



MUSE

The official newsletter of the Humanities
Division Brandeis University



Message from the Head of the Division

Dear Colleagues, Students, Staff Members, and Friends of the Humanities,

The Division of the Humanities experienced a lovely and celebratory diploma ceremony for all of our undergraduate and graduate students in the Humanities on Sunday, May 23, from 2:00–3:45 pm in ZOOM, and we honored everyone to the fullest possible extent we could. We had such an accomplished crew of graduates this year, and it was such a pleasure to see them smile, take their bows, and be recognized for all that they had done in their Brandeis years. All of us are so proud of you!

Overall, as I've said a few times before in these MUSE newsletters, it was a very difficult year with hard decisions for me (and for many of us). We experienced illness, stove for recovery, and suffered some big losses. We lost, for example, [Associate Professor Andreas Teuber](#) on February 15, and he was one of our most iconic Philosophy professors. Given all the stresses and anxiety of the past year, I have decided quite recently, in fact (with no small amount of encouragement from my Humanities Council colleagues and from Dean Dorothy Hodgson herself), to step down as Head of the Division of the Humanities one year earlier than my contract called for—for personal and some professional reasons—and I shall be focusing on finishing three book projects:

Books Under Contract and Forthcoming or In Preparation:

1. *Making Sense of Pompeii and Herculaneum: Daily Life and the Sensorium of the Ancient Roman City* (sole author). Under contract with Cambridge University Press, New York and Cambridge, England.
2. *Sixty-Eight Toilets and Urinals in the Ancient City of Rome: Sanitary, Urbanistic, and Social Agency*, co-authored and edited with Gemma C. M. Jansen and Richard L. J. Neudecker. Under contract with BABESCH (*Bulletin Antieke Beschaving*) Leuven, Belgium.
3. *The Bloomsbury Cultural History of Technology, Volume I, Pre-History through Antiquity (2.5 MBP-600AD)*, contributor and co-editor with Rabun M. Taylor. Under contract with Bloomsbury Press, London, UK.

I shall miss serving in the role of Division Head in 2021–22, but Professor Jonathan Decter of NEJS, Edmond J. Safra Professor of Sephardic Studies, will start a brand-new three-year term as Division Head on July 1, 2021, and we will all support him as much as we can. Before we use the rest of our space in this newsletter to honor all the students (graduate and undergraduate) who won prizes and awards in the Humanities in 2021–22, I thought you might enjoy reading a few priceless gems of wisdom from the FOUR excellent graduation speakers we had last Sunday, May 23:

1. **Diana Filar**, Ph.D. in English, had many wise thoughts to offer on her studies, but this para. struck me as one of the most salient from her speech: “My dissertation focuses on the ways that names and naming appear and

function in the contemporary US immigrant novel. In a time long before our own, in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet asks "What's in a name?" lamenting that fact that Romeo's last name, his belonging to another family, is what keeps them apart. If Romeo had any other name, their relationship wouldn't pose such a problem. In short, names matter – and the work of remembering, critical thinking, and analysis – the work of the humanities – have prepared us to go forward into a world of euphemism, hidden meaning, and clandestine disinformation. We have been summoned – as Rebecca Solnit puts it – to "call them by their true names." Yes, we have made it here and we thank all of those who have helped us get here – our faculty, friends, roommates, loved ones, and family watching and listening today, and that is valuable – but, through our humanistic education, we have also acquired the tools to name that which has gone wrong, say the names of those we have lost, and propose new names for alternative futures.

2. Julia Andrina Greig, M.A. in Ancient Greek and Roman Studies, who wrote her M.A. thesis on "The Vagueness of Dying in Epicurean Thought: A Stoic Remedy?," and whose areas of research in antiquity are the philosophy of death, Hellenistic philosophy, and metaphysics, concluded her speech with these pearls of wisdom: "Once again, I found myself staring at the bronze handle of my front door, trying to muster the courage to leave, but the ringing returned and the room began to spin. A familiar nausea resurfaced, and I sat on the stairs. While the jingle of my keys reverberated in my ears, it occurred to me: isn't there a kind of consolation in the inevitable, too? A kind of certainty in uncertainty? We know, after all, that we cannot know. Perhaps this act of acknowledging the indeterminacy of the future may introduce a kind of opportunity, an opportunity to take action. While we can neither control what life has thrust upon us, nor how we've been thrown into this world, it is incumbent on us to decide what attitudes we adopt, what actions we take, and how we can will the freedom of others. We cannot forge ahead without confronting the angst that plagues us; but each of us has a decision: we can either become paralyzed by uncertainty or revolt against it, but it starts by unlocking the door.

3. Jessica Wei, B.A. in Philosophy, whose senior essay "Unlabeled Events: Event Ontology and Mental Causation," had wonderful memories to share about her years at Brandeis, which essentially involved EVERYTHING to do in the Department of Philosophy, included this insightful observation in her farewell speech to her fellow classmates: "When I first got into philosophy, I was moved by this humanistic spirit in philosophical enquiries. That human beings from thousands of years ago were asking the very same questions my childhood self was so eager to find the answers to—questions that I am still urgently pondering today. What makes a "just society"? How should morality be construed? What makes me, me? How does the mental relate to the physical? And, what is the meaning of life? Engaging with these collective enquiries about the world and our place in it makes me feel "human", that I am a part of this everlasting search for answers, shared not only with the greatest minds throughout human history, but also, between you and me."

4. Professor Darlene Books Hedstrom, Myra and Robert Kraft and Jacob Hiatt Associate Professor in Christian Studies, offered this thought to the graduating class: "My own path to understanding the value of the humanities came through making and saving things of the past. When I was young, I spent my Saturday mornings in New Hampshire going to the town dump with my dad. We dropped off our week's trash and then we headed over to the treasure side of the dump where piles of metal things glistened besides piles of unusual things that owners hoped would find new homes. My father absolutely loved this part of going to the dump. As a survivor of the 1918 epidemic and the Great Depression, he was always collecting things as an adult, saying "you never know when we might need this, and things could be scarce again." As a kid, I did not carry the trauma he experienced. I only had the curiosity in the looking and finding— in the wonder and mystery. My mother, on the other hand, came to dread Saturdays for she would later need to find secret ways to bring items back to the dump if they did not magically become useful things. The tension between useful and useless things is probably why I grew up to become an archaeologist. I found I learned more about the world in uncovering discarded things, even the most mundane."

Warmest congratulations to all, and please enjoy the following list of winners of Prizes and Awards from across the Division of the Humanities!

Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow
 Head of the Division of the Humanities
 Kevy and Hortense Kaiserman Endowed Chair in the Humanities, Professor, Department of Classical Studies,
 Affiliate Faculty Member of Anthropology, Fine Arts, Italian Studies, and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
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Prizes and Awards in the Humanities

- **Allen Grossman Prize for the Best English Department Senior Thesis**
Quinn Weiner, English Department
- **Andrew Grossbardt '72 Memorial Poetry Prize**
Lissa Sangree-Calabrese, Creative Writing Program
- **Andrew Grossbardt '72 Memorial Prize for Best Poem Published in a Brandeis Literary Journal**
Caroline Hyejin O, Creative Writing Program
- **Andrew Grossbardt '72 Memorial Prize for a Senior Thesis in Fiction**
Isaac Haber, Creative Writing Program
- **Anna S. Aronson Memorial Award**
Rebecca Ellen Kane, French and Francophone Studies Program
- **Bernard H. Herman '08 Endowed Prize in Creative Writing**
Nicolas Claude Leger, Creative Writing Program
- **Dafna Zamarripa Gesundheit Memorial Award for Fiction**
Isaac Haber, Creative Writing Program
- **Dafna Zamarripa-Gesundheit Memorial Prize for a Senior Thesis**
Emi Cohen, Creative Writing Program
- **David S. Wiesen Memorial Prize**
Madeleine Rose Cahn, Classical Studies Department
- **Doris Brewer Cohen Award in the Humanities**
Kwesi Baraka Lee Jones, African and African American Studies
- **Dorothy Blumenfeld Moyer Memorial Award**
Aaron Luke Newitt, Hispanic Studies Program
- **Dr. Eberhard Frey Prize in German Studies**
Noah Colin, German Studies Program
- **Dr. Eberhard Frey Prize in Russian Studies**
Nathan Maxwell Rtishchev, Russian Studies Program
- **East Asian Studies' Outstanding Student Award**
Carter William Yee, East Asian Studies
- **Eli D. and Mollie Goodstein Prize in Hebrew**
Ilan Saul Hascal, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
Chelsea Tyla Todtfeld, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
- **Eli D. and Mollie Goodstein Prize in Spanish**
Aaron Luke Newitt, Hispanic Studies Program
- **Elsie Witt Award in Jewish Studies**
Lily A. Morris, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
- **English Department Award for Outstanding English Essay**
Siena Marie DeBenedittis, English Department

- **Esther Goldman Prize for Excellence in Classical Art and Archaeology and/or Ancient History**
Joseph Alexandre Michel Roupinian Marceau, Classical Studies Department
- **Esther Goldman Prize for Excellence in Classical Languages and Literatures**
Jack Michael Vermette, Classical Studies Department
- **Esther Pine Memorial Prize**
Carter William Yee, East Asian Studies Program
- **Eunice M. Lebowitz Cohen Fellowships in Classical Studies**
Madeleine Rose Cahn, Classical Studies Department
Jack Michael Vermette, Classical Studies Department
Draken Matan Garfinkel, Classical Studies Department
- **Ezra Z. Shapiro Family Prize in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies**
Ariella Rachel Gentin, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
Rachel Lucy Ordan, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
- **Henrietta and David Chassler Prize**
Harrison Edward Carter Rosengard, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
- **Jane's Essay Prize**
Alejandra Bonilla, Latin American and Latino Studies
Aaron Luke Newitt, Hispanic Studies
- **Jane's Photo Prize**
Xuanton He, Latin American and Latino Studies
- **Morris Homonoff Prize in Yiddish**
Adeline G. Skovronek, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
Rebecca Claire Weiss, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
- **Murray Sachs Prize for Outstanding Work and Dedication in French and Francophone Studies**
Akim Sanni, French and Francophone Studies Program
- **Nahum and Anne Glatzer Endowed Prize in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies**
Esther Brownsmith, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
Tina M. Sherman, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
- **Near Eastern and Judaic Studies Prize in Arabic for excellence in Arabic**
Henry Wudl, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
- **Philosophy Prize**
Jiaxin Jessica Wei, Philosophy Department
- **Ramon Feliciano Poetry Prize from the Academy of American Poets**
Lily Ray Darling, Creative Writing Program
- **Renee B. Lang Prize in Literature**
Caroline Sydney Greaney, English Department
- **Rose and Joseph M. Weissman Prize in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies**
Shari Ariel Boiskin, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
Rebecca Liza Marcus, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
- **Ruth Nessel Gollan Prize in Hebrew Language or Literature**
Aaron Joel Gordon, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
Yael Traeger, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies

- **Samuel and Jennie Raucher Prize**
Leah Brittany Trachtenberg, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
- **Selma and Joseph Finstein Award**
Abigael Florence Good, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
- **Susan Mae Green Award for Creativity in Poetry and Photography**
Uma Hontanosas Jagwani, Creative Writing
- **Turock Family Prize in Italian Studies**
Leah Ray Sagan-Dworsky, Independent Interdisciplinary Major in Italian Studies
- **Yakas Senior Thesis Award**
Arianna Arguetty, Creative Writing Program

Other Prizes Awarded to Humanities 2021 Graduates

- **Carol Ann Steinfeld Memorial Prize in Economics**
Manqi Wang, East Asian Studies
- **Chris Lerman Prize for Essays on Extraordinary Women**
Alejandra Bonilla, Latin American and Latino Studies
- **Doris Brewer Cohen Endowment Award in Justice and Public Life**
Ryan David Shaffer, Philosophy Department
- **Elliot Aronson '54 Prize for Excellence in Psychological Research-in Memory of Ellen Mason '78**
Wanchen Zhao, Philosophy Department
- **Harold and Mimi Steinberg Prize for Best Original Play**
Nathan Maxwell Rtishchev, Russian Studies Program
- **Herbert and Sandra Fisher '56 Award for Exceptional Achievement in the Creative Arts**
Leah Ray Sagan-Dworsky, Italian Studies
- **Irving Kenneth Zola Prize for Excellence in Sociology**
Quinn Weiner, English Department
- **John Lisman '66 Memorial Award for Excellence in Neuroscience Research**
Wanchen Zhao, Philosophy Department
- **Margaret Scheinman Prize in Film Production**
Mendel Nissim Weintraub, Creative Writing
- **Phyllis and Lee Coffey Award in Music**
Aaron Luke Newitt, Hispanic Studies
- **Politics Faculty Prize for Best Senior Thesis**
Jocelyn Emma Gould, Creative Writing
- **Rachel Oliveri Family Prize in Women's Studies**
Quinn Weiner, English Department
- **Richard Saber Undergraduate Research Grant in Women's and Gender Studies**
Quinn Weiner, English Department
- **Rosalind W. Levine Prize in Fine Arts**
Qiang Hu, Philosophy Department
Joseph Alexandre Michel Roupinian Marceau, Classical Studies Department