



## Society for American Archaeology

### — Dissertation Award —

**Current Committee Charge:** The committee solicits nominations and selects recipients for the Dissertation Award. The committee annually selects a single dissertation (completed within the last three years in the field of archaeology) that exemplifies exceptional research to receive special recognition as the most outstanding, original contribution to the field at this level.

**Committee Composition:** Committee composition is one chair and at least four (preferably five) members.

**Term Length:** Term length is three years. Individuals ending their terms cycle off the committee at the close of the Business Meeting held during the annual SAA Meeting, and new appointees begin their terms at this time.

**Award Cycle:** Not applicable.

**Committee Chair and End of Term:** Jason Yaeger [2017]

**\*Committee Chair Contact Information:** Jason Yaeger, UTSA, Dept. Of Anthropology, One UTSA Circle, San Antonio, TX, 78249-1644, Tel: 210-458-7966, Email: [jason.yaeger@utsa.edu](mailto:jason.yaeger@utsa.edu)

**Committee Members and Ends of Terms:** Robin A. Beck [2018], Christina A. Conlee [2017], Suzanne L. Eckert [2017], Lars Fogelin [2017], Liam Frink [2017], Hector Neff [2017]

**Committee on Awards Chair:** Heather A. Lapham [2016]

**Board Liaison to Award Committees:** Tobi Brimsek

**Award Description:** Members (other than student members) of SAA may nominate a recent graduate whose dissertation they consider to be original, well written, and outstanding.

**Who Is Eligible to Submit Nominations or Apply for Award:** Nominations must be made by non-student SAA members (although the nominee need not be a SAA member) and must be in the form of a nomination letter that makes a case for the dissertation. Self-nominations will not be accepted.

**Nomination/Submission Materials Required:** Nomination letters should include a description of the special contributions of the dissertation and the nominee's current address. Nominees must

have defended their dissertations and received their Ph.D. degree within three years prior to September 1, 2015. Nominees are informed at the time of nomination by the nominator and are asked to submit ONE COPY of the dissertation IN PDF FORMAT ON CD-ROM by October 15, 2015 (to be mailed to the committee chair, Jason Yaeger). IF THIS FORMAT IS NOT POSSIBLE, PLEASE CONTACT THE CHAIR.

**\*Nomination/Submission Deadline:** October 15, 2015

**Other Special Requirements:** None.

**Selection or Evaluation Criteria:** Submitted dissertations are evaluated and ranked by committee members on factors including originality of research and strengths and weaknesses of the dissertation.

**Committee Deliberation Process (e.g., dates, venue):** The committee evaluates submitted dissertations through a series of electronic meetings. Honorable Mention(s) may be recognized for the second and third-ranked dissertations if the committee chooses to do so (as per Motion 132-74A, Board of Directors Meeting #132, October 2013).

**Nature of Award (e.g., monetary, medal, symposium):** A three-year membership in the SAA is given to the recipient. In addition, the awardee is recognized by the SAA through a plaque presented during the business meeting held at the Annual Meeting, a citation in *The SAA Archaeological Record*, and acknowledgment on the awards page of the SAA Website.

### **Awardees**

2015 Alan Farahani (University of California, Berkeley)

Dr. Alan Farahani has won the 2015 SAA Dissertation Award for his dissertation entitled “Sustaining Community under Empire: An Archaeological Investigation of Long-Term Agricultural Production and Imperial Interventions at Dhiban, Jordan, 1000 BCE - 1450 CE,” completed in 2014 in the interdisciplinary program in Ancient History and Mediterranean Archaeology at the University of California, Berkeley. This outstanding dissertation investigates the responses of local agricultural communities to imperial taxation and extraction regimes of the Byzantine and Mamluk Empires. By integrating excavation data, analysis of paleobotanical materials, and paleoenvironmental proxies, Farahani documented how communities at Dhiban exercised agency in their choices of agricultural crops, the composition of fields, and the organization of agricultural labor, responding distinctly to each imperial regime. With his sophisticated and nuanced arguments, Farahani’s outstanding dissertation makes significant contributions to our knowledge of the ancient Near East, while advocating for a new socioecological approach to ancient ecological dynamics.

2014 Matthew A. Peeples (Arizona State University)

Award for his dissertation *Identity and Social Transformation in the Prehispanic Cibola World: A.D. 1150-1325*. In this innovative, ambitious, and comprehensive dissertation, Peeples addresses

a major social transformation in the U.S. Southwest: the process of mass resettlement and reorganization of social practices and identities that occurred in the Cibola region between the 12th and 14th centuries A.D. Peeples approaches identity by distinguishing between relational and categorical processes and criteria of identification, and engages with these concepts by deftly weaving together large datasets and multiple lines of evidence. In this exemplary and enduring contribution to anthropological archaeology, which fuses innovative theory, analytical acuity, and expositional clarity, Peeples provides a framework for understanding identity and collective action in other regions of the Southwest and beyond.

Honorable Mentions — Jade D’Alpoim Guedes (Harvard)  
Destiny Lynn Crider (Arizona State University)

2013 Amanda Logan (University of Michigan)

Dr. Amanda Logan is the 2013 recipient of the Dissertation Award. Her clearly written dissertation incorporates archaeological, ethnobotanical, ethnographic, and historical evidence to address change in foodways over the past 1,000 years in Banda, west-central Ghana. Countering the frequent claim that African societies are in a permanent condition of food deficit, Logan illustrates how the culinary process is indicative of agentive investment at each stage of activity, from farming to cooking to consumption. The “Colombian exchange” brought many new foods to West Africa in particular, some of which appear to have been quite quickly adopted (e.g., tobacco) and others that only became widely used staples under conditions of post-slavery economic stress and British colonial practices of labor management and taxation (e.g., maize). Emphasizing the many stages of decision making in food use, Logan writes eloquently about food and foodways while incorporating theory from a variety of disciplines to discuss the role of memory, gender dynamics, and migrations in creating new culture complexes.

2012 Christopher Morehart (Northwestern University)

Christopher Morehart’s dissertation, *The Archaeology of Farmscapes: Production, Place, and the Materiality of Landscape at Xaltocan, Mexico* (Northwestern University, 2010) details the evolution of a Postclassic Period agricultural landscape in the area of Xaltocan in the Basin of Mexico. Synthesizing remote sensing, survey, soil chemistry, archaeobotanical, and excavation data, the author meticulously reconstructs how farmers dealt with shifting material, social, political and ideological factors in developing and experiencing the chinampa farmscape. The work connects daily agricultural practices with larger political processes, including Aztec conquest, by revealing how political relations, communal relations, and systems of property, were manifested in the fields and their use. Guided by innovative conceptualizations of “choreogeography” and materiality, the author shows how chinampa system dynamics can be understood only through synthesizing ecological with practice-oriented, phenomenological perspectives. In its multifaceted and multiscalar approach, the research illustrates the potential of agriculture landscapes for re-envisioning the dynamics of prehistory.

2011 Scott G. Ortman (Arizona State University)

Scott Ortman's dissertation, *Genes, Language, and Culture in Tewa Ethnogenesis, A.D. 1150-1400* (Arizona State University, 2010), is a multistranded study of the depopulation of the Mesa Verde region, and the origins of the Tewa People. Through meticulous study of archaeological material, skeletal remains, ethnography, and linguistic data, the author establishes that Tewa origins lay in a massive migration from the Mesa Verde region. This exodus likely stemmed from the rise of a religious movement against the increasing social hierarchy at Mesa Verde. To reconstruct Tewa ethnogenesis, the author traces Tewa biological, linguistic, and cultural inheritance, weaving diverse bodies of contemporary theory in multiple disciplines with original approaches, including a pioneering method for discerning conceptual metaphors in material culture. The dissertation exemplifies how a study focused on a particular question in prehistory can be a basis for a signal theoretical contribution to the anthropology of social change.

- 2010 Sarah Clayton (Arizona State University)
- 2009 Timothy Messner (Temple University)
- 2008 Kevin Fisher (University of Toronto)
- 2007 Matthew Liebmann (University of Pennsylvania)
- 2006 Elisabeth Hildebrand (Washington University in St. Louis)
- 2005 Severin Fowles (University of Michigan)
- 2004 Ian G. Robertson (Arizona State University)
- 2003 Wesley Bernardini (Arizona State University)
- 2002 Silvia R. Kembel (Stanford University)
- 2001 Andrew I.L. Duff (Arizona State University)
- 2000 Alex Barker (University of Michigan)
- 1999 Karen G. Harry (University of Arizona)
- 1998 Mark D. Varien (Arizona State University)
- 1997 Alvaro Higuera-Hare (University of Pittsburgh)
- 1996 Daniel R. Finamore (Boston University)
- 1995 David R. Abbott (Arizona State University)
- 1994 Mary Van Buren (University of Arizona)

- 1993 Cathy Lebo (Indiana University)
- 1992 Lynette C. Norr (University of Illinois)
- 1991 David Anderson (University of Michigan)
- 1990 David J. Bernstein (State University of New York at Stony Brook)
- 1988 Judith A. Habicht Mauche (Harvard University)