Getting to Know Our Faculty
An Interview with Dr. Bari Stith

**What school(s) did you attend and what degree(s) did you earn?**
Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies, Case Western Reserve University
Dissertation: “Visions of Community: Rural Culture in 19th Century Geauga and Lake Counties”

Master of Arts in Museum Studies and American Studies, Case Western Reserve University
Thesis: “‘Blest Be the Tie That Binds: Mary Evans, ‘True Education,’ and the Young Ladies of Lake Erie Female Seminary, 1869-1909”

Bachelor of Science, Lake Erie College, Major: History and Secondary Education

**What led you to choosing your field of study/studies?**
I have always loved history and been most fascinated by the memories that we choose to hold most dear. Our identities — personal, community, and cultural — are intimately intertwined with the past around us — our landscape and built environment, our oral and cultural traditions, our artifacts and documentary resources. They combine with our own experiences to make us who we are.

My entry into CWRU’s American Studies graduate program, encouraged by Professor Gladys Haddad, opened my eyes to the limitless possibilities for sharing with others my own commitment to history’s continuing importance. Then my graduate fellowship opportunities at Western Reserve Historical Society introduced me to a cadre of consummate professionals working in a plethora of public history professions. Graduate school led to lots of part time paid internship and employment opportunities, which in turn led to full time positions in public history.

**Have you had any other careers before teaching at Ursuline? If so, where did you work/what did you do?**
Oyler Stith Historical Consulting
Focus:
- Research, Writing, Exhibit development, Oral History
- Historic Preservation, National Register and Ohio Historical Marker applications
- Educational programming and development
- Archives/records management

County Archivist and Department Director, Geauga County Archives and Records Center

President, Geauga County Bicentennial Board of Managers

John Carroll University, Adjunct Faculty, Department of History
Courses: Public History, Living History, Material Culture, Ohio History, Western Reserve History, Trails West, American Women’s History, American Family History, all U.S. History sections

Western Reserve Historical Society, Fenn Fellowship then grant funded positions

**What do you like most about interacting with or teaching students?**
The energy and enthusiasm of seeing places and events through the fresh eyes of the next generation and sharing the way that they interpret heritage so that it is relevant in their lives.
What do you like most about your program?
History and Historic Preservation are all about detective work and storytelling, so what’s not to love???? When you combine the uniqueness of Ursuline’s location in this historically rich area with the incredible variety of places (countryside and cityscape) to use as learning laboratories and then add the vigorous interest of these wonderfully bright and committed students, you get a powerful and thought-provoking experience that, frankly, is as fun as it is professionally rewarding.

What ultimately led you to choosing a career in teaching?
Just doing what comes naturally. Most of my ancestors in the past two centuries have either been teachers or farmers, sometimes both!

What has been one of your proudest moments or accomplishments?
Professionally – graduating from CWRU with my Ph.D.!

What do you like most about Ursuline?
- The enthusiasm and commitment of the people, including my students.
- Ursuline’s heritage of educating women.
- The energy in our Historic Preservation program.

What advice do you have for students while searching for a graduate program?
- Think in terms of what you love to do and where any individual program will take you on your career path
- Make sure the program is certified/licensed/etc. by any available pertinent professional associations
- Check for associated opportunities beyond the coursework – experiential education such as internships, networking with professionals and professional organization, conference and workshop attendance
- What possibilities are offered by the campus location? Can you easily commute from campus to a variety of research repositories, historic sites, and different kinds of communities/neighborhoods (rural farmsteads, village centers, ethnic neighborhoods, cityscapes)?

What advice do you have for your current students?
- Enjoy this! Sure it is hard work but most of it should be rewarding exploration.
- Take shameless advantage of the experiences and resources for networking, extra-curricular opportunities such as lectures and conferences, and tapping the expertise and experience of the professors.
- Connect with your fellow graduate students and program alumni. They will be invaluable professional colleagues in your future.

Favorite class to teach: all of them

Professional Affiliations:
American Association for State and Local History
Cleveland Restoration Society
Heritage Ohio
National Council for Preservation Education
National Council on Public History
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Ohio Academy of History
Ohio Farm Bureau
Ohio Historical Society
Ohio Local History Alliance
Smithsonian Institution
Western Reserve Historical Society
Fun Facts

**Song/music genre:** Eclectic – everything from the 5th Dimensions “Aquarius” to Sarah Brightman’s “Journey Home” to Barbra Streisand’s “Yentl” to American western movie soundtracks such as Lonesome Dove, True Grit, and Stagecoach.

**Color:** Amethyst purple followed by sapphire and emerald

**Vacation Spot:** Anywhere in the American West, especially the mountains (“The mountains are calling and I must go!” John Muir)

**Sports Team:** OHIO STATE BUCKEYES! One of my History professors, Dr. Joe Dubbert, once said of central Ohio where I grew up: “Priorities are God, Corn, and Woody Hayes – and not in that order during football season!” So true, so true!

**Holiday:** 4th of July

**Season:** Fall then Spring

**Food:** Chocolate, especially Buckeyes and Reese Cups - combined with Diet Coke, they got me through graduate school at Case. Followed by sweet corn, mashed potatoes, and maple syrup – but not combined together!

**Quote:** "Ours is a story mad with the impossible, it is by chaos out of dream. It began as dream and has continued as dream down to the last headlines you read in a newspaper. And of our dream, there are two things above all others to be said, that only madmen could have dreamed them or would have dared to --- and that we have shown a considerable faculty for making them come true." Bernard de Voto to Catherine Drinker Bowen, quoted by James Oliver Robertson in *American Myth, American Reality*, 1980.

"Of all the questions which can come before this nation, short of the actual preservation of its existence in a great war, there is none which compares in importance with the great central task of leaving this land even a better land for our descendants than it is for us." Theodore “TR” Roosevelt

“We have fallen heirs to the most glorious heritage a people ever received, and each one must do his part if we wish to show that the nation is worthy of its good fortune." Theodore “TR” Roosevelt

**Book/Author:** so many, so many!
Mary O’Hara’s trilogy *My Friend Flicka, Thunderhead,* and *Green Grass of Wyoming;*
Zane Grey’s trilogy *Betty Zane, Spirit of the Border,* and *The Last Trail*
Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*
Stephen Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage*
David McCullough, *Mornings on Horseback*
Annette Kolodny, *The Land Before Her*
Garrison Keillor, *Lake Wobegon Days* and *Leaving Home*

**TV Show/Movie:**
Movies: *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and John Wayne/John Ford’s *Stagecoach*
Miniseries: *Lonesome Dove* and James A. Michener’s *Centennial*

**Favorite Animal/pet:** Horses – especially Morgans and Mustangs

**Historical figure:** So many inspiring people! But if I HAD to choose...
Phoebe Ann Moses (a.k.a. Annie Oakley, sharpshooter and women’s rights activist)

Theodore “TR” Roosevelt (his accomplishments on behalf of wilderness and nature preservation, the national parks, and the national monuments program are astounding)

Thomas Jefferson (that mind! What he wrote in the Declaration of Independence and his commitment to the Lewis and Clark expedition are incredible)