

Gordon Couse



Ottawa, January 12 2012

Our retired colleague of the Department of History, **Professor Gordon Couse**, age 89, died on Saturday, January 7, 2012. He taught at Carleton from 1948 to 1987.

Those of us who had the honour of knowing him as a colleague remember him with fondness and admiration. They have

told those of us who arrived after his retirement how fine a scholar he was, how judicious and unassuming was his work as an administrator.

Dr. Carman Bickerton, who worked beside him, writes that:

“Gordon Couse was a fine scholar, a judicious administrator and Chairman of the department at a time when it was rapidly expanding, and a good and unassuming man who took on major tasks for the University. He was admired and much liked by a wide circle of colleagues throughout Carleton for his commitment and collegiality. In a like manner, he gave a great deal of his time to teaching. He was very much “old Carleton”, a member of the small band of faculty and staff who put the University together. One of his last pieces of scholarship, ‘Unrecognized Implications of R.G. Collingwood’s Attack on “Scissors-and-Paste History”’, was acclaimed by leading critics of the day.”

Dr. David Farr, who hired him in the late 1940s, summarizes his career in his personal recollection:

“It brings me back to the very early days of Carleton and the History Department. Gordon Couse was the third full-time appointment to the Carleton History Department. He was appointed in 1948 and followed the two appointments made the year before: James Gibson and myself. In addition there were two sessional lecturers: a retired History teacher from Glebe Collegiate and an editorial writer for one of the two Ottawa papers of the time.

James Gibson and I had both undertaken our bachelor’s degrees at the University of British Columbia. The four-year History Honours curriculum at U.B.C. included a course in the history of historical writing and the philosophy of history. Neither James Gibson nor I felt we could handle

such a course and so we sought a third full-time appointment who could teach in this area as well as handle conventional European courses. Gordon Couse, who was a McMaster graduate, I think, and was now a graduate student at the University of Chicago, was our choice. So we continued to follow the U.B.C. curriculum as our model.

There was another reason for the choice of a recruit who could lecture on the philosophy of history. At the time we were urgently seeking approval of our Honours course by the Ontario Dept. of Education as a qualification for teachers seeking the credits to teach history in the high schools. We recognized this status for our program would help us to recruit students. We had many discussions with Toronto and eventually we secured approval for our curriculum. I am convinced the new course in the philosophy of history was a great help in achieving this status, so Gordon was a key figure in the strengthening of the department.

My wife Joan and I had much to do with Gordon and Phyllis Couse during these early years. We admired Gordon as a friend and respected his accomplishments in art and music. He sketched a small pencil portrait of how I appeared about 1950 which is still a valued possession. I respected Gordon’s broad knowledge of historical texts, both specialized and more embracing. We often met in the Library where Gordon was frequently to be found.

Gordon Couse, in his quiet scholarly way, was an important personage in Carleton’s growth. He always had time for students and was remembered fondly by those who were taught by him. Perhaps I could summarize his devotion to learning by recalling a little remark he once made to me that university teachers had so much to do that they should be celibate!”

Dominique Marshall

History Department, Carleton University

Helen Smith



Helen Smith passed away on January 22, 2012 after an 18-month battle with ovarian cancer. Helen was a popular teacher and colleague and an active and award-winning researcher. She eagerly took on the multiple roles of teaching, research, and service, and recognized the importance of active contribution in all three categories. Jointly appointed to History and Women's Studies (which she helped to co-found) at Lakehead University in 1992, Helen introduced new and popular courses in Canadian and European history as well as courses in Reformation and Renaissance history. Helen believed strongly in interdisciplinary teaching and research and, along with Pamela Wakewich (also of Lakehead University), she co-developed the unique humanities and social studies model of Lakehead's Women's Studies undergraduate and graduate programs. Her ability to draw rich connections between the history of ideas on women and contemporary representations of gender and culture in diverse forms of literature and media made her courses on feminist thought and the history and culture of witchcraft among the program's most popular.

Helen was renowned for her dedication to teaching. Her door was always open to students; she lent them books from her own considerable library and she fuelled their spirit of inquiry through her constant encouragement. Helen compelled students to find the right question and to seek intricate answers by being sensitive to the historical context. In her classrooms, she also encouraged students to consider their own roles in the production of knowledge.

Helen published widely on various aspects of women's history. With her long-time research partner, Pamela Wakewich, she undertook an extensive SSHRC-funded oral history and archival project on Canadian women's wartime work and identities,

focusing on the CanCar plant in Fort William, Ontario. Research from this project was and is being published in national and international journals as well as in various book chapters. In recognition of her research contributions, she received The Riddell Award from the Ontario Historical Society in 2000 and the JP Bertrand Award in 2001.

In addition to her teaching and research, Helen believed strongly in the importance of university service to build community and spark change. Her colleagues placed much trust in her abilities and her capacity for equity and fairness as they elected her to be Chair, Graduate Co-ordinator, and to committees like the Promotion, Tenure, and Renewal Committee as well as the Lakehead University Faculty Association bargaining team.

Helen also worked tirelessly in the wider academic community and beyond to encourage people to see the relevance of history and historical thinking. She was a long-time board member at the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society and frequently volunteered her time in other areas. Her dedication to the Thunder Bay Museum was acknowledged in 2007 through a Volunteer Service Award from the Province of Ontario.

After her diagnosis, Helen continued to work between bouts of chemotherapy: chairing the department of History, developing and revising courses, mentoring colleagues and students, and writing and publishing. In early 2012, when, due to the illness, she had to step down as Chair, she sent an email to her colleagues in which she wrote: "I just wanted to say that I quite enjoyed my time as chair and wish I could have continued." That type of dedication and warmth, even in the face of adversity, was typical of Helen.

Helen Smith was greatly admired by colleagues and students for her dedication to History and Women's Studies. She brought energy, enthusiasm, and collegiality to everything she did. A generous colleague, friend, and teacher, Helen is greatly missed.

*Patricia Jasen, Jane Nicholas, Jill Siddall,
and Pamela Wakewich*