

University Mourns Professor Gerner

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LAWRENCE — University of Kansas Chancellor Robert Hemenway and several noted colleagues made the following statements in response to the death today of Deborah J. “Misty” Gerner, professor of political science and internationally noted expert in Middle Eastern conflicts. Gerner, 50, died of cancer. Survivors include her husband, Philip A. Schrodt, professor of political science at KU.

Chancellor Robert Hemenway:

“Deborah Gerner was an extraordinary scholar and teacher who embodied a deep passion for her field of study and an equally strong ability to engage and inspire her students. Her respected books and many honors for teaching reflected her ability to present complex topics objectively and with distinctive clarity. She will be greatly missed. On behalf of the entire university community, I offer our sincere condolences to her family and friends.”

Elaine Sharp, chair and professor of political science at KU:

“Misty brought an incredible level of intensity and passion to all that she did — but most especially to her teaching. She consistently focused on her students as individuals, seeking out their talent and developing it and in the process forging close bonds that in many cases have led to continuing contact long after students have graduated from KU.”

Alice Lieberman, KU professor of social welfare:

“Misty lived out her values. She was invested in the absence of war, in furthering peace, especially in the Middle East. She was traveling and engaged in her work until fairly recently because it was so very important to her.”

Helena Cobban, global-affairs columnist for The Christian Science Monitor and Al-Hayat, and a member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies:

“Deborah Gerner was a great and thoughtful scholar on the Palestinian question. She has inspired generations of students — both through her teaching and through her published works. Her book *One Land, Two Peoples* continues to be one of the very best introductions to the Palestinian-Israeli dilemma that there is. The experience of traveling with her in Israel and Palestine made me understand the depth of the esteem in which she was held by scholars and peace activists there.”

Harriet Lerner, clinical psychologist and bestselling author:

“Misty moved toward the center of things with enormous passion, vitality and courage. She was so brave, so loving and so generous. She was, for me, a teacher in the best sense of the word.”

BIOGRAPHY

Gerner, who spent more than 25 years studying, visiting and living in the Middle East, was an expert on the the Arab-Israeli conflict and Palestinian nationalism. She twice interviewed Yassir Arafat, former chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The author of a textbook used widely in college classes on the Middle East, she taught about foreign policy; mediation, conflict resolution and crisis early warning; and human rights, ethnicity, democratization and gender. She also was co-director of the Center for International Political Analysis at KU.

Gerner came to KU in 1988 as an assistant professor of political science. She became an associate professor in 1991 and a full professor in 2001. She is credited with helping turn international relations, then a subfield of study, into a high profile and active program. She taught undergraduate and graduate courses in international relations and foreign policy and in comparative politics. She earned a bachelor's degree from Earlham College, Richmond, Ind., in 1977 with double majors in peace and conflict studies and in religion. She received master's and doctoral degrees in political science from Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., in 1979 and 1982, respectively. She taught at the University of Iowa, Iowa City, and at Hamilton College, Clinton, N.Y., before coming to KU. She also taught as a visiting professor at Northwestern University, Birzeit University on the West Bank and American University in Cairo, Egypt.

A member of the KU Women's Hall of Fame, Gerner received many awards including a Kemper Award for teaching excellence, Byron T. Shutz Award for distinguished teaching, International Studies Association Ladd Hollist Award for outstanding service and Susan Northcutt Award for outstanding service to women scholars. She also received a Distinguished Alumna Award from Earlham College.

She was the author of three books: *One Land, Two Peoples: The Conflict Over Palestine* (1994); *Understanding the Contemporary Middle East* (2000); and *When the Rain Returns: Justice and Reconciliation in Palestine and Israel* (2004)