

SUMMER 2021  
NEWSLETTER NO. VII

# UCLA

*The Department of Classics*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

*Palevsky Lecture  
Graduation*

*Undergraduate Research Week*

## RETURNING TO CAMPUS IN FALL 2021

*Fall classes to return to  
in-person instruction!*

**Featured Cover Photo:** Lorrain, Claude.  
*Pastoral Landscape*. 1636, Art Gallery of New  
South Wales (AGNSW), Sydney, Australia.



# UCLA Department of Classics

## Greetings from the Chair



We have reached the end of a difficult academic year amazed and proud at the resilience of our students. Our warmest congratulations to the Class of 2021! We had an exceptionally strong cohort among our graduating majors in Greek, Latin, and Classical Civilization (look within this newsletter to find highlights of some of their accomplishments) and awarded three Helen Caldwell Awards for outstanding majors and three for outstanding minors this year. We are prouder than ever of all of our graduating seniors and look forward to sharing their news in these pages in the years to come.

Our post-baccalaureate and graduate students were no less impressive. We had a 100% placement rate among our post-bacc students, who have earned admittance to MA and PhD programs in Classics, Ancient History, Art History and Comparative Literature, and we welcome ten new and returning post-baccalaureate students into our program in the Fall. Our graduate students have rallied to support each other and persevered with impressive, innovative research and teaching despite significant obstacles. We are delighted to share that Benjamin Davis has now completed their MA in Classics and Diana Librandi and Zachary Borst have received their PhDs. Both Diana and Zach have also secured teaching positions in Los Angeles for the coming year (CSULB; UCLA). Later in this newsletter you can find news from them and descriptions of their dissertations. A hearty congratulations to all!

We are very excited to welcome five new graduate students into our program in the Fall. These students bring a dynamic range of interests to our department, including linguistics, material culture, classical reception, historiography, disability studies, race and ethnography, Koine Greek, and sexuality, gender, and queer studies.

Thank you to all of our friends and supporters who joined us for the annual Joan Palevsky Lecture in Classics in the Spring (look inside for a feature on this) on the subject of the ancient plague. We had record-breaking attendance at this event with over 280 participants, and are particularly grateful to our audience for their questions and lively engagement and to the faculty and alumni who appeared on the panel.

Finally, we cannot wait to be back together in person in the Fall. It will be a huge relief to return to the classroom, and we are so excited to reconnect in person with our larger Classics family at our upcoming events. Until then, stay safe and well, and a sincere thank you from all of us for your support in keeping our community uplifted and strong.

ALEX PURVES



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## DEPARTMENT NEWS

*John K. Papadopoulos to be the next Director of the Excavations of the Athenian Agora*

The Department of Classics is pleased and proud to announce that John Papadopoulos, Distinguished Professor of Classics at UCLA, has been named the next Director of the Excavations of the Athenian Agora, at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, starting July 1, 2022. He will continue to teach at UCLA in the first half of the academic year, resuming his duties in Athens every spring and summer.

The excavations in the Athenian Agora, in the center of Athens and adjacent to the Acropolis, were initiated by the American School in 1931, and they uncovered not only the ancient commercial center of the city but also the very heart of the world's first democracy. The project is one of the two long-term excavations of the American School and one of the most important

archaeological endeavors in the world. Its student volunteers over the past 40 seasons have included undergraduates and graduate students from UCLA.

Professor Papadopoulos has been an integral part of the team of scholars working on publication projects at the Agora since 1994, in particular on the Early Iron Age, for which two volumes have already appeared (*Ceramicus Redivivus*, 2003, and *Agora XXXVI*, 2017). His interests range from broad questions of the historical topography of Athens and the Agora to the scholars whose work we depend on so heavily. His work on the Piet de Jong paintings—curating an exhibition at the Benaki Museum in Athens and editing Greek and English editions of *The Art of Antiquity*, 2006—exemplifies this breadth of interest and intellectual curiosity, as well as his commitment to scholarly collaboration.

*Prof. Giulia Sissa Named as Co-Director of UCLA Program in Experimental Critical Theory*

We are pleased to announce that Professor Giulia Sissa will be co-leading UCLA's program in Experimental Critical Theory for the next three years. Several of our graduate students have benefitted from the courses offered in this program and we look forward to its continued success under the leadership of Professor Sissa and Professor Zrinka Stahuljak.

**STAY CONNECTED**

Want to stay updated with department news? Stay connected by following our social media pages on Facebook and Twitter!

**FACEBOOK:** [UCLA CLASSICS](#)  
**TWITTER:** [@CLASSICSATUCLA](#)

## DEPARTMENT NEWS

*Prof. David Blank Promoted to Distinguished Professor*

The Department of Classics is delighted to announce the promotion of Professor David Blank to the rank of Distinguished Professor. As friends of the department know, Professor Blank is an internationally renowned scholar of ancient philosophy and particularly of the Herculaneum papyri and the philosophical study of language in ancient Greece and Rome. His prolific and important scholarship has revealed the influence of ancient philosophical schools on ancient linguistic theory. Much of his recent work has focused on the carbonized fragments of papyrus rolls found in the remains of an aristocratic library in Herculaneum and buried by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE. These fragments preserve previously unknown works of the 1st century BCE Epicurean philosopher Philodemus as

well as parts of the magnum opus of his school's founder, Epicurus, and Professor Blank is (among other projects) working to reconstruct and publish Book 8 of Philodemus On Rhetoric. Other recent work has made new contributions to our understanding of the Roman polymath Varro, particularly his great work on the history of the Latin language (*de lingua latina*). Professor Blank is also a tireless contributor to the service work of the department and university, and has just created an entirely new lower-division course on Ancient Medicine (taught for the first time in 2020). His colleagues and students send him many congratulations on this achievement.

*Welcome, Professor Greg Woolf!*

We are excited to welcome Professor Woolf to the UCLA History Department! Greg Woolf is Ronald J Mellor Professor of Ancient History. He has broad interests in the culture of the Roman world, especially its relation to the various power dynamics that formed the empire. His first book *Becoming Roman in Gaul* examined the formation and transformation of provincial cultures through archaeological evidence. Since then he has written on literacy, on knowledge cultures and libraries, on ethnography, on the Roman economy, on gendered Roman history and on the emergence of religions. His latest book is *The Life and Death of Ancient Cities. A Natural History*, which reflects a growing interest in the history of the very long term. Currently he is working on a book on migration and mobility and also on urban resilience as one aspect of the environmental history of antiquity. Prof. Woolf will be teaching a graduate level seminar in the Fall titled "Topics in History: Ancient Rome: Romans and Their Slaves" and will be participating in the UCLA Steinmetz colloquium in January on "Ancient Cities."





## DEPARTMENT NEWS

## *Professor Adriana Vazquez awarded 2021-22 Rome Prize!*

I was delighted to receive a Rome Prize Fellowship from the American Academy in Rome for the 2021-22 academic year. While at the Academy, I will be researching and writing a book on the Brazilian neoclassical poetry of the second half of the 18th century. During this time period, Brazilian thinkers and writers were being exposed to European modes of thought and literary traditions as students at the University of Coimbra in Portugal and as members of the Italian Accademia degli Arcadi. When they returned to Brazil after their studies, they established a literary society, the Arcadia Ultramarina in which they composed and circulated their poetry, producing a neoclassical literary style inspired by Greco-Roman bucolic poetry, which has as its signature imagery the shepherd composing his songs in a lonely landscape.



The book project takes as its essential inquiry how the literary forms and tropes of Roman antiquity were adapted in the formation of a Portuguese-language tradition of poetry during a time when a Brazilian nationalist identity was emerging in the socio-political thought of the period. I am especially interested in understanding how Brazilians living under the state of colonization as a colony of the Portuguese Empire make use of the model of the Roman Empire to understand and think through their socio-historical conditions. Roman authors like Vergil and Ovid serve as models for negotiating status and identity, at a time when that identity is being renegotiated. The engagement with antiquity that emerges lays the foundation for a radical reinterpretation of the antique past at a crucial moment in Brazilian history.

## *Sharon Gerstel named Commander of Order of the Phoenix*

Congratulations to Professor Sharon Gerstel, Professor of Art History and Director of the UCLA Stavros Niarchos Foundation Center for the Study of Hellenic Culture for being named a commander of the Order of the Phoenix, one of Greece's highest honors. Professor Gerstel has received this prestigious title in recognition of her many contributions to the study of Hellenic culture in Southern California.

Read the full article here: <https://newsroom.ucla.edu/dept/faculty/sharon-gerstel-commander-order-phoenix>



## DEPARTMENT NEWS

# Reading Aeschylus with Seamus Heaney

By William Burnside

**William Burnside received his undergraduate degree in Classics from Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1973, and his MBA from Harvard in 1977. He subsequently pursued a career in management consulting in London, Chicago and Los Angeles.**

In Spring 2021 I had the great pleasure and privilege of joining a graduate seminar, led by Professor Kathryn Morgan and attended by post-bacc and graduate students. Our topic was *Agamemnon*, the first play of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, which deals with Agamemnon's victorious return from Troy and his murder at the hands of his wife Clytemnestra. Over ten three-hour sessions we read the play in the original Greek. We examined the poetry, its meters, diction, imagery and use of metaphor. We discussed aspects of staging. We examined the treatment of women in ancient Greek society as characterized by Clytemnestra and Cassandra in the play. In particular we examined how Aeschylus brought to life universal issues of justice, retribution, murder and reconciliation embodied in the curse shadowing the House of Atreus.

I first read *Agamemnon* in 1972, two years after I had come up from Belfast to Cambridge to study Classics. I was escaping the height of The Troubles in Northern Ireland. I little thought then that I would be reading the play again nearly forty years later at a seminar in California. And though my teachers had tried to impress it on me, I could not at that age appreciate fully how the great Classical works and the issues they address are timeless.

In our last *Agamemnon* class I introduced The Troubles in Northern Ireland, that country's curse, its own multigenerational saga of murder and retribution. It is not surprising that contemporary Northern Irish poets like Longley, Mahon and Carson have made rich use of Classical allusions, and none more so than Seamus Heaney, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1994. The centerpiece of Heaney's first publication after his Nobel award, *The Spirit Level*, is the thirteen-page poem *Mycenae Lookout*. The voice is that of the Watchman who introduces *Agamemnon*. Heaney's Watchman is tormented by guilt that he could have done more to prevent a disaster. He speaks in the metaphors of the original, and uses a range of meters and stanzas that recall the Greek. But all speak to the Irish Troubles.

For the torture of the Watchman's, and Heaney's, complicit silence:

*And then the ox would lurch against the gong  
And deaden it and I would feel my tongue  
Like the dropped gangplank of a cattle truck*

For the fate of the innocent Cassandra:

*No such thing  
as innocent  
bystanding*

But with hope finally for reconciliation:

*....men puddling at the source  
through tawny mud, then coming back up  
deeper in themselves for having been there  
like discharged soldiers testing the safe ground*



View from the citadel of Mycenae, looking towards Argos.

In an interview with the Open University in 2007 about his work based on Classical literature, Heaney said "the thing about the Classics is that they can be travestied, if you like, and mocked, but they can't be outstripped or diminished or dodged".

We read several sections of *Mycenae Lookout* aloud, and I was reminded of the perpetual relevance of great poetry to the human condition, and how poetry offers the potential for understanding and even, at its best, comfort. Cicero was right. The purpose of an education about the past is to free the student from the tyranny of the present. In the act of learning, at any age, the discovery of oneself is made at the same time as the discovery of the world around us. Students and faculty in the UCLA Classics Department are blessed to enjoy this rich and varied learning environment.

# Faculty Reading Recommendations

**David Blank** - I've just read a great historical study with lessons for today. Frank M. Snowden, son of the distinguished classicist Frank M. Snowden, Jr., followed up his study of the conquest of malaria in Mussolini's Italy with a book on *Naples in the Time of Cholera 1884-1911* (Cambridge 1995). The book follows my favorite city, Naples, in the interplay of public health, politics, urban planning, medical science, and propaganda in the cholera pandemic of 1884. In addition, Snowden discovers another epidemic of cholera, in 1911, which was completely covered up by political propaganda and forgotten! His study is exacting and fascinating, eerily foreshadowing many of the events of 2020-21.

**Sander Goldberg** - I've been enjoying Gore Vidal's *Julian* (1962), set sufficiently late in antiquity that my professional side doesn't constantly think "but—but—but" while it can still note with amusement the modern sensibilities foisted on such passing acquaintances as Libanius and Oribasius.

**Ella Haselswerdt** - I recommend Ocean Vuong's 2016 poetry collection *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*. The Vietnamese American poet works with and through Homer's epics as he mythologizes his queer, refugee status in a moving account of intergenerational trauma, survival, and rapture.

**Bryant Kirkland** - It's hardly 'light summer reading,' but in the wake of certain deplorable events of the past year, including the murder of George Floyd, it has been sobering to revisit Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, a novel that reworks portions of Homer's *Odyssey* but also forges its own grim American epic.

**Sarah Morris** - Last summer I was so inspired by Silvio Curtis' review of Madeline Miller's *Circe* that I finally plunged in, and loved it! This year, my favorite read over the long pandemic winter was something thirty years old, Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (1990), one of the twentieth century's greatest poems, by one of modernity's greatest lyric poets (and artists). Whether or not you follow the obliquely Homeric characters and names, the embedded narratives that trace natives of three continents through indigenous colonial histories and forms of exile, in ever-lush visual landscapes, and thrilling verse, are so absorbing that I reached the end and wanted to start reading it over again, at once.

**Alex Purves** - I recommend Alice Oswald's *Nobody* (Cape, 2019). I keep returning to this short book of connected poems based on Odysseus, Philoctetes and Greek myth. In this collection, rather than following the thread of a single ancient poem as she did with her amazing *Memorial* (based on the *Iliad*), Oswald offers an underwater perspective on the *Odyssey* which is both perplexing and mesmerizing.





DEPARTMENT LIFE

# Department PhD Celebration!



Left to Right: SAO Savannah Shapiro, Prof. Adriana Vazquez, Prof. Bryant Kirkland, Prof. Lydia Spielberg



Prof. Bryant Kirkland enjoys his Ancient Grains salad



PhD alums Ben Radcliffe and Elliott Piro



PhDs and faculty are all smiles for the first in-person gathering



Graduate students reunited at the celebration



## UNDERGRADUATE NEWS

*2020-2021 Helen Caldwell Awards*

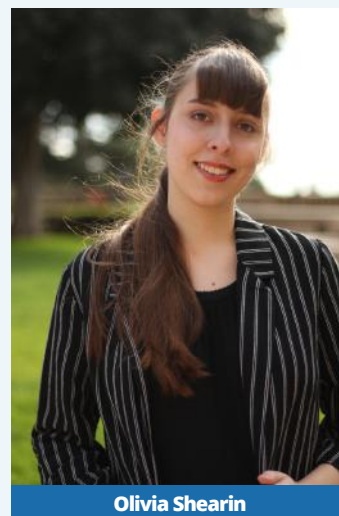
Each year the Department is pleased to bestow the annual Helen Caldwell Awards and Prizes, named in honor of a dedicated teacher of Greek and Latin in our department for over thirty years (1939-70). Helen Caldwell graduated in the first class at UCLA to award the Bachelor of Arts in 1925 and earned her MA in Latin fourteen years later. She later was employed by the Classics Department for 30 years until her retirement in 1970. A dedicated teacher of Latin and Greek, Helen Caldwell was also a respected scholar of Brazilian literature, one of the first to translate into English some of the most important works of the 19th century novelist Machado de Assis. The Caldwell Prizes for majors and minors are given each year to the top students in our department. The recipients for 2020-21 for Outstanding Major are **Alex Adame** (Classical Civilization), **Emily Liu** (Classical Civilization), and **Olivia Shearin** (Classical Civilization). The recipients for 2020-21 for Outstanding Minor are **Shanahan Europa** (Classical Civilization), **Maddie Gutierrez** (Classical Civilization), and **Kelli Woodward** (Classical Civilization). Congratulations to all!



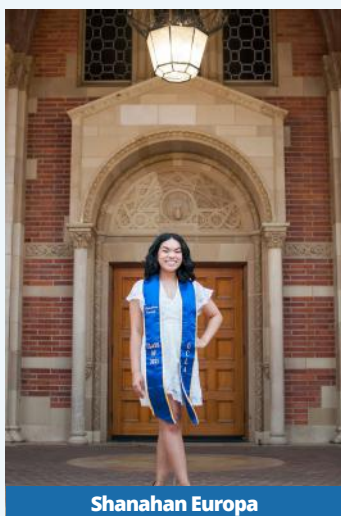
Alex Adame



Emily Liu



Olivia Shearin



Shanahan Europa



Maddie Gutierrez



Kelli Woodward

## UNDERGRADUATE NEWS

## *UCLA Undergraduate Research Week* By Shannon Boland

It was very exciting to be able to participate in Undergraduate Research Week during an unconventional Senior year. Inspired by the many wonderful adaptations of *Antigone* I read as part of the curriculum for Professor Lydia Spielberg's fall class on *Antigone*, I wrote an adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone* for my final project. Motivated by the rise in anti-Chinese xenophobia in relation to COVID-19, I researched reactions to historic pandemics and quarantine measures which disproportionately affected Chinese residents of San Francisco's Chinatown during the first outbreak of bubonic plague in the US.

By researching newspaper archives and historical documents, I originally sought to understand the ways in which public responses to viral outbreaks have or have not changed. The process of researching and writing my adaptation allowed me to explore the idea of "the other" through the themes of *Antigone*. Putting together the presentation gave me the opportunity to revisit my project from last fall and add to my own understanding of the topic. I appreciated that the virtual showcase format allowed me to include visuals and music. I'm happy that I was able to showcase my project and I'm very grateful to Professor Spielberg for encouraging me to present my work!



DEPARTMENT  
OPEN HOUSE  
SEPT. 22ND | 4:00-5:15 | DODD 243

Stay tuned for announcements about upcoming events that will take place in-person in the Fall, including our department open house on **Wednesday, Sept. 22nd from 4:00-5:15pm**. For more information and to receive information about department events, email [sshapiro@humnet.ucla.edu](mailto:sshapiro@humnet.ucla.edu) to join our listservs.

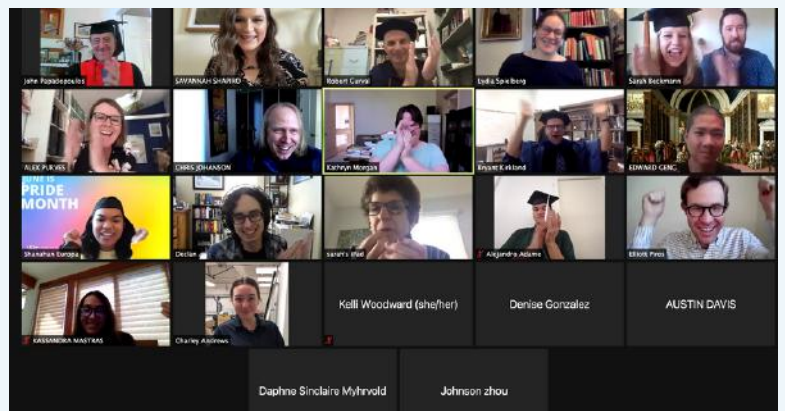
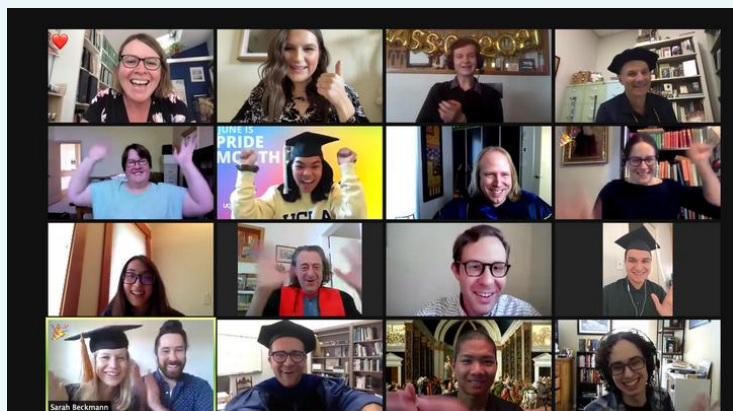


## UNDERGRADUATE NEWS

### *UCLA Undergraduate Commencement 2021-2022*

Congratulations to the Graduating Class of 2021! The Department is so proud of all that you have accomplished during your time at UCLA. We wish you nothing but the best of future success and happiness and cannot wait to see all the amazing things you accomplish! Please stay in touch and keep us updated on all your accomplishments!

*Watch our virtual Commencement Celebration video below!*

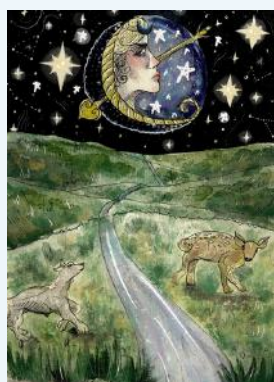




## UNDERGRADUATE NEWS

*Ovid as Tarot*

by Caroline Lunt



As an artist by training, I often consider things through a creative lens. Research is a large part of my artistic process, and when conceiving of this project I was surprised to learn more about the history of tarot cards, which happen to be rooted in Ovid. In fact, the original “Major Arcana” as it is called from the Marziano Tarot Deck (a medieval Italian rendition of the tarot, one of the first instances of one of these card sets) actually features characters and stories from *The Metamorphoses*. With the recent resurgence in popularity of tarot decks in general, I thought it would be a fun and rewarding experience to create my own deck. It is a common notion in witchcraft that the tools you create yourself are the most powerful, so not only was this an invigorating academic experience to research into the stories and artistic receptions of them, but it was also spiritually fulfilling to design my own version of tarot. I aimed to incorporate both symbolage that would resonate with the Rider-Waite tarot (the sort of default deck in modern practice), but was also reflective of the stories I based them off of.

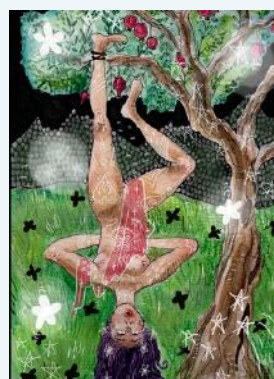
Originally, this was not intended to be a series. I started with an idea for an entire deck, but had only sketched out a plan for Circe as The Empress. When I decided to paint more cards, I had to make decisions based on the design choices I originally made for Circe on what to carry over. As you can see, there are a few repeating motifs in these pieces: strong blocks of black ink, a small circular pattern that repeats in separate blocks, and the usage of digital overlays to make white star-like shapes. These are intended to invoke unity across the series.

I intentionally chose to use watercolor, since this is the medium I am most familiar with. This is actually the second watercolor series I’ve made! One of the most important colors in my palette is Payne’s Gray, a blue-ish black that is known for its versatility. I use it in all of my pieces. Until I switched over to a new pre-made palette, I was originally using my old palette from high school. It was wonderful to have an excuse to dive into them again.

Overall, I am excited to continue this project and will hopefully expand the minor arcana to incorporate important elements from Ovid’s life. Looking at works of ancient literature artistically is a wonderful way to get to know the piece from a different perspective, and extremely helpful in creating lasting and meaningful connections to it. I hope you enjoy viewing these as much as I enjoyed creating them!

Check out Caroline's prints on her Etsy shop:

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/mulberrynaiad>





## UNDERGRADUATE NEWS | GRADUATE NEWS

*Classical Civilization Minor, Charley Andrews, selected as 2021 Undergraduate Commencement Speaker*

I was very excited to be asked by the School of Arts and Architecture to participate in this year's commencement ceremony as the undergraduate speaker. I have had such a great experience as an Architectural Studies major and Classics minor, and am looking forward to coming back to UCLA this Fall to begin the M.Arch (Master of Architecture) program. While writing my speech, I thought back to my experiences as a student; the projects I completed, the friends I made through our group projects, and, recently, our experiences with online classes. I was offered two methods of presenting my speech: live online, or pre-recorded. I opted to pre-record my speech since I know I will be watching my commencement ceremony with my family. One of the main themes I focus on in my speech is the importance of community;

the classes in the Architecture and Urban Design department are very small (20-30 people), so through them, I became very good friends with some of my classmates. These friendships have made projects and work much more enjoyable, and while online classes are still no substitute for in-person classes, I know they would have been much harder without the support of my friends, and I look forward to the new friendships and connections I will make in grad school.



PHOTO BY REED HUTCHINSON

*Wedding Bells for Graduate Students, Tianran Liu and Andrew Lifland!*

The Department is thrilled to announce that two of our very own graduate students, Tianran Liu and Andrew Lifland, were married on June 21, 2021! We are sending our warmest wishes and felicitations to the happy couple. Congratulations, Andrew and Tianran!

## POST-BACC NEWS

*Post-Bacc Placement*

We are delighted to announce that our post-bacc grad school applicants are placed and looking forward to a happy, face-to-face 2021-2022 school year. Thank you so much to outgoing post-bacc Director, Prof. Amy Richlin, who served with such care and attention as director for eight years. We extend a warm welcome to Prof. Sarah Morris, who will be stepping into the role of post-bacc Director. Here is where our students are headed:

**Noushin Ahdoot (2020):** Johns Hopkins University (PhD program in Comparative Thought and Literature)

**Stacy Flores (2017):** I will be starting my PhD program in History in the fall at UC Riverside. The post-bacc program helped me build my confidence in my abilities and gave me the support to further my studies.

**Danielle Ortiz (2021):** Johns Hopkins University (PhD program in Art History)

**Janan Perkins (2021):** University of Colorado (PhD program in Classics)

**Emily Schwartz (2021):** Bryn Mawr College (PhD program in Classics)

**Heather Richard (2021):** I am excited to be starting the Ancient History PhD program through the Classics Department at the University of Cincinnati this fall! I chose the program at Cincinnati because of the interdisciplinary features of the department, as well as the opportunity to acquire skillsets in papyrology, epigraphy, and numismatics on campus. Additionally, I was impressed by the wonderful mentorship opportunities, the world-renowned Blegen Library, and their state-of-the-art archaeology lab. My experience at UCLA has played an essential role in my preparation, not only for the PhD application season but also for refining the linguistic skills necessary for doctoral-level research. I am so grateful for the opportunity that has been provided to me by the Classics Department at UCLA and I am thankful to all of the professors, mentors, and my fellow cohort who provided so much encouragement and have made this experience so impactful.

**Chloe Wheeler (2021):** Princeton University (PhD program in Comparative Literature)

**Huiling Zhang (2021):** I am going to go be a DPhil student in Ancient History at the University of Oxford, where I will research Roman spectacles, fandom, and self-definition. Being forced to do the post-bacc program on Zoom, with a 16-hour time difference, makes me realize how important it is to have a supportive department, full of kind and steadfast people at your back. Thank you; I could never have gone this far without you.



*Pictured from left to right: Heather Richard, Stacey Flores, and Huiling Zhang*



## SUMMER NEWS | GRADUATE NEWS

## 2020 &amp; 2021 Summer Facts &amp; Figures



## Graduate Student Workshops

The UCLA Classics Graduate Workshop is a bi-weekly seminar for graduate students in Classics and related fields; the purpose of the workshop is to provide a venue in which graduate scholars can showcase their ongoing research and receive useful commentary from their peers in an informal setting. To see topics of past sessions this spring quarter, visit [Graduate Workshop](#).



The UCLA Classics Graduate Workshop presents...

“οὐ σάφα εἰδός: Agency, Knowledge, and the Defense of Ignorance in the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite and the Aeneid”

Ben Davis

April 7, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.  
Zoom meeting ID: 978 4871 0697



The UCLA Classics Graduate Workshop presents...

“Class and Rhetoric in Philodemus's *On Music*”

Andrew Lifland

May 5, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.  
Zoom meeting ID: 949 6435 5611



The UCLA Classics Graduate Workshop presents...

“Death in the diaspora: the tomb of the Messenians in Athens”

Camille Reiko Acosta

May 26, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.  
Zoom meeting ID: 958 3297 6659

## GRADUATE NEWS

***Congratulations to our Newly Minted PhDs!***

Two students earned their PhDs in Classics this Spring and each has secured an academic position.



***Diana Librandi***

***Lecturer, CSULB***

Diana Librandi's dissertation "Recognition and its Dilemmas in Roman Epic" examines how tragedy, philosophy, and history merge in the reception of tragic recognition in the Roman epic tradition, with particular attention to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Flavian epic. In her study, Diana argues that Roman epic poets draw on tragic recognition and ancient philosophical theories to address the cognitive instability that is typical of civil war, an event that recurrently marks the cultural memory of Rome since its foundation. For the next academic year, Diana will be a lecturer in Latin in the Department of Classics at California State University, Long Beach. Her participation in future conferences includes presentations at Feminism and the Classics 2022 and the next SCS annual meeting.



***Zach Borst***

***Lecturer, UCLA***

Zachary Borst's dissertation, *Mimesis as Metamorphosis in Classical Greek Literature*, argues that dramatic authors such as Aristophanes and Euripides depict mimesis, or dramatic representation, on stage as a way of reflecting on and theorizing the effects of representation. Aristophanic scenes of cross-dressing or disguise are often meant to parody previous tragedies (including those of Euripides), but they also show a keen awareness of the possibility of change. For example, Dicaeopolis in the *Acharnians* insists that he remains who he is even after the costume change. This paranoia about identity exhibits an awareness of what he calls "mimetic metamorphosis," the transformative power of dramatic representation on an individual. The dissertation situates these literary reflections on mimesis with famous philosophical works that are typically treated as the beginning of theorization on mimesis, in order to show how "mimetic metamorphosis" is inherited in Plato and Aristotle. Zach will remain in Los Angeles as a lecturer in the Classics Department at UCLA.



## GRADUATE NEWS

***Welcome, Incoming PhD Students!***

***Welcome to our incoming 2021-2022 PhD cohort! This year we have the pleasure of five new graduate students joining our program in the Fall. Read more about who will be joining us below.***



**Lena Barsky** graduated with a BA in Classics: Latin (magna cum laude, with honors, Phi Beta Kappa 2013) from Brown University in 2014 and received her MPhil in Greek and/or Latin Languages and Literature from Oxford University, St Anne's College in 2021. Her primary areas of interest include texts and culture of the late Roman Republic and Augustan eras; gender and sexuality in the ancient world; and Classical Reception, especially in video games and online spaces.



**Tom Francis** received his BA in Latin and Greek from University of Richmond (2018), his Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Classical Languages from University of Pennsylvania (2019), and his MA in Classics from University of Colorado Boulder (2021). His research interests include Linguistics and Imperial and Koine Greek, and he has incorporated these interests into projects such as a BA thesis on the verbal aspect of perfect participles in New Testament Greek, a study of periphrastic constructions in Sophocles, and an examination of proems and endings in Homer and Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*.



**Grant Hussong** graduated with a BA in Classical Languages and Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies from the University of Kansas in 2021. He is primarily interested in how texts create meaning with bodies and impairment. His classics thesis suggested that Herodotus's *Histories 1* and Sophocles's *Philoctetes* employ physical impairment as narrative/thematic devices. His gender studies thesis considered how the novel *Stone Butch Blues* constructs queer identity and disability together through systems of violence, care, and material objects. Grant also has research interests in ancient intellectual history, feminist theory, and classical reception.

## GRADUATE NEWS

## Welcome, Incoming PhD Students!

### Continued....



**Jennifer MacPherson** received an Honours BA with high distinction from the University of Toronto in 2021, double majoring in Classics and Classical Civilization, with a minor in English. Her primary areas of interest are ancient drama, particularly Aristophanic comedy and Euripidean and Senecan tragedy, and depictions of gender, sexuality, and the body. Her undergraduate research examined the use of costume and pubic hair depilation in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* through the lens of queer critical theories. Additionally, Jennifer was part of the Bay of East Attica Regional Survey (BEARS) team, has co-authored an article published in the *American Journal of Archaeology* which proposes the role of women as ceramic producers in the Early Iron Age, and is interested in the relationship between material culture and literature.



**Marco Saldana** received his BA in Classics and History from the University of Texas at Austin (2019) and his MA in Classical Languages from the University of Kansas (2021). Marco's MA thesis, "First Impressions of the Persian *Other* in Aeschylus and Herodotus," investigated the portrayals of the Persians in the *Persae* and Book 1 of the *Histories*. Through this research, Marco has become deeply interested in the representations of race, ethnicity, and otherness in the ancient Mediterranean. His other research interests include Greek historiography, in particular Herodotus and Xenophon, ancient drama, and Achaemenid Persia.

Read more about our Graduate Students on our website at [classics.ucla.edu/graduate-students/](https://classics.ucla.edu/graduate-students/)



## ALUMNI NEWS

# Alumni Spotlight

*Blake Livesay (UCLA Alumnus, BA Classical Civilizations, 2011)*

I began studying classics as a child, copying the alphabet, introductory phrases, and writing out numbers in Greek using my mother's old textbook, and always choosing to do school projects on Greece. Growing up in a small Midwestern town, my mom was the only person of Greek descent that I knew. So while we had lamb on Easter and made baklava and spanakopita, there wasn't much opportunity for immersion in the culture. Following her footsteps I applied to UCLA, and chose to apply as a Classical Civilization major to satisfy one of my lifelong interests.

Once at UCLA, I dove in immediately. I took ancient Greek in my first year. I went on to take a classical linguistics course with Professor Brent Vine. And in my third and final year I took Modern Greek. Through these courses, I learned more about the English language than in any English course. Although I did not study abroad as a student, I learned of a heritage program, and a year after I graduated I was able to go on the program's second trip to Greece. Having studied the classics and Greek, I extended my stay and spent an additional two weeks traveling the country, including a visit with Eleni Tsaggouri, who taught my Modern Greek class and helped me plan my trip. One of my fondest accomplishments is becoming lost in Argos, and becoming un-lost by asking a taxi driver for directions and understanding the response. The success of that trip gave me the confidence to travel solo through Austria, Germany, and France years later. Having studied primarily American and English literature in high school, I looked forward to and greatly enjoyed upper-division courses devoted to ancient epic, tragedy, and comedy. Studying the classics has influenced how I consume media today. It has added additional layers and meaning, and has revealed the continuity of many aspects of culture in the last three thousand years from the Middle East throughout the West. One of my favorite Tolkien books, the Children of Húrin, is the quintessential tragic story.



Blake on the island of Delos (birthplace of Apollo and Artemis) with the island of Mykonos in the background.

Classics also allowed me to literally feel history. While looking for a source on Cloelia for Professor Robert Gurval's course on the female in Roman literature and culture, I found myself holding a 15th century book written in Latin courtesy of the Young Research Library Special Collections.

Many people, including engineering and premed friends at UCLA, wondered what I was doing as a classical civilization major, or what I could do with that degree after I graduated. To me, a background in humanities is an invaluable part of being a well-rounded person living in our modern society. And since classics includes so many different aspects of the humanities—art, art history, history, language, literature, philosophy, politics, religion, and modern reception—it instills a breadth of skills through a range of courses, no two of which need be alike.

Not long after graduating, I returned to campus to fill in as the undergraduate staff adviser for the Classics Department before moving upstairs to the Philosophy Department to help the next generation of students navigate the university. Now I work in the Registrar's Office on the General Catalog where I can put my language skills to use. I am fortunate to be able to be among the first to know of new courses in the department, attend department-sponsored colloquia on campus, and even sit in on intermediate Modern Greek (stressful as foreign languages are to me).

## ALUMNI NEWS

# Alumni News

**Kevin Armonio (Classical Civilization BA, 2012)** After graduating from UCLA, Kevin returned home to the San Francisco Bay Area and attended UC Hastings College of the Law. He graduated with a JD in 2016. After initially failing the bar exam he worked for several large tech companies in non-legal roles for several years. With all his newfound time working from home because of the global Covid-19 pandemic he was able to study for the California bar exam and passed this year. He was sworn in as an attorney in February and recently started as an associate attorney with Mayall Hurley PC. He will be focusing on employment litigation.

**Suzanne Lye (Classics PhD, 2016)** is an Assistant Professor of Classics at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She has been awarded two fellowships for the upcoming year: Fellow, Harvard's Center for Hellenic Studies (2021-22) and Fellow, Loeb Classical Library Foundation at Harvard University (2021-22). She was recently elected as the Co-Chair of The Women's Classical Caucus and gets to work with our very own Prof. Adriana Vazquez (Membership Director). This past year, Suzanne was elected as the Founder of the SCS-WCC Covid-19 Relief Fund and member of the SCS Committee on Diversity in the Profession. She is also this month's featured CAMWS member.

**Erika Schulz (Classical Civilization BA, 2013)** is in the process of opening her own law firm after working as a litigator for five years at national and international law firms. As the *Aeneid* taught her, "audentis Fortuna iuvat."

**Robert D. Skeels (Classical Civilization BA, 2014)** was promoted to full-time associate at the Law Offices of Hirji & Chau, LLP. Robert litigates both civil and special education matters as the practice is in educational rights, civil rights, and disability rights. Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education and current New York University Professor Diane Ravitch recently wrote about Robert on her blog for his victories in court over the forces of school privatization.

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## Alumni Network

We want to keep in touch with all our students and friends, so please do send any news of your lives and accomplishments to [sshapiro@humnet.ucla.edu](mailto:sshapiro@humnet.ucla.edu)!

Visit our alumni on our department website at <https://classics.ucla.edu/alumni/our-alumni/>

**Declan Trudel (Classical Civilization BA, 2021)** will be headed to graduate school at the University of Michigan to pursue his PhD in Philosophy. He specifically plans on pursuing the Program in Ancient Philosophy there, which involves earning an MA in Greek along the way.

**Zhongyue Zhang (Latin Minor, 2016)** is pursuing a PhD in Experimental Physics on dark matter searching in Germany! Her life now revolves around lab work and computers, but her experience in Latin really helps her learn German. From time to time, she misses the whimsical sense of humor of the Classics Department, especially of Professor Richlin!



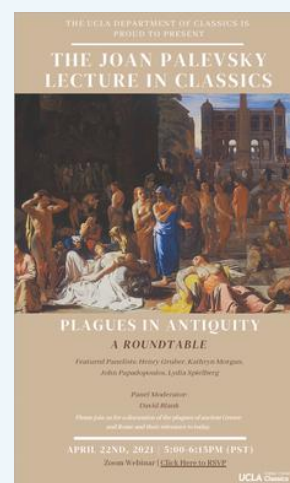
## DEPARTMENT EVENTS

# 2021 Annual Palevsky Lecture Reflections

*The 2021 Annual Joan Palevsky Lecture featured a Departmental Roundtable Panel, which included discussion among faculty and alumni of the UCLA Classics Department of plagues in antiquity. Read more below to hear the panelists' reflections on their presentations.*

**Kathryn Morgan:** It was a new and rewarding experience for me to engage with my colleagues and the audience in the Palevsky Roundtable. Not only did the process bring faculty members and former students together to brainstorm, but the talks enabled us all to see new forms of connections that spanned the ancient world. My own presentation focused on the devastating plague that struck Athens in the late 5th century BCE, as presented by the historian Thucydides. His account gives us a picture of not just physical suffering but of social breakdown. I was interested in how he used the plague as a way to explore human strategies of interpretation and prediction and to highlight the way societies under stress—and especially in times of war—degrade and see normal rules of morality break down. His interpretation is part of a larger development that uses disease as a political metaphor and sees war as a sickness in the body politic.

**John Papadopoulos:** My presentation focused on the archaeological evidence for the Athenian plague, estimated to have killed one-quarter of the population of the city. The critical evidence appeared during excavations in the 1990s for the Athens Metro in one of the main cemeteries of ancient Athens, in particular, a simple, circular pit, 6.50 m in diameter, containing 89 bodies of men, women, and children, tightly packed in successive layers. The excavator estimated that the original number of those buried was over 150. The large number of dead, the hasty manner of burial, and the date of finds, all point to the plague as described by Thucydides. Among those buried in the pit was the skeleton of an 11-year old girl, dubbed Myrtis. Various DNA studies failed to isolate the pathogen that gave rise to the pandemic (over 30 pathogens have been suggested from Bubonic plague and typhoid fever to Ebola or a related viral hemorrhagic fever), so its cause awaits future analysis. The plague brought Athens to its knees, and as a political entity, the city-state never really recovered, psychologically and physically, a timely reminder of the power of pandemics.



**Lydia Spielberg:** I had a great time taking part in the Palevsky panel on plagues in antiquity. My presentation surveyed Roman interpretations of pestilence. The earliest Roman historical tradition treats severe outbreaks of endemic disease as signs of cosmic disorder almost interchangeable with other kinds of community “sickness”, such as class conflict or the collective misbehavior of women. We see similar anxieties even in better-documented plagues, such as the Antonine Plague of the late second century CE. This epidemic, possibly of smallpox, ravaged the entirety of the Roman empire. Yet the historian Cassius Dio, who lived through plague outbreaks in the 160s and 180s, attributes the deaths partly to plague but partly to gangs of poisoners for hire. Conspiracy theories in the face of a new and frightening disease have a long history! We can also see something of the Zeitgeist of plague in the Roman world in a fascinating speech by an unknown senator from the 170s (CIL II 6378), in which a vivid description of the emperor’s aid to municipalities destroyed by plague turns out to be a metaphor for eliminating a tax on the gladiator shows that local elites were expected to fund. Plus ça change...

**Henry Gruber:** I spoke briefly about the Justinianic Pandemic, the name that scholars use for an outbreak of bubonic plague that struck the Mediterranean world—and beyond—starting in the 540s CE. While the written sources for this pandemic have long been known, in recent years they have been restudied and combined with exciting advances in the field of ancient DNA work in order to shed new light on this potentially devastating outbreak. I say potentially here because this question—how bad was the Justinianic Pandemic?—is one of the most contentious current debates in the field of Late Antiquity.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

***On Outgroups and Muted Groups: A Conference in Honor of Amy Richlin******April 1st-2nd, 2022 | Meyer and Renee Luskin Conference Center******Sadly for us, Amy Richlin will be retiring at the end of the coming academic year. We look forward to celebrating her pathbreaking career and reuniting with her many UCLA students at this conference in her honor.******Professor Richlin writes:***

As I look towards retirement in June 2022 after 45 years of teaching, I am honored by the department's decision to hold a conference for me. Its theme, "On Outgroups and Muted Groups," comes from the self-description on my UCLA webpage, and well describes the work that has occupied me for all these years of writing history from below. I began from the study of Roman satire which led me, to my surprise, into the then brand-new field of the history of sexuality and made me into an outspoken feminist. I was lucky enough to begin this work in the heyday of Second Wave feminism, and, thanks to the supportive network of the Women's Classical Caucus and the quadrennial "Feminism and Classics" conferences, I had a lot of people to talk to. After jobs at Rutgers, Dartmouth, and Lehigh, I moved to USC in 1989, teaching jointly in Classics and Gender Studies, which meant that my Classics students read a lot of feminist theory and my Gender Studies students learned a lot about antiquity. At UCLA, from 2005 onwards, I have taught graduate seminars in "Roman History and the Theory of History," satire, comedy, epistolography, ancient sexuality, and Roman women's history, with undergraduate courses to match, while serving from 2011 onwards as director of the post-bacc program. All of this goes to explain why I wanted my dear students to be the speakers at this final conference, for in teaching them I have learned a great deal. They will be returning from where their far-flung jobs have taken them, to speak here on history, comedy, satire, and gender, and tell me something new, as they always do.

**Speakers:****Hans Bork (PhD 2018), Stanford University****Caroline Cheung (Post-Bacc 2009), Princeton University****Grace Gillies (PhD 2018), Bates College****Henry Gruber (Post-Bacc 2015), Harvard University****Nathan Kish (PhD 2018), Tulane University****Mik Larsen (PhD 2015), CSULB****Hilary Lehmann (PhD 2016), Knox College****Suzanne Lye (PhD 2016), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill****Kristin Mann (PhD 2015), Indiana University****Elliott Piros (PhD 2019), CSU Northridge****Katie Tardio (Post-Bacc 2014), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill****Anthony Vivian (PhD 2018), Independent Scholar****Brian Walters (PhD 2011), University of Illinois****Celsiana Warwick (PhD 2018), University of Iowa**