Justinne Lake-Jedzinak

**Dissertation Title:** Reframing Femininity: Collecting Pictures of Early Christian Martyrs in Seicento Naples

**Chair:** David J. Cast

**Committee:** Christopher D. M. Atkins (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), Sylvia Houghteling (Bryn Mawr College), Roberta Ricci (Bryn Mawr College)

**Defense Date:** April 23, 2020

**Abstract:**

This dissertation is an art historical study of the production and consumption of early Christian female martyr imagery in seventeenth-century Naples. Although it was the second largest city in Europe at the time, scholars have only recently begun to study the flourishing art market and the prevalence of devotional culture in the lives of Neapolitan citizens. Through a dedicated study of the interplay between socioeconomic conditions, politics, and religious devotion, I will examine the use of virgin martyr imagery as instruments of female agency in both sacred and secular contexts. Both the wealthy elite and the urban poor collected female portraits of saints in prints, hagiographies, drawings, and paintings. Artisans and street vendors sold moderately priced, often secondhand, pictures of saints, while aristocratic families commissioned sacred portraits and displayed them in their palace galleries alongside paintings of family members. My research will explore how these pictures of virgin martyrs allowed collectors to communicate authority or undermine patriarchal controls, while also providing nonelite audiences with appealing examples of female agency.