Dean Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina
Gretchen Gerzina joined the Commonwealth Honors College as dean on July 1, 2015, after ten years as a named professor at Dartmouth College where she held the Kathe Tappe Vernon Professorship in Biography, and served as chair of the English department and later as chair of African and African American studies. Previously she spent fourteen years as a professor of English at Vassar College where her administrative positions included being founding...
director for Teaching and Learning, and associate dean of the faculty, followed by two years as a professor and director of Africana studies at Barnard College, Columbia University. She holds a doctorate from Stanford University, a master’s from Simmons College, and a bachelor’s degree from Marlboro College.

Her seven books, most of them historically-grounded biographical studies, have been widely reviewed. Carrington: A Life (1989) is the biography of Bloomsbury figure Dora Carrington. Black England: Life Before Emancipation (1995) was a New York Times “notable book of the year” and was published in America as Black London. Frances Hodgson Burnett: The unexpected life of the author of The Secret Garden (2004) was the first biography of Burnett in over thirty years and drew upon previously unseen caches of family letters and journals.


Gerzina appears regularly on radio and television in both Britain and America. From 1997 to 2012 she hosted the nationally-syndicated public radio program “The Book Show,” and has done commentaries on National Public Radio and Vermont Public Radio. She recently completed a ten-part BBC Radio 4 series on Britain’s Black Past that will air in January 2016.

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