Graduate Student Features

CENFAD Emerging Scholar: Isabela "Cas" Casanova

Each year, applicants to Temple University's M.A. Program in History have the opportunity to be selected for the Emerging Scholar Graduate Award, funded by CENFAD. This year's recipient is **Isabela "Cas" Casanova**, a first-year M.A. student in Temple's History Department.

Photo courtesy of Cas Casanova

Born and raised in Miami, Florida, Cas earned both a B.A. in International Relations and an M.A. in Education from Florida State University before coming to Temple. "I have always wanted to be an educator in some capacity and taught at the K-12 level for four years," Cas explained. "I decided to return to school and pursue my Master's in History to take part in the making of scholarship that students will one day study."

Casanova described how a lifelong fascination with understanding the world's divisions ultimately led them to history. "I am a firm believer in the idea that to look to the future, we must first learn from the past," they reflected. "This not only helps me feel grounded - we are not the first to be dealing with the issues and questions we face today - but as if I am a part of something bigger."

Drawn to Philadelphia for its rich historical landscape, Cas noted that teaching U.S. history had often centered their attention on places like Virginia, New York, and Massachusetts, and they wanted to immerse themselves in a city with a vibrant historical community of its own. It was during the application process that they first encountered CENFAD, whose focus on diplomacy and transnational cooperation aligned closely with their academic interests.

Currently, Cas is laying the groundwork for a long-term research project on the evolution of the international socialist movement. "I am trying to build the foundation for a future research project on the evolution of the

international socialist movement: right now, I am examining the historiography of the Civil War period from an international perspective and what scholarship has been done on the role of the International Workingmen's Association (or the First International) on emancipation of slaves and Reconstruction," they explained.

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At Temple, Cas looks forward to deepening their understanding of U.S. foreign relations. "Dr. McPherson's work on American foreign relations is incredible," they said, "and I am looking forward to his class on diplomatic history in the spring."

Reflecting on receiving the Emerging Scholar Award, Cas described the recognition as both meaningful and motivating. "It is truly an honor to be chosen for this award - the knowledge that there is interest and support in my future work is extremely humbling and motivates me to put my absolute best into my work at every stage," they said. "Being afforded the opportunity to attend lectures and learn what kind of work is being done by historians around the country has been a great privilege. I hope to use these connections to further my professional network and learn from my colleagues."

Casanova also emphasized how CENFAD's programming has influenced their thinking. "The CENFAD lectures have really expanded my idea of what force and diplomacy can be in several ways," they observed. "I have been greatly inspired by the Fall 2025 lecture series and the variety of approaches taken to the subject by the presenters. For example, Michael E. Neagle's lecture on the War on Terror helped me change the way I think about periodization and trends in American foreign policy over time; Renata Keller's lecture on the Cuban Missile Crisis also challenged me to question the framing of historical events and examine things from a more nuanced global perspective."

Looking ahead, Cas hopes to pursue a Ph.D. and continue exploring questions of race and transnationalism within the international socialist movement.