

"Practicing What I Teach" - A Reflection on the Past Six Years as Chair

Adrianna Bakos, Associate Professor

When teachers get together, the conversation almost always steers to the question of what to do about participation marks. I made a change quite a few years back when, instead of assigning participation grades, I began asking students to self-evaluate using the following set of guiding questions.

- Did I complete all the homework assignments/readings at a level beyond minimum expectations?
- Did I contribute meaningfully and consistently to discussions and activities?
- Did I feel engaged in this class? Why or why not?
- What did I do especially well?
- Where could I have improved?
- What have I discovered about myself and how can I apply this new self-knowledge going forward?

As I reflect back on my six years as the chair of the department, it is only fitting to "practice what I teach." So, I offer here an authentic assessment both of what the department has accomplished during my tenure and what I have learned about my institution, my colleagues, and myself over the last six years.

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Featured Professor

Professor Adrianna Bakos has been our department's chair for the past six years (2017-2023) and provided excellent leadership and vision. We have her to thank for sharing prescient online and digital teaching methods and skills while our university, like much of the world, transitioned to more online forms of teaching and learning due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Through it all, Professor Bakos has done everything you could ask of a chair: liased with the broader university community, supported department faculty, and encouraged students in our program to do their best. Thanks for your years of service Adrianna! You deserve a big, long vacation!
-N & T Editors



[HTTPS://WWW.UFV.CA/HISTORY/](https://www.ufv.ca/history/)

Did I/we complete all our “homework” at a level beyond minimum expectations? – I believe so. We’ve made a lot of changes over the last six years, from personnel to programs. We have worked hard to implement many of the suggestions made to us when we underwent Program Review in 2018-2019. The most significant change was the introduction of the Honours program in 2018. Since that time, some of our best and brightest students have produced truly spectacular research projects, presenting their work in traditional academic papers as well as in newer, public-facing formats. The calibre of this work has helped to secure several of our students coveted spots in graduate schools across Canada. Other initiatives were also exciting but short-lived, such as our experiment with micro credentials. An important takeaway was the realization that if the larger institution is not onboard, there is only so much we can do to actualize new plans (both great and small) that we might envision for our students (and the larger community).

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It has been bittersweet to oversee the shift in personnel that has begun over the last few years, and which will continue to change the face of our department. Several of our valued colleagues stepped into retirement: Daniel Kwan in 2018, Christopher Leach and Robin Anderson in 2022, but we are very fortunate that they continue to be actively involved in the department. Their exit from the permanent ranks allowed for the hiring of new colleagues: Ian Rocksborough-Smith in 2019, Eiji Okawa in 2022 and, our newest member who will begin in Fall of 2023, Aleks Jovanović. From my point of view, this moment is replete with possibilities: we continue to benefit from the expertise of our long-time members while at the same time profiting from the energy and imagination of the new folks. I am excited to see where we go next.

Did I/we contribute meaningfully and consistently to discussions and activities? – I hope so. Within our department, I am consistently impressed with the thoughtful approach my colleagues have taken to thorny problems – as a group, we don’t shy away from disagreement, but that healthy dissent has always been coupled with a genuinely warm collegiality. Our annual retreats to various locales around the lower mainland have been wonderful opportunities to reflect on our past and plan for the future – punctuated by bountiful beer and belly laughs. We have also taken steps to broaden those conversations, creating an External Program Advisory Committee, made up of people from across the broader Fraser Valley community, including teachers, alumni, and members from the GLAM sector, who provide us with such valuable insights into the changing work environment our students are graduating into. These semi-annual meetings have invariably inspired us to think broadly about what our students can accomplish when they apply the historical skills they have gained through our program.

Did I feel engaged with this work? Why or why not? – I know so. Over the years, I have been so fortunate to get to know our students. Early on, I decided to invite program students to come to “chair chats” each year – to meet with me, have some coffee and cookies, and share not only their hopes but also how they felt about us and what we were doing. This has resulted in powerful changes. It was a simple but profound question from a student in one of these chats – “why don’t we have an Indigenous history requirement?” - that led directly to the addition of that important requirement. Meeting and talking to students, both in the chair chats and our now annual History Tea, have been the best part of my job.

What did I/we do especially well? – As a department we navigated the tumultuous COVID years extremely well. We worked collaboratively to figure out the “flip.” The amount of pedagogical expertise and technical savvy that was shared amongst members was truly inspiring. We didn’t just survive, we thrived. And we maintained connections even during lockdown – thanks to Geof Spurling, who initiated Zoom Beer Thursdays and, as things opened up just a little, Ian Rocksborough-Smith, who organized Saturday hikes to get us all out of our houses (and our funks). With most of the restrictions lifted, we have taken what we learned and created a “new normal,” which retains so much of what we already did well and continues to evolve and include, in positive ways, the changes which circumstances forced us to make.

What could I have improved? I am definitely NOT a nuts-and-bolts person. I would have utterly failed at the everyday responsibilities of the chair, had it not been for the unflagging efforts of our Department Co-ordinator, Nicole Kungle, whom I can never thank enough. She has been the Kato to my Green Hornet!

Being primus inter pares for the last six years has been a truly rewarding experience, because of the high quality of individuals alongside whom I have been so privileged to work.

What have I discovered about myself and how can I apply this new self-knowledge going forward? That I work best in a collaborative environment. Being *primus inter pares* for the last six years has been a truly rewarding experience, because of the high quality of individuals alongside whom I have been so privileged to work. I have also realized that I am a dog-with-a-bone. I am persistent, and as I look around our beautiful new departmental space, I am proud that this vision from back in 2015 finally came to fruition. That persistence is going to continue to be on display – fair warning, dear colleagues! Finally, I hope that all of us have come to realize that change, even when forced upon us, even when we desperately don’t want it, always contains somewhere the possibility for positive transformation. Please join me in welcoming our incoming chair, Barbara Messamore, who I know will captain our ship beautifully through both calm seas and any rough waters that may still lie ahead.

Alumni Highlights

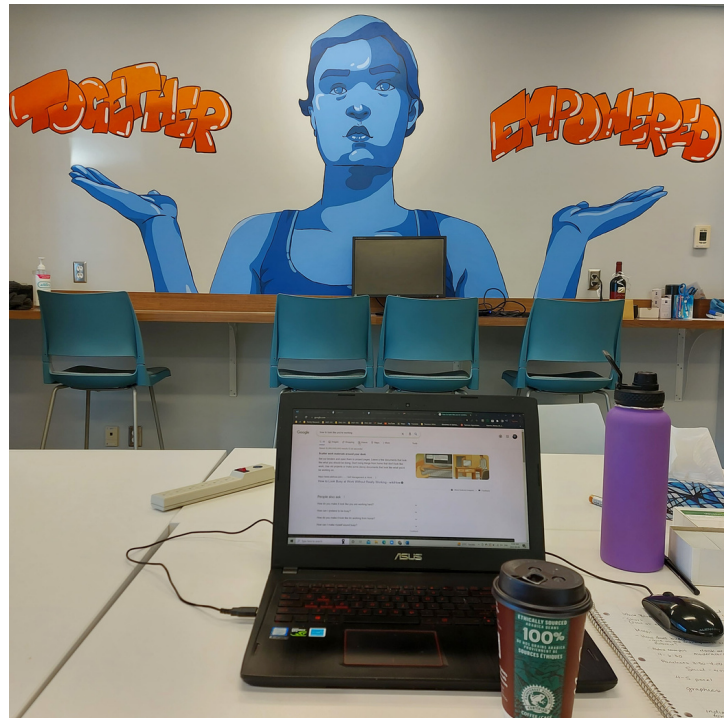
Applying Historical Skills

By [Carlanna Thompson](#), [Research Assistant, Community Health and Social Innovation \(CHASI\) Hub](#)

As a recent graduate ('22), I am not long removed from feeling the anxiety creep in as I thought about finishing my degree. Suddenly, I realized I had no idea of how to turn my dream of working in the historical field into a reality... or what that would even look like. What did I need to do to break into the field? What courses did I need? What skills? What jobs were even out there? How could I convince someone to pay me to do history?

Good news- I managed to do it.

I am coming up on my one-year anniversary as a full-time Research Assistant with UFV's [Community Health and Social Innovation Research Centre \(CHASI\)](#). One of our big projects over the last year has been working with a BC Indigenous community to find, gather, and preserve the stories of their children that were sent to Residential Schools. My work involves accessing a wide variety of archives on the local, provincial, and federal levels to gather records. I am also working on creating a database of archival records for the community. I am humbled and honoured that I am able to use my passion for history and the skills I learned as a student for such important work.



Carlanna's current workspace at UFV CHASI HUB (above). Receiving a distinguished [University Research Excellence Award \(URE\)](#) (below).



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Alumni Highlights

So how did I get here?

My biggest piece of advice would be to look for opportunities to build transferable and practical skills. Courses like HIST 301: Studies in Applied History, HIST 400: Learning and Doing History, as well as HIST 401: Practicum in History are all great ways to develop your resume. One of the courses that I credit with preparing me for the work I am currently doing is HIST 440: Local History for the Web. Through this course, I was able to get hands-on experience doing archival research by working closely with the staff at the Chilliwack Museum and Archives. With the goal of putting together a website on the history of the sport of lacrosse in Chilliwack, I learned how to conduct and publish original research for a public audience. The skills and relationships I built in HIST 440 would go on to serve as the basis for my History Honours project- a website telling the story of how colonial-settlers adopted and adapted lacrosse, an Indigenous sport from Eastern Canada, and brought it to British Columbia where it was then embraced and re-indigenized by the Stó:lō peoples of the Fraser Valley.

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My next piece of advice would be to get involved and engaged in your learning and your environment. Take that little bit of extra time to chat with your professors and your classmates. Stick around campus outside of class time and join clubs like the [Association of History Students](#) (yes, that was a totally unsubtle plug). At the risk of sounding cynical, networking is crucial to what your options look like post-graduation. Getting to know your professors (and letting them get to know you) can be a huge help when it comes time for application references for Masters or TEP programs. Furthermore, professors and peers are often the best sources for finding out about upcoming events and opportunities, such as practicums, research assistant positions, and conferences. Put yourself out there and good things will happen.

To sum it up, you get out of your degree what you put into it. The best way to convince someone to pay you to do history is to engage with the world around you. Read those articles and books. Write those essays. Connect with others. And most of all, push yourself to try new things.

Alumni Highlights

A Reflection on History and Teaching

By Tanveer Saroya, UFV Teaching Education Program Student

As a former student of the History Department at UFV, I have always been fascinated by the intricacies of the past and the way it shapes our present. My journey in the education program has allowed me to explore this passion in a more practical way, as I have been able to learn about teaching and the ways in which we can pass on this knowledge to future generations.

Over the past few years, I have had the opportunity to work with some amazing educators in the UFV history department who have helped me grow both as a student and as a future teacher. Through various placements in schools, I have been able to gain invaluable experience in the classroom and witness firsthand the impact that a great teacher can have on their students. My time in the education program has also given me a chance to reflect on the ways in which history can be taught in a way that is engaging and relevant. As a result, I have been able to develop my own teaching philosophy, which prioritizes the importance of student-centered learning and the incorporation of diverse perspectives.

The transition to the Teacher Education Program (TEP) at UFV was exciting as it allowed me to continue my journey as a learner and educator. I am looking forward to the opportunities that this program will provide, including more practical experience and the chance to work with a wider variety of students. Overall, my experience in the education program and history program has been incredibly rewarding, and I am grateful for the opportunities they have provided me.



Tanveer Saroya (seated above, bottom left), alongside his UFV Teacher Education Program cohort as they visited the historic Gur Sikh Temple of Abbotsford. One of Tanveer's practicum classrooms (pictured below)



Faculty Highlights

On Videogames and Historical Translations

By Prof. [Aleksandar Jovanovic](#)

In the fall of 2002, twelve-year-old me sat down to play a videogame called Age of Empires II. I recall being particularly excited that I was able to choose from a number of pre-modern Mediterranean and European civilizations in game play. Before I knew it, the architectural aesthetic of the eastern civilizations (Turks, Saracens, and Byzantines) in the videogame caught my attention and I ended up playing mostly with the Byzantines. While playing the game, twelve-year-old me liked the sound of Greek when clicking on any character. Not that I understood anything, but it felt original and genuine that the scout would say voulomai or malista as I would order him to go and explore an uncharted area. Fast-forward twenty years, to the fall of 2022, when I was offered the opportunity to contribute to a new game in the Age of Empires universe.

I embarked on the journey of translating specific phrases from English to medieval Greek at the beginning of 2023 as part of my contribution to the videogame. While I cannot share anything beyond what I have just discussed in terms of the gameplay - the NDA is quite strict! - I think this is an opportune moment to talk about the challenges a historian may face when using their knowledge in meeting the expectations of employers who operate in non-academic settings.



Age of Empires II gameplay

Faculty Highlights Cont'd

On the surface, translating simple phrases from English to medieval Greek sounds like not much of a challenge. However, the situation becomes rather tricky once one wants to do an honest job in bringing the language of the game's characters back to life. The complex and, really, convoluted nature of the medieval Greek language makes it rather challenging for me to decide about which way to translate certain mundane phrases. For one, medieval Greek lacks one standardized language; rather, we are dealing with a number of known and, unfortunately for us, unknown dialects and variants of Greek. We should always keep in mind that the Greek used for composing histories, speeches, sermons, and other such writing is a somewhat artificial learned language that is based on the 5th- and 4th-century BCE written Classical Greek – the dialect of the Athenians which was employed for writing by such people as Plato and Aristotle. Unlike the written standard of the learned elites in the Medieval Roman Empire – also known as Byzantium – the spoken language was not in a state of arrested development. Rather, it developed independently from the educated intellectuals' attempts to write in a form of the language that would be archaic. Thus, the spoken Greek would have ended up being quite different from the written standard of the Medieval Roman aristocracy.

Maintaining the distinction between the spoken and written variants of the language becomes the key, as well as a major challenge, to conducting the translations honestly.

Maintaining the distinction between the spoken and written variants of the language becomes the key, as well as a major challenge, to conducting the translations honestly. Whether we study the history of the Medieval Roman Empire or not, I believe that it is easy for everybody to agree that it is highly improbable that villagers or random infantry soldiers were able to speak the language of the hyper-learned elites. The same courtesy should be applied to the game too. We should not expect the villagers and soldiers in the Age of Empires universe to be able to communicate in the language that could only be spoken through learned acquisition. So far, so good. One might even wonder where the problem is: we have two distinct variants of the language, and we should just apply the spoken one, and not the literary standard, to the game's characters. This is the crux of the challenge. The two keywords that distinguish the variants of Greek in the medieval period are written and spoken. Thus, most of our written sources which have come down to us were composed in the literary language, while the spoken variant used in everyday communication is for the large part lost to us.

So, how can a historian do an honest job in contributing to an accurate recreation of the medieval world of the Romans? Well, first, one must rely on the very few texts written in the spoken variant of the language. Once these texts are identified, one should find the adequate grammatical constructions to use for the characters. Having determined the grammatical functions and constructions, one then has to go back to the different written sources in attempts to find a vocabulary that best represents the words used in a specific time period (as we are talking about a thousand years of the medieval period). Once both the grammar and the vocabulary are discerned, the translation process can begin. The complete veracity of the translations remains an open-ended question as sometimes we simply do not know what the preferred spoken word to denote an object, a person, or a concept would be in every period. In the end, here, a historian must loosen up a bit and enjoy the creative process of not just solving the linguistic puzzle but of giving shape and colour to the missing pieces, to the best of their ability.

In the end, it is my hope that the translations contributed to the Age of Empires universe will catch a few gamers' attention and inspire them to explore more of the lost world of the Medieval Roman Empire outside the virtual world of gameplay.

Student Highlights

Interdisciplinarity, History, and Journalism

By Bradley Duncan, Executive Editor, *The Cascade*

For almost a year, I've worked for *The Cascade*, UFV's student press; first as a staff writer, and then as features editor and editor-in-chief. As a student journalist, I typically focus on wide-ranging cultural and political issues, which I often attempt to contextualize with a dive into the historical record. As a student of history, I try to explore as many different subjects as I'm able, because psychology, sociology, and political science, for example, all provide insight into events like the Russian Civil War. As a journalist, my job is not so different.

When I wrote about Canada's Nuclear future, I certainly discussed its past— but I also delved into climate change, global development, public policy, and competing forms of power generation. When I reported on the troubling rise of political violence, I drew not only from recent cases, but also from fractious periods in the 20th century. History is a valuable lens through which to view a story, and the more information you take in, the better your resolution becomes. That lens can illustrate where comparisons exist, but crucially, it also shows where they break down. The complexity and inherent messiness of human history makes me approach each new story with caution. The uncertainty of my own thoughts and opinions leads me to ask better questions— both in interviews, and ultimately to the readers.

I love writing, but since I'm more analytical than artistic, I've never been all that imaginative. Good stories, however, are all around us if you know how to spot them. We are all living through history, and scholars will mine the legislation, writing, and multimedia we craft today in an attempt to understand events like COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, and the emergence of artificial intelligence. Could ChatGPT prove to be more transformative than Gutenberg's printing press? Time will tell.

The virtue of history is that by studying who we were, we can better decide who we want to be. My ambition— my goal— is to weave the stories of today with those of the past to create a compelling, informative, and thought-provoking article that readers can truly engage with. I never cared about dusty old photos of even dustier old prospectors because I never connected to the story behind it. My time at *The Cascade* will ultimately be successful if just a few more people care— about our past, present, and future. That, for me, is progress.



The War in Ukraine After One Year - UFV "Politalk" Roundtable + Return of the Annual "History Tea"

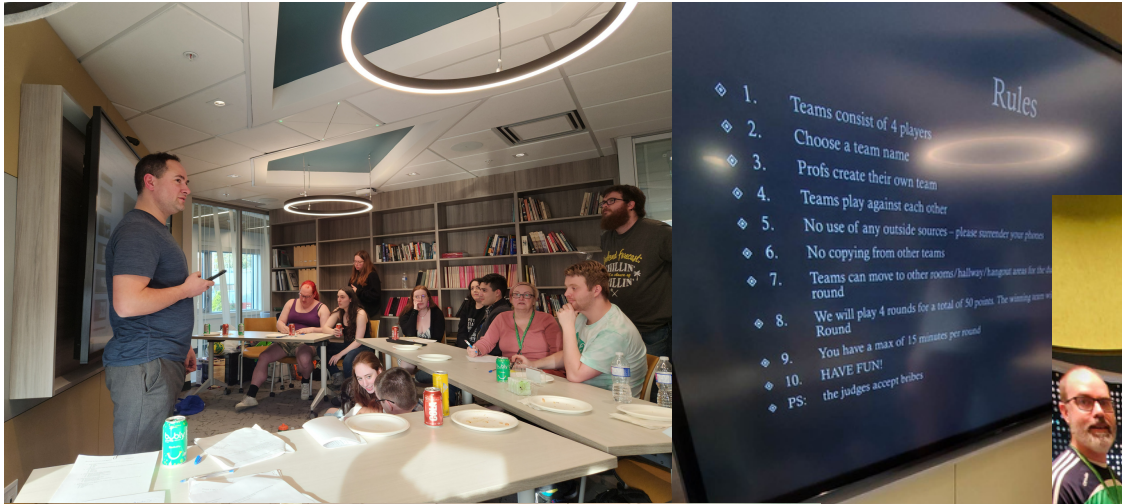


History Department Profs. Scott Sheffield, Sebastien Huebel, and Larissa Horne were part of a well attended "Politalk" Roundtable (with a Q & A) about the one year anniversary of the ongoing war in Ukraine, hosted by our colleagues at UFV's Political Science Department on March 30, 2023. Check it out on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/LBA-7ye-pT4>



The History Department was able to once again host our annual "History Tea" - organized by our esteemed Department Coordinator, Nicole Kungle. A great tradition that brings student and faculty together for stimulating conversations, and, of course, some refreshing afternoon tea with snacks!

UFV History Department Trivia Night (First Ever)



Profs. Sebastian Huebel and Ian Rocksborough-Smith organized the first ever History Department "trivia night" in our newly renovated department meeting room. There were prizes, pizza, and fun had by all! No cell phones were allowed! Congrats to the winners!!!! (pictured centre-left and lower-right).

Social Media

Association for History Students



UFV Association for
History Students

UFV History Dept.

@ahs.ufv

@ufv_history_dept



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history department information!

UNIVERSITY
OF THE FRASER VALLEY
HISTORY



Recent scenes from two of the many fascinating history courses you can take at UFV. History 313 (above) and History 309 (below).



If you are a current student or alumnus and are working on a project you might like to have profiled in this newsletter, consider submitting ideas to *Now and Then*. We would love to hear from you! **Contact: historyinfo@ufv.ca**