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Race Formation Social Historian to Speak at IWU

Taylor Kuzniar
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Contact: Taylar Kuzniar, (309) 556-3181

Race Formation Social Historian to Speak at IWU

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Illinois Wesleyan’s Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society will host historical scholar David Roediger, who will speak about the concept of “whiteness” after a screening of Frank Sinatra’s Oscar-winning film, *The House I Live In*. The event, which is aimed to appeal to students in many disciplines, will be held on Thursday, Feb. 9 at 4 p.m. in the Hansen Student Center (300 Beecher St., Bloomington).

Roediger’s research interests relate to white ethnicity, a concept in American history and socialism that is often overlooked, according to Phi Alpha Theta’s President, Matt Cassady. Before World War II, the Irish and Jewish in America were not considered part of the “white” racial group. It was during the war when suddenly all European immigrant groups became part of the “white race” and America was suddenly divided by the concepts of “white” and “black” and no longer by ethnicity. In his presentation, Roediger will link these ideas to themes in his new book, *Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White*.

Cassady, says the society is “thrilled to have David come to speak at our school. Hopefully, his coming will lead us to bring other prominent historians to speak every year. And what better way to start this trend than with a historian that opens our eyes to something many people do not know about?”

Roediger is the Kendrick C. Babcock professor of history at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. He has authored several books, such as *Our Own Time: A History of American Labor and the Working Day* and *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness*. He was the editor of *The North and Slavery*, *Black on White: Black Writers on What it Means to be White* and *Fellow Worker: The Life of Fred Thompson* and his articles have appeared in several history journals.

Currently focusing on immigration and racial formation in the U.S., Roediger graduated from Northern Illinois University in 1975 and completed his doctorate in history at Northwestern in 1980.

Phi Alpha Theta, founded on March 17, 1921, at the University of Arkansas, currently has 820 active chapters with a total of 275,000 members nationwide. The society, which has had a chapter at IWU since 1966, offers over 25 scholarships regularly available to students and

hopes to promote the study of history through the encouragement of research, publication, and the exchange of ideas between scholars.

For additional information, contact Cassady at mcassady@iwu.edu.