



EARLY HISTORY: White began his career at Rochester, where he taught history for a decade, starting in 1958.

TRIBUTE

Hayden White: Seeing the ‘Story’ in ‘History’


I first encountered Hayden White’s work as a master’s degree student in comparative literature, when I read *The Content of the Form*. I was entranced, particularly by his assertion that history writing creates and shapes historical reality through narrative form, rather than reflecting an already constituted past waiting to be discovered.

Many historians shunned him for his controversial idea that “all stories are fictions.” But he insisted that history isn’t science. Historical facts are scientifically verifiable, but historians make choices about plot—what Hayden called “emplotment”—that are ethical and political in nature. The very act of choosing a beginning, a middle, and an end is an imposition by the historian.

Hayden was my dissertation advisor at Stanford University, where he taught part time after retiring from the University of California, Santa Cruz. He was for me the ideal mentor, allowing me great freedom to work out my ideas as I saw fit, restricting himself when offering advice to overarching themes and methodological issues. Although Hayden was without doubt the most influential historical theorist of the 20th century, beginning with the intense and widespread interest generated by his magnum opus *Metahistory* in 1973, he was never interested in creating a “school” or in defending himself from specific attacks (which were innumerable), even if he cherished dialogue and debate.

When I told Hayden that I was offered a tenure-track position at Rochester, he was thrilled, not least because of a happy coincidence: his own first tenure-track position had also been at

the University, where he had been a member of the history department exactly 50 years earlier, from 1958 to 1968. In 2009, and with generous support from Rochester colleagues, I organized “Between History and Narrative: Colloquium in Honor of Hayden White.” The conference brought 12 distinguished outside speakers, including Hans Kellner ’72 (PhD), one of Hayden’s first students. Hayden was, as one of the invited speakers, Gabrielle Spiegel, wrote to me in a recent email, “characteristically humble and funny” amid the tributes. I know that it was an especially moving event for Hayden, who asked me to drive him and his wife, Margaret Brose, to the house where he lived during his decade teaching in Rochester.

I last saw Hayden just a year ago, at UCLA, and at age 88, he was still at the top of his game: never missing a beat, regaling his audience with his infectious charm and sharp wit. He passed away on March 5 at his home in Santa Cruz. I am unable to adequately convey here what Hayden meant to his colleagues and students. But suffice it to say that he was an inspiration not only as an intellectual, but also as a human being. 

—ROBERT DORAN

Doran, a professor of French and comparative literature at Rochester, is the editor of Hayden White’s The Fiction of Narrative: Essays on History, Literature, and Theory, 1957–2007 (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010) and of Philosophy of History After Hayden White (Bloomsbury, 2015).

School of Medicine and Dentistry

1979 **Floyd Dewhirst** (PhD) has been named a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in the field of dentistry and oral health. A pioneer in the use of molecular methods for the identification and classification of the oral microbiome, Floyd is a professor in the Department of Oral Medicine, Infection and Immunity at Harvard’s dental school and a senior staff member of the Harvard-affiliated Forsyth Institute, a research organization devoted to understanding the connections between oral health and overall health.

1988 **Immanuel Ho** (MD) (see ’84 College).

2004 **John Mamoun** (Res), who practices dentistry in Manalapan, New Jersey, has written a book, *Plakoto: Board Game Strategy* (CreateSpace), about a game that’s a variant of backgammon and popular in Mediterranean countries.

2010 **Christopher Bell** (MS) (see ’08 College).

School of Nursing

1977 **Christopher (Kit) Bakke** has written a book, *Protest on Trial: The Seattle 7 Conspiracy* (Washington State University Press), revisiting the story of the Seattle Liberation Front. A Seattle native, Kit is an activist, writer, and retired pediatric oncology nurse.

Simon Business School

1970 **Donald Kingston** (MBA) sends a career update. He writes, “I was reelected in December for a fourth term as the mayor of Duck, North Carolina. I’m now serving in my fifth term on the Duck Town Council, having been first elected as mayor pro tempore in 2009. I was also elected in September 2017 to the board of directors of the North Carolina League of Municipalities, which represents all of the towns and cities in the state. I retired from my business career as a vice president/officer of Kelly Services.”

1978 **Jon Chernak** (MBA) (see ’77 College).