

THE Current

September 5, 2012

[Andrea Estrada](#)

UCSB Receives \$175,000 Grant for Seminar on Comparative Study of Cultures

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has awarded a \$175,000 grant to UC Santa Barbara in support of a Sawyer Seminar on the Comparative Study of Cultures entitled "Sea Change: Integrating the Historical Study of Human Cultures and Marine Environments in Three Pacific Regions."

The Sawyer Seminars program supports comparative research on the historical and cultural sources of contemporary developments. The program funds seminars that bring together faculty, visiting scholars, postdoctoral fellows, and graduate students from the humanities, social sciences, and related fields. Only institutions that are invited to do so may submit proposals to the program. The grant covers a period of two years, and provides support for one postdoctoral fellow and for the dissertation research of two graduate students.

The research seminar at UCSB will focus on the development, integration, and application of historical knowledge about the relations between human cultures and marine environments. It seeks to advance the emerging field of marine environmental history while integrating diverse geographic perspectives and disciplinary approaches. The three faculty organizers include Peter Alagona, assistant professor of history and environmental studies, and an affiliate faculty member in geography; David Lopez-Carr, professor of geography and director of

Latin American and Iberian Studies; and Teresa Shewry, assistant professor of English.

"UC Santa Barbara is proud to be the recipient of a prestigious Sawyer Seminars grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation," said UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang. "It is a great honor, and an indication of the exceptional interdisciplinary research taking place on our campus. Combining their respective expertise in geography, history, environmental studies, and English, Professors Alagona, Lopez-Carr, and Shewry will shed new light on an important and timely topic."

"The prestigious Sawyer Seminar grant will allow our faculty members to research an important topic through the type of interdisciplinary collaboration that is a hallmark of this campus," said Melvin L. Oliver, executive dean of the College of Letters and Science. "In addition, by helping to fund the dissertation research of two graduate students and a post-doctoral researcher, the grant supports our mission of teaching and training the next generation of scholars."

The researchers have separated the seminar into three sections: "The Environmental History of the Oceans," "The Cultural History of the Oceans," and "The Contemporary History of the Oceans." Together, they will focus on case studies based on three Pacific Ocean regions, including the California margin, the Pacific Islands, and the western fringe of South America.

The Mellon Foundation was established in 1969, and awards grants in five key areas, including higher education and scholarship; scholarly communications and information technology; art history, conservation, and museums; performing arts; and conservation and the environment. The Sawyer Seminars program, established in 1994, is named for John E. Sawyer, the foundation's third president.

Related Links

[The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation](#)

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.