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[Andrea Estrada](#)

History and Environmental Studies Scholar Receives Harold J. Plous Award

Peter Alagona, assistant professor of history and of environmental studies at UC Santa Barbara, has received the 2012-13 Harold J. Plous Award. One of the university's most prestigious faculty honors, the award is given annually to an assistant professor from the humanities, social sciences, or natural sciences who has shown exceptional achievement in research, teaching, and service to the university. Presented by the College of Letters and Science, the award was established in 1957 to honor the memory of Harold J. Plous, an assistant professor of economics.

Alagona will showcase his research when he delivers the annual Plous Lecture next spring.

"I offer my heartiest congratulations to Professor Alagona on this very meaningful recognition from his campus peers," said UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang. "The Plous Award honors not only his remarkable research achievements in the fields of history and environmental studies, but also his exemplary teaching and mentorship. Our campus community looks forward to his Plous Lecture next spring."

"Peter Alagona's research and teaching cross the humanities, social sciences, and sciences," said David Marshall, dean of UCSB's Division of Humanities and Fine Arts and executive dean of the College of Letters & Science. "It is appropriate that he

should be recognized by the College of Letters and Science with this wonderful honor."

Pierre Wiltzius, the dean of mathematical, physical, and life sciences at UCSB, said: "Professor Alagona wonderfully represents the collaborative spirit of UC Santa Barbara. We are very proud of his early career accomplishments."

Noted Carla D'Antonio, the Schuyler Professor of Environmental Studies and the department's acting chair: "Peter Alagona is an inspired, energetic, and truly interdisciplinary scholar. He has reached out across departments and shown great initiative in starting up new and exciting research programs. I am particularly excited about his research on how nature reserves -- and the UC Natural Reserve system in particular -- have contributed to the development of environmental protection in California."

Elizabeth Digeser, professor and acting chair of history, added: "I'm delighted that Peter won the Plous Award. As an environmental historian whose work addresses endangered species and analyzes the politics that flow from such designations, he exemplifies the interdisciplinary culture that UCSB strives to foster."

Alagona, who joined the UCSB faculty in 2008, is an environmental historian whose work addresses the need for North Americans to understand the concept of endangered species, and the politics that flow from that set of ideological, cultural, and scientific constructs. His work takes insights from political, cultural, and legal history, as well as environmental studies. In his forthcoming book, "After the Grizzly: Endangered Species and the Politics of Place in California" (University of California Press), Alagona explains the complex relationship between species conservation and the physical places in which species flourish or grow extinct.

Alagona is the recipient of numerous honors and awards, including collaborative grants from the National Science Foundation (NSF) and The Mellon Foundation. He also received a five-year NSF CAREER award. CAREER awards are designed to support the early careers of scholars who are most likely to become academic leaders of the 21st century.

A gifted and popular instructor, Alagona is praised by his students for courses that are "thought-provoking" and "eye-opening." His lectures have been described as rigorous, current, interdisciplinary, and inspiring.

In addition to his accomplishments in research and teaching, Alagona has made significant contributions to the Department of History and Department of Environmental Studies, as well as to the campus at large. He has served as a member of the UCSB Faculty Senate Sustainability Committee, and is affiliated with the UCSB political science department's Politics of Environmental Policy graduate program, and the campus's Center for Nanotechnology in Society.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.