



Gavin S. Fort
M.A. History

Although his B.A. was in modern literature (Biola University, 2005), Gavin Fort completed his M.A. in history focusing on medieval religious thought in England and France. He is a member of the Medieval Academy of America, the American Historical Association, and Phi Alpha Theta, and has presented papers at numerous conferences, most notably at the largest annual medieval conference in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in May 2011. Gavin was also selected as the Lawrence B. de Graaf Outstanding Graduate Student in the history department for 2009, and was inducted into the academic honor society of Phi Kappa Phi in April, 2011. He has been accepted to the Ph.D. program at Northwestern University, and will continue his research there beginning in the fall. He and his wife Rebecca, admittedly his intellectual superior, are expecting their first child this November.

Commencement Speech

Distinguished professors, fellow students, family, friends. I am here today with the charge of recalling for you my experience as a graduate student in the history department, and it strikes me that such recollection is a fitting task for a historian who has been trained to study the past and relate it to his audience.

My most notable memories come from the classroom. In History and Theory, Dr. Fitch challenged me not simply to read about different historical theories, but to read works that actually employed those theories, and to embrace the multiple ways of constructing the past. Dr. Mikhail, when he wasn't extolling the magnificence of UCLA sports or bemoaning the utter incompetence of certain TV writers, introduced me to the early centuries of Islam, and continually reminded me that historical arguments demand a careful attention to detail. Dr. Brunelle allowed me to be a part of the teaching process

during a teaching internship, and encouraged me to think about my educational career in practical and professional terms.

Dr. Burgtorf demanded the growth of my reading and writing skills during two graduate seminars as I was required to read one book, and produce a six-page response to it, each week. In addition, by requiring all students in these seminars to read articles outside of their subfields, he challenged the class to learn from each other rather than simply look to him for all the answers—although, we all agree, you *do* have all the answers anyway.

Still, no other experience has so greatly prepared me as a historian than the completion of my Master's thesis. I was graciously guided through the whole process, and have never worked so hard to produce a piece of my own intellectual effort. I could never have imagined a more thoughtful, gracious, and enjoyable group of committee members—Dr. Burgtorf, Dr. Mikhail, and Dr. Brunelle—and the success of that work is just as much yours as it is mine.

I dare not continue here without noting the inestimable gift of all these faculty members. As students, we are thankful that they did not kick us out of their offices when office hours ended, or refrain from asking that last question which helped us put all of our thoughts together, or, in my case, even use up the ink of more than one pen to grade my work. Your efforts have made me, and all your students, not only better learners but better humans.

And now, for some closing remarks to my fellow students: Do not abandon the pursuit of knowledge. Do not let college be the intellectual high point of your life; let it be the thing that catapults you into a lifetime of inquiry. Always follow your intellectual interests even if they, like Alice's rabbit, lead you down a dark hole to a strange and backwards world. Yet, do not be compelled by the mere possession of knowledge. For knowledge also sets men free, and true scholars are servants of society—as our professors have modeled.

Remember that the study of history is always the study of ourselves, since humanity remains unchanged throughout the ages. Thus, it is only through the study of the past, the record of humankind's successes and failures, that we can arrive at a more

hopeful future. In this way, we as historians are poised to achieve, and to contribute, great things.

And so, at this moment of graduation, when we pass from being students who learn to citizens who serve, let us not consider this the end, but the beginning. For as T.S. Eliot says,

“What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from
We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.”
Congratulations on a job well done.

Gavin S. Fort
May 22, 2011 Sunday



[Coming soon]

Grace Kim

B.A in French

Commencement Speech

Welcome 2011 graduates, faculty, and loved ones! I want to thank you all for joining our celebration, bright and early this Saturday morning!

My name is Grace Kim and I am graduating today with a BA in French. Since I began my journey at Cal State Fullerton, two subjects have caught my interest, French and Teaching. After spending 2 years in Paris teaching high school students, I have decided to pursue my teaching credential next fall.

My fellow graduates:

In today's economy, language learning has become somewhat of a luxury. It is considered an "abstract" topic to study, but I believe, and I'm sure you agree with me, that learning a foreign language is a necessity! It is not solely a means of

communication but a means of discovering the world and who you are.

I would like to share some words of wisdom that I recently came across. "You live a new life for every language you speak". This proverb touched me because it showed me how my own life has been affected and influenced by the languages that I speak. My passion for language has opened so many doors in the past and it will continue to do so. For example, the two years I spent in Paris rekindled my love for teaching and influenced my decision to become a high school teacher. My love for Portuguese and Brazilian culture has opened up opportunities for me to serve with a Christian organization in Sao Paulo, Brazil. In the future, I hope to teach in Korea and explore my heritage and my native language on a deeper level.

I hope you will be encouraged in the pursuit of your future careers. I hope that we will find jobs that make use of the skills that we have acquired here and that continue to grow our love for languages. I have been blessed with the opportunity to continue my education with the credential program and I cannot wait to be in the classroom! In any profession you choose, I hope that you, too, will find this same joy and purpose.

So I commend you and congratulate you, Class of 2011, for completing a degree in foreign language! Thank you.



Samantha Guzzi
B.A in History

Samantha Guzzi graduated Summa Cum Laude in January 2011 with a Bachelor of Arts in History. Samantha has maintained a place on the Dean's List from Fall 2006 to Spring 2010. She is passionate about history and art and their ability to express the noble and tragic complexity of humanity's existence. Her favorite undergraduate assignment, her senior honors project entitled "The Shadows of Decent Men: The Line Between Nobility and Depravity in the Pacific Campaign," explores how compassion, human solidarity and vengeful hatred influence combat motivation and impact the complete face of warfare. Samantha's education has compelled her to listen, learn and seek knowledge and wisdom in order that she may continually grow as a sensitive, critically engaged individual. This has led her to continuously address complex issues about the human condition, morality, purpose as well as her own principles and conduct. These challenges have ultimately led her to know more deeply the love of Christ, be found in Him and seek to demonstrate this love toward others. Samantha plans to continue her education in order to pursue her passion of becoming a college professor.

Commencement Speech

Good Morning My Friends,

What a blessing to share this day of celebration with you. I am among men and women with eager and insightful minds. And so, I am truly honored and humbled to have the privilege to pour my heart out to you.

We are graduating today, and thus the inevitable question begs an answer: What has our degree in history taught us and where do we go from here?

If I may be so bold as to share with you the intimate workings of my heart: the study of history has taught me love and led me to love. And let me tell you, my friends, this is a continual growing experience.

You see, I found something true about humanity through history.

History is about the internal workings of individuals---their fears, egos, affections, how they see life, themselves and what they believe to be real and true.

Nothing is black and white, there are no dichotomized characters. Humanity's existence is a complex one, full of beauty and nobility and also tragedy and depravity.

It is this juxtaposed nature of humanity that has left me feeling simultaneously inspired and haunted to the point of tears and speechlessness.

It has left me wrestling with the pain and perplexities that abound whenever real people encounter the real struggles of everyday existence.

And this is how history has ripped my world apart and put me in tune with reality as a result.

How tragic would it be for me to write a paper that does not embrace the three-dimensional nature of humanity and instead treats them as some formula that needs to be evaluated?

On top of that, how tragic would it be for me to dismiss the people around me in such a black and white way?

And, my friends, this is how I have found something true about myself through history.

Because I have done just that, using knowledge to elevate myself above others. I have dismissed people in such a one-dimensional way out of lofty, callous pride.

And this created a chasm between my head and heart, until I realized that knowledge without love and wisdom is futile.

And I learned this because studying history has this way of stripping you of your pride—and it has left me feeling completely naked sometimes.

I see myself in the men and women of historical memoirs, and it humbles me to question myself for who I really am, what I really know and what I could become given the right circumstances.

History continues to stir within me a sense of urgency and awareness about my life, compelling me forward in self examination toward transformation.

I am seeking answers: why are there people suffering, how am I to really know truth, what is Truth I can stake my life on? You know, “small” questions like that.

And that is the beauty of humility, when you find yourself lost and in need, because it awakens you to truly seek, to truly listen, to truly find answers, and grow.

And this is also when I began to bridge that chasm between my head and heart to more deeply love and empathize with people, when I faced some of my most difficult questions and circumstances.

And thus, my dear friends, I come full circle: what have I learned from my history degree and what am I walking away with?

I've learned next time I'll pick an easier major.

No, no, not only does history continue to teach me love and lead me to love, but it has served as an avenue through which I found a Love.

You see, in the midst of all of my uncertainties, I am learning that I can have questions and still walk hand in hand with God.

I don't presume to have all the answers or minimize the hurt, far from it. But I do know that the Love and Wisdom of Christ has found me. He promises His unfailing Love that is better than life to all who cry out and seek Him, and I am discovering Truth in the reality and beauty of this Love.

And so, with all my heart, I am so proud of each of you. You are all so beautiful and have demonstrated personal and academic excellence by graduating.

As we continue on our journeys and face the questions that life brings, my heart is that history will continue to lead you and I toward genuine reflection and growth. I pray my words may bring you encouragement. Because it is in these moments of crisis that the true journey toward life, love and certainty begins.

Congratulations and thank you so much.



Juliette Marie Dumont

B.A. Liberal Studies

Juliette Marie Dumont will graduate Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies. She is a member of the Liberal Studies Honor Society as well as the Phi Kappa Phi National Honors Society. Currently employed as an instructional assistant, she works with students with special needs, and has received recognition and praise for the many accomplishments of her students. She has participated in several programs which promote social awareness of children with Autism and other disabilities. Also, passionate about the arts as well as history, she is currently finishing work on a fiction novel, the first in a series, which she hopes to have published later this year. Her goal is to continue her education and obtain a credential in Special Education, as well as pursue a career in writing.

Commencement Speech

Many of you know me from our various classes, and are probably thinking: geez, this woman just can't seem to resist the urge to speak! And my family members out there – are probably nodding in agreement. But I have say, that after accepting the great honor of speaking to you today, I immediately sat down and tried to think of how to sum up my experience in the Liberal Studies program and found that I was uncharacteristically at a loss for words. Other than - "Yay, we did it, now let's go have a drink" - I was completely stumped.

So, I decided to ask some of you, my fellow graduates, what you would remember most about our Liberal Studies courses. I got several answers, ranging from our *fantastic professors* and *wonderful friends*, to the movie *The Matrix* and *beer pong*. But I have to say, that hands down, the most popular answer was – and I quote - "God, 302A and B totally sucked".

Truly, those of us headed into careers as elementary school teachers have at some point wondered why we were spending so much time learning about ancient philosophers like Plato

and Aristotle. We may have even secretly wished we had taken the “blue pill” and went with a CHAD major instead. However, one of our professors has been quoted as saying “we teach you about Plato and Aristotle because they were great teachers, so that one day you can be great like them.” I’m certain I speak for each of us in saying to you - our great liberal studies professors – we will be great teachers because we have learned *from* great teachers. You will always have our unwavering respect and gratitude.

The truth is that this has been a hard but rewarding journey for each of us respectively. I personally would like to thank my family both present and absent for their love and support over the years, without whom – I would certainly not be standing here today.

As much as we all may have complained about examinations, presentations and yes 302A and B, we now know that every moment was worth it. It is an accomplishment that we should rightly take pride in. Today we celebrate this milestone in our lives not as an ending, but as a real beginning. Because wherever we choose to go next, with the breadth of information that we have gained from our Liberal Studies major, we will definitely be prepared.

Congratulations Class of 2011.

Yay! We did it! Now let’s go have a drink!