



**PennState**

# Liberal Arts doctoral student wins national dissertation fellowship

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University Park, Pa. -- Rachel Louise Moran, a doctoral candidate in History and Women's Studies in Penn State's College of the Liberal Arts, has been awarded the Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship, the largest and most prestigious award for doctoral students studying the humanities and social sciences and addressing questions of ethical and religious values. Only 21 recipients were selected from 600 applicants to the program, organized by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, based in Princeton, N.J. Moran's research also earned a National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant for 2011, another mark of high distinction.

The Newcombe Fellowship will allow Moran to focus on completing her dissertation over the coming academic year. She will spend the year as a Fellow in Politics and History at the University of Virginia's Miller Center of Public Affairs, which brings together outstanding graduate students from top institutions such as Columbia, Harvard, and Stanford Universities. In her current research, Moran is exploring the long history of U.S. federal government involvement in the weight and physique of its citizens, including information from selective service rejections during World War II and 4-H health contests in the 1920s. "This seemingly personal or individual realm, then, is historically actually a very public concern," she said.

She has long been intrigued by the politics of gender and physique, she said. Initially, she looked at the history of food stamps in America, a topic that became the focus of her master's degree at Penn State. Her work in that area culminated in an article, "Consuming Relief: Food Stamps and the New Welfare of the New Deal," which was published in the March 2011 issue of *The Journal of American History*.

"Rachel is a perfect example of how excellent graduate students propel the College's reputation forward," said Denise Solomon, associate dean. "The Newcombe and NSF awards put Rachel, and also Penn State, in an elite group whose members come from the most prestigious graduate programs in the nation. Rachel's success also illustrates how the support available to graduate students through alumni gifts helps these students to excel in their scholarship and, in turn, enables them to compete successfully for prestigious external awards."

Alumni gifts have played a major role in Moran's educational career at Penn State and in the development of her dissertation research. She has received funding from the Department of History, the College of the Liberal Arts, the Rock Ethics Institute, and the Richards Civil War Era Center, much of which came from gifts by several alumni and friends such as Don and Carol Miller, Mark and Lucy Stitzer, Larry and Lynne Brown, and Ann and Mark Persun. This past year, Moran was awarded the Crawford Fellowship in Ethical Inquiry, established by 1957 alumnus Forrest "Rusty" Crawford, allowing her to concentrate on her dissertation and travel extensively.

More information can be found at the following links:

-- Five Questions with Rachel Moran at <http://www.rps.psu.edu/indepth/moran.html> online.

-- *Journal of American History* associate editor Stephen Andrews talks with Rachel Moran on her research published in the March issue. Listen to an interview with Moran at <http://www.journalofamericanhistory.org/podcast/> online.

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