

*Collaborating between Classics and History in Teaching Ancient History at the Ph.D. level: The University of Toronto-York University Collaborative Programme in Ancient History (COLPAH)*<sup>1</sup>

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In the spring of 2004, the Ontario Council of Graduate Studies (OCGS), which is the body that vets all new graduate programmes in the province of Ontario (Canada) before they are permitted to commence operations and then reassesses their quality every seven years, formally approved a joint-proposal from the Graduate Programme in History at York University and the Graduate Programme in Classics at the University of Toronto to create a Collaborative Programme in Ancient Greek and Roman History at the Ph.D. level.<sup>2</sup> For some years there had been increasing collaboration between the ancient historians of both universities, culminating in myself becoming an Associate Member of the Graduate Programme in Classics at the University of Toronto and teaching a graduate course there and Christer Bruun becoming an Associate Member of the Graduate Programme in History at York. There had also been growing collaboration between the two groups in the editing of the journal *Phoenix*. By 2003 we felt that a joint-PhD programme would make much better use of the resources the two programmes provided than if ancient historians continued to be restricted to participation in just the Classics programme at Toronto or the History programme at York. But more importantly we felt that the combination of training in two separate programmes with rather different methodological orientations would be of great pedagogical value for students who enrolled in a Collaborative

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Christer Bruun, currently Director of COLPAH, for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> There are currently 50 students enrolled in all fields in the Graduate Programme in Classics at U. of T. and about 120 students in the Graduate Programme in History at York.

Programme of this sort.

There was immediate support from the Chairs of the Toronto Classics and York History departments and from the Deans of Graduate Studies at both institutions, and the approval of the Collaborative Programme took place remarkably swiftly internally within both universities and at the provincial level of the Ontario Council of Graduate Studies. A proposal that we had begun to develop in the summer of 2003 had received all necessary approvals to commence by April of 2004. The Collaborative Programme (COLPAH) began operations in the Fall of 2004 and by the start of this current year 2007-8 it had eight students enrolled, divided equally between the GPH at York and the GPC at Toronto. Currently there are thirteen faculty members appointed to the programme (eight from the U. of T. and five from York, with another three York junior faculty members informally associated with COLPAH as they await appointment to the Faculty of Graduate Studies).<sup>3</sup> Searches now in progress at York and U. of T. should result in another three or four appointments to COLPAH in the near future, and the prospect of a position in Roman History and Material Culture at the U. of T. in 2008-9 will add a further member to the COLPAH faculty. A group of around twenty faculty members is a really exciting prospect, and should allow the city of Toronto to become a major centre for the graduate training of ancient historians. One guiding principle has been to include faculty working in archaeology/art history within the COLPAH faculty, as well as those working on early Christianity within the context of the Roman Empire.

COLPAH allows students to take graduate seminars at either university and requires them to take one obligatory graded course, Research Methods in Ancient History, taught jointly by

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<sup>3</sup> U. of T.: Ben Akrigg, Ryan Balot, Andreas Bendlin, Christer Bruun, Michel Cottier, Björn Ewald, Eph Lytle, Catherine Rubincam. York: Jonathan Edmondson, Philip Harland, Steve Mason, Guy Métraux, Jeremy Trevett. York associate members: Tony Chartrand-Burke, Ben Kelly, Robert Tordoff. Emeriti: Timothy Barnes, Mac Wallace. New hires in Ancient History (UT Scarborough), Greek History/Material Culture, Greek art/archaeology at U. of T. and in Roman literature/culture at York (to replace J. Rives).

COLPAH faculty, and to participate in a non-credit Work-in-Progress Seminar, which currently meets once a month during term-time and at which faculty and students in the programme present papers on topics arising from their current research. Examiners for Major and Minor Field comprehensive examinations and dissertation supervisory committees are made up of participating faculty from either unit, though the dissertation supervisor is normally drawn from the student's home unit. Although it is still too early in the programme's development to assess its full impact, my remarks this morning will outline some of the advantages of this collaborative approach for students wanting to specialise in Ancient History over courses of study offered in broader Ph.D. programmes in Classics or History.

From the outset, it was our firm belief that Ancient History forms a distinct and cohesive specialty that straddles the disciplines of History and Classics. Despite the cohesion of the field, distinctive advantages are offered by operating within a History department (typically a broader historical context and a more open methodological framework for research and teaching) and within a Classics department (typically a better integration with other fields of study within the ancient world and readier access to the linguistic, cultural and ancillary disciplines without which ancient history cannot function at its best). A collaborative programme combining elements of the 'Classics' and 'History' approach to Ancient History, in our view, provides a number of important advantages for doctoral students training in the subject. Not only do they have access to a much larger pool of specialized faculty expertise, but their training and research are significantly enhanced by the methodological diversity that comes from drawing on two disciplinary contexts. Students, it was felt, would be attracted to the programme from backgrounds in Classics and in History, and this is indeed proving to be the case. From the start we were confident that regular interaction with students from the other participating unit would

be an advantage to all students in the programme, broadening and enriching their approach to the subject of Ancient History. It is currently the only graduate programme of its kind available in Canada, and we are not aware of many parallels in the United States (beyond Michigan's Interdepartmental PhD Programme in Greek and Roman History and Berkeley's Ancient History and Mediterranean Archaeology PhD Programme).

The first of our aims, to encourage students formally enrolled in a Classics PhD programme to take courses in a History department and History students to take courses in a Classics environment, has worked well. York ancient historians are indeed working in seminars with U. of T. classicists and U. of T. classicists are working with ancient historians at York. However, there have been rather fewer opportunities for York historians to work alongside classicists working in other fields within Classics (in literature or philosophy, for example) or for U. of T. classicists to work in seminars alongside historians of other periods, since only a few Classics students specializing in other subfields of Classics take Ancient History graduate courses at U. of T. and even fewer York students working in other fields of History take courses in Ancient History. In the latter area, we are trying to develop seminars that will attract students from other fields: on topics such as 'Roman Imperialism and Cultural Change', 'Slavery in Greece and Rome' or 'Family and Gender in Ancient Rome', but even though these courses are designed for students who do have the linguistic capabilities to work with sources in the original languages, there is still a fear at entering into unfamiliar areas, especially since Canadian graduate students take relatively fewer courses, I think, than their peers in U.S. graduate programmes.

Even more important to the goals of COLPAH is the Research Methods in Ancient History required course. In thirteen sessions, we aim to introduce students to the main ancillary

disciplines crucial for research in Ancient History (epigraphy, papyrology, numismatics, prosopography and onomastics, the interpretation of archaeological and iconographic evidence), but we have also insisted that all students take part in sessions designed primarily for Classicists on topics such as manuscripts and palaeography, textual criticism and literary theory. The latter topics would normally be unavailable to PhD students working in an Ancient History stream within a History Graduate Programme. And, in my view, most important of all, we have designed four sessions on issues in historiography: two on general historical methods, and then one each on Greek and Roman historiography respectively. The years I have participated in the course I have led the sessions on General Historical Methods and used a critical reader in 20<sup>th</sup> century history and theory, edited by Anna Green and Kathleen Troup, entitled *The Houses of History*, published by Manchester University Press (1999). It has twelve chapters, each devoted to a particular theoretical or methodological approach, arranged in broadly chronological order: so a chapter each on the empiricists; Marxism; Freud and psychohistory; the *Annales* school; historical sociology; quantitative history; anthropology and ethnohistory; history and the narrative turn; oral history; gender and history; postcolonial perspectives; and, finally, poststructuralism and postmodernism. Each chapter is accompanied by a sample article or extract from a monograph that draws on the particular methodology or theoretical approach under scrutiny. The selection is quite good, with pieces by G.R. Elton, E.P. Thompson, Fernand Braudel, Inga Clendinnen, Hayden White, Catherine Hall etc. and the editors introduce each piece briefly but effectively, as well as posing a series of study questions that have proved valuable in discussion during the seminars. In other years my colleagues have used other works such as Neville Morley's *Theories, Models and Concepts in Ancient History* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004) as a starting point for similar discussion.

The more I reflect upon our brief experience of the last three years the more I think that we need to beef up the training in general historical methods. While the two sessions based on the *Houses of History* volume serve a useful purpose in challenging the students in COLPAH to think beyond the boundaries of the history of the Graeco-Roman world, it would be valuable to expose them over an entire semester to research in other fields of history. Unfortunately York's Graduate Programme in History does not run a broad overarching course in historical methodology, but prefers to treat methodological and theoretical issues in discussions of scholarship germane to the subject-matter of each particular course offered. So I think we need to increase the number of sessions devoted to general historical method. However, I realize that there is only so much one can achieve in the taught environment of coursework, especially since the number of required courses is so small in Canadian graduate programmes (typically just six semester-long courses at the PhD level, following six at the MA level), and with the exams in two ancient and two modern languages the Ancient field already has more formal requirements than other fields within the Graduate Programme in History at York. We hope that the variety of types of approach that we lay out in coursework and the balance between the methods and skills of the classicist and ancient historian that we require students to acquire throughout our collaborative enterprise represents the most promising way forward in the difficult and demanding task of training the ancient historian in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.