

# THE *Current*

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## **PhD candidate Solaire Denaud receives prestigious humanities and social science fellowship**

For her interdisciplinary ethics research through the lenses of antiracist and anticolonial movements, UC Santa Barbara comparative literature PhD candidate Solaire Denaud has received the [Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship](#) — one of the nation’s largest and most prestigious humanities and social sciences awards.

“It is truly an honor,” Denaud said. “This fellowship will allow me to focus on my research. Since my project is relatively new in my field, it relies heavily on primary sources, with very few prior scholarly works available. Having this time to focus on the final stage of my dissertation is a gift.”

The annual fellowship honors doctoral candidates exploring questions of moral, ethical or theological and religious relevance with nuance, depth and intellectual sophistication. Denaud is one of 20 recipients chosen in 2025 from a pool of more than 600 applicants. Her dissertation, “Plant-Based Diets and Animal-Centric Thinking Throughout the African Diaspora from 1930 to the Present-Day,” examines the role of animal and environmental ethics in key antiracist and anticolonial movements, including Rastafari, Nation of Islam, the US Civil Rights Movement and the Orthodox Ethiopian Church, among others.

“Denaud’s work beautifully illustrates the ways that research in the humanities and humanistic social sciences connects to pressing issues in contemporary society,” said Leila Rupp, a feminist studies professor and UCSB’s Interim Anne and Michael Towbes Graduate Dean. “She brings a global and interdisciplinary approach to questions of environmental ethics.”

With degrees in philosophy and geography from the Sorbonne University in Paris, Denaud earned her master’s in environmental humanities from France’s National Museum of Natural History. She chose to pursue her doctoral studies at UCSB after meeting Renan Larue, a professor of French and comparative literature, and learning about his vegan studies curricula.

“I felt this is where I needed to be,” she said. “Being French and Haitian, I am quite far from home, but this has been an amazing adventure, and I was lucky to find a supportive community here.”

Environmental and animal ethics have been central to Denaud’s research since her undergraduate days, she said. “Although my work has since changed considerably, eventually reaching a place where I feel most intellectually at home, it has consistently questioned how colonization has impacted the natural and animal worlds, how their suffering can be connected to the suffering of my own people, and what solidarities can emerge from this. These questions are even more crucial now as we face an era of environmental collapse, which is an increasingly urgent issue, particularly for racialized and gendered minorities.”

Since its inception in 1981, the [Newcombe](#) award has funded nearly 1400 fellows; each receives a \$31,000 stipend to complete the writing stage of their dissertation, plus tuition and fee waivers.

Tags

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## 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.