

At Florida Atlantic University

Major: History

Michael Ortiz is currently a Graduate Student at the University of Colorado working on his PhD. His major is History with a concentration on Modern Europe and his expected graduation date is 2015.

Up until now, the biggest challenge I have faced was making a career choice. I graduated with an undergraduate degree in Finance from Notre Dame in 2007, and immediately secured a job working in the financial sector. After nearly a year however, I came to the realization I was in the wrong profession. Rudderless, and unsure of where to proceed, I decided to take a couple of classes at FAU to see how I liked the historical profession. Four years later, I could not be happier. In retrospect, the struggle of selecting a career has made the past four years that much sweeter. FAU has really cultivated what was previously a dormant passion for history, and prepared me extremely well for all I have faced since. Even if I decide not to pursue a PhD, the critical thinking, research, and other skills learned at FAU would serve me well in almost any profession.

I was in a bit of a unique position entering FAU in that I had very little exposure to history. Beyond a few classes during my undergraduate experience, I was definitely 'green' when it came to the historical profession. Fortunately, the introductory colloquium, teaching practicum, and other classes caught me right up to speed. Nowadays, after having undergone several harrowing, but ultimately fulfilling courses-in addition to having written a Master's Thesis after researching for months in Europe-I certainly feel as though FAU more than prepared me for a career in history. Having spent some time now at the University of Colorado, I can say for certain that after having attended FAU, I was exceptionally prepared for post-graduate work.

After deciding to attend a local South Florida University, I can remember visiting FAU for the first time and just being blown away at how organized, welcoming, and enthusiastic the faculty was. The first time I walked into Dr. Kollander's office (the Department Chair), as little more than an unsure and trembling first year grad student interested in Modern European history, she beckoned me right into her office and we talked about my interests for half an hour. That meant so much and it was right around that time I knew I had made the right decision at FAU.

The feedback, guidance, and passion of the faculty is unparalleled, and is one of the primary reasons I continue to study history to this day. And of course, I would be remiss if I did not especially thank the direction of my thesis committee: Dr. Kollander, Dr. Kanter, and Dr. McGetchin. My fondest memories of FAU are without a doubt the people I encountered. My fellow classmates, to this day, are some of the best friends-and best people-I have ever met. But beyond academic considerations (of which there were plenty), the close knit group of graduate students was something I also held very dear. Always willing to assist one another, or share a drink and lend an ear, my fellow graduate students were one of the major reasons I survived!

At the moment my goal is to survive! Indeed, I would love nothing more than to follow my passion and eventually graduate with a PhD. I love to teach, and enjoy researching; the historical profession offers the perfect marriage of both. Hopefully I can make it through and graduate at some point.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my parents, Roberto and Elena, for all their support and guidance over the years. Without their patience, backing and influence, there is no way I would be the person I am today.

