



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

Department of History

COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

JUNE 16, 2024

LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

Dear History Graduates,

Congratulations to you and your families! I know that you have worked very hard to achieve this goal. In fact, you class of 2024 graduates have overcome countless challenges since high school due to the pandemic. We applaud your resilience and dedication. A History degree from a highly regarded department in the nation's best public university will serve you well in the future. History teaches us to think and read critically, to articulate ourselves in speech and writing, and to do research. These are valuable skills in any profession. You have also learned that we cannot understand the present without studying the past, and that History can teach us valuable lessons about how to proceed in the future. And you have learned about yourselves, for as Robert Marley said in a song: "if you know your history, then you would know where you're coming from."

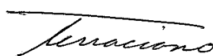
Part of my research involves learning Indigenous languages of Mexico, including the Nahuatl or Aztec language. On this occasion I would like to quote part of a Nahuatl speech that was recorded in the 16th century, almost 500 years ago, which I have translated into English. It is a speech made by mothers and fathers to their sons and daughters when they came of age. I think their timeless advice is appropriate now, as you prepare to go from Westwood into the world.

Live peacefully among people. May everyone have your respect. Do not offend people, don't blow like the wind against people. Rather, embrace them, have mercy. Think of others, not just yourselves. We say this, for we are your mother, we are your father who speak to you. Take our words and guard them. This is how we were raised by our ancestors. When they left earth, they said only one thing: 'Listen. The earth is a place of learning.' Listen to these words, and with them lead your life, do your work. Do not forget them; for they will become your torch, your light, all the time that you live on earth. Because of you we will raise our heads high; you will make us great.

That phrase, "the earth is a place of learning," reminds me of a quote by a famous UCLA teacher, a wise man who was not a professor but a coach who led our basketball team to 10 national championships. I refer to John Wooden, of course, who said: "Once you're through learning, you're through." Indeed, never stop learning. Your time here at UCLA represents a few giant steps in your life-long journey of learning. But it's only the beginning. That's why this ceremony is called "commencement" and not "completion." Commence: to begin. You're beginning to learn and the more you learn the more you will realize that you don't know. Learning is both a humbling and empowering experience. Learning how to help others can be especially challenging. As you learn, teach those around you, help others, lead by example. For you are bound to be leaders as educated, informed citizens in our democracy.

We're very proud of you and wish you the best of luck. Please come back to visit us as Bruin alumni when you have a chance. Go Bruins!

Sincerely,



Kevin Terraciano
Professor and Robert Burr Chair of History

COMMENCEMENT SCHEDULE

PROCESSION OF THE CLASS OF 2024

CHAIR'S WELCOME

PROFESSOR KEVIN TERRACIANO

COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER

TEOFILO F. RUIZ,
DISTINGUISHED RESEARCH PROFESSOR

RECOGNITION OF DEPARTMENT STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AND HONORS

PHI ALPHA THETA ♦ HISTORY UNDERGRADUATE ADVISORY BOARD ♦ HONORS THESES

PROFESSOR MICHAEL MERANZE, VICE CHAIR FOR UNDERGRADUATE AFFAIRS

RECOGNITION OF DEPARTMENTAL AWARDS

CAREY MCWILLIAMS AWARD

MARY RITTER BEARD AWARD

PROFESSOR MICHAEL MERANZE, VICE CHAIR FOR UNDERGRADUATE AFFAIRS

PRESENTATION OF THE BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE

PROFESSOR ANDREA S. GOLDMAN ♦ PROFESSOR CARLA PESTANA

CLOSING REMARKS

PROFESSOR KEVIN TERRACIANO

COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER



Teófilo F. Ruiz

Distinguished Research Professor

Professor Teófilo "Teo" Ruiz is a Distinguished Research Professor of History, Spanish and Portuguese (Emeritus) at UCLA. Teo was born in Cuba and came to the U.S. when he was 19 years-old. He received his B.A. from City College (CUNY) in History, graduating Magna Cum Laude in 1969. He went on to receive an MA from New York University in 1970 and then a Ph.D from Princeton in 1974. Teo taught History at Brooklyn College and History and Spanish Medieval Literature at the CUNY Graduate Center; he was also a visiting professor (three times) at Princeton and Visiting Martin Luther King Jr. Professor at Michigan State University, among many other appointments. He joined the History faculty at UCLA in 1998 and became Distinguished Professor of History and Spanish and Portuguese in 2012. During his tenure at UCLA, he served as chair of the History and Spanish and Portuguese Departments, and Faculty Director of the International Education Office.

Professor Ruiz specializes in the history of medieval and early modern Iberia and the Mediterranean. A list of his many publications, honors, fellowships, elections, and lectureships would fill up this program. He has authored or co-authored 15 books and more than 100 research articles. Teo received the National Humanities Medal from President Barack Obama in 2011 for his "inspired teaching and writing." Two years later he was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Mellon and Guggenheim Foundations, the American Academy in Rome, the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton), and the American Council of Learned Societies, to name only a few. In 2021 he received the American Historical Association Award for Scholarly Distinction, the highest award given by the AHA. And a few weeks ago, he received the UCLA Dickson Emeritus Professorship Award for distinguished research, teaching and service since retiring in 2019.

In retirement, Professor Ruiz has continued to write and publish, to teach undergraduate lecture classes with high enrollments, to serve on doctoral dissertation committees, and to teach dozens of students in the Summer Travel Abroad Program in Paris. Teo is perhaps best known at UCLA for his enthusiastic, outstanding teaching. He has taught tens of thousands of students since he came to Westwood. He received the Academic Senate Distinguished Teaching Award in 2008. This spring quarter he taught a lecture course on Magic and Witchcraft in the Middle Ages and a fiat lux course for freshmen. He has volunteered to teach nearly 70 fiat lux courses since the program was instituted. He has led more than 20 UCLA Alumni Travel groups all over the world; in fact, he returned a few days ago from leading a group of alumni along the Danube River.

In spite of all the honors and achievements, Teo never rests on his laurels or toots his own horn. He is one of our most active, modest, and gracious colleagues. For all these reasons, we are honored and grateful that he has agreed to give our 2024 History commencement address.

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Maria Tran Nguyen

Caro Slusarz

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Elliott Hall Franklin

Erin Hughes

Dongshi Zhang

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Avalon Baltera

Kaitlyn Coons*

Elliott Hall Franklin*

Jakob Johnson*

Grace Mauro

Daniel Rabkin*

Ching Hong Brian Yeung*

Dongshi Zhang*

*Highest departmental honors

RECOGNITION OF DEPARTMENTAL AWARDS

CAREY MCWILLIAMS AWARD

Jeff (Zipeng) Tang

“Li Zubai and the Theory of a Western Christian Origin of Chinese Civilization”

Advisors: Andrea S. Goldman & Stefania Tutino

MARY RITTER BEARD AWARD

Jakob Johnson

“Reframing an Epidemic and Recentering Gay Life Amid AIDS”

Advisor: Teofilo F. Ruiz

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2024

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AYRTON GARCIA-JURADO
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KAI HAALAND
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