

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Jim Logan

Fellows of Distinction

Two UC Santa Barbara scholars have been awarded prestigious grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) that will allow them to complete important projects in their respective fields.

[Anthony Barbieri](#), a professor of history, and [Sherene Seikaly](#), an associate professor of history, were awarded full-year fellowships of \$60,000.

“On behalf of the Division of Humanities and Fine Arts, I congratulate Professors Barbieri and Seikaly on their NEH grants,” said Mary Hancock, the acting dean of Humanities and Fine Arts. “Professor Barbieri’s award will support his translation of an important Chinese work, dated to the Han dynasty; Professor Seikaly’s will enable her to study modern Palestinian mobility through the prism of one individual’s life history. The vital resources for projects in the humanities that the NEH provides allow scholars to address pressing global issues through humanities methods and skills. As a campus, we take great pride in their receipt of these highly selective awards and look forward to the outcomes of their research.”

Barbieri, who studies a wide range of aspects of Early China, will write the first complete English translation of the “Discourses on Salt and Iron,” one of the most important classical texts to survive from the 1st century BCE in Han dynasty China.

“Discourses,” he said, is a work in 60 chapters, only 28 of which have been previously translated into English, nearly 90 years ago. It purports to be a faithful recording of an imperial court debate held in 81 BCE between the government and

its critics about whether to abolish state monopolies on iron and salt production that had been imposed four decades previously.

According to Barbieri, the text is invaluable for understanding the political currents and economic policies of the most populous empire on Earth at the turn of the common era.

“I have used the ‘Discourses on Salt and Iron’ text since my dissertation, and on every subsequent project since then,” Barbieri said. “While I was engaged in writing my last four books, I had always assumed someone would step forward to provide a complete study and translation of this crucial text, but no one did. Now that those projects are behind me, and I have this funding for uninterrupted work from NEH, I can finally complete this important project, which will have a major impact on the field and on ancient history more generally. I endeavor not just to translate the work, but also to provide a detailed introduction addressing several important issues in economic history.”

Seikaly, a historian of capitalism, consumption and development in the modern Middle East, will embark on a project with a personal connection. Her work, “From Baltimore to Beirut: On the Question of Palestine,” charts the trajectory of her great-grandfather Naim Cotran (c.1877-1961) from 19th-century mobility across Baltimore and Sudan to 20th-century immobility in Lebanon.

“Cotran,” she said, “was a Palestinian man who was at once a colonial officer and a colonized subject, a slave-holder and a refugee whose homeland was dismembered. The book places the question of Palestine in a global history of settler colonialism, race, capital, slavery and dispossession.

“The NEH award will allow me to complete the research and writing of this project,” Seikaly continued. “It is an important recognition of a history subject to erasure in the ongoing Nakba, or catastrophe, of the Palestinian condition.”

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.