**Project:** Slavery and Servitude? Catholic Views of Orthodox Life Under Ottoman Rule

My experience at the NEH Summer Institute 2010 in Barcelona was fruitful both broadly, in my conceptualization of Mediterranean history, and specifically, in the work that I was able to conduct on my project.

The project that I developed for the NEH Institute grew out of a larger set of questions on Christian universalism and political thought that I am exploring in my doctoral dissertation. This summer I examined Latin views of Orthodox Christians living under Islamic rule in the Ottoman Empire in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. My point of departure for this study was an unpublished *memorial* composed by Count Pedro Navarro in 1506 and addressed to King Ferdinand of Aragon. The text presents a crusading plan for a Spanish-led conquest of Greece and Turkey and subjugation of the ascendant Ottoman Empire. In this projected endeavor, Navarro suggests that the Greek Orthodox inhabitants of Ottoman-ruled lands will act as willing allies of an invading Latin force. Moreover, Navarro links this agenda to an aspiration to end the Great Schism and to “restore” the Orthodox Church to obedience to the Roman pontiff.

Navarro’s *memorial* demonstrates a seeming lack of awareness of Orthodox resistance to Latin rule engendered by the thirteenth-century Latin occupation of Constantinople and more recent episodes of Latin rule over Orthodox populations in the eastern Mediterranean. In this respect, Navarro’s thinking is in fact representative of many Latin Christians’ perceptions of Orthodox Christians during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Underlying Navarro’s and other Catholic Europeans’ misperceptions of Greek Orthodox religious and cultural loyalties is the belief that any Christian, even a schismatic, will be naturally inclined to resist Islamic rule. While Navarro’s *memorial* fails to fully grasp the complexities of Greek Orthodox life under Ottoman rule, the text is illustrative of broad trends in late medieval Latin Christian thought as well as evolving Iberian Christian views of religious minorities within the Peninsula. In short, Navarro attempts to understand religious pluralism in the eastern Mediterranean according to a model of binary opposition that did not actually fit the particularities of the Ottoman Empire. The lectures, readings, and seminars at the Institute were particularly helpful to me in thinking about how to approach these fifteenth- and sixteenth-century perceptions of religious difference and individuals’ attempts to “fix” religious identity into rigid categories. Navarro’s *memorial* hints at a significantly more complex series of religious and cultural fissures in the Mediterranean world than that suggested...
by a binary model of Christendom and Islam as fundamentally opposed to one another.

Since the Summer Institute in Barcelona I have expanded my study to situate Navarro’s *memorial* in the broader context of later medieval religious and political thought. Navarro’s *memorial* grew out of a confluence of forces that included the fifteenth-century Conciliar Movement that aimed to end the Great Schism between the Roman and Greek churches as well as Latin responses (intellectual and other) to the rapid rise of the Ottoman Empire and its conquest of Constantinople.

Moreover, while I argue that Navarro’s text bears the imprint of certain particularly Iberian views on the religious pluralism of the Mediterranean basin, it is simultaneously representative of more broadly European fears of further Ottoman advances. Plans similar to Navarro’s circulated widely in Mediterranean Europe, likewise predicated on the Orthodox population of the Ottoman Empire serving as a “fifth column” during a Latin crusade. Seven years after Navarro presented his *memorial* to King Ferdinand of Aragon, two Italian monks submitted a similar proposal to Pope Leo X. Both texts reflect Latin attitudes toward Orthodox Christians at a critical juncture in Mediterranean history.

In order to demonstrate the fact that these Latin attempts to fix and stabilize categories of religious identity in the multi-confessional Ottoman Empire did not reflect the realities of Orthodox life in Ottoman-ruled lands, I have devoted extensive portions of my expanded project to comparing the status of Orthodox Christians under Latin rule (including sixteenth-century Venetian Crete) to that under Ottoman rule.

While in Barcelona I conducted research at the Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó and uncovered a great deal of important unpublished documentation among the *Registros* generated by the royal Chancery during the years 1504-1516. It will take some time to fully incorporate these findings into this and other projecats, and I will likely need to conduct another research trip to Barcelona at some point in the future. Even in the absence of a future trip, the research I was able to conduct during the summer of 2010 will be valuable in the completion of several pieces of work that I am currently completing.

The project that I embarked on during the Summer Institute 2010 in Barcelona has expanded into a broader study, not only of Latin views of the Orthodox Christian inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire, but of religious difference and
constructions of religious identity in the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Mediterranean. Ultimately, I intend to submit this as an article for publication. My experience at the NEH Summer Institute on Mediterranean history in Barcelona has had a profound impact on the ways in which I am thinking about these themes. The lectures, readings, and seminars, not to mention the informal discussions with fellow participants, have been extraordinarily stimulating as I have developed and revised this project in the months since the Institute.