

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
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Conference to offer historical perspective on modern Olympics

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WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University will host an international conference on the history of the Olympic Games on October 3 and 4. Onward to the Olympics: Historical Perspectives on the Olympic Games will gather Olympic historians from across North America for a review of a phenomenon that began at Olympia, Greece and will next be held in Athens.

Olympic Games scholars – both classical and modern – will review the development and accomplishments of the world's most important athletic festival. Topics covered will range from "Judges and Judging at the Ancient Olympic Games" to "The Impact of the New World Anti-Doping Agency and World Anti-Doping Code."

Organizers hope to raise awareness of how the modern movement developed from its ancient roots. They anticipate an increased interest in the historical aspects as the Games return to their birth place in 2004.

"Southern Ontario is a focal point for the study of the Olympic Games – both in their original development in Olympia, Greece, and their modern transformation from Athens in 1896 to Athens in 2004," said Gerry Schaus, co-chair of the conference and professor of archaeology and classical studies at Wilfrid Laurier University. "This conference looks at major features of the greatest sports festival in history, as we turn our attention to Athens in 2004 and the place of Olympic athletics in the 21st century."

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The conference will open at 8:45 a.m. on Friday in Laurier's Maureen Forrester Recital Hall (MFRH) with welcoming remarks from Robert G. Rosehart, president and vice-chancellor of Wilfrid Laurier University; Leonidas Chrysanthopoulos, Canadian ambassador of the Hellenic Republic; and Paul Henderson, Canadian member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

Donald Kyle, chair of history at the University of Texas at Arlington, will deliver a keynote address entitled "Fabulous Females and Ancient Olympia" at 9:30 a.m. in the MFRH. His talk will review the pitfalls of trying to connect ancient and modern athletic phenomena, touching on issues that include ancient festivals hosted by the goddess Hera and female physical education in Sparta.

Saturday's keynote address, delivered by Mark Dyerson of Penn State University at 10 a.m. in the senate and board chambers (SBC), is entitled " 'To Construct a Better and More Peaceful World' (de Coubertin) or 'War Minus the Shooting' (George Orwell)?: The Olympic Movement's Second Century." This talk will examine how uninhibited idealism on the one hand and unvarnished cynicism on the other transformed the Games into a popular and significant stage for cultural dramas.

Other topics covered in joint sessions include:

- "Judges and Judging at the Ancient Olympic Games" – Friday, 10:30 a.m., MFRH.
- "The Impact of the new World Anti-Doping Agency and World Anti-Doping Code" – Friday, 10:30 a.m., MFRH.
- "Juan Antonio Samaranch's Score Sheet: Revenue Generation and the Olympic Movement, 1920-2001" – Friday, 2:45 p.m., SBC.
- "Beyond the Bid Book: Using the IOC Olympic Studies Centre Resources to Delve Beneath the Surface of the Olympic Host City Bidding Process" – Saturday, 1:45 p.m., SBC.

The conference is sponsored by The Canadian Academic Institute in Athens and Wilfrid Laurier University, with support from the universities of Guelph, Western Ontario and Windsor.

For more information on this conference, including a complete program, please visit [www.wlu.ca/~wwwclass/onwardtotheolympics.shtml].