

## Seth Richardson

**Seth Richardson** spent the academic year as a Faculty Research Fellow at the University's Franke Institute for the Humanities. The time was largely devoted to research and writing for his monograph *Studies in Late Old Babylonian History: A Historical Analysis of 17th-century Babylonia and the Collapse of the First Dynasty State*. The book looks to not only historical and anthropological models of collapse, but also takes some very modern models deriving from political science, geography, and comparative literature to gain some new perspective on an old problem.

In the fall, he was also busy with co-teaching duties as the Departments of Near Eastern Civilizations and Classics launched a new undergraduate core sequence entitled "Ancient Empires," for which he and Museum Director Geoff Emberling co-taught a quarter on the Neo-Assyrian empire to forty enthusiastic students. The continued meetings of the Ancient Societies Workshop, for which he is a co-sponsor, also kept him busy. The Workshop hosted fourteen speakers during the year, speaking on subjects as diverse as the Arab conquest of Damascus, the composition and historical reliability of the Hebrew Bible book of Chronicles, and servile populations in Kassite Babylonia — but all attending to the Workshop's annual theme of historical methodology.

Richardson briefly set some time aside for other projects, including a very enjoyable trip to the annual meeting of the Association of Ancient Historians, which met at Princeton University in May, where he delivered a paper on economic regulation in the Old Babylonian period. The conference provided a welcome opportunity to extend the contacts between ancient Near Eastern and classical Greco-Roman historical discussions. Also in May, Richardson acted as co-organizer of a one-day conference on comparative methodological paradigms between the disciplines, entitled Text Envy and Artifact Allure. The conference brought together Africanists, Andeanists, Americanists, and more to share ideas about how sources and research paradigms tend to form very different research questions in different areas of the Academy. He was particularly happy to welcome as part of the event Jerry Cooper from Johns Hopkins and Jan Assmann, already on loan to Chicago as a visiting scholar from the University of Heidelberg.

---