

DEAN'S ALM THESIS PRIZE IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES:

2004:

Melissa D. Burrage

The Dean's Prize for the outstanding ALM thesis in the Social Sciences went to Melissa Dawn Burrage, graduate in history. Burrage's thesis, titled "Albert Cameron Burrage: An Allegiance to Boston's Elite through a Lifetime of Political, Business and Social Reform," investigates the activities of A. C. Burrage (1859–1931), lawyer, politician, mining entrepreneur, horticulturalist, and philanthropist. The thesis places his career in the context of the attempts of the Boston Brahmin elite to preserve their hegemony through linking to the expanding industrial developments in the United States during the late 19th–early 20th century and the rising financial aspirations of New York City at the time. The thesis director, Sven Beckert (the Dunwalke Professor of History), writes that her thesis is "a stunning work of scholarship, based on an unbelievably comprehensive use of archival resources all over the country." He also calls it "a tour de force" and "an important contribution the study of the Boston bourgeoisie...." Melissa received her bachelor's degree in music from Keene State College in 1984 and plans to go on for a Ph.D. in American history.

2003:

Carla Bosco

The Dean's Prize for the outstanding ALM thesis in the Social Sciences in 2003 went to Carla Bosco, graduate in history. Carla's thesis, entitled "Prelude to War: The Harvard Community and Slavery during the Fugitive Slave Era, 1850–1855," explores the Harvard community's attitudes toward slavery during the period following the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act. Drawing extensively on unpublished archival sources, she analyzed how Harvard's conservative stance on slavery embroiled it in a number of controversies and also affected faculty appointments. The thesis director, Peter Gomes (the Plummer Professor of Christian Morals), wrote that her thesis is "excellent ... both in conception and execution.... [and that] [t]his is original work of the highest order." Carla plans to go on for a Ph.D. in history.

2002:

(first place):

Joanne Markow

The Dean's Thesis Prize for the outstanding ALM thesis in the Social Sciences (first place) in 2002 went to Joanne Markow, graduate in Anthropology and Archaeology. Markow's thesis, entitled "Harmonic Systems of Production in Classic Maya Cylinder Vase Painting," hypothesizes that rules of proportion common to other cultures govern the compositional layout of the Classic Maya cylinder vases. The thesis director, William Fash (the Bowditch Professor of Central American and Mexican Archaeology and Ethnology), wrote that her thesis is "[a]n absolutely superb work of scholarship. The approach ... had never before been applied to New World Art." Markow got the idea for the thesis several years ago from viewing an exhibition of Maya vases at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and patterns on stelae at the Peabody Museum at Harvard University. She is currently director of Internet development at Houghton Mifflin.

(tied for second place):

Daniel Friedlander, MD

The Dean's Thesis Prize for the outstanding ALM thesis in the Social Sciences (tied for second place) in 2002 went Daniel Friedlander, graduate in History. Friedlander's thesis, entitled "The Propylaea of Paris: Revolutionary Architecture Before the French Revolution," investigates the paradoxes inherent in the French monarchy's building of a customs wall around Paris in the 1780s to increase revenue. Although the architect, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, created a revolutionary neo-Classical design for the wall and toll booths that, among other things, may have influenced the paintings of Jacques Louis David, the structures became associated with the *ancien regime* and were plundered by the revolutionaries. The thesis director, Patrice Higonnet (the Robert Walton Goelet of French History), wrote: "It was an excellent piece of work, well conceived and very well written, a true labor of love." Friedlander plans to pursue a PhD in History with the goal of teaching history after he retires from his medical practice.

(tied for second place):

Linda Hime Newberry

The Dean's Thesis Prize for the outstanding ALM thesis in the Social Sciences (tied for second place) in 2002 went Linda Hime Newberry, graduate in History. Newberry's thesis, entitled "The Fruits of Her Hands: Baltimore Album Quilts as Manifestation of Early Nineteenth-Century American Patriotism," examines the development of the Baltimore Album-style of quilting relative to the developing sense of American nationalism in the early nineteenth century and its demise as a result of the conflicts that would erupt into civil war. The thesis director, John Stilgoe (the Robert and Lois Orchard Professor in the History of Landscape Development), wrote: "This superb thesis proves itself to be solid documentation of the hypothesis that intense analysis of material-culture objects illuminates known historical themes and reveals others.... This well-researched, well-argued thesis ... goes far toward clarifying the interlocked roles of men and women in the pre-Civil War republic." Newberry gives lectures on quilts and the history of quilting, and she works as an Executive Assistant at the Harvard Extension School.

2001:

Nick Patler

The Dean's Thesis Prize for the outstanding ALM thesis in the Social Sciences in 2001 went to Nick Patler, graduate in Government. Patler's thesis, entitled "The Protest of Federal Racial Segregation in the Wilson Administration, 1913–1914," investigates the struggle of blacks and white sympathizers against the introduction of racial segregation into federal offices during the first two years of the Wilson administration. Although this protest movement did not succeed in reversing the implementation of segregation in most federal departments, it can lay claim to being the largest collective and most strategic protest until that time in American history. Making extensive use of primary and unpublished sources, Nick demonstrates that the protest campaign brought together into a coordinated movement, for the first time, various groups and individuals who previously had not agreed on methods for advancement of African-American rights. Nick's thesis is now the definitive work on this significant historical event. On the recommendation of his thesis director, Prof. Stephan Thernstrom, Patler plans to pursue a doctorate in history.

2000:

Evelyn Gerson

The Dean's Thesis Prize for the outstanding ALM thesis in the Social Sciences in 2000 went to Evelyn Gerson, graduate in Women's Studies. Gerson's thesis, entitled "A Thirst for Complete Freedom: Why Fugitive Slave Ona Judge Staines Never Returned to Her Master, President George Washington," discusses the escape of one of Washington's slaves from the Executive mansion in Philadelphia in 1796 and his failed attempts to recover her. Gerson analyzes Staines' flight to Portsmouth, NH, in the context of the African-American community there and of slavery at the time in New England. The thesis director, Professor John Stilgoe wrote that "Ms. Gerson has done a splendid job with a very difficult topic.... This thesis exemplifies creative and diligent—at times dogged—research in archives.... [T]he thesis makes Ona Judge Staines not only an individual in her own right but someone of growing force of character.... [It] is literally a *bildungsroman* that is not fiction, but rather the tracing of a non-person's rise to personhood." Gerson herself received her BA from the University of New Hampshire in 1990 and plans to continue her graduate studies this fall in the Ph.D. program in history at the University of Virginia.

1999:

Christopher Harris

The Dean's Thesis Prize for the outstanding thesis in the Social Sciences in 1999 went to Christopher Harris, graduate in History. Harris' thesis, entitled "A Study in Influence: Edwin Atkins and the Evolution of American Cuban Policy, 1894–1902," analyzes the diplomatic activity of an American landowner in Cuba in regard to Spanish-American relations over the island. Harris did extensive research not only in the scholarly literature but also among the unpublished letters in the Atkins archives. The thesis director, Professor John Womack, Jr., wrote that Harris "has the makings for an excellent dissertation, and the bases for a significant book, not only about the [Spanish-American] War, but about the larger subject of how American foreign policy . . . was formed in the period before World War I." Prof. Womack goes on to say that "[t]his thesis is already the best thing I have read on its subject."

1998:

Dennis Pricolo

“The Impact of U.S. Naval Radio Intelligence on the Pacific War, 1941–1945”

thesis director: Dennis Skiotis

[no blurb available]

1997:

Keren McGinity

The Dean’s Thesis Prize for the outstanding thesis in the Social Sciences in 1997 went to Keren McGinity, graduate in History. Her thesis, entitled “In the Eyes of an Immigrant: Mary Antin’s America,” analyzes the experience of Mary Antin as a Jewish immigrant to the United States in the early twentieth century and places it within the context of Jewish immigration of the time. In the process of her research, Keren collated the draft (now housed in the Boston Public Library) of Mary Antin’s autobiography, *The Promised Land*, with the published version. Her thesis director, Werner Sollors, the Cabot Professor of English Literature, remarked: “The thesis that resulted from Keren's efforts shows the love and labor that went into its making.... [It] is a thoroughly professional work, closer to a dissertation (in length as well as substance) than to other M.A. theses I have read, and it makes numerous new contributions to humanistic knowledge.”

Professor Sollors goes on to call Keren “a professional historian, a dedicated archivist, and a sensitive reader of literature....”

Honorable Mention (Note: this thesis should have received honorable mention but didn’t):

Michael J. Frederick (1999)

Michael J. Frederick’s thesis, entitled “Transcendental Ethos: A Study of Thoreau’s Social Philosophy,” analyzes Henry David Thoreau’s writings and argues against the scholarly claims that he shows inconsistencies in his ideas concerning Antebellum reform. In particular, Frederick concludes that an analysis of “Thoreau’s writings reveal that he was not ... a pacifist as is commonly assumed,” and, furthermore, that Thoreau’s social philosophy, as expressed in his essay “Resistance to Civil Government” and other writings, is consistent with his subsequent defense of John Brown and the latter’s raid on Harpers Ferry. The thesis director, Professor John Stilgoe, wrote that this is “[a] superb thesis—extremely well researched, original, and insightful. . . .”

Thesis That Missed Out on Dean's Thesis Prize (handed in before the prize was established):

Norton Q. Sloan (1996)

“William Thomson's Inventions for the Submarine Telegraph Industry: A Nineteenth-Century Technology Program”

thesis director: David Landes