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History

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PUBLIC LECTURE

Autobiography, the Self and Identity in Eighteenth-Century England

by

James R. Farr

Purdue University

This presentation is based on the autobiography of the Briton William Hickey, written between 1809 and 1813. This text intersects with a number of issues that historians and literary scholars have been exploring recently. First, the history, nature, and problematics of autobiographical writing. Hickey wrote his autobiography at the historical juncture when its form was coalescing into what we would recognize as autobiography henceforth, a retrospective and selective story of a life told by the person who lived it, in an unfolding linear temporal frame (I was born...and so forth). This emergence of life-writing of this particular kind was in part a cultural product of the eighteenth century's philosophical fascination with the nature and meaning of the self (e.g., Locke and Hume), and this, in turn, intersects with another recent historiographical current, the meaning of national, social and individual identity in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, above all in Britain. Hickey's text intersects with each of these scholarly concerns.

James R. Farr is the Germaine Seelye Oesterle Professor of History at Purdue University. After receiving his B.A. from the University of Mississippi and his M.A. from Memphis State University, he was awarded the Ph.D. from Northwestern University in 1983. He is the author of several books on European history: *Hands of Honor: Artisans and Their World in Dijon, 1550-1650* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); *Authority and Sexuality in Early Modern Burgundy, 1550-1730* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); *Artisans in Europe, 1300-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); *A Tale of Two Murders: Passion and Power in Seventeenth-Century France* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); and *The Work of France: Labor and Culture in Early Modern Times* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008). He was the editor of *French Historical Studies* from 1991 to 2000, and recently edited a volume entitled *Europe During the Era of Industrialization, 1750-1914* (New York: Gale, 2003). He is currently completing a co-authored global history text, *Wealth and Power in World History*, and is engaged in a book-length project on the *Memoirs* of William Hickey, *Who Was William Hickey? Autobiography, Self and Identity in Georgian England*.

Professor Farr has been the recipient of several awards and fellowships during his career, among them a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, an American Council of Learned Societies Fellowship, and a residency fellowship at the Shelby Cullom Davis Center at Princeton University.



October 14, 2014, Tuesday, 17:30
Nádor 9, Gellner Room

Reception to follow