DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS: ERIN WALKER

*Under the Kilt: Defining and Transforming Cultural Identity Through the Scottish Pipe Band in North America*

(Research Director: Diana Hallman)

For Scots and non-Scots alike, the sounds of the bagpipes and the pipe band serve as a cultural metaphor for Scottish ethnic identity, immediately conjuring up the material culture and romantic imagery of the clannish, kilted Highland Scot. This nearly global association appears to have been constructed on a series of transformations of cultural practices within Scotland itself, as well as throughout greater Britain and the lands of the Scottish diaspora. During this period, the pipe band moved from military spheres to serve a range of civic and social purposes within Scotland, and its appeal was rendered greater by the ideas of “tartanization” and “Celticism” that flourished in the 19th century. These concepts were fueled by the romanticization of the Highlander in British literature, Queen Victoria’s affinity for summer holidays at Balmoral Castle, and the formation of Scottish and Celtic heritage societies embracing Highland dress, music, and sport.

The primary goal of this dissertation will be to study the role of the pipe band in the construction and transformation of Scottish and Celtic identity through an examination of the meanings, values, and musical practices that are built into ideas of “Scottishness,” or, more generally, “Celticness,” from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century in the British Isles and North America. It will also raise far-reaching questions concerning the nature of both group and individual identity, as well as the ways in which identity functions and is recognized within and outside a particular cultural group.