Few, including the ancient Greeks themselves, would deny Aphrodite’s persona as a goddess of sex and love. Yet she also descended from much older goddesses worshipped as Queens of Heaven, who guaranteed the legitimacy and power of the king in various Near Eastern and Mediterranean societies. How did Aphrodite’s worship thus fit into new egalitarian mentalities evolving amongst the Greeks between the 8th and 6th centuries BCE? My paper will move forward on two levels: I first consider the socio-political meanings behind the shared cultural motif of the Queen of Heaven as she was transmitted between east and west across the Bronze and Iron Ages. I then consider the appearance of her symbolism in sites connected with Aphrodite in the Iron Age Mediterranean, focusing on Naukratis in the Nile Delta in Egypt. I interpret the symbolism reflected in the votive offerings from Naukratis against the longstanding tradition of the Queen of Heaven as a deity connected to divine kingship, and consider the novel meanings developing in relation to Aphrodite against the socio-political contexts of the Iron Age.

Megan Daniels is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Classics. Her research investigates the movement of ideologies, goods, and peoples between the Mediterranean and western Asia through various scales of analysis, from long-term historical accounts of movement and exchange to small-scale interconnections. In terms of the former, her dissertation analyzes the transmission of religious ideologies connected to the Queen of Heaven as they evolved between the Near East and the Aegean over the Bronze and Iron Ages. In terms of the latter, she is interested in using information from ceramics to reconstruct scales of exchange between cities, their hinterlands, and the wider Mediterranean world. She currently does fieldwork in Turkey and Tunisia and has also worked in Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Bermuda, and Canada.

Wednesday, April 27, 2016
12:00pm - Seminar Room

Location: Building 500
488 Escondido Mall
Room 106