

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY NEWSLETTER

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

A MESSAGE FROM THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT



There's a poster that greets students as they enter the History Department: How can you know where we're going unless you know where we've been? Our graduates have spent years with us answering that question, through research, writing, and original scholarship that illuminates the past and its meaning for the present.

This year's class pursued that work across an extraordinary range of subjects, from the botanical wealth of empire to women of color feminism in 1970s New York City, from Victorian medicine to the land policies that shaped the American West and East Africa. The curiosity and ambition their scholarship represents is a testament to what Portland State History students do.

None of it happens without a community behind them. The awards celebrated in these pages are made possible by the generosity of the Friends of History, dedicated faculty, and donors who believe in the future of historical inquiry and public engagement. As we look toward summer and the year ahead, we thank you for being part of that community and for helping us sustain a vibrant future for the study of history at Portland State University.

THE PAST FAST!

FRIENDS OF HISTORY

8TH ANNUAL HISTORY SLAM



Pictured: Slam Winners Sheridan, Amezcua, Pollen



Pictured: Slam Participants 2026

The **8th Annual Friends of History (FOH) History Slam** brought an evening of research, storytelling, and friendly competition to McMenamins Kennedy School. Students from Portland State University's History Department presented original historical research in a fast-paced format, with each presenter given just three minutes to communicate the significance of their work to a live audience and panel of judges. The event showcased the breadth of research being conducted by PSU history students and their ability to make historical scholarship engaging and accessible to broad audiences.

This year's top presenters were:

1st Place: Brian Sheridan, "The Essential Role of Sex Workers in Early Portland"

2nd Place: Isabelle Amezcua, "The Political Economy of Perfection"

3rd Place: Lally Pollen, "The Botanical Wealth of Empires: How the Wilkes Expedition Contributed to the Rise of Botany in America"

People's Choice Winner: Isabelle Amezcua, "The Political Economy of Perfection"

The evening was emceed by Eliza Canty-Jones of the Oregon Historical Society and judged by CLAS Dean David Bowman, Mark Rothert (FOH Board), Callie Pappas (Alumna & FOH Board), Vicky Lorca-White (Alumna & Pitttock Mansion), Nicky Yasuhara (Oregon Historical Society), and David Olsen (Alumnus & FOH Board).

Selecting winners proved especially challenging given the strength of this year's field, with each participant delivering a compelling presentation rooted in months of original research. The competition highlighted both the depth of student scholarship at Portland State University and the enduring power of history to inform, inspire, and connect communities.

Additional Presenters: Rachel Bard, Bridget Eide, Ashley Hood, Alexis McLean, Leah Tucker, Bri Whitacre, Tenna Wilson, Lauren Yanase

CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN HISTORY

STUDENT AWARDS, HONORS, AND GRADUATES

Our students continue to exemplify the curiosity, dedication, and excellence that define the study of history. Through outstanding scholarship, original research, leadership, and public engagement, they have enriched our department and contributed to a vibrant community of learning. The recognitions in these pages celebrate their many achievements and the bright futures that lie ahead.

FRIENDS OF HISTORY UNDERGRADUATE AWARDS

Undergraduate GPA, for Spring 2025 through Winter 2026

- Winner: Brianne Whitacre, 4.0 GPA for 28 graded credits of History

Best Undergraduate Seminar Papers

- Winner: Ava Becking, "Bactericide and Business: Tracing the Carboic Acid Market in Victorian England"
- Honorable Mention: Sam Black, "A Fragile Attempt at Justice: Andrew Cargill, Federal Intervention, and the Trial of the Camp Grant Massacre"

HISTORY HONORS STUDENTS

- Avery Clark, "Seventeenth-Century Scottish Presbyterians: Religio-political Arguments"
- Alexis McLean, "The Dolor: How a Generation of Women Quietly Lost their Children"

OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO THE DEPARTMENT

Winner: Isabelle Amezcua

FRIENDS OF HISTORY GRADUATE AWARDS

Graduate GPA, for Spring 2025 through Winter 2026

- Winner: Zachary White, 4.0 GPA for 24 graded credits of History

Best Graduate Seminar Paper

- Winner: Melissa Thomsen, "The Fight Goes On: The Quest to Make Gendered, Unpaid Labor Visible in the US Economy, 1975-2009"
- Honorable Mention: Kristin Wingo, "The High-Water Mark of Socialism on the Southern Oregon Coast"

STUDENT AWARDS, HONORS, AND GRADUATES, CONT.

DAVID JOHNSON FAMILY AWARDS

Outstanding Performance, Lower Division

Co-Winners: Blenda Fetahu, Elisabet Munoz-Avila, Freida Rossdanson

Outstanding Honors Thesis

Winner:

- Theus Richards, "From Reclamation to Restoration: Remaking Nature on Portland's Peninsula"

Honorable Mention:

- Alexis McLean, "The Dolor: How a Generation of Women Quietly Lost their Children"

Outstanding MA Thesis

Winner:

- Genevieve Davis, "Intersectionality and Insurgent Citizenship: Women of Color Feminism in 1970s New York City"

Honorable Mention:

- Trenna Wilson, "When Bad Fences Make Bad Neighbors: Civilization v. Pastoralism in Oregon and Kenya 1860s-1930s"

DEPARTMENT AWARD & GRANT RECIPIENTS

Bernard V. Burke Endowed Scholarships

Zoey Ahlers, Eden Day, Devin Singh

Ann Fulton Awards

James Carter, Cora Lahti, Kacie Parker

Anne Myers Awards

Avery Clark

Stephanie K. Oliver Graduate Awards

Genevieve Davis

Joel Palmer Awards

Sean Reyes, Lauren Yanase, Trenna Wilson

Friends of History Graduate Student Fund Awards

Ethan Bishop-Blaikie

History Student Internship and Professionalization Grant Awards

Ethan Bishop-Blaikie, Ashley Hood, Lally Pollen, Lauren Yanase

CONGRATULATIONS TO PSU HISTORY CLASS OF '26

UNDERGRADUATES LIST

(CL) = cum laude | (MCL) = magna cum laude

(SCL) = summa cum laude | ** = History Honors

Bachelor of Arts in History

Avery Fulton Clark (CL) ** | Milo Henry Elliot | Mark C Funk (SCL)
Calum Markel Goodman-Brownlee (SCL) | Michelle Lyn Hannigan (MCL)
Logan Bradley Horne (MCL) | Tristan N Madron ** | Alexis R McLean (SCL) **
Ernesto Najera-Bustillos (CL) | Benjamin John Ortola (SCL) **
Jessica M Ramos | Samuel Andrew Randall (SCL) | Daniel Michial Singh (CL)
Soren Kjell Enok Storfjell (CL) | Hazel Isabella Teague Gustina (SCL)
Brienne Donn Whitacre (CL) | Lauren Wittkop

Bachelor of Science in History

Grayson S Aguilar | Rachel Leigh Bard | Thomas Isaac Driggs (SCL)
Carson Robert Fisher | Francesco Andrew Graffis | Seong Cheol Jeon
Lucas Edward Kopp | Jeremy O'Connor | James Stafford Parker
Kelly Ann Parson (MCL) | Lucas Venable | Morel Flora Williams

GRADUATES LIST

Genevieve Davis | Matthew K Masunari
William Adam Reed | Sean Reyes
Melissa Rochelle Thomsen | Wren Weddell | Tenna Marie Wilson

SUPPORT OUR STUDENTS

SUPPORT THE FUTURE OF HISTORY

The accomplishments celebrated in these pages are a testament to the talent of our students, the dedication of our faculty, and the strength of the History community. Together, they demonstrate the enduring value of historical inquiry and public engagement.

Gifts to the History Department help sustain student success, faculty excellence, public programming, alumni connections, and the vibrant intellectual community that defines History at PSU. To learn more about supporting this work, please visit [//bit.ly/psuf_history](https://bit.ly/psuf_history) or email us at hst@pdx.edu.

CLICK HERE
TO DONATE!



CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENT, COMMUNITY, AND NEW BEGINNINGS

COMMENCEMENT 2026



KEEP IN TOUCH WITH US

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Events List



Join FOH



The Friends of History is a community-based organization affiliated with the Portland State University Department of History that is committed to supporting the teaching and study of history within the larger Portland area. Thanks to the generous support of our members, we are able to provide lectures, discussion groups, and other programming that speaks to a variety of scholarly interests, as well as scholarships and grants to further important research in history by Portland State University students and faculty members.