

## **Winner of the 2005 Graduate Prize**

### **Tillman Nechtman (University of Southern California) "'These Fungus's of Asia': Nabobs, Metropolitan Fears, and the Indian Empire"**

Tillman W. Nechma, PhD, University of Southern California, received the 2005 PCCBS Graduate Prize for his paper, "'These Fungus's of Asia': Nabobs, Metropolitan Fears, and the Indian Empire" which he presented at the PCCBS meeting in Berkeley in 2004. The paper was drawn from his completed dissertation, "Nabobs: Defining the British Nation and the Indian Empire in the Late Eighteenth Century." His paper examined the diamond trade used by East India Company employees (nabobs) as an invisible way exchange their Indian fortunes into a usable currency in metropolitan Britain. He argues that diamonds became a visible material sign of the ways in which empire was changing the terms of economic exchange in the metropolitan world. They were symbols of luxury and decadence, both traits associated with nabobs. More importantly, they were a medium of economic exchange that did not make sense to domestic observers who were more familiar with land as a common unit of economic value. Diamonds were part of a foreign economic system, and the fact that nabobs used them to transfer their imperial money home seemed to suggest that becoming an imperial power was altering the economic structures of the British nation.

Nechman finished his dissertation this spring and accepted a tenure-track position in British and British Imperial History at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York.