

## History Department News

# Archive for February, 2012

### [Robert Darnton awarded National Humanities Medal by President Obama](#)

Robert Darnton, Carl H. Pforzheimer University Professor and Director of the Harvard University Library, has been awarded a National Humanities Medal. This award honors individuals or groups whose work has deepened the nation's understanding of the humanities, broadened our citizens' engagement with the humanities, or helped preserve and expand Americans' access to important resources in the humanities.

For the full list of winners and more information about the award, visit the National Endowment for the Humanities [website](#).

Tags: [National Humanities Medal](#), [President Obama](#), [Robert Darnton](#)

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Posted on February 17th, 2012

### [Joshua Hill wins Gross Dissertation Prize](#)

[Joshua Hill](#) has won the Harold K. Gross Dissertation Prize for Best History Department Dissertation for his project "Voting as a Rite: Changing Ideas of Elections in Early Twentieth Century China". He is currently a lecturer at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University where he has taught a graduate-level survey of Modern Chinese history in addition to coordinating "Topics in Chinese Foreign Policy," a credit-bearing series of guest lectures for graduate students.

Tags: [Gross Dissertation Prize](#), [Joshua Hill](#)

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Posted on February 9th, 2012

### [Niall Ferguson discusses his new book "Civilization: The West and the Rest"](#)



[Niall Ferguson](#) is a little concerned these days.

The feeling started years ago, during one of his stints leading a course in Western civilization. “Each time I taught it, I felt I was getting closer to an original answer to the question, ‘Why did the West dominate the rest?’ plus the subordinate question, ‘Is it over?’ ”

Ferguson, the Laurence A. Tisch Professor of History, believes we are witnessing the end of the predominance of the West — “Europe and North America, broadly,” he says — relative to countries like China, India, and Brazil. Much of the rest of the world has not only caught up with Western achievements; according to Ferguson, the West also has lost faith in its own civilization because of the widespread perception that its success was almost exclusively the result of violence and imperialism.

So his latest book, “[Civilization: The West and the Rest](#),” was mostly produced amid a mood of uneasiness, he admits. “I was worried that the West was losing sight of what made it so successful, and perhaps losing those advantages that had previously been so important.”

In “Civilization,” Ferguson dubs these Western advantages his six “killer apps,” which are competition, science, property rights, medicine, consumerism, and the work ethic. “The prescription must be to reinstall and update these apps, to take these six things and make sure we’re doing them as well as we can,” he argues.

“I’ve spent a lot of time lately thinking about how healthy these things are in the West, and the answer is not very. While I was writing the book I also realized that what other fallen civilizations had in common was the speed with which their downfall happened. Things don’t always happen gradually in history; sometimes they fall apart quite fast. So there’s a certain urgency in my argument. If you don’t watch out, things can go wrong very rapidly. By the way, I think that’s what’s happened in Europe. The financial crisis has gone from bad to worse in the span of a year.”

Read the full [Harvard Gazette](#) article.

*\*Photo credit: Jon Chase, Harvard Staff Photographer*

Tags: [Civilization](#), [Niall Ferguson](#)

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