

The College of Liberal Arts &
McCormack Graduate School



Spring 2025
Graduate Convocation Ceremony

College of Liberal Arts & McCormack Graduate School

2025 Spring Convocation Program

National Anthem Vocalist

Lillian Harris

Jazz Musicians

Piano: Angel Hepes-Yenao

Drums: Jorry Tropnas

Bass: Ash O'Brien

Photographer

Olivia Reid, '25

Welcome

Pratima Prasad, Dean
College of Liberal Arts

CLA Research Committee Award for Outstanding Faculty Research

Professor Tiffany Donaldson, Psychology Department

American Studies Book Award

Daniela Lilly Rodiles

This year's American Studies Book Award recipient is Daniela Lilly Rodiles for her stunningly brilliant M.A. final project, "Undressing the Tramp: 19th-Century Construction of the Female Tramp Archetype." In this project, Daniela reads a wide swath of newspaper articles and illustrations to uncover the complicated gender and class dynamics at play in representations of women who took to the road, shedding, in the process, the constricting expectations for domesticity, femininity, and passivity that bound women in American society at the turn-of-the twentieth century. Daniela is a remarkably thorough researcher, locating in the archives a robust history of a population that most historians have completely overlooked. Far beyond that, however, she is also a creative thinker whose work asks us to rethink what counts as politics, how everyday acts of resistance expand the vernacular of gender performance, and what society sought from representations of these women who refused to comply with the limitations placed on their lives. While her ideas are legitimately groundbreaking, original, and paradigm-shifting – frankly, her work would be considered excellent for a doctoral candidate – it also bears noting that she is a clear, compelling, and gifted writer. She produced an energetic and smart project that is truly a joy to read. And I have no doubt that we will be reading more of this soon, as Daniela will be heading to the University of Connecticut this fall to pursue her Ph.D. in History. The best American Studies scholarship blends a potpourri of sources into a new and dynamic way of understanding the world. Without exaggeration, I can say that Daniela Lilly Rodiles offers the best of what American Studies scholarship can do, and I could not be more proud to speak on her work and present her this award, and I congratulate her on her phenomenal career at UMass Boston.

MPA Richard Hogarty Award for Academic Excellence (Book Award)

Conor Glasheen

This award recognizes the MPA student with highest GPA, with ties broken by quality of capstone, as determined by the instructor(s) of PUBADM 690 Capstone.

Outstanding Achievement in International Relations

Mikael Killian

This award recognizes outstanding scholarly achievements in the field of international relations. It is given to a student whose performance in courses and also in other scholarly endeavors deserves special recognition.

Arthur MacEwan Award for Excellence in Political Economy

Helen Vo

Helen Vo is graduating from the MA program in Applied Economics. She's previously worked as an intern for the research division of the Boston Planning & Development Agency. Having worked with Professor Philip Granberry, Professor Marlene Kim, and Professor Dania Francis, she hopes to further explore research adjacent to immigrant populations and women of minority status in the future. As of now, Helen's channeling these interests into writing a research article pertaining to Asian immigrants in conjunction with a PhD candidate in Public Policy Analysis. In her free time, Helen can usually be found playing video games. She really enjoys elaborating upon the undertones of political economy within the Nintendo video game, Mario Party, among her fellow peers in the Economics department.

Randy Albelda Award for Excellence in Applied Economics

Marvens Francois

Marvens Francois is a graduate student in the Applied Economics master's program at UMass Boston. His interest in economics began during his undergraduate studies at UMass Lowell, where introductory courses in microeconomics and macroeconomics sparked his curiosity about the field. This led him to pursue a bachelor's degree in economics. After completing his undergraduate degree, he worked as a Research Operations Analyst for the United States Air Force, where he gained experience in applying economic concepts to public sector challenges. Supported by the Air Force's tuition assistance program, he returned to graduate school to build on his academic foundation. He has a strong interest in development economics and enjoys exploring the intersections of economics, history, and politics. He hopes to combine these interests to make a meaningful impact in his community through policy work and activism.

Award for Academic Excellence in Latin and Classical Humanities: Pedagogy

Isabella “Bella” Miko-Rydzaj

Isabella Miko-Rydzaj, “Bella”, came to us from Holy Cross College, where she earned her BA in Classics, and swam for Holy Cross’ Division I swim team. She combined her passion for classics and swimming in her master’s thesis, which explores ancient competitive swimming and the sites where it took place – swimming pools – in Greece and Rome. The directors of her research were particularly impressed by the range and breadth of the classical sources that she investigated. They were also impressed with how Bella was able to integrate literary with material evidence. In her coursework, Bella constantly challenged herself. Even though only Latin coursework is required for her degree, Bella also took Greek, and, for her thesis, translated both Latin and Greek sources. In addition, Bella took—even though not required to—the rigorous 5-week archaeology summer program in Italy that is run by the American Academy of Rome. Bella is currently completing what has been a very successful student-teacher practicum at Boston Latin Academy, where she already displays the presence and know-how of a veteran instructor. Bella, congratulations ! We wish you the very best as you launch what promises to be a stellar career as a high school Latin teacher.

Award for Academic Excellence in Latin and Classical Humanities: Greek & Latin Allison Allen

Allison Allen earned her BA right here at UMass Boston, with a major in Classical Studies and a minor in Anthropology. After graduation, Allison decided to pursue an MA degree in Classical Languages. This meant Allison first had to acquire the necessary skills in both Greek and Latin in a relatively short amount of time – not an easy lift! Since her acceptance to our MA program in Greek and Latin, she has impressed us with her sharp and clear-sighted in-class contributions and written work. She has maintained an impressive 3.8 GPA, adding coursework in public history, in preparation for a career in museum work. We have no doubt that she will shine in this profession, thanks in part to her language skills and impressive knowledge of Greco-Roman culture. Allison, congratulations from the entire faculty of the Classics and Religious Studies department!

Academic Excellence in Conflict Resolution (MA)

Thanzin Nan & Gabrielle Matthews

This award recognizes excellence in academic work in the field of conflict resolution. It is given in recognition of outstanding academic performance in research, written work, and/or classroom discussion.

Conflict Resolution Convocation Award

Dayana Blanco Quieroga

This book award is given in recognition of extraordinary work in the conflict resolution program. It recognizes excellence across both coursework and the capstone project.

Donald Paulson Service Award in Conflict Resolution

Tayla Duarte

This award recognizes outstanding service into the field of conflict resolution, both within the program at UMass Boston and to the wider conflict resolution field.

**Ambassador John W. McDonald Award for Leadership & Innovation
in Global Governance & Conflict Resolution
Allison Bachta**

This award is given to a graduating student in the Department of Conflict Resolution, Human Security and Global Governance for showing leadership and innovation in global governance and conflict resolution.

This award is inspired by the life and work of Ambassador McDonald -- a lawyer, diplomat, international civil servant, development expert and peacebuilder. His career has been dedicated to the integration of thought and action in solving global challenges through innovative means at all levels of governance.

English MA Program The Phillis Wheatley Peters Book Prize Connor McMahon

Conor McMahon is the recipient of this year's Phillis Wheatley Peters Book Prize in recognition of his sustained commitment to graduate studies as a scholar, teacher, and citizen of the English department. Conor's teaching is innovative, generous, and responsive to the complicated realities of his students' lives. His feedback is encouraging, careful, and supportive to both students and his colleagues. His colleagues, students, and faculty have seen, in Conor, a deep enthusiasm for exploring new ways to connect the writing process to societal challenges. Conor's final MA project – "An Opportunity for Antiracist Practices in the Peer Review Process" – received the prestigious Conference on College Composition and Communication's Chairs Memorial Scholarship. This award is given to four graduate students who have been invited to present their research at the national Conference on College Composition and Communication. In his work, Conor brings student-to-student peer review practice in line with the field's commitments to understanding the ways writing participates in anti-racist work. After graduation, Conor hopes to teach rhetoric and composition abroad before pursuing doctoral work. (Professor Timothy Oleksiak)

English MA Program Robert T. Crossley Award

Anne Latimer

Anne Latimer's final project, "Relatability: A Post-Mortem," presents an original and insightful argument about Irish novelist Sally Rooney's work through the lens of what readers and critics describe as her "relatability." Latimer argues that "the narrator's distance from and disdain for Rooney's characters is what animates the reader's identification with and fondness for them"—a seemingly paradoxical claim that she goes on to convincingly prove. Latimer deploys what her readers describe as "well-ordered and diverse evidence," which is "clearly and thoroughly argued" in order to reveal how Rooney's latest novel, *Intermezzo*, offers a departure from Rooney's earlier work, suggesting that she is moving away from the techniques that led to her designation as a relatable writer. Weaving together these claims and bringing in approaches that range from theories of empathy to pedagogical reflections results in an impressive project that exemplifies the innovative and risk-taking work recognized by the Crossley Award. (Professor Eve Sorum)

English MA Program Ann E. Berthoff Award for Excellence in Composition Studies Ciaran Olmstead

Ciaran Olmstead is the recipient of this year's Ann E. Berthoff Award for her outstanding Final Exercise in Rhetoric and Composition Studies. In "Remixing Peer Review: A Posthuman Praxis for Peer Review," Olmstead deftly wades into the complex issues surrounding the pedagogical usefulness of Generative AI (GenAI) in the writing classroom. She argues that the humanist core underlying our current understanding of student-to-student peer review has limited rhetoric and composition teacher-scholars from developing rich, meaningful, and generative relationships with GenAI in the writing classroom. She argues that a posthumanist orientation to student-to-student peer review grounded in deliberate rhetorical tactics and strategies can help teachers and students alike see GenAI's potential to support student writing. Ciaran's project demonstrates an emerging scholar who is comfortable and sophisticated at building complex theoretical ideas as a way to respond meaningfully and consequentially to emerging problems in Rhetoric and Composition. Ciaran has already begun participating as a professional in important ways. She presented selections of her final exercise at the peer-reviewed, national Conference on College Composition and Communication, the largest scholarly conference for the study of rhetoric and composition. (Professor Timothy Oleksiak)

MFA in Creative Writing (English) Dean's Book Prize

Sarah Sutton

Sara Sutton's thesis director, Professor Askold Melnyczuk, says her stories' "south sounds a singular, sometimes melancholy, sometimes comic yet always true and affecting note. The title of the thesis, "Silk and Tendons," may not say it all--but it says a lot about, among other things, Sutton's supple prose style. There's a boldness, an imaginative courage here, a well-tempered vigor, as well as a faith that fiction, telling stories, matters--because the best have a curious effect on both the reader and the writer.

Dean's Book Prize MFA (Creative Writing): Poetry

Stuart Arend

Stewart Arend's thesis director, Professor Shangyang Fang, calls Stewart's collection of poems "a pagoda at the border of metaphor and reality, where the imagined and the autobiographical interlace." These poems invite us into a world where the mundane is reborn as vivid, unexpected imagery. In "Meditation on Stasis," his dreamscape unfurls with lines like "the sun is setting now. There's a glass door. The moon: a shimmering bubble....The rain of the day fixing to crystal/chandeliers" suggesting how memory reclaims the present in surreal, haunting ways.

The Clinical Psychology Book Award

Nicholas Pierorazio

Nicholas Pierorazio is receiving the Clinical Psychology Book Award for his thesis entitled, *A QUALITATIVE META-ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENCES OF CLIENTS IN PSYCHOTHERAPY FOR POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER: AN EMPIRICALLY BASED PROCESS-ORIENTED STAGED MODEL*. Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is prevalent and can be highly complex. Guidance for the treatment of PTSD has typically been based on quantitative meta-analyses of randomized controlled trial findings and has focused on the comparative efficacy of specific treatments, rather than how to deliver treatment. There is a need for clinical guidance that highlights moment-to-moment, in session psychotherapy processes for psychotherapists working with clients with PTSD. In the current study, I conducted a qualitative meta-analysis, focusing on the qualitative literature investigating clients' perspectives in order to develop an understanding of the preferences, values, and experiences of clients in individual psychotherapy for PTSD. Thirty-nine studies were included in the meta-analysis. I used critical-constructivist grounded theory to build a hierarchy to represent patterns across included articles' findings to understand PTSD psychotherapy processes and outcomes. I then conducted a hermeneutic analysis of the hierarchy to generate process-based principles for practice. Results included one core category, six clusters, 15 categories, and 15 principles for practice. Findings indicated that clients progressed through a developmental process of first establishing relational security as well as collaborative treatment. They then gained a sense of groundedness, also learning to turn toward and transform trauma-related reactions. Their expanded capacities facilitated their deep emotional experiencing and meaning reconstruction. This progression represents a staged model encapsulating clients' central process of developing their agency upon a foundation of therapeutic safety to liberate themselves from trauma and related pain.

Award for Academic Excellence in Applied Sociology

Giona Picheco

Giona Picheco is a first-generation student graduating with an MA in Applied Sociology. Originally from Connecticut, he spent six years in the submarine force of the U.S. Navy. Following his military service, he went on to pursue his education and earned a BA in Sociology and Political Science at the University of Rhode Island with a minor in French. In recognition of his academic aptitude, he was granted the University Academic Excellence Award in Sociology. He then enrolled at the University of Massachusetts Boston for graduate school in the Sociology program, where he has excelled in his studies, cultivated a positive classroom environment for students, and contributed his collaborative efforts to the Graduate Sociology Student Association to plan and host a graduate student research symposium. He has pursued research projects centered around the sociology of sports related to analyses on masculinity, risk, politics, identity, and social status interplaying within sports culture. Giona has been admitted into the PhD program in Sociology at UMass Boston, where he will continue to develop his research and advance his academic career.

GGHS Excellence in Dissertation Research

Fatou Sidibe

Fatou Sidibe is a master's graduate of the Class of 2025 in the department of Global Governance and Human Security with research interests in human security, protection of vulnerable populations, and civic engagement. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Government from Smith College, Northampton, MA and currently works as Communications Director and Criminal Justice Reform Advisor for Senator Cindy Friedman in the Massachusetts Senate. She's involved in domestic violence and poverty reduction advocacy and is a member of UMB's African Scholars Forum.