

An Interview with James H. Capshew

Throughout his 34-year career in the History and Philosophy of Science and Medicine at Indiana University, recently retired Professor Jim Capshew has seen the department evolve into a broad and dynamic hub of scholarly inquiry, including fields that were not part of its original core mission. Reflecting on his own journey to the department, Capshew recalls a time when his own area of expertise had no place there. In the 1970s, while exploring potential opportunities to study the history of psychology as an IU undergraduate, the faculty responded, kindly but firmly: "We don't do that here." A decade later, after he received his PhD at the University of Pennsylvania in history and sociology of science, that changed—he was hired at IU. His addition to the core faculty meant not only the addition of a new scientific discipline but also coverage of the history of science in the 20th century as well as science in America. As Capshew reflects on his role in HPSC, he is encouraged by continuing efforts to marry the department's traditional strengths with emerging areas of research.

During his faculty career, Capshew served as director of graduate studies for eight years, which helped him foster personal relationships with students and aid them in navigating their graduate careers. Teaching was both rewarding and demanding for Capshew. Among the undergraduate courses he created, two are noteworthy: *Scientists at Work: Frankenstein to Einstein* and *Neuropsychological Pathography* (formerly *Memoirs of Madness*). The former explored the culture of science and aimed to address questions about what scientists actually do. Believing that "all students need to know something about science," he developed the course to introduce methods to assess the cultural roles of science in society. The latter course was designed to provide a humanistic lens for psychology and neuroscience majors to explore

personal narratives of mental illness and neurological injury from a first-person perspective, supplementing their scientific training. Additionally, he pioneered one of Indiana University's first large online courses in 2000, Traditions and Cultures of Indiana University, which continues to be taught 24 years later.

Capshew's research spanned the history of American psychology and the history of Indiana University. His first book, *Psychologists on the March: Science, Practice, and Professional Identity in America, 1929-1969*, recounted the expansion of psychology from a laboratory science to the domain of mental health practice as a consequence of World War II mobilization. In 2015, he was named University Historian, serving through IU's Bicentennial in 2020 and beyond. His latest manuscript, *Making Indiana University: History, Landscape, and a Sense of Place*, expands the notion of who writes the history of the institution. It is due to be published at the end of 2024.

Capshew's advice to students at IU is simple: find good mentors. As an IU undergraduate, he counted sociologist Tom Gieryn, psychologist Eliot Hearst, and former IU president Herman B Wells as cornerstones of his career development.

As a historian of science and learning, Capshew's legacy at Indiana University is one of innovation, mentorship, and dedication to broadening the horizons of academic inquiry. His efforts have helped shape the HPSC department into a diverse and inclusive space that now embraces multiple disciplines. Capshew not only left a lasting mark on his students and colleagues but also contributed to the understanding of the historical identity of Indiana University. As he continues his work in retirement, his influence on the institution's past, present, and future remains undeniable, inspiring future generations of IU students and faculty to approach science, history, and education with curiosity and openness.