

HIST 250

The Idea of History

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Assistant Professor

Joseph Buscemi
PhD Candidate



UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
FACULTY OF ARTS
Department of History

If you haven't filled out the survey.. do it now!

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the following details:

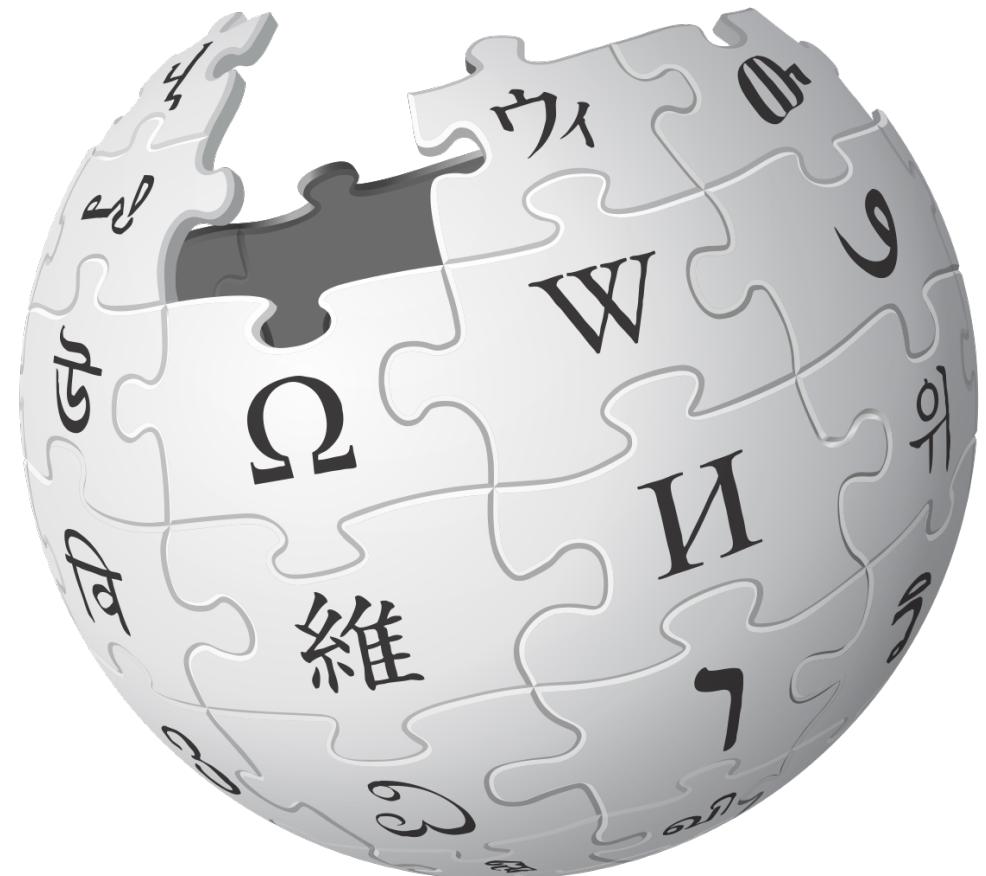
- Address Bar:** Homepage - HIST 250 - W × <https://learn.uwaterloo.ca/d2l/home/233205>
- Toolbar:** Apps, Keep, Lib, HistD, GM, W, MMA, RSS, Globe
- User Profile:** Ian Milligan
- Breadcrumbs:** My Home > HIST 250 - Winter 2016
- Page Headers:** WATERLOO LEARN, HIST 250 - Winter 2016
- Page Content:** A large banner image featuring bookshelves with the text "HIST 250 Introduction to Historical Thinking". To the right is the University of Waterloo Faculty of Arts logo and text: UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO, FACULTY OF ARTS, Department of History.
- Navigation:** Course Home, Course Materials, Connect, Assessments, Grades, Reports, Edit Course
- Footer:** The Syllabus, News, Teaching Team
- News Item:** Office Hours Change This Week (Posted Jan 10, 2016 4:07 PM)
- Teaching Team:** Professor Ian Milligan (i2milligan@uwaterloo.ca), Office: Hagey Hall 114

Assignment #1

Introduction

Wikipedia and Historians

- Wikipedia is controversial!
- Some people herald it as a changing approach to human knowledge; others as a threat to, well, everything.



Wikipedia and Historians

- Question: **Is Wikipedia a Good Source for Historians?**
- That is your **thesis statement and you should take a position on it.**

Wikipedia and Historians

- **Choose a “historical” Canadian, American, Irish, or British figure that is found in an “official” biographical website, such as:**
 - Dictionary of Canadian Biography
 - American National Biography Online
 - Dictionary of Irish Biography Online
 - Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online
- **Read the “official” page as well as the Wikipedia page**
- **Write a paper comparing the two, considering the following questions:**
 - Who were the authors of the two sources?
 - How do you think the authors were chosen?
 - How are the entries written and edited?
 - Is the research high quality or not?
 - Does one read better or tell a better story than the other?
 - Do the sources draw from each other?
- **Make sure to have a conclusion that addresses your opinion of the relative merits of the two sources.**

L History 250 - History Rese... X Ian

subjectguides.uwaterloo.ca/Hist250

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Historical thinking & the role of the library

Your library ... your lab

National biographies vs Wikipedia

National biographies

Wikipedia

Two screenshots are shown side-by-side. The left one is from 'National Biographies' and the right one is from 'Wikipedia'. Yellow arrows point from both screenshots to a comparison table below.

Category	National Biographies	Wikipedia
Title	Biographies A-M	The Free Encyclopedia
Frequency	Biographies A-M	Quarterly
Language of Text	English	Text in: English
Refereed	No	Yes
Abstracted / Indexed	No	Yes
Serial Type	Journal	Journal
Content Type	Academic / Scholarly	Academic / Scholarly
Format	Online	Online
Website	http://www.biographies.ca	http://www.journals.uchicago.edu

Evaluation tools

- Ulrichsweb Global Serials Directory.**
Learn more about a journal, for example whether it's peer-reviewed ("Refereed") or not.

The Journal of Modern History

Basic Description	
Title	The Journal of Modern History
ISSN	1537-5358
Publisher	University of Chicago Press
Country	United States
Status	Active
Frequency	Quarterly
Language of Text	Text in: English
Refereed	Yes
Abstracted / Indexed	Yes
Serial Type	Journal
Content Type	Academic / Scholarly
Format	Online
Website	http://www.journals.uchicago.edu

The Pursuit of History

The Pursuit of History - John Tosh
Call Number: D13 .T69
ISBN: 9780582894129

Book review sources

The "Book reviews" tab above links to databases that track reviews.

Get started Encyclopedias, biographies & more Books Book reviews Scholarly articles Book reviews Print Page

Retraction Watch
"Tracking retractions as a window into the scientific process"

Retraction Watch Tracking retractions as a window into the scientific process

Scrutinizing Web Sites
Consider: Authorship & Authority; Accuracy & Currency; Objectivity & Coverage



The Idea of History

What we know and
what we don't?

How do you know that
**Canada won the War of
1812?**



Why does this matter?



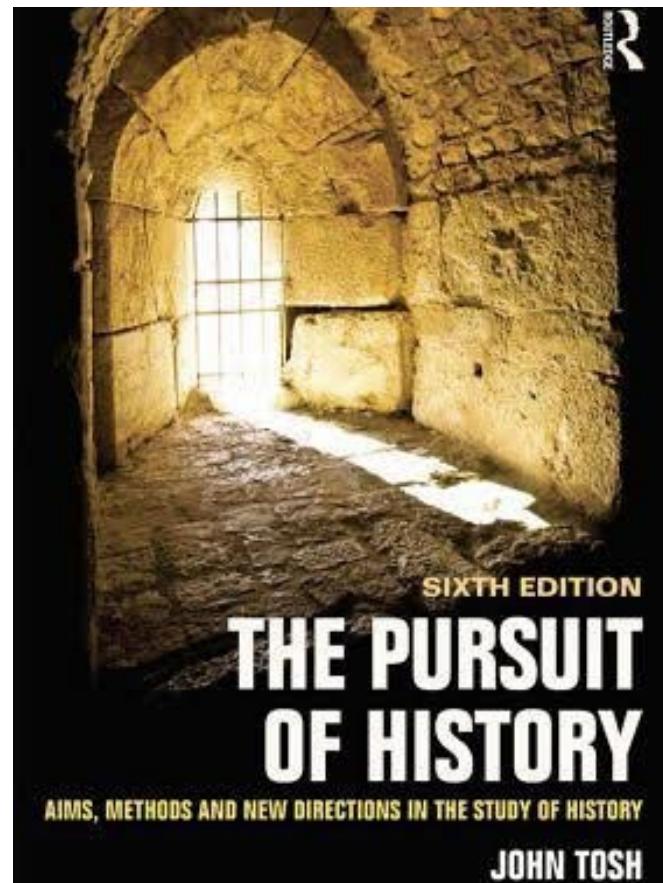
There really was a
past...

We just don't know it.

What is the idea of history?
What can we know from
the past?
And what can we do with
it?

Readings

- Ch. 2 and Ch. 7, *The Pursuit of History*
- Lecture complements these readings.



What do we know?

- Who was the first Prime Minister of Canada?



Do this on your own. **Trace out how you know that the University of Waterloo was founded in 1957?**

A screenshot of a Google search results page. The search query "university of waterloo founded" is entered in the search bar. The results page shows a snippet for "University of Waterloo / Founded" with the date "July 1, 1957". To the right of this snippet is the University of Waterloo logo, which consists of the text "UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO" above a heraldic crest featuring a lion. Below the logo is a "Feedback" link. To the right of the logo is a map showing the university's location. The top of the page shows the browser's address bar with the URL <https://www.google.com/search?sourceid=chrome-psyapi2&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8&q=uni...> and various browser icons.

University of Waterloo founded

https://www.google.com/search?sourceid=chrome-psyapi2&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8&q=uni...

Google university of waterloo founded

All News Maps Images Shopping More Search tools

About 493,000 results (0.83 seconds)

University of Waterloo / Founded

July 1, 1957

UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Feedback

History | About Waterloo - University of Waterloo
<https://uwaterloo.ca/about/who-we-are/history> ▾ University of Waterloo ▾ Building a world-changer In 1957, innovation and entrepreneurship brought ... Together with J. Gerald Hagey, Waterloo's founding president, and Rev.

University of Waterloo - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Waterloo ▾ Wikipedia ▾ The institution was established on 1 July 1957 as the Waterloo College St. Paul's University College is a university college founded by members of the United ... Waterloo - Engineering - Arts - Mathematics

List of University of Waterloo people - Wikipedia, the free ...
https://en.wikipedia.org.../List_of_University_of_Waterloo_p... ▾ Wikipedia ▾ The University of Waterloo, located in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, is a comprehensive

Columbia St W
Ring Rd
Univ of W

University of Waterloo

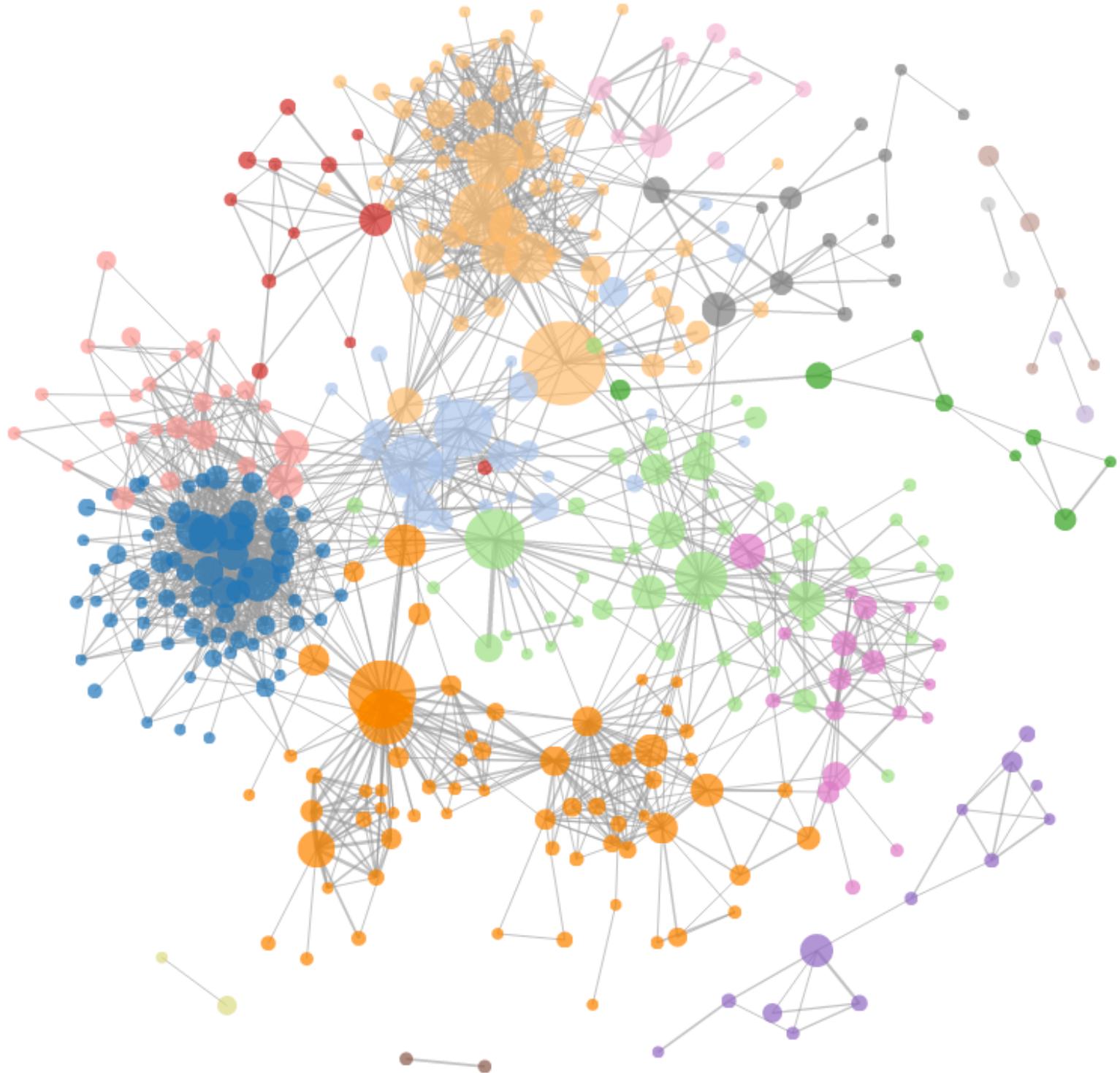
Public university in Waterloo, Ontario

The University of Waterloo is a public research university located in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. Its main campus is located in the city of Waterloo, in the "Uptown" area near the Ring Road and Columbia Street. The university has several satellite campuses and research facilities across the region.

Address: 200 University Avenue, Waterloo, ON N2L 3G1, Canada

President: Feridun Hamza

Enrollment: 35,900



**History as a
Science?**

**Idealist
Historians?
(a middle
ground)**

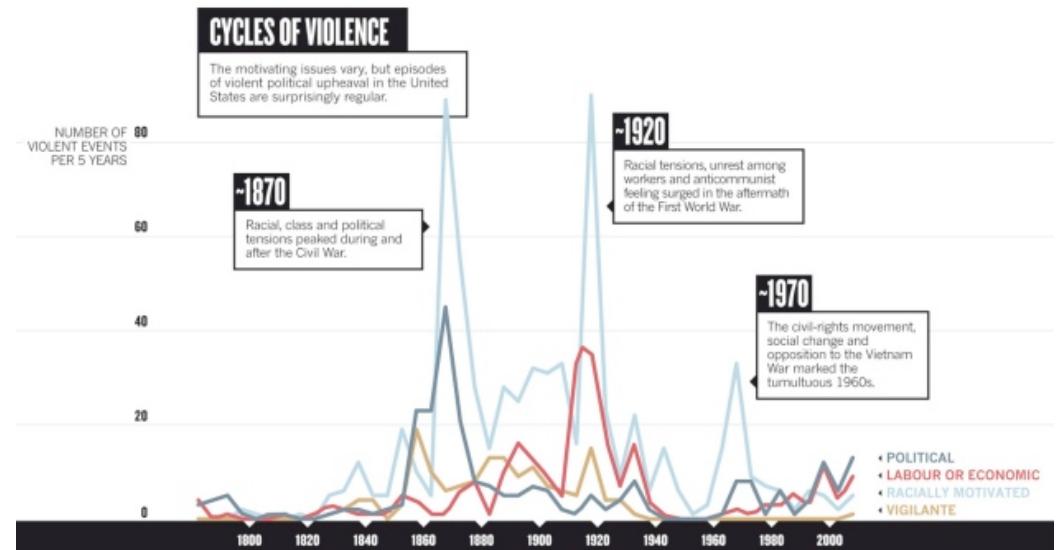
**Postmodernist
Historians**



(Complicating) A Debate in History

History as (Social) Science

- The Scientific Method
- Disinterested, Neutral Observer
- POSITIVISM (laws of history)



The Middle Ground

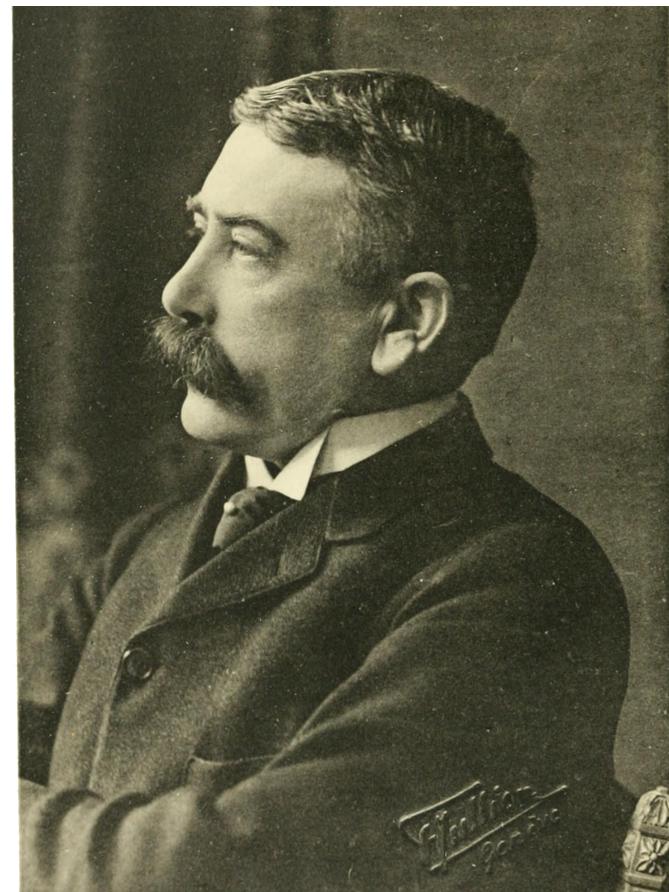
- The **inside** dimension of people.
- Importance of intuition and empathy
- Studies that don't generalize well.
- (we'll be discussing this more)



Modernist history?

Postmodernist Histories

- History = personal construct
- Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and semiotics
- Untrustworthiness of sources
- History as a literary form





“The Treachery of Images” by René Magritte
(not a pipe, but a **representation** of one)

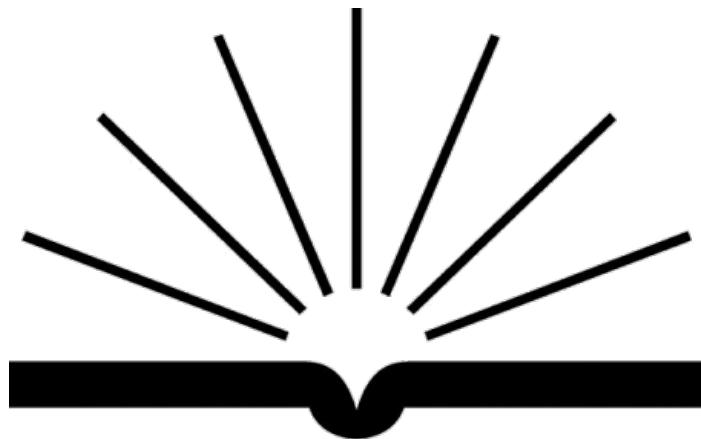


Ceci n'est pas une pipe.

**The loss of historical
reality?**



History as a literary form



UBCPress





Contacts | History

https://uwaterloo.ca/history/about/people

SEARCH

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History » Contacts

Expand all | Collapse all

James Blight	CIGI Chair
Catherine Briggs	Sessional Instructor
Gary Bruce	Department Chair; Associate Professor
Erin Campbell	Administrative Co-ordinator Undergraduate Studies (on secondment)
Dylan Cyr	Sessional Instructor
John English	Distinguished Professor Emeritus
Dan Gorman	Associate Chair (Graduate); Associate Professor
Patrick Harrigan	Distinguished Professor Emeritus
Geoffrey Hayes	Associate Professor
Donna Hayes	Administrative Assistant and Administrative Co-ordinator Graduate Studies
Andrew Hunt	Professor
Shahram Kholdi	Sessional Instructor
Greta Kroeker	Associate Professor
Anne Leask	Administrative Co-ordinator Undergraduate Studies

Contacts by group

- Administration (2)
- Staff (3)
- Faculty - University of Waterloo (16)
- Sessional instructors (5)
- Distinguished professors emeriti (2)

So no reading will
produce the same
results, period.

Do documents **reflect** or
rework historical reality?

Thoughts?

What could you learn from this?



Labour Day 1900, Toronto ON



What could you learn from this?



**Thanks and have a
wonderful weekend.**

Ian Milligan
Assistant Professor

Joseph Buscemi
PhD Candidate



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