

Fresno paragraph

During my time as an undergraduate at St John's College Annapolis I studied the Great Books, which meant engaging with these primary sources on their own terms uninfluenced by the interpretations of them by later secondary sources. I had loved history for as long as I could remember, but it was only upon engaging with classical works of history at St. John's that I felt a desire to be a historian. Meanwhile, I came across Professor Brian Catlos's book, *Kingdoms of Faith: A New History of Islamic Spain*.

As I read through it, all my assumptions about the so-called "Reconquest" of Spain and Portugal by Christians were overturned. Rather than a united Christian military venture to reclaim a formerly Christian Iberia which expelled all the "foreign" Muslims in the process, Dr. Catlos's book showed that this nearly 800-year process included the formation of alliances across religious boundaries against co-religionist just as often as alliances between Christian and Muslim powers.

I began pursuing my master's degree in Religious Studies at CU this past fall, and will shortly begin working with Professor Catlos, researching the Mudejar (Muslim) population of the Aragonese Kingdom of Valencia. Since the first 50 years following the Aragonese crusade have been thoroughly researched already, my research will focus on the 14th century.