁵

Although Stone envisioned the profession as the primary audience (in absentia) for the seminar's work, the weekly audience at Princeton was also a decisive factor in the selection of themes and in their ultimate success. The seminar's place within the department has long served as a source of opportunity and tension. Like History 500, which aimed to introduce graduate students to the most cutting edge historical and social-scientific work, the seminar, through the selection of themes, was meant to elevate the practices of historical inquiry at Princeton.¹¹⁶ For William Chester Jordan, the *Popular Culture* theme was "decisive." Describing his work on Jewish-Christian relations in the Middle Ages, Jordan recalled that without the seminar, "it would probably have been from an almost purely political point of view, political history, or even administrative history. But through the Davis Seminar ... [I] was stimulated to think about the social aspects of those relations and the interplay of politics, economics, and so on."¹¹⁷ Most interviewees who came to Princeton as junior faculty likewise described the seminar as a new education, which significantly broadened their scholarly horizons.

Theme selection also generated tensions, though those floated beneath the surface through Stone's tenure. In a 1971 memo, for instance, Stone recommended that the next theme, covering the years 1973–1977, should be "the Family," a subject Stone would soon take up on his own account. The topic was "easily the most popular subject in the Department," Stone wrote to the Davis Center Executive

was likely the pig.

¹¹⁵ Nord, Interview, 39.

¹¹⁶ Jordan, Interview, 8–9.

¹¹⁷ Jordan, 9.

Committee, but it was passed over in favor of *Popular Culture* without any explanation.¹¹⁸ Likewise, as the seminar increasingly took up anthropological approaches and examinations of meaning, Stone seems to have encountered pressure to pursue themes more engaged with issues of politics and power. In the final year of *The Professions*, Stone wrote: "The Director felt very strongly that after 1980 the Center should turn its attention to topics concerned not with social and cultural themes but those related to political power. Otherwise," he continued, "there was a danger that the Center would, quite falsely, come to be seen as more interested in one kind of history than another."¹¹⁹ During the final years of his tenure, the themes oscillated between more explicitly cultural themes, like *Charity and Welfare* and the *Transmission of Culture*, and more recognizably political themes, such as *Power and Responses to Power*.

Sometimes, themes have proved surprisingly influential for individual scholars. As Inga Clendinnen wrote of her experience in the 1983–1984 academic year:

I was initially attracted rather by the general situation and style of the Davis Center than by the particular theme on *War and Society*, which I thought could be at best tangential to my interests. But as so often happens, at least in my intellectual life, the apparently fortuitous was revealed as providential. The "warrior in society" theme I pursued in my seminar paper now provides the organizing principle for an extended study on Aztec society on the eve of conquest. The paper has been redrafted and submitted for publication, the shape of a projected book roughed out, and the relevant material ... gathered.¹²⁰

The article, "The Cost of Courage in Aztec Society," appeared the following year in *Past & Present*, with an acknowledgment to the "members of the Shelby Cullom Davis Seminar ... who responded to an initial draft of this article with lively interest, subtle and acute criticism, and generous encouragement." The book, *Ambivalent Conquests: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatán, 1517–1570* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), won the Bolton Prize for the best book

¹¹⁸ Stone to Davis Center Executive Committee, October 12, 1971.

¹¹⁹ Stone, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1978–1979," 8.

¹²⁰ Inga Clendinnen, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1983–1984," appendix II, 7.

in Latin American history.

Despite Clendinnen's prize-winning work at the Center, looming over many of the subterranean debates within the department was the seminar's perennial omission of non-Western histories. For department members like Robert Tignor, an Africanist and long-serving department chair, this was galling, a circumstance he attributed to Stone's own parochial interests.

I went to a brilliant lecture that [Lawrence] did on the coffee houses in England, in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. And he said, "Well, they drank coffee, they smoked tobacco, they had tea, they had lots of sugar, they talked politics." So, I raised my hand after the lecture was over. And I said, "Well, Lawrence, what can you say, or what are you willing to say about where these products came from ... how did they arrive, and under what circumstances did they appear in English Society?" And he said, "I'm only interested in those products when they reached the soils of England."

"That," Tignor concluded, "said a lot."¹²¹

Moreover, while the seminar's themes created room for emerging subdisciplines rooted in the identity movements of the 1960s and 1970s, under Stone's leadership the seminar never engaged these movements directly and it was slow to even accept papers on such themes. For example, the first paper dedicated explicitly to some aspect of women's history was not delivered until the fifth year of the seminar's existence, when historian Joan Scott gave a paper entitled "Women's Work and the Family in 19th Century Europe" on November 22, 1974.¹²² The second paper dedicated to women's history was given by the department's own William Chester Jordan in 1976, a work entitled "The Status of Women in Thirteenth Century France: Evidence from the *Enquêtes Provinciales*."¹²³ In a sense, this neglect reflected Stone's conviction that the historian's task was to explain large-scale socioeconomic and political changes, and that careful and specific attention to women and other marginalized groups was unlikely to shed light on these larger concerns. His conviction could, in

¹²¹ Tignor, Interview, 19.

¹²² "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1974-1975," appendix I, 1.

¹²³ "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1975-1976," appendix I, 2.

part, explain why the *History of the Family* theme was such a “disappointment” in 1977.

Stone’s subsequent critical engagement with women’s history, and with Joan Scott, is illustrative. In a 1985 review of two works of women’s history in the *New York Review of Books*, Stone affected the voice of God, issuing “ten commandments which should, in my opinion, govern the writing of women’s history at any time and in any place.”¹²⁴ In an acid response, Scott wrote, “The impression left is that a great authority has deigned to comment on some works that are by their nature minor, that his is the only standard of judgment possible, and that the subject matter and its historians will never quite measure up.”¹²⁵ Stone was wounded by Scott’s reply and sought to emphasize that he was “for equal treatment of women in academia.”¹²⁶ For Stone, though, within the seminar and without, the appropriate standards for academic work remained his standards.

Stone’s fundamental project, first as department chair and then as director, had been to expand the boundaries of historical and methodological inquiry, at Princeton and in the wider academy. But by the 1980s, Stone was increasingly a liberal in a progressive age. In the intervening years, the department had experienced conflicts over what the faculty would look like and what kinds of history it would embrace. A new generation of scholars was eager to press the project of inclusion further and faster than Stone’s initial vision.

Stone’s retirement in 1990 thus created the opportunity to correct the seminar’s increasingly glaring omissions, a challenge boldly taken up by the Center’s second director, Natalie Zemon Davis. As Daniel Rodgers, who was then department chair, recalled, Davis actively sought the role of director. Her directorship, Rodgers claimed, amounted to a “re-founding” of the Center. Davis, then a preeminent scholar of early modern France, turned the seminar’s lens squarely on the non-European world with the theme *Colonialism, Imperialism, and the Colonial Aftermath*. This transition was a consequence of Davis’s own evolving scholarly interests, as well as her political interest in

¹²⁴ Lawrence Stone, “Only Women,” *New York Review of Books*, April 11, 1985.

¹²⁵ Joan W. Scott, “Women’s History,” *New York Review of Books*, May 30, 1985.

¹²⁶ Lawrence Stone, Reply to Joan W. Scott, “Women’s History,” *New York Review of Books*, May 30, 1985.

and commitments toward the developing world.¹²⁷ The change also fit the evolving character of the department, where long-term members of the faculty, like Tignor and Latin Americanist Stanley Stein, had recently been joined by Gyan Prakash, a South Asianist and emissary of subaltern studies. By embracing the global, Davis permanently embedded non-Western histories into the intellectual mission of the seminar.

In addition to using the theme to shift the seminar's geographic emphasis, Davis also expanded the seminar's disciplinary horizons, moving from social science and anthropology into literary theory. This transition had, to some extent, been underway during the latter years of Stone's tenure, driven by the interests of the faculty and the fellows. But despite his embrace of narrative as a method for writing history, Stone remained deeply skeptical of scholars like Michel Foucault, of discourse analysis, and of the postmodern turn.¹²⁸ Stone, it seems, may even have banned the term "discourse" from discussion during the *Transmission of Culture* theme.¹²⁹ Davis, however, was eager to give these approaches a fair hearing. Reflecting on her two terms as director, she recalled, "I just thought these were themes that brought in, both of them, different networks in the department and across campus that would nourish the intellectual life of the Davis Center."¹³⁰

Following Stone's perpetual directorship, the department has followed a model where directors serve two consecutive two-year terms, selecting two themes covering their four years of service (and an additional one-year theme if the incoming director happened to be on leave). Under the Center's constitution, the director is officially appointed by the president of the university, though the actual decision-making power has long rested with the department chair. When seeking to appoint a new director, the chair polls the past directors, and appointees have often been long-serving faculty and long-standing participants in the life of the Center. Administrative experience and skill have certainly been sought-after qualities, and many directors

¹²⁷ Rodgers, Interview, 32; Prakash, Interview, esp. 5; Tignor, Interview, 24–25; and Natalie Zemon Davis, Interview by Sean Vanatta, September 25, 2018, transcript, 40–42.

¹²⁸ Lawrence Stone, "Madness," *New York Review of Books*, December 16, 1982.

¹²⁹ Stone, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1986–1987," 6.

¹³⁰ Davis, Interview, 30–31. The second theme of Davis's directorship was *Proof and Persuasion*.

previously or subsequently served as department chair or in other important administrative roles. By relying on the input of past directors, the process, too, has helped solidify the project, begun with Davis's appointment and resonant in the department and throughout the profession, of expanding the range of persons who counted in history and who counted as scholars. Although the Center has never addressed these efforts in explicit themes, after Davis's directorship they were nevertheless pursued within themes, through fellow selection, and by director appointments.¹³¹

Stone's tenure was long, his interests were many, and there was often significant overlap between his own research agenda and the themes chosen by the seminar. For directors on a more limited term, the stakes surrounding the choice of theme may appear higher. Some directors have tried to look beyond their own immediate scholarly concerns, to identify important areas of exciting and novel methodological work. Anthony Grafton's theme of *Conversion* fits within this mold. It built on interest within the department and the wider field but had little direct connection to his scholarship. It was "an itch that I'd always wanted to scratch," he explained.¹³² Likewise *Migration*: "I was curious." Other directors, like Stone, have hewn more closely to their immediate research interests. For Philip Nord, his work on the Holocaust suggested both *Belief* and *Catastrophe* as vital themes. Angela Creager saw intersections between her work on science and environmental health and ideas about risk percolating through social science and economic history. Framing theme choices as either externally or internally motivated, of course, is meant to suggest a spectrum of approaches, rather than poles. All directors have conceptualized their projects as efforts to engage and advance leading themes in historical studies, whether they pursued the selection from the outside-in or the inside-out.

Some themes have found their moment. When William Chester Jordan proposed *Animals and Human Society*, his colleagues expressed significant apprehension. Were there enough scholars engaged with this work? And was this a serious topic? The presence,

¹³¹ We would like to thank Daniel Rodgers for this formulation and his encouragement to emphasize this point more directly.

¹³² Grafton, Interview, 54.

during the first year, of a live snake at one of the seminars may not have gone far in convincing them. By the second year, “certain colleagues in the department did not seem to give the biennial question all the scientific weight it deserved,” one fellow remarked. “‘What’s your animal?’ they would ask each other jokingly.”¹³³ But the theme, and the commitment of the Davis Center to explore it, answered these concerns, both within the department and—more importantly for the fellows and other scholars working at the animal-human boundary—within the larger profession. It validated their work. Reflecting on the choice of themes, Jordan wrote, “I have never been more certain that an undertaking in which I have played a part had a more important impact on the direction of scholarship.”¹³⁴

Other themes have fallen flat or missed their window. For Daniel Rodgers, the theme of *Authority and Legitimation* grew from an acute personal interest. “I don’t understand why people obey authority. I really don’t.”¹³⁵ Yet, despite the fellows’ collective engagement, the seminar, Rodgers observed, lacked a theoretical foundation beyond the works of Max Weber. Without this grounding, it was difficult to build positive momentum around the core interpretive or evidentiary problems raised by the theme. “It’s a case where my own sense of what I thought was going to have pretty wide reverberations in the profession didn’t turn out

to be as accurate as I hoped,” Rodgers recalled. Other directors have



Poster for “Conversion: Old Worlds and New,” October 29, 1999, a conference organized by Anthony Grafton during his *Conversion* theme. Grafton and his executive secretary, Kenneth Mills, went on to publish two volumes of essays on the theme of conversion.

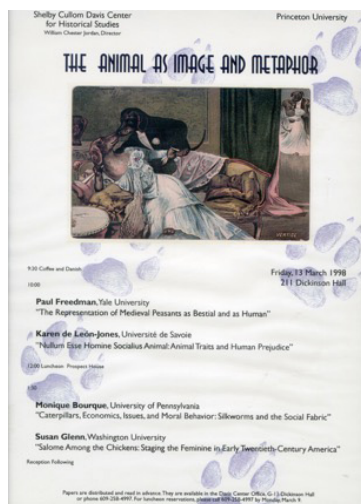
¹³³ François Pouillon, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1997–1998,” appendix II, 8.

¹³⁴ William Chester Jordan, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1997–1998,” 6–7. Human-Animal Studies is a vibrant field, though the precise impact of the theme on that growth is impossible to determine. For overviews, see Margo DeMello and Kenneth Shapiro, “The State of Human-Animal Studies,” *Society & Animals* 18 (2010): 307–18; David G. Shaw, “A Way with Animals,” *History and Theory* 52 (2013): 1–12.

¹³⁵ Rodgers, Interview, 4.1.

seen themes struggle for more prosaic reasons. A distinct lack of physical and mental attendance by fellows and other participants stifled Grafton's curiosity about *Migration*.¹³⁶

Directors have also used themes to challenge and unsettle the department, especially through an intensive engagement with theoretical approaches. Natalie Zemon Davis's embrace of literary theory certainly had this effect, as did Gyan Prakash's engagement with critical geography and urban studies. "How," Prakash wondered as he worked to frame his first theme, *Cities: Space, Society, and History*, "does one bring space into the consideration of history because historians largely think of temporality and not in terms of space." The resulting effort drew especially on the foundational work of critical geographers like David Harvey and theorists like Walter Benjamin, but was meant to encourage, as Prakash described, "people who work on urban matters from a variety of different perspectives—sociology, economics, literary people, geography, anthropology, cultural studies, and so on."¹³⁷ Within the department, many traditionally minded empiricists found the theoretical approach demanding and occasionally absurd. "Walter Benjamin's work was especially pronounced," Kevin Kruse, who served as executive secretary under *Cities: Space, Society, and History*, recalled. "One of the seminar participants joked with me that there was now at every point in the seminar someone who would invoke Benjamin and his *flâneur*. And once she said it, I realized it really did happen every single seminar." Kruse was doubtless exaggerating, and he was also quick to emphasize how generative the discussions were for his own development as a young faculty member. "For me the seminars really proved to be



Poster for "The Animal as Image and Metaphor," a four-paper conference on March 13, 1998, which was part of the *Animals and Human Society* theme directed by William Chester Jordan.

¹³⁶ Grafton, Interview, 60–61.

¹³⁷ Prakash, Interview, 20.

an education."¹³⁸

That the history of science has played a less explicit role in theme selection than critical theory over the life of the seminar is to some extent surprising, but it also reflects the different axes on which the Center and the history of science program turned until very recently. When she was hired as an assistant professor in 1994, Angela Creager had only recently made the transition from scientist to historian of science. At that time the Program in History of Science had a rich intellectual legacy, founded on the institutional work of Charles Gillispie and the reputation of Thomas Kuhn, but maintained a distinctiveness in subject and method from the History department at large.¹³⁹ Successive efforts to rebuild the program in the late 1980s and 1990s had fostered stability, and the program's own seminar adopted the precirculated paper and commentator model employed in the Davis seminar. Over the 2000s, leadership of the program shifted to a younger generation, most of whom had served as Davis Center executive secretaries. While some earlier themes, such as *Animals and Human Society*, had aligned especially closely with history of science, Creager became the first historian of science appointed as director. Her directorship coincided with an increased interest among the department's graduate students in using tools from history of science, as witnessed by enrollment in the history of science methods course (595) and attendance at Program Seminar.

Finally, over the seminar's history, themes have often resurfaced or been reconfigured. Directors have tended to come from within the department, and they, along with the colleagues they consult as they seek to pin down a workable theme, often draw conscious and unconscious connections to the Center's previous work. Nord's *Belief and Unbelief* took cues from Davis's *Proof and Persuasion*. Culture, its movement and transmission, has come under attention again and again. Such thematic reappearances could be attributed to Princeton's institutional inertia or to the inability of historians to put problems to rest. These iterations have not proven to be mere repetitions, but they do point to the endurance of key problems in the profession at large.

¹³⁸ Kevin Kruse, Interview by Sean Vanatta, August 20, 2018, transcript, 18.

¹³⁹ Angela Creager, Interview by Sean Vanatta, September 11, 2018, transcript, 21–22.



Under the directorship of Gyan Prakash, Indra Gill became the graphic designer, and the Center began distributing eye-catching posters with each year's entire seminar lineup. Left to right: the poster for *Fear*, 2007–2008, under Gyan Prakash; the poster for year 2 of *Cultures and Institutions in Motion*, 2009–2010, under Daniel T. Rodgers; and the poster for year 2 of *Risk and Fortune*, under Angela N. H. Creager, 2017–2018.

The theme announced for 2020–2022, *Revolutionary Change*, certainly hearkens back to a preoccupation with power that has featured in seminars since 1969, though there is no doubt that the seminars will reach beyond the European touchstones of Stone's era.

Audience

I think [Stone] thought above all, that it was going to make a contribution to the historical profession. That was more important to him than anything that happened inside the department. That's why the published volumes were important. That's why bringing in outsiders was important. That's why thinking about Princeton as a magnet for people doing the most interesting work he could find and he and the committee could find, that's why that was important. So, I would say his very first audience wasn't even present physically, but was there. And I'm sure he was enormously proud of the reputation that the Davis Seminar had around the world for being one of the go-to places. If you got invited to give a paper at the Davis seminar, it was something important and something interesting would happen.

I think he wanted to be a funder of a certain kind of discourse inside the Princeton History department, and he did that. He wanted to, I think, also model a certain kind of a faculty member inside of Princeton—maybe I'm

*making this up—but the old Princeton had been full of wonderful teachers. It hadn't been necessarily part of what gave you prestige at Princeton to be a world-class academic. And I think Lawrence wanted to model a different kind of faculty member, maybe closer to what the sciences already had in, say, math and physics.*¹⁴⁰

By structuring the research seminar around a theme at the leading edge of historical scholarship, Stone expected to shape the research methods and agenda of the historical profession. The wistful recollections of participants from the early seminars suggest that many felt that they were doing just that: pressing new frontiers of historical work. Yet as Rodgers's recollections indicate, the seminar's audiences have always been multiple. Moreover, which audiences were most important has changed as, within an enlarging and changing profession, the original field-defining ambition no longer seemed appropriate or attainable. As Angela Creager observed, "There's a legitimate question as to whether a five-person center at one wealthy university can have a big impact on history at large. I think we would like to imagine that our themes and whatever edited volumes we issue kind of help to steer fields. It's not clear to me that that happens, but that doesn't mean it's not a worthwhile endeavor."¹⁴¹

For Stone, the most concrete way of reaching the profession was through scholarly publications, and since his directorship edited volumes have always been an important means of communicating the work taking place at Princeton to the wider profession. Judging by reviews, the first *University in Society* volumes were well- and widely received, but the Center soon faced difficulties finding—and retaining—publishers. The first four works were published by four different presses. A promised series with the University of North Carolina Press ignominiously fell apart. And even when the volumes found a semipermanent home at the University of Pennsylvania Press, they failed to satisfy expectations. For *Rites of Power*, edited by Sean Wilentz, "sales are sluggish at present," Stone lamented. "It may be that sales will pick up, or it may be that a book ranging so widely in time and space, bound together by a single theme, does not sell these days." Volumes, Stone complained, were increasingly the victim of technolo-

¹⁴⁰ Rodgers, Interview, 15–16.

¹⁴¹ Creager, Interview, 44.

gy. “Specialists in various fields and periods borrow the book from the library and xerox the article they are interested in,” Stone concluded, though he was gratified the next year that, following “some very enthusiastic reviews,” sales of *Rites of Power* were “quite brisk.”¹⁴²

Wilentz’s volume emerged out of a 1981 conference, “Ritual and Political Power,” which was the first theme-related, stand-alone conference hosted by the seminar. Such conferences, which multiplied in successive years, became an increasingly important activity of the Center, as directors sought other venues and collaborators for exploring their chosen themes. More focused in geographic and temporal scope than the seminar as a whole, and often organized by motivated executive secretaries and other junior faculty, conferences provided focused opportunities to develop edited volumes. Several, including Wilentz’s, have found wide historical readership and succeeded in shaping the agenda for emerging fields of historical research. Conferences also provided the opportunity to broaden the reach of the themes, bringing in a still wider range of scholars—and larger audiences—than the seminar could contain.

Directors have also used academic journals to promote the work of the seminar. The June 1978 and December 1979 issues of the *Journal of Family History* were composed of essays presented at the seminar between 1976 and 1978 during the *History of the Family* theme, with an introduction from Stone.¹⁴³ But like the volumes, such special issues nevertheless required significant continuity among the articles,



Dustjacket of *Rites of Power: Symbolism, Ritual, and Politics since the Middle Ages*, ed. Sean Wilentz (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

¹⁴² Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1985–1986,” 3; and Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1986–1987,” 4.

¹⁴³ Lawrence Stone, “Introduction,” *Journal of Family History* 3 (1978): 115.

which was often difficult to achieve. Moreover, as Stone explained following an inquiry from *Daedalus* about a possible volume of the seminar's best papers from that year, the seminar's best essays were often already committed elsewhere.¹⁴⁴ That Stone, as an editor of *Past & Present*, was an active poacher of Davis essays (as was Theodore Rabb, through his *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*) likely did not help matters.¹⁴⁵

The difficulties Stone experienced publishing seminar volumes continued to be a major challenge, and each director was left to negotiate what deals they could. After a four-volume run at the University of Pennsylvania Press, the series moved briefly back to Princeton University Press, before bouncing to Brepols during William Chester Jordan's directorship, and then to the University of Rochester Press under Tony Grafton. "Rochester had a small but well-organized press ... that did works of quality but of limited market, and they were willing to do it," Grafton recalled. "That was really their main qualification, they were willing to do it."¹⁴⁶

As they struggled to find presses willing to publish the volumes, directors likewise struggled to convince fellows to provide superior essays for publication, linked problems that became self-reinforcing. "Davis Fellows were, quite rightly, reluctant to put a good article in a volume," Grafton observed, that would likely receive limited distribution and little notice. Especially in the era before digitization, he continued, "you might as well bury it at a certain crossroads at midnight."¹⁴⁷

During his term as director, Gyan Prakash reversed this downward trajectory, using the Lawrence Stone Lectures as leverage in a deal with Princeton University Press to once again publish the volumes. The press wanted the Stone lectures, which were likely to reach

¹⁴⁴ Stone, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1985–1986," 3.

¹⁴⁵ The list of such publications is extensive. To provide only a few examples from the earliest years of the Davis Center: Richard L. Kagan, "Law Students and Legal Careers in Eighteenth-Century France," *Past & Present* 68 (1975): 38–72; Eileen Yeo, "Christianity in Chartist Struggle, 1838–1842," *Past & Present* 91 (1981): 109–39; James K. McConica, "The Prosopography of the Tudor University," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 3 (1973): 543–54; and William H. Beik, "Popular Culture and Elite Repression in Early Modern Europe," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 11 (1980): 97–103.

¹⁴⁶ Grafton, Interview, 70.

¹⁴⁷ Grafton, 69.

“a broader audience,” Prakash recalled. “And since they wanted that, I said, ‘Then you have to publish our volumes.’ (laughter) So that was quid pro quo.” For Prakash’s fellows, who were younger and more international than previous cohorts, the opportunity to publish “in a Princeton University Press volume was important.”¹⁴⁸ Prakash produced four volumes during his five years as director, certainly a record level of productivity.¹⁴⁹

Princeton University Press has continued to publish some Davis Center collections, but the momentum for producing volumes has declined. Since the financial crisis of 2008, the press has taken a stern line on the level of quality and directorial oversight they expect. Daniel Rodgers and Philip Nord produced only one volume each from their directorships, on the themes of *Cultures and Institutions in Motion* and *Belief and Unbelief* respectively.¹⁵⁰ “The press made clear, you know what? No more of this sort of junior faculty stuff,” Phil Nord explained. “That kind of steady churning without a lot of anxiety is no longer the case ... the cost of entry is now a lot higher.”¹⁵¹

The press’s concerns about quality have dovetailed with growing discomfort within the department about the Center’s convention of placing the editorial burden of its volumes on untenured executive secretaries. After Lawrence Stone’s *University in Society* volumes, junior faculty largely shouldered the editorial duties of the Center’s publications. Yet, although the rewards of compiling a field-shaping conference volume clearly speak to ambitious young faculty members, seminar volumes, with their wider scope, offered less tangible professional remuneration. The volumes also involve an enormous amount

¹⁴⁸ Prakash, Interview, 35.

¹⁴⁹ Kevin Kruse and Gyan Prakash, eds., *Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics, and Everyday Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Michael D. Gordin, Helen Tilley, and Gyan Prakash, eds., *Utopia/Dystopia: Conditions of Historical Possibility* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Gyan Prakash, ed., *Noir Urbanisms: Dystopic Images of the Modern City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Michael Laffan and Max Weiss, eds., *Facing Fear: The History of an Emotion in Global Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

¹⁵⁰ Daniel T. Rodgers, Bhavani Raman, and Helmut Reimitz, eds., *Cultures in Motion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); Philip Nord, Katja Guenther, and Max Weiss, eds., *Formations of Belief: Historical Approaches to Religion and the Secular* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

¹⁵¹ Nord, Interview, 54.

of work. In recent years, directors and other faculty have determined that pushing this work onto executive secretaries is no longer tenable. Though the position has long carried the nickname of “executive serf” within the department, there is a growing consensus that executive secretaries should not be serfs in practice.¹⁵² Consequently, as Nord claimed, the cost of entry for directors who wish to publish volumes has grown that much higher.

Although a variety of forces have limited the direct output of the Center, from Stone's perspective and that of subsequent directors, everything Davis fellows or seminar participants have published accrues to the Center's reputational benefit. Thus, although the publications of the Davis seminar, under its own imprimatur, have remained limited, directors, in their annual reports and later recollections, rightly emphasize the robust publication records that fellows and other seminar participants have achieved. Such scholarly output is more difficult to track and properly attribute (though we have tried). Nevertheless, any ambition Stone and subsequent directors had to shape the contours of historical scholarship should rightfully be judged in relation to this impressive and still expanding output, which includes thousands of articles, hundreds of books, and dozens of prizes.¹⁵³

If Stone's primary audience of the research seminar was the wider historical profession—and other participants have disputed this interpretation—then the Princeton community and the History department in particular were of course fundamentally important as well. From the Center's founding through the end of Stone's directorship, the seminar played a central role in the intellectual life of the university.¹⁵⁴ Stone was an intellectual entrepreneur, enthusiastic for new methods, eager to expand his audience and learn from new approaches. For example, in 1974 Stone wrote, “The attendance was larger and more diverse than in any previous year. There was never less than 15 members attending, and sometimes up to 30. They ranged from full professors to undergraduates, they were drawn from the History,

¹⁵² Department lore is that “executive serf” was introduced under the Center's first medievalist director, William Chester Jordan.

¹⁵³ For a bibliography of publications arising out of the Davis Center that attempts to be complete, see the department's website.

¹⁵⁴ Katz, Interview, 11–13.

English, Religion, Anthropology and Art History Departments, and came from Princeton University, the Institute for Advanced Study, Rutgers University and sometimes Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania.”¹⁵⁵ Following this pattern, each director has been concerned to attract the attendance of faculty members, graduate students, other members of the university, as well as outside scholars, and their annual reports often highlight the involvement of scholars and historians from across the university, local community, and wider region.

Within this desire for broad participation, for most directors, the participation of department faculty, especially junior faculty, has been an especially important goal. Directors who have risen from within the department tend to look back on their years as junior faculty as a kind of second education, when the experience of the seminar’s thematic, chronological, and geographic diversity pressed them beyond the narrow confines of their dissertation work, and familiarized them with their senior colleagues’ characteristic lines of inquiry (useful knowledge in preparing for reappointment and tenure review, to be sure). For those serving as executive secretaries to the Davis Center, the seminar discussions were only the beginning. According to Keith Wailoo:

I do think that there’s something useful about junior faculty being ... linked to this enterprise, because it’s one thing to be part of the conversation as a discussant or an attendee. It’s another thing to actually work with the Davis Center director to try to build an agenda for the year, to be part of the selection process for fellows, ... to be in the room where you’re reading applications from senior and not-so-senior people who want to be part of this conversation, speaking to this theme. And there is a lot to learn for a junior faculty person in the selection process, in thinking through how selection works, and in raising your voice to talk about qualities of scholarship, even if you’re junior, and all the people you’re judging are senior. And then seeing how your colleagues assess and think about strengths and weaknesses in scholarship ... there’s something clearly of value that happens there for junior people who are themselves trying to write a book for the first time, develop their own distinctive voice as a scholar,

¹⁵⁵ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1973–1974,” 2.

and navigate through a very contentious and demanding profession.¹⁵⁶

Given these ambitions, one theme that runs throughout the director's reports is concerns about the attendance of History faculty members at the seminar and the integration of the visiting fellows into the academic and social life of the department—or the lack thereof. In some ways, these concerns are a result of personality and perspective. While many fellows have grumbled about the commitment of the department to the seminar (usually in light of attendance at their own session), others have been amazed by that same commitment. For example, in 2017 Carl Wennerlind wrote, “It was inspiring to see the Princeton faculty and graduate students’ commitment to the Davis Seminar and the seriousness whereby they engaged each paper. I have never before experienced such a vibrant and engaged department culture. I will miss it greatly.”¹⁵⁷ Yet, concerns about attendance were not confined to visiting fellows. They were voiced by Lawrence Stone as early as 1973. In that year’s annual report, Stone complained that “a continuing problem is how to better integrate the Visitors and the Seminar into the Department. At present Visitors have offices in the Department and are invited to all functions, and all faculty and students in the Department are invited to all sessions. *Attendance varies from zero to fifteen.*”¹⁵⁸ The fullest description and assessment of the attendance issue appeared in Stone’s final annual report in 1990. According to Stone,

Several Visiting Fellows remarked that it was hard to get to know the faculty. This is a real problem, which is getting worse. It is caused by an increase in the work load on the members of the Department. The burden is now so great that the social as well as the intellectual life of the Department is suffering, and this also affects the Davis Center. For example, it is noticeable that attendance by the History faculty at the seminars on Fridays is diminishing, the reason being, so I am told on all sides, the pressure of work to be done.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Keith A. Wailoo, Interview by Sean Vanatta, November 28, 2018, transcript, 21–22.

¹⁵⁷ Carl Wennerlind, in “Biennial Report of the Davis Center, 2016–2018,” 15.

¹⁵⁸ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1972–1973,” 3 (emphasis added).

¹⁵⁹ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1989–1990,” 5. Stone had already registered a similar concern about graduate students a decade earlier. Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis

Despite recurrent concerns, attendance at the seminar remained remarkably stable over its first fifty years. Poorly attended themes, such as the final two years of the *History of Education* or the *History of the Professions*, averaged between 15 and 20 participants each session, while many other themes have averaged between 40 and 50 participants throughout their two-year cycle.¹⁶⁰

Several explanations can be offered for the discrepancy in attendance figures. As Stone suggested in 1973, in earlier years the least-attended themes often did not align very well with the department's thematic, geographic, or chronological interests and expertise.¹⁶¹ As the department's own size and thematic reach has grown over the decades, attendance at the seminar has stabilized—regardless of thematic choice. That said, the status of the individual presenters still affected (and affects) attendance. William Chester Jordan neatly summed up the ongoing trend in his 1997 report: “Famous scholars and members of our own department attracted large audiences of faculty and graduate students. Younger scholars from outside the university had smaller audiences (fifteen to twenty-five).”¹⁶²

The physical space of the seminar room has also contributed to attendance figures. Between 1969 and 1987, the seminar was conducted in the History Seminar Room located on the C floor of Firestone Library. The room was small, featuring a “large-ish double table” and a single row of chairs around the perimeter of the room. While the room was turned into a veritable “hothouse” and “packed to the rafters” during presentations by major speakers like Clifford Geertz or Jean-Christophe Agnew, its maximum capacity was only 40 or 50 people.¹⁶³ After a few years in exile in room 8 of the Woodrow Wilson School, the seminar permanently relocated to Dickinson 211 in the fall of 1990 following the long-delayed move of the Department of Eco-

Center, 1979–1980,” 4: “The topic continued to attract a manageable and enthusiastic body of participants every week, usually about 20 to 25. They were almost entirely faculty, with very few or no graduate students. This seems to have been caused by the fall in numbers in the latter, and the increased pressure on them to concentrate on their own special interests. This is an unfortunate trend, but it is difficult to see any easy way to correct it.”

¹⁶⁰ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1972–1973,” 3; and Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1978–1979,” 5.

¹⁶¹ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1972–1973,” 3.

¹⁶² Jordan, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1996–1997,” 6.

¹⁶³ Nord, Interview, 17–18.



Jochen Hellbeck discussing his paper at the Davis Center seminar, April 15, 2016, with Caryl Emerson commenting and Philip Nord presiding as director, in 211 Dickinson Hall. In the foreground is Marie Kelleher.

Photo credit: Libby Z. Schwartz.



Other participants at Davis Center seminar with Jochen Hellbeck, with portrait of George Henry Davis hanging in the background, April 15, 2016. Left to right: unidentified participant, Yaacob Dweck, Serguei Alex Oushakine, Yael Sternhell, and Sheldon Garon (behind and obscured is William Chester Jordan).

Photo credit: Libby Z. Schwartz.

nomics out of Dickinson Hall.¹⁶⁴ After the relocation to Dickinson 211, large audiences of over 80 people became a regular feature of the seminar, and Natalie Zemon Davis reported the largest audience to ever attend a single seminar, when 140 people turned out to hear Edward Said present a paper entitled “Secular Interpretation, the Geographical Element, and the Methodology of Imperialism” on October 26, 1990.¹⁶⁵

Despite the relative stability in attendance figures, directors have launched different initiatives over the years designed to further incorporate the seminar into the academic and social life of the department and encourage the participation of its members. In addition to briefly moving the seminar to Thursday evening between 2003 and 2008, these initiatives include public lecture series of broad appeal, film viewings, scheduling lunches for visiting fellows and faculty members or graduate students, and directly encouraging first-year graduate students in History 500 to attend.¹⁶⁶ Directors have

¹⁶⁴ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1987–1988,” 3.

¹⁶⁵ Davis, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1990–1991,” 3.

¹⁶⁶ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1969–1970,” 2; Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1980–1981,” 2; Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1983–1984,” 2; Prakash, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 2003–2004,” 2; and Prakash, Interview, 22–23. Natalie Zemon Davis organized monthly lunches connecting visiting fellows with faculty members of the department during her term as director, between 1990 and 1994. William Chester Jordan continued the lunches but connected the visiting fellows with interested graduate students instead. He attended the lunches himself during the first year of his directorship but later absented himself because “my sources now tell me that things were a little more free wheeling without me present; so I will organize these lunches again this year and absent myself from

even worked to incorporate themes into undergraduate and graduate teaching. In 1975, as a result, in part, of sagging finances, the Center sought and ultimately received a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, which enabled a visiting fellow and a resident graduate student to design and coteach an undergraduate course on the seminar theme.¹⁶⁷ A similar practice has been revived in recent years under the directorship of Angela Creager, who taught a graduate seminar herself on the theme of *Risk and Fortune* in fall 2016, involving Davis Center fellows in various sessions. Another graduate course was offered in the first year of *Law and Legalities*, and cotaught by the executive secretary, Natasha Wheatley, and Hendrik Hartog.

Many of these initiatives have proven successful, although one of the largest public events hosted by the Davis Center in its first fifty years did not quite go off as planned. Gyan Prakash wrote in his 2003–2004 annual report:

The scheduled lecture by the prominent architect and writer Rem Koolhaas, for which roughly 200 turned up, had to be cancelled when he got lost on the New Jersey Turnpike, and ended up in South Jersey. Apparently, post-industrial New Jersey can defeat the navigational skills of even an architect who regularly deals with and writes about the post-city urban space!¹⁶⁸



Participants at another Davis Center seminar in 2015–2016, 211 Dickinson Hall. Left to right: Anson Rabinbach, Adam Beaver, Marie Kelleher, Jochen Hellbeck, William Chester Jordan, and Stephen Kotkin. In front of the window, partly obscured, is Tsing Yuan.

Photo credit: Libby Z. Schwartz.



Angela Creager offering remarks at the discussion of a paper by Vanessa Ogle at the Davis Center seminar, September 16, 2016. Harold James commented.

Photo credit: Libby Z. Schwartz.

them also. (I am still puzzling over the fact that, being so gentle, I inhibit anyone from speaking his or her mind.)” Jordan, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1995–1996,” 4.

¹⁶⁷ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1974–1975,” 6.

¹⁶⁸ Prakash, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 2003–2004,” 4.

Not all was lost. The 200 or so attendees who came to see Koolhaas's presentation were treated to forty-five minutes of stand-up comedy from Stephen Kotkin. "By the end of it," Gyan recalled, "I think they were not sorry that Rem Koolhaas hadn't come."¹⁶⁹

Many directors have also encouraged participation in the seminar through social activities and events. Though these too have evolved and adapted over time, the two main social activities that have most consistently enveloped the Friday morning seminar were the Thursday dinner and the Friday lunch. While both the Thursday dinner and Friday lunch were meant to encourage the participation of the department's members and tie them into the seminar and the lives of the visiting fellows in a less formal way, from the beginning, and through most of the seminar's history, the two meals also served distinct functions. Of the two, the Friday lunch, typically held in a room at Prospect on the university's campus, has been the more staid affair, intended to continue the discussion and the business of the seminar itself in a more relaxed atmosphere. Although in the early decades the Friday lunch was not free of charge, the growth of the Center's budget now allows a gratis lunch for all who care to participate—including unaffiliated guests and hungry graduate students.

With a few exceptions, the Thursday dinner was meant to be a more purely social event, which threw together the director, visiting fellows, outside speakers, senior and junior faculty, and as time went on, graduate students, in a convivial and merry atmosphere of food and drinks. During his directorship, Lawrence Stone and his wife, Jeanne Fawtier, hosted the Thursday dinners, often accompanied by a predinner cocktail hour, at their home. Though not an academic by training, Jeanne was a scholarly partner to Lawrence, and together they published *An Open Elite? England, 1540–1880* in 1984. To her frequent guests, Jeanne was infamous for her French cuisine and white soups.¹⁷⁰ As a sharp conversationalist, she was also Lawrence's match and possessed an "intimidating" seminar presence of her own.¹⁷¹ The Stones' willingness to "mix it up" with one another at the table made the dinners especially memorable:

¹⁶⁹ Prakash, Interview, 43–44.

¹⁷⁰ R. Sean Wilentz, Interview by Sean Vanatta, August 6, 2018, transcript, 29.

¹⁷¹ Kagan, Interview, 44.

Most of the dinners took the form of Jeanne and Lawrence having an argument about something, which everybody else watched with amusement and relief that you didn't have to be part of this argument because they didn't give one another any quarter. It was a very Oxford kind of event, really. But that was only Thursday night.¹⁷²

"It was something to see," and reports of the Thursday dinners during Stone's directorship were universally enthusiastic. One might even assume the Stones' arguments were calculated, to some extent at least. They suggested that guests at dinner—and by extension, at the seminar—"could disagree. Argument was possible. You didn't just have to be deferential."¹⁷³ Of course, that did not prevent some presenters from feeling "blindsided" and "set up" by the pleasant Thursday dinners after Stone "decimated" their papers the following morning.¹⁷⁴

The end of Stone's tenure also marked the twilight of an era when the wives of male faculty were expected to organize and provision their husbands' professional social functions. As a consequence, Thursday dinners transformed into pleasant evenings at local restaurants, including Lahiere's, La Mezzaluna, Masala Grill, and now Agricola. Although the choice of restaurant has, on occasion, provoked some dissent and grumbling—Anthony Grafton advised the incoming director to "get a good cardiologist" if he planned on eating at Lahiere's every week—they still serve the same function as dinners at the Stones' house on Moore Street: entertain the guests of the Davis Center, introduce visiting fellows to the department in a relaxed atmosphere, and incorporate members of the department into the Center's



Photograph of a table of Davis Center seminar participants eating lunch afterward in Prospect House, September 13, 2019. Clockwise from under light: Matthew Karp (that day's presenter), Sean Vanatta, Sheldon Garon, Angela Creager, Ben Nathans (a fellow), Randall Pippenger, Abigail Sargent, Philip Nord, and Beth Lew-Williams.

Photo credit: Tasha Schwartz.

¹⁷² Katz, Interview, 28.

¹⁷³ Nord, Interview, 79.

¹⁷⁴ Katz, Interview, 27.

activities.¹⁷⁵ And although spousal arguments no longer entertain the seminar's guests and participants at the Thursday dinners, they remain the setting of amusing, entertaining, and bonding anecdotes: from misconstruing forced friendliness as a romantic overture to ordering veal before a talk about bestiality and animal rights.¹⁷⁶

Culture

I had heard about the Davis Center seminar even before arriving in Princeton—its notoriety having reached even the distant shores of Israel—and, being as “blood-thirsty” by nature as anyone where intellectual combat is concerned, looked forward gleefully to the opportunity of partaking in a “sport” I had learned both at my own university, and at Oxford during graduate days. I was not disappointed and can now confirm for others the Center’s admirable reputation for going after the jugular (which, as everyone knows, is a vein with direct connections to the head). It has always seemed to me that nothing is intellectually so fatuous, drab, and unrewarding as the widespread notion that academics should preserve a gentility of manner, a generosity, even magnanimity, of mind as befits—so a concomitant notion would have it—affairs of the intellect. In fact, it seems to me, in matters of intellectual concern no holds should be barred and no benefit of the doubt should ever be entertained—since so much that is of the very essence and uniqueness of human activity is at stake. The director of the Center, and others who regularly participated in the weekly dissection of papers, are to be congratulated, in my view, for not allowing their otherwise peace-loving natures to overpower their healthy killer instincts in matters intellectual, and thereby making worthwhile and enlightening, not to say lively, even such sessions as were preceded by either uninteresting or unedifying papers.¹⁷⁷

Since the beginning of the Davis Center's five-year trial period in 1969, the research seminar has been the showcase of the Center's activities, dominating both its financial budget and its academic and social calendars. It has been the setting of important, field-altering presentations by the likes of Carlo Ginzburg, Inga Clendinnen, and Natalie Zemon Davis, as well as the site of unique experiences and performances, such as the day one visiting fellow brought 4,000-year-old Babylonian tablets to the seminar or when another fellow, presenting a paper on Indian snake charmers, produced a live snake for

¹⁷⁵ Kruse, Interview, 12–13.

¹⁷⁶ Creager, Interview, 38–42. Cf. Jordan, Interview, 37–39.

¹⁷⁷ Baruch Knei-Paz, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1980–1981,” appendix II, 2.

the audience—and the very alarmed director—at the end of the session.¹⁷⁸ Regular participants in the seminar's early years described it as a “heady experience,” charged with a special kind of “intellectual energy.” They argued that the weekly seminar was the room in which “the really serious intellectual action took place” within the department.¹⁷⁹ In its first two decades of existence under the leadership of Lawrence Stone, the seminar gained a reputation in the United States and beyond for its rigorous academic and intellectual standards. The friendly dinners and social events notwithstanding, Stone was known for his “combative approach to seminar,” and the early seminars often began with the words “let’s have at it,” a phrase Stone borrowed from prize fights in England.¹⁸⁰ The adversarial, sometimes destructive, quality of the encounters occasionally left participants weeping and feeling that their work had been eviscerated.¹⁸¹ As Sean Wilentz claimed, “It was not soft soap. It was tough.”¹⁸²

In these early years, visiting fellows’ opinions of the seminar and their experiences in it varied widely. Some, like Baruch Knei-Paz, celebrated the “gladiatorial” atmosphere of the early seminar. Vernon Lidtke commended the seminar for its “no-nonsense and vigorous approach to research and scholarship.”¹⁸³ Comparing the seminar to a cockfight, Robert J. Bezucha claimed in 1976 that “nowhere is one’s work taken more seriously than at the Davis Center. The mutually sustaining (but not self-congratulatory) atmosphere is not something a scholar soon forgets ... in my mind it is in the cockpit (*pace* Clifford Geertz) of the small seminar that things happen.”¹⁸⁴ Robert Bartlett, a former postdoctoral fellow at Princeton and a visiting fellow in 1983–1984, claimed that “the Davis Seminar is not distinguished from other seminars by the quality of the papers or of the discussion, which varies, but by the fact that, at the end of an unfocussed discussion, the Director is able to say ‘What a mess.’”¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁸ Jordan, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1996–1997,” 7.

¹⁷⁹ Katz, Interview, 19; Rodgers, Interview, 7.

¹⁸⁰ Jordan, Interview, 25.

¹⁸¹ Rodgers, Interview, 12; Katz, Interview, 26.

¹⁸² Wilentz, Interview, 24.

¹⁸³ Vernon Lidtke, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1974–1975,” appendix II, 6.

¹⁸⁴ Robert J. Bezucha, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1975–1976,” appendix II, 3.

¹⁸⁵ Robert Bartlett, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1983–1984,” appendix II, 1.

Other fellows were unhappy with the confrontational style. Lutz Berkner wrote that he found the seminar under Stone to be “intellectually unsatisfying. The aim of the discussion was to find out ‘what’s wrong this paper?’ and only rarely ‘what can we learn from this paper?’ I think that this is a good part of the reason that virtually no new ideas were generated in the discussions.”¹⁸⁶ Graham Barker-Benfield argued that the seminar’s discussions only became productive after “the hostility of the earlier part of the year” gave way to “a fruitful spirit of collegiality.”¹⁸⁷ Mary Beth Norton, a fellow in the same year, wrote that “the atmosphere of the seminar was rather unpleasant as participants vied to produce sharp critiques of the papers being given (by whomever), as a way, I thought, of impressing Lawrence. This was particularly true of the untenured members of the Princeton History Department, but extended to the resident graduate students as well.”¹⁸⁸ If the junior faculty members and graduate students were performing to impress Stone, it often worked. Critical questions and participation in the seminar could indeed result in Stone’s extending an invitation to lunch.¹⁸⁹ At one such lunch, Stone told the junior faculty member, “I really like the way you take part in the seminar.” After an appropriately thankful response, Stone continued, “Yes, I like the way you put them up against the wall and shoot them.”¹⁹⁰

Some fellows during Stone’s tenure, however, found the seminar’s reputation for “bloodthirstiness” to be unwarranted. Peter Winn even bemoaned the fact that the discussions in the seminar of 1973–1974 often resulted “in more confusion than confrontation.”¹⁹¹ Other participants viewed the seminar as a model institution. Ira Berlin claimed that the seminar in 1975–1976 had “not only been a joy to participate in, but [it has] provided a model which I hope to emulate in my own teaching.”¹⁹² In the same year, Lynn Lees described the seminar as “by far, the best run and best functioning historians’ seminar that I have

¹⁸⁶ Berkner, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1976–1977,” appendix II, 2.

¹⁸⁷ Graham Barker-Benfield, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1977–1978,” appendix II, 10.

¹⁸⁸ Mary Beth Norton, Fellows Survey, 3.

¹⁸⁹ Wilentz, Interview, 21.

¹⁹⁰ Jordan, Interview, 26.

¹⁹¹ Peter Winn, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1973–1974,” appendix II, 10.

¹⁹² Ira Berlin, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1975–1976,” appendix II, 2.

ever attended.”¹⁹³ Elizabeth Traube chalked up the seminar’s “reputation for ‘bloodthirstiness’” to mythic tales of “academic folklore.” Of the seminar’s reputation, Traube claimed,

It has always seemed to me that metaphors of warfare are peculiarly inappropriate, albeit culturally revealing, representations of productive intellectual exchange. There is, indeed, a close relationship between warfare and exchange, but, as Mauss and others have argued, exchange is culture’s substitute for “war, isolation and stagnation.” The Davis Seminar succeeds because, for all the gallows humor, the guiding intent is not the annihilation of an enemy, but involvement in the thought of others.¹⁹⁴

One year later, Patrick O’Brien suggested that Keith Thomas’s description of the seminar as an “intellectual punch up” in the *Times Literary Supplement* was unfair. According to O’Brien, he “witnessed and benefitted from a serious and lively attempt to engage in intellectual debate. Perhaps, however, that is what Oxonians now experience as an ‘intellectual punch up’?”¹⁹⁵

These defenses notwithstanding, Stone himself often commented upon the combative nature of the seminar under his directorship. In 1976, Stone wrote of the necessity of “the Chairman to exercise very tight control in order to focus what has been a lively and animated, sometimes combative, discussion.”¹⁹⁶ Stone argued that some discussions, and some entire years, turned ugly because of the uneven quality of papers. Of the first year of the *History of the Family* theme, in 1976–1977, Stone wrote that “the year worked out less successfully than was hoped. A number of the papers offered turned out to be disappointing . . . as a result, the discussions tended to be more consistently destructive than was healthy.”¹⁹⁷ That year must have been particularly notable because Stone continued to reference it in subsequent

¹⁹³ Lynn Lees, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1975–1976,” appendix II, 12. The 1975–1976 year was a good one as virtually all of the visiting fellows’ reports described the seminar as a “model seminar” in some fashion.

¹⁹⁴ Elizabeth Traube, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1981–1982,” appendix II, 10.

¹⁹⁵ Patrick O’Brien, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1982–1983,” appendix II, 8. O’Brien was referring to Keith Thomas, “Review of Lawrence Stone, *The Past and the Present* (London: 1981),” *Times Literary Supplement*, April 30, 1982, 479.

¹⁹⁶ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1975–1976,” 3.

¹⁹⁷ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1976–1977,” 2–3. This was the first annual report from Stone, though not the last, that was truly negative.

reports. In 1978, Stone wrote that "the tone was quite different from last year, still firmly critical, but no longer hostile but rather constructive and helpful."¹⁹⁸ Again, in 1979, Stone compared the conduct of that year's seminar to that of 1976–1977. "The tone of the discussions continued to be tough but constructive, rather than hostile and destructive, and the rather acid quality of the seminar two years ago was avoided."¹⁹⁹

The quality of papers at the seminar, however, would prove to be a recurring problem. Although the seminar is rightly praised for its greatest presentations, regular participants and visiting fellows have often been subjected to less than perfect "works-in-progress." The first mention of subpar papers appeared in the annual report of 1974, and in the decades that followed, it became the most common criticism of the Davis Center offered by visiting fellows.²⁰⁰ In a one-paragraph rant on the subject, Alan Dawley neatly encapsulated such criticisms:

The more serious problems have included a fumbling interpretation of evidence, an attempt to impose a fuzzy idea of domesticity on reluctant sources, an extremely narrow selection of data, a broad selection of data without recourse to significant questions, antiquarianism in quantitative dress, inadequate theorization, premature presentation, and several attempts to make one discipline (intellectual history) do the work of another (social history).²⁰¹

Stone first acknowledged the issue himself in 1977, but in 1979 Stone compared the number of poor papers to a "plague."²⁰² Stone was particularly furious that "some of the worst papers, however, were given by scholars with the highest reputations, so that there is clearly no way to guarantee uniformly high quality."²⁰³ Many poor papers were also given by presenters recommended by senior faculty. Stone,

¹⁹⁸ Stone, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1977–1978," 3.

¹⁹⁹ Stone, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1978–1979," 7.

²⁰⁰ Winn, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1973–1974," appendix II, p. 10: "Criticisms are both easy and difficult to offer. The Davis Fellows will always vary in quality and this year was no exception. There was also too great a diffuseness of focus, perhaps reflecting the state of the art, but with the consequence that at times the seminar members seemed to be talking past each other and resulting in more confusion than confrontation."

²⁰¹ Dawley, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1977–1978," appendix II, 3.

²⁰² Stone, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1978–1979," 6–7.

²⁰³ Stone, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1980–1981," 3.

keen to circumvent the issue, tried to institutionalize the selection of speakers as well as visiting fellows in order to “make it easier to reject unsuitable candidates regardless of who has nominated them.”²⁰⁴

Occasionally, a poor paper, or a poor year, could defeat the seminar. As Stone reported of the second year of the *Charity and Welfare* theme, “with a few notable exceptions, the papers were not very good and the discussions were often rather limp.”²⁰⁵ However, the seminar audience and the Princeton faculty usually proved able to meet the challenge of a bad paper, sometimes in inventive ways. Mary Beth Norton recalled the following story from a seminar held in 1978:

I vividly recall the day when the paper being given by the visitor was so awful that Lawrence actually thought a discussion of it would not occupy the entire 2 hours of the seminar and mused (to me, at least, perhaps to others) that he might arrange to be interrupted by a staff person early on the pretext of some sort of emergency that he would have to deal with. But in the event, everyone was exceedingly kind to the (clueless) author and made many useful suggestions to him. And the discussion did encompass the full time scheduled.²⁰⁶

Stone was very proud of the seminar in this regard. He wrote in 1981 that despite some poor papers, “the discussions remained as lively, animated, hard-hitting, and good tempered as usual.”²⁰⁷

Criticism of poor papers continued after Stone’s tenure. Richard Rathbone, a fellow in 1990–1991, wrote that the seminar was “disappointing.” He called the colloquium held in November 1990 a “damaging day,” and added that “three of the four papers were so intellectually and methodologically bankrupt that I should have asked for re-writes had they been submitted as term-papers by undergraduates.”²⁰⁸ However, three years later, Natalie Zemon Davis, after receiving yet more complaints about the quality and relevance of papers, wrote the most

²⁰⁴ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1978–1979,” 6–7.

²⁰⁵ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1985–1986,” 3.

²⁰⁶ Norton, *Fellows Survey*, 4.

²⁰⁷ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1980–1981,” 3.

²⁰⁸ Richard Rathbone, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1990–1991,” appendix II, 12. In the *Fellows Survey*, 10, Rathbone did write with great admiration of the Davis Center, its seminar, and the directorship of Natalie Zemon Davis, expressing a concern that she may have found him to be “too pugnacious at the seminar table.”

complete, and perhaps the best, statement on the problems of attempting to control paper quality, as well as the inherent value of weaker papers:

Could there be more control over the quality and relevance of the papers, two of the Fellows ask in their reports, or failing that, a smaller number of Friday seminars? The Davis Center committee has no practical means of controlling the content of the papers, short of insisting that they be submitted many months before, when the calendar is being set up. This would mean not only much reading of the papers from the many candidates who apply, but also a loss of the "work-in-progress" quality of the presentations. It seems best to continue working from CVs and abstracts and departmental reaction. The consistently high quality of the commentators' remarks has led to interesting discussion even for the weaker papers. We hope the reactions will help the author improve the paper, but the discussion itself is the seminar, that is, part of an ongoing reflection on the overall theme and on ways of doing history. Having papers that sometimes stray from a strict definition of the year's theme also prevents rehashing the same theoretical issues each week and attracts new colleagues to individual sessions. Of course, the stronger the papers the better, and fortunately, this year saw a good number of splendid ones.²⁰⁹

As Davis's successor, William Chester Jordan, wrote the following year, with customary brevity, "For good or ill, a weak paper does not preclude an excellent discussion; nor does an excellent paper assure one."²¹⁰

While the seminar under Stone, and in its first few decades of existence, was characterized by a more adversarial tone, as Traube argued in 1982, its purpose was not "annihilation" but "involvement in the thought of others."²¹¹ During Bertram Wyatt-Brown's presentation in 1977, one participant interjected, "If this paper is as poorly done as we seem to think, should we spend any more time on this horse opera?" Stone announced, "That's carrying matters too far." While Wyatt-Brown compared Stone's intervention to a "figurative thumbs up—the gladiator's reprieve—to spare the victim any further

²⁰⁹ Davis, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1993–1994," 5–6.

²¹⁰ Jordan, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1994–1995," 4.

²¹¹ Traube, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1981–1982," appendix II, 10.

misery,” it was instead reflective of Stone’s approach to scholarship and seminar.²¹² The seminar was not meant to be mean-spirited or personal.²¹³ It was meant to be engaging, if demanding, and ultimately, productive. Indeed, “productive” is one of the most common adjectives used by regular faculty participants to describe the seminar under Stone.²¹⁴ Even fellows somewhat critical of the seminar’s atmosphere and culture saw its usefulness and productive potential. “The Director’s reputation as a formidable critic may serve to guarantee that no speaker will approach the Davis Seminar in a careless manner,” claimed Patricia Bonomi. “In short, no speaker who comes to the Davis Seminar prepared to benefit will go away disappointed.”²¹⁵ Some found themselves taking part in the sport even as they protested. As Wyatt-Brown himself wrote in 1978, “once the adversarial approach, however, is understood as a general policy, affecting good papers as well as weak ones, the Davis Center Fellow can take the experience in good stride.”²¹⁶ Ellen Ross admitted that even as she “was critical of the adversarial (if polite) form in which many of the seminars took place, not only was I as pugnacious as the next fellow, but I found the rigorous criticism my own paper received very useful.”²¹⁷

Although some women, like Ross, were “as pugnacious as the next fellow,” the seminar’s gladiatorial posture was certainly more comfortable territory for male academics than for their female colleagues. During Stone’s tenure, women came to represent a larger (though still minor) proportion of the History department faculty and at times a majority of the seminar’s fellow cohorts. But as of the mid-1970s, the still-smoke-filled seminar room remained a largely male domain. When women “fought back and stood up for themselves,” Philip Nord recalled, Stone “felt respect.”²¹⁸ Yet, while Stone was enthusiastic about making room for women in academia, he could not entirely reconcile himself to changing the culture of his seminar or to accommodate modes of intellectual exchange outside the Balliolian

²¹² Wyatt-Brown, “Preface to the 25th Anniversary Edition,” *Southern Honor*, xiv.

²¹³ Wilentz, Interview, 24.

²¹⁴ For examples, see Wilentz, Interview, 23; and Jordan, Interview, 25.

²¹⁵ Patricia Bonomi, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1979–1980,” appendix II, 2.

²¹⁶ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1977–1978,” appendix II, 14.

²¹⁷ Ellen Ross, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1983–1984,” appendix II, 12ff.

²¹⁸ Nord, Interview, 10.

cockpit, the Oxonian boxing ring.

The atmosphere of the seminar changed substantively following Lawrence Stone's retirement in 1990. The combative tone common to seminars during the Stone years gave way to more circumspect and diplomatic encounters in the decades following, a transition orchestrated by Natalie Zemon Davis, who served as director between 1990 and 1994. Davis's directorship has been described as the "era of good feelings" within the seminar.²¹⁹ She sought to build "a community of scholars" on the foundations of agreement and consensus, and was eager that "every voice be heard."²²⁰ Though she too could be critical, and would identify weaknesses, Davis was far more interested in "learning everything that could be learned from a paper,"²²¹ and in the scholarly conversation itself.²²²

Davis's goal, in essence, was to downplay the role of the director within the seminar room in order, in her words, to "expand the intellectual leadership and participation of the Davis Center."²²³ Under Stone, Davis observed, "it was very much a Lawrence Stone performance. People waited for his comments and criticism, both with excitement and trembling. What was he going to say? As I recall, the paper was interesting, and people commented, and there were questions, but Lawrence was the critic." Stone, Davis observed, "was such a presence, and such an intellectual leader, but I felt that it was important to reshape it in a way that drew upon a larger intellectual universe."²²⁴

Davis undertook this project in two important ways that reshaped the culture and format of the seminar subtly, but substantially. First, building on an experiment undertaken by Stone, Davis made the outside commentator a permanent feature of the seminar, so that instead of performing the role of resident critic, as Stone had, Davis invigorated the seminar with new critical perspectives each week. And although beginning each seminar with the commentator's critique instead of her own moved Davis's critical contribution offstage,

²¹⁹ Jordan, Interview, 25.

²²⁰ Jordan, 25; Rodgers, Interview, 31.

²²¹ Rabb, Interview, 33.

²²² Rodgers, Interview, 30.

²²³ Davis, Interview, 22.

²²⁴ Davis, 24.

the selection of the right discussant remained a vital component of each seminar's success. In the words of Davis, it "can make a lot of difference."²²⁵ Moreover, Davis reinvented the director's final summation, a unique and integral part of the seminar developed by Stone and carried on by his successors. While Stone delivered summations that have been described as "pellucid" and "virtuoso performances," they often functioned as critical evaluations of the paper and discussion itself.²²⁶ They were a "sorting out" of sorts that is uncommon in most professional seminars—the essence of the "Lawrence Stone performance."²²⁷ On the other hand, Davis attempted to incorporate every comment, every suggestion, every speaker into her summations—and would go so far as to apologize if she left someone out.²²⁸ Davis's goal was to clarify for the presenter what the room thought, what the results of the collective enterprise amounted to, rather than issuing her definitive judgment on the merits and demerits of the paper.

Accounting for differences in personality and style, the directors following Davis have hewed more to her approach than that of Stone.²²⁹ Although the occasional complaint about weak or off-topic papers still appears in the annual reports, perhaps unsurprisingly, the number and frequency of criticisms and negative reviews offered by the visiting fellows have dropped precipitously since 1990. Of course, not everyone was satisfied with the changed atmosphere. Richard Elphick, a fellow in 1991–1992, suggested that "no doubt some scholars would prefer less civility and more blunt candor." Although as Elphick conceded, even under Davis's generous direction, "many paper givers would prefer a more forgiving, deferential audience."²³⁰ Teofilo Ruiz remembered the Davis seminar under Stone as "a scintillating intellectual setting" even if "it was also a place of terror." He continued, "Although many of us realized that the discussion sometimes reached into cruelty, many of us also hoped that Bill [Jordan] would restore some of the combative spirit of Lawrence's directorship" when he re-

²²⁵ Davis, 23.

²²⁶ Samuel Haber, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1978–1979," appendix II, 7; Wilentz, Interview, 24.

²²⁷ Rodgers, Interview, 30.

²²⁸ Rodgers, 30.

²²⁹ Rabb, Interview, 33.

²³⁰ Richard Elphick, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1991–1992," appendix III, 11.

placed Davis as director in 1994. To Ruiz's disappointment, while Jordan maintained a "critical attitude," he "turned all politeness and amiability."²³¹ Slowly, the "hothouse" of the seminar described by Donald Scott in 1979 was transformed into the "congenial hothouse" of Thomas Lekan in 2010.²³²

There are a few competing ways to account for and evaluate these changes. Certainly, under Natalie Zemon Davis and the subsequent directors who modeled their seminar management practices on her style, the figurative goal of lining presenters against the wall and shooting them was rejected. Yet it is also likely the case that specific structural conditions, which enabled the ritual combativeness, changed. As the department became larger and more diverse, and as the competing opportunities and priorities increased for faculty, the seminar featured both larger and less consistent audiences. And of course, too, there were more women in the room from the mid-1980s onward, as well as others with different experiences of intellectual exchange than the "guerilla warfare of the cloister" typical of Oxford and Cambridge.²³³ Although the seminar may not hold the same place in departmental life that it did, especially for Europeanists, under Lawrence Stone's directorship, the enthusiasm for its programming, as demonstrated by weekly attendance, has never been higher. "If all the faculty showed up every week, there would not be room for everyone in the room," Keith Wailoo observed.²³⁴

Yet, although the culture that made the seminar distinctive has fallen away as a consequence of structural forces and intentional actions, arguably the influence of the Center's culture on the department is more dominant than ever. "Read this, think about it, analyze it, come up with the key question about this approach, or this piece of evidence, or this piece of writing. We really nurture and hone that," Angela Creager observed. "It's not just happening in the Davis Center;

²³¹ Teófilo Ruiz, "William Chester Jordan: A Life of Learning," in *Center and Periphery: Studies on Power in the Middle Ages in Honor of William Chester Jordan*, ed. Katherine L. Jansen, Guy Geltner, and Anne E. Lester (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 269.

²³² Donald M. Scott, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1978–1979," appendix II, 9; Thomas Lekan, in "Biennial Report of the Davis Center, 2008–2010," 24.

²³³ Trevor-Roper to Berenson, November 8, 1953, in *Letters from Oxford*, 132.

²³⁴ Wailoo, Interview, 18.

it's happening in every seminar room in the department."²³⁵ Indeed, the culture of today's department *is* the culture of the Davis seminar—perhaps more so than ever before.

Fellows

*I don't know if I can put into words the psychological and spiritual elation your intellectual oasis provided. I think it was that profound and utterly, existentially rare (perhaps impossible) sense of being "home" that most deeply affected me about my stay among you. I can try to put that into quantifiable terms of growth and exchange and development, words better written and thoughts better thought, but I think on a much deeper level there is something not quantifiable at the heart of what makes me most grateful to have been among you. It is this unquantifiable essence that allowed me to flourish as a human being as much as a scholar during the few months I found refuge in your halls. And for that to have happened, you also had to be extraordinary human beings as well as scholars, and luckily for me, so you were, and as such continue to provide inspiration.*²³⁶

*Loneliness.*²³⁷

The Davis Center has hosted 328 visiting fellows in its first fifty years of existence, 191 men and 137 women. Nearly one-third (106) of these scholars hailed from foreign institutions. From newly minted PhDs to senior faculty members in the twilight of long, productive careers, from natives of New Jersey and Princeton graduates to individuals new to America and the English-speaking world, the visiting fellows have been a varied lot. Their impressions of Princeton and the people within and without Dickinson Hall have been equally varied, from paragraphs of effusive praise and gratitude to succinct one-word expressions of discontent and unhappiness. The shared experiences of the Davis Center, the research seminar, and the social activities surrounding them unite the disparate impressions of the visiting fellows. And for almost all of them, their semester- or year-long fellowship represented an important moment of progress, and even validation, in the growth and continuation of their careers.

²³⁵ Creager, Interview, 76.

²³⁶ Susan Einbinder, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1999–2000," appendix II, 5.

²³⁷ John Hart, Fellows Survey, 4.

Coming to Princeton

Throughout my dissertation years, people kept asking me why I wanted to write about animals and that the work would not be supported. I struggled on the job market, but the announcement that the Davis Center Seminar was going to devote two years of research to Animals and History seemed a huge validation of what I hoped to do. When I received word that I had been awarded one of the fellowships, I literally wept.²³⁸

The selection of visiting fellows has remained one of the most stable features of the Davis Center's year-to-year operation. Every prospective fellow formally applies to the Center, although directors regularly issue direct invitations to scholars whose work seems particularly relevant to the year's theme.²³⁹ In consultation with the Davis Center Executive Committee, each director selects visiting fellows for one-year or one-semester terms. Since 1969, between four and seven fellows have remained in residence, or have at least been obliged to participate in the Center's activities, throughout the academic year.

While most visiting fellows have been professionals working in universities, Davis fellowships are open to all qualified persons whose work addresses the theme in question, regardless of seniority, academic affiliation, or area of specialization.²⁴⁰ Many fellows, therefore, have not been historians; some, like Luca Einaudi and Pamela Long, have been independent scholars; and a few, such as Ranjani Mazumdar, were not academics in a traditional sense at all when selected. This intellectual openness, spirit of inquiry, and experimentation has often impressed visitors to Princeton. Magali Larson, a visiting fellow in 1979–1980, remarked “that one extraordinary feature of the Davis Center—one for which Lawrence and the Board must be praised very highly—is the sincerity with which it absolves its intellectual and scholarly mandate without any interference (at least none I could see) or academic elitism or institutional snobbery. The fellows and the guests come from all sorts of institutions because of what their work represents, and not because of what their institution represents in the academic pecking order.”²⁴¹ Especially in recent years, the quality and

²³⁸ Nigel Rothfels, Fellows Survey, 20–21.

²³⁹ Josine Blok, Fellows Survey, 19.

²⁴⁰ “The Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies Charter Document, 1974,” 2.

²⁴¹ Magali Larson, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1979–1980,” appendix II, 6.

fit of fellows' proposals are decisive in their selection.

For Stone, the seminar was a place where early-career scholars, who "come highly recommended and ... come from around the world," could, as both paper presenters and fellows, test new projects as they transitioned from their dissertation project to their second book.²⁴² This was extremely important to Stone. During his tenure, the average fellow was nine years removed from their terminal degree. First-year PhD recipients and even current graduate students were not uncommon selections, and 41 of 110 visiting fellows came to Princeton from foreign institutions. Subsequent directors have charted safer courses in terms of fellow selection—since 1990 visiting fellows have been, on average, fourteen years removed from their graduate work—while expanding the international profile of the Center dramatically. While just over a third of the visiting fellows during Stone's tenure were international, all but two of them came from European or English-speaking countries. By contrast, since 1990 almost 1 in 10 of the fellows have come to Princeton from non-European and non-English-speaking countries.

The demographic profile of the fellows has evolved in other ways over the past half century, which, like the themes and subjects addressed by the Davis Center, reflects a dynamically changing profession and a History department struggling to become more inclusive and diverse. Perhaps the most obvious evolution within the Center has been the gradual inclusion of women, a deliberate, if slow, process that mirrored their similarly gradual inclusion within the department. In its first decade of existence, the presenters at the seminar and the visiting fellows of the Center were overwhelmingly men. The first female presenter was Dorothy Ross, a historian of social science, in 1970. The first female fellow, Eileen Yeo, arrived at the Center in 1973 as part of a husband-and-wife pair. The first year when more than two women presented at the seminar was 1975–1976, which was also the first year when more than one woman was appointed as a visiting fellow. Each of these steps aligned with concurrent developments within the department and demonstrates the intertwined trajectories of the two institutions. Nancy Weiss and Virginia McLaughlin, the first

²⁴² As quoted in Reynolds, "Davis Seminars Probe Historical Studies," 3.

two women appointed to the regular faculty, joined the department as assistant professors in 1970. When Eileen Yeo was appointed as the first female visiting fellow in 1973, Dorothy Ross also returned to Princeton—this time as an assistant professor within the department. In 1975 Nancy Weiss began her first year as a tenured member of the faculty, becoming the first female associate professor. The reputed contention around her promotion finally alerted the department to the pressing problem of gender inclusion, and in future years the Davis Center for its part became more active in selecting female presenters and fellows. Under Stone's directorship in the mid-1980s, the Center achieved a measure of gender parity. Women were finally awarded an equal number of fellowships in 1985, and the following year, female fellows outnumbered male fellows for the first time. Since then, 119 of the 236 visiting fellows have been women. Despite the triumphal tone of this narrative, it is very important to note that female faculty in this era continued to feel like outsiders within the department, a circumstance that also likely shaped the experiences of female fellows, paper presenters, and audience members of the seminar. "There were three women assistant professors," Lorraine Daston said of the era. "We were regularly confused with one another by our male colleagues: 'Eve? No, Marta—or is it Raine?' It was not so much a matter of discrimination but lack of discrimination: we were all much of a muchness in their eyes (even allowing for scholarly myopia), and we clearly made many of our colleagues socially uncomfortable, which of course made us fidgety and tongue-tied ourselves."²⁴³

Nevertheless, a common refrain among female scholars, younger scholars, international scholars, and those scholars hailing from poorly endowed institutions or positions was that their year at the Davis Center "changed" their lives. Simeon Evstatiev, a visiting fellow from Bulgaria during Philip Nord's term as director, is far from alone in his claim that "without any exaggeration, I can honestly say that the Davis Fellowship was a turning point in my academic career."²⁴⁴ Immediately after her fellowship in 1993–1994, Josine Blok wrote, "Being a Fellow at the Davis Center has been one of the most wonderful

²⁴³ Lorraine Daston, Address at "Natalie Zemon Davis: A Celebration of Her 90th Birthday," April 26, 2019, published version forthcoming in *H-France Salon*.

²⁴⁴ Simeon Evstatiev, in "Biennial Report of the Davis Center, 2012–2014," 13.

experiences of my life.”²⁴⁵ Blok, who received her PhD in 1991 and worked at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands at the time of her selection, claimed twenty-five years later that her exposure to an American academic life and university setting that was “incredibly open and engaging and friendly” at that point in her career “changed my life.” The experience provided her the time and encouragement to revise her dissertation and publish a series of articles in the 1990s, which established her academic career and earned her a chair of ancient history and classical civilization at the Universiteit Utrecht seven years later, in 2001.²⁴⁶ Similarly, when reflecting upon his experience at the Davis Center and the role played by then-director William Chester Jordan, Nigel Rothfels, who had been an assistant editor at the Center for Twentieth Century Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee only two years removed from his PhD, wrote:

William C. Jordan had such an enthusiasm for the work of the Seminar and his encouragement (along with that of the fellows) really gave me a great deal of confidence when I needed it most. I had been entirely unsuccessful on the job market and felt lucky to have a rather low-paying and very limited (and limiting) job working at a humanities center in the Midwest. Director Jordan and the fellows helped get me back on my feet.²⁴⁷

Now, Rothfels is a tenured member of the History department and the director of the Office of Undergraduate Research at Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Life at Princeton

Since 1968 I have spent semesters at Harvard, Berkeley, Yale, Virginia and Princeton. Without the least intention to flatter, I have been reflecting on why I found my term at Princeton the most enjoyable of all. Being among historians rather than economists was certainly a bonus. The Princeton campus is distinguished but so is Charlottesville. Widen-er rivals Firestone. Cambridge is chic. Its restaurants are superior. Yale can parade scholars. Berkeley was more disturbing. For an outsider, and I write only as one “passing through,” Princeton’s great advantage is its intimacy. I discovered it easy to meet and talk to so many people. As a Davis Fellow I found a ready and delightful community among the quartet of

²⁴⁵ Josine Blok, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1993–1994,” appendix II, 4.

²⁴⁶ Blok, Fellows Survey, 19.

²⁴⁷ Rothfels, Fellows Survey, 21.

*1983—perhaps a rather special, maybe a cleverly selected group? Then the Davis seminar itself and the lunch helps to create what Oxford's colleges try to foster, casual encounters, conversation and a sense of community.*²⁴⁸

Life at Princeton varied, sometimes dramatically, for visiting fellows in idiosyncratic ways. It often depended on their origins, age, gender, experience, engagement in the life of the Davis Center and department, and the expectations they had upon arrival of Princeton and the Center. Many, especially those hailing from international locales, found the physical—rural and suburban—setting of Princeton and the atmosphere of the small university town to be a necessary tonic and a goad to further research. John Keegan, an English military historian, wrote glowingly of his experience as a Davis Center fellow in 1983–1984. Of Princeton itself, he wrote:

There can be few institutions which, on the one hand, so unrelentingly and successfully pursue the highest standards of excellence and, on the other, do so in a way which does not stretch the nerves or roughen the manners of those involved in the chase. Perhaps the Gothic spires and the trees are the essential emollient.²⁴⁹

Subsequent fellows shared Keegan's enthusiasm for the natural environment. Nigel Rothfels commented that Princeton was "a very quiet town with few distractions," and so he "mostly walked from the little apartment I sublet to my office and back. Along the way I walked there was a water tower and early in the mornings I would stop there and watch turkey vultures sunning themselves with their wings half-spread. Whenever I think of those birds, I smile happily."²⁵⁰ In 2014 Stefania Pastore wrote, "Obliged as I am to commute every week between Rome and Pisa, it will be difficult to forget the sensation of interior peace of biking through the woods, from the idyllic setting of the Institute for Advanced Study Project, and crossing the campus to reach my cozy office at the Davis Center."²⁵¹

While commenting upon the physical beauty of Princeton and its surroundings, Richard Rathbone's recollections also touch upon

²⁴⁸ O'Brien, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1982–1983," appendix II, 9.

²⁴⁹ John Keegan, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1983–1984," appendix II, 3.

²⁵⁰ Rothfels, *Fellows Survey*, 23.

²⁵¹ Stefania Pastore, in "Biennial Report of the Davis Center, 2012–2014," 20.

the other perspective of Princeton's suburban setting—its isolation. “Physically Princeton is, of course, a delight. Walking along the Raritan Canal on the weekends, crunching through the snow on Poe Field on my way between Hibben and the Centre are nice memories. But being a city person and being without a car, I found Princeton just a tad suffocating. The Dinky and Amtrak to NYC were sometimes a bit of a steam-valve.”²⁵² Many visiting fellows, particularly those from urban centers, keenly felt the lack of a social life at Princeton, and John Hart was not the only fellow who expressed feelings of “loneliness.” Mary Beth Norton recalled her year at Princeton in 1977–1978 being “rather a lonely one.” As an antidote, Norton “started going into the city for the ballet.”²⁵³ Perhaps Robert Cage, a visiting fellow in 1985–1986, put it best. “Socially, Princeton can be lacking.”²⁵⁴

To combat feelings of isolation, many cohorts of fellows relied upon the fellowship of one another. As Susan Amussen wrote of her time at the Davis Center in 1988–1989, “The best part of Princeton were my relationships with my fellow fellows.”²⁵⁵ Fellows reported sharing meals and cooking together, going on sightseeing and recreational trips, even bonding through playdates with their children.²⁵⁶ The 1982–1983 fellows instituted a Friday afternoon “Margarita Society,” and Michael Fellman fondly recalled the times spent with other fellows at “the noontime Student Center scrums, and the Common Room (despite the quality of the coffee).”²⁵⁷ In addition to social events, some early cohorts also organized impromptu weekly discussion groups, which addressed the year's theme as well as their research outside the seminar. The first year this occurred was 1978–1979. Robert Fox, a visiting fellow that year, expressed “complete satisfaction” with his time as a fellow. He believed it was so successful because of “the closeness of the group,” and that regardless of what else might be said, “this year's Fellows have certainly worked *together*.”²⁵⁸ Indeed,

²⁵² Rathbone, Fellows Survey, 10.

²⁵³ Norton, Fellows Survey, 4.

²⁵⁴ Robert Cage, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1985–1986,” appendix II, 2.

²⁵⁵ Susan Amussen, Fellows Survey, 8.

²⁵⁶ For an example, see Susannah Elm, Fellows Survey, 25.

²⁵⁷ Michael Fellman, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1982–1983,” appendix II, 4.

²⁵⁸ Robert Fox, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1978–1979,” appendix II, 4–5. Also see the comments of Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1978–1979,” 7–8; and Bonomi,

many of the most positive annual reports were produced during years in which these discussion groups and lunches developed, in the late 1970s and 1980s. As Magali Larson wrote in 1980,

I can sincerely say that I have never been as happy in an academic setting as I have been here. Surely, there was the fact of being on leave. But, above all, there was the atmosphere of the Center and the History Department. I could mention which of the qualities of each of my "fellow Fellows" has made their company so precious to me, but I don't want to embarrass them! They have been so supportive, so encouraging, so unfailingly interesting and stimulating, so wonderful as friends that I will miss all and each of them very much.²⁵⁹

The recurrent popularity of these types of events led to the institutionalization of the fellows' lunches and discussion groups in the decades following Stone's retirement.²⁶⁰

In addition to organizing lunches and discussion groups, the directors, executive secretaries, and managers have made consistently strong efforts to enhance the social lives and academic experiences of the visiting fellows at the Davis Center. These efforts have always begun with the desire to bring the fellows and the department together. As Stone stated in 1979, "When the Davis Center was first conceived, one of the main purposes was to arrange things so as to maximize intellectual and social communication between the fellows and faculty and students in the department."²⁶¹ Although this was considered "one of the main purposes" of the Center, Stone went on to acknowledge that the integration of the department and the visiting fellows was not always perfect: "During the last two years this objective was not fully achieved—two years ago it was a total failure—but this year it succeeded better than in any other year since the Center began. The Fellows did not only make their presence felt in the Department, and make many friends among faculty and graduate students; they also interacted with one another in a remarkable way."²⁶² In the years since, the directors' reports on the integration of the department and the

in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1979–1980," appendix II, 2–3.

²⁵⁹ Larson, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1979–1980," appendix II, 5.

²⁶⁰ Davis, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1990–1991," 10.

²⁶¹ Stone, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1978–1979," 7–8.

²⁶² Stone, 7–8.

Center have varied from Stone's enthusiasm of 1979 to Natalie Zemon Davis's consternation of 1992: "It was regretted that more graduate students and colleagues did not take advantage of their presence. Though some Fellows just want to hunker down and work (and should be free to do so), they like to feel they are part of the scene when they walk into the mail room."²⁶³

The fellows' descriptions of the faculty's accessibility and openness have also varied dramatically (sometimes in the same year) from enthusiastic endorsements offered by fellows like Robert Bartlett and John Keegan, who respectively described "lively social and intellectual connections" and the development of an "academic comradeship" among the fellows and the faculty, to the mournful recollections penned by Ellen Ross and Richard Hoffmann.²⁶⁴ Hoffmann "felt more or less isolated from the members of the Department" in 1997, while Ross lamented the department's overall policies toward the fellows: "It did seem that the History Department's policy toward the fellows, their spouses, and children was to leave them strictly alone, the Friday lunches, which did not include families, being the only organized social activity."²⁶⁵



Fellows from the second year of *Migration* visiting the Grounds for Sculpture in Trenton, sometime in 2002–2003. Left to right: Gautam Ghosh, David Gutierrez, Jennifer (Houle) Goldman, Hasia Diner, Anthony Grafton, and Alex Byrd.

Source: Jennifer Goldman.



Christina Jimenez (*Cities* fellow), Jennifer (Houle) Goldman, Gyan Prakash, and Ranjani Mazumdar (*Cities* fellow) at Triumph Brewery during the 2003–2004 year.

Photo from Jennifer Goldman.

²⁶³ Davis, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1991–1992," 5.

²⁶⁴ Robert Bartlett, Fellows Survey, 6; Keegan, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1983–1984," appendix II, 9 (incorrectly numbered p. 1).

²⁶⁵ Richard Hoffmann, Fellows Survey, 23; Ross, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1985–1986," appendix II, 13.

A fundamental factor shaping the possibilities for fellow and faculty interaction, and long a topic of discussion and dispute, has been the arrangement of office and working space for the fellows. In his first annual report Lawrence Stone asserted optimistically, "The visitors are fully integrated into the Department ... being housed in the offices of members of the Department away on leave. The result is that the Fellows have got well acquainted with the faculty to the mutual benefit of both parties."²⁶⁶ Yet, while placing fellows in unoccupied faculty offices was meant to integrate the fellows and the resident faculty seamlessly, it had the unfortunate drawback of scattering the fellows and limiting their daily contact with one another.²⁶⁷ After a few years, it was decided to place them in contiguous offices in the basement of McCosh Hall.²⁶⁸ While a couple of fellows described the suite of offices in the basement of McCosh as "pleasant" and "superb," most detested them.²⁶⁹ "Grim" and "depressing" were the most common adjectives used to describe the McCosh offices of the 1970s and 1980s.²⁷⁰ Michael Fellman found them "ill-ventilated" and "ill-lit"; for Omer Bartov, they were "cheerless"; and for Inga Clendinnen, "clammy."²⁷¹ In 1988, Stone pronounced the McCosh offices "dank and gloomy subterranean cells."²⁷² However, even these offices were preferable to scattered, shared, or no offices whatsoever. As Sarah Hanley wrote in 1981, "the contiguous arrangement of offices for Fellows at the Center in McCosh Hall remains absolutely essential for the proper formation of a Davis Center community each year."²⁷³

Furthermore, in the later years of Stone's directorship, a new barrier arose to the interaction among faculty and fellows: the per-

²⁶⁶ Stone, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1969-1970," 2.

²⁶⁷ Norton, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1977-1978," appendix II, 8.

²⁶⁸ This was at a time when the History department occupied portions of McCosh and Dickinson Halls.

²⁶⁹ Louise Tilly, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1977-1978," appendix II, 11; Wyatt-Brown, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1977-1978," appendix II, 14.

²⁷⁰ For examples, see Valerie Flint, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1987-1988," appendix II, 2; and David Sugarman, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1987-1988," appendix II, 16.

²⁷¹ Fellman, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1982-1983," appendix II, 5; Omer Bartov, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1983-1984," appendix II, 2; Clendinnen, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1983-1984," appendix II, 7.

²⁷² Stone, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1987-1988," 4.

²⁷³ Sarah Hanley, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1980-1981," appendix II, 5.

sonal computer (PC). In 1987, Stone complained that PCs were “imposing new restrictions upon social interchange. Now that everyone works with a PC,” he continued, “the place where the machine is located dictates where he or she works. Thus Fellows who choose to keep their PC’s at home necessarily find themselves a little cut off from the Department.”²⁷⁴ In response, the Center purchased computers and printers for each visiting fellow that fall, which, according to Stone, “did much to attract the Fellows onto the Campus, and keep them from staying home communing with a word-processor.”²⁷⁵

In 1986, the university announced the construction of a new Economics building. Moving out the Economics faculty still housed in Dickinson Hall created the possibility of a permanent home for the Davis Center integrated within the department. The economists left Dickinson Hall, “at last,” in the summer of 1990, and the new offices, which opened that year, were an apparent “Paradise.”²⁷⁶ There was, however, an invisible danger in the new space. Using equipment for his own research at the Davis Center on safety, evidence, and the politics of science, Robert Proctor “discover[ed] that something was amiss” in the new offices. According to Natalie Zemon Davis,



Belief and Unbelief (year 1) Davis Center fellows at their Wednesday lunch seminar in G-14 Dickinson during 2012–2013. Left to right: Jarod Roll, Dagmar Herzog, Peter Gordon, Louis Warren, Philip Nord, Julia Smith, and Moshe Sluhovsky.

Photo from Dagmar Herzog

Robert Proctor found that radon levels were well above the 4.0 level of safety set by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the New Jersey Department of Health. Subsequent testing by the Department of Engineering from the MacMillan Building revealed unacceptable levels throughout the entire ground floor.... Starting in March, various efforts were made by the Department of Engineering to reduce the radon level: a new fan system, new pipes in the crawl space, and most recently

²⁷⁴ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1986–1987,” 3 and 6–7.

²⁷⁵ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1987–1988,” 8–9.

²⁷⁶ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1989–1990,” 3.

a repair of perforated plywood that has been allowing radon to seep into the crawl space.²⁷⁷

Proctor hoped that his efforts had not “made me an unwelcome whistle-blower.” He wrote, “I will never forget the calls from the Princeton Radiation Safety Office wondering what a historian was doing (‘sleuthing’ as the local paper put it) with a professional radon detector.”²⁷⁸ The reason for the unusually high levels of radon in Dickinson Hall was deemed a “mystery” by the Department of Engineering, but the issue was finally resolved in 1994.²⁷⁹

After more than twenty years, the Davis Center had found a home ensconced within the department itself. It remains there, on the ground or “garden” floor of Dickinson Hall, encompassing five fellow offices, a conference room, and the office of the Center manager.



Belief and Unbelief (year 2) Davis Center fellows out for a holiday dinner in December 2013. Left to right: Caterina Pizzigoni, Philip Nord, Katja Guenther, Jennifer (Houle) Goldman, Simeon Evstatiev, Katherine Luongo, and Brandi Hughes.

Photo from Benedict Kiernan.

The conference room's shelves are lined with books published by former fellows, while the photostat of Shelby Davis's check hangs conspicuously on the wall. Hugh Thomas admitted to “feeling a bit of Ivy League envy” when reflecting on his time in Princeton in 2010–2011. “After I arrived, I wrote to several of my colleagues that my office was not only bigger than our history department's seminar room at the University of Miami, but even had windows!”²⁸⁰

Solving the office space problem may have facilitated more scholarly engagement among the fellows and

the faculty, but it did not overcome the challenges of social isolation and loneliness that dampened the experiences of many fellows. In keeping with Stone's commitment “to maximize intellectual and *social* communication,” directors and Center managers have been attentive to fellows' personal needs as well, hosting social events and other-

²⁷⁷ Davis, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1992–1993,” 3.

²⁸⁰ Hugh Thomas, in “Biennial Report of the Davis Center, 2010–2012,” 11.

wise working to make fellows feel at home. Following a conversation with a homesick visiting fellow and feeling strongly that the fellows “deserved something beyond academic engagements,” Gyan Prakash decided to host dance parties while he was the director of the Davis Center, complete with strobe lights, fog machine, and DJ.²⁸¹ While the dance parties of the mid-2000s are perhaps the most spectacular example of attempting to forge a social fellowship among the fellows, each director has developed the social life of the Center according to their own style. Natalie Zemon Davis’s efforts in this regard were universally praised by the fellows during her directorship regardless of their overall experience. Zachary Lockman recalled her as “a dynamo,” who “put a lot of time and energy and smarts into making the Davis Center a congenial and productive venue for intellectual exchange.”²⁸² The “initial terror” Richard Rathbone felt in 1991 “gave way to a much more personal sense of belonging not least because of Natalie’s warmth and the intellectual generosity of the faculty.”²⁸³ Many fellows also fondly recall the hospitality of Lawrence and Jeanne Stone, and the solicitude they had for their families’ welfare. Konrad Jarausch, an early fellow during the second year of the Davis Center’s existence, recalled how he taught Stone to ski during his fellowship.²⁸⁴ Roger Chartier, while criticizing Stone’s “harsh” professional tone and demeanor, recalled that he “was a very gentle and kind man in ‘private life’ and he helped during all my term at the Center.”²⁸⁵

Over time, the Center’s managers—Joan Daviduk, Kari Hoover,



A typical Davis Center office, photographed during the 1998–1999 academic year.

Source: Gabriella Etmeksoglou, *Corruption fellow*.

²⁸¹ Prakash, Interview, 28–29; Jennifer Houle Goldman, Interview by Sean Vanatta, November 21, 2018, 28.

²⁸² Zachary Lockman, Fellows Survey, 17.

²⁸³ Rathbone, Fellows Survey, 10.

²⁸⁴ Konrad Jarausch, Fellows Survey, 1.

²⁸⁵ Chartier, Fellows Survey, 3.

and Jennifer Houle Goldman—came to fill the social role formerly held by faculty wives like Jeanne Stone, while also assuming the numerous other responsibilities necessary to making fellows' experience socially as well as intellectually fulfilling. This has ranged from assisting fellows with their visa applications, finding apartments, and enrolling their children in local schools, to buying furniture, lending clothes, and even having the police investigate a stolen computer (in this final case, the fellow reported that she “did enjoy the dusting for fingerprints”).²⁸⁶ Describing her approach to her role, Goldman explained, “I was obsessed with making a community from the beginning,” an ambition recognized and appreciated by the scholars who habitually sing her praises in their fellowship reports.²⁸⁷

Perhaps the most personal issue confronted by past fellows, managers, and directors has been navigating childbirth. Over the decades, several fellows have had children while at the Davis Center, and each has reported positively on the experience, praising the Center and its

²⁸⁶ Furniture: Louis Warren, in “Biennial Report of the Davis Center, 2012–2014,” 12; Goldman, Interview, 55; clothing: Dorothy Noyes, in “Biennial Report of the Davis Center, 2008–2010,” 27; theft: Brinkley Messick, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1992–1993,” 5.

²⁸⁷ Goldman, Interview, 23.

Fellows in Firestone

Princeton's Harvey S. Firestone Memorial Library, which opened in 1948, and the Shelby Cullom Davis Center have had a long, productive partnership. Firestone was the location of the original seminar room on C floor for the first two decades of the Center's existence, but its extensive, open-stack collection—one of the largest of its kind in the world—has also been a major draw and selling point for visiting fellows. Firestone and its intellectual bounty have been praised frequently over the last fifty years by the visiting fellows, who annually remark on the library's “strengths” and “riches.” Yet, praise has not been unanimous, especially among fellows who came to Princeton in the twentieth century. Maya Shatzmiller wrote of her experience in Firestone in 1996 at the greatest length:

The Firestone Library of Princeton University is a maze to all newcomers. Sometimes, the anxiety over locating the books I needed prevented me from attempting to retrieve more than one item at a time. For the sake of the mental health of future fellows, I would greatly urge the authorities responsible for the Library (as a previous bibliographer and book selector, I fully know what *is* involved in this) to unify the different cataloguing and shelving systems. Princetonians simply don't know any better, but trust me, the experience can be rewarding!ⁱ

Though Shatzmiller wrote in the strongest terms, other fellows wrote of Firestone's "confusing eccentricities," of "roaming" its "labyrinthine" stacks, of being plunged into the "deeps" of a bizarre "subterranean" and "bureaucratic" landscape. Even Inga Clendinnen wrote of the "snakes-and-ladders world of Firestone Library ('this is a q. Go down three levels')." ⁱⁱ

These complaints, humorous as many of them are, virtually disappeared from fellows' reports written after the turn of the millennium. The policy changes and renovations that have taken place within Firestone over the last twenty years have done their work well, and nearly all visiting fellows leave Princeton impressed by the library and the modern wonders of a (functioning) online catalogue, ReCap, and especially Borrow Direct (established in 2003). And importantly, unlike their predecessors, today's fellows are not confronted by complex, and multiple, cataloguing systems unique to Princeton University. Firestone finally abandoned "Richardson's Numbers," or the "Princeton System," developed by university librarian Ernest Cushing Richardson in the early twentieth century, and completely converted to the Library of Congress catalogue in 2010—a "snakes-and-ladders world" no more.

ⁱ Maya Shatzmiller, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1995–1996," appendix II, 8–9.

ⁱⁱ Clendinnen, in "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1983–1984," appendix II, 7.

personnel. In 1987, Susanna Barrows claimed that the “untold kindnesses and acts of caring” she received from Lawrence and Jeanne Stone, Joan Daviduk, Sean Wilentz, and others after the birth of her daughter, Alexandra, reminded her that the “term ‘community’ describes far more than the formal academic contours of discussion.”²⁸⁸ While Laurie Wood attended a Davis seminar within weeks of giving birth to her first child in 2017, she was thankful for the flexible schedule offered by the director, Angela Creager, and wrote “Mothers all, I can’t imagine working among a more supportive (and smart!) team of women: Angela, Jennifer, and Beth.”²⁸⁹ Emma Kuby resisted Philip Nord’s suggestions that she should name her newborn son “Shelby” or “Davis” in 2015, but she remembered fondly how her son received his first teddy bear from Adam Beaver, the executive secretary of the Center that year. Kuby wrote in her annual report, “We are indeed deeply grateful to the Shelby Cullom Davis Center and our Princeton friends for helping us to welcome Theodore into the world. What a good place to have begun.”²⁹⁰

But as Lawrence Stone wrote in 1986, “despite all we could do for them,” some fellows were still unhappy at the Davis Center.²⁹¹ Many of the unhappy fellows were those who chose not to live in residence or who were otherwise isolated from the rest of the community, which has been a problem noted from the earliest years of the Center to today.²⁹² For example, Hasia Diner found that the atmosphere of the Davis Center in 2002 was not “terribly friendly or receptive to what I was doing,” but as she acknowledged, “I commuted in from NY twice a week and I was the only woman and I frankly felt excluded although I cannot know if it was the topic, the fact that I was not around other than the times of the official gatherings, or the gender issue.”²⁹³ In 1986, Mary Lindemann “never really developed a network of contacts with faculty members.” However, she spent her Davis Center fellowship preparing a book manuscript for tenure, and “thus by choice,

²⁸⁸ Susanna Barrows, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1986–1987,” appendix II, 3–4.

²⁸⁹ Laurie Wood, in “Biennial Report of the Davis Center, 2016–2018,” 25.

²⁹⁰ Emma Kuby, in “Biennial Report of the Davis Center, 2014–2016,” 26; Goldman, Interview, 44.

²⁹¹ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1985–1986,” 3–4.

²⁹² Norton, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1977–1978,” appendix II, 8; Wyatt-Brown, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1977–1978,” appendix II, 8; Goldman, Interview, 21–22.

²⁹³ Hasia Diner, Fellows Survey, 27.

I led a rather isolated and subterranean existence, with days spent slithering around the basement corridors of McCosh and Dickinson Halls.”²⁹⁴ Of course, one of the original purposes of the Davis Fellowship was to provide promising younger scholars teaching relief in order to produce publications. As Natalie Zemon Davis reiterated in 1992, “some Fellows just want to hunker down and work.”²⁹⁵ And over time, many other fellows have been excited about the isolation they experienced at the Davis Center. Thomas Philipp wrote in his report of 1996, “After having been covered for the longest time by the usual load of administrative work, thesis evaluations, proposals, committees etc. at my own university, being left alone meant first and foremost the occasion to immerse myself fully into my own research again.”²⁹⁶

Leaving Princeton

*Like the Canada geese, despite the winter, despite the ice, I find it hard to leave.*²⁹⁷

As with Inga Clendinnen, for many fellows departure from Princeton was bittersweet. Baruch Knei-Paz wrote in 1981 that “my only regret is that [my fellowship] cannot remain outstretched beyond this year.”²⁹⁸ Some tried to recreate what they left behind. Leonard Blussé van Oud-Alblas, “very much admiring the seminar and the way it was run,” founded the Cravenborgh Lectures at Leiden following his fellowship in 1991–1992. The lectures were conducted between 1993 and 2010, “following the Princeton format.”²⁹⁹

Despite the regret some may have felt when they left Dickinson Hall for the final time, for many fellows, their time at the Davis Center produced tangible results that changed the course of their careers: jobs, promotions, publications. Tallying these accomplishments presents an absurd accounting task, one made impossible by the often long gestation of historians’ work, by the ineffable influences of temporally

²⁹⁴ Mary Lindemann, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1985–1986,” appendix II, 10.

²⁹⁵ Davis, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1991–1992,” 5.

²⁹⁶ Thomas Philipp, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1995–1996,” appendix II, 7.

²⁹⁷ Clendinnen, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1983–1984,” appendix II, 8.

²⁹⁸ Knei-Paz, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1980–1981,” appendix II, 1.

²⁹⁹ Leonard Blussé van Oud-Alblas, Fellows Survey, 11.

The Managers

Three managers, responsible for the day-to-day administration and operation of the Center and the coordination of all of its social and professional events, have served the Davis Center for most of its existence: Joan Daviduk, Kari Hoover, and Jennifer Houle Goldman. While the fellows' reports have varied in their positivity and enthusiasm for the Center, the seminar, the directors, the department, the university, and Princeton itself, they have never wavered in their positivity and enthusiasm for the Davis Center's managers. Described alternately as "magical," "ever-welcoming," and "long-suffering," year after year, the Davis Center managers have been uniformly praised for their abilities, professionalism, friendliness, and generosity by the fellows in both their reports and subsequent publications.



Joan Daviduk was the manager of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center from 1976 to 1990, a position that grew out of her original role as Lawrence Stone's personal secretary. She joined Princeton University in the Department of Psychology in March 1974; following Stone's retirement in 1990, she was appointed manager of the Department of History beginning that fall and held the position until her own retirement in 1994. Under

Stone, she managed seven different themes and welcomed 76 visiting fellows to the Davis Center. Daviduk passed away in 1996, at the age of 67.

Photograph of Joan Daviduk, manager of the Davis Center, 1976–1990.

Source: Office of Communications Records, folder 121, box 222, AC168, Princeton University Archives, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.



Kari Hoover was the manager of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center from 1990 to 2002, when she retired from the university. Hoover joined Princeton University in the Program of Visual Arts in September 1987 and joined the Department of History one year later, in 1988. She served under three directors and hosted 86 visiting fellows at the Davis Center.

Photograph of Kari Hoover, manager of the Davis Center, 1990–2002.

Source: Kari Hoover.



Jennifer (Houle) Goldman is the current manager of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center, a position she has held since 2002. She arrived at Princeton University in 2000, holding a position in the Department of English and serving as program director of the Technology Council. As of September 2019, she has served with five directors and welcomed 133 visiting fellows to the Davis Center.

Photograph of Jennifer (Houle) Goldman, manager of the Davis Center, 2002–present.

Source: Jennifer Goldman.

bounded experiences on scholarly production, and by the fact that former Davis fellows have published thousands of articles and books, and continue to produce new, innovative work as active and productive scholars.

In this sense, then, what fellows have reported as the intangible influences of the Davis Center on their professional lives provide as valuable a gauge of the Center's impact as tangible publications and promotions. Several report feeling “recharged” by their experience. In 2009, April Masten wrote that the Davis Center “was uplifting for me

intellectually and personally.”³⁰⁰ Twelve years before Masten's term as a fellow, Edward Steinhart wrote forcefully about his own experience at the Davis Center:

I have had my sense of being a valued member of the discipline of history revived and my own capacities as a contributor to the intellectual life of the community raised to levels which I have not enjoyed since the heady days of graduate study many years ago. My year at the Davis Center has been productive and restorative of my energy and enthusiasm for the historical project and for the life of the mind. It will be remembered with appreciation for the rest of my active career.³⁰¹

One fellow remembered her time at the Davis Center as a fantasy. In 2010, Dorothy Noyes wrote that she “had borne enough reality lately. Black squirrels, David Smiths along the walkways, Prospect House lunches, the fabulous wardrobe and magical efficiencies of Jennifer Houle, and the flow of visiting luminaries provided a deeply refreshing excursion to a parallel universe.”³⁰²

Growing Budget, Growing Program

*The Center's financial condition continues to be strong.*³⁰³

*The Davis Center used to run huge surpluses ... The stock market crash of 2008 brought those heady days to an end, and what followed was a period of belt tightening ... The market has recovered, and in addition to that the University has increased the payout rate on the Davis Center's endowment. The result is that the Davis Center is now running a substantial financial surplus.*³⁰⁴

In no small part, the Davis Center has occasionally seemed like a “parallel universe” to visiting fellows because of the vast financial resources it has commanded, especially since the mid-1980s. “The finances of the center remain almost embarrassingly healthy,” Lawrence Stone practically gloated in his final report as Davis director.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁰ April Masten, in “Biennial Report of the Davis Center, 2008–2010,” 11.

³⁰¹ Edward Steinhart, in “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1996–1997,” appendix II, 14–15.

³⁰² Noyes, in “Biennial Report of the Davis Center, 2008–2010,” 27.

³⁰³ Prakash, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 2006–2007,” 2.

³⁰⁴ Nord, “Biennial Report of the Davis Center, 2014–2016,” 1.

³⁰⁵ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1989–1990,” 3.

In future years, directors would use a variety of positive adjectives: “healthy,” “superb,”³⁰⁶ sometimes merely “stable.” Through the 1990s and early 2000s, directors echoed the presidential sentiments born of the long bull market. As Anthony Grafton and Gyan Prakash were fond of writing, the state of the finances was “strong.”³⁰⁷

This had not always been the case, however. Despite the generosity of the original Davis gift, the Center initially received a somewhat meager allocation from the central university administration, which limited the stipends it could offer and the fellows it could attract. Under the agreement struck in 1974 to transition the Center from a trial to a permanent basis, the university agreed to allocate 33 percent of the income from the Davis fund to the Center, which, for the 1974–1975 academic year, amounted to just under \$86,000 annually.³⁰⁸ These funds covered half the director’s salary, a portion of the executive secretary’s salary, an administrator’s salary, and the fellows’ stipends. “Because of inflation,” however, in the first year of this arrangement, Stone wrote, “the income of the Center is not keeping up with its expenses.”³⁰⁹ Consequently, the Center capped visiting fellow stipends at \$13,000 annually, or \$7,000 for a single term. The formula, which Stone borrowed from the Institute for Advanced Study, was designed to encourage fellows to also seek outside support. In its first year, the policy “paid off handsomely.”³¹⁰

Through the mid-1980s, the Center operated in stable austerity. Many fellows succeeded in obtaining outside funding, while a National Endowment for the Humanities grant provided additional resources to maintain the Center’s activities. There were also unexpected windfalls. During the summer of 1978, the university comptroller discovered that surpluses had not rolled over in several Center accounts. With the extra funds, the Center, in concert with the department, pro-

³⁰⁶ Jordan, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1995–1996,” 3.

³⁰⁷ As in presidential state of the union addresses, a variation of this statement is repeated in the annual reports *every year* from 1999 to 2007.

³⁰⁸ Ford, Wilson, and Woodward, February 19, 1974; and Richard D. Challener to Davis Executive Committee and the Planning Committee, April 22, 1974, Department of History Records, Princeton University Library. Also see Carl W. Schafer to W. M. Young, February 6, 1975, folder 2, box 15, Bowen Papers.

³⁰⁹ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1974–1975,” 5.

³¹⁰ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1975–1976,” 1.

vided fifth-year support to “the most promising graduate students,” who had not yet secured full-time employment.³¹¹ “The finances of the Center,” Stone averred, “are at present almost embarrassingly buoyant.”³¹² Yet persistent inflation in the late 1970s tested Stone’s optimism. The Center steadily drew down its surplus. By the early 1980s, the Center’s finances were stable, but it could no longer afford to sponsor fellows for a full year.³¹³

Stone took action. During the 1984–1985 academic year, Stone convinced the administration to significantly increase the dividend paid to the Davis Center from the Davis fund by 50 percent, an increase that amounted to an additional \$90,000 annually.³¹⁴ Although we have an account of the meeting where the decision took place (see box, “Securing the Finances”), we lack concrete evidence that explains why the allocation change was necessary. Possibly, the proportion of the Davis allocation required to fund the fixed expenses in the deed of gift, including the Davis professorships, declined as the size of the Davis fund grew along with the university’s endowment. Whatever the reason, “the financial future” of the Center, Stone wrote in 1987, “has been transformed.”³¹⁵

Indeed, the change in allocation fundamentally altered the nature of the Davis Center. When the visiting committee issued their recommendations in 1974 about the future design of the Center, they recognized that their plan “would leave the Center ... limited to the Seminar as its one special activity.” With the expansion of the budget, the seminar and the Center began to pull apart and become distinct entities. This change did not happen immediately. Under Stone’s directorship, Center funds remained focused on supporting that year’s theme, and were used to raise fellow stipends in particular. But over time, as directors continued to confront the problem of how to spend all of the accruing money, the Davis Center contributed to the proliferation of events and activities that detracted from its place of promi-

³¹¹ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1979–1980,” 3.

³¹² Stone, 1. In response to Stone’s comment about buoyant finances, President Bowen joked: “Now I know where to turn when I need money!” William G. Bowen to Lawrence Stone, August 21, 1979, folder 2, box 15, Bowen Papers.

³¹³ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1983–1984,” 1.

³¹⁴ Stone, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1986–1987,” 3.

³¹⁵ Stone, 3.

nence within the department and university.

On the one hand, directors have often used the surplus funds to support academic programming that further develops the seminar theme, allowing it to reach into new venues. Beginning in 1981, for example, theme-related conferences became a regular part of the annual schedule. The conferences provided two salient benefits. Because they were more limited geographically and temporally than the seminar as a whole, they provided a more focused platform for developing edited volumes. Conferences, usually organized by executive secretaries or other motivated junior faculty, allowed younger members of the department to mark out new fields of inquiry, and, with the power of Princeton's purse, to attract the participation of leading scholars. For example, in 2004, executive secretary Kevin Kruse organized "City Limits: New Perspectives in the History of American Suburbs." As Kruse, a pioneer in the then new suburban history, recalled, "I was able to invite a dream list of scholars."³¹⁶ The conference was "like lightning in a bottle," and, for Kruse, captured the leading approaches in a transforming field. The volume, *The New Suburban History*, which Kruse edited with historian Thomas J. Sugrue, provided a "manifesto" for metropolitan history.³¹⁷

In a sense, the billowing budget enabled directors to realize Stone's original vision of the Center as a vector for multidisciplinary projects assembled around the themes, some of which proved to be very ambitious. Under the 1998–1999 theme of *Corruption*, the Center partnered with George Soros's Open Society Institute to host con-



Photograph of William Chester Jordan with his executive secretary, Emmanuel Kreike, and fellows from *Corruption* theme in 1998–1999, taken by Denise Applewhite of the Communications office for a *Princeton Weekly Bulletin* column ("The President's Page") February 8, 1999, by Harold T. Shapiro, entitled "Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies." Left to right: Vinod Pavarala, Yemi Akinseye-George, Kreike (standing), Robert Gregg, Jordan (standing), Gabriella Etmektsoglou, and David Witwer.

Source: Office of Communications Records, box 147, AC168, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

³¹⁶ Kruse, Interview, 21.

³¹⁷ Kruse, 23; *The New Suburban History*, ed. Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

ferences in Princeton and Budapest, Hungary. Corruption was politically salient in the late 1990s, William Chester Jordan, the director at the time, recalled. The theme brought together global concerns with democratization and anticorruption in the liberalizing Eastern Bloc, with domestic concerns about business corruption in the United States (though the major accounting scandals at Enron and World-

Com would break later). The conference in Budapest, largely organized by Stephen Kotkin, “was moving,” Jordan recalled. “There was still that sense of ... opportunity.”³¹⁸ Jordan hoped to organize additional conferences in Africa and Latin America, but political turmoil in both regions ultimately made the planned follow-up events impossible.

Over time, Center-sponsored programming multiplied, eventually encompassing conferences, faculty

works-in-progress talks, prestigious invited lectures, and other subsidiary events. Each new addition was justified on the merits. Conferences allowed for more concentrated, sustained, and in-depth interrogation of the theme. Works-in-progress talks offered department faculty a useful venue for presenting their latest research, a role once filled by the seminar itself, but were abandoned gradually as it became



Professor Mae Ngai of Columbia University giving one of her Lawrence Stone Lectures, under the title “A Nation of Immigrants: A Short History of an Idea,” Princeton University, October 15–17, 2018.

Source: Jennifer Goldman.

³¹⁸Jordan, Interview, 26. See also the volume that was produced: *Political Corruption in Transition: A Skeptic's Handbook*, ed. Stephen Kotkin and András Sajó (New York: Central European University Press, 2002).

Securing the Finances

Stanley Katz was present at one of the meetings concerning the budget (likely during the 1984–1985 academic year):

Lawrence was quite concerned ... that the seminar was not getting its fair share of the income produced by the Davis Endowment ... And Lawrence was really upset about it. He

had done a very careful study of the revenue generated by the university endowment over a period of, say, ten years before I got here. He could tell you exactly what the return was and so forth. He didn't understand why the income provided to the Davis Center hadn't increased at the same rate. And he was absolutely convinced that the president of the university was ... diverting Davis Center funds to other purposes.

At this point I knew very little about the management of universities. He asked me if I would be willing to go with him to confront the president about all this. He wrote a long memo ... laying out all these numbers and so forth. He used a slide rule to do this ... He was just determined to find out why we hadn't prospered in the same way that the university endowment had prospered.

We went into the President's room at Nassau Hall, just the two of us, to confront Bill Bowen. Lawrence was a little bit forbearing. When he got wound up, he was really wound up. And so we came in and Bill barely had time to say hello and Lawrence started making a speech about how he was screwing the history department and depriving us of money that we were entitled to. He got about five minutes into that speech and Bill said, "Halt, stop." And Lawrence looked at him and he said, "What?" [Bowen] said, "I take your point." He said, "I think it's right. The Davis Center probably isn't receiving enough annually. I'll tell you what, starting next year, I will increase the annual allotment to—" and named a big number, I can't tell you what, but a big number. One that was a considerable increase from where we had been. He said, "If I do that, are you okay?" And Lawrence looked a little staggered and he said, "Yes." Bill got up and stuck out his hand, and we shook his hand and left.

I remember Lawrence said to me, "What happened?" I said, "You were just had." We didn't have a formula; it was just such a big number that Lawrence was happy. But there was no agreement on how this number would be arrived at in the future. I learned from that a lot about how universities run.ⁱ

ⁱ Katz, Interview, 38–40.

too difficult to shoehorn research into the theme. Gyan Prakash's film and urban reflections lecture series brought the Center's themes to larger campus audiences, while Anthony Grafton's Lawrence Stone Lectures brought eminent scholars to campus and (after 2007) published their lectures through Princeton University Press.³¹⁹ Nevertheless, while each of these initiatives followed naturally from the Center's ambit, together they contributed to the multiplication of events and programming that has, many faculty argue, become overwhelming in recent years. "The problem of obesity," Daniel Rodgers observed, "has been the Davis Center's problem for a long, long while."³²⁰ So has the problem of how to spend the money.



Photograph of class of 2012 Stone-Davis prize winners with their senior thesis advisors. Left to right: Emily Rutherford, Lucy Reeder, Wendy Heller, Daniel Rodgers (as Davis Center director), Saraswathi Shukla, Tera Hunter, Ting-Fung Chan, Anthony Grafton, and Michael Laffan.

Without doubt, directors have devised enduring programs that enhanced the intellectual life of the department without also mortgaging faculty time. Anthony Grafton introduced a program in keeping with Stone's original vision of the Davis Center as the hub of the department's research initiatives—faculty, graduate, and undergraduate alike. The Lawrence Stone and Shelby Culom Davis Prizes are now awarded to promising seniors in order to support ambitious thesis research. Most of the other initiatives, however, have added

events to the faculty calendar.

Thus, as directors pursued different lines of intellectual inquiry within the Davis conglomerate, the Center also became a venture capitalist, underwriting diverse start-up projects throughout the department and wider university. In the early 1990s, the Center began funding smaller, topical seminars, the first of which seems to have been the workshop "American Indian History," organized by Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron in 1993–1994.³²¹ Two years later, the

³¹⁹ The first Stone Lecturer in 2001 was Sir Keith Thomas. Gyan Prakash arranged with Princeton University Press for the book series.

³²⁰ Rodgers, Interview, 54.

³²¹ Davis, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1993–1994," 12.

Center sponsored three such groups, along with “a long list of lectures and conferences organized by other departments and programs. Such sponsorship,” William Chester Jordan observed, “usually amounts to no more than a few hundred dollars of support for each project, but small as the grants are they nevertheless help maintain intellectual excitement on campus.”³²² Davis Corp would brook no competition from these new, nimble competitors, however, and by the next year, Jordan’s tone and message changed dramatically. “By long tradition nothing in the Department is scheduled—formally or informally—against the Davis Center seminars or conferences. Nothing. And also by long tradition the Center only co-sponsors programs that will not conflict with its own schedule. On rare occasions these traditions have been breached. Hence the necessity to mention the matter at all.”³²³

Jordan maintains that his remark referred not to a fragmentation that detracted from the seminar’s central position in the intellectual life of the department—a development, he argued, that came later—but instead to the lack of acculturation to the norms of the department among graduate students and junior faculty. Nevertheless, fragmentation was on the horizon. Although the timing of what Sean Wilentz called the “great crack-up” is imprecise, in recent decades, the number of workshops, seminars, and other programming has increased dramatically within the department and the wider university. Such proliferation certainly represents the size and diversity of the department and the widening of its horizons. It also feeds on anxieties, especially of graduate students, who face an ever-diminishing job market. But at its heart, as Daniel Rodgers observed: “a lot of these kinds of things were driven by the fact that there was always an abundance of money.”³²⁴

For a brief moment, the 2008 financial crisis seemed likely to compel retrenchment and reform. The university endowment lost 22.7 percent of its value from June 2008 to June 2009, which demanded a major reevaluation of the Center’s budget and funding priorities.³²⁵ In a meeting in the early months of both William Chester Jordan’s tenure as department chair and Daniel Rodgers’s as Davis Center director, the

³²² Jordan, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1995–1996,” 4.

³²³ Jordan, “Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1996–1997,” 7–8.

³²⁴ Rodgers, Interview, 46.

³²⁵ Zachary Goldfarb, “After the Crash,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, December 9, 2009.

two men met with Princeton president Shirley Tilghman in Jordan's office. Together, they decided to redirect the Davis Center's accumulated surplus to provide financial support for undergraduate history majors, which represented an application of the funds consistent with the donors' gifts. Money earmarked for history was also used to support less-well-endowed university programs and departments possessing a historical focus. For the Davis Center, the budget cuts, 8 percent annually in two successive years, were significant but manageable. "If we'd been working up to the limits of our budget," Rodgers recalled, "it would have been really, really hard. But we weren't," and the cuts that came fell on the Center's funding of other campus events and programs.³²⁶ "In the long run," Jordan observed, "I don't think anybody on this faculty suffered or felt the effects of that hit. What felt the effect were the surpluses, but they built up again."³²⁷ By the end of Rodgers's directorship, the Center was running those surpluses again. "I don't care what anybody tells you, we had gifted leadership," Jordan concluded.

An important legacy of the financial crisis has been the Center for Collaborative History, a joint funding unit, which since 2008 has coordinated fund disbursements among the Davis Center and the History department. In the free-spending days before the crisis, both the department chair and the Davis director had significant discretion to fund worthy scholarly activities and other programming. This discretion and the attendant opacity created the possibility for, or the appearance of, favoritism and outright abuse. Groups seeking money for their initiatives frequently asked both the department and the Center to support their entire budgets, with the assurance that if neither grant-maker met the full request, they would nevertheless end up with more money in aggregate than they had requested from each. "It was absolutely wrong," William Chester Jordan, who helped implement the subsequent administrative changes, observed.³²⁸

The Center for Collaborative History, then, centralized grant-making within the department and across the university, freeing the Davis Center from the responsibility of evaluating proposals—allowing Davis Corp, as it were, to divest its venture capital arm and focus on its

³²⁶ Rodgers, Interview, 54.

³²⁷ Jordan, Interview, 70.

³²⁸ Jordan, 61.

core business. This, in a larger sense, enabled a return to the vision espoused by the 1974 committee, which had urged that the seminar remain the Davis Center's "one special thing," although now with enduring programming like the Stone Lectures and faculty works-in-progress also firmly a part of the Davis Center's mandate. The Davis Center, in effect, leads the department-wide programming of events, seeking to keep faculty and students talking across their regions and time periods, while supporting a team of visiting scholars to work together on an ambitious historical problem. Directors have remarkable freedom to focus their and the Center's energy on developing their chosen themes in multivalent ways, even as the pressure to spend the income wisely has remained ever-present. The Center's recent post-doctoral fellowships, and the fiftieth anniversary history project itself, have been two recent outcomes of that continued necessity.

Epilogue

When I think back on the events of the last decade or so, I am reminded of how many times I have used the Davis Center as an example of the intellectual gains that can be achieved by bringing together individuals from a "home campus" with exceptional visitors for spirited discussions.³²⁹

There is nothing else like it.³³⁰

Nothing in the Department of History's own past provokes more nostalgia or collective pride than the Davis Center, its research seminar, and the individuals who have led it. Memories of great papers, such as those given by Carlo Ginzburg and Inga Clendinnen, jostle alongside those of tough seminars, big questions, and high stakes that influenced the department and the professional study of history in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. "It changed the way history is done. I do think that, without the Davis Center, the rise of social history and of all the things that go with it," claimed Theodore Rabb, "would never have happened anywhere near as completely as it did."³³¹ The longevity of the Davis Center is impressive, even unique, for an academic endeavor that was explicitly interdisciplinary from its very inception.

³²⁹ William G. Bowen to Lawrence Stone, July 22, 1987, folder 3, box 15, Bowen Papers.

³³⁰ Wilentz, Interview, 90.

³³¹ Rabb, Interview, 36.

There is a collective sense of pride that goes along with that uniqueness. As Gyan Prakash said, "We are lucky to have something like this. No other department really [does]." ³³²

Nostalgia, the defining quality of many recollections of the Center, only exists when the moment it recalls has passed. For Theodore Rabb, the Davis Center was "very much bound up with the figure of Lawrence himself." "The continued gathering is important," Rabb maintained, and "in the last 20 or so years of the Seminar, there have been some very nice talks, but I don't think that they've shaped the profession in the way that ... the '70s and '80s did."³³³ "I don't think anything the Center does is dead, but I don't see the Center as sponsoring experiment in quite the way it did in the '70s and '80s," echoed Anthony Grafton. "I can't think of the last time that the Center did something like Mother Goose and the cosmology of [a miller]. I don't know who here is doing something that has that kind of power to fascinate, irritate, enrage ... I don't know how you do it anymore."³³⁴

As Grafton acknowledged, such sentiments may very well be "the nostalgia of an old fart," but it is also likely a feature of a changing profession and a changing world.³³⁵ Daniel Rodgers believed that "structurally" the Davis Center would never be able to occupy the place in the profession that it once did.³³⁶ When the Davis Center was founded in 1969, the professional study of history in the United States was more compact, if more elitist and overtly Eurocentric. The number of subfields taught, the number of PhDs, and the number of PhD-granting institutions were far smaller. At its founding, the Davis Center, as the only institution of its kind in the United States, could embrace "all" of history, and guide, or at least prod, the development of its professional study in a way that is impossible now. Publications and journals are more numerous and dispersed than ever before, specialties and subdisciplines are more omnipotent as large institutional structures across the profession, like the American Historical Association, have lost importance and influence.³³⁷ As Sean Wilentz explained,

³³² Prakash, Interview, 46–47.

³³³ Rabb, Interview, 36–37.

³³⁴ Grafton, Interview, 91–92.

³³⁵ Grafton, 91–92.

³³⁶ Rodgers, Interview, 57.

³³⁷ Katz, Interview, 53; Grafton, Interview, 91–92.

The glory of the Princeton department was always that it was centripetal, it pulled people together, and the Davis Center was crucial for that. Now it's centrifugal. Now, that is in part the function of professional anxiety, but it's part of the way the profession has gone, so that everything's become balkanized, everybody has their own little thing, and maybe you shift around but you're with 10 other people. The whole universe was relevant to the Davis Center.³³⁸

However, when Lawrence Stone noted fading attendance in his final annual report in 1990, he did not single out the proliferation of subfields and professional journals, or the balkanization of the historical profession. Instead, he complained of the increased "workload," "pressure," and "burdens" placed upon the faculty.³³⁹

Stone's critique embraced a changing profession and mode of academic life. It embraced households where both partners were employed outside the home. It embraced new professional norms like committee work and letters of recommendation. It embraced the "PC" and "Word Processor"—harbingers of a new, uncertain, less civilized, and social age. It would embrace email, a scourge that Stone never encountered as the director of the Davis Center. "People don't have time," claimed Wilentz, because "the workload has increased. The workload is a lot of different things. It's the workload inside the department, but it's every letter of recommendation you have to write, it's all the stuff that's out there. And you only really realize how bad it is when you're on leave, because you wonder why that ringing in your head has stopped."³⁴⁰

But despite a changing academy and the "new" pressures placed upon its members, a good portion of the Princeton History department still turns up on Friday mornings in the Davis seminar room. It is no longer a room located deep in the bowels of Firestone Library, but one nestled within the heart of Dickinson Hall, and the History department itself. In an era that now universally gives pride of place to interdisciplinary endeavors and projects, virtually all acknowledge the continuing importance, strength, vitality, and even the future po-

³³⁸ Wilentz, Interview, 83–85.

³³⁹ Stone, "Annual Report of the Davis Center, 1989–1990," 5.

³⁴⁰ Wilentz, Interview, 83–85.



Poster for Natalie Zemon Davis 90th birthday event sponsored by the Davis Center and the Institute for Advanced Study, School of Historical Studies, in Princeton on April 26, 2019. Poster designed by Indra Gill, using a still photograph of Natalie Zemon Davis when she appeared as an extra in the 1982 French film adaptation of her book, *The Return of Martin Guerre*.

tential of the Davis Center. “It’s going strong” is a common refrain among past directors.³⁴¹ Angela Creager, the current director of the Davis Center, believes that having such a research center based in the department continues to provide “a centripetal force, to pull us together.” This force fosters a “common conversation” among the disparate subfields and the more than five dozen regular faculty members in today’s department.³⁴² “The Davis Center,” in the words of Keith Wailoo, “is one of the things that holds us together.”³⁴³

Those sentiments were demonstrated on Friday, April 26, 2019, when the Davis Center and the Institute for Advanced Study cosponsored an event for the first time since the days of Lawrence Stone. The two institutions jointly held a celebration in honor of the ninetieth birthday of Natalie Zemon Davis, the second director of the Center and one of the stars of the “Hot History Department.” Naturally, the celebration involved three hours of papers and presentations. Few institutions on campus can do celebrations as well as the Davis Center, and the event did not disappoint. Before a lively audience of over one hundred, in a lecture hall in which people were physically standing along the walls just to witness the proceedings and from which many others had been turned away, former directors, fellows, and faculty members, including William Chester Jordan, Joan Scott, Anthony Grafton, Lorraine Daston, Bonnie Smith, and Peter Brown, praised both Davis and the institutions to which she had made such important contributions.

Lawrence Stone might not have approved. The rules of engagement for the evening were loose; formal critique, discouraged. Yet, as only fitting, the two former directors of the Center who spoke—William Chester Jordan and Anthony Grafton—not only praised Davis but also

³⁴¹ Rodgers, Interview, 57.

³⁴² Creager, Interview, 75.

³⁴³ Wailoo, Interview, 40–41.

offered papers of original research in her honor. When it came her turn to take the podium, Davis not only thanked the audience and reflected upon her career; she also took the opportunity, like the other former directors that afternoon, to present an original paper on her latest research project about *Leo Africanus*. As is the custom of the Davis Center, the presentations were followed by a reception, cake, and continued discussion. Perhaps no better tribute could have been paid to the ethos of the Center, its founder Lawrence Stone, or Natalie Zemon Davis herself. Fifty years on, the original mission of the Davis Center remains strong, its purpose and utility undimmed by time and circumstance.

Appendix

Directors



Lawrence Stone, one of several photographs taken for the *Princeton Weekly Bulletin* feature "Davis Seminars Probe Historical Studies," December 7, 1981.

Source: negatives in Office of Communications Records, folder 1, box 37, Historical Subject Files Collection, AC109, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

Lawrence Stone was the Dodge Professor of History and the first director of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center, from 1969 to 1990. The founder and guiding force behind the Davis Center, Stone tackled ten themes during his directorship: *History of Education*, *Popular Religion*, *Popular Culture*, *History of the Family*, *History of the Professions*, *Political Power and Ideology*, *War and Society*, *Charity and Welfare*, *The Transmission of Culture*, and *Power and Responses to Power*. Stone joined the Department of History in 1963, after being educated at the Sorbonne and Oxford, where he served as Lecturer at University College (1947–1950) and Fellow at Wadham College (1950–1963). An expert in the history of early modern England and an innovative social historian, Stone published eleven books, including *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641* (1965), *The Causes of the English Revolution, 1529–1642* (1972), *Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (1977), *An Open Elite? England, 1540–1880* (1984), and *Road to Divorce: England, 1530–1987* (1990). He also served as the chair of the Department of History from 1967 to 1970. Stone passed away in 1999, at the age of 79.



Recent portrait of Natalie Zemon Davis.

Photo credit: Derek Shapton.

Natalie Zemon Davis was the Henry Charles Lea Professor of History and the second director of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center, from 1990 to 1994, overseeing the themes of *Colonialism*, *Imperialism*, and the *Colonial Aftermath* and *Proof and Persuasion*. Davis joined the Department of History in 1978, after receiving her PhD in history from the University of Michigan and teaching at Brown University, the University of Toronto, and the University of Califor-

nia, Berkeley. An innovative social and cultural historian of early modern Europe and beyond, she has published eight books in her career, including *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays* (1975), *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983), *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (1987), and *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (1995). For her scholarship, she has been awarded the Holberg International Memorial Prize and the National Humanities Medal. Professor Davis also served as the second female president of the American Historical Association, in 1987.

William Chester Jordan, the Dayton-Stockton Professor of History, was the third director of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center, from 1994 to 1999, overseeing the themes of *Business, Enterprise, and Culture*; *Animals and Human Society*; and *Corruption*. He joined the regular faculty in the Department of History in 1975, after receiving his PhD from the department in 1973 and serving two years as Lecturer. He is the author of twelve books on the history of high medieval Europe, including *Louis IX and the Challenge of the Crusade: A Study in Rulership* (1979), *The French Monarchy and the Jews from Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians* (1989), *The Great Famine: Northern Europe in the Early Fourteenth Century* (1993), *From England to France: Felony and Exile in the High Middle Ages* (2015), and *The Apple of His Eye: Converts from Islam in the Reign of Louis IX* (2019). For his scholarship, he has been awarded a number of prizes, including the Haskins Medal of the Medieval Academy of America. He served as the chair of the Department of History from 2008 to 2017 and as the president of the Medieval Academy of America from 2014 to 2015.



Portrait of William Chester Jordan, 2019.

Photo credit: Sameer Khan/
Fotobuddy LLC.



Portrait of Anthony Grafton, 2019.

Photo credit: Sameer Khan/
Fotobuddy LLC.

Anthony Grafton, the Henry Putnam University Professor of History, was the fourth director of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center, from 1999 to 2003, overseeing the themes of *Conversion: Sacred and Profane* and *Migration*. He joined the Department of History in 1975, having received his PhD in history from the University of Chicago. With special interests in the cultural history of Renaissance and early modern Europe, as well as the history of the book, scholarship, and science, Grafton has published twelve monographs, in addition to numerous coauthored works, including *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship*, 2 vols. (1983–1993), *Forgers and Critics: Creativity*

and Duplicity in Western Scholarship (1990, new ed. 2019), *The Footnote: A Curious History?* (1997), and *The Culture of Correction in Renaissance Europe* (2011). Grafton also published the influential article “‘Studied for Action’: How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy,” *Past & Present* 129 (1990): 30–78, based upon a Davis Center paper coauthored with Lisa Jardine. He has won numerous honors for his work, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, and the Balzan Prize for History in the Humanities. In 2011, Professor Grafton also served as the president of the American Historical Association.



Portrait of Gyan Prakash, 2010.

Photo credit: Aruna Prakash.

Gyan Prakash, the Dayton-Stockton Professor of History, was the fifth director of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center, from 2003 to 2008, overseeing the themes of *Cities: Space, Society, and History*; *Utopia/Dystopia: Historical Conditions of Possibility*; and *Fear*. Prakash was educated in India and the United States, receiving his PhD in history from the University of Pennsylvania in 1984, before joining the Department of History in 1988. An expert in the history of modern India, he has published five monographs: *Bonded Histories: Genealogies of Labor Servitude in Colonial India* (1990), *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern*

India (1999), *Mumbai Fables* (2011), *Tower of Silence* (2013), and *Emergency Chronicles: Indira Gandhi and Democracy's Turning Point* (2018). *Mumbai Fables* was adapted into a film entitled *Bombay Velvet* (2015), for which Professor Prakash cowrote the screenplay.

Daniel T. Rodgers was the Henry Charles Lea Professor of History and the sixth director of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center, from 2008 to 2012, overseeing the themes of *Cultures and Institutions in Motion* and *Authority and Legitimation*. He received his PhD in history from Yale University and taught at the University of Wisconsin-Madison before joining the Department of History in 1980. He served two stints as the chair of the Department of History, 1988–1995 and 1997–1998, before retiring from active teaching in 2013. He has published four books: *The Work Ethic in Industrial America, 1850–1920* (1978), *Contested Truths: Keywords in American Politics since Independence* (1987), *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (1998), and *As a City on a Hill: The Story of America's Most Famous Lay Sermon* (2018). For his published work, Professor Rodgers has been awarded numerous prizes, including the Frederick Jackson Turner Prize and the Bancroft Prize.



Recent portrait of Daniel T. Rodgers.

Photo credit: Mark Czajkowski.

Philip G. Nord, the Rosengarten Professor of Modern and Contemporary History, was the seventh director of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center, from 2012 to 2016, overseeing the themes of *Belief and Unbelief* and *In the Aftermath of Catastrophe*. He joined the Department of History in 1981 and received a PhD in history from Columbia University the following year. He served as the chair of the Department of History from 1995 to 2001 and has published five books on aspects of the history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century France: *Paris Shopkeepers and the Politics of Resentment* (1986), *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (1995), *Impressionists and Politics: Art*



Portrait of Philip G. Nord, 2010.

Photo credit: Etta Recke.

and *Democracy in the Nineteenth Century* (2000), *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* (2010), and *France 1940: Defending the Republic* (2015). In 2005, Professor Nord was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to conduct research for *France's New Deal*.



Portrait of Angela N. H. Creager, 2019.

Photo credit: Sameer Khan/
Fotobuddy LLC.

Angela N. H. Creager, the Thomas M. Siebel Professor in the History of Science, is the eighth, and current, director of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center, from 2016 to 2020, overseeing the themes of *Risk and Fortune* and *Law and Legalities*. She joined the Department of History in 1994, having received a PhD in biochemistry from the University of California, Berkeley. Her published work includes *The Life of a Virus: Tobacco Mosaic Virus as an Experimental Model, 1930–1965* (2002) and *Life Atomic: A History of Radioisotopes in Science and Medicine* (2013). For *Life Atomic*, Professor Creager was awarded the Patrick Suppes Prize in the History of Science from the *American Philosophical Society*.



Portrait of David A. Bell, 2019.

Photo credit: Big Apple
Portraits.

David A. Bell, the Sidney and Ruth Lapidus Professor in the Era of North Atlantic Revolutions, will become the ninth director of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center, serving from 2020 to 2024. The first theme of his directorship will be *Revolutionary Change*. After receiving his PhD from the department in 1991, he taught at Yale and Johns Hopkins before coming back to Princeton in 2010. He is the author or coauthor of seven books on the history of early modern and revolutionary Europe, including *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680–1800* (2001) and *Men on Horseback: The Power of Charisma in the Age of Revolution* (forthcoming in 2020). His awards include three book prizes, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a Cullman Center Fellowship.

He served as the dean of faculty in the School of Arts and Sciences at Johns Hopkins from 2007 to 2010, and as an elected council member of the American Historical Association from 2015 to 2018.

**Executive Secretaries,
1969–2020**

<i>1969–1970</i>	John Talbott	<i>1997–1998</i>	Angela Creager
<i>1970–1971</i>	Henry Smith, II	<i>1998–1999</i>	Emmanuel Kreike
<i>1971–1973</i>	James McLachlan	<i>1999–2001</i>	Kenneth Mills
<i>1973–1976</i>	James Obelkevich	<i>2001–2002</i>	Eagle Glassheim, Saje Mathieu
<i>1977–1979</i>	Anthony Grafton	<i>2002–2003</i>	Marc Rodriguez
<i>1979–1980</i>	John Murrin	<i>2003–2005</i>	Kevin Kruse
<i>1980–1981</i>	Sean Wilentz	<i>2005–2006</i>	Helen Tilley
<i>1981–1982</i>	John Murrin, Sean Wilentz	<i>2006–2007</i>	Michael Gordin
<i>1982–1983</i>	Sean Wilentz	<i>2007–2008</i>	Michael Laffan
<i>1983–1984</i>	Philip Nord, David Abraham	<i>2008–2009</i>	Bhavani Raman
<i>1984–1985</i>	Peter Mandler	<i>2009–2010</i>	Helmut Reimitz
<i>1985–1986</i>	Gary Gerstle, Peter Mandler	<i>2010–2011</i>	Yair Mintzker
<i>1986–1987</i>	Gary Gerstle, Philip Nord	<i>2011–2012</i>	Eleanor Hubbard
<i>1987–1988</i>	Laura Engelstein, Theodore Rabb	<i>2012–2013</i>	Max Weiss
<i>1988–1989</i>	Harold James	<i>2013–2014</i>	Katja Guenther
<i>1989–1990</i>	Gyan Prakash	<i>2014–2015</i>	Matthew Karp
<i>1990–1991</i>	Gyan Prakash, Michael Jiménez	<i>2015–2016</i>	Adam Beaver
<i>1991–1992</i>	Robert Shell, Gyan Prakash	<i>2016–2017</i>	Jack Tannous
<i>1992–1993</i>	Suzanne Marchand, Elizabeth Lunbeck	<i>2017–2018</i>	Beth Lew-Williams
<i>1993–1994</i>	Jeremy Adelman, Hendrik Hartog, Harold James	<i>2018–2019</i>	Natasha Wheatley
<i>1994–1995</i>	Stephen Aron, Karen Merrill	<i>2019–2020</i>	Iryna Vushko
<i>1995–1996</i>	Jeremy Adelman		
<i>1996–1997</i>	Mary Voss		

Fellows, 1969–2020***History of Education****1969–1970*

Patrick L. Alston
 Robert L. Church
 Richard L. Kagan
 Sheldon Rothblatt

1970–1971

Konrad Hugo Jarausch
 Donald W. Light
 James K. McConica
 James McLachlan
 Nicholas T. Phillipson
 Richard Seabold

1971–1972

Patrick J. Harrigan
 Carl F. Kaestle
 Peter Lundgreen

1972–1973

David F. Allmendinger Jr.
 Guy Howard Miller
 Gerald Strauss
 Ilan (Selwyn) Troen
 Arthur Zilversmit

Popular Religion*1973–1974*

Jay P. Dolan
 Carlo Ginzburg
 Lionel Rothkrug
 Robert Muchembled
 Eileen Yeo
 Stephen Yeo

Popular Culture*1974–1975*

William H. Beik
 Vernon K. Lidtke
 Frederick D. Marquardt
 Irwin Scheiner

1975–1976

Ira Berlin
 Robert J. Bezucha
 Roger Chartier
 Herbert Gutman
 Lynn Hollen Lees

History of the Family*1976–1977*

Linda S. Auwers
 Lutz K. Berkner
 Jean-Louis Flandrin
 Barry Higman
 Diane Hughes
 R. Burr Litchfield

1977–1978

G. J. Barker-Benfield
 Alan Dawley
 David Levine
 Mary Beth Norton
 Louise A. Tilly
 Bertram Wyatt-Brown

History of the Professions*1978–1979*

Stephen Botein
 Robert Fox
 Samuel Haber

Robert Muchembled
 Donald M. Scott
 Andrew Scull
 John H. Weiss

1979–1980

Patricia U. Bonomi
 Magali Sarfatti Larson
 Anthony J. La Vopa
 Harold Perkin
 Wilfrid Prest
 Matthew Ramsey

Political Power and Ideology

1980–1981

Sarah Hanley
 Baruch Knei-Paz
 Lionel McKenzie
 Gary A. Puckrein
 Woodruff D. Smith

1981–1982

Maurice Agulhon
 Rhys Isaac
 Alf Lüdtke
 Richard L. McCormick
 Elizabeth Traube

War and Society

1982–1983

Daniel A. Baugh
 Michael D. Fellman
 Patrick Karl O'Brien
 William Pencak

1983–1984

Robert J. Bartlett
 Omer Bartov
 Jean-Paul Bertaud
 Inga Clendinnen
 John Keegan

Charity and Welfare

1984–1985

David Garland
 Judith Herrin
 Michael B. Katz
 Dale Vivienne Kent
 Christoph Sachsse

1985–1986

Robert A. Cage
 Gerald N. Grob
 Jose Harris
 Colin David Hugh Jones
 Mary Lindemann
 Ellen Ross

The Transmission of Culture

1986–1987

Susanna I. Barrows
 Victoria De Grazia
 Alan Charles Kors
 Molly Nesbit

1987–1988

Valerie I. J. Flint
 David Hall
 William Hunt
 Lisa Jardine
 Donald R. Kelley

David Prochaska
David Sugarman

Power and Responses to Power

1988–1989

Susan Amussen
Donna Merwick
Rudrangshu Mukherjee
Angelo Torre

1989–1990

Eric Davis
Anthony C. Howe
Christian Jouhaud
T. Jackson Lears
Thomas P. Slaughter
Margaret R. Somers

*Colonialism, Imperialism, and
the Colonial Aftermath*

1990–1991

Joan (Colin) Dayan
David Hardiman
John M. Hart
Michael Osborne
Richard Rathbone
Gayarti Chakravorty Spivak

1991–1992

Shahid Amin
Leonard Blussé van Oud-Alblas
Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch
Richard Elphick
Steven Feierman
Zachary Lockman
Richard Price

Proof and Persuasion

1992–1993

David Abraham (honorary
fellow)
Karen Cunningham
Barbara Herrnstein-Smith
Rachel Laudan
Brinkley Messick
Robert Proctor
Bonnie Smith
David Wootton

1993–1994

Silvia Berti
Josine Blok
Claudine Cohen
Marianne Constable
Tapati Guha-Thakurta
Christine Heyrman
Sarah Humphreys
Andrew Pickering

*Business, Enterprise, and
Culture*

1994–1995

Sally Clarke
James Farr
Margot Finn
Leonard Rosenband
Leigh Schmidt
Dilip Simeon
Katherine Stone
Juliet Walker

1995–1996

Kathryn Burns

Ann Vincent Fabian
 Louis Galambos
 Sonya Michel
 Charles Perrow
 Thomas Philipp
 Maya Shatzmiller
 Robert Vitalis

Animals and Human Society

1996–1997

Katherine Grier
 William Hallo
 Richard Hoffmann
 Andrew Isenberg
 Karen Rader
 Nigel Rothfels
 Edward Steinhart

1997–1998

Mary Fissell
 Maryanne Kowaleski
 Susan Lederer
 Robert Meens
 Gregg Mitman
 François Pouillon
 James Serpell

Corruption

1998–1999

Yemi Akinseye-George
 Virginie Coulloudon
 Gabriella Etmektsoglou
 Robert Gregg
 Vinod Pavarala
 David Witwer

Conversion: Sacred and Profane

1999–2000

Rachel Ankeny
 Richard Bushman
 Susan Einbinder
 Heinz-Gerhard Haupt
 Ronnie Po-chia Hsia
 Dorothee Schneider
 L. Carol Summers
 John Van Engen

2000–2001

Aditya Behl
 Susanna Elm
 Valerie I. J. Flint
 Peter Gose
 Heather Hendershot
 David Murray
 Julia Smith

Migration

2001–2002

David Abraham
 Gary Gerstle
 Sarah Jansen
 Marcy Norton
 Joshua Sanborn
 Stephanie Smallwood

2002–2003

Alexander Byrd
 Hasia Diner
 Luca Einaudi
 Gautam Ghosh
 David Gutierrez

Cities: Space, Society, and History

2003–2004

Belinda Davis
Christopher Friedrichs
Christina Jiménez
Willem Jongman
Ranjani Mazumdar
Cormac O. Grada

2004–2005

Sheila Crane
David Frisby
Pamela Long
Frank Mort
Martin Murray
Jordan Sand
Sarah Schrank

Utopia/Dystopia: Historical Conditions of Possibility

2005–2006

Lauren Benton
Margaret Elen Deming
Igal Halfin
Susanna Hecht
Aditya Nigam
Jacqueline Stewart
Jennifer Wenzel

2006–2007

John Krige
Anne-Maria Makhulu
David Pinder
Shira Robinson
Mark Shiel

Ravi Vasudevan
Luise White

Fear

2007–2008

Alexander Etkind
Lisbeth Haas
David Lederer
Melani McAlister
Ronald Schechter
Marla Stone
Ravi Sundaram

Cultures and Institutions in Motion

2008–2009

Celia Applegate
Thomas Bender
April Masten
Susan Pennybacker
Mimi Sheller
Robert Stam
David J. Wasserstein
Nira Wickramasinghe

2009–2010

Michael David Fox
Petra Goedde
Elena Iseyev
Thomas Lekan
Mary Nolan
Dorothy Noyes

Jocelyn Olcott
Pamela Smith

Authority and Legitimation

2010–2011

Monica Black
Sabrina Mervin
Mary S. Morgan
Mridu Rai
Rachel St. John
Hugh Thomas
Katherine Verdery
Eric D. Weitz

2011–2012

Paul Friedland
M. Cecilia Gaposchkin
Doris Garraway
Polly Jones
Christine Philliou
Jonathan Rieder
Hilda Sabato
Joanna Tokarska-Bakir

Belief and Unbelief

2012–2013

Peter Gordon
Dagmar Herzog
Sophie Lunn-Rockliffe
Jarod Roll
Moshe Sluhovsky
Julia Smith
Louis Warren

2013–2014

Simeon Evstatiev
Brandi Hughes
Benedict Kiernan
Katherine Luongo
Stefania Pastore
Caterina Pizzigoni
Victoria Smolkin-Rothrock

*In the Aftermath of
Catastrophe*

2014–2015

Nicole Archambeau
Pamela Ballinger
David S. Barnes
Jennifer Foray
Pierre Force
Atina Grossmann
Rebecca Nedostup

2015–2016

Susan Carruthers
Pierre Fuller
Jochen Hellbeck
Marie Kelleher
Emma Kuby
Arnaud Orain
Yael Sternhell

Risk and Fortune

2016–2017

Giovanni Ceccarelli
Jacco Dieleman
Shennette Garnett-Scott
Pablo Gómez Zuluaga
Caley Horan

Vanessa Ogle
Carl Wennerlind

2017–2018

Robert Aronowitz
Monica Azzolini
William Deringer
Esther Eidinow
Jeffrey Freedman
Bryna Goodman
Mae Ngai
Laurie Wood

Law and Legalities

2018–2019

George Aumoithe
Tatiana Borisova
Jonathan Connolly
Tom Johnson
Lena Salaymeh

Franziska Seraphim
Mitra Sharafi
Elizabeth Thornberry
Barbara Welke

2019–2020

George Aumoithe
Debjani Bhattacharyya
Malachi Crawford
Rohit De
Sarah Ghabrial
Stuart McManus
Mary Mitchell
Benjamin Nathans
Judith Surkis
Karl Ubl

Davis Center Publications

Edited Volumes by Date

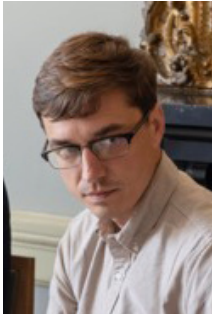
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- Stone, Lawrence, ed. *Schooling and Society: Studies in the History of Education*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.
- Stone, Lawrence, ed. *Journal of Family History* 3.2 (June 1978): 115–202.
- Stone, Lawrence, ed. *Journal of Family History* 4.4 (December 1979): 326–420.
- Obelkevich, James, ed. *Religion and the People, 800–1700*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979.
- Geison, Gerald L., ed. *Professions and the French State, 1700–1900*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984.
- Wilentz, Sean, ed. *Rites of Power: Symbolism, Ritual, and Politics since the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985.
- Mandler, Peter, ed. *The Uses of Charity: The Poor on Relief in the Nineteenth-Century Metropolis*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990.
- Grafton, Anthony, and Ann Blair, eds. *The Transmission of Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990.
- Prakash, Gyan, ed. *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Marchand, Suzanne, and Elizabeth Lunbeck, eds. *Proof and Persuasion: Essays on Authority, Objectivity, and Evidence*. Turnhout: Brepols, 1997.
- Merrill, Karen R., ed. *The Modern Worlds of Business and Industry: Cultures, Technology, Labor*. Turnhout: Brepols, 1998.
- Adelman, Jeremy, and Stephen Aron, eds. *Trading Cultures: The Worlds of Western Merchants*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2001.
- Henniger-Voss, Mary J., ed. *Animals in Human Histories: The Mirror of Nature and Culture*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003.
- Creager, Angela, and William Chester Jordan, eds. *The Animal/Human Boundary: Historical Perspectives*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003.
- Grafton, Anthony, and Kenneth Mills, eds. *Conversion: Old Worlds and New*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003.
- Mills, Kenneth, and Anthony Grafton, eds. *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Seeing and Believing*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003.
- Rodriguez, Marc S., ed. *Repositioning North American Migration History*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004.
- Kreike, Emmanuel, and William Chester Jordan, eds. *Corrupt Histories*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004.

- Isenberg, Andrew C., ed. *The Nature of Cities: Culture, Landscape, and Urban Space*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2006.
- Kruse, Kevin, and Gyan Prakash, eds. *Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics, and Everyday Life*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.
- Gordin, Michael D., Helen Tilley, and Gyan Prakash, eds. *Utopia/Dystopia: Conditions of Historical Possibility*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.
- Prakash, Gyan, ed. *Noir Urbanisms: Dystopic Images of the Modern City*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.
- Laffan, Michael, and Max Weiss, eds. *Facing Fear: The History of an Emotion in Global Perspective*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Rodgers, Daniel T., Bhavani Raman, and Helmut Reimitz, eds. *Cultures in Motion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.
- Nord, Philip, Katja Guenther, and Max Weiss, eds. *Formations of Belief: Historical Approaches to Religion and the Secular*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019.

Lawrence Stone Lecture Series by Date

- Mazower, Mark. *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Sugrue, Thomas. *Not Even Past: Barack Obama and the Burden of Race*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.
- Jalal, Ayesha. *The Pity of Partition: Manto's Life, Times, and Work across the India-Pakistan Divide*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.
- Schwartz, Stuart B. *Sea of Storms: A History of Hurricanes in the Greater Caribbean from Columbus to Katrina*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Wickham, Christopher. *Sleepwalking into a New World: The Emergence of Italian City Communes in the Twelfth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Cooper, Frederick. *Citizenship, Inequality, and Difference: Historical Perspectives*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.
- Clark, Christopher. *Time and Power: Visions of History in German Politics, from the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019.

About the Authors



Sean H. Vanatta is Visiting Assistant Professor of History at New York University. He received his PhD from the Department of History in 2018 for his dissertation, “Making Credit Convenient: Credit Cards and the Political Economy of Modern America.”

Photograph of Sean H. Vanatta at a Davis Center seminar lunch, September 13, 2019.

Photo credit: Tasha Schwartz.



Randall Todd Pippenger is Lecturer in the Department of History at Princeton University. He received his PhD from the Department of History in 2018 for his dissertation, “Crusading as a Family: A Study of the County of Champagne, 1179–1226.”

Photograph of Randall Todd Pippenger at a Davis Center seminar lunch, September 13, 2019.

Photo credit: Tasha Schwartz.



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