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Professional Assessment Statement  
June 2019

## **Introduction:**

Rollins's interdisciplinary atmosphere is an ideal professional home for broad and creative historical teaching and for stimulating new avenues of research. The liberal arts setting resonates strongly with my field: Byzantine history requires flexibility and synthesis across broad content (sitting between East and West, and spanning more than a millennium) and comfort in disciplines from theology to archaeology to literature. Moreover, I value Rollins as a community, and the opportunity to serve students and colleagues both in and outside of the classroom.

Below, I present my achievements in all three arenas required for tenure. Over the past five years, I have pursued impassioned, well-prepared teaching for History and other programs, published two peer-reviewed articles, and contributed to the college through student-centric service. Notably, I accomplished all of this work in the face of a high number of new course-preps during my first three years at Rollins and the impact of a dramatically decreased History faculty in the last two years.

## **Teaching:**

I strive to familiarize, humanize, and make the—often quite distant—past accessible to students. I especially seek to make history more tangible. Bringing personal photographs of Greece into class illustrates the impact of landscape on political systems; cooking Turkish food with my Ottoman RCC immerses students in the empire's hybrid cultures; having students in my Istanbul course connect the city's buildings to each lesson's historical material binds past events to a finite time and place. While not feasible for every student, field studies can animate history even further; after my Panhellenic Greece trip, students repeatedly remarked on my ability to connect archaeological sites and artifacts to events and concepts we'd studied in a way that added weight to course material. I hope to reprise this field study in the future, and develop others as my teaching interests evolve, both to help bring my historical content alive for students and to nurture their growing senses of global citizenship. I am also unabashedly enthusiastic about my course-content, which encourages students to give unfamiliar material or civilizations a chance (per one Crusades CIE, Fall 2018: "she was so enthusiastic and knowledgeable that it kind of rubs off on you"). At all levels, I've found it worthwhile to enjoy a good laugh with the class. History is fun: we learn as much through drawing infographics, dramatically reading an Aristophanes comedy, reenacting a historical trial, or reading relevant mystery novels as we do from traditional classroom activities. History is engagement with and interpretation of the past, and can and should be pursued via diverse approaches to captivate student interest.

A primary goal of my teaching is to challenge my students to become active historians and thinkers: to examine *how* we know what we know, to get beyond 'common knowledge,' and to analyze multiple voices and perspectives for any given subject. In my Spring 2019 Black Death class, we examined how the traditional narrative of the pandemic failed to reflect the varied

experiences of those who lived through it. By reading multiple primary sources from the period, many of which contradict each other, we traced how writers with different political and religious agendas interpreted events in disparate ways. We also compared scientific data from plague graveyards to our texts, not to poke fun at medieval ignorance about the plague but to help us ask *why* writers came to the conclusions that they did. Furthermore, when halfway through our semester I attended a conference-presentation with cutting-edge research mapping the plague's movement and framing it more fully as a global pandemic, I brought this evidence back to the class to weigh in with our other materials and consider yet again how historical interpretation is an ongoing process. Rather than focusing only on 'right' and 'wrong' answers, I push students to think critically to build their own informed interpretations about historical events, their causes, and their effects (as one CIE from this course articulated, "training us to think like historians").

To help students to take ownership of their learning, I provide them with classroom structure, readings, and scaffolded assignments that both meet them at an appropriate level and push them forward. While my students' lack of background in the topics I teach often necessitates some lecture, I primarily see the classroom as a space for dialogue and exploration. I carefully map out each class ahead of time, to make sure I cover all material, but also commonly ask open-ended questions that push students to go beyond their readings or connect material across the semester. My students read primary sources almost every day, to practice 'doing history' themselves. However, I calibrate these sources to students' abilities: for the 100-level, if our (often public domain) texts lack the basic framing introductory students require, I provide annotations to these works myself (e.g., Homer example, Canvas). While I sometimes assign 100-level students general-audience narratives (e.g., Tom Holland's *Rubicon*, Tom Madden's *Istanbul*) in lieu of the more academic materials I use at the higher levels, I work up to journal articles and monograph chapters across the semester. I regularly assign formative projects that build up students' skills ahead of major assignments. For example, often students practice single-text analyses before they write an argument-paper, or do research in stages (see rFLA100 and HIS374 assignments, Canvas). Likewise, I regularly ask classes to write their own exam study-guides collectively to practice judging the importance of information (unpopular with freshmen used to being given guides, but ultimately more useful in promoting understanding over regurgitation).

I teach broadly at Rollins, enabling my students (and myself) to explore historical connections across time and space. I comfortably teach in ancient, western medieval, early modern European, and Islamic history in addition to my Byzantine specialization. I've employed all of these areas in my Rollins teaching, developing nine HIS course preps—plus an intersession, a field study, and advising honors theses and independent studies. I have taught three 300-levels that stress critical thinking and independent research, a Renaissance-centered 200-level research-methods class, and five 100-levels that introduce students (largely non-majors) to primary sources and historical thinking. While the pre-modern Mediterranean is my primary interest, I've stretched further into modern history while at Rollins, particularly with my History of a City: Istanbul course (in which 40% of the content is 20<sup>th</sup>-century or later). I will further extend my chronological coverage this fall by reinventing Jim Norris's popular World War I course and co-leading a World Wars-themed field study in May. I am broadening my geographic scope with increased Balkan coverage, too, thanks to Rollins's former Fulbright visitor Neli Aljec and my faculty internationalization trip to Albania.

My teaching contributes widely beyond my department, too. Teaching either RCC or rFLA100 every academic year since 2015, I've focused on first-years and cultivating these fledgling students' foundational skills. For example, in my Spring 2019 Barbarians course, I used group competitions to evaluate their knowledge-retention and devoted class-time for developing and peer-reviewing outlines for their formal papers, to catch elementary mistakes early and push their arguments and content beyond simple first attempts. The latter activity led to the best formal papers I've ever received in rFLA100. My general education and HIS courses alike contribute to interdisciplinary programs as well—Classical Studies, International Relations, Middle Eastern & North African Studies, and Religious Studies—showcasing the value of historical study to multiple majors and minors. I've taught in Holt once so far, with both another history course and a Masters of Liberal Studies class scheduled there for Spring 2020. As a contribution to R-Compass, I taught Making Any Major Marketable twice, first with Jenny Queen and later with Emily Nodine. Encountering all these different student populations has made me more aware of how to adapt my teaching methods to meet diverse needs and backgrounds.

Such versatile teaching and so many course-preps have not been without their challenges. I, like many other faculty, struggle to demand consistent rigor and engagement, particularly while trying to avoid assigning busywork. My first year at Rollins, my teaching and expectations were still oriented toward the large-classroom dynamics I'd experienced at Ohio State; to recalibrate my courses and rigor to Rollins norms, I revamped my participation grading-scale to demand active classroom engagement (see Canvas). I also spent more time on writing assignments, particularly incentivizing students to read my feedback and strengthen their previous weaker areas by rewarding progress made on problem areas and incrementally penalizing lack of improvement. Student CIEs now comment on the rigor of my classes, and appreciate my feedback. Modeling my higher expectations has been particularly helpful; for example, my Leader Day Assignment (see Canvas) has pushed students to elevate their reflections before and during class—which has improved students' skills and contributions even on days when they are not completing an assignment. I still grapple with how to handle student apathy, which is in higher ratios in non-major courses including CLP, rFLA, and RCC, and to adapt to the new learning-patterns of Generation Z students—but I keep bombarding my students with enthusiasm and experimenting with new activities to spark a curiosity to learn. As I now slow down on new course-preps (aside from more pre-1918 modern European history), I look forward emphasizing further course-revision.

### **Research:**

I am an active scholar with a particular emphasis on the religious culture and administration of the Byzantine Empire and growing interest in intercultural comparison among medieval Mediterranean civilizations. As such, my work often centers on time-intensive translation of Greek and Latin texts before I can begin historical research. Regardless, I have both met my department's requirement of "two scholarly accomplishments" and established a steady article-based research agenda that will carry me forward to the next stage of my career.

I met my department's research requirements through two peer-reviewed articles, both published in 2018. "Occupying and Transcending a Provincial See: The Career of Euthymios Malakes," appeared in *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, one of the top journals in my field. This is a traditional article based on four years of primary-source research, recreating and analyzing the career of a twelfth-century bishop. Not only is this one of the first direct studies of Malakes, an important literary and theological figure of his day, but this article has also offered a window into episcopal activities outside of the major metropolitan sees. The second article, "Translation and Evolution: Byzantine Monastic Studies since ca. 1990" (published in *Religion Compass*), is more historiographical in its approach. This focuses on digesting the considerable scholarly activity in this subfield over the last thirty years, making the complex Byzantine monastic world more accessible to scholars and students outside of Byzantine studies, and highlighting fruitful avenues for future monastic research. As a direct result of this study (and inspired in part by Rollins's emphasis on responsible leadership), I developed an article-project comparing the roles of male and female abbots in the Byzantine Empire; I intend to research and write this during my Fall 2020 sabbatical.

Moving forward, I also have two article-length projects in development that infuse my western medieval side into my Byzantine research. Not only have these projects been fed by my western medieval teaching at Rollins, but they also tap into new academic trends that seek cross-cultural comparison and the promotion of a more global medieval world. The first, tentatively titled "Finding Byzantine-Norman Common Ground: Classics and Christianity in Tzetzes' Encomium to Loukia," examines how a Byzantine author argued for shared heritage with the Normans of Sicily at a time when the relationship between these two powers was extremely fraught. I argue that the text's cultural approach to Sicily's most famous saint provides a relative antidote to the hostile political narratives more common in both contemporary texts and modern scholarship. I presented elements of this project at the major conferences for both Byzantine and medieval studies, to useful and positive feedback, and am currently writing up the article for submission to *Viator*, a respected peer-reviewed medieval studies journal. For a second project, I have done most of the Byzantine research for an article comparing western and Byzantine twelfth-century monastic reform movements, which I plan to write collaboratively with a medievalist who works on the western equivalents. The timeline for this project is less certain due to the conflicting demands of two different schedules, but given my own considerable training in western monastic history, it is a project I would also consider pursuing alone if necessary.

As part of the broader pattern of research, I also presented regularly at major conferences and published a book review. Since coming to Rollins, I presented twice at the Byzantine Studies Conference and twice at the Annual Meeting of the Medieval Academy of America, respectively the two most important conferences on Byzantine and medieval studies outside of Europe—and each selective. My book review (2016), on Brenda Llewellyn Ihssen's study of John Moschos' *Spiritual Meadow* appeared in *Church History*, the top ecclesiastical history journal in the U.S. While book reviews are not a priority for me moving forward, given that my own research is so time-intensive, I plan to keep presenting research at both Byzantine and broader medieval conferences.

## **Service:**

I am a community-minded colleague who seeks to do my part at the departmental, college, and national levels. While ready to act wherever needed, I prioritized service that enhances students' personal and academic experiences at Rollins. This unifying thread is evident across my advising, work with co-curricular events, and committee service.

My favorite contribution at Rollins has been as an academic advisor. I have served in this role to over forty students in the last four years, both as a major advisor (for History, but also for IR and Classical Studies) and for two sections of RCC—with a third lined up this fall. I build strong relationships with my advisees in order to connect them to the courses and opportunities best suited to their academic and personal growth. This level of trust and knowledge has helped me support one advisee to finish a semester successfully despite fighting an eating disorder, suggest a particular philosophy class to two Business-inclined RCC advisees that led to both declaring Philosophy majors, and generally help students navigate campus bureaucracy and personal crises. My advisees regularly express their comfort in approaching me for help or a friendly ear, and respect my mastery of our ever-changing academic regulations. I inform my advising via regular attendance at campus advising workshops and actively seeking information on less familiar areas of campus. For example, I served as the outside member on search committees for Business and Olin Library and taught in CLP with a particular eye toward better informing my advising re: these areas. My advisees appreciate both my compassion and detailed records, and have nominated me for formal advising appreciation each of the last three years. R-Compass has likewise recognized my advising: Tiffany Griffin chose to read my advisees' tributes out loud to the full faculty in May 2018 and I was invited to become a R-Compass Advising Mentor (RCAM) later that same year.

As a member of a small department, service to the History program has been both a requirement (particularly given our recently diminished faculty numbers) and pleasure. My most consistent contribution has been as the advisor to our chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, history's national honor society. The advisor is a particularly student-facing role, which suits me well: I handle inductions, supervise student officers, and facilitate student participation in conferences—including, next year, hosting the regional  $\Phi\alpha\Theta$  conference at Rollins. I also handle events that reinforce our department's tight-knit atmosphere, including tabling at the R-Compass fair, organizing lectures, and arranging trivia and movie nights. I have pitched in collegially wherever I could, whether through formal projects or informally. Examples of the former include helping Claire Strom draft the Latin American tenure-line proposal, writing the department's last three (successful!) TPJ grants, and serving on two Visiting Assistant Professor search committees. Less formally, I attended meetings on behalf of our chairs, covered class-sessions for Jim Norris and Julian Chambliss, and helped colleagues navigate the finer points of Blackboard. Post-tenure, I look forward to covering as chair during Claire Strom's next sabbatical and taking on other projects as needed, including assessment.

At the college-level, I am particularly drawn to service that enriches students' experiences. I served on the Student Life Committee, both while this was a standing faculty committee and after it transitioned to an all-campus one. I co-chaired the Scholarship for High Impact Practices subcommittee, handling scholarship correspondence, facilitating blind review, and maintaining

the SHIP blog with recipients' reflections. With my midcourse committees' recommendation to undertake less committee work in favor of research, I've assumed smaller campus roles, test-piloting new course management software with an eye to student and faculty usability, interviewing candidates for the Alford Scholarship, and, as above, becoming a RCAM. In the future, I'd like to push my student-centric interests further into academic spheres of service, perhaps on the Curriculum Committee.

While Rollins and its students comprise my primary service-sphere, I also represent the liberal arts world in my Byzantine field whenever possible. Most notably, I was elected to the governing board of the Byzantine Studies Association of North America (BSANA) in 2017, to serve a three-year term. R1 faculty traditionally predominate in BSANA leadership; the other three scholars elected my year are from Harvard, Duke, and Cornell. During my first year on the board, I focused on graduate-student outreach, including representing the possibilities of small liberal arts institutions at a panel for graduate students. In my second year on the board, I was elected Secretary. In this role, I joined the executive committee, handle association records, and manage an academic listserv and social media. My committee role has raised my and Rollins's profile within the field and kept me engaged with the latest research, which helps keep my scholarship current.

I am proud of my accomplishments and look forward to advancing my teaching, research, and service even further in the future.