OSHINSKY’S BOOK INSPIRES GATES TO JOIN FIGHT AGAINST POLIO
WRITTEN BY DAVID OSHINSKY

In 2005, Oxford University Press published my book, Polio: An American Story. Although I wasn’t a medical historian—my previous works had covered the Cold War, crime and punishment, and academic freedom—the subject of polio had fascinated me because I had been a child in the baby boom era following World War II, when this terrifying disease was at its height. Polio would come each summer, with deadly force. Swimming pools and public parks would close; children were told to avoid movie theaters, bowling alleys—any public place where the virus might spread. Newspapers would print lists of those admitted to the hospital polio wards, the numbers climbing in June and July, peaking in August, and ending with the frosts of autumn. Returning to school, we—the fortunate ones—would see classmates in leg braces and wheel chairs, and the occasional empty desk, signifying the death of a classmate.

I also remember the day polio was “conquered”—the incredible announcement in 1955 that a vaccine had been found to prevent the disease. (Physical rehabilitation may reverse some of the paralysis, but there is no “cure.”) I got the word over the public address system in my elementary school. Office workers heard it while huddled around radios. In department stores, coffee shops, and factories, Americans wept at the news. So, too, did President Eisenhower, his voice trembling with emotion, as he thanked Dr. Jonas Salk for developing the vaccine.
Part of my book focuses on obvious issues—from the panic generated by a paralytic disease that singled out children, in particular, to the bitter and dramatic race for a vaccine between Salk and his rivals, especially Albert Sabin. I made a point to show that both the “killed virus” vaccine (Salk) and the “live virus” vaccine (Sabin) were group efforts, with vital building blocks provided by researchers long forgotten to history. But much of the book moved in other directions, showing how the battle against polio became a “national crusade” in the post-World War II era, mobilized by a remarkable organization, the March of Dimes, which revolutionized philanthropy, medical research, and the perception of disease in America. And with the polio vaccines came a second wave involving the ways in which our government licensed and tested new drugs before allowing them on the market, and the manner in which our legal system dealt with manufacturers’ liability for unsafe products.

The polio vaccines were developed and tested with little government support or intervention. This was a time before the NIH, the CDC and the big drug companies poured billions into medical research—a time before there were explicit rules and protocols for “informed consent” in medical experiments. The enormous expenditures surrounding the polio vaccines were raised privately—by millions of small donations solicited by an army of volunteers. In 1954, the United States witnessed the largest public health experiment in its history, as more than a million children lined up to receive the experimental polio vaccine or a look-alike placebo. No one could be certain that the vaccine would work, or that it was perfectly safe. But the parents of America, confident in the March of Dimes and literally aching for a world without polio, did what had to be done. Never before, or since, has so much faith been invested in the promise of medical research. Never before, or since, has America been as engaged in confronting a disease.

Following the publication of Polio: An American Story I moved on to other subjects. I just published a book on the history of the death penalty in America, and I’m currently writing a history of Bellevue, the oldest and most influential hospital in the United States. But to my surprise and delight, the polio book has become part of a larger discussion in public health circles regarding the final push to end polio worldwide. Only one infectious disease in human history has been fully eradicated; that is smallpox. Though polio is gone from much of the globe, it still haunts remote sections of Africa and Asia. Recently, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation committed its substantial resources to the polio fight, joining with Rotary International, the World Health Organization, and the CDC. Bill Gates wrote that “reading Oshinsky’s book broadened my appreciation of the challenges associated with global health issues and influenced the decision that Melinda and I made to make polio eradication the top priority of the foundation, as well as my own personal priority.” I’m honored to be part of this historic life-saving global campaign.


FRED COOPER GIVES MARC BLOCH LECTURE
WRITTEN BY FRED COOPER

Jane and my routine has long been to go to Paris at the end of NYU’s school year, bringing us to Paris in time for the annual Marc Bloch lecture of l’Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales. We have friends at l’Ecole and we generally wangled an invitation. The Marc Bloch is simultaneously an intellectual, social, and political (in the academic sense) event—a public lecture in the vast and elegant amphitheater of the Sorbonne followed by a party in which Paris academia gathers to drink champagne, converse, and lobby for their favorite candidates for the forthcoming selection process for l’Ecole’s faculty. So I was surprised, thrilled, and thoroughly intimidated last November when François Weil, the President of l’Ecole, asked me to deliver this year’s Marc Bloch lecture. I would be following in the footsteps of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Natalie Zemon Davis, Robert Paxton, Carlo Ginzburg, and other luminaries—and in a lecture named for one of the greatest historians of the 20th century, a politically engaged scholar who died at the hands of the Nazis. I would be giving a 50-minute talk in French, to an audience of around 700, later to be published on the EHESS website and podcast on the government radio station, France-Culture.

“This was the highest-anxiety event I had been involved in...”

This was the highest-anxiety event I had been involved in, even more so than a couple of radio interviews I’d done in France (where at least I couldn’t see my audience). I therefore took a long time to write out the talk and showed it to French friends, who made numerous corrections on the written text and listened to me present a dress rehearsal. But the occasion was of much more than personal interest. As I said in my opening lines, the invitation to me was a recognition that my domains of research—African history and the history of French colonization—had a place, an ordinary place, in the
A Spanish edition of Thomas Bender’s *A Nation Among Nations* has been published by the Buenos Aires publisher Siglo XXI with the title *Historia de los Estados Unidos. Una nación entre naciones* (2011). In connection with the publication of this translation, *N: Revista Cultura* (Buenos Aires) published a two page interview with him, mostly about American exceptionalism.

FACULTY NEWS


Tom Bender presented a paper on “Historians in Public” at a conference on “The Transformation of the Public Sphere” at the Wissenschaftkolleg in Berlin and co-sponsored by the Social Science Research Council. A lecture he delivered in Santiago, Chile has been published as “La historia global y el fin del excepcionalismo de Estados Unidos,” in Cathedra Norbert Lechner, ed. Manuel Vicuna (2011), and his essay on “The Life and Times of the Neo-Cons,” was published in the Political Quarterly (England) in 2011. He has been appointed to the Advisory Council for the Department of History at Princeton University.


Stefanos Geroulanos has been named a Remarque Faculty Fellow for spring of 2012.
MIRELA DAVID (EAST ASIAN HISTORY, FOURTH– YEAR PHD)

Thanks to the generous Mainzer Fellowship I was able to fly to Shanghai and conduct my research for the months of July and August. Most of the research was conducted at Shanghai Library and the Shanghai Municipal Archives. I was able to find and print numerous newspaper articles from the 1920s and 1930s on the topics of free love, birth control, eugenics and overpopulation.

Each page of primary material that I printed had to be paid for and the Mainzer Fellowship enabled me to get as many documents as I needed for my project. I paid special attention to the reporting on Margaret Sanger’s visit to China. In order to find out more information about the visit I investigated the journals of the people involved in her visit, for instance of her translator Hu Shi. In my investigation I took into consideration all the possible ways in which one can transcribe Sanger’s name in Chinese. Thanks to the Mainzer fellowship I was able to purchase the complete works of Pan Guangdan (7 Volumes) recently printed in simplified Chinese. Pan Guangdan was the editor and most salient writer of the Eugenic Review in China and was heavily involved in all debates with Zhou Jianren, who was both a politician and biologist.

Martha Hodes has been elected a fellow of the Society of American Historians, on merits of literary and scholarly distinction in the writing of history; she was welcomed at the annual dinner at the Century Club last spring. This fall, she presented a paper entitled “Franz Boas and the Problem of Skin Color in the Era of Jim Crow” at Yale University, as part of a conference on “Indigenous Visions: Rediscovering the World of Franz Boas.” She also appeared in a BBC documentary on global multiracial identity, “How the World Got Mixed Up,” for which she served as a consultant.

Guy Ortolano delivered the plenary address at Fordham University’s graduate conference on ‘Cities in History’, and his most recent article, ‘Planning the Urban Future in 1960s Britain’ (Historical Journal), was featured in the BBC History Magazine.

Andrew Sartori published an article in the August issue of Past and Present: "A Liberal Discourse of Custom in Colonial Bengal.” He will also be spending November in London through the new NYU Global Research Center. In September he presented at a workshop on “The Identity of Modern Indian Political Thought” at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study, Uppsala. He will be presenting at a conference called “Global History, Globally,” at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin in October and the Oxford University South Asian History Seminar in November.

Peter Wosh edited and wrote the introduction to “Waldo Gifford Leland and the Origins of the American Archival Profession”, published over the summer by the Society of American Archivists.

Jonathan Zimmerman has begun a biweekly radio segment for WHYY, Philadelphia’s NPR affiliate. Co-sponsored by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Zimmerman’s segment examines contemporary news events in historical perspective. Recent topics have included natural gas “fracking,” American economic recessions, and juvenile delinquency.

The Department Welcomes New Faculty Member: Eleonora Gilburd

The Department of History is pleased to welcome the newest member of our faculty, Professor Eleonora Gilburd. She has been hired as a joint History faculty member with the Russian and Slavic Studies Department. Prof. Gilburd received her PhD from the University of California, Berkeley in 2010. Prof. Gilburd’s research interests include modern Russian and Soviet history; the Soviet Union in an international context; Russia and the West; late Soviet society and culture; the collapse of the Soviet Union; cultural diplomacy and cultural exchange; translation; internationalism; mega-events; aesthetic reception; the everyday as a concept and a lived experience. She is working on a book (based on her dissertation) which focuses on the 1950s and 1960s as a pivotal chapter in the history of Russia’s westernization.
Congratulations to co-founders of PhD Octopus Peter Wirtzbicki and David Weinfeld, (Joint History/HJS). Their joint venture received the Cliopatrica Award for History Blogging for Best New Blog, given by History News Network. HNN called PhD Octopus “edgy and substantive,” “lively,” and “leavened by senses of wonder and humor in roughly equal measures.”

Link to the PhD Octopus site:
http://phdoctopus.com/

Kevin Arlyck’s article “Plaintiffs v. Privateers: Litigation and Foreign Affairs in the Federal Courts, 1816-1825” was accepted for publication in Law and History Review. Arlyck was named a 2011 Kathryn T. Preyer Scholar by the American Society of Legal History.

Ben Davidson, a first-year History doctoral student, has been awarded a four-year Jacob K. Javits fellowship for superior academic ability.

Brendan Dolan co-presented with Kent Underwood, head of NYU’s Avery Fisher Center, at the International Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres (IAML) annual conference on July 29 at Trinity College, Dublin. Dolan and Underwood’s presentation highlighted the Irish music collections that the two have been processing for the past three years: the Mick Moloney Irish-American Music and Popular Culture Collection, the McNulty Family Collection and the Jim McGinty Collection. Taken together, the three collections document the Irish-American experience through

MAIRIN ODLE (ATLANTIC WORLD HISTORY, FOURTH-YEAR PHD)

My summer research was made possible by a departmental grant and a short-term research grant from the Harvard International Seminar on the History of the Atlantic World. Thanks to both awards, I was able to do research at the Massachusetts Historical Society, Massachusetts State Archives, John Carter Brown Rare Book Library, Library Company of Philadelphia, and Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

I found a great deal of useful material for a portion of my dissertation that will consider the emergence and evolution of scalp bounties issued by the British North American colonies and the financial and cultural repercussions of such bounties. Work in the archives also provided some new ideas and directions: in particular, the rich holdings of the MHS and Mass Archives pointed me towards the northern frontier of Maine and Nova Scotia as an under-explored but important site for scalping incidents and other forms of cross-cultural markings. One recommendation for other students researching at the Massachusetts State Archives: at this time, they don’t have wi-fi or public terminals that connect to anything other than their online catalog—so if you need to look at any other websites or databases as part of your research, be sure to do so before arriving!

AMY WEISS (JOINT HJS/HISTORY, FIFTH-YEAR PHD)

The 2011 History Department Summer Research Fellowship enabled me to spend a month in Jerusalem, Israel conducting archival research for my dissertation. I divided my time between the Central Zionist Archives and the Israel State Archives, where I found numerous documents related to my work on American Protestant Zionism. While in the archives, I enjoyed running into many current NYU PhD students as well as a recent history department graduate. A big thank you to the Department of History for making this research trip possible!

In addition to the aforementioned primary source material, I collected helpful secondary literature about those years, about Republican China, women’s history, publishing history, journals in the Republican China and on the specific debates. Thus this research trip enabled me not only to focus my research to produce a future article or chapter of my dissertation, but also the opportunity to read on topics related to my project, to expand my understanding of the time I am studying and to get a deeper understanding of the concerns of Chinese intellectuals in the 1920s and 1930s.
commercial and field recordings and sheet music dating from 1840 to the present. Brendan took advantage of his time in Dublin by staying on to complete a ten day mini-internship at the Irish Traditional Music Archive (ITMA), the world's premier repository for Irish traditional music.

**Irfana Hashmi** (Joint History/MEIS) was awarded a fellowship from the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE) to conduct a second year of archival research during the 2011-2012 academic year.

**Max Mishler** presented a paper, “Conflicted Affinities: Francisco Oller and William McKinley,” with Edward Sullivan, NYU Professor of Art History, with whom he co-authored the paper, at a symposium entitled “Encuentros: Artistic Exchange Between the U.S. and Latin America,” held at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C.

**Mairin Odle** won a research grant from the Harvard Seminar on the History of the Atlantic World.

**Atiba Pertilla** was awarded a Hackman Research Residency grant by the New York State Archives Partnership Trust and spent part of August in Albany researching banking regulation at the state level in the years leading up to the Panic of 1907.

**Lara Rabinovitch** and **Jerusha Westbury** was awarded the History Department’s Doris Quinn Fellowship.

**David Rainbow** published the article “American Invasion? The Project to Unite the Russian and American Railroad Networks at the beginning of the Twentieth Century” (in Russian) in Vestnik Omskogo universiteta, Fall 2011, based on archival research carried out in New York and Eastern Siberia.


**Josh Teplitsky** was awarded a travel grant for summer 2011 from the Conference Group on Central European History for research in Prague. For the 2011-2012 academic year, he was awarded: A fellowship from the Leo Baeck Fellowship Programme of the Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes, a fellowship from the Foundation for Jewish Culture, and a fellowship from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, all of which were for dissertation research and writing.

**Amy Weiss** received a Loewenstein-Wiener Fellowship at the American Jewish Archives for the 2011-2012 academic year.

**Peter Wirzbicki** presented a paper, “Wendell Phillips and Transatlantic Radicalism,” at the Wendell Phillips Bicentennial Conference at Harvard University, and published a review of *We are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848*, by Mischa Honeck, in H-Net/H-Soz-U-Kult.
UNDERGRAD NEWS: MEET THE HISTORIAN EDITORS

Caroline Marris and Modupe Akinnawonu, both seniors completing honors theses, are this year’s Co-Editors in Chief of Historian. They took the position hoping to continue a long tradition of excellence with one of the nation’s oldest undergraduate-only journals. After graduation, Caroline will be working for the Bellevue Literary Press for at least a year before applying to graduate school; Modupe has been accepted into the accelerated BA/MA program, and anticipates completing a Masters in Economics in 2013. With the help of CAS Student Council funding, generous backers in the Department and incoming student editors, they hope to bring the journal into a new digital stage by establishing a web presence for the first time and beginning an online archival project for previous editions.

ALUMNI NEWS AND JOB PLACEMENT

Sarah Cornell (History PhD 2008), Assistant Professor of History at the University of New Mexico, presented her book manuscript, “Americans in the U.S. South and Mexico: A Transnational History of Race, Slavery, and Freedom, 1810-1910,” to a panel of scholars who specialize in Southern, Mexican, borderlands, and transnational history, at a workshop at the Clements Center for Southwest Studies. Sarah also recently presented two papers: “We Have No Rights Because We Have No Vote: Mexicans in the Deep South, 1900-1910,” at the Newberry Seminar on Borderlands and Latino History, and “An American Revolution? Amelia Island and Southern Views of Mexican Independence,” at the annual meeting of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic.

Kendra Field (History PhD 2010), Assistant Professor of History, University of California-Riverside, published a review of Leslie A. Schwalm’s, Emancipation’s Diaspora: Race and Reconstruction in the Upper Midwest, in the Journal of African American History 96 (2011).

Aaron Slater (History PhD 2011) defended his dissertation “The Ideological Origins of the Imperial State: Republicanism, Rights, and the Colonization of Virginia, 1607-1660” in April, 2011, and he received an NYU Morse Academic Plan Postdoctoral Fellowship for 2011-12.

RENOVATIONS: SUMMER 2011

During the hot summer months when classes are out and life at the university slows to a leisurely pace, students and faculty spend their hard earned down-time in a number of ways—working on new publications, researching in archives, interning, vacationing with family or traveling abroad. From Brazil to Bangladesh, they travel far and wide, but one thing was for sure this summer, everyone was steering clear of the Department of History. With scheduled demolition and construction taking place on three of the Department’s four floors for three straight months this was no real surprise.

Renovations began the first week in June. Staff moved into temporary spaces on the 5th and 6th floors of the King Juan Carlos Center, working awkwardly next to piles of files, boxes and books, while the new central offices were being constructed. Karin Burrell, the Department Administrator, would make her morning rounds in a hard hat, carefully inspecting the work of the electricians and carpenters. Despite a few setbacks, including but certainly not limited to a half-constructed wall having to be taken down, numerous delays of the office lighting fixtures, a leak in the ceiling of Karin’s new office, the mysterious disappearance of Prof. Zvi Ben-Dor Benite’s file cabinet, and a delivery of tangerine-orange chairs, the staff and construction team managed to pull the Department into working order in time for the return of students and faculty for the fall 2011 semester. >>

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TWO STAFF PROMOTIONS

After 9 years of outstanding service, Patricia Mouzakitis has left the Department of History. She got her start in the department as an administrative assistant covering the front desk but was quickly promoted to the position of Assistant to the Chair after only 8 months. Fortunately she has not gone far, having accepted a job just across the park assisting Dean of the Humanities Lauren Benton and Assistant Director Rafael Acevedo. Although both faculty and staff are sad to see her go, we are all extremely happy for Patty and wish her the best of luck in her new position.

Jessica Corey, the former Undergraduate Administrative Assistant, has moved into the position of Assistant to the Chair in the Department of History. She has spent the past two weeks transitioning into her new job while still fulfilling many of her undergraduate advisory and administrative duties. As always, Jessica has showed great resilience and she is excited to take on the challenges of her new position.

WELCOMING A NEW STAFF MEMBER

The Department of History warmly welcomes its newest staff member Samantha Gonzalez-Block, who will be starting in the position of Undergraduate Administrative Assistant on November 1st, 2011. Samantha was selected out of more than one-hundred applicants for the position. She completed her undergraduate degree at Barnard College in Religious Studies and also holds a Teaching Certificate in childhood education. A fun fact about Samantha is that she is also a Latin dance instructor. While living in Chile, she taught “Salsa in English” to Spanish speaking adults to promote English language fluency through dance. Book your classes now!

STAFF NEWS

The Department’s new space boasts a cozy faculty lounge and mailroom overlooking Washington Square, a graduate student lounge with ten brand-new computers, spacious administrative offices now located on the 4th floor, and a new large conference room with smart-room technology and lots of natural light. Students, faculty, and staff are glad the excitement and turmoil of the summer has passed and pleased to be settling in to their new space. The Department of History would like to thank those who helped make the summer renovations a success and appreciates everyone’s continued patience over the past four months.
A MESSAGE TO OUR ESTEEMED ALUMNI

Although you have graduated, the Department of History hopes you will always remain an integral part of our vibrant academic community. Drop us a line and let us know where your career in history has taken you. Not only are we genuinely interested in how you are doing, but we strongly feel that your advice and expertise is an indispensible asset to our current students. Send us an update or a submission for our next newsletter to:

history.dept@nyu.edu

Hope to hear from you soon!

Sincerely,

The Faculty and Staff of the NYU Department of History

FOR MORE INFO...

To be added to the Department of History Info and Opportunities Listserv, e-mail history.announcements@nyu.edu. This list is recommended for prospective and current history graduate students, faculty, or members of the NYC community who wish to learn more about the following:

♦ History and Humanities related events in the NYC area
♦ History related conference info and call for papers
♦ Fellowships and scholarships
♦ Job postings for scholars and historians

To be added to our Newsletter Mailing List e-mail your name and address to history.announcements@nyu.edu or call our office at 212-998-8600.