Feb 9: "Is the Future of Revolution Feminist?"
Valentine Moghadam
3-4:30pm, Thompson Library 168

This lecture is part of the 2017-2019 Center for Historical Research Program. For more information on the CHR, go to http://chr.osu.edu

Feb 7: "Ancient Atheism," Bert Harrill
5pm, Dulles 235

What counted as “atheism” in classical antiquity? Who were the “atheists”? What did they teach about the gods and the universe? Why were they persecuted? Although we define atheism as a disbelief in the existence of deity, this definition does
not hold for the diverse teachings of ancient figures accused of “atheism” in their own day, such as Socrates, the Epicureans, and even the early Christians. The aim of this talk, therefore, is to explore the historical difference between ancient and modern atheisms.'

This lecture is presented by the OSU chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, the national history honor society. For more information on PAT, go to https://history.osu.edu/undergrad/phi-alpha-theta

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**Kudos!**

**History Student Achievements**

Chris Newman’s “African Spirituality and the Slave Experience in Pre-Antebellum America” was published in the Proceedings of the National Conference of Undergraduate Research 2017.

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**Advising Tips for February**

**from Maria Mazon**

If you are taking a Spring semester course for grade forgiveness, the deadline to complete the grade forgiveness form is Friday, Feb 2nd! To fill out the form, go to: https://registrar.osu.edu/secure/Grad eForgiveness/
Buckeye on the Past: Thank you so much for doing this interview! I wanted to start out by asking you to tell our readers a little bit about the book and how you came to the topic?

Prof. Hathaway: The book is a study of the office of Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Harem. I actually came to it through my dissertation research long, long ago. I was working on Egypt under the Ottomans, the subject of my first book. I was in the archives in Istanbul reading copies of imperials orders from the sultan to the governor of Egypt and every other one seemed to start out “The Agha of the Abode of Felicity has sent a petition to my threshold,” which is the kind of formula that usually starts out one of these orders. I didn’t know who this person was. The title agha is generic for commander, even a military commander, so I thought maybe it was the Janissary commander.

I kept thinking that whoever this is, he knows exactly what is going on in Egypt, right down to who is doing what to whom. The main issue here is the imperial pious foundations for Mecca and Medina that get revenue from Egypt. So, I went back to the American Research Institute and poked
around in the library and that’s how I found out that the Agha of the Abode of Felicity was the Chief Eunuch – sitting in Istanbul, but knowing exactly what was going on in Egypt because he was the supervisor of these pious foundations. These foundations remitted money and grain to Mecca and Medina every year, and the grain came from Egypt – you can’t grow grain in the western part of what is now Saudi Arabia. They had to bring it in with the pilgrimage caravan, and what that meant was that there were properties endowed to these foundations all over the empire. The Chief Eunuch had to make sure every year that all of these properties remitted the revenues for these pious foundations. And that meant he had connections all over the empire.

So, I had a chapter on the Chief Eunuch in my dissertation, which was the germ for my first book, which concerned households in Egypt. These were administrative households – a combination of kin and patron/client relationships – kind of like a mafia household, only official. These were overseen by provincial notables, but these notables wanted to cultivate links to the Chief Eunuch because they wanted to have control over villages endowed to these pious foundations. Also, as I was finishing my dissertation, I published one of my first articles on the role of the Chief Eunuch in Ottoman Egypt.

It was in the back of my mind to come back to this subject, but various things got in the way. Then much later, in the later 2000s, I came back to it. In 2006, I published a little biography of Beshir Agha, the most powerful Chief Eunuch in Ottoman history, who was active in the 18th century. People ask me, “Is this new book about Beshir?” and I say, “No, it’s about the whole office.” And I know a lot more about his career now, as well, than I did when I published that little biography. The research expanded, because the Chief Eunuch is based in the palace in Istanbul and I had never really done primary research on the palace and I had to do all of that. Or at least I told myself I had to do that. So finally, at long last, I’ve finished it.

Buckeye on the Past: Were there any particular challenges with the research and writing?

Prof. Hathaway: The book was hard to organize because part of it has to be chronological. There was always a head of the eunuchs in the harem, but the office of Chief Eunuch really came into existence when the head eunuch received the title “Agha of the Abode of Felicity” – “Abode of Felicity” being the euphemism for the harem – along with supervision of the pious foundations, in 1588.

This is a time when the empire is about to enter the 17th-century global crisis. The creation of the office has something to do with that and something to do with the changing nature of the dynasty at a time when the sultanic lineage is shifting drastically. The princes are no longer sent out to Anatolia to govern, but are raised in the palace. At the same time, there is a dynastic crisis in which sultans are coming to the throne as children and not living past their teens or twenties. The
The harem filled the power vacuum and in this new order the sultan’s mother was particularly powerful and her principal ally was the Chief Eunuch.

The Chief Eunuch would have worked his way up to this position over many years. There were several hundred eunuchs, most of them from Africa, from Ethiopia. You start at the bottom. You would be presented to the palace, usually by the governor of Egypt or some provincial notable, and by the time you become Chief Eunuch – if you ever do – you are retirement age. So you have the connections, and you have the experience. Part of the purpose of the harem is to control sexuality, to make sure the dynasty is reproduced, but in a very organized and hierarchical way, and there was a hierarchy of age, not only among the women, but among the eunuchs as well.

In some ways, I saw myself as connecting the provincial authority, which I knew much more about, with the authority of the palace and the harem and there I really had to do significant research to get up to speed. I had to do a lot of reading on the 16th and 17th centuries, and on the other end, I had to do a lot of reading on the 19th century and even going into the 20th century to wrap the story up. There was one harem eunuch – he didn’t hold the office of Chief Eunuch but he was the sultan’s companion – who lived into the 1950s. He became a private citizen after the Ottoman Empire collapsed; he opened a dairy.

Buckeye on the Past: When working on this topic, do you find that you have to struggle with popular misconceptions of eunuchs?

Prof. Hathaway: Yes. I had to deal with this in the book. Undergraduates, and graduate students, too, and the public at large, really have a hard time with the idea of castration as a global institution, which it was, until about three hundred years ago. The stereotype that people tend to have now is that castration was a dastardly punishment, that the people affected would have harbored anger and resentment and sought revenge for their entire lives. And yet, it was almost never a punishment – not under the Ottomans, anyway. There were other cultures that used it as a punishment. The Ottoman eunuchs were slaves; they didn’t have any choice in the matter, that’s true, and a certain number of them - both from Africa and from the Caucasus, and earlier on from the Balkans -- were castrated. It was just assumed in societies going all the way back to the Assyrians, maybe earlier, that there would be this group of people, court slaves mainly, who were castrated. They weren’t always for the harem, either. There were eunuch military commanders in various civilizations, including the Ottoman Empire. These leaders were never Africans in the Ottoman case, but instead came from the Balkans and the Caucasus.

I tell students to think of castration as a kind of security clearance. Because the real reason for castration was not so much to inhibit sexuality but to ensure loyalty. The harem eunuchs, even, didn’t really go into the harem all that much. The harem was run by the sultan’s mother or favorite concubine, who was post-sexual. At a certain point, you had a son and that was it – no more sex for you. Your energies were invested in the son. Most harem residents were staff women of various kinds and they were celibate. It really was like a nunnery.

A man could not get very close to a male ruler, unless he were castrated or his blood relative, because he would have all these other ties (family ties, ties of place) that could possibly compromise his loyalty to the sultan. Even for uncastrated elite slaves, there was always the possibility of marriage and children. If you were castrated, it really meant you had thrown in your lot or your lot had been thrown in for you, with this regime.

Buckeye on the Past: Castration seems like a dangerous and specialized process. Were there dangers associated with it? Where there particular places and individuals who dealt with it?

Prof. Hathaway: Infection was the big problem; they knew how to deal with blood loss. Of course, I had to deal with castration practices. African eunuchs were castrated mainly in Upper Egypt,
mainly when they brought in the kids from Ethiopia and Sudan. Specific Coptic monasteries got the practice almost down to a science. It’s against Islamic law castrate Muslims and for Muslims to do the castration. And for the Africans, and apparently for all eunuchs under Islam, the castration was radical – in other words, all genitalia were removed, whereas among the Byzantines it was just the testicles. One clean stroke. Then they would put a tube in. And these Coptic monks had a secret formula for this cauterizing agent they used. [repeats first sentence: The big problem was post-operative infection, not blood loss]. To limit the risk of infection, they tended to do the operation in the autumn, when it was cooler and there were fewer bacteria. The death rates were probably about thirty-percent on the average.

Buckeye on the Past: How did you become interested in Ottoman history?

Prof. Hathaway: I got into it when I graduated from college at UT-Austin. I had originally wanted to do the modern Middle East. I studied Arabic at first and didn’t start Turkish until I went to Princeton for the Ph.D.. I had also gotten interested in Jewish communities under Muslim rule. I graduated early in December of 1982 and was kind of hanging around Austin and I sat in on an Ottoman history course taught by the professor who would later become my MA advisor. I think he influenced my approach to Ottoman history, what you were supposed to cover, more than anyone else. He kind of did everything and that’s what I thought you were supposed to do. For the master’s degree, I worked on pre-modern Egypt and that’s how I got into the Ottomans. Still, I went to Princeton intending to work on the Cairo Geniza – documents from Egypt’s medieval Jewish community. Between applying and starting the Ph.D. program, though, I had done a master’s thesis on Ottoman Egypt and I thought if I want to continue with Ottoman Empire, I need to learn Turkish. My first year at Princeton, I was taking introductory Turkish and reading Islamic law texts at the same time that I was sitting in on an undergraduate course in Hebrew. So, I kind of got into Ottoman history by going back from the modern. That and I had some great teachers. And I went to Istanbul for intensive Turkish language study in 1987 and I was hooked.

Buckeye on the Past: What would you tell students about the relevance of Ottoman history to our world today?

Prof. Hathaway: It is impossible to understand that part of the world – the Middle East, the Balkans, and Turkey – today without knowing something about Ottoman history. If George W. Bush had been advised by an Ottoman historian, we would never have invaded Iraq. That’s one of the tragedies of our foreign policy. Not only do people not know the history, they don’t care about it. There’s even an arrogant disdain for it. And you see this even with the popular press. They ask questions of the policy wonks, not historians of the region. It takes a long time to tell the back story. As you know, we historians are not very good at sound bites.

Buckeye on the Past: Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with us and the students about your new book, Professor Hathaway!

Publication Opportunity!

From the Journal for Undergraduate Research at Ohio State:
Conducting and presenting research is a large part of your undergraduate experience here at Ohio State, but what do you do after that? Have you considered submitting your research for publication?

JUROS is the Journal for Undergraduate Research at Ohio State. JUROS is a multidisciplinary research journal, whose editors review and publish quality research by Ohio State undergraduates. JUROS is currently accepting submissions for its online and print editions.

Acceptable material for submission includes the following:

- Manuscripts (6-35 pages)
- Feature articles (<6 pages)
- Images & descriptions of creative projects
- Research theses (<35 page)
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Publish with JUROS and you will have a permanent, professional citation to your name and get recognition for your hard work!

If you’ve already written about your research or drafted an abstract, consider submitting it to JUROS. To find out more details about the submission process, read about it on the JUROS website. Feel free to email any questions to juros@osu.edu.

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Nominate an Outstanding History Teacher for the Clio Award

Each year, the OSU history honorary, Phi Alpha Theta, sponsors the Clio Award to recognize outstanding teaching by both professors and teaching assistants in the History Department. This is your opportunity to thank teachers who have made a difference!

Each nomination will be carefully considered. The nomination form is here: https://history.osu.edu/undergrad/phi-alpha-theta/clio. Simply return the form either to Phi Alpha Theta, 106 Dulles Hall, 230 Annie & John Glenn Avenue or to a PAT officer.

You may also put the nominee’s name, course title, year/semester of the course, your name and email address, and the reason that you have chosen to nominate the instructor in an email to Michelle Sdao (PAT chapter president, sdao.1@buckeyemail.osu.edu) or to phialphatheta@osu.edu.
We are pleased to announce the 2018 History Department Scholarships and Support for Research for UNDERGRADUATES. Detailed information and application forms for the following are available at https://history.osu.edu/undergrad/resources/scholarships/dept-scholarships.

Applications are due by March 1, 2018.

The following awards are available for 2018 - 2019:

**Lloyd Roberts Evans Endowed Scholarship in History**
To support undergraduate students of junior or senior rank who are majoring in History. The scholarship is awarded annually on the basis of both merit and financial need. Candidates for the scholarship should possess a GPA of 3.4 or above and a broad range of interests. One or two awards of up to $2,000.

**Gerry D. Guthrie Scholarship**
To support an incoming undergraduate honors student majoring in history. One or two awards of up to $2,000 each.

**Adrienne A. and Marvin R. Zahniser Scholarship**
To support a history major entering, or soon to enter, her/his senior year at the Columbus campus. This one-year scholarship is awarded on the basis of superior academic achievement to a history major with junior or senior standing whose total grade point average falls in the top ten percent of history majors. Award of up to $2,000.

**Lois Kemp Shinkle Memorial Scholarship**
To support a History major with an interest in education. This scholarship will be provided through Student Financial Aid to the recipient’s account for the 2018-2019 year. One or two awards of up to $2,000.

**Dr. John T. von der Heide Scholarship**
To support a History major entering his/her senior year in 2018-2019. Award will be based on merit and financial need. Several awards of up to $2,000.

**Dr. Morris Frommer Scholarship**
To support one or more undergraduate student majoring in history and interested in study abroad. Award will be based on merit and financial need. One award of $2,000.

**Allan R. Millett Study Abroad Scholarship**
To support undergraduate students enrolled in existing study abroad programs approved by the Office of Academic Affairs. Preference will be given to programs that (a) provide training in a language related to the student’s program of study and/or career goals, and/or (b) contain a
historical component. Up to three awards of $2,000 each.

**Honors Thesis Research Grant**

Subject to the availability of funds, the Department plans to make several awards ranging from $750 to $5,000 to help cover major costs associated with the thesis research leading to graduation with Honors Research Distinction. Applicants must be current honors students majoring in history, have at least a 3.5 GPA both in history coursework and overall, and have arranged to complete a research project under the direction of a faculty member in the Department of History. Funds must be used during the 2018–2019 academic year (June 2018–May 2019). To apply, students must submit a statement that includes 1) the amount requested and a brief budget, indicating categories for which funding is requested (e.g., airfare, housing, books, CDs, photocopies, translator); 2) a statement of no more than 500 words describing the research project and explaining how a research grant will contribute to and enable completion; and 3) the name of the thesis advisor and proposed date of graduation.