



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.