

Six History Professors Participate in "Touching History" Exhibit

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A world-class exhibition has come to Morgantown — and with it the chance to see, read and even touch rare books and documents from throughout history. As part of the events surrounding the exhibit, six professors from the history department are giving talks about the significance and historical context of several of the publications.

"Touching History: The Wisdom of the Ages Athenaeum," presented by The Remnant Trust and sponsored by the WVU Center for Democracy and Citizenship Education, is an exhibit of rare books on display from August 24 to September 20, 2014. The exhibit includes over 30 historical documents and manuscripts which include such revered works as a leaf from the Gutenberg Bible, a printing of the Magna Carta, a first edition of the Emancipation Proclamation, a limited edition of Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman, and the trial record of Brown V. The Board of Education.

On August 31, Associate Professor Kate Staples placed the Magna Carta (1350) within the historical context of King John's disputes with his barons and the resolution of Runnymede, but also considered medieval ideas of revolt and just governance, women's and men's access to political influence, and the legacy of the document itself. Associate Professor Matt Vester compared the Dutch humanist writing *Institutio Principis Christiani* [Education of a Christian Prince] (1516) to works by contemporary writers, such as the late medieval natural law tradition of Thomas Aquinas and the unbridled power politics of Niccolo Machiavelli.

On September 7, Professor Ken Fones-Wolf uses *Proceedings and Debates of the Virginia State Convention of 1829 – 1830* to show a constitutional crisis emerging in Virginia over issues of democratic representation, political equality, and the future of slavery in the Commonwealth, and how the inability of the Virginia Constitutional Convention to solve these issues planted the seeds of disunion and the possibility for western Virginians to create their own state. Associate Professor Krystal Frazier presents Booker T. Washington's autobiography *Up From Slavery: An Autobiography* (1901) and focuses on how Washington's background prepared him to become the most prominent African American leader of his time.

On September 14, Professor Elizabeth Fones-Wolf presents the *Gospel of Wealth* (1900), a book in which Andrew Carnegie argued that the wealthy had a responsibility to redistribute their surplus through philanthropy, and which continues to have important contemporary implications. Associate Professor Jason Philips explores the significance of the Emancipation Proclamation (1862) by explaining how it contributed to abolition and Union victory. Looking beyond the Civil War, his talk will also consider how the Proclamation affected global efforts to end slavery.

All talks will take place in the WVU Alumni Center's Nutting Gallery Room from 2:00 – 3:30 pm. For more information about the exhibit, please visit <http://cdce.wvu.edu/touching-history>.