



SPRING 2026

CAL POLY HUMBOLDT

Graduate Studies

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Extra! Extra!

Read all about it!

As the ink dries on another spring semester, the Graduate Studies Team would like to extend a warm Thank You to each graduate student, both in-person and virtual, across the Humboldt community! Whether you are deep in the archives, mid-experiment in the lab, or putting the final flourishes on your dissertation, we hope this year has been successful and productive for you all! There is a multitude of groundbreaking work to celebrate, and the Graduate Studies Office would like to recognize some of the students and faculty shaping the future.



Student Spotlight

Meet our Spotlitged Students of the Year!



Elisa Reyes

Public Sociology

What is the focus of your research?

My research focuses on strategies and facilitation within grassroots organizations.

“The faculty are incredibly welcoming and supportive :)”

Why did you choose Cal Poly Humboldt and your graduate program?

I chose this program for its strong emphasis on community engagement and its amazing, supportive faculty. Having previously worked with grassroots organizations, I wanted to further develop my skills in community organizing. Being so close to both the forest and the beach is definitely a plus!

How did you choose your area of study?

I’ve always been interested in methodology and theory when examining social and systemic issues. Sociology provides a strong theoretical foundation to help structure meaningful solutions to these challenges.

Tell us a bit about your program

This is a two-year program where students can choose between completing a traditional thesis or a project. I chose the project option and am currently completing my placement with the Q Center on campus. The program is designed to support students as they develop their research while taking core courses such as theory, methods, and statistics—all held in the evening.

Student Spotlight

H.



Jesse Benefiel

Psychology
(Academic Research)

What is the focus of your research?

The reduction of physiological stress

Fun Fact!

I collect pre-20th-century artifacts, even though they completely clash with my modern home décor.

“I love Arcata! And a special thanks to Dr. Sanchez who guided me through my academic journey, and to Benny and Dr. Gaffney who gave me the statistical tools to succeed”

Why did you choose Cal Poly Humboldt and your graduate program?

I chose Cal Poly Humboldt because I fell in love with the area. The redwoods, the culture, and the eccentricity all deeply appealed to me. I stumbled across the campus while traveling to visit a different college, and I immediately knew this was where I wanted to begin my undergraduate career. When it came time to choose a graduate program, I simply remembered what had drawn me there in the first place, as well as the many meaningful experiences I had there, and the decision felt natural.

How did you choose your area of study?

As soon as I was exposed to psychology in a high school elective, I felt naturally drawn to the field. As I navigated my undergraduate studies, I realized two things: there was an entire realm of biological underpinnings behind behavior and cognition that I wanted to explore, and I was far more interested in gaining knowledge and making discoveries than I was in applying that knowledge directly. I had always admired scholars in books and movies, and over time, I realized they were the kind of people I wanted to be like.

Tell us a bit about your program

My program focuses on developing the skills needed to interpret and conduct research, as well as navigate academia. Although you continue learning psychology, much of that learning comes from the articles you read, dissect, and write about for the purposes of completing your thesis and demonstrating proficiency in finding, analyzing, and applying data.

Advice for Students Considering a Master's Program

My advice would be to explore the research early on, find a specific theory or niche in the field that naturally draws your interest, and spend your graduate career dissecting and digging into it as much as possible. It doesn't even have to be the focus of your thesis; it's just worth finding something to become deeply knowledgeable about. Also, join the research labs on campus!

Student Spotlight



Magee Headley
Environment and
Community MA

What is the focus of your research?

My research sits at the intersections of land, people, and trauma and the ways that human and more-than-human kin heal together. I sometimes call this ethnoecology.

Fun Fact!

I used to play electric ukulele in a band!

Why did you choose Cal Poly Humboldt and your graduate program?

I learned about CPH through a TEK & Place Based Learning Communities in my undergrad back home in Denver, I felt drawn to the school and E&C was a great fit for the kind of work I want to do.

How did you choose your area of study?

I have a background in horticulture and biology but I've also been really involved in community organizing, at E&C I can integrate the two like I do in real life.

Tell us a bit about your program

Environment and Community is a multidisciplinary program that focuses on finding sustainable solutions to complex social issues rooted in a decolonized, social justice approach. There are so many of us doing so many different things at E&C and yet each of them feel so connected. It is a big honor to do my work alongside my cohorts.

Advice for Students Considering a Masters Program

It's hard work but if you are grounded in doing what you want and need to be doing it's so very worth it.

Faculty Spotlight



Çağlar Dölek
Assistant Professor,
Department of
Sociology

I began teaching at Cal Poly Humboldt in January 2022. As a first-generation university graduate, I was drawn to Humboldt's status as a Hispanic-Serving Institution and its commitment to providing higher education opportunities for first-generation students. The Sociology Department's social-justice orientation and the university's rich history of campus and community activism resonated with my aspirations as a scholar-activist. Additionally, the extraordinary beauty of the campus, situated between the redwoods and the coast, was a major draw for my partner and me.

As an assistant professor of Sociology, I teach in our undergraduate Sociology and Criminology and Justice Studies programs, while also supervising projects in the Public Sociology MA Program. Teaching is my passion; I am a dedicated educator who believes in the transformative power of higher education. To foster critical thinking and civic engagement, I have collaborated with students to develop two new courses: Popular Resistance to the Global Carceral State and Marginalized Poor and Radical Imagination. Beyond the classroom, I serve as an academic advisor for student clubs, Chair of the Sociology Department Curriculum and Assessment Committee, and a member of the Rapid Response Network for immigration justice.

My research spans critical criminology, urban sociology, and social history, focusing on how state power and policing interact with class formation and social marginalization. This work was shaped by the rise of authoritarian climates globally and seeks to uncover the silenced histories of the marginalized.

I am currently completing a book manuscript, *Policing Slums in Turkey: Crime, Resistance, and the Republic on the Margin*, under contract with Edinburgh University Press. This research, which utilizes oral narratives and social historiographies from the Global South, received the Cal Poly Humboldt Promising Faculty Scholars Award in 2025. I encourage graduate students to explore the transformative power of critical theory to better understand their lived experiences. Outside of work, I enjoy hiking the Arcata community forest with my partner, Gina, and our French poodle, Lucas,

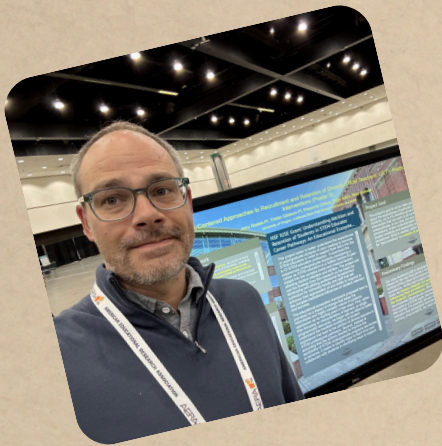


Faculty Spotlight



Tristan Gleason

Associate Professor,
School of Education



I joined Cal Poly Humboldt because my research theorizes the importance of using the outdoors as a site of teaching and learning. I was thrilled to find a university that shares this commitment to place-based, hands-on education, and I am personally smitten by the extraordinary beauty of this area.

On campus, I serve as the program coordinator for the MA in Education program. My work involves teaching courses on the sociology of education, critical pedagogy, and educational research, while supporting students through their theses and capstone projects. I also teach science education and action research within the Elementary Education BA program.

My educational journey began in Portland, Oregon, followed by a BA in Biology from Bowdoin College in Maine. My transition into education started while teaching middle school science in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, which eventually led to six years of high school teaching back in Portland. I later earned my PhD in Critical and Sociocultural Studies in Education from the University of Oregon. Initially, I viewed teaching as temporary before pursuing graduate biology, but I fell in love with the joy of the classroom and became passionate about addressing educational inequities. Education serves as a transdisciplinary space for me, allowing my research to bridge the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

My advice to graduate students is first to remember that you belong. Graduate school shifts your role from a knowledge consumer to a knowledge producer, which can fundamentally change how you see yourself as a learner. Additionally, remember that things worth doing are hard; seeking out challenges is the best way to grow. Locally, I enjoy spending time at McKay Tract, the Trinity River, and the dunes and forests out on the peninsula.

Faculty Spotlight



Stefanie Israel de Souza

Assistant Professor
of Sociology

I chose Cal Poly Humboldt because the position perfectly aligned with my values as a scholar and educator. My commitment to critical criminology and comparative research fits naturally here, allowing me to remain authentic to my scholarly identity. Growing up in the Pacific Northwest, I was also deeply drawn to the campus location, nestled beautifully between the Redwoods and the coast.

Currently, I teach undergraduate courses in Sociology, Criminology and Justice Studies, and Cannabis Studies, while also advising graduate students in the Public Sociology program. My campus leadership roles include serving as the Editorial Board President of the Humboldt Journal of Social Relations and acting as the Cal Poly Humboldt Chapter Representative for Alpha Kappa Delta, the International Sociology Honor Society.

My research trajectory began after earning my PhD in Sociology from the University of Notre Dame. After college, I worked with an NGO in a Brazilian favela, where I witnessed how structural constraints and problematic policing limited life opportunities for families. This experience led me to conduct extensive ethnographic fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro during the 2016 Summer Olympics to study "pacification" policing initiatives. My current book manuscript draws on this research to explore the impact of mega-event-driven security policies on urban margins in the Global South.

I encourage graduate students to ask big questions and research what truly interests them. If you plan to pursue a PhD, view your master's thesis as a launchpad for future dissertation work; you don't need all the answers now, just a meaningful portion to address. Outside of academia, I enjoy visiting Trinidad State Beach and Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park. A fun fact about me is that I am a certified yoga instructor; I earned my credential during graduate school so I could give back to the community by teaching free classes in the favelas during my fieldwork.



PATRICKIA MCCONKEY

AWARD WINNERS

These students are recognized for their outstanding efforts while graduating with a master's degree from each of our graduate programs. Every academic year we ask our staff and faculty to nominate graduating master's students who have gone above and beyond during their time here at Cal Poly Humboldt. All students who've completed a master's degree between May 2025 and May 2026 are eligible. These awardees were selected by their respective programs. Congratulations, Students!



**Delaney Schroeder-
Echavarria**
MA Environmental and
Community
Thesis Title:
"Kelp Guardians Can
Save the World "



Holly Reed
MSW



Elizabeth Silver
MA Public Sociology
Thesis Title:
"Rethinking Belonging in
First-Year Student
Support: A Mixed-
Methods Evaluation of
EOP/SSS Programming
at Cal Poly Humboldt"



Rachel Matteri
MA Applied English
Thesis Title:
"True Crime Podcasts as a Scene of
Feminist Reckoning: A Comparative
Analysis of My Favorite Murder and
Sistas Who Kill"

PACTRICIA MCCONKEY

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NOMINATIONS



Miranda Connelly
MA Academic Research
in Psychology

Thesis Title:

"The Effects and Attention
to Placebo-Relevant
Sensations on the Open-
Label Placebo Analgesic
Response "



Grace Gonzalez
MA Counseling
Psychology



Kaiden Walton
MS Biological
Sciences

Thesis Title:

"A Comparative
Survey of
Ichthyoplankton
Assemblages in
Humboldt Bay "



Lacy Mitchell
MA Public Sociology

Thesis Title:

"Decolonizing
Restorative Justice: A
Teaching Development
Project"



Anthony Aviles
MA Applied
Anthropology



Sebastian Evans
MS Natural Resources
FWWS

Thesis Title:

"Succession and alpine
plant habitat of a recently
deglaciated foreland in
the Trinity Alps, California"

April & May Deadlines

APRIL 27th - Deadline for
Courtesy Format Review
(submit to cfr@humboldt.edu)

MAY 12th - Final Thesis or
Project Submission Deadline for
Spring 2026 Graduation
term (submit to Digital
Commons at least one business
day before deadline)

MAY 11th - Spring
Final Exams Begin



**MAY 16th - Spring 2026
Commencement**

2026 Cal Poly Humboldt Grad Slam
Hosted by the Office of Graduate
Studies with support from
Sponsored Programs

Humboldt Grad Slam Winners!

1st Place

Soph Robson

Breaking the
Cycle: Written &
Spoken Word
Poetry as
Transformative
Justice Healing

2nd Place

Magee Headley

Healing
Ecologies

3rd Place

Alex OB

Fissures to
Fractures: An
Analysis of
Violent
Enclosures,
Contrapuntal
Humanitarian
Aid, and
Weaponized
Landscapes

Keep a look out!

**Humboldt's 59th
International Film Festival**

April 23rd - 26th

3:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Minor Theatre Off-Campus
(Free to all Cal Poly Students)

Late Night Breakfast

Monday, May 12, 7 - 10pm
Jolly Giant Commons 113
Come enjoy Build-A-Bear
and Karaoke in the Rec
Room on the 1st floor of the
JGC!



Commencement

**Spring 2026 Commencement will be held
Saturday, May 16th in
Lumberjack Arena**

Congratulations Class of 2026!



Photos

Flowers

Regalia

**College of Arts, Humanities and
Social Sciences | 8:30 a.m. |**

College of Natural Resources | 12:00 p.m. |

College of Professional Studies | 3:30 p.m. |

Resources

Graduate Student Handbook

Financial Aid Office

Humboldt Digital Commons

IACUC

Institutional Review Board

Office of the Registrar

Information

Technology Services

Chancellors Doctoral Incentive Program

Sally Casanova Pre-Doctoral Program

Academic and Career Advising Center

Cashiers Office

Dean Of Students

Extended Education and Global Engagement

Oh Snap!

Student Disability Center

Student Health Center

University Bookstore

University Police Department