MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

This newsletter, put together by Assistant Professor Andrew M. Smith II, represents a new phase in our ongoing commitment to alumni and members of the department. Much has been happening as of late, all good. The department is expanding by leaps and bounds with the addition of nine new full-time faculty members: two new Classicists/Archaeologists, a new Hebrew instructor, and no fewer than six new Arabic instructors: Andrew M. Smith II, Elise Friedland, Shoshana Cohen, Tracey Maher, Nashwa Taher, Jennifer Tobkin, Rana Kanaan, Sam Harris, and Moham-mad Kassab. This is in addition to the full-time faculty who continue on: Eric H. Cline (Chair), Elizabeth Fisher, Yaron Peleg, Mohssen Esseesy, and Max Ticktin, which brings us to a total of 14 full-time faculty members in addition to adjunct faculty, which might just be an all-time high. We do, regretfully, announce the recent retirement of long-time faculty members John Ziolkowski and Yael Moses, who are sorely missed by all.

On the pages below, we bring current news of the departmental faculty and their recent activities. In future issues we would like to also include news of alumni, so we would encourage messages by return email, full of information which we can include in the next issues.

In the meantime, we hope that this finds you happy, healthy, and prospering in the New Year.

Sincerely,

Eric H. Cline, Chair
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Recent Publications

Dr. Yaron Peleg has recently published his new book *Israeli Culture Between the two Intifadas: A Brief Romance*. Yaron’s new book is “informative, intelligent, [and] never condescending. [It] allows outsiders broad insights into Israeli literature and society, even as it provides articulate, nuanced readings of particular authors.” —Naomi B. Sokoloff, University of Washington

Dr. Elise A. Friedland’s co-edited book, entitled *The Sculptural Environment of the Roman Near East*, was just published in late July. The book presents expanded versions of twenty-six papers delivered at an international conference co-organized by the volume’s editors and held at the University of Michigan in November 2004. It offers exciting new perspectives on the dynamic role of statuary in the urban landscape of Roman Israel, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt.
Dr. Eric H. Cline's newest book, first published in 2007, is now reprinted in paperback. *From Eden to Exile* “explores some of the most challenging mysteries of the Bible, from the location of the mythic Garden of Eden to the historical question of how the Ten Lost Tribes were lost. [It remains] a stimulating and fluent read throughout, and always instructive” (Baruch Halpern, Pennsylvania State University). Cline himself “demythologizes the ‘mysteries of the Bible’...with the force of reason, using clear language and a perfect command of the ancient records and the finds from the field” (Israel Finkelstein, Tel Aviv University).


Dr. Elizabeth Fisher Returns After A Year-Long Fellowship At Harvard University’s Dumbarton Oaks Center For Byzantine Studies

Elizabeth Fisher returned to the classroom in Fall 2008 after a year’s sabbatical leave spent on a fellowship at Harvard University’s Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies (Washington DC; see http://doaks.org) in the stimulating company of five other Byzantine fellows from Sweden, Italy, Greece, Russia and the U.S. as well as resident and visiting scholars. Her sabbatical project was twofold: (1) the completion of annotated English translations with introductions of two previously untranslated lengthy essays by the medieval Greek polymath and classicist Michael Psellos (to be published by Notre Dame University Press in a collected volume of Psellos’ scholarly writings), and (2) the commencement of an extended study of the tradition of the translator’s preface in Greek literature of late antiquity and the Byzantine middle ages. While at Dumbarton Oaks, she also served as advisor for the senior thesis of graduating Classical Studies/History major John Urban, who wrote on “Procopius and the Face of the Enemy: Persians, Vandals and Goths.”

In addition to a research report presented at Dumbarton Oaks, she also presented a refereed paper on Psellos’ views regarding classical and Christian oracles at the annual conference of the Byzantine Studies Association of North America hosted by Rutgers University in New Brunswick NJ (October 2008). At the same conference she served on a panel devoted to a current blockbuster publication in Byzantine Studies, Other Icons: Art and Power in Byzantine Secular Culture, by Henry and Eunice Maguire (Princeton 2007); she presented a classicist’s appreciation of the pagan imagery from literature and art discussed in the book.

Arabic Program Flourishes Under Dr. Mohssen Esseesy

The Arabic Language, Literature, and Culture Program continues to flourish under the directorship of Dr. Mohssen Esseesy. The program has expanded its course offerings in both areas of language and literature in the original language and in translation. Currently the program offers a Semitic Minor with an Arabic track and four years of Arabic language studies. Six new faculty members have been hired to support the program (see below).

Mohssen Esseesy
The department is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Andrew M. Smith II as an Assistant Professor of Classics. Dr. Smith holds a Ph.D. in Ancient History from the University of Maryland. He specializes in the social and cultural history of the Greek and Roman Near East, in particular the interactions between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in urban and rural settings. His current research concentrates in Syria, where he is examining social transformations and urban development at the oasis city of Palmyra during the Roman period. Dr. Smith is also an active field archaeologist, having worked on surveys and excavations in Greece, Austria, Israel, and Jordan, where he has worked since 1989. Much of his current archaeological interests concentrate in the Wadi Araba, which is part of the Great Rift valley in Jordan.

The department is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Elise A. Friedland as an Assistant Professor of Classics and of Art History. Dr. Friedland holds a BA in Classics from Williams College and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Classical Art and Archaeology from the University of Michigan. Before coming to GWU, she taught at Rollins College (Winter Park, FL) for ten years. A specialist in Roman art and archaeology, Roman sculpture, the Roman Near East, and museum studies, she serves as the sculpture specialist for the Excavations at the Sanctuary of Pan at Caesarea Philippi/Banias in Israel and for the site of Jerash in Jordan. Her co-edited book (showcased in this newsletter), entitled *The Sculptural Environment of the Roman Near East: Reflections on Culture, Ideology, and Power*, has just been published by Peeters Press in Belgium (2008).
New Faculty In The Arabic Program

Six new full-time faculty have been added to the Arabic Language, Literature, and Culture Program as instructors of Arabic. Jennifer Tobkin and Nashwa Taher joined the department in 2006, as the first two hires in the new category of Arabic Language Specialist. Jennifer holds a B.A. in History and Classical Studies from Loyola University New Orleans and an M.A. in Semitic and Egyptian Languages and Literatures from the Catholic University of America. Nashwa holds a B.A. in English Literature from Tishreen University in Syria and an M.A. from Ohio University in Applied Linguistics. In 2007, four new Arabic Language Specialists were hired full-time: Tracey Maher, who received her B.A. in Asian and Middle Eastern Studies from Dartmouth College and her M.S. in Arabic Language, Literature and Linguistics from Georgetown University, and who was a Visiting Professor of Arabic in the department in 2006; Rana Kanaan, a Ph.D. Candidate at Cairo University in Egypt, who holds an M.A. and B.A. (with High Honors) from the American University in Cairo, Egypt; Sam Harris, who received his B.A. cum laude in Social Anthropology from Harvard College and his M.A. in Arab Studies from Georgetown University; and Mohammad Kassab, who holds an M.A. from Columbia University in Middle East/Asian Languages and Cultures, a second M.A. from the American University of Beirut in Arabic Language and Literature, and who is currently ABD at Georgetown University.

Hebrew Language Program

The Hebrew Language Program continues to grow under the directorship of Dr. Yaron Peleg. Currently, the Program offers a Semitic Minor with a Hebrew track and four full years of language study. In addition to GW students, the Program attracts members of the greater Washington DC community and GW faculty and staff from different ethnic, national, and religious backgrounds. In support of the Program’s growth and success, Shoshana Lev Marcus was added as a full-time faculty member in 2007. Shoshana is a native of Israel. She studied for her B.A. at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and in 1990 received her M.A. in Judaic Studies (Midrash) from the Hebrew College in Boston. From 1992-1996 she taught Hebrew at Brandeis University to graduate students in the Horenstein Program. Currently, Shoshana teaches all the Beginning Hebrew classes at the university.
“There’s the classroom, and then there’s Megiddo, where you literally encounter the archaeological experience of mystery, history and getting your hands dirty in the discipline.”
- Eric H. Cline

Tel Megiddo— an archaeologically unparalleled site in Israel where one can literally see, touch, and be inspired by monuments from biblical times. Sitting astride one of the most important highways of the ancient world, the Via Maris, this ancient city controlled a strategic point along the connecting route between the great ancient civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia, and was the site of a number of famous battles. Known in the New Testament as Armageddon, it is also the only site of the Levant that is noted in the records of the Ancient Near Eastern civilizations. It was also the inspiration for James Michener’s best-selling novel, The Source. With Eric H. Cline serving as the Associate Director (USA) of the renewed excavations at Megiddo, The George Washington University has been the Senior Member of the international consortium led by Tel Aviv University since 2000. In 2004, Professor Cline took six GWU students with him; that number swelled to 30 in 2006 and to 38 in 2008. Applications are already being taken for 2010! See http://megiddo.tau.ac.il/ (with a short video featuring GW students and filmed by a GW student)...
Tel Kabri Project, Israel

Located in a quiet rural setting within the western Galilee of Israel, only a ten minute ride from the historical town of Acco and the modern resort town of Nahariya, the site of Tel Kabri has what may be the earliest-known Western art yet found in the Eastern Mediterranean. Today the Tel and its surroundings are an agricultural land, with lush plantations of bananas and avocados overlying the ancient remains. During excavations conducted at the site from 1986-1993, a floor and wall frescoes painted in an Aegean manner—probably by Cycladic or Minoan artists—were discovered within a building identified as a palace. Preliminary excavations in 2005 and 2008, co-directed by Eric H. Cline, indicated that this palace, which dates to the Middle Bronze (MB) IIB period during the early second millennium BCE, is at least twice as large as previously thought, with much still remaining to be excavated. Data from the entire history of the MB palace, from a pre-palatial period through to final destruction, was retrieved, along with approximately 45 more fragments of wall plaster, at least some of which appear to be painted, and additional evidence for red paint on one of the plaster floors in the palace. The 2009 season will focus on continued excavation of the palace, with the goal of investigating its life cycle, from humble beginnings to its destruction three centuries later. Applications are already being accepted; go to http://digkabri.wordpress.com/ for more information and a preliminary application.
Bir Madhkur Project, Jordan

During Summer 2008, Dr. Andrew M. Smith II directed archaeological excavations at the Nabataean, Roman, and Byzantine site of Bir Madhkur in southern Jordan. Bir Madhkur is a major way-station and military outpost in the foothills of Wadi Araba, ca. 15 kms northwest of Petra along the ancient Incense Road. The main features of the site include a Roman fort, a domestic settlement, and a bath-complex. Numerous other sites lie in the vicinity of Bir Madhkur, which range from farm-houses and campsites to larger caravan stations that once supported the ancient trade that passed through the region, all of which are targeted in the project’s regional survey. Ultimately, the range of site types suggests intense social, economic, and cultural interactions between non-indigenous (soldiers and traders) and indigenous (pastoralists and farmers) peoples in the classical periods. One focus of the Bir Madhkur Project is to examine the nature of these interactions and how they were shaped by environmental circumstances. Smith plans to return to Bir Madhkur in Summer 2009 to resume the regional survey around the site. Excavations at Bir Madhkur will resume in 2010, when Smith returns with a contingent of students from The George Washington University.

Andrew M. Smith II
Dr. Fisher Invited To Latin Colloquium
In November Elizabeth Fisher joined more than fifty professors invited by the College Board to participate in a faculty colloquium on Advanced Placement Latin; invitees represented what the College Board described as the “top classics departments nationwide,” those most frequently designated to receive the AP Latin scores by students taking the Advanced Placement Latin exams. Over two days, the group discussed reformulating the current AP structure so that a single reading list could be divided into a two-year course cycle with an exam that could be repeated for credit. If approved by the College Board, this scenario would lessen the negative effect of the Board’s earlier decision to collapse the current AP offerings of Vergil and Latin Literature courses and exams into a single course and exam on Vergil.

Dr. Smith Awarded Fellowship From The Royal Geographic Society Of Great Britain
In the 2008-09 academic year, Dr. Andrew M. Smith II was awarded a Thesiger-Oman Fellowship from the Royal Geographic Society of Great Britain to support his work in Wadi Araba, Jordan. The aims of Smith’s project are to analyze the economic and cultural landscape of the central Wadi Araba by documenting all evidence of ancient agricultural activity in relation to human settlement activity in the region (especially in the Roman and Byzantine periods) and to assist others in determining whether modern applications of ancient techniques are viable. The project is a major component of Smith’s Bir Madhkur Project.

Dr. Cline Nominated For CASE Professor Of The Year, 2008
Our distinguished chair, Eric H. Cline, was nominated for the Council for Advancement and Support of Education’s (CASE) “Professor of the Year” for 2008. This is quite an honor, since an institution is only allowed to nominate three individuals in a given year. This nomination acknowledges Dr. Cline’s excellence in teaching and his positive influence in the lives and careers of his students.

Appointments
- Eric H. Cline appointed to the Archaeology Advisory Board, National Geographic magazine (2007-present)
- Eric H. Cline appointed to the Editorial Board, Near Eastern Archaeology magazine (2008-present)
- Elizabeth Fisher appointed to the Program Committee of the annual Byzantine Studies Conference to be held in Winter Park, FL in November 2009
- Elise A. Friedland and Andrew M. Smith II appointed co-chairs of the program committee for the Annual Meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research (2009-present)
- Elise A. Friedland and Andrew M. Smith II continue as co-chairs of the Near Eastern Interest Group of the Archaeological Institute of America (2007-present)
Student Fellowships

Five George Washington University students received fellowships to participate in the archaeological excavations at Megiddo in Israel during Summer 2008. The fellowships of $1000 each were awarded through The William Warren Endowment Fund for Fellowships in the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences. Awardees included: Kristine Merriman, Kelly Overvold, Zach Dunseth, Natalie Mueller, and Rachel Navarro.

Gelman Library Receives Archaeology/Classics Book Collection

In January 2008, Dr. Andrew (Drew) Oliver donated a private collection of books (more then 6,000 monographs and journals) on Mediterranean archaeology, classics, and art history to GW’s Gelman Library. The collection is worth an estimated $500,000, and the donation was made expressly to support the growing programs in Classics and Archaeology at The George Washington University. Dr. Drew Oliver gave the collection in memory of his late wife, Dr. Diana Buitron-Oliver, a specialist in Greek art and Cypriote archaeology. Dr. Buitron-Oliver curated exhibits at the National Gallery of Art, the National Archives, and the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore. The donation provides The George Washington University with one of the largest collections of Old World archaeology and classics volumes in this part of the country and will benefit future students of Classics and archaeology, faculty, and even visiting scholars immeasurably. The Gelman Library and the University’s Development staff are now seeking funding to support the cataloguing, housing, and curatorship of this important collection.

Staff KUDOS

The Department of Classical and Semitic Languages and Literatures is most grateful to its committed and highly efficient staff, our Office Manager, Michael Weeks, and our Departmental Secretary, Mary Watson. Their untiring efforts keep the department humming along. KUDOS to each of them!!!
MAKING A DIFFERENCE

You CAN Make A Difference!!!

The Department of Classical and Semitic Languages and Literatures is committed to providing an unparalleled understanding of the languages and cultures of the Classical World and the Near/Middle East to the students, faculty, staff and alumni of The George Washington University. The recent growth of the department highlights the success of this commitment. To continue this growth and to position the department further to pursue its commitment to the students, faculty, staff and alumni of The George Washington University, support is welcomed. Indeed, there are many ways to support Classics and Semitics at GW. Such opportunities include, but are not limited to, donations to support the cataloguing, housing, and curatorship of the Drew Oliver book collection, the development of undergraduate scholarships, and faculty development.

Your Support Makes A Difference

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This issue was compiled by Andrew M. Smith II. Comments and contributions are welcome, and can be sent to amsii@gwu.edu