I am saddened to inform you that Professor Emerita Barbara Brenzel died on Sunday in Toronto, where she lived. Professor Brenzel taught in the Education Department from 1978 until her retirement in 2004. She also served as chair of that department for much of her tenure at Wellesley.

Professor Brenzel’s teaching focused on the history of education and the history of childhood. Her signature course, Youth and Student Activism—which she created and taught for many years—enabled her to share her passion for activism with students.

A respected historian, she was the author of Daughters of the State: A Social Portrait of the First Reform School for Girls in North America, 1856-1905 (MIT Press, 1983) and a number of other publications about dependent children and families. Her much cited book described the difficulties of so-called “wayward” girls, and documented how they were treated. Professor Brenzel was a graduate of the University of Toronto, where she received her BA and MA degrees, and of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where she received her EdD.

She will be remembered for her wit, scholarship, and great insight into the history of the lives of girls in the 19th century, whose stories she brought vividly to life. Professor Brenzel also loved the arts, especially painting, and it is both touching and sad that she died so soon after her close friend and colleague James Wilson Rayen. My thoughts are with Professor Brenzel’s family, friends, and colleagues at this difficult time.