

Winter 1995

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Annual Meeting Update !

Michael Bishku sends his greeting to everyone and hopes to see you all on the University of North Florida's campus this October 12-15 in sunny Jacksonville, Florida. Michael is busy organizing the panels and attending to details so that the "Thirteenth" meeting will be a lucky one!!

Professor Bishku has recently secured a commitment from Ambassador Hali Ugur of the former Soviet Republic of Turkmenistan to be our banquet speaker. Turkmenistan is located along the Iranian border and as the official representative from this newly independent state, Ambassador Ugur's talk should be of great interest to us all whatever our country or region of primary academic interest might be.

The conference will begin on Thursday the 12th at 3.00 p.m. and the final session will wrap-up by noon on Saturday the 14th. Ending the conference at noon on Saturday was a deliberate decision to make this year's conference experience a full and rich one. With this schedule, conference participants can attend all of the sessions and still have time to enjoy the area. For example, San Augustine is a short 30 miles away and boasts of some of the nation's best beaches.

ON A SERIOUS NOTE... There will only be four concurrent panels at this year's meeting compared to the six simultaneous sessions in Williamsburg. This cutback will have the advantage of reducing the possibility of conflicts where similar topics, countries, or regions are scheduled at the same time. Fewer panels should also lead to further improvements in the quality of our panels and papers.

Those wishing to propose a panel should pay close attention to the March 15 deadline. As well, with fewer panel slots this year, the competition will be more difficult. To avoid disappointment Bishku has some suggestions.

1. Get your panel proposal in on time!
2. Be sure to include BOTH the completed panel application form and an abstract for each paper.
3. Include your e-mail address even though there was no line on the form for this. Since e-mail is becoming so popular this is a real asset to good communications.
4. Be certain that the abstract is thorough since decisions will have to be based on what you say in the abstract.
5. Abstracts should be about a page in length and clearly define the topic, method of inquiry, sources, and significance.

An incomplete or sloppy abstract could result in rejection.

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PROGRESS OF ATWS-UN/ESCSOC LINK

In the second week of January the ATWS's Executive Director, Zia Hashmi, responded to an information request from Farida Ayoub the chief of the United Nations' section office for Non-Governmental Organizations. This was the latest step in the ATWS's application for an NGO consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Dr. Hashmi has already described in detail the Association as an organization and its activities, especially as they relate to the United Nations itself.

once the desired consultative status is obtained the ATWS will be able to serve its members and the UN by linking our organization with the international body's various activities. The main purpose of obtaining consultative status is, in fact, to

provide the opportunity for direct and strong collaboration with the United Nations and the Economic and Social Council's various committees.

Future issues of the newsletter will feature up-dates on the application's progress and describe how individual members will be able to involve themselves with the United Nations once the consultative status is gained.

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The Journal's in the Mail

we have all heard famous promises such as "the check's in the mail," but this time it appears to be true. During a recent phone conversation Editor Harold Isaacs said that he expects to have the Spring 1994 issue of the *Journal of Third World Studies* back from the printer and in the mail at about the same time that this issue of the newsletter is sent out.

once again the journal is a big one with sixteen articles of which six are on Asian countries from Pakistan to the Peoples' Republic of China. There are also three articles each focusing on countries in Africa and the Americas and one article on Iranians in the United States. Especially topical are the articles by Kong Chu, "The Industrial development in the PRC: Current Conditions and Future Prospects," Robert Curry, Jr.'s, "Issues in Official Development Assistance Policies in Vietnam," and Daniel Masterson's piece on the Shining Path of Peru. In addition there are three thematic articles such as Craig Lockard's piece about the influence of the University of Wisconsin's Philip Curtin on comparative world history.

isaacs is currently going over the galley proofs for the Fall 1994 issue and hopes to have that to the printer in the very near future. Again there will be many articles with five titles on Africa, four on Asia, three for the Americas, two on the Middle East, and three others discussing thematic issues. Once again there will be some very topical articles including Robert Lawless' "The Challenges Facing Haiti (And the United States)," Taifa Yu's "Second Phase of China's Economic Reform: Crossing the Rubicon Divide?," and Assefaw Bariagaber's piece titled, "Regional Characteristics of Political Violence and Refugee Situations: A Study of Four Refugee-Generating African countries."

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General Announcements

Council on International Educational Exchange offers International Faculty Development Seminars that provide short-term intensive overseas experience for faculty and administrators by focusing on global issues and regions that are shaping world events. Upcoming seminars include:

The Arab-Israeli Peace Process - Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Israel, June 10-17, 1995.

Zimbabwe, South Africa and Southern Africa in the 1990's - University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe, June 11-17, 1995.

Democracy Restored: Politics and Culture in Chile Today - Catholic University, Santiago, Chile, July 2-8, 1995.

For more information contact: CIEE/Professional Programs; 205 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017; (212) 661-1414, ext. 1455, or E-mail: IFDS@CIEE.org

Art & Fact an international and multi-cultural conference on the learning effects of arts education, March 27-28, organized by the LOKV, Netherlands Institute for Arts Education and to be held in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. For further information contact, Jane Hudak, Department of Art, Georgia Southern University, Landrum Box 8032, Statesboro, GA 30460.

Black Popular Culture (in Africa, USA, and the Caribbean), U. of Pittsburgh, April 6, 7, and 8. Topics will include Youth Culture; Music; Women's Culture; Beliefs, Myths, and Rituals; Art and Dance; and Film, TV and Theater.

For further information contact: Joseph K. Adjaye; Africana Studies Department; U. of Pittsburgh; 3T01 Forbes Quadrangle; Pittsburgh, PA 15260; tel. (412) 648-7544; fax (412) 648-7214; or e-mail: JADJAYE@VMS.CIS.PITT.EDU

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The Extra ATWS Insert self-described "ATWS old-timer" George Pruden of the History Department at Armstrong State College in Savannah submitted a lengthy article/opinion piece to the newsletter in which he offered suggestions for "Panel

Reform.” Professor Pruden is referring to the panels at the annual ATWS conference and he made a number of suggestions that we might consider. Unfortunately, his offering was far too long for the newsletter, even with severe editing.

Instead I asked ATWS Executive Director, Zia Hashmi, if an abridged version of Pruden’s paper might be distributed to ATWS members as a special insert in this issue of the *International Perspectives*. This idea was welcomed by both Drs. Hashmi and Pruden and I direct your attention to Professor Pruden’s comments.

Panel Reform: Some Suggestions

George B. Pruden

Armstrong State College

Reform — change for the better — is needed in the panel sessions at our annual meetings. A few of us old-timers remember when it was done all in one day: morning and afternoon sessions of one panel each, capped off with a banquet and keynote address by a renowned scholar. Now that our membership has greatly expanded to include a wider range of academic disciplines and third world regions, the annual conference must have sessions over two or three days and simultaneous panels within each session to accommodate our diverse interests and to provide sufficient opportunities for members to participate.

Yet we need to improve the structure of how panels are organized and conducted in order to make them a more worthwhile experience for those who attend, while at the same time permitting members to enhance their professional records by contributing to an international scholarly conference.

The basis of all academic conferences is enlightened self-interest. Panelists invest a great deal of time and effort, first in meticulous research, then in analyzing their findings, which are carefully crafted into papers designed to inform the audience and stimulate intellectual exchange. All this work, though, has its rewards: recognition as a scholar, another entry in one’s curriculum vitae, and improved chances for tenure, promotion, or a better position. But when the manner in which sessions are conducted seems designed to benefit the participants and loses sight of the need to inform and intellectually stimulate the audience, the cart has been put before the horse. This has been my reaction at many conferences and I hope our annual meetings might be improved by some structural changes and some presentation adjustments.

The first structural change I would recommend is that no more than three papers be included on any regular panel. (Roundtable panels, far fewer in number, will not be affected.) If sessions are limited to 90 minutes, each panelist would have 20 minutes to deliver a paper leaving 20–25 minutes for ample interaction with the audience.

If each panel is limited to three papers, conference organizers will be more selective in choosing proposals for the program which has certain inherent advantages that outweigh depriving a few persons the opportunity to participate. First, the Program Chair can select good quality proposals and abstracts, received by the announced deadline, that are appropriate to the theme of the conference and that maintain regional and disciplinary balance. Second, it should insure that proposals do not dribble in after the deadline and upset the otherwise careful positioning of papers by the Program Chair. And a third advantage is that each panel can comprise a more coherent grouping of papers and look less like a patchwork quilt of papers that are only remotely related to each other and to the panel’s title.

The second structural change I would recommend is that if panel chairs also read papers on their panels, they must go last. Some chairs claim “the prerogative of the chair” in going first, and take more than their share. As a result, the chair then hurries the others along and discussion by the audience is also reduced to the point that some persons who have questions never get a chance to ask them. If the chair must be the last to read a paper, this situation is far less likely to occur.

An alternative structural reform might be to have a neutral timekeeper assigned to each panel solely to keep anyone, including the chair, from going over time. The Call for Papers can also ask for timekeepers, but to make it sound less mundane, the title could be listed as “proctors” or “facilitators.” Some members may wish to volunteer to be a “panel facilitator,” and list this on their annual professional report.

The structure does not exist that cannot be circumvented. For these external reforms to make a significant improvement in our annual conferences, they should be accompanied by an internal reform by panel chairs and members. The first of these internal reforms is for participants always to keep in mind that the primary beneficiaries of the meetings ought to be the audience. The listeners may also be participating in another panel, but when they attend a session other than their own, they must be respected as professional colleagues for whom the panel exists.

Chairs need to show respect for the audience by starting on time, making sure each presenter is given his allotted time, and permitting the audience to have a reasonable opportunity to interact with panelists. Those who present papers must respect their audience, primarily by having a good paper and delivering it well. A paper is good not only because of the information and insights it conveys, but also because it conforms to the time limit. Years ago I was given this rule of thumb: a page of text that is double-spaced in pica type (10 characters per inch) and has one-inch margins on all four sides takes two minutes to read. If the time limit is 20 minutes, the text of the paper can be no more than ten pages long.

The other hallmark of a good paper is that it has been written specifically for the panel on which it is to be read. Whenever I see a panelist with a thick manuscript — a chapter from a book in progress or a major research report — my heart sinks, because I know that one of two things will happen. The first scenario is that the panelist will begin reading it verbatim as the audience watches with trepidation while he slowly turns the pages. But the number of turned pages remains minuscule when compared to those in the original stack. Time is finally, and mercifully, called, but perhaps even before the real meat of the paper is reached.

Then, there is the other, even less desirable, scenario. With all the good intentions in the world, the panelist will intone those dreaded words, “Let me preface my paper by saying that this is too long to read, so I’m only going to summarize it.” What most often happens is that the panelist will get off on tangents, occasionally flip a few pages, but rarely make a coherent presentation. The audience did not travel hundreds of miles just to listen to the extemporaneous remarks of someone who did not take the time to prepare a proper paper for the conference.

panels can be done right, and I am pleased to report that one of them at Williamsburg was a prime example. The chair and two other panelists had done extensive research and written lengthy papers (one of which was 29 single-spaced pages), but they came to the panel with edited versions that were the proper length. With four papers, one of which was a late addition, each presenter was given only 15 minutes, but no one exceeded it. There was enough time for interaction with the audience, which was disappointingly small, so few people got to see how the chair conducted the panel in such an exemplary fashion.

Had that excellent panel been the norm, there would be no need to make this plea for reform, but if structural changes can be made and if all panelists realize that they must put into practice we will have the Golden Rule of conferences: “Present unto others as you would have others present unto you.”