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Symposium to look past, and to society

The relationship between the historian and society has been the subject of a long-standing and often heated debate within the historical profession. It is based on a problem crucial to all members of academe: The social obligation of the scholarly community.

The issue will be discussed in Ohio State's first Graduate Student History Symposium, "The Historian and Society," April 24. Three sessions will be held from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the Ohio Union Conference Theater.

"Our goal is to create an annual, ongoing forum through which issues of critical importance to the historical profession may be discussed," says Lawrence F. Greenfield, a graduate student and a member of the symposium coordinating committee.

Graduate students in the department organized the symposium. A faculty member and a student will comment after each presentation.

The topics to be covered are:

- "History on Trial," which will explore issues raised when historians are involved in the courts as expert witnesses. J. Morgan Kousser, a professor at the California Institute of Technology, will be the guest speaker. Author of The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1889-1910, he has participated in affirmative action cases. In 1984, he wrote "Are Expert Witnesses Whores? Reflections on Objectivity in Scholarship and Expert Witnessing" for the Public Historian.

- "The Politics of Social History" with Paul Gottfried, a conservative critic of some modern historians, especially those who try to use history to change the present and the future. He is editor of Continuity: A Journal of History and senior editor of The World and I. His most recent book is The Search for Historical Meaning: Hegel and the Postwar American Right.

- "The Impact of Radical History," featuring Jonathan Wiener of the University of California-Irvine, author of Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885. He also has written "Why the Right is Losing in Academe" and "The Sears Case: Women's History on Trial" for The Nation.

Following the sessions, Clayton Roberts, professor of history, will moderate a panel discussion with the guest speakers and Ohio State faculty and graduate students.

The free symposium is open to the University community.

For more information, call Greenfield at 292-2555.