



History Department

College of Liberal Arts

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Summer 2014

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STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS



Student Historians Present Papers at Phi Alpha Theta Conference

Three Cal Poly history majors, one history graduate student, and one history minor made research presentations at the Phi Alpha Theta Southern California Regional Conference, held at California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks, Calif., on April 26. Phi Alpha Theta is a national history honor society with more than 350,000 members in 860 local chapters.

This regional conference featured students from 11 universities in Southern California.

“It was a fantastic experience that really inspired all of us to push our research further while we are here at Cal Poly,” said

participant Sean Martinez (a third-year history major).

Below are the student presenters (in the order that they are pictured left to right), their research paper titles, and the titles of the panels in which they were included:

- Madeleine Aitchison (second-year history major), “The Nats of Burma: A Glimpse Into Folk Tradition and Outsider Opinion,” in Panel 1: “Imperialism, Identity and Economy”
- Anthony Wong (third-year political science major and history minor), “Cold War Culture: The Social Functions of the Cal Poly ROTC from 1953-57,” in Panel 5: “Cold War Culture”
- Sean Martinez, “The National Assets: The Australian Pearling Industry and The Royal Commission,” in Panel 10: “Colonial and Post-Colonial Societies”
- Soquel Filice (third-year history major, with minors in Spanish and communication studies), “Mermaids of the Twentieth Century: American Women on Display,” in Panel 14: “Gender and History”
- Amy Hart (first-year history graduate student, not pictured), “Borderlands in the American West,” in Panel 4: “Settlement and the American West”

These papers were all written in upper-division history courses this year and exhibit the Learn by Doing that occurs in the department.

“It was a pleasure to present my own research and listen to other young historians share theirs,” noted Aitchison.

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Filice agreed. “It was fun to present my research and receive feedback from some of my peers.”

Congratulations to the student presenters on all their hard work!

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ALUMNI NEWS

Johnston Named New San Luis Obispo High School Head Football Coach

Pat Johnston (B.A., History, 2009), who played football at Cal Poly and has been on the Mustang coaching staff since 2009, was named San Luis Obispo High Tigers' head football coach on Feb. 26. This will be Johnston's first head coaching experience after coaching defense and special teams at Cal Poly. Johnston joins Daniel Monroe (B.A., History, 2009), the girls' basketball coach, as Cal Poly history alumni coaching varsity sports at San Luis Obispo High.



Two articles in The Tribune newspaper praised Johnston's background and preparation for the game. Former Cal Poly player Alex Hubbard, an all-Big Sky Conference safety in 2013, told the Tribune that “[Johnston] taught me a lot about the game ... the angles of the quarterback, what the quarterback’s looking for, how to read the quarterback, and how to mess with him. He knew about that because he played quarterback. I think he’ll do very well if the players buy into what he’s saying and what he’s doing, because he knows exactly what he’s doing. I think he can bring SLO High back.

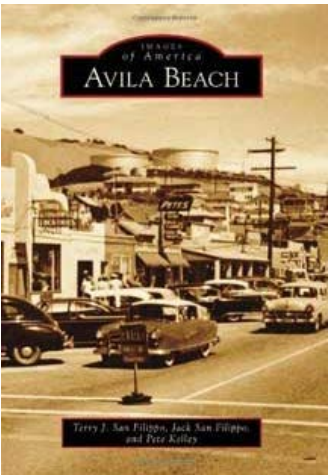
He can bring that charisma back and fun attitude back, loving to play football.”

Please visit sanluisobispo.com for the complete story.

The Tribune also described Johnston's family background in football — his father Craig also played and coached football at Cal Poly — and his longtime exposure to coaching and football strategy. He told the Tribune, “I’m going to preach here [that] every guy on the team is important. Every single guy on the team is important, and they need to go to practice every day knowing that.

If everybody can walk off the field every day knowing that there’s a great purpose in what they’re doing, then I think we can be successful.”

For the full story, please visit sanluisobispo.com



History Grad Student Publishes First Book

History graduate student Jack San Filippo has completed his first book, “Avila Beach,” (co-authored with Terry J. San Filippo and Pete Kelley). The book, released by Arcadia Publishing in December 2013 as part of its “Images of America” series, examines the history of a town beloved by Central Coast residents and visitors but whose past is often overlooked or overshadowed.

“Avila Beach” is the first published work to examine this history, a fact that seems ironic and surprising given the town’s many attractions and popularity. But San Filippo sees the shortage of historical writing on Avila as a function of its scenic beauty, quaintness and ability to stand apart from surrounding changes. “You don’t pass through Avila on your way to somewhere else,” he explains. “You either are going there or you end up there.” This “out-of-the-way-ness” also means that when Avila Beach has appeared in histories, writers tended to view it as a minor setting for larger tales of the railroad, petroleum and nuclear power industries.

But Avila’s “untouched” and “overshadowed” qualities, in San Filippo’s words, make it a valuable case study for accessing the region’s Native American, Mexican and Anglo-American past. The book covers Avila’s original Chumash inhabitants, its inclusion in the 1842 Rancho San Miguelito land grant, its development into a rail and shipping hub by American settlers like John Harford, and its varied European immigrant communities of the early 20th century. The richness of its past makes Avila Beach a “quintessential monument to the history of California,” according to San Filippo.

Beyond his intellectual interest in local history, San Filippo holds a deep personal connection to the area. For four generations, both sides of his family have lived and worked there. And both sides, representing the town’s Irish and Portuguese heritage, arrived in Avila Beach to work in the fishing industry. San Filippo’s grandfather, Jack Farris, and great uncles operated the Lucky One fishing boat and Farris Fish Market in town. Farris went on to become a

celebrated local landowner who developed many areas of San Luis Obispo, notably along Foothill Boulevard near the Cal Poly campus.

Familial ties to Avila’s past proved essential to the book project. As San Filippo explains, connections and contacts established by his grandfather and maintained by his family afforded him and his co-authors special access and gave them a foot in the door with Avila’s old-timers and insiders, many of whom gave interviews and oral histories.

The book also benefited from the support and partnerships among the local history community, including private individuals, local families, and repository institutions. “Many photographs came from our family archive,” notes San Filippo.

Numerous individuals and interviewees also donated images from their personal collections. San Filippo also credits the History Center of San Luis Obispo County and the Point San Luis Lighthouse for housing primary source material and newspaper collections essential to the book and for generously assisting with the project.

San Filippo cites his education in the Cal Poly history master’s degree program, which provided him the knowledge to research varied sources of information and the ability to compile and organize information in a presentable manner.

The reaction of San Luis Obispo County’s history community to the book has been enthusiastic and positive. Many locals and visitors to Avila Beach have thanked San Filippo and his co-authors for compiling the information. The book has also started a broader conversation about Avila Beach’s history. “For the people who knew the original Avila,” San Filippo remarks, “the book provided them a voice in the town’s historical narrative, a way to remember times past and reconnect with bygone people and places.”

Today, historical images may be found displayed in stores and restaurants throughout Avila Beach. “Our book informs the reader of who these people are, the impacts these people had, and their importance to the local community,” said San Filippo.

With “Avila Beach” under his belt, San Filippo is already busy with several new publication projects. This includes a second book on Avila Beach that will examine the forgotten industries of the bay and surrounding communities.

San Filippo will also serve as editor of La Vista, a journal for both academic and public historians focused on the history of San Luis Obispo and the Central Coast. The History Center of San Luis Obispo County and Cal Poly’s Graphic Communication Institute have reinvigorated the publication and plan to re-launch it with a first issue scheduled for May 2015. San Filippo envisions La Vista as a venue in which to expand discussion of public history and make the region’s past accessible to a broader public.

He also encourages a broad set of contributors and local history enthusiasts to find a home in the journal. When it comes to writing history, “The point is that you accomplish *something*; you does not have to rewrite an entire field of research for it to be important,” San Filippo explains.

Prospective contributors and subscribers to La Vista are invited to visit the [History Center’s website](#) for submission guidelines and further information.

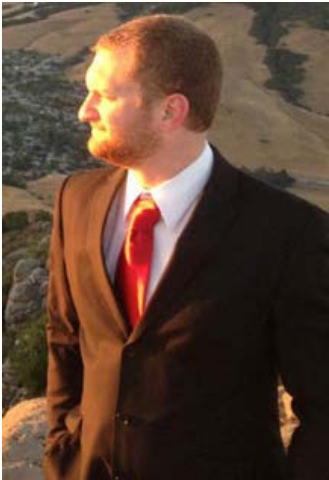
Engdahl Transfers History Skills to Software Sales

A year after graduating, Andrew Engdahl (B.A., History, 2013) finds himself in a place he never expected: an office building, working for Silicon Valley software giant Oracle Corp.

Why surprising? Throughout college Engdahl pursued his passion for history. He became a standout student in history classes and an active member (and chapter president) of Phi Alpha Theta history honor society. As he looked beyond graduation, Engdahl aspired to a career as an academic and specialist in early modern Mediterranean history. When his plans to enter a doctoral program did not pan out, Engdahl felt his history degree had left him with few other options.

Things changed, however, when he took a history faculty member’s advice to attend Cal Poly’s spring career fair where Oracle was among the numerous employers recruiting on campus. Dressed in business attire and with resume in hand, Engdahl spoke to the company representative about job opportunities in sales.

From there, he became one of 450 college graduates nationwide recruited into the first-ever Oracle Sales Academy “Class of ____” Program, which took place summer 2013. The program introduced recruits to tele-sales and the diverse opportunities for professional and personal advancement within the company. Fellow Cal Poly history alumni



Ian Rosenthal, Chris Bennett and Kevin Ferrell joined Engdahl in the academy. History graduates Jenessa Geer, Ana Pereira and Alex Fopma will participate in the company's summer 2014 training program.

In the year since, Engdahl's work at Oracle has taken him into the heart of one of world's largest providers of database management systems. Based in Redwood City, Calif., Oracle delivers business-to-business software and hardware and IT infrastructure that enable large businesses and institutions, from Travelocity to oil and gas companies to Cal Poly, to function. Engdahl works as a sales representative, consulting and advising clients on the IT products that will help them attain their business goals.

Engdahl has found his on-the-job experiences instructive as to what history majors can accomplish beyond the classroom. "It turns out that history and liberal arts degrees are well suited to sales and big companies. History majors can analyze abstract information, and they are able to transmit this data back to colleagues with authority and an informed, researched perspective and in ways that make sense," he said.

He has found the work of a sales analyst is quite similar to that of a historian. Rather than work with past battles or imperial diplomacy, however, they do so with present-day market trends and products.

Engdahl's work has offered other ways to draw upon his history education. "One of the things I enjoyed most about college was talking to people and talking history, and I still get to do this," he said.

The essence of his job is to make and maintain relationships and to dissect and solve clients' problems. Oftentimes this affords opportunities to talk about history with people who are interested but maybe didn't pursue formal training.

Engdahl has even found an outlet for his historical interests in Oracle's chapter of Toastmasters International by delivering mini-lectures on some of his favorite history subjects.

"I did not expect to love what I do quite as much as I do today," Engdahl observed. "But this sense of connection between college interests and professional work gives me a sense of purpose every day."

With this perspective and one year into his career at Oracle, Engdahl offers some advice to current history students:

- **Attend a career fair early during your time at Cal Poly** -- Find out which companies have jobs for history majors. Practice interviewing and career development skills. And make an appointment with a career advisor.
- **Research companies you hope to work for** -- Employers want to know why they should hire you, and they want to see that you understand and care about their business and will work hard and add value to it.
- **You know more than you think you do** -- The skills you will learn as a history major, such as critical thinking and being an articulate communicator, are invaluable and in demand. Don't be dissuaded by students from other programs who don't understand this. Remember that most people do not end up in careers that directly pertain to their college degree.
- **Don't take your time in college for granted** -- Study and learn what you can to build a strong foundation. Life doesn't end once you graduate; it begins. Working life gets better, more rewarding, and more fun. And during evenings and weekends, your time is your own.

As he looks ahead, Endahl plans to continue his sales work with Oracle and rise in the ranks by moving into the field to work with customers and eventually into management with his own sales team. "I'm sitting in a place I never expected to be," he says. "And I'm enjoying the ride."



One Is Not Enough: Arrona Pursues Second Master's Degree and Interns with CNN

Ben Arrona (M.A., History, 2011) stopped by the History Department during a recent visit to San Luis Obispo. Since earning his master's degree, Arrona has continued his interest in the Middle East and Islamic world by pursuing a second master's degree at Columbia University in New York City.

Arrona is completing his master's thesis, which examines the political philosophy and influence of Mustafa Kamal Atatürk, who in 1923 became the first president of the Republic of Turkey. Kamal remains fascinating and relevant today for successfully combining the traditional religious and political authority within Islam with the modern political structure of the nation-state to craft a "cult of personality" form of leadership, Arrona explained. Arrona's thesis, advised by Professor Christine M. Philliou, examines U.S. State Department assessments of Kamal's rise to power and his famous 1927 speech, "Nutuk."

Arrona recently completed an internship at CNN's New York studios, where he assisted in the production of "Fareed

Zakaria GPS.” The work gave him additional education in foreign affairs through interactions with Zakaria and the show’s staff. Arrona fact checked and edited material on the show’s [blog](#) and helped pitch ideas for the regular segments “What in the World” and “Last Look.” He also researched, time coded, and edited existing footage for use as introduction and transition material in Zakaria’s interviews.

Highlights of Arrona’s internship included watching Zakaria interview world leaders, such as President Abdullah Gül of Turkey and seeing former Vice President Dick Cheney walk through the office with his entourage. One of the most insightful experiences was observing the full, unedited conversations between Zakaria and the show’s guests. Despite their role in making history, interviewees often proved to be normal, everyday people, Arrona said.

Stay Connected

Alumni, we'd like to hear from you! Forward us information on your career, activities, anything of interest to former classmates, professors, and current history majors. You may just be highlighted in our next department newsletter. Email hist@calpoly.edu and include the following information:

- Name
- Year Graduated
- Email Address
- Phone Number
- Summary of what you'd like to share

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DEPARTMENT HAPPENINGS

The History Department Congratulates 2013-14 Scholarship and Award Recipients

Jessica Colbert and Solange Kiehlbauch – Kristin King Morana Memorial Scholarship
Madeleine Aitchison – Thomas Redican Memorial Scholarship
Andrew Gorman and Kevin McLaren – Heifetz Family/John G. Snetsinger Scholarship
Laura Neylan – Thomas Family Learn by Doing Scholarship
Megan Manning – Madalene P. Farris History Award
Ana Pereira – Dan Krieger History Award
Eddy Trang – J. Irving Snetsinger Award for Political or Diplomatic History
Jennifer Freilach – J. Irving Snetsinger Award for Writing Excellence
Italia Krahling – George Cotkin Award for Scholarly Excellence
Nicola Williams – Robert Detweiler Outstanding Senior of the Year
Amy Hart and Timothy Zellinger – Spencer Wood Memorial Award

Help continue to support outstanding history students through scholarships and awards — [give online](#).

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FACULTY NEWS

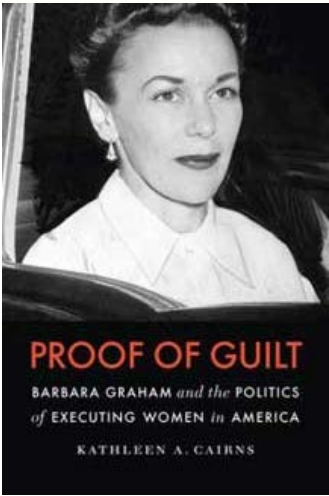
Professor Kathleen Cairns Publishes New Book on Capital Punishment

Professor Kathleen Cairns, Ph.D., published her fourth book, “Proof of Guilt: Barbara Graham and the Politics of Executing Women in America.” The work tells the story of the third woman executed by the state of California and the impact of her case on Californians’ and Americans’ evolving attitudes on capital punishment.

The state charged Graham and two male defendants with first-degree murder for the 1953 robbery and killing of an elderly woman near Los Angeles. Prosecutors had no physical evidence to link Graham to the murder, but testimony by a fourth defendant, who received immunity in exchange, placed her at the scene of the crime. Despite her claims of innocence, Graham died in the gas chamber at San Quentin Prison in June 1955.

As a historian, what fascinates you about Graham’s case and death?

The first thing that stands out is that Graham was executed. California had only executed two women before her, starting in 1941. Second, we should note that the charges against Graham and also her trial did not necessarily seal her fate. At the time, women defendants could easily avoid the death penalty by appealing and conforming to social conventions by emphasizing their status as mothers and dependents or by showing deference to male authority. Graham was only 31 years old and had three young sons. Yet, she flouted convention and authority and either



refused or proved unable to play to the gendered sympathies of jurors, the press and the public. Third, her trial and death left an important impression. High-profile journalists came to believe Graham's claims of innocence, and their advocacy led to the Hollywood film, "I Want to Live," released in 1958. This transformed Graham into a symbol of wrongful execution and of a woman mistreated by both society and the criminal justice system.

What aspects of your previous work led you to this book project?

My interest in Graham started when I was working on my second book, "Enigma Women" (2007). I began looking in general at the women whom the state of California executed. Three of the four were not sympathetic. For example, the first woman was a violent criminal gang member, the second a serial murderer, and the fourth planned a murder-for-hire.

Graham seemed different, sympathetic and even tragic. During work on my third book, "Hard Time at Tehachapi" (2009), I examined Graham in her time as a prison inmate and found her truly interesting. I became skeptical of her direct involvement in the murder, and I found others held the same doubts. But what really drew me to the project was the historical context. Graham's case coincided with great national interest in and shifting ideas about the death penalty during the post-World War II era. This included a rising abolition movement led by politicians, celebrities, and even the former warden of San Quentin. So Graham's execution provides a placeholder in a historical process by which the death penalty transformed from individual case-by-case controversies into a constitutional law issue ultimately brought before the California Supreme Court, which outlawed capital punishment in 1972 (overturned by voters later that year), and the U.S. Supreme Court, which temporarily suspended executions in 1972.

What sources and archives did you use for the book?

I looked primarily at the trial transcripts of the appellate case located at the California State Archives in Sacramento. These papers included biographical sources on Graham that revealed aspects of her early and inner life. For example, I found that she had very little education but nonetheless had a strong interest in reading. I also used the papers of Edward Montgomery, a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist with the San Francisco Examiner, and the Walter Wanger Papers at the University of Wisconsin. Both men sought to exonerate Graham. Montgomery's writings and Graham's letters to her lawyer inspired Wanger to produce the film, "I Want to Live." Finally, I read through the 1960 State Assembly hearings that investigated whether Graham had been wrongfully executed. The hearings were highly unusual since an Assembly committee was convened to discuss a single case, and that of a woman, to boot.

How does 'Proof of Guilt' relate to your teaching at Cal Poly and future research?

The book project certainly fits with and shapes interests and topics that I focus on in my classes: HIST 208, the Survey of California History; HIST 435, U.S. Women's History; and HIST 440, U.S. History Through Film. I think the research also closely connects with aspects of my courses that students find most interesting and compelling. I'm already at work on my next book, a biography of Rose Bird. In 1977 Bird became California's first female Supreme Court Justice and Chief Justice. She quickly became the focus of political controversy — in particular for her opposition to the death penalty — that culminated in 1986 when she failed to be confirmed for a 12-year term. So the project marks a continuation from where the book on Graham left off and of the themes central to my courses. The other three books focused on women prisoners. The Bird book will examine a woman who had power to impact the lives of prisoners and death row inmates.

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YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

Thank you to all of the past, current and future supporters of the History Department. Our generous donors have made it possible for us to significantly impact students and faculty at Cal Poly through:

Student Scholarships

Each year the History Department presents a number of scholarships made possible by donors. Over the last five years, the History Department has been able to present 65 awards totaling more than \$42,000 in academic scholarships.

Faculty Professional Development

In recent years, donors have helped fund the travel expenses of several faculty members conducting research in Cambodia, England, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Honduras, Nigeria, Taiwan, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, and Vietnam.

Instructional Resources

Past donations have allowed the department to purchase special computer software and teaching resources, including films and maps to enhance instruction. Thanks to generous donations, the department has been able to provide a stipend of \$1,000 per year to each new tenure-track faculty member to purchase teaching materials for courses in his or her area of specialization.

To continue providing the outstanding educational experiences for which the department is known, we need your

support. Please contact the department chair, 805-756-2670, to discuss ways in which we can help match your interests and resources, or [give online](#) today.

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