

Dean's medalist says his humanities degree marks 'capstone of experiences'

By Julia Taylor, ASU News
December 4, 2025

Editor's note: This story is part of a series of profiles of notable [fall 2025 graduates](#).

Even as a teenager, Richard Lingua knew he wanted to study history, though this took “many years” to come to fruition.

Between having a teacher who brought historical narratives to life and a personal interest in how we got to today's world, Lingua was fascinated by history. To him, this discipline uncovers the background behind countless social phenomena, which is exactly what Lingua sought to understand.

Along with his historical inquiry, Lingua had spent much of his professional career in technology and technology education, where his employers instilled a deep commitment to the arts and humanities. Combined with regular involvement in live arts like film and theater, these factors drew Lingua to pursue a [bachelor's degree in history](#) with a [minor in religious studies](#).

“I spent 30 years in technology,” he said, “but I have a leaning for humanities and arts — it's where I go to relax.”

Though he'd considered returning to university and completing his degree before, it wasn't until the summer of 2022 that Lingua enrolled through [ASU Online](#). This he attributes to multiple factors: the COVID-19 pandemic, ASU Online's robust infrastructure and his personal desire to apply his previous experience toward something new.

“I was looking at where to go next in my life,” Lingua said, “how I unify everything together and then move on to the next thing.”

The San Francisco native explained that he required the flexibility of online learning to return to university, but still wanted a full university experience. And ASU provided that, he said, meeting him where he was and allowing him to succeed.

This fall, Lingua is graduating as Dean's Medalist from the [School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies](#). He is also a member of [Barrett, The Honors College](#); received the Barrett Gold Standard Award; and recently defended his thesis: "Proportionality Versus Total War: Truman, MacArthur, and the Korean Conflict, 1950-1951."

Lingua will return to ASU this spring to complete the graduate portion of the [Accelerated History BA/MA](#) program. He will continue his focus on Cold War studies, he says, and hopes to become more engaged with the public history program.

We spoke with Lingua to learn more about his time at ASU.

Note: Responses have been edited for clarity and/or length.

Question: Have you participated in or benefited from any programs, labs or centers at ASU?

Answer: Being able to attend Barrett online would top my list. When I first applied to ASU, Barrett did not yet have an online program. So, when that opportunity later emerged and I was accepted, it added significant value to my entire ASU experience. For example, I was able to join the Barrett College Fellows research program for a year, I spent another two semesters studying with a Nobel laureate, and I was able to participate in-person activities with other honors students. Barrett offers many additional opportunities to the online student, and I feel my involvement there brought me even closer to the university.

Q: Did any other ASU support play a role in your journey?

A: ASU offers an impressive array of resources for online students. Having a success coach played an important and supportive role; we had productive discussions about the university, and my coach pointed me toward valuable tools and support services. I also have to commend the [ASU Library](#) and its librarians! The library provides such a great array of services, and I love their [home delivery](#) program.

Q: Which professor taught you one of the most important lessons you've learned at ASU? What was the lesson?

A: That's a tough one — several instructors come to mind! But I want to acknowledge [Dr. Daniele Lauro](#). Rather than a single lesson, he provided a process and a path for real academic growth. I completed a [Barrett Honors Enrichment Contract](#) for one of his courses, spending a semester on a substantial research project. With his guidance, I was able to make that first big leap into the scholarly writing our field demands, and that work became the foundation for stronger projects later on.

Q: What's the best piece of advice you'd give to other students?

A: Office hours matter! Make it a habit to drop by during your instructors' office hours. Every instructor had scheduled Zoom times or I could make an appointment. Use the time to get to know them a bit better and let them get to know you. Building good relationships with your teachers pays off in ways that go far beyond a single grade.

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



Richard Lingua is the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies' fall 2025 Dean's Medalist. He is graduating this December with a bachelor's degree in history and minor in religious studies.