

H-Diplo ESSAY 296

Essay Series on Learning the Scholar's Craft: Reflections of Historians and International Relations Scholars
17 December 2020

The Scholar's Craft

<https://hdiplo.org/to/E296>

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I fell in love with history in sixth grade. As I snuck barbecue corn nuts (the least inconspicuous snack in the world) from my desk, listening to Mr. Sorum's guest speaker weave tales of Aztec resistance to Hernando Cortés, the Mayan ball game's ritual sacrifices, and Inca architectural prowess, I was hooked. Later that year we reported on the political, social, and economic makeup of various countries. I presented on Venezuela. It was a long presentation, so long in fact that I passed out around minute 40 when discussing the importance of oil to the Venezuelan economy. No one had warned me that locking legs for a long period of time cuts off one's circulation. This unfortunate fact subsequently led to a fear of public speaking. Ironical, no? Mrs. West in seventh and eighth grade furthered my passion for history as I wrote papers on the origins of World War I and the Battle of Gettysburg. My U.S. AP History final paper on the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan was stupendous, though lacking in overall argument. You can see where this is going. I was fascinated by war, conquest, and foreign nations. Undoubtedly my dad played a role here too as he was a History major, received an M.A. at San Francisco State, and devoured all books ever written on World War II. His love of German history, language, and the writing of Friedrich Nietzsche never quite inspired the same level of devotion in me. Instead, I found myself drawn to French culture and expression, no doubt due to Madame Johnson's terrifying insistence on understanding French holidays and traditions as well as perfect verb conjugation in all tenses.

When applying for college I knew I would be a History and French major, and my years as an undergraduate at U.C. Santa Barbara confirmed that choice. Along with my fellow history lovers and friends, Diana Saso and Sylvia Linggi, I took a class with Frank Frost and was introduced to underwater archaeology. Warren Hollister's singing and Sears McGee's limericks about medieval and early modern history made them come alive. Laura Kalman, Harold Marcuse, Luke Roberts, Immanuel Hsu, and Albert S. Lindemann provided an excellent education in modern history. Lindemann directed my senior thesis on, what else, the Cuban Missile Crisis. I had arrived at that topic during my junior year abroad, when I attended the Université Lumière II and Sciences Po in Lyon. While visiting a household in Torino, I saw a painting of John F. Kennedy, Nikita Khrushchev, and Pope John XXIII titled "three men for peace." I have wondered ever since, was that a true statement? The jury is still out. Lindemann made me a much, much better writer, and I remain grateful for his guidance. Also, during my senior year, a newly minted assistant professor appeared on the scene, Fredrik Logevall. I took a seminar with him on Cold War history and finally understood exactly what I wanted to do with my life: go to graduate school and study U.S. Foreign Relations with one of the brightest rising stars in the field. And that's exactly what I did.

I learned many things from Logevall, but probably the most important was how to truly analyze events from multiple perspectives. I also learned how to present my research in the elevator pitch, five-minute, and thirty-minute formats, and that form sometimes matters as much as function. My favorite memory of Fred was when he began teaching his first Vietnam War class. He asked me to let him know if he had any distracting habits. He was pretty nervous and played with his tie the entire lecture, so I told him. He never played with his tie again. Note to everyone in the age of Zoom, record yourself and check for distracting habits (recently, I was shocked to find that "um" had crept back into my lecturing). Another massive influence during graduate school was the brilliant and incredibly organized Kenneth Mouré. His

exceedingly challenging Modern European reading seminar (History 200E) was probably the most important class I ever took. Here I learned the historian's craft in full—being presented with myriad historiographical perspectives on an event, synthesizing and prioritizing those perspectives, formulating an argument, substantiating it with overwhelming evidence, presenting it both orally and in writing, and then debating (endlessly) with professors and colleagues about it. An important part of the course's impact was the superb graduate students in it (more on that in a minute). Mouré's infinite willingness and capacity to provide feedback enhanced my research and writing skills during the class and later on as I wrote my dissertation.

I also had the good luck to be a TA for Ken's Western Civilization class (Hist 4C), which profoundly influenced my teaching, especially as I witnessed how effective using novels and memoirs were to relating key themes and events to students. As an undergraduate student, two teaching assistants—Gordon Shaeffer and Ted Dickson—had played a major role in honing my critical thinking skills. Now it was my turn to return the favor. One of my favorite parts of graduate school were the weekly meetings with Mouré and the other TAs to discuss pedagogy (lively discussions ensued on how to present Voltaire's *Candide*, Primo Levi's *The Drowned and the Saved*, and the film *The White Rose*).¹ Any doubts about pursuing a Ph.D. and trying to teach were dispelled my first time in the classroom as a TA for History 4C. I remember leaving the classroom, going to the beach and staring at the waves (it's UCSB), and realizing I had found my career. Other faculty at UCSB who had a major impact include Laura Kalman (I figured out early on I would be lucky indeed if I could bring to the classroom her high energy teaching style) and John Majewski (who helped prepare me for the job market).

During the many Cold War History Group (with the unfortunate acronym of COWHIG and now the much more dignified Center for Cold War Studies) guest lectures and conferences I learned the importance of formulating the two-part question from Tsuyoshi Hasegawa. Indeed, every faculty member in the department I came into contact with added a little more to my intellectual growth, doing a first-rate job of preparing graduate students for a life in academia. On the research side, lengthy trips to France provided valuable lessons on independence, discipline, and the importance of being fluent in French (my junior year abroad paid real dividends). The French Foreign Ministry Archives (then at the Quai d'Orsay, now at Courneuve), National Archives, and Military Archives at the Château de Vincennes are quirky, byzantine, and fantastic. They taught me patience when requesting documents, humility when asking for help, and the excitement of discovery when I encountered previously classified files. I remain indebted to archivists Isabelle Nathan and Françoise Watel at the Quai d'Orsay. The research process itself is often solitary but the camaraderie of fellow researchers and archivists makes it less so.

Ultimately, the most important influence throughout my entire academic career has been my fellow graduate students. I came into graduate school with an unprecedentedly large cohort. During our many seminars, coffee breaks, and informal gatherings, I came to value the diversity, inclusiveness, and collaborative nature of this group, something that I now appreciate is quite rare. I have no doubt that the collegiality of the UCSB faculty had a direct influence on the *esprit de corps* among the graduate students. I have remained in touch with many of them over the years (we are sometimes referred to as the UCSB mafia). Three in particular deserve the highest recognition—Kimber Quinney, Kenneth Osgood, and Andrew Johns. For more than a quarter century Kimber and I have spent thousands of hours jogging, walking, and talking our way through new books and articles, conference presentations, the state of the field, public engagement questions, and the meaning of life. Those conversations have shaped my views on U.S. foreign policy, teaching, and human nature in immeasurable ways. Ken helped with research (I would not have survived a research trip to the Eisenhower Library without his unflagging optimism) and writing (his quick mind and superhuman editorial skills have made so many of my articles much better). Finally, his very special brand of humor has ensured good spirits over the decades. And Andy, Andy is simply the best. Sharing office hours (and spilled coffee), presenting on panels, studying for Ph.D. exams, co-editing *The Eisenhower Administration, the Third World, and the Globalization of the Cold War* volume, and co-hosting the 2016 SHAFR conference at the University of San Diego (USD) are just a few of our many joint endeavors over the past twenty-

¹ Voltaire, *Candide* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1950), Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Knopf, 1989), and *The White Rose* (CCC film, 1982).

seven years.² In addition to his incredible scholarship on the importance of domestic politics in U.S. foreign relations, he is the most decent, modest, and open-minded person I have ever encountered.³ He is unstinting in his support of family, friends, colleagues, and our field. For example, I didn't think I was quite ready to go on the market when the USD job appeared. He insisted I apply. He has also read everything I have ever written. I can only hope to emulate his loyalty to the pursuit of truth about the past, and to the historians who pursue it. It is Kimber, Ken, and Andy's perspective, intellectual breadth and depth, and, most important, friendship that have made me the historian I am today.

Entering graduate school, I knew I wanted to write on Franco-American relations. I had also developed an increasing interest in Vietnam thanks to Logevall's influence, so it made a lot of sense to study the intense period of Franco-American turmoil over what to do about Vietnam in the 1950-1960 period. My French language skills ensured I would be able to do equal justice to both the American and French perspective. As I began my dissertation research, I thought I was writing about the actions of individuals, but the evidence eventually persuaded me otherwise. If I had to name a culprit for increasing U.S. intervention in Vietnam, as much as I wanted it to be Secretary of State John Foster Dulles (he didn't help), it would have to be the gradually increasing administrative, bureaucratic, military, economic, political, and diplomatic U.S. presence in Vietnam that in many ways took on a life of its own and became increasingly difficult for each subsequent president to stop. I always use this example when teaching my Historian's Craft course and my Senior Capstone seminar at USD to remind students that you never know where your research will take you, and that you cannot ignore evidence that contradicts your preconceived ideas. Ultimately, as I argue in my first book, *Replacing France: The Origins of American Intervention in Vietnam*, it was the U.S. desire to replace France in every possible way in the 1950s that led to the Vietnam War.⁴

Just as I moved directly from undergraduate to graduate school, I was one of those increasingly rare lucky folks to move directly from graduate school into a tenure-track position at the University of San Diego. I will be honest, at the time, it did not feel lucky as I scrambled to finish my dissertation and prep three brand new classes (one on American colonial history!) but, ultimately, here I sit twenty-two years later at the same institution, and could not be happier to be working with the most fabulous colleagues and students in the world. My fellow faculty in the USD History department are a collaborative bunch, no prima donnas here, and I am so grateful for Iris Engstrand, Jim Gump, Ken Serbin, Michael Gonzalez, Molly McClain, Sun Yi, Colin Fisher, David Miller, Tom Barton, Clara Oberle, Ryan Abrecht, Channon Miller, and T.J. Tallie. A particular thanks to Iris and Jim for hiring me and to Sun Yi for her unwavering friendship. I am also very grateful for the thousands of engaged undergraduate and graduate students in my classes, many of whom I now call friends and peers. I have learned so much from all of them --the highlight of my day is stepping into the classroom.

I also want to acknowledge the breathtaking historical expertise and camaraderie of my colleagues in the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR). I presented my first paper at the 1996 Boulder, Colorado conference. Already panicked about the panel, my terror reached a fever pitch as I watched two of the most eminent scholars on the Vietnam War—George Herring and David Anderson--saunter into the room. Two other renowned scholars, Tony Edmonds and Ed Moise, served as commentator and chair. Somehow, I made it through my presentation. The questions and conversation in the discussion portion of the panel made it crystal clear; SHAFR is not only my intellectual home but also where some of the most generous, inquisitive, and dedicated humans on the planet reside. So many of them, at that time, and at many other events since, have influenced me, not only as a historian but also as a human being. So thank you

² Kathryn C. Statler and Andrew L. Johns, eds., *The Eisenhower Administration, the Third World, and the Globalization of the Cold War* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006)

³ See, for example, Andrew L. Johns, *Vietnam's Second Front: Domestic Politics, the Republican Party, and the War* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2010) and Andrew L. Johns, *The Price of Loyalty: Hubert Humphrey's Vietnam Conflict* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020).

⁴ Kathryn Statler, *Replacing France: The Origins of American Intervention in Vietnam* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007).

George, David, Tony and Ed, and thank you too David Schmitz, Lisa Cobbs, Chester Pach, Lori Clune, Jason Parker, Mitch Lerner, Molly Wood, Kyle Longley, Walter Hixson, Laura Belmonte, Matt Masur, Klaus Larres, Bob Brigham, Mark Lawrence, Addison Jensen, Tim Borstelmann, Vanessa Walker, Marc Selverstone, Will Hitchcock, Jim Matray, Bob McMahon, Jerald Combs, Heather Dichter, Mark Bradley, Anne Foster, Steve Wrinn, Dustin Walcher, Salim Yaqub, John Prados, Jim Meriwether, Jeremi Suri, Bill Rust, Brian Etheridge, Amy Sayward, Peter Hahn, and so many more. Walking into a SHAFR conference each year remains a joyous homecoming where I share my research and learn about colleagues' new endeavors (whether on a panel, at a coffee break, or during dinner). I also get caught up on all the exciting new ways to view U.S. Foreign Relations. At the end of each conference, I always return home physically exhausted (how about more West Coast meetings?) but intellectually rejuvenated. Indeed, my current manuscript, "Lafayette's Ghost: A History of the Franco-American Alliance," which looks at the cultural diplomacy French and American citizens promoted from the American Revolution to the present, emerged from many conversations with my SHAFR colleagues over the years. Finally, a huge shout out to H-Diplo and its editors for their superb job in circulating SHAFR members' work (including mine) among a wide audience. H-Diplo allows all of us to keep up with the latest offerings in the field, providing a robust virtual community of scholars who shape our understanding of U.S. foreign relations every single day.

I am fully aware of how lucky I am and have nothing but gratitude that I have been able to pursue that love of History that began in sixth grade my entire career, working with so many wonderful people along the way. Being a professor can seem like a solitary job, but it is impossible to do (and do well) without help from colleagues and friends, and it is meaningless without the students we teach. My last thanks go to my family—my parents (Joan and John), my sister, her husband, and two boys (Gretchen, Scot, Statler, and Colton), my husband (Craig), and my two daughters (Claire and Kate). They have loved and supported me every step of the way, and I look forward to many more history and non-history related adventures with them.

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