

Two History Department grad students win Prestigious Senate Teaching Awards

Our department's TAs have a hard-won and well-earned reputation for being among the university's best. Proof came early last week when the Faculty Senate awarded their Outstanding Teaching Assistant award to two History graduate students, Donna Anderson and Mika Thornburg. The competition for the award is always keen, with over 60 nominations this year and only four or five selected. Here is what the Senate Award Committee had to say:



Mika Thornburg is a PhD candidate in the Department of History and a truly exceptional educator. She is thoughtful in accommodating her students' needs as learners and as people. Her teaching goes well beyond the classroom and her teaching philosophy statement describes the value of a collaborative learning environment and the "opportunity for the blending of multiple perspectives and ideas into more innovative conclusions." Mika is described as "an electric classroom teacher – full of energy, knowledgeable, articulate, empathic." Mika helps students evolve their approaches and ideas about academia as a whole. Mika's truly outstanding characteristic as a TA is her ability to lead her students through personal growth. One student noted, "Mika has ... played a significant role in my personal journey towards the

reclamation of my identity as a multiethnic Asian American.... She showed me that there is both personal and academic value in my narrative; she helped me recognize the broader significance of my study as a legitimate source of knowledge." Mika is an exceptional educator and helps students transform their university experience, expand their career goals and revolutionize their daily lives. We are pleased to recognize Mika Thornburg as an Outstanding Teaching Assistant.

A doctoral student in history, **Donna Anderson** draws on her many years of experience as a high school social studies teacher to "loop together individual ideas to create a net



of understanding" for her students. By creating a "lively and informal class atmosphere," her sections routinely reflect a "community of enthusiastic learning." Faculty unanimously reflected that she is "a superb teacher in every way" and "one of the finest instructors [they] ever had the pleasure to work with." They particularly noted her "deep investment in her students' success," her "ability to pivot," and especially her range of techniques for engaging students from all backgrounds. Students noted the deep interest that she took in every one of them and the powerful impact that she had on their lives, from developing critical thinking and public speaking skills to inspiring confidence to pursue research to helping to clarify postgraduate goals. They collectively remarked on her genuine approachability,

her authentic efforts to build rapport and trust, and a kindness that “comes through the screen.” One student noted that, “It’s almost impossible to truly capture the passion and ... energy that is abundantly apparent through her teaching.” On the basis of her stellar accolades by faculty and students alike, we are delighted to present this seasoned educator with the Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award.

One History Department grad wins GSA's Excellence in Teaching Award



The Graduate Student Association (GSA) at UCSB recognizes graduate students who go above and beyond in their roles as teachers. This award is heavily rooted in the campus community, as anyone can nominate a teaching assistant or associate for the award. This year, the Graduate Student Association awarded one of their Excellence in Teaching Awards to Sarah Dunne. Read more about the awards and its winners [here](#)!