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Miguel Ángel Chávez // historian of exploration, empire, and cartography
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2096248146
ankhx100@hotmail.com
ankhx100@hotmail.com
Miguel Chavez
Miguel
Chavez

Personal - Education
Personal-Education

/about-me
about me
Thu, 06 Mar 2025 05:37:06 +0000

<article class="sections" id="sections" data-page-sections="67c92d290499ac37e4afc9e2">
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repeat(90,minmax(calc(var(--container-width) * var(--row-height-scaling-factor)), auto)); grid-template-columns: minmax(var(--grid-gutter), 1fr) repeat(24, minmax(0, var(--cell-max-width))) minmax(var(--grid-gutter), 1fr); } } .fe-block-67c92d7bb9ae2114930e4162 { grid-area: 1/2/3/10; z-index: 0; @media (max-width: 767px) { } } .fe-block-67c92d7bb9ae2114930e4162 .sqs-block { justify-content: flex-start; } .fe-block-67c92d7bb9ae2114930e4162 .sqs-block-alignment-wrapper { align-items: flex-start; } @media (min-width: 768px) { .fe-block-67c92d7bb9ae2114930e4162 { grid-area: 1/2/3/26; z-index: 0; } .fe-block-67c92d7bb9ae2114930e4162 .sqs-block { justify-content: flex-start; } .fe-block-67c92d7bb9ae2114930e4162 .sqs-block-alignment-wrapper { align-items: flex-start; } } .fe-block-67c92d7b0962db429399055f { grid-area: 3/2/10/10; z-index: 1; @media (max-width: 767px) { } } .fe-block-67c92d7b0962db429399055f .sqs-block { justify-content: center; } .fe-block-67c92d7b0962db429399055f .sqs-block-alignment-wrapper { align-items: center; } @media (min-width: 768px) { .fe-block-67c92d7b0962db429399055f { grid-area: 3/2/23/26; z-index: 1; } .fe-block-67c92d7b0962db429399055f .sqs-block { justify-content: center; } .fe-block-67c92d7b0962db429399055f .sqs-block-alignment-wrapper { align-items: center; } } .fe-block-67c92d7bda1f43739885a284 { grid-area: 10/2/13/10; z-index: 2; @media (max-width: 767px) { } } .fe-block-67c92d7bda1f43739885a284 .sqs-block { justify-content: flex-start; } .fe-block-67c92d7bda1f43739885a284 .sqs-block-alignment-wrapper { align-items: flex-start; } @media (min-width: 768px) { .fe-block-67c92d7bda1f43739885a284 { grid-area: 23/2/25/26; z-index: 2; } .fe-block-67c92d7bda1f43739885a284 .sqs-block { justify-content: flex-start; } .fe-block-67c92d7bda1f43739885a284 .sqs-block-alignment-wrapper { align-items: flex-start; } } .fe-block-67c92d7b1e97cd69dc4d20e3 { grid-area: 13/2/19/10; z-index: 3; @media (max-width: 767px) { } } .fe-block-67c92d7b1e97cd69dc4d20e3 .sqs-block { justify-content: flex-start; } .fe-block-67c92d7b1e97cd69dc4d20e3 .sqs-block-alignment-wrapper { align-items: flex-start; } @media (min-width: 768px) { .fe-block-67c92d7b1e97cd69dc4d20e3 { grid-area: 26/6/30/22; z-index: 3; } .fe-block-67c92d7b1e97cd69dc4d20e3 .sqs-block { justify-content: flex-start; } .fe-block-67c92d7b1e97cd69dc4d20e3 .sqs-block-alignment-wrapper { align-items: flex-start; } } .fe-block-67c92d7bf87d67f304c707d0 { grid-area: 20/2/39/10; z-index: 4; @media (max-width: 767px) { } } .fe-block-67c92d7bf87d67f304c707d0 .sqs-block { justify-content: flex-start; } .fe-block-67c92d7bf87d67f304c707d0 .sqs-block-alignment-wrapper { align-items: flex-start; } @media (min-width: 768px) { .fe-block-67c92d7bf87d67f304c707d0 { grid-area: 30/6/42/22; z-index: 4; } .fe-block-67c92d7bf87d67f304c707d0 .sqs-block { justify-content: flex-start; } .fe-block-67c92d7bf87d67f304c707d0 .sqs-block-alignment-wrapper { align-items: flex-start; } } .fe-block-67c92d7bc6539411aea7c41c { grid-area: 40/2/41/10; z-index: 5; @media (max-width: 767px) { } } .fe-block-67c92d7bc6539411aea7c41c .sqs-block { justify-content: center; } .fe-block-67c92d7bc6539411aea7c41c .sqs-block-alignment-wrapper { align-items: center; } @media (min-width: 768px) { .fe-block-67c92d7bc6539411aea7c41c { grid-area: 42/6/43/22; z-index: 5; } .fe-block-67c92d7bc6539411aea7c41c .sqs-block { justify-content: center; } .fe-block-67c92d7bc6539411aea7c41c .sqs-block-alignment-wrapper { align-items: center; } } .fe-block-67c92d7bab24fbd3f6d788f1 { grid-area: 41/2/48/10; z-index: 6; @media (max-width: 767px) { } } .fe-block-67c92d7bab24fbd3f6d788f1 .sqs-block { justify-content: flex-start; } .fe-block-67c92d7bab24fbd3f6d788f1 .sqs-block-alignment-wrapper { align-items: flex-start; } @media (min-width: 768px) { .fe-block-67c92d7bab24fbd3f6d788f1 { grid-area: 43/6/49/22; z-index: 6; } .fe-block-67c92d7bab24fbd3f6d788f1 .sqs-block { justify-content: flex-start; } .fe-block-67c92d7bab24fbd3f6d788f1 .sqs-block-alignment-wrapper { align-items: flex-start; } } .fe-block-67c92d7b1d5e61033f775990 { grid-area: 49/2/50/10; z-index: 7; @media (max-width: 767px) { } } .fe-block-67c92d7b1d5e61033f775990 .sqs-block { justify-content: center; } .fe-block-67c92d7b1d5e61033f775990 .sqs-block-alignment-wrapper { align-items: center; } @media (min-width: 768px) { .fe-block-67c92d7b1d5e61033f775990 { grid-area: 49/6/50/22; z-index: 7; } .fe-block-67c92d7b1d5e61033f775990 .sqs-block { justify-content: center; } .fe-block-67c92d7b1d5e61033f775990 .sqs-block-alignment-wrapper { align-items: center; } } .fe-

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the hope of publishing my dissertation as a manuscript. I will endeavor to update my progress here 🙂</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">For more information, please take a look at my research page: Link.</p> </div> </div></div></div><div class="fe-block fe-block-67c92d7bc6539411aea7c41c"><div class="sqs-block horizontalrule-block sqs-block-horizontalrule" data-block-type="47" id="block-67c92d7bc6539411aea7c41c"><div class="sqs-block-content"><hr /></div></div></div><div class="fe-block fe-block-67c92d7bab24fbd3f6d788f1"><div class="sqs-block html-block sqs-block-html" data-blend-mode="NORMAL" data-block-type="2" data-border-radii="{"topLeft":{"unit":"px","value":0.0},"topRight":{"unit":"px","value":0.0},"bottomLeft":{"unit":"px","value":0.0},"bottomRight":{"unit":"px","value":0.0}}" id="block-67c92d7bab24fbd3f6d788f1"><div class="sqs-block-content"> <div class="sqs-html-content"> <p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Outside of academia, I am an avid political junkie, a fan of modern art and design, coffee addict, and a sci-fi geek.

As a Chicano, I care deeply about issues affecting my community so this blog may, from time to time, veer away from history to contemporary politics. </p> </div>   </div></div></div><div class="fe-block fe-block-67c92d7b1d5e61033f775990"><div class="sqs-block horizontalrule-block sqs-block-horizontalrule" data-block-type="47" id="block-67c92d7b1d5e61033f775990"><div class="sqs-block-content"><hr /></div></div></div><div class="fe-block fe-block-67c92d7b5beb666714314bba"><div class="sqs-block image-block sqs-block-image sqs-stretched" data-aspect-ratio="133.4265734265734" data-block-type="5" id="block-67c92d7b5beb666714314bba"><div class="sqs-block-content">
<div   class="   image-block-outer-wrapper   layout-caption-below   design-layout-fluid   image-position-left   combination-animation-none   individual-animation-none   "   data-test="image-block-fluid-outer-wrapper"   >   <div   class="fluid-image-animation-wrapper sqs-image sqs-block-alignment-wrapper"   data-animation-role="image"   >   <div   class="fluid-image-container sqs-image-content"   style="overflow: hidden;-webkit-mask-image: -webkit-radial-gradient(white, black);position: relative;width: 100%;height: 100%;"   >   <div class="content-fill">   <img data-stretch="true" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/bf197fd9-8291-44a8-8316-98e52fd8a213/IMG_1574.jpeg" data-image="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/bf197fd9-8291-44a8-8316-98e52fd8a213/IMG_1574.jpeg" data-image-dimensions="2316x3088" data-image-focal-point="0.5,0.5" alt="" data-load="false" elementtiming="system-image-block" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/bf197fd9-8291-44a8-8316-98e52fd8a213/IMG_1574.jpeg" width="2316" height="3088" alt="" sizes="100vw" style="display:block;object-fit: cover; object-position: 50% 50%" srcset="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/bf197fd9-8291-44a8-8316-98e52fd8a213/IMG_1574.jpeg?format=100w 100w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/bf197fd9-8291-44a8-8316-98e52fd8a213/IMG_1574.jpeg?format=300w 300w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/bf197fd9-8291-44a8-8316-98e52fd8a213/IMG_1574.jpeg?format=500w 500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/bf197fd9-8291-44a8-8316-98e52fd8a213/IMG_1574.jpeg?format=750w 750w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/bf197fd9-8291-44a8-8316-98e52fd8a213/IMG_1574.jpeg?format=1000w 1000w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/bf197fd9-8291-44a8-8316-98e52fd8a213/IMG_1574.jpeg?format=1500w 1500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/bf197fd9-8291-44a8-8316-98e52fd8a213/IMG_1574.jpeg?format=2500w 2500w" loading="lazy" decoding="async" data-loader="sqs">   <div class="fluidImageOverlay"></div>   </div>   </div>   </div>   </div>   <style>   .sqs-block-image .sqs-block-content {   height: 100%;   width: 100%;   }   .fe-block-

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<p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">vanderbilt (outdated) - profile page </p>
<p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">email - mchavez @cumberland.edu</p>
<p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">twitter - @_etruscan
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threads - @_etruscan
instagram - @_etruscan
linkedin - link</p> </div>   </div></div></div></div>   </div>   </div>   </section> </article>
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publish

David Lynch Is Your New Bicycle

/blog-1/david-lynch-is-your-new-bicycle

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<figcaption class="image-caption-wrapper"> <div class="image-caption"><p >Photo by Nadav Kander</p></div> </figcaption> </figure> </div> <div class="sqs-html-content"> <p>During the late 1980s, Lynch met the television producer Mark Frost and they decided to start working together on a project that never got off the ground. It was whilst they were talking in a coffee shop that Lynch and Frost both had the idea of a corpse washing up on the shore of a lake, and using this image as a basis subsequently set about on their third project, which they initially named Northwest Passage but which would eventually come to fruition as the television series Twin Peaks.</p> </div>

david-lynch-is-your-new-bicycle
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kander
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Photography
ankhx100@hotmail.com
open

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tylerperkins825@gmail.com
Flying with Anne
https://www.flywithanne.com/
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<p>Hello mate, nice post</p>

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ankhx100@hotmail.com

The Fun Conference
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Beukelman</p></div>   </figcaption>   </figure>   </div>   <div
class="sqs-html-content">   <p>ValioCon is an annual conference held in Mission Bay, San Diego.
The speakers are mostly people building awesome web-based products and encouraging everyone else
to do the same, with an overarching theme of doing what you love, and find happiness in doing
it every day. Steve Schoeffel sums it
up nicely:</p><p>Just get out and do stuff. Do what you love and what interests you. Make
things and take risks. Don't do it foolishly but also don't let the fear of uncertainty hold you back. No
product is ever perfect, ship early and iterate. Use your skills to have the biggest impact possible. With
it all, find a way to give back. Keep pushing ahead and don't give up.</p> </div>

valiocon
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Sat, 21 Jul 2012 15:10:00 +0000
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san diego
valio
Web
Photography
ankhx100@hotmail.com
open

Meds
/blog-1/meds
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<p>Placebo are an androgynous glam rock band formed by Brian Molko and Stefan Olsdal, who gained notoriety with their cover of "20th Century Boy" on the Velvet Goldmine soundtrack. Their studio album "Meds" features duets with Alison Mosshart of The Kills ("Meds") and Michael Stipe ("Broken Promise"). The Special Edition album includes artwork created by the band in collaboration with photographer Nadav Kander.</p>

meds

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placebo

kander

Music

Photography

ankhx100@hotmail.com

open

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post
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draft
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lessons for a teaching assistant

/blog/2021/what-i-learned-as-a-teaching-this-past-year

<div class="sqs-html-content">   <p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">The semester has ended, and so has my year as a teaching assistant. Unlike my prior stint as a teaching assistant, I did not serve as just a grader, but led discussion sections on top of meeting with students, reading student drafts, and the usual grading. And unlike my prior stint, this was done during the mist of the COVID-induced move of higher education to Zoom. It was an interesting set of circumstances. But I am overall proud of my work and the results. I took away a few things I thought were worth sharing.</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">compassion costs nothing</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">There is a kind of instructor whose conduct becomes infamous on campus. Whose commitment for the rules border on extreme. Whose sympathy for students is below zero. And whose view of the world is one of jaded cynicism towards their students. Instead of instructors, they see themselves as gate keepers; their students see them as vindictive bullies. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">I can say I have never experienced this sort of instructor first-hand through my collegiate career. But on Reddit, on professor-rating websites, and on Twitter, such instructors gain infamy as students vent their frustrations. When their infamy grows to an absurd level, these instructors are even subject to news coverage by national and international media. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">During my time as a teaching assistant - and before coming to Vanderbilt, as an adjunct instructor - I have just grown to dislike those type of instructors. Why become a teacher if one is going to view their students antagonistically? </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">For my part, I would like to think I have become more empathetic given my experience as an instructor/teaching assistant. It's easy to become wrapped up in one's duties: but it's important to know that for the students, the course is one of many aspect of their lives. This is doubly so in the context of COVID-19, when semesters are truncated and the challenges of distanced learning and isolation increasingly grates on the student's psyche. Something has to give, so why not us as instructors?</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">That is to say, why should we be sticklers for hard deadlines given the students are under so much stress? To give one example, the course I TA'd for had an overarching project in which the students had to write a series of papers on the same topic. When it came time to submit papers, I received an unprecedented number of extension requests. Ultimately, I spoke with the professor and we agreed to waive the late penalty for this assignment. I think the students appreciated that gesture.</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">These decisions cost nothing. Allowing students to turn in assignments late costs nothing. Giving them leeway to complete their assignments costs nothing. So why is it so hard for many instructors to be compassionate and merciful? </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">There are fears that such compassion are detrimental to the "rigour" of academic learning; that in giving students breathing room, one is debasing academia via grade inflation. But as this professor points out, that sentiment is just hogwash: </p> </div>   <blockquote class="twitter-tweet"><p lang="en" dir="ltr">Someone argued with my teaching practice, saying that letting students rewrite/redo work is grade inflation. I couldn't disagree more. What's the point of commenting on someone's work if I don't invite them to revise? If I'm wrong, I'll continue happily inflating grades,

thanks.</p>— Annemarie Perez (@anneperez) May 12, 2021</blockquote> <script async src="https://platform.twitter.com/widgets.js" charset="utf-8"></script> <div class="sqs-html-content"> <p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">I agree wholeheartedly. We should not fetishize an ideal of academic rigour if it comes at the expense of student well-being. Besides, this gets to the question of why we teach: is it to weed out students or to create an environment where students are able to learn the material and concepts we want to teach them? It's unfortunate that a lot of incentives for instructors are geared towards a sociopathic stance on students, such as the charge of "grade inflation" when it comes to determining if one should receive tenure. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">This is not to say that I am against having high standards for academic work or that I am devaluing student excellence. Only that a stringent adherence to deadlines and procedure is not synonymous with the promotion of such excellence. If anything, compassion on the part of the instructor is conducive to student creativity and curiosity. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">zoom is good!</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Like many instructors, this past year was my first foray into distanced, online learning. While there are many things I miss about in-person instruction, such as the intangible benefits of body language when leading a class discussion, I will say that I've come to like Zoom at the end of this experience. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">There are the benefits of reducing commuting to-and-from campus; as someone who lives a dozen or so miles from Vanderbilt, the ability to log into Zoom to lead class has been liberating and cost-effective. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">But more important are the pedagogical benefits to Zoom. A clear example is with the flexibility of office hours that video chatting offers. In an in-person context, I would need to be on campus at a certain period of time and find a space in which to discuss things with students. But I would never be available to all students as many would be in other classes or busy with extracurricular activities when I set my in-person office hours. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">But with Zoom, I can be flexible in speaking with students as I'm already at my desk at my dinky apartment. This proved especially helpful in two contexts. The first is with inclement weather. Earlier this year, there was a large snow storm that made travel impossible for many people. No matter, I was able to speak with several students over Zoom about their questions about the readings and their assignments. The second context concerns international students. As a result of COVID-19, I had students forced to do their studies in China because they could not travel to the United States. With Zoom, I was able to speak with the students in the evening (their morning), which proved to be fruitful. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">keep it simple</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Sticking with Zoom, I've been impressed at the creative ways in which instructors have navigated both the advantages and weakness of the platform. I, on the other hand, am not creative 😵 As such, when deciding how to format my discussion section, I kept it simple: it was an open forum where I would ask questions in order to facilitate a conversation over the course reading. No break out rooms, no gimmicks: just talk. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Part of the reason is that I observed that many students, while appreciative of the benefits of the technology, were also frustrated by aspects they found to be gimmicky. Breakout rooms, a favored technique by many of the TAs I followed on Twitter, were not a hit with students. As this collection of memes highlights, there is a lot of disdain for breakout rooms among undergraduates. This meme sums up the sentiment:</p> </div>   <blockquote class="twitter-tweet"><p lang="en" dir="ltr">"And now we're going to go into Breakout rooms" pic.twitter.com/gzqKYmamBT</p>— Sam Crawford (@samcrawford99) October 12, 2020</blockquote> <script async src="https://platform.twitter.com/widgets.js" charset="utf-8"></script> <div class="sqs-html-content"> <p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">This isn't to say that breakout rooms are always bad. For example, the instructor I worked with this semester had the students fill out a Google Docs sheet with their thinking about a short reading done during the lecture session. That's clever as it allows students in a breakout room to see what other students are talking about. Instead of being siloed into a single group, a connection is maintained with the rest of the class. I'm totally stealing this for when I'm designing my next remote-learning course

😴</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">But I will admit I have an aversion to do this for the discussion section. Part of this was my own conception of responsibility to the course: I only had 50 minutes to speak with both sections so why was I going to abdicate that time with my students? While I understand why professors - who also give lectures - may rely on breakout rooms for a much needed respite, I am not as sympathetic with TAs who only have the discussion section to worry about. And because I know my limitations, I think a simple discussion format was the best way forward. While there was an imbalance in terms of activity levels between my two sections for both semesters, I think it worked out in the end. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">clarity is golden</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Students hate ambiguity, especially when their grades are on the line. This is something I had to learn the hard way from my days as an adjunct. It created a situation where students would often ask me to reconsider certain grades as I was ambiguous with how I graded their papers. I eventually learned that I needed to have readily-available rubrics in order to make clear my expectations regarding their course work. This seems obvious in hindsight. However, this was my first time teaching so I learnt this obvious point on the fly. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">With this in mind, having rubrics proved essential for a teaching assistant. I was fortunate to work with another teaching assistant during the Fall 2020 semester. Early on, we both decided we had to craft a rubric when grading the papers as 1. the professor did not provide one and 2. that there would be a consistent rubric for each half of the class. We spent an hour making our own, bringing our experiences together to craft a unified rubric. And it worked really well! I made it a point to post the rubric on my section's Brightspace page and to reference it whenever I gave my grading comments. I did not get a single student pushing back against their grades because the rubric was comprehensive and comprehensible. Clarity here paid dividends. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">spring break is necessary</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Vanderbilt decided to accelerate the Spring semester by jettisoning Spring Break. In hindsight, this was a stupid decision. Epidemiologically, it made sense: there were numerous examples of off-campus get-togethers and vacations contributing to on-campus outbreaks of COVID-19. But the students needed a break! It proved disastrous as students were running on fumes by the end of the semester. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">keep your cool</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">There were times when it was clear that no one did the discussion readings. It's understandable why a TA may snap at the students on this point. But when I got frustrated, I thought of my own undergraduate experience; of how many times I skipped a reading and just winged it the best I could. Like I said earlier, the course I TA'd for is one of many classes the students are taking. There is always going to be a prioritization of certain courses by students, and this changes depending on when major assignments are due. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">When I had my first experience with a silent group of students, I had a hard time not taking it personally. But, over time, I realized that such silences were not the result of a moral failure in my part: instead, the students were trying their best and juggled multiple courses to the point of feeling overwhelmed. This became evident as different sections exhibited different levels of engagement with the same material. It will just be the case that some groups will be more active than others, and that's outside one's control. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">It's frustrating, no doubt. We've all been there. It happens even with the best of instructors. Adjust if need be, but such silent moments are not a judgement of you as a person. It'll be fine 🙂</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">the students are great</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Lastly, my biggest takeaway from this past year as a TA was being in awe of the tenacity and brilliance of my students. They persevered despite the challenges of distanced-learning and the stresses of the past year. Many brought their creativity to the fore despite these challenges. Many students continued despite contracting from COVID-19; and others finished the school year despite tragedies in their own lives. To do all that work and do so ably is just astounding. I was a crummy undergrad, so seeing so many brilliant students is really humbling. They made this past year work, and for that, I am immensely grateful 🙂</p> </div>

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/blog/2021/paris-2020
<div class="sqs-html-content"> <p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">In February 2020, I took a fortuitous research trip to the United Kingdom, not knowing that it would be the last opportunity to do such research as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the month wore on, and coverage of the virus began to focus on the plight of Spain and Italy, I decided to take a trip to Paris for a few days in between the end of my research in Durham and the final days in London. I booked a room in Paris and took the Eurostar to Paris. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Unsurprisingly to anyone who has gone to Paris, I fell in love with the city. I visited the Louvre for only a day. But its vastness felt like a challenge to visit it again and again in the years to come. The rainy weather and increasing uncertainty of COVID-19 meant that I couldn't take advantage of my Parisian sojourn to explore more of the city. But what I saw whetted my desire to go to Paris once more. I hope that the proliferation of vaccinations will allow for a return to normalcy of tourism in Paris. I miss Paris despite being there for a few days.</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Below are a few images I took during this visit. A belated post, no doubt. But I don't think there's a statute of limitations to posting these images. So enjoy! Maybe I'll be back soon, who knows? </p> </div>   <div class=" sqs-gallery-container   sqs-gallery-block-stacked   sqs-gallery-block-show-meta   clear"   > <div class="sqs-gallery">   <div class="image-wrapper" id="67c92d280499ac37e4afc8f8" data-type="image" data-animation-role="image"> <noscript></noscript>   </div>   <div class="meta">   <div class="meta-inside">   <div class="meta-description"><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Like everyone, I've seen pictures of the Eiffel Tower ad nauseum. If not the most photographed structure on Earth, it's certainly in the top 5. But seeing it in person, seeing this iron laddice rise up over Paris was just breathtaking. In my mind I was just thinking: "Oh shit, that's the Eiffel Tower!" I was giddy looking at it. </p></div>   </div>   </div>   <div class="image-wrapper" id="67c92d280499ac37e4afc8fb" data-type="image" data-animation-role="image"> <noscript></noscript><img class="thumb-image" elementtiming="system-gallery-block-stacked" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1620377268916-

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<div class="meta">   <div class="meta-inside">   <div class="meta-description"><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">The Eiffel Tower from the Place du Trocadéro.</p></div>   </div>   </div>   <div class="image-wrapper" id="67c92d280499ac37e4afc8fe" data-type="image" data-animation-role="image"> <noscript></noscript>   </div>   <div class="meta">   <div class="meta-inside">   <div class="meta-description"><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Selfie of myself in front of the Eiffel Tower. Touristy? Yes. A bit kitsch? Sure. Worth it? Definitely! </p></div>   </div>   </div>
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<div class="meta">   <div class="meta-inside">   <div class="meta-description"><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">I. M. Pei's famous glass pyramid at the Louvre. In the tourist guides it's recommended not to take this entrance due to the long lines. But as my visit was in late February, COVID-19 had begun to became the subject of popular discussion throughout the world. Two days after my visit, the staff of the Louvre would force a closure out of fear of the virus. I don't blame them. But the upshot was that the Louvre was not all that busy when I visited. Many exhibits were relatively quiet. </p></div>   </div>   </div>
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<div class="meta">   <div class="meta-inside">   <div class="meta-description"><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">The Arc de Triomphe, in all its majestic glory. </p></div>   </div>   </div>   <div class="image-wrapper" id="67c92d290499ac37e4afc929" data-type="image" data-animation-role="image">
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embellishments in travel narratives
/blog/2019/embellishments-in-travel-narratives
<div class="sqs-html-content">   <p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">This is just a stray thought, but in the course of these past few years of research, I am struck by the difference between the contents of exploratory field journals compared with the published works based on those field journals. Specifically, I am referring to the phenomenon whereby published journals and travel narratives contain more embellishments and details that are not found in the original field journals. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">After going through a few journals by Richard Francis Burton, I am struck by how much more detail is found in his published works than are in his field journals. I found a similar pattern after reading Samuel White Baker's journals during my first research trip some years back. This is to say nothing of John Petherick's oeuvre, namely his apologia over claims of his involvement in the Nile slave trade.</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">I am having a hard time reconciling this fact. Were these explorers so good at retaining these narrative details that they did not bother recording these events in their field journals? Maybe something else? However, my more cynical take is that some of the embellishment never occurred in the first place, being added in the course of publication to "spice things up."</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">My view can be best summed as: "you'd really think someone would do that, just publish a travel narrative and tell lies?"</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">After reading Raymond John Howgego's lecture "Invented and Apocryphal Narratives of Travel from Ancient Egypt to the Present Day," I think there's some reason to be skeptical as to the veracity of these narratives, given that the reading public (and certainly the scientific community) would have a hard time verifying these claims.</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">However, I think the one aspect that made it difficult to fib was what can be termed "geographic data," such coordinates, place names, ethnographic information, etc. Given the discussions and debates moderated by the Royal Geographical Society or the Athenaeum over

controversies regarding place names or field research, I do wonder if the potential to verify such data gave license to explorers to embellish (or outright lie) about their deeds and adventures in far off lands. After all, the existence of geographical features like lakes and rivers, along with botanical and ethnographic data would be verifiable by future explorers. But how would one verify specific encounters with "greedy" natives? Or the "heroics" in defending English pride to an uncouth chieftain? Or in felling an especially ferocious beast? Truth be told, it's not possible. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">There's no way to know for sure what's truth and what's fiction regarding these narratives. But it does open up the question as to why details are added or omitted in travel narratives, especially in the case of travel narratives that also serve scientific ends. </p> </div>

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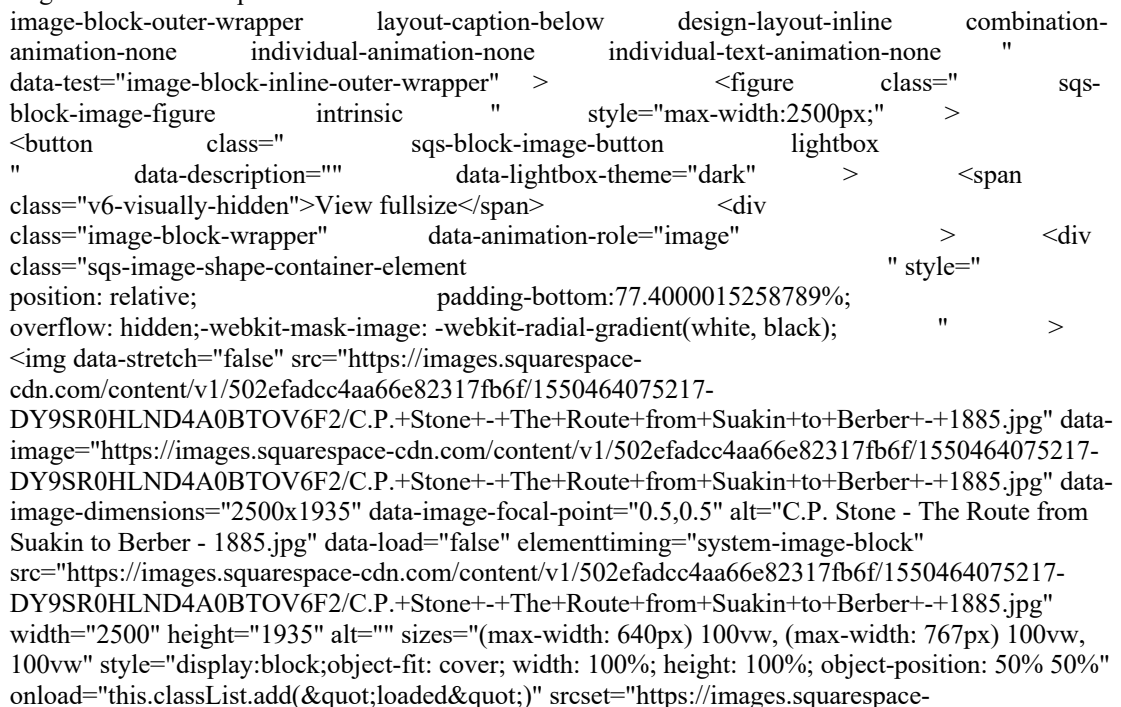
gordon's map of suakin to berber
/blog/2019/gordons-map-of-suakin-to-berber
<div class="sqs-html-content"> <p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">What I find interesting in researching Nile exploration is the synonymity between field science and colonial warfare present in Sudan during the 1880s and 1890s. This map, taken from an 1885 issue of Science, is from a report by C.P. Stone on the unfolding siege of Khartoum.</p> </div>   <div   class=" image-block-outer-wrapper   layout-caption-below   design-layout-inline   combination-animation-none   individual-animation-none   individual-text-animation-none   " data-test="image-block-inline-outer-wrapper"   >   <figure   class="   sqs-block-image-figure   intrinsic   "   style="max-width:2500px;"   > <button   class="   sqs-block-image-button   lightbox   "   data-description=""   data-lightbox-theme="dark"   >   View fullsize   <div class="image-block-wrapper"   data-animation-role="image"   >   <div class="sqs-image-shape-container-element   " style=" position: relative;   padding-bottom:77.4000015258789%; overflow: hidden;-webkit-mask-image: -webkit-radial-gradient(white, black);   "   > <img data-stretch="false" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550464075217-DY9SR0HLND4A0BTOV6F2/C.P.+Stone+-+The+Route+from+Suakin+to+Berber+-+1885.jpg" data-image="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550464075217-DY9SR0HLND4A0BTOV6F2/C.P.+Stone+-+The+Route+from+Suakin+to+Berber+-+1885.jpg" data-image-dimensions="2500x1935" data-image-focal-point="0.5,0.5" alt="C.P. Stone - The Route from Suakin to Berber - 1885.jpg" data-load="false" elementtiming="system-image-block" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550464075217-DY9SR0HLND4A0BTOV6F2/C.P.+Stone+-+The+Route+from+Suakin+to+Berber+-+1885.jpg" width="2500" height="1935" alt="" sizes="(max-width: 640px) 100vw, (max-width: 767px) 100vw, 100vw" style="display:block;object-fit: cover; width: 100%; height: 100%; object-position: 50% 50%" onload="this.classList.add("loaded")" srcset="https://images.squarespace-

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<div class="sqs-html-content">   <p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">A Civil War veteran, Stone (along with a hundred other veterans) was invited by Egypt to train its military. Stone stayed in Egypt until the 1882 Urabi Revolt and the subsequent bombardment of Alexandria by the Royal Navy. In 1884 and early 1885, Charles Gordon was besieged in Khartoum, his force surrounded by the Mahdist rebels. On Jan. 26 1885, the Mahdist took Khartoum. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Using his experience as a springboard to speak authoritatively on matters of geography, Stone speaks about Khartoum's fall by providing an overview of Sudan's geography between the Nile and the Red Sea. With an attached copy of Gordon's 1874 map of the region, Stone speaks to the logistical issues facing any mission to avenge Gordon's death. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">But why was this published in Science? Given that this same issue of Science would extol Gordon's scientific credentials by citing Gordon's military prowess, I have questions on how Americans viewed the relationship between scientific thinking and military skill during the 1880s and 1890s. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">In any case, I went through the journal article to reassembled the map. It's above in all its glory. For a larger copy of the map (at 10 mb), click here: Link</p><p class="" data-rte-preserve-empty="true" style="white-space:pre-wrap;"></p><h3 style="white-space:pre-wrap;">citation: CP Stone, "The Route from Suakin to Berber," Science 5, no. 114 (10 April 1885): 290.</h3> </div>

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<div class="sqs-html-content"> <p style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Apologies for the lack of updates, but as I try to collect my thoughts for a future post here I figure it would be good to post pictures of my trip to Mexico City last summer.</p> </div>

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<div class="sqs-html-content"> <p style="white-space:pre-wrap;">I stayed in Mexico City for a week in June 2018. I decided to explore the city on my own and at my own pace. What I wanted to see most was the Museo Nacional de Antropología (MNA), the largest and most visited museum in Mexico. The MNA houses the pre-Columbian heritage of Mexico, from the first arrivals millennia ago to the Mayans, Tarascans, and Aztecs. </p> </div>

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https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550369284065-T3ADX1T00P6JAN5ZQ2KA/2018-06-19+14.01.19.jpg?format=1500w 1500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550369284065-T3ADX1T00P6JAN5ZQ2KA/2018-06-19+14.01.19.jpg?format=2500w 2500w" loading="lazy" decoding="async" data-loader="sqs"> </div> </div> </button> <figcaption class="image-caption-wrapper"> <div class="image-caption"><p>There is always a crowd around the Aztec Sun Stone…</p></div> </figcaption> </figure> </div> <div class="sqs-html-content"> <p style="white-space:pre-wrap;">The MNA is large and will take the better part of a day to navigate. It is one of the best museums I have ever visited. </p><p style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Beyond the MNA there are plenty of sites to visit in Mexico City, such as the Monumento a la Revolución. Originally built to be the centerpiece of the Mexican Congress during the Porfiriato, it was commandeered to become the monument for the Mexican Revolution.
</p> </div>

<div class=" image-block-outer-wrapper layout-caption-below design-layout-inline combination-animation-none individual-animation-none individual-text-animation-none " data-test="image-block-inline-outer-wrapper" > <figure class=" sqs-block-image-figure intrinsic " style="max-width:2500px;" > <button class=" sqs-block-image-button lightbox " data-description="<p>Monumento a la Revolución</p>" data-lightbox-theme="dark" > View fullsize <div class="image-block-wrapper" data-animation-role="image" > <div class="sqs-image-shape-container-element " style=" position: relative; padding-bottom:133.3199920654297%; overflow: hidden;-webkit-mask-image: -webkit-radial-gradient(white, black); " > <img data-stretch="false" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550369616631-BGMAAQEZ7P5V0PA2WPQN/2018-06-19+16.54.55+HDR.jpg" data-image="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550369616631-BGMAAQEZ7P5V0PA2WPQN/2018-06-19+16.54.55+HDR.jpg" data-image-dimensions="2500x3333" data-image-focal-point="0.5,0.5" alt="Monumento a la Revolución" data-load="false" elementtiming="system-image-block" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550369616631-BGMAAQEZ7P5V0PA2WPQN/2018-06-19+16.54.55+HDR.jpg" width="2500" height="3333" alt="" sizes="(max-width: 640px) 100vw, (max-width: 767px) 100vw, 100vw" style="display:block;object-fit: cover; width: 100%; height: 100%; object-position: 50% 50%" onload="this.classList.add("loaded")" srcset="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550369616631-BGMAAQEZ7P5V0PA2WPQN/2018-06-19+16.54.55+HDR.jpg?format=100w 100w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550369616631-BGMAAQEZ7P5V0PA2WPQN/2018-06-19+16.54.55+HDR.jpg?format=300w 300w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550369616631-BGMAAQEZ7P5V0PA2WPQN/2018-06-19+16.54.55+HDR.jpg?format=500w 500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550369616631-BGMAAQEZ7P5V0PA2WPQN/2018-06-19+16.54.55+HDR.jpg?format=750w 750w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550369616631-BGMAAQEZ7P5V0PA2WPQN/2018-06-19+16.54.55+HDR.jpg?format=1000w 1000w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550369616631-BGMAAQEZ7P5V0PA2WPQN/2018-06-19+16.54.55+HDR.jpg?format=1500w 1500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550369616631-BGMAAQEZ7P5V0PA2WPQN/2018-06-19+16.54.55+HDR.jpg?format=2500w 2500w" loading="lazy" decoding="async" data-loader="sqs"> </div> </div> </button> <figcaption class="image-caption-wrapper"> <div class="image-caption"><p>Monumento a la Revolución</p></div> </figcaption> </figure> </div> <div class=" image-block-outer-wrapper layout-caption-below design-layout-inline combination-

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<div class=" image-block-outer-wrapper layout-caption-below design-layout-inline combination-animation-none individual-animation-none individual-text-animation-none " data-test="image-block-inline-outer-wrapper" > <figure class=" sqs-block-image-figure intrinsic " style="max-width:2500px;" > <button class=" sqs-block-image-button lightbox " data-description="<p>The Palacio de Bellas Artes</p>" data-lightbox-theme="dark" > View fullsize <div class="image-block-wrapper" data-animation-role="image" > <div class="sqs-image-shape-container-element " style=" position: relative; padding-bottom:75%; overflow: hidden;-webkit-mask-image: -webkit-radial-gradient(white, black); " > <img data-stretch="false" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370420792-1NNUENU8X14N91YMOTMD/2018-06-20+13.29.26.jpg" data-image="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370420792-1NNUENU8X14N91YMOTMD/2018-06-20+13.29.26.jpg" data-image-dimensions="2500x1875"

data-image-focal-point="0.5,0.5" alt="The Palacio de Bellas Artes" data-load="false" elementtiming="system-image-block" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370420792-1NNUENU8X14N91YMOTMD/2018-06-20+13.29.26.jpg" width="2500" height="1875" alt="" sizes="(max-width: 640px) 100vw, (max-width: 767px) 100vw, 100vw" style="display:block;object-fit: cover; width: 100%; height: 100%; object-position: 50% 50%" onload="this.classList.add("loaded")" srcset="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370420792-1NNUENU8X14N91YMOTMD/2018-06-20+13.29.26.jpg?format=100w 100w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370420792-1NNUENU8X14N91YMOTMD/2018-06-20+13.29.26.jpg?format=300w 300w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370420792-1NNUENU8X14N91YMOTMD/2018-06-20+13.29.26.jpg?format=500w 500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370420792-1NNUENU8X14N91YMOTMD/2018-06-20+13.29.26.jpg?format=750w 750w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370420792-1NNUENU8X14N91YMOTMD/2018-06-20+13.29.26.jpg?format=1000w 1000w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370420792-1NNUENU8X14N91YMOTMD/2018-06-20+13.29.26.jpg?format=1500w 1500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370420792-1NNUENU8X14N91YMOTMD/2018-06-20+13.29.26.jpg?format=2500w 2500w" loading="lazy" decoding="async" data-loader="sqs">   </div>   </div>   </button>   <figcaption class="image-caption-wrapper">   <div class="image-caption"><p>The Palacio de Bellas Artes</p></div>   </figcaption>   </figure>   </div>   <div   class="   image-block-outer-wrapper   layout-caption-below   design-layout-inline   combination-animation-none   individual-animation-none   individual-text-animation-none   "   data-test="image-block-inline-outer-wrapper"   >   <figure class="   sqs-block-image-figure   intrinsic   "   style="max-width:2500px;"   >   <button   class="   sqs-block-image-button   lightbox   "   data-description="<p>Oh hey! Darwin! This is from a (small) portion of Diego Rivera's mural El hombre controlador del universo (1934)</p>"   data-lightbox-theme="dark"   >   View fullsize   <div class="image-block-wrapper"   data-animation-role="image"   >   <div class="sqs-image-shape-container-element   " style="   position: relative;   padding-bottom:133.3199920654297%;   overflow: hidden;-webkit-mask-image: -webkit-radial-gradient(white, black);   "   >   <img data-stretch="false" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370518093-TSLBPXP5ONIF1H5WVB3O/2018-06-20+13.17.53.jpg" data-image="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370518093-TSLBPXP5ONIF1H5WVB3O/2018-06-20+13.17.53.jpg" data-image-dimensions="2500x3333" data-image-focal-point="0.5,0.5" alt="Oh hey! Darwin! This is from a (small) portion of Diego Rivera's mural El hombre controlador del universo (1934)" data-load="false" elementtiming="system-image-block" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370518093-TSLBPXP5ONIF1H5WVB3O/2018-06-20+13.17.53.jpg" width="2500" height="3333" alt="" sizes="(max-width: 640px) 100vw, (max-width: 767px) 100vw, 100vw" style="display:block;object-fit: cover; width: 100%; height: 100%; object-position: 50% 50%" onload="this.classList.add("loaded")" srcset="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370518093-TSLBPXP5ONIF1H5WVB3O/2018-06-20+13.17.53.jpg?format=100w 100w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370518093-TSLBPXP5ONIF1H5WVB3O/2018-06-20+13.17.53.jpg?format=300w 300w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370518093-TSLBPXP5ONIF1H5WVB3O/2018-06-20+13.17.53.jpg?format=500w 500w,

https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370518093-TSLBPXP5ONIF1H5WVB3O/2018-06-20+13.17.53.jpg?format=750w 750w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370518093-TSLBPXP5ONIF1H5WVB3O/2018-06-20+13.17.53.jpg?format=1000w 1000w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370518093-TSLBPXP5ONIF1H5WVB3O/2018-06-20+13.17.53.jpg?format=1500w 1500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550370518093-TSLBPXP5ONIF1H5WVB3O/2018-06-20+13.17.53.jpg?format=2500w 2500w" loading="lazy" decoding="async" data-loader="sqs"> </div> </div> </button> <figcaption class="image-caption-wrapper"> <div class="image-caption"><p>Oh hey! Darwin! This is from a (small) portion of Diego Rivera's mural El hombre controlador del universo (1934)</p></div> </figcaption> </figure> </div> <div class="sqs-html-content"> <p style="white-space:pre-wrap;">If you go to the Palacio de Bellas Artes, just be aware that you will need to buy a ticket from the ticket booth to go beyond the ground floor. Stand at the long line, since that's for the theatre and not to see the murals. </p><p style="white-space:pre-wrap;">The last site I'll mention here its the Museo Nacional de Arte (MUNAL), which is close by to the Zocolo. It houses Mexican art from the colonial era into the modern. I especially enjoyed their special exhibit on Nahui Olin. </p> </div>
<div class=" image-block-outer-wrapper layout-caption-below design-layout-inline combination-animation-none individual-animation-none individual-text-animation-none " data-test="image-block-inline-outer-wrapper" > <figure class=" sqs-block-image-figure intrinsic " style="max-width:2500px;" > <button class=" sqs-block-image-button lightbox " data-description="" data-lightbox-theme="dark" > View fullsize <div class="image-block-wrapper" data-animation-role="image" > <div class="sqs-image-shape-container-element " style=" position: relative; padding-bottom:133.3199920654297%; overflow: hidden;-webkit-mask-image: -webkit-radial-gradient(white, black); " > <img data-stretch="false" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371229160-0VMJCSBATC4QCC2ACCL0/2018-06-20+14.08.19.jpg" data-image="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371229160-0VMJCSBATC4QCC2ACCL0/2018-06-20+14.08.19.jpg" data-image-dimensions="2500x3333" data-image-focal-point="0.5,0.5" alt="2018-06-20 14.08.19.jpg" data-load="false" elementtiming="system-image-block" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371229160-0VMJCSBATC4QCC2ACCL0/2018-06-20+14.08.19.jpg" width="2500" height="3333" alt="" sizes="(max-width: 640px) 100vw, (max-width: 767px) 100vw, 100vw" style="display:block;object-fit: cover; width: 100%; height: 100%; object-position: 50% 50%" onload="this.classList.add("loaded")" srcset="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371229160-0VMJCSBATC4QCC2ACCL0/2018-06-20+14.08.19.jpg?format=100w 100w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371229160-0VMJCSBATC4QCC2ACCL0/2018-06-20+14.08.19.jpg?format=300w 300w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371229160-0VMJCSBATC4QCC2ACCL0/2018-06-20+14.08.19.jpg?format=500w 500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371229160-0VMJCSBATC4QCC2ACCL0/2018-06-20+14.08.19.jpg?format=750w 750w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371229160-0VMJCSBATC4QCC2ACCL0/2018-06-20+14.08.19.jpg?format=1000w 1000w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371229160-0VMJCSBATC4QCC2ACCL0/2018-06-20+14.08.19.jpg?format=1500w 1500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371229160-0VMJCSBATC4QCC2ACCL0/2018-06-20+14.08.19.jpg?format=2500w 2500w" loading="lazy" decoding="async" data-loader="sqs"> </div> </div> </button>

</figure> </div> <div class=" image-block-outer-wrapper layout-caption-below design-layout-inline combination-animation-none individual-animation-none individual-text-animation-none " data-test="image-block-inline-outer-wrapper" > <figure class=" sqs-block-image-figure intrinsic " style="max-width:2500px;" > <button class=" sqs-block-image-button lightbox " data-description="" data-lightbox-theme="dark" > View fullsize <div class="image-block-wrapper" data-animation-role="image" > <div class="sqs-image-shape-container-element " style=" position: relative; padding-bottom:133.3199920654297%; overflow: hidden;-webkit-mask-image: -webkit-radial-gradient(white, black); " > <img data-stretch="false" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371292907-LEW670VA50UQH4FHWE20/2018-06-20+14.00.34.jpg" data-image="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371292907-LEW670VA50UQH4FHWE20/2018-06-20+14.00.34.jpg" data-image-dimensions="2500x3333" data-image-focal-point="0.5,0.5" alt="2018-06-20 14.00.34.jpg" data-load="false" elementtiming="system-image-block" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371292907-LEW670VA50UQH4FHWE20/2018-06-20+14.00.34.jpg" width="2500" height="3333" alt="" sizes="(max-width: 640px) 100vw, (max-width: 767px) 100vw, 100vw" style="display:block;object-fit: cover; width: 100%; height: 100%; object-position: 50% 50%" onload="this.classList.add("loaded")" srcset="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371292907-LEW670VA50UQH4FHWE20/2018-06-20+14.00.34.jpg?format=100w 100w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371292907-LEW670VA50UQH4FHWE20/2018-06-20+14.00.34.jpg?format=300w 300w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371292907-LEW670VA50UQH4FHWE20/2018-06-20+14.00.34.jpg?format=500w 500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371292907-LEW670VA50UQH4FHWE20/2018-06-20+14.00.34.jpg?format=750w 750w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371292907-LEW670VA50UQH4FHWE20/2018-06-20+14.00.34.jpg?format=1000w 1000w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371292907-LEW670VA50UQH4FHWE20/2018-06-20+14.00.34.jpg?format=1500w 1500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371292907-LEW670VA50UQH4FHWE20/2018-06-20+14.00.34.jpg?format=2500w 2500w" loading="lazy" decoding="async" data-loader="sqs"> </div> </div> </button> </figure> </div> <div class="sqs-html-content"> <p style="white-space:pre-wrap;">I'm embarrassed to say that I did not know of Nahui Olin until this visit. But I'm now a fan. Her typography and design aesthetic is phenomenal.</p> </div> <div class=" image-block-outer-wrapper layout-caption-below design-layout-inline combination-animation-none individual-animation-none individual-text-animation-none " data-test="image-block-inline-outer-wrapper" > <figure class=" sqs-block-image-figure intrinsic " style="max-width:1208px;" > <button class=" sqs-block-image-button lightbox " data-description="" data-lightbox-theme="dark" > View fullsize <div class="image-block-wrapper" data-animation-role="image" > <div class="sqs-image-shape-container-element " style=" position: relative; padding-bottom:115.39734649658203%; overflow: hidden;-webkit-mask-image: -webkit-radial-gradient(white, black); " > <img data-stretch="false" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550372280015-493FMR8OEGQIYK6K8PQK/Screen+Shot+2019-02-16+at+8.57.45+PM.png" data-

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</button>   </figure>   </div>
<div   class="   image-block-outer-wrapper   layout-caption-below   design-layout-inline   combination-animation-none   individual-animation-none   individual-text-animation-none   "   data-test="image-block-inline-outer-wrapper"   >   <figure class="   sqs-block-image-figure   intrinsic   "   style="max-width:2500px;"   >   <button   class="   sqs-block-image-button   lightbox   "   data-description=""   data-lightbox-theme="dark"   >   View fullsize
<div   class="image-block-wrapper"   data-animation-role="image"   >   <div class="sqs-image-shape-container-element   "   style="   position: relative;   padding-bottom:75%;   overflow: hidden;-webkit-mask-image: -webkit-radial-gradient(white, black);   "   >
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<div class=" image-block-outer-wrapper layout-caption-below design-layout-inline combination-animation-none individual-animation-none individual-text-animation-none " data-test="image-block-inline-outer-wrapper" >   <figure class=" sqs-block-image-figure intrinsic " style="max-width:2500px;" >   <button class=" sqs-block-image-button lightbox " data-description="" data-lightbox-theme="dark" >   View fullsize   <div class="image-block-wrapper" data-animation-role="image" >   <div class="sqs-image-shape-container-element " style=" position: relative; padding-bottom:133.3199920654297%; overflow: hidden;-webkit-mask-image: -webkit-radial-gradient(white, black); " >   <img data-stretch="false" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371426327-BJU97LQXQ7FARWYEW0TX/2018-06-20+14.49.44.jpg" data-image="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371426327-BJU97LQXQ7FARWYEW0TX/2018-06-20+14.49.44.jpg" data-image-dimensions="2500x3333" data-image-focal-point="0.5,0.5" alt="2018-06-20 14.49.44.jpg" data-load="false" elementtiming="system-image-block" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371426327-BJU97LQXQ7FARWYEW0TX/2018-06-20+14.49.44.jpg" width="2500" height="3333" alt="" sizes="(max-width: 640px) 100vw, (max-width: 767px) 100vw, 100vw" style="display:block;object-fit: cover; width: 100%; height: 100%; object-position: 50% 50%" onload="this.classList.add("loaded")" srcset="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371426327-BJU97LQXQ7FARWYEW0TX/2018-06-20+14.49.44.jpg?format=100w 100w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371426327-BJU97LQXQ7FARWYEW0TX/2018-06-20+14.49.44.jpg?format=300w 300w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371426327-BJU97LQXQ7FARWYEW0TX/2018-06-20+14.49.44.jpg?format=500w 500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371426327-BJU97LQXQ7FARWYEW0TX/2018-06-20+14.49.44.jpg?format=750w 750w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371426327-BJU97LQXQ7FARWYEW0TX/2018-06-20+14.49.44.jpg?format=1000w 1000w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371426327-BJU97LQXQ7FARWYEW0TX/2018-06-20+14.49.44.jpg?format=1500w 1500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1550371426327-BJU97LQXQ7FARWYEW0TX/2018-06-20+14.49.44.jpg?format=2500w 2500w" loading="lazy" decoding="async" data-loader="sqs">   </div>   </div>   </button>   </figure>   </div>   <div class="sqs-html-content"> <p style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Unfortunately, I was not able to stay in the city longer. There were many more sights I wanted to visit, but time was limited since I had to prepare for a research trip to the UK. If time permits, I will go back this summer. As someone born and raised in the US and who is also of Mexican descent, I really connected with the art and culture of my ancestral homeland. It's useful to know where one comes from, and I hope to learn more from Mexico in the years to come. </p><p data-rte-preserve-empty="true" style="white-space:pre-wrap;"></p> </div>
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ankhx100@hotmail.com
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john hanning speke's 1863 map of central africa
/blog/2017/john-hanning-spekes-1863-map-of-central-africa
<div class="sqs-html-content"> <p style="white-space: pre-wrap;">One of the joys of researching is encountering the unexpected. Case in point is this map, produced in 1863 for the Royal Geographical Society, depicting the travels of John

Hanning Speke through Central Africa:</p> </div>

<div class=" image-block-outer-wrapper layout-caption-below design-layout-inline combination-animation-none individual-animation-none individual-text-animation-none " data-test="image-block-inline-outer-wrapper" > <figure class=" sqs-block-image-figure intrinsic " style="max-width:2500px;" > <div class="image-block-wrapper" data-animation-role="image" > <div class="sqs-image-shape-container-element " style=" position: relative; padding-bottom:124.72000122070312%; overflow: hidden;-webkit-mask-image: -webkit-radial-gradient(white, black); " >

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</figure> </div> <div class="sqs-html-content"> <p style="white-space: pre-wrap;">I discovered this map through JSTOR's archive of the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society (Article Link). Attached to a report by Speke on his return to Britain detailing his various encounters and exploits, the map itself was divided into 16 distinct pages. I decided to collate these pages together to produce the map above. Neat, huh?</p> </div>

2017/john-hanning-spekes-1863-map-of-central-africa
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<p>This is a greeat blog</p>

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city drawing series : kathy prendergast
/blog/2016/city-drawing-series-kathy-prendergast
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block-outer-wrapper layout-caption-below design-layout-inline " data-test="image-block-inline-outer-wrapper" > <figure class=" sqs-block-image-figure intrinsic " style="max-width:1200px;" > <a class=" sqs-block-image-link " href="http://www.kerlingallery.com/artists/kathy-prendergast/artist_works/29/887#7" > <div class="image-block-wrapper" data-animation-role="image" data-animation-override > <div class="sqs-image-shape-container-element " style=" position: relative; padding-bottom:133.33334350585938%; overflow: hidden;-webkit-mask-image: -webkit-radial-gradient(white, black); " > <img data-stretch="false" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1482530895273-P9WR5BMWMPGLENM58INZ/image-asset.jpeg" data-image="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1482530895273-P9WR5BMWMPGLENM58INZ/image-asset.jpeg" data-image-dimensions="1200x1600" data-image-focal-point="0.5,0.5" alt="City Drawings Series - Tehran-n44&nbsp;1997 pencil on paper 31 x 21 cm / 12.2 x 8.3 in. Click on the picture for source." data-load="false" elementtiming="system-image-block" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1482530895273-P9WR5BMWMPGLENM58INZ/image-asset.jpeg" width="1200" height="1600" alt="" sizes="(max-width: 640px) 100vw, (max-width: 767px) 100vw, 100vw" style="display:block;object-fit: cover; width: 100%; height: 100%; object-position: 50% 50%" onload="this.classList.add("loaded")" srcset="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1482530895273-P9WR5BMWMPGLENM58INZ/image-asset.jpeg?format=100w 100w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1482530895273-P9WR5BMWMPGLENM58INZ/image-asset.jpeg?format=300w 300w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1482530895273-P9WR5BMWMPGLENM58INZ/image-asset.jpeg?format=500w 500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1482530895273-P9WR5BMWMPGLENM58INZ/image-asset.jpeg?format=750w 750w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1482530895273-P9WR5BMWMPGLENM58INZ/image-asset.jpeg?format=1000w 1000w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1482530895273-P9WR5BMWMPGLENM58INZ/image-asset.jpeg?format=1500w 1500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1482530895273-P9WR5BMWMPGLENM58INZ/image-asset.jpeg?format=2500w 2500w" loading="lazy" decoding="async" data-loader="sqs"> </div> </div> <figcaption class="image-caption-wrapper"> <div class="image-caption"><p style="margin-left:0px; margin-right:0px; text-align:center">City Drawings Series - Tehran-n44 1997 pencil on paper 31 x 21 cm / 12.2 x 8.3 in. Click on the picture for source.</p></div> </figcaption> </figure> </div> <div class="sqs-html-content"> <p>Following yesterday's post is another contemporary example of map-art, this time from Kathy Prendergast. I first learned about Prendergast's work in Denis Cosgrove's article "Maps, Mapping, Modernity" (as posted in yesterday's post). Cosgrove's succinct writing does all the summarizing needed to introduce Prendergast's work:</p> </div> <figure > <blockquote data-animation-role="quote" data-animation-override> "Prendergast's City Drawings (2001) trace the intricate and beautiful street patterns in the world's capital cities while challenging their usual hierarchy of size and political or economic significance by removing names and indicators of scale." </blockquote> </figure>

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<figcaption class="image-caption-wrapper"> <div class="image-caption"><p>Ruth Watson's Take heart (1999), Exhibited as part of The World Interrupted, a solo show at the Jonathan Smart Gallery, Christchurch, 1999.</p></div> </figcaption>
</figure> </div> <div class="sqs-html-content"> <p>I first heard of this art piece by reading Denis Cosgrove's essay on cartography and modern art in the 20th century. The essay is a brilliant piece of writing that expands the study of artistry and mapmaking beyond the early modern period. While the piece can be found at JSTOR, I have linked it here for your viewing pleasure. </p> </div>

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The Monument to the Third International : Nikolay Punin
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applying to grad school: conclusion
/blog/2016/grad-school-applying
<div class="sqs-html-content">   <p>The first part was done: deciding to go to graduate school. The rest was a bit harder.</p><p>After I had successfully defended my master's thesis , my advisor asked what my plans were now that I had done that hurdle. When I told her of my inclination of going on for my PhD, she was super supportive. Her only word of advice was in carefully choosing were I would like to get my doctorate from.</p><p>Fit is important in choosing a graduate program. Not only do you have to consider if the potential faculty and department are able to support you the best that they can, but you have to wonder how you would fit into the program. Are there enough faculty members who are able to serve as your mentor? How does the university do in funding graduate students? Stipends? Travel/research grants? In providing academic resources? </p><p>This is something I wholly neglected to evaluate until it was too late. I was only concerned with finding potential professors to work with, which also was done badly. I searched a random set of universities - schools I've heard of, schools I thought were interesting - and searched for professors through departmental faculty pages to see any potential interests. But since no other professors is really doing what I'm doing, it was an awkward process. In hindsight, after reading numerous forum posts from GradCafe after I had applied, the best bet would've been to contact professors and asked them. But I didn't and pressed forward.</p><p>If there is any takeaway from my experience, it's that I did a lot of things badly and got immensely lucky at the end.</p><p>○○○</p><p>Applying to graduate school is expensive. You will normally pay $50-70 per application. As someone of limited financial means since leaving my old job, this constrained the number of schools I applied to. And even if you get rejected, that money will never be seen again. I do wonder why there isn't a greater movement to remove these application fees across the board. Yes, some schools do have fee-free applications for financially disadvantaged applicants, but this is neither consistent or readily advertised. If universities were actually serious about opening up graduate education to minutes and lower-income students, this needs to change. But it hasn't, and I was forced to charge this on my credit cards. </p><p>Not only are fees a limitation, but so is asking professors to write you letter of recommendations. Even if application fees are not a barrier, asking your professors to write you 15 LoRs comes across as a bit

much to me. But maybe it wouldn't be. Maybe your professors will be happy to write those letters. But I didn't know since I didn't ask them what a reasonable number of applications would be. I simply assumed six applications was "enough." I asked and had no issues on that account. But again, the professors I've asked I have worked closely with, and they knew what I was capable of. If you are thinking about graduate school, just keep in mind who you need to ask for LoRs and ask them what they process normally entails. Would've done me some good.</p><p>With both those out of the way, I then went on to do my applications. If there is one takeaway here, it's to read the instructions carefully and press forward. Fortunately, I did not screw this part up! Yay me!</p><p>○○○</p><p>The application process finished in December. Everything was submitted on time, and my LoRs were sent on time. It was now to play the waiting game.It is around this time when I began reading GradCafe and other sites, and as I read more, I cringed more. So yes, read these sort of sites before you start applying. They're full of wise sages. Heed their advice!</p><p>○○</p><p>Of the schools I applied to, three accepted me and three rejected me. In hindsight, I chalk this up to my obliviousness to note how I would fit into these programs. One was a dream school that I applied to without considering the fact that the faculty members I needed were not entirely a good fit for my own research.</p><p>The three schools that did accept me were more close to me in the "fit" department. What made the difference to me was that Vanderbilt reached out to me: first my future advisor, then graduate students. What made me lucky was that my future advisor was animated to reach out to me (despite not having prior contact) and wanted to see my research first-hand. I imagine he would be busy enough to justify looking over GPAs and discarding those that would not interest him. But he looked into my application and saw something there. I really lucked out there, and I'm thankful for that. </p><p>Not everyone will be so lucky. If there are any takeaways, it's these:</p><ul dir="ltr">
Contextualize your research interests into something larger. Since my research dealt with geography and cartography, I should have situated my own research into the wider history of science. Understand that your research is unique. As such, you will not find a future person of interest (PoI) who will do what you do. From what I've heard from various professors at Vanderbilt, having a graduate student apply doing the exact same thing as you is actually detrimental. Find someone who you admire and think can expand your research, not another you.
Aim High. Vanderbilt's graduate acceptance rate is on par with Yale. I purposely did not apply to any Ivy League schools out of a sheer sense of intimidation. If you have the money, try to apply to a top-tier program. You'll never know!
Contact your PoI! Seriously, it's necessary. Why? Because the department will discuss amongst themselves for graduate students, and if a PoI knows you, they will vouch for you. This is how students are accepted. Not by the "best" GPAs or "best" credentials, but by these intra-department discussions. That my advisor would reach out to me and vouched for me in these discussions only proves that I should've done this will all the schools I applied to. <p>○○</p><p>In the end, I got into a great program. I just finished my first semester, and I'm very much looking for the next. While things worked out for me, they so easily could not. I do wonder where I would be if I was not accepted to any programs. Some on GradCafe have said they've applied multiple years before they got accepted to their dream schools. I don't think I would've been able to do that, and I greatly admire those who do.</p><p>I do not know where my journey in grad school will take me. But I'll be sure to keep this page updated with any news. </p> </div>

laura gibson - the cause
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applying to grad school: impetus
/blog/2016/vyos2xqzzr2b392vksiv873nxpr302
<div class="sqs-html-content"> <p>Last summer, I voluntarily became unemployment. It wasn't that my old job was particularly hard. Rather, i had graduated with my M.A. from North Texas earlier that May. Was I going to have a graduate degree and simply stay on in my tech support job? With a half-assed plan in place, and little-to-no savings, I quit after seven years there.</p><p>Through luck and the fortuitous friendship of my M.A. advisor and the person in charge of hiring me, I was able to find as an adjunct-instructor at a local community college. Was the pay good? Hah, no. But I figured it would be a good testing ground to see what I ultimately wanted to do with my life. Obviously I would teach history, but the question would be where and in what context. That is, do I want to continue on with my education to get my doctorate degree and brave the academic job market in a few years time? Or would I use my M.A. to finagle my way into a high school job and be content there? My heart wanted the former, while my brain told me to be realistic. At the very least, I could buy time with my adjuncting.</p><p>I wouldn't teach actual college students, by the way. I would instead teach high school students who wanted to earn college credit before heading off to a four-year university. Now I would actually interact with high schoolers and see if teaching high school would be something I want to do. </p><p>Truth be told, I didn't know what to expect. But seven months in, I can say that I love my job. This is what I want to do with my life. And even if I "settle" to teaching at a high school, I can say that I would still be a happy man.</p><p>Except...except I still had that itch, that desire to get my doctorate degree. My experience as a M.A. student is not entirely analogous to others in that 1. I was a part-time student and 2. did not really partake into the clique of graduate students that predominated North Texas.* I wasn't able to graduate in two years on account of work-related changes and training. But despite the time constraint and the anonymity I felt with the department, I loved graduate school. It's simplistic to say if it was "hard" or "easy." It was challenging, but I love a challenge. I found a good topic to write about, and while funding from UNT was non-existent, I did the best I could to research my thesis. Researching topics, grappling with historiography, and writing are things I also loved. And I would not be able to do any of that in a professional setting if I went the high school or community college route.</p><p>My philosophy was this: I could either do this now, or live with the regret of not having tried. The worst-case scenario would be that I would be rejected from all the schools I've applied to. In which case, I transition from adjuncting to full-time teaching. I took the plunge and applied in the autumn of 2016. </p><p>In the next post, I will expand on the

application process. What schools I applied to, and what I learned (belatedly). I will also end on a very optimistic note. Stay tuned!</p><p> </p><p> </p> </div>

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Totten: Eternal Enmity
/blog/2016/qm1nt82s5if34o0sh2ivrvp7a68ymz
<div class="sqs-html-content">   <p>In his Jan. 18 post "Iran's Hostage Victory," Michael Totten displays the same blindness typical of many hawks in their disdain and loathing of both Iran and the possibility of a détente with Iran.</p><p>Totten begins his post eye-rolling Bernie Sanders' suggestion on restoring diplomatic relations with Iran:</p> </div>
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"During Sunday's Democratic primary debate, Senator Bernie Sanders argued that it's time to bring Iran in from the cold. "I think what we've got to do is move as aggressively as we can to normalize relations with Iran," he said.

If Iran had a representative government, if it wasn't ruled by Ayatollah Khamenei, his dark theocratic Guardian Council and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, the United States and Iran would restore normal relations almost as a matter of course.

Iran would, in all likelihood, take its proper place as one of America's premier allies in the Middle East alongside the Kurds and the Israelis. The extreme and often fantastical anti-Americanism so endemic in the Arab world is far weaker among the Persians, Azeris and Kurds who make up the Iranian nation.

Iran right now is like Poland under the Warsaw Pact—a would-be friendly nation occupied and ruled by a hostile regime. Good and proper relations will have to wait until the government is overthrown or reformed out of all recognition like Vietnam's current communist-in-name-only government." </blockquote> </figure> <div class="sqs-html-content">   <p>Now, my response isn't to defend Iran. It is beyond any doubt that Iran is the perpetrator of many human rights abuses: ranging from the persecution of Baha'is and homosexuals, to sponsoring Hezbollah, and liberal use of torture against prisoners of conscious. That can't be denied.</p><p>But for the sake of consistency, why doesn't Totten advocate ending diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, or Egypt? Those same abuses can be pinned on nominal American allies. But he doesn't. And he shouldn't.</p><p>Breaking diplomatic relations from other states is rarely a good idea. Yes, the circumstances behind the 1979 Iran Hostage Crisis were unique. But Totten is not advocating the continued situation with Iran because of the hostage crisis of 1979. Rather, he's angry (rightfully so!) that Iran is unjustly imprisoning someone today. And while his anger is warranted, you do not base your foreign policy on those concerns. </p><p>The United States and Iran have shared interest in the region; namely, the destruction of the so-called Islamic State. And while the 2015 nuclear deal's ramifications are yet to be seen, the upside is that Iran's pursuit for a nuclear weapon has been stymied for the foreseeable future. In contrast to McCain's infamous rendition of Barbara Ann to Bomb Iran, President Obama was able to accomplish the same goal without another disastrous war in the Middle East. </p><p>The prospect that diplomacy may work and may be a force for good is frightening to Totten and the still-extant neoconservative punditocracy, where it is forever 1938 and Obama is another Neville Chamberlain. Iran is an evil and must be dealt with post-haste!</p><p>But what is truly mind boggling is that these well-meaning (if woefully wrong) pundits have their equals in the conservative inner-circles of the Islamic revolutionary vanguard of 1979. Ayatollah Khamenei and his ilk also have memories of the United States that mirror the boogey-men of Totten's fevered imagination. From Mosaddegh to America's support for the tyrannical Pahlavi dynasty and Saddam Hussein's invasion of

Iran…well, you get the idea. </p><p>It's easy to imagine what Khomenei would think of making peace with the United States. Why would he support dealing with a regime that has openly talked about bombing his nation for the last three decades? That surrounds his country militarily? That could theoretically exterminate his population in half an hour? And that is complicit in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iranians?</p><p>For all the faults Iran has done to the United States, it does not compare to what we have done to Iran.</p><p>But to Totten, while may think it's Munich 1938 all over again, our past against Iran is irrelevant. Iranians will just have to get over ancient history.</p><p>The point is not that two wrongs make a right. Peace is not going to happen when one side completely capitulates to the other. That's a fool's errand. Instead, the first steps to peace are always tentative: one side gives, the other side reciprocates. Pride and reactionary factions on both sides would rather want war than admit their mistakes.</p><p>To their credit, both Barack Obama and Hassan Rouhani have made those first steps despite the opposition. That the Iranians quickly released US navy sailors after their capture shows what diplomacy can accomplish. </p><p>Diplomacy isn't always going to work. And that's okay. There are no easy answers, and peace is hard for both sides. But war is even harder. Totten may fret that Iran isn't perfectly compliant with his image of what it could be. But as the saying goes, the perfect is the enemy of the good. And of course, good is better than our current situation.</p><p>One hopes that the future American and Iranian leadership continue the work accomplished this last year. Peace depends on it.</p> </div>

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the idealization of pope francis
/blog/2015/the-idealization-of-pope-francis
<div class="sqs-html-content">   <p>Last week, my father spoke highly of Pope Francis. He said "Me cae bien." (He's fine by me). Now, if you knew my father, this is extremely out of character. Since a child in rural Mexico, he was vehemently anti-Catholic and flirted with Evangelical and Charismatic Christian churches. And given the long history of the Catholic Church in Mexico, who can blame him for his attitude? </p><p>My father was not impressed by Pope John Paul II, and much less by Pope Benedict. But Francis? He's fine by me. I thought hell had frozen over.</p><p>But Pope Francis has that effect on people. Many of my fellow atheists and liberals have been swayed and enamored with Francis. Unlike his predecessors, Francis hails from Latin America and brings in a new perspective on a euro-centric religious organization. The actions of Francis in the early days of the papacy showed a man more committed to the poor, vulnerable, and shunned than the pomp of Benedict's red Prada shoes. Instead of an insular body out of touch from the realities of modernity, Francis showed that he was at least listening. </p><p>The amount of goodwill Francis had generated among skeptics and critics is astounding. And indeed, some of this is warranted. While the Republican party still clings to antediluvian denial on climate change, Francis's Laudato Si was a clarion call to all Catholics to combat climate change. That Francis has spoke critically on the pervasiveness of poverty was also welcomed by his nominal leftist critics. And let's us not forget his role in bridging US-Cuban relations.</p><p>Clearly, Francis is living up to the hype.</p><p>But let's be honest: has Francis change one doctrine, one tenet of Catholicism? Has Francis signal a change to redefine Catholicism stance on marriage?</p><p>No. </p><p>But there is widespread disappointment over the meeting between Pope Francis and Kim Davis by many liberals, as exemplified here in Slate. There is a difference between giving the Pope credit in voicing concerns on issues like poverty and climate change, and idealization: the latter is inherently unstable as it ignores that Francis has never wavered from his view on religious liberty or same-sex marriage. So how can we be disappointed over nothing? </p><p>Regardless of what you think of Kim Davis and the reactionary attempts to make her a martyr, one cannot claim that the Papacy had a position resembling that of the pro-SSM side in the US. Where would anyone get that idea? Or the idea the Catholic Church was going to break with centuries of tradition over this issue? Again, the idealization of Francis led to delusions of the reality of the Catholic Church. </p><p>I do not say this to be harsh. As a former Catholic, a portion of me is still moved by Mass, by Catholic hymns, and the antiquity of the Church. I will admit that I am sympathetic to the Catholic Church, if I can never actually bring myself to believe again. Nonetheless, even my sentimentality doesn't cloud the reality of the church's stance on gay marriage, on divorce, abortion, contraception, and sex. These positions have not changed while Francis has been pontiff, and they are positions I reject whole-heartedly. </p><p><a href="http://douthat.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/09/24/pope-francis-and-the-not-quite-secular-west/?module=BlogPost-Title&version=Blog%20Main&contentCollection=Opinion&action=Click&pgtype

=Blogs&region=Body">Maybe Ross Douthat is correct in saying that the West is not entirely secular. Maybe that can go some length into describing why Francis has had such a hold on even nominal skeptics like myself or my father. But even if that is the case, and even if Francis is fine by you, do not be taken: the Church hasn't changed at all.</p><p> </p> </div>

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take down the flag: apathy and historic lies
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<figcaption class="image-caption-wrapper"> <div class="image-caption"><p>Photo by eyeliam</p></div> </figcaption>
</figure> </div> <div class="sqs-html-content"> <p>The oft-quoted and oft-misattributed line "History if written by the victors" has always been wrong. With enough spin, with

enough apathy from the victors, the loser's narrative can take hold and dominate the conversation. Like global warming denialism or creationism, there is no need to "win" the debate among academics. So long as enough of the lay public believes the spin, that's all that's' needed.</p><p>The spin de jour are the increasingly feeble attempt to salvage the meaning of the Confederate flag. In the wake of the Charleston Church Shooting of June 17, 2015, discussion of the place of the Confederate flag has resurfaced given that the shooter, Dylann Roof, was an unrepentant white supremacist who idealized the Confederacy, Apartheid South Africa, and the former Rhodesia. This idealization goes hand-in-hand with the Confederate Flag flying at full-mast over the South Carolina Statehouse, while the American flag is at half-mast in honor of the victims of the shooting. </p><p>Given the sordid and twisted history associated with the "Rebel flag," the continuing flying of that flag by any and all municipality and state government - South Carolina most of all - is an insult to not only the victims of the shooting, but all victims (direct and indirect) of white supremacy of the last 300 years.</p><p>By no means am I suggesting the Confederate flag should be banned from sale, or excised by society at large, a là Germany and Nazi insignias. But any decent human being should look at that flag and view it for what it is: the failed symbol of traitors who sought to expand a slave-holding society across a continent. The Confederacy deserved to die, and so should any nostalgia for it.</p><p>Yes, any one should be able to wave the Confederate flag at their own pleasure. But society at large should view those individuals as they would any loon waving the Nazi flag or the Islamic State's banners: as people far outside decent society. But why has American society humored the Confederate flag-waving for so long? </p><p>Simply put, it is because of lies and apathy. </p><p>The Civil War was caused because of slavery. End of discussion. There is no historical debate over this question, and yet contemporary opinions outside of academia continue to push the lie that the Civil War was due to "state's rights." The simple rejoinder to that lie - "a state's right to do what?" - should tell you how flimsy that idea is. And yet it continues to persist. High Schoolers are taught this lie under the well-meaning intent to show complexity to historical events. The problem is that while analyzing the minutia of battles, of individual motives, and of war-time strategies are themselves complex, the ultimate roots of the war are as simple as they are tragic.</p><p>This tragedy cannot be denied. Over 700,000 Americans died as a result of the war. And for what? The proposition that men can own men? And women? And children? On the basis of skin color? There's nothing redeemable about this. Nothing at all. And yet, that's the kicker: when confronted with such a horrible excuse, people create new myths to justify their collective actions. So the goal to preserve slavery became to "defend state right." This Lost Cause became a lie that continues to this day, because so many people would rather deny the obvious that comprehend the horrors committed by their ancestors.</p><p>They're not alone in this, and given the rash of denialism around the world towards genocides and atrocities, we can say that this reaction is "natural." But whereas Germany has taken an active stance in combating revision and to fully recognize the magnitude of Nazism's horrors, this was not (and is still not) the case in the United States. Because while Nazism died when the Red Army sacked Berlin, American white supremacy didn't die. Jim Crow would metastasize as a result of Reconstruction's failure, and exist for another century until the Civl Right Acts of the 1960s ended it. But the racism that fueled it didn't die, only to recede under the surface where it still exists, manifested by Dylann Roof.</p><p>Defenders of the Confederate flag resort to emotional and parochial appeals: they say it is about heritage . But such a statement is itself racist. Why? Because whose heritage are we talking about? Are we talking about the heritage of only white Southerners? Or does the heritage of African-Americans not matter? Do the defenders of the flag even think what African-Americans think about the flag? I don't think the thought ever crossed their mind. Or if it did, they would resort to thinking that this is just another instance of "identity politics" and that by pointing out the evil behind the flag, that those complainers are the real racists.</p><p>Unironically, Dylann Roof said as much in his manifesto:</p><blockquote><pre style="margin-left: 40px;">"I think it is is fitting to start off with the group I have the most real life experience with, and the group that is the biggest problem for Americans. [****] are stupid and violent. At the same time they have the capacity to be very slick. Black people view everything through a racial lens. Thats what racial awareness is, its viewing everything that happens through a racial lens. They are always thinking about the fact that they are black. This is part of the reason they get offended so easily, and think that some thing are intended t

be racist towards them, even when a White person wouldnt be thinking about race. The other reason is the Jewish agitation of the black race. Black people are racially aware almost from birth, but White people on average dont think about race in their daily lives. And this is our problem. We need to and have to." </pre></blockquote><p>There is absolutely no self-awareness here by Roof. While writing a screed about his rationale to murder and inflict human misery due to his racism, he instead lays blame on African-Americans for simply pointing out past injustices. This "racial lens" is a problem, according to Roof, because "white people" do not do that. This, lady and gentlemen, is what we called white privilege. But he's not exceptional in saying this. While crude, Roof is simply conveying an extremely common opinion. In a 2013 Rasmussen poll, more Americans thought that African-Americans were more racist than whites. Further, Pew found that half of American whites see no racism around them. This is despite de facto segregation, white flight, police brutality against minorities, and, oh yeah, the entire history of white supremacy against blacks and minorities. But it is the idea that because blacks and minorities - the victims of white supremacy - are voicing the damage wrought to them, that by simply speaking, they must be the real racists.</p><p>And the reason why this continues is because of apathy. Why bother with such a depressing issue when you yourself are not affected by it? Dylann Roof did say that he and his ilk did not think about race all that often. Sheltered by privilege, he could not muster the empathy to see why racism is still a menace today. Instead, frustrated by this and other small events through life, he took up the gun. And nine people are now dead.</p><p>In the wake of Sandy Hook, or the Aurora Cinema shootings, and of so many other mass shootings, I have little faith that gun control will ever be enacted. But the symbol of white supremacy still waves over the South Carolina Statehouse in Charleston. Cane we at least take that down? And cosign it to museums, textbooks, and cheesy Civil War reenactments? </p><p>Taking down the flag will not do anything meaningful to end racism. But at least we won't be humoring racists any longer.</p><p> </p> </div>

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onwards and forwards
/blog/2015/forwards-and-onwards
<div class="sqs-html-content"> <p>It took me long enough, but I finally have my Master's degree in History.</p><p>Now what? </p><p>Find a job, that's what. I keep telling myself that whatever job I find will only be temporary, and that I will eventually complete my PhD in History. But I cannot predict the future, so a successful job search may mean that I will forever be a teacher. Not that there's anything wrong with that, mind you. But it's just odd that, back in high school, I would have never imagined myself as a teacher. Funny how life leads us into strange and new directions.</p><p>Last year my job search was, to be blunt, a failure. Looking back on it now I feel that there were many mistakes made during the interview processes. But I did discover a few things during all that about what principals are looking for at prospective teachers. </p><p>I was confident given my good grades in History, and my performance on the TExES Social Studies exam. I don't think my knowledge of the subject is in doubt. Rather, what principles care about is on how to manage a classroom, how to deal with parents, how to make lesson plans. Not really the subject at hand.</p><p>On one level, this makes all the sense in the world: a teacher must do much more than simply lecture. We simply do not appreciate the entirety of what a teacher has to do. I wasn't at all surprised by these questions. Makes sense. But surely, you would have expected something about competency on the subjects,

no? </p><p>Whatever is the case, I didn't get a job last year. So the search continues again. This time I have a Master's degree, and more teaching positions to choose from. And I have the added bonus of applying at community colleges!</p><p>We'll see what new opportunities come my way, but even with last year's troubles, I remain optimistic.</p> </div>

2015/forwards-and-onwards
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grad school - a couple of thoughts
/blog/2013/grad-school-a-couple-of-thoughts
<div class="sqs-html-content"> <p>So, I'm now into my third semester in graduate school, and so far I'm managing my own. Having a 4.0 is nice, and my work in my three study courses is coming along nicely.</p> </div>   <div   class="   image-block-outer-wrapper   layout-caption-below   design-layout-inline   "   data-test="image-block-inline-outer-wrapper"   >   <figure   class="   sqs-block-image-figure   intrinsic   "   style="max-width:774px;"   >   <div   class="image-block-wrapper"   data-animation-role="image"   data-animation-override   >   <div class="sqs-image-shape-container-element " style="   position: relative;   padding-bottom:133.33334350585938%;   overflow: hidden;-webkit-mask-image: -webkit-radial-gradient(white, black);   "   >   <img data-stretch="false" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1361360063954-SM88HG17DIQKF5TP0F3L/old_clock_by_neyle.jpg" data-image="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1361360063954-SM88HG17DIQKF5TP0F3L/old_clock_by_neyle.jpg" data-image-dimensions="774x1032" data-image-focal-point="0.5,0.5" alt="old_clock_by_neyle.jpg" data-load="false" elementtiming="system-image-block" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1361360063954-SM88HG17DIQKF5TP0F3L/old_clock_by_neyle.jpg" width="774" height="1032" alt="" sizes="(max-width: 640px) 100vw, (max-width: 767px) 100vw, 100vw" style="display:block;object-fit: cover; width: 100%; height: 100%; object-position: 50% 50%" onload="this.classList.add("loaded")" srcset="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1361360063954-SM88HG17DIQKF5TP0F3L/old_clock_by_neyle.jpg?format=100w 100w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1361360063954-SM88HG17DIQKF5TP0F3L/old_clock_by_neyle.jpg?format=300w 300w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1361360063954-SM88HG17DIQKF5TP0F3L/old_clock_by_neyle.jpg?format=500w 500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1361360063954-SM88HG17DIQKF5TP0F3L/old_clock_by_neyle.jpg?format=750w 750w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1361360063954-SM88HG17DIQKF5TP0F3L/old_clock_by_neyle.jpg?format=1000w 1000w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1361360063954-SM88HG17DIQKF5TP0F3L/old_clock_by_neyle.jpg?format=1500w 1500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/1361360063954-SM88HG17DIQKF5TP0F3L/old_clock_by_neyle.jpg?format=2500w 2500w" loading="lazy" decoding="async" data-loader="sqs">   </div>   </div>   </figure>   </div>   <div class="sqs-html-content"> <p>However, this is the first time that

I'm going full-time to school; the previous two semesters were part-time only. In taking these three study courses, I'm now able to appreciate the different styles (for lack of a better term) among my professors, regarding their assumptions in the study of history. </p><p>My first professor (also my advisor) focuses on systemic institutions and assumptions that permeate all levels of society, even into the most innocuous aspects. People are trapped by these forces and assumptions, and by realizing our biases, we can come closer to understanding past decision making and the resulting consequences. In this perspective, the works of structuralism (especially of Foucault and Derrida) takes center stage as analytic tool in studying the past. As my advisor's focus is on Orientalism - the Western perception and assumptions towards the Orient - it isn't a surprise that this is the primary means to analyze the past. This includes trying to observe the historian's biases when analyzing texts and material from another society. It is not simply to let the text "speak for itself," but to also be vigilant toward's our own biases. I can say that studying under her has helped tempered my earlier, skeptic-influenced ambivalence towards post-modernist thought. </p><p>In contrast, my second professor eschews the "systemic" notion of history, and looks at individuals. As a semi-famous military historian (and certainly one of the top military historians anywhere), he can appreciate trends and patterns - commonalities - in the history of European warfare. However, he tries to focus much more closely on individual decisions, individual factors that swing the entire course of history from one end to another. In studying WWI under him, the old notions I had of WWI - that the war was inevitable due to long-term trends - are being challenged. The more I read, the more I realize that a Bismarck or any competent leader would not have let war come at all. Rather, the leadership - political and military - fucked up. And fucked up a lot in institutions that did not promote merit or good ideas, in societies plagued by class antagonisms, in a ambivalent adoption of new technologies and falling back on old tactics, and on the contradiction of wanting a decisive victory in the face of trench warfare. Even with these trends, bone headed mistakes and hesitations led to this. So with this professor, the human factor looms large.</p><p>And there's the third course. This course deals with Mexican-American and Chicano history. As a Chicano myself, you would think that the style taught here would be to my liking. You'd be wrong about that. From my readings and my observation of the professor, the entire field of Mexican-American history is wrapped up with Chicano and Latin American activism. Now, in their defense, Chicano and Borderland scholars have shed a lot of light of systemic prejudices against Hispanics - from the use of quarantine in South Texas to the use of eugenics to sterilized "troubled" Mexican youths in California to showing that Mexican-Americans were lynched at a higher rate than blacks were. That anger is there, and that anger towards the past is actually justified, unlike the fears of conservatives towards something as tame as affirmative action. Nonetheless, when I hear from this professor that a writer should be more emotional and condemnatory towards an injustice, I feel uncomfortable. History should not be synonymous with polemics. While the course is interesting, I am better able to articulate why I'm unsettled by Chicano studies in genera.</p><p>If anything, I do find that the three courses have helped me understand the nuances and contradictions among these different threads. What am I to make of it? Or what am I to choose, I can not say.</p><p></p><p></p><p></p><p></p><p></p><p></p><p></p> </div>

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<p>Back during my days back in Austin, I walked passed the main building often on my way to class. Inscribed on its facade is the

following:</p><p class="text-align-right">Ye shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free.</p><p class="text-align-left">Ironically, these words are sourced from the Book of John as an appeal to accept the Holy Ghost in order to achieve eternal salvation. But never mind that. Despite the theological origin of the phrase, I always liked it. I feel learning unshackles a person from the constraints of ignorance. Ignorance is a prison, limiting one from knowledge and blinding them to the world as it really exists.</p><p>At times, though, the truth hurts. It really hurts. In learning new ideas - the unseemly details of past events, and the inconsistencies of cherished narratives we hold dear - our view of the world is shaken and shattered. The uncomfortable realities that manifest from our new-found knowledge can lead to the following scenarios:</p>
We accept the truth and change our views accordingly (if reluctantly) based on new data.
We ignore the new truth to end the unsettling feeling that arises after such discovery.
We dismiss the truth as false out of a deep conviction we already know the one and only truth.
<p>I strive to choose the first option every time the opportunity presents itself. And yet it's hard. Giving up my religion and my political ideology was hard; once those were gone, I developed a void where these ideas once took center place, and trying to fill that void with substitute ideas only let to more confrontations with uncomfortable ideas. No doubt I am not alone with this feeling.</p> </div>   <div class="sqs-html-content">   <p>Why do we resist? We should recognize the errors of our ways and accept the truth, accept reality. Sure, it's embarrassing to admit a mistake, but in the end we should be able to recognize the inherent advantage in our new found truth. But still we resist.</p><p>I don't think anyone will know the answer to this question other than to say that humans are not logical animals. We are much more than automatons who follow basic commands preset from a creator. We base our lives on emotions and feelings and would rather cherish these feelings more so than to recognize and appreciate the cold reality.</p><p>Still, while it's useful to understand that humans are inherent emotional creatures, not rational ones, these emotions can lead to detrimental reasoning. </p><p>Some weeks ago, I passed by my sister's snow cone shop. However it happened, our conversation steered from what apps to install on her new iPhone and to a discussion of welfare. Keep in mind that my sister graduate as a Social Work major, is steeped in the literature of welfare statistics, and was once vehement in debunking the stereotypes of welfare abuse and its perceived prevalence. Years of working outside of field of study, opening up her own business, and being a mother has drastically changed her views on welfare.</p><p>She now rails against welfare abuse. Her once liberal views have veered towards the right. This, despite knowing the statistics. In fairness to my sister, she is cognizant of this change and tries to remember the evidence from her years in school. But alas, that's not enough. And it's not enough for a very obvious reason:</p><p>Her new truth feels good.</p><p>And if it feels good, sounds good, then it's true. Damn the facts. Anecdotal evidence may be worthless to any practitioner of logic and skepticism, but boy, does it ever work in shaping a person's narrative of the world.</p><p>I know what the standard skeptical/atheist refrain would be. You must teach people how to think properly, logically so they can base their beliefs on reason and on the evidence. It's a nice sentiment, and works great if we're talking about a single thing a person will not put much attention to in a day-to-day basis, like alternative medicine or other pseudosciences. But such reasoning has a hard time challenging an established narrative. </p><p>If a narrative makes sense and feels correct to someone, what can be done? And considering that our entire political culture is dominated by these self-insulated narratives, I have a hard time thinking much can be done. And I'm not just referring to my sister's views on welfare.</p><p>People actually think anthropogenic global warming is a hoax. People really think that Barack Obama is an evil socialist autocrat hellbent on destroying Western civilization. People actually think that there's a cabal of corporations that seek to impose free trade and unbridled capitalism on humanity. Faulty narratives are pervasive.</p><p>Anyone seeking to sway political discourse one way or another must understand that showing statistics, charts, or photo evidence is not enough. But again, anyone seeking to sway political discourse would be advised to take a critical look into their own assumptions and ask if they are proselytes of the one, objective truth, or dupes like the rest of us.</p><p>I wish I had an answer. But considering this has been the way humans have thought since the dawn of our species, I doubt anything can change this. Indeed, I think that while combatting the most harmful narratives would be advantages to all of us*, maybe we should just agree to disagree on most narrative conflicts. Maybe this is prudence

speaking, or just exhaustion on my part. </p><p>There are times I do wish I did not know and accepted the comfortable narratives most people do have. I would like there to be a God. I would like there to be an ultimate political truth. But I just can't bring myself to reject what I've learned, to reject the history and my skepticism to accept a truth that is most likely true. Ultimately, I could not accept the Catholic faith I grew in. I could not accept the veracity of the claims Conservatism, and then Socialism offered.</p><p>The narratives may be comforting. The narratives may offer a community of gnostics who are self-assured compatriots of the one, self-evident truth. I do wish I could just accept ignorance and bathe in her warm bliss. But I cannot. If you want to know why I am repelled by organized religion, by political parties, by ideological movements, this is why.</p><p>I wish it weren't the case. </p><p>And the funny thing is, while I do know enough to call shenanigans on this or that narrative, I do not know enough to actually formulate a narrative for myself. I don't know enough. Period. So not only am I repelled by groups I yearn to join, I'll never have the means to find such a group.</p><p>I may be free, but I can assure you, it's no picnic.</p><p>
</p><p>_____</p><p>*Narratives that actively promote violence or inflict deadly harm on a person. So think violent Jihadism, Fascism, Communism, Anarchism, or the promotion of homeopathy to a cancer patient. Anything that is self-evidently physically killing an individual.</p><p></p> </div>

2012/ignorance-is-bliss
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<p>Thanks foor sharing this</p>

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egpyt's presidential elections and liberal activists
/blog/2012/05/25/egpyts-presidential-elections-and-liberal-activists
<div class="sqs-html-content">   <p>As mentioned in the New York Times, the presidential elections in Egypt have seen the Muslim Brother candidate Mohamed Morsi and old Mubarak-apparatchik Ahmed Shafik emerge as the two leading candidates; as a result, a runoff will be held to determine Egypt's first democratically elected President. More interesting (at least to me), is the reaction of the liberal wing of the Egyptian revolution who are piqued at the thought that either a Muslim Brother or Mubarak stalwart will lead the country.</p>
<p></p> <p></p> <p></p>

<p>Other moderate and liberal candidates like Amr Moussa, the Nasserite Hamdeen Sabahi, and the former Muslim Brother Aboul Fotouh did not gain enough votes to proceed to the runoff. Indeed, the two former frontrunners of the race, Moussa and Fotouh, are now out of the race. In the case of Fotouh, it seems liberal support for the candidate eroded with the Salafists endorsement of his candidacy. Thus, liberal support buoyed Sabahi's candidacy to propel him to be on par with that of Fotouh. And while the combined votes of Fotouh and Sabahi would put them in a clear plurality of the vote, the Egyptian voting system doesn't care for such ad hoc rationalizations.</p> <p>Moderate and liberal voices were overshadowed by the organizational skill of the Brotherhood should not come to anyone's surprise. As mentioned by this special from Al Jazeera, this Muslim Brotherhood has had organizational success in parliamentary elections since the beginning of Mubarak's regime. And they are the most organized and largest non-state actor in Egypt. And while the revolution itself was led by liberal and leftist activists, the inability of these activists to speak in a single voice like the Brotherhood doomed their candidate(s) of choice.</p> <p>However, the success of Shafik may come as a surprise since the revolution sought to remove the ancien regime of Mubarak. But this is not that surprising once you think about it. It was never clear if the majority of the Egyptian people actually supported the revolution. Not to mean they thought Mubarak was awesome, but that they were neutral with regards to the revolution. The revolution has had an economic and social cost to Egypt: the lost of tourism has sunk an already beleaguered economy, and the constant protests, clashes, and riots of the past year and a half has created a yearning for "normalcy" on the part of many Egyptians. They want security and jobs, and the revolution-as-a-phenomenon has created a situation counter to that. This is the situation that Shafik tried to tap into by stating that the "revolution is over". The chaos of the revolution has ended.</p> <p>Of course, the dictates of the second-place candidate does not end a revolution. It'll be interesting to see how far Morsi goes if he does win the run-off vote. If so, the Muslim Brotherhood will now control the presidency and parliament, able to pass any legislation they will wish to pass. How they interact with the military (much less the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces) is to be determined.</p> <p>So what's next of Egypt's liberal activists? Well, the defection of many Fotouh supporters to Sabahi has led to Shafik being the second-place winner. Assuming that this election fosters a new era of Egyptian democracy, and not a continuation of autocratic rule, liberal and leftist activists should follow the example of the Brotherhood and do a better job at organizing at a political level. Yes, the liberal activists were at the forefront of the revolution, with the Brotherhood joining the protests once Mubarak's power became untenable. But as seen in the parliamentary elections, liberals and the left could not even hope to compete against the Brotherhood. And the decision to boycott the election proved to be disastrous. Yes, they showed their displeasure at Islamists controlling the legislature, but they don't have any say in the matter. What did that accomplish?</p> <p>Let this election be a lesson to the Egyptian left. Hopefully, next time (if there is a next time), some semblance of unity can emerge to actually shift the course of the election. In the meantime, they will need to decide if either Morsi - the Islamist - or Shafik - the face of the old regime - is the lesser to two evils.</p> </div>

2012/05/25/egpyts-presidential-elections-and-liberal-activists
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/blog/2011/11/18/on-writing

<div class="sqs-html-content"> <p>I try to post here more often, but I feel that I don't have much to say. I have ideas, I have opinions, but when I start to write them down here, I second-guess myself. Do I actually know what I'm talking about?</p> <p>At the same time, I'm astounded as to how often I read the opinions and thoughts of pundits that are worthless. They know very little, they fail to fact-check, and they are so damn sure they are right. How can they be so confident despite being wrong so often? And they get paid for it? It's mind-blowing.</p> <p>You can chalk this up to the Dunning-Kruger effect, but I feel that what makes people so enamored to the writings of know-nothing pundits is that these pundits are so confident. The whole industry of political blogging feels like some large echo chamber, where people reinforce their beliefs day in and day out.</p> <p> "Damn learning! I want to read more on how I'm already correct, and how they are wrong!"</p> <p>Maybe this is why, despite my liberal proclivities, I am turned off by the liberal blogosphere. I am more fascinated with the ideas of anarchists, communists, and the marginalized left than I am with those loyal stewards of the Democratic party.</p> <p>Another problem I find in updating this blog is that I have a hard time maintaining my focus on my writing. I may have an idea in mind, but I then go about making outlines to organize my ideas around. It seems I need to forgo that entirely and just write from the top of my mind. Edits can come later.</p> <p>So I'll try to update this more often. But who knows.</p> </div>

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Thoughts
ankhx100@hotmail.com
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an ode to the optical disk drive: or why blu-ray is doomed
/blog/2011/07/27/an-ode-to-the-optical-disk-drive-or-why-blu-ray-is-doomed
<div class="sqs-html-content"> <p>Engadget: Apple's officially over the opti cal drive, for better or worse</p> <p>A common theme I notice about the lamentations over the removal of ODDs from the Mac Mini is the desire for Apple to install Blu-Ray ODDs into Macs and MacBooks. But what percentage of people actually play movies on Blu-Ray disks?</p> <p>I would imagine that many more people peruse the DVD selection of a Redbox than buying the latest Blu-Ray movie from Best Buy. Maybe I'm letting my own personal anecdotal experience affect my outlook on this "controversy" as I don't have a big screen TV, much less a blu-ray player. But I feel that Blu-Ray was a moribund format on arrival, doomed for failure as a result of the convenience of online streaming.</p> <p>Sure, the engadget editiorial is correct: downloading a 50gb rip of a Blu-Ray disk is going to take a while, even on the best ISP network in the US. But how many people actually download (legally or illegally) a Blu-Ray film versus a standard DVD rip or standard definition flick?</p> <p>I can see Blu-Ray living on as the go-to format for installing games, especially in next-generation gaming consoles. But the fact that Apple more or less succeeded in distributing their new OS without a physical delivery system, I see the removal of ODDs from the Mac Mini not as an act of hubris on Apple's part, but simply stating the obvious: the Optical Disk Drive's days are numbered.</p> </div>

2011/07/27/an-ode-to-the-optical-disk-drive-or-why-blu-ray-is-doomed
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idealism and reality: rand paul's troubles
/blog/2010/05/25/idealism-and-reality-rand-pauls-troubles
<div class="sqs-html-content">   <p>After winning the Republican primary to be the party's Kentucky Senate candidate, a series of interviews - one with NPR and another with the Rachel Maddow Show - left Rand Paul in a bit of trouble. The issue concerned his views on a section of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In summation, his views are that the federal government does not have the constitutional right in legislating who a private business may or may not choose as patrons - if the business owner decides to refuse service to a person of another race, it was within his right as the property owner to do so. This is in keeping with the libertarian view that a key function of government is to protect the rights of property owners and the right to free speech of its citizenry.</p> <p>In theory, the community at large (leveraging their collective might as consumers) could boycott the discriminatory business owners and hurt him economically as a protest against his opinions. In the libertarian viewpoint, this is a self-correcting mechanism that does not require governmental involvement and zero infringement on the property rights or freedom of speech of anyone person...in theory, at least.</p> <p>The problem with Paul's (and libertarians') view on this issue is that it makes several assumptions:</p> Government is an entity separate from the wider society that has a set (if arbitrary) role in protecting "natural rights" - rights that include the protection of private property and free speech but not freedom from unjustifiable discrimination or injustice; essentially, government has no right to protect the welfare of a minority group due to an arbitrary demarcation of responsibility and duties libertarians adhere do. The notion the wider society would actually be opposed to the discriminatory actions of the hypothetical business owner and be bothered to actually boycott the hypothetical business. For example, we all know that many goods on sale at your local discount store are made in sweatshops that abuse the rights of their workers - how are the boycotts against these sweatshops and Wal-Mart working out? They're still in business (and thriving) despite years of knowledge of these practices. The notion that property rights are more important than the right of a citizen from being discriminated against. <p>While these views may seem reasonable to Paul and his ilk, these ideological views are completely out of touch from reality. It is easy to say that people will unite and protest against unfair business practices if these practices are known in the open; but when the situation emerges, how many people will actually partake in the boycott? And what is to be done when nearly every business in the hypothetical community are also discriminatory as well? Who will protect the minority group from this?</p> <p>It is easy for an idealistic libertarian to tout how, if given the chance, he would march along side Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights movement in condemning racism...only after the fight for equal rights has been mostly won already. An idealistic libertarian does not have the burden in having an internal debate over the rampant racism and discrimination against blacks and other minority groups pervasive throughout the entire country and the rights of business owners in choosing whether or not to discriminate. When faced with a situation that causes this type of conflict between one's ideals and one's common sense, it is always troubling. Fortunately for most libertarians, they do not have to face history in their day to day lives.</p> <p>Unfortunately for Rand Paul, he now needs to balance his idealism and reality. It will be interesting to see how he proceeds from here.</p> </div>

Civil Liberties
Politics
Thoughts
ankhx100@hotmail.com
open

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<p>interesting post. libertarian seems a bit contradictory in theory (and assumes a lot of things, you're right), let alone this issue on civil rights.</p>

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a uniquely american debate: democracy or republic?
/blog/2010/04/01/a-uniquely-american-debate-democracy-or-republic
<div class="sqs-html-content"> <p>No matter where you hear it – be it a ranting posting on a forum, a podcast by a know-it-all, an editorial in a newspaper, or the rhetoric of self-righteous politicians – the expression "America is a republic, not a democracy" is used to show that the United States was not founded on the principal of majoritarian rule, but on the principals enumerated in the Constitution. The writings of some of the Founding Fathers seem to point towards this view.</p> <p>Thomas Jefferson – the oft used source in discussion on the structure of American governance – wrote:</p> <p>A democracy is nothing more than mob rule, where fifty-one percent of the people may take away the rights of the other forty-nine.</p> <p>The framers of the Constitution (excluding Jefferson) sought to limit the idea of mob rule from forming in the nascent United States. James Madison, instrumental in crafting the Constitution, wrote in Federalist #10:</p> <p>Hence it is that such democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths. Theoretic politicians, who have patronized this species of government, have erroneously supposed that by reducing mankind to a perfect equality in their political rights, they would, at the same time, be perfectly equalized and assimilated in their possessions, their opinions, and their passions</p> <p>Similar ideas written John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and other figures crucial for the formation of the United States show that the idea of a direct democracy, in the minds of the founders, would devolve into mob rule, where the majority will undoubtedly strip away the innate rights of the minority. In this context, we need to keep in mind that the government of the United States was idealized to be a bulwark against the return of tyranny. It did not matter if the tyranny came from the King of England or from the majority rule of Americans. Democracy was a slippery slope towards authoritarianism.</p> <p>The founders used the term "republic" to describe the governmental structure of the United States. Instead of direct democratic rule, this republic would instead be governed by elected representatives and appointed leaders that would guide and manage the United State in an enlightened manner. With the exception of local congressmen, major offices in the government were either appointed or elected by bodies independent of the federal government (e.g. the electoral college and state legislatures). Of those who could vote, only property-owning men of English or Scottish origin could. Needless to say, the percentage of eligible voters was small compared to the entire population of the United States.</p> <p>The constitutional structure of the federal government - with its enumerated definition of powers - is contrasted with simple majority rule. At the end of the day the founding fathers sought to emulate republican Rome, not democratic Athens.</p> <p>I guess this settles the debate: America is a republic, not a democracy!</p>

<p>...except that it's not over. Two centuries have passed since the revolution and the drafting of the constitution; many things have changed. Suffrage has been extended to all American citizens; Senators are now elected by the citizens of their states, and Presidents, while still elected by the electoral college, campaign across the country for the millions of votes needed to win the Presidential elections. With a wider electorate, the US has become much more democratic.</p> <p>A thing to consider is the definition of what is a "republic" versus a "democracy" has changed in the intervening two centuries. Political scientists argue over the exact definition of the word "democracy", but they agree that democracies share similar traits with one another: free, multi-candidate elections; the ability of voters to punish elected representatives by voting for someone else into that office; and the institutional constraints on executive control. We can argue over the meaning of what is a "true" democracy, especially argue over a definition that fits our opinions of that definition. But if we to place the United States as either a democracy, an authoritarian state, or an anacracy (i.e. without an government of some import to the state), the United States is considered a democracy. This poli-sci definition doesn't make everyone happy, but it does seek to be as free from ideological biases and as objective as possible.</p> <p>Then, what is a republic? The term originates after the ousting of the Tarquinii dynasty from ancient Rome and the establishment of a government free from monarchal tyranny. This res publica - "thing of the people" - was named as the power of the state did not lie with the kings of Rome but on the Senate and the two consuls elected every year by the citizens of Rome. It's perfectly understandable the American revolutionaries, fighting against monarchal tyranny, would hark back to Rome for inspiration in setting up the government. The term "republic" was naturally appropriated by the early Americans to signal a disdain towards monarchy; a repudiation of the "divine right" of rule; and an appreciation for a government based on the concept of natural law and the rights of man. The fact that a government based on high-minded principals was not democratic - democratic as we define it - was noted with irony by the early American leaders. We need to remember that the federal government was meant to be anti-tyrannical and not pro-democratic.</p> <p>The hoopla this debate incites is also political in nature. A typical debate follows as such:</p> The more leftist/liberal side of this debate will argue for a particular policy position and cites polling and mass opinion to show popular support for this position. The more right-wing/libertarian side would then argue that the United States was founded as a republic and not a democracy; essentially, damn public opinion. The right-winger would then look at the befuddled face of the leftist and elaborate that the republican nature of the United States is designed to prevent rash, popular ideas from being implemented to prevent the "mob" from imposing their will on the minority(i.e. the right-wingers) and stripping away the freedom and liberty of the minority. The leftist would then argue that the terms "republic" and "democratic" are not mutually exclusive... ...and the right-winger would then use his own definition of the word to argue against the lefty. <p>I admit, this is a vast oversimplification of the debate, but tends to be true. What is revealing in this debate is how self-serving the leftist and the right-winger are: the leftist and the right-winger will conveniently abandon their definitions if popular opinion or constitutional constraints are in contrast to their ideological view point. But - more important on the topic on-hand - is that both sides are arguing over two different sets of definitions and misconceptions of the founding of this country.</p> <p>The United States is, by every objective definition of the word, a democracy. But this definition did not exist in 18th century America. The term "republic" is now meant to be used as short-hand for "representative democracy" - but this term was also not a construct of the 18th century. The United States was not founded as a democracy, but the United States has changed, as have the words we use to assign what America is. As long both sides of this debate are completely unaware of the differing definitions each has, the debate will be a futile, aggravating experience for all involved.</p> <p>*On a side note, it doesn't help matters when Republicans (i.e. the GOP) are more likely to use this debate not only to invalidate the positions of Democrats, but the basis of the Democratic party. Republican = defenders of the Republic VS Democrats = advocates of democracy</p> <p>Get it? Partisanship sucks, doesn't it?</p> </div></p>

2010/04/01/a-uniquely-american-debate-democracy-or-republic
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a few words on the texas textbook controversy
/blog/2010/03/21/a-few-words-on-the-texas-textbook-controversy
<div class="sqs-html-content"> <p>The problem with any "debate" about the Texas textbook controversy is the illusion that there needs to be "balance" in the way history is presented; that the goal of the education system is to present "both sides" of any given issue. In all cases of history, there is not a liberal historiography or a conservative historiography, but simply history itself. The idea that we need to "balance" history is absurd. The goal, rather, is to strive for a general, objective overview of world, national, and state history that will be taught to kids in our education system here in Texas. This not only applies to conservatives who wish to gloss over inconvenient facts that conflict with their political ideology (e.g. the secular nature of the Constitution), but also to post-modernist/deconstructionists who wish to impose a world-view hostile to empiricism and replace it with the notion of relative truths.</p> <p>We need to get outside this frame of mind that celebrates the balancing of two mutually exclusive "truths" and instead focus on the idea that history, even inconvenient histories, should be taught to students despite the inevitable cries of protests of special interests groups and stiffing parents. Likewise, educators do not have the right to make moral or political claims about historical events because ideological groups will always try to indoctrinate children to support their own viewpoint on a given matter.</p> <p>As a scientifically minded individual, I am always in favor of teaching kids critical thinking skills. Critical thinking, however, is always endangered when ideologues try to influence not only what is taught, but how one should think and feel about a historical matter. If given the mental toolkit in order to think critically, we need to trust kids to learn history and interpret the causes, the effects, and the morality of those events on their own and amongst themselves. If we cannot trust them to think for themselves and instead feel the need to teach them the "proper" histories, then this paternalism negates the purpose of teaching critical thinking.</p> <p>In the end, however, the children and teens of Texas (and other states) will get a stilted textbook that is devoid of any interesting history that will lead most students to disdain any future references of historical matters. This bothers me more than anything else about this whole controversy.</p> </div>

impact of the austin terrorist attack
/blog/2010/02/19/impact-of-the-austin-terrorist-attack
<div class="sqs-html-content">   <p>It's not news to anyone about what happened in Austin this past Thursday. The crashing a personal airplane to an office building housing an IRS bureau was a blatant act of terrorism. This is an act of violence by a man disgruntled with the government. In the aftermath of this terrorist attack, a manifesto of Joe Stack emerged on his personal website. Suicide notes are not unusual to find, especially ones after a terrorist attacks; one only has to see the videos of "martyrs" from Palestine and Iraq to know this. Political manifestos are not unusual to find after terrorist attacks. The manifesto of McVeigh after the Oklahoma City bombings and the manifestos of Ted Kaczynski come to mind.</p> <p>In the case for McVeigh and Kaczynski, their "manifestos" tended to be incoherent screeds in protests of society and their hope their attacks would precipitate a societal change. Kaczynski railed against the industrialization of civilization, while McVeigh hoped to avenged the siege of the Branch Davidians at Waco and to start a race war, a la the "Turner Diaries". In both cases, the general public (at least those who bothered to read the manifestos) were at best perplexed and bemused by the thought process that went into writing incoherent, self-righteous nonsense.</p> <p>When Joe Stack's suicide note/manifesto came to light, I, the masochist that I am, decided to read a cached copy of his website. I was fulling expecting yet another illogical and nonsensical rant. The logical conclusions that Stack makes, namely that violence is the only way to enact change, is absurd. However, the gist of his argument is so emotional and filled with passion that I think will lead people to sympathize with his situation, even his actions against the federal government.</p> <p>The words Joe Stack writes do not seem illogical. I don't mean that I agree with him; my own interactions with the IRS have been painless and easy to deal with thus far. But I know full well that his words have struck a cord with many disgruntled Americans. The anger against this government, especially during this economic recession, will lead to copycat acts inspired by Stacks' actions.</p> <p>In surfing Twitter, I see many people posting this excerpt from Stacks' suicide note:</p> <p>*The communist creed: From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.*</p> <p>*The capitalist creed: From each according to his gullibility, to each according to his greed.*</p> <p>In reading many more comments online, many people are essentially saying "I don't agree with Stack's actions, but he has a point". How many of these people are thinking along Stack's reason? Of the hundreds of people joining Facebook groups in memory of this terrorist, how many will be inspired and follow in Stacks' footsteps? These same people are calling Stacks a patriot and a hero! If they admire this man so much, then one would fathom to think that people will emulate him.</p> <p>Many right-wing pundits are now backtracking from their calls of "revolution" against the "tyrannical" and "communist" policies of the Obama administration. Even though Stack shows no sign to being a part of the Tea Party movement (he showed disdain for Republicans in his message), the mere fact he attacked the IRS for "robbing" him will resonate to many of the "Taxed Enough Already" movement.</p> <p>I think Stacks is just the first of many more to come.</p> <p>It's certainly a rough time for our Republic.</p> </div>

2010/02/19/impact-of-the-austin-terrorist-attack
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jesus denial
/blog/2010/02/17/jesus-denial
<div class="sqs-html-content">   <p>In the atheist/"freethought" movement, there exist a growing subset of activists who voice the belief that Jesus (aka "Christ") never existed. The proponents of this idea make arguments, that, on the surface, appear to be valid to ask:</p> There are no documentation to suggest Jesus existed up until the writings of the Gospels The divine characteristics attributed to Jesus (e.g. the virgin birth, resurrection, his miracles) are found again and again throughout the mythologies of other people in the Near East and the wider Greco-Roman world. The imagery used to depict Jesus during early Christian era varies depending on the culture Jesus is worshiped in: as Apollo-like in Greece, to a black man in Ethiopia, to the bearded man we know emerging from Byzantium The myriad of contradicting texts that does not give a clear picture on the life of Jesus <p>I will admit that when I first became an atheist (which is more me leaving the Catholic church than anything else), I was kinda swayed by these arguments. Thinking back on it now, I was so enthused about discovering I was not alone in having non-beliefs that I jumped right into the exact counter of what I used to believe: from believing in the divinity of Christ to the rejection of the existence of Jesus. People tend to over indulge on a new found belief more out of validation and insecurity than anything else...</p> <p>But enough of that tangent, back on topic:</p> <p>These arguments against the historicity of Jesus, as I said, sound good, at first blush. In fact, most of these arguments are true. The deities worshiped in the ancient world did have many of the attributes that Jesus is said to have had. Not only that, many so-called "prophets" went around preaching their own ideas and wowing audiences with supposed "miracles". Much of the arguments and rationalizations of Jesus deniers is true that it is kind of hard to disprove them wrong. And there lies the problem with the premise of the jesus deniers.</p> <p>The deniers do not contend that he is not divine or endowed with supernatural powers; rather, they insist that Jesus/Yeshua never existed. That's the claim they make, not that he was a mortal, but that the idea of Jesus as both a man and as the messiah were concocted by the leaders of the early church.</p> <p>Let me just get this out of the way: I do not believe that Jesus is the messiah or a prophet from God. Rather, he was just one of many apocalyptic preachers roaming around Roman Judea foretelling an end of the Roman occupation and the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel on earth. Obviously, I believe that Jesus was a historical person, if not a deluded person. But a person nevertheless.</p> <p><!--more--></p> <p>The Jesus deniers will respond to any criticism of their views by asking for evidence of the existence of a person called Jesus. It seems like a reasonable proposition to make; the burden of proof lies on the claimant, right? Yes, but only insofar as the claim is beyond belief. For example, if I claim I saw a cat running across the street on my way home, no one would ask me to prove my claim, as it is not much of an extraordinary claim to see a random cat. However, if I claim instead that I saw a pride of lions chasing an emu on my drive home, then yes, it is perfectly reasonable for someone to ask me for evidence. It is the degree of ridiculousness of my claim that warrants proof. So it is perfect admissible to ask for evidence and proof on the claim of the divinity/sanctity of this Jesus fellow; however, the fact we know that there were many self-proclaimed prophets in Judea during the rule of Augustus is not far fetched at all. There really is not reason to deny the existence of this Jesus fellow, especially when the initial followers of Jesus would interact with historical documented individuals like Saul of Tarsus, not to mention the accounts of Tacitus and Josephus on the existence of the Jesus movement spreading around the Roman world as early as the reign of Nero.</p> <p>As for Josephus' documentation during the First Jewish War (circa 70 CE): while it is popular for Jesus deniers to claim that Josephus' writings on the "followers of Christus" is a medieval forgery, there is no actual debate among classicists and historians as to the validity of this claim. In this case, the burden of proof does lie with the Jesus deniers to prove.</p> <p>The insistence of the Jesus deniers to ask for proof of Jesus' existence is spurious. If I were to ask for proof of Socrates existence, then other than the writings of Plato and a handful of writings from other Athenians, there is no physical evidence that Socrates existed. Hell, if I

want to ask for proof of Phillip II of Macedon's existence or the existence of Scipio Africanus, then you'd be hard pressed to find any physical proof of the existence of these persons. Rather, such pressing for evidence would seem absurd and paranoid; why would I doubt the existence of these ancients figures to begin with?</p> <p>My own personal opinion is that many proponents of Jesus denialism do so out of a sense of vindication of their newly found non-belief and non-theism. If Jesus never existed, then the rejection of a long-held belief is even more justified. The uncertainty of leaving a previously held worldview is diminished if the central figure of that worldview is just a myth. The anger in believing in a falsehood can be directed at the creators of the Jesus myth rather than one's own incredulity for believing in the divinity of a jewish carpenter.</p> <p>Jesus denialism, then, is more about combating one's own insecurity with their newly found conversion story rather than any meaningful or substantive historical debate.</p> </div>

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"lost to the west" lecture series
/blog/2010/01/24/lars-brownworths-lost-to-the-west-lecture-series
<div class="sqs-html-content">   <p>One of the first podcast I ever listened to was "12 Byzantine Emperors" by Lars Brownsworth. The podcast tells the history of the reign of 12 different emperors (and empress) of the Eastern Roman empire, starting with Diocletian and ending with Constantine XVI. This podcast series is, without a doubt, one of the best history series out there today. Fortuitously, I stumbled upon this lecture series by Brownsworth himself on Youtube. Very interesting.</p> <p>Lecture playlist at Youtube</p> <p>.</p> <p>[youtube=http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28lr5PRpKTY&feature=PlayList&p=B850 97DCCDFAC7E9&index=0&playnext=1]</p> </div>

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<div class="sqs-html-content"> <p>As with many things, I'm late in discovering the musical talents of AIR. I'm instantly hooked to this vid. Very beautiful imagery and music. [youtube=http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJ4Pm0N8s78&fmt=18]</p> </div>

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it's about fairness, isn't it?
/blog/2010/01/20/its-about-fairness-isnt-it-or-why-hate-crime-legislation-is-wrong
<div class="sqs-html-content"> <p>I understand the sentiment behind hate crimes legislation: I understand the well-meaning people who want to end the continuation of hate crimes</p> <p>I understand the seeming high-minded and noble belief that we, as a society, must combat despicable human attitudes like racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia.</p> <p>I understand.</p> <p>Yet I cannot support hate crime legislation, despite the good intentions behind it.</p> <p>Despite the good intentions, the "noble" idea of enacting hate crimes legislation, I believe the end result is not a solution of discrimination but rather a perpetuation of discrimination.</p> <p>The most noblest, high-minded ideals, when enacted and legislated, can result in evil.</p> <p>------------</p> <p><!--more--></p> <p>Now, it is not evil to combat racism and unfair discrimination.</p> <p>I remember reading a counter-protest in Austin, TX against a Neo-Nazi Rally that far outnumbered the Nazis themselves; some 20 Nazis vs some several thousand counter-protesters.</p> <p>What I like about that instance was the protests highlighted the mass opposition to the debunk ideology of Nazism and white supremacy by exercising their right of assembly, their right of free speech, and their right of protest. The counter-protest voiced its opposition to the racist wet dream of stripping the innate rights away from minorities (religious, sexual, racial, ethnic minorities).</p> <p>And yet, despite the media narrative of" good counter-protesters fight the evil Nazis", we have to keep in mind that many of the protesters, while good-hearted, did not protest and voice their opinions against the Neo-Nazi's belief system, but rather the fact the Nazis were holding a rally in the steps of the state Capitol.</p> <p>I agree that the scene of Nazis, in their quaint brown-shirts and flying the swastika on the steps of my state's Capitol is repulsive. But despite their flaws, these people are humans, and have the right to rally, not just in the state Capitol, but any where that other interest groups hold their rallies and marches. Free speech is an innate, unalienable human right. But this right applies to all people, even those we disagree with.</p> <p>We cannot be hypocritical and agitate to restrict the speech of those who want to do the same to others. Why stoop to their level?</p> <p>----</p> <p>The crux of my argument is that if we expect the majority to respect and tolerate the minority, then the minority and its supporters can not then ask

for preferential treatment and protection from the government. If the goal of the civil rights movement was to demand the equal protection of all citizens under the law, any hate crimes legislation is anathema to the ideals of civil rights.</p> <p>I am of the opinion that the way our justice system should enforce criminal law is if someone commits the crime, not why they committed the crime.</p> <p>If I assaulted a Mexican guy, I would be naturally charged with assault and be tried for that crime. It should not matter if I assaulted the person because I though he was a dick or if he ran over my dog, assault is assault and the crime was committed regardless of rationale.</p> <p>On the other hand, I assaulted that same guy, and if I was White, then I would not only be charged with assault, but also of suspicion of committing a hate crime against a minority. Right there and then, there's a suspicion of committing another crime, even if I had the assault had nothing to do with the race of the assaulted individual. Such legislation would adversely affect the presumption of innocence on the part of the individual who had committed a crime against the affected minority.</p> <p>Following up on my example, even if a white person assaulted the Mexican guy out of racial animosity, then it should not matter the rationale for the assault. The person who has committed a crime should only be tried for the crime. Nothing else, nothing more.</p> <p>Oddly, enacting hate crimes legislation would bolster hatred by some members of the majority towards minority groups. If there is the sense that the majority is purposely prosecuted for crimes against a minority, even as crimes against the majority by minorities are treated by the justice system in a completely different manner, then it should not surprise anyone that animosity against the minority group will rise.</p> <p>Ironically, hate crimes legislation will simply fuel the fires of bigotry.</p> <p>The intentions of the supporters of hate crimes legislation are not rooted in evil or malice. I just think that if we are serious in achieving true equal rights for racial, ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities, then the goal is to eliminate laws that discriminate (e.g. drug laws, same-sex marriage laws, religious laws) against minority groups and achieve true equal protection under the law.</p> </div>
<p>I understand the sentiment behind hate crimes legislation: I understand the well-meaning people who want to end the continuation of hate crimes</p> <p>I understand the seeming high-minded and noble belief that we, as a society, must combat despicable human attitudes like racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia.</p> <p>I understand.</p> <p>Yet I cannot support hate crime legislation, despite the good intentions behind it.</p> <p>Despite the good intentions, the "noble" idea of enacting hate crimes legislation, I believe the end result is not a solution of discrimination but rather a perpetuation of discrimination.</p> <p>The most noblest, high-minded ideals, when enacted and legislated, can result in evil.</p> <p>------------</p>
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ankhx100@hotmail.com
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sickening support for sterilization
/blog/2010/01/20/sickening-support-for-sterilization
<div class="sqs-html-content"> <p>A few weeks ago a story emerged that a Massachusetts woman, who was both a mother of nine children and was receiving welfare, was accidentally sterilized after requesting a contraception to be inserted to prevent any future unwanted pregnancies. You can read up on this story here: <a title="Link"

href="http://abcnews.go.com/Health/mother-sterilized-lawsuit-claims/story?id=9474471" target="_blank">http://abcnews.go.com/Health/mother-sterilized-lawsuit-claims/story?id=9474471</p> <p>I will not comment on the litigation filed against the doctors who either botched the operation or purposely sterilized her. No, I will write about the many people who have thrown their support to the doctors who sterilized the woman. These people tend to pop up in comment threads on various news sites praising the medical mishap of the operation and moralizing against having 9 children while on welfare.</p> <p>Now, before I go on, let me be clear that I have nothing against the notion of personal responsibility and I have nothing against saying that this woman should have been more careful as to protect herself from getting pregnant. Birth control is readily available and cheap to buy, especially in comparison to the money to raise a kid. There was no reason for this woman to get pregnant and give birth nine times.</p> <p>That being said, my opposition is to those people in support of sterilizing this woman.</p> <p><!--more-->I might be someone on the fringe of society for saying this, but who has ownership of your body? Society? Institutions such as religion or governments? Your spouse or family? I'd figure most people would unequivocally say that the only person who has ownership over your body is you. You have absolutely zero right to tell someone what they can do over their own body. If society was to demand that you be sterilized, would you agree to this demand and peacefully comply?</p> <p>You may counter,"this woman was getting welfare! If she is accepting the public dole, then society has the right to demand a change in her lifestyle...or enforce it upon her."</p> <p>On an emotional and visceral level, this may make sense. This course of action feels right. But it is not if something feels right, it's if that something is an anathema to the purpose of governmental institutions and is an inherent contradiction to highest ideals our society is built upon.</p> <p>What do I mean by this?</p> <p>The main argument that the supporters of the doctors who sterilized this woman point to the fact she gets welfare as proof that this woman was irresponsible and thus deserving of her misfortune. This argument falls apart when you consider how much taxpayer money is drained up to support everyday activities that take a larger chunk of taxes than an irresponsible woman. Our society is in love with automobiles and our highway system. Tens of million of dollars are spent on the building of new roads and buying new cars...but also clearing up the mess when accidents occur. Tens of thousands of people die every year on motorways. Thousands more are injured and disabled permanently as a result. The deaths and disability of thousands of people each year means that the productivity of these people they would have done during their lifetime is erased. The cost to emergency responders to the wreckage of accident scenes is in the millions of dollars. The societal costs of automobiles exceed the cost of welfare queens.</p> <p>If it is okay to sterilize a woman because she got pregnant 9 times, then it follows that cars should be banned. It's an idiotic line of reasoning, but if the infringing of a woman's right over her body is perfectly acceptable to save society money, then the banning of automobiles to all will also do the trick, right?</p> <p>Same thing with alcohol: the societal and economic costs of alcoholism, liver disease, and drunk driving exceed that of welfare queens. But no one in their right minds will respond to these costs by pushing forward another era of Prohibition. But why not prohibition when it's okay to sterilize a woman against her will?</p> <p>What I'm trying to get at is that when we pay taxes, we are already paying for other people's mistakes and fuck ups. When we fund welfare, we ideally hope that we will support people who are down-in-there-luck. But there are the people who exploit and leach off the system. Likewise, we fund our fire departments and police force to not only protect the community, but to protect the community from the idiocy and mistakes of people in that community.</p> <p>No matter what you may want and feel that you need, tax money will be used to fill in the costs caused by idiots and people who are socially irresponsible. To try to infringe on the civil liberties of a person because you want to save a dime is akin to torturing people to prevent a crime. It may "feel" right, but it is something easily said by people who cannot realize they will fuck up and leach off the system as well.</p> <p>Civil Liberties are another part of this story. I will not dwell on this too much, but I will say that I am someone who is pro-choice. I feel that a woman has the right to end a pregnancy. A woman has the right to her body, after all. If a woman has the right to her body, she has the right as well to have as many kids as she wants.</p> <p>You can't pick and chose what civil liberties you want to fight for and which ones you want to dismiss and ignore. It's all or nothing.</p> </div>

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scattered thoughts on my ongoing research trip
/blog/2019/scattered-thoughts-on-my-ongoing-research-trip
<div class="sqs-html-content"> <p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">I am three weeks into my research trip to the UK, so thought I'd update this blog with my trip. I don't have a singular, linear narrative of my trip but rather I will provide an assortment of thoughts, appreciations, and complaints I've accrued thus far. </p> </div>   <hr /> <div class="sqs-html-content"> <p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">On my accomodations in London…</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Before my first trip to London in 2017, my former advisor suggested I book a room at UniversityRooms.com, where I could find accomodations at the many student dorm buildings across London. I ultimately stayed at the Wilson House in Paddington. While the neighboring area was touristy and kitschy, the ability to do laundry and cooking on-site was fantastic. Last year I decided to stay at a weird Turkish/Kazakh hotel in Camberwell whose only redeeming qualities were piping hot showers and working A/C. While I liked getting to know Camberwell and South London, I did miss the ability to cook and save some money. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">This year I am staying at the Ifor Evans Hall in Camden. I wouldn't recommend it. Camden is great, but the facilities at Ifor Evans are a bit run down. The kitchen gets crowded rather quickly, so cooking has been difficult. The windows do not block noise, so every evening people on my side of the dorm are kept awake by a gaggle of </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">On the various London Archives…</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">I am highly appreciative of the help and hospitality I've received from the Royal Geographical Society. The staff is friendly and very knowledgeable about the RGS's collection. While I wish the Society would reconsider its stance on photographing archival materia for personal research purposes, I have had a good time taking notes and finding new threads to follow for my research. I'm almost done with my first leg of research at the RGS, but I am currently collating more sources to examine once I return from Durham in mid-August (assuming I don't do a detour to Oxford). </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Much closer to my residence is the Wellcome Library. Even if you may not be doing archival research at the Wellcome Library, the library is probably the best place to do writing and other work. In contrast to the British Library, which every seat outside the manuscripts rooms are taken by hundreds of teenagers doing their homework or the average joe on Twitter, the Wellcome Library's second floor study spaces are quiet and relatively sparse. The fast wifi is also a plus. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">When I came to London this past March, I had my introduction to the National Archives at Kew. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">On commuting to (and from) the archives</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">In my previous trips, I had no issues with the public transportation in London. The buses were</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Regarding Groceries</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Tesco is love. Tesco is life 😍</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Aside from Tesco, Mexican food has been on my mind this trip. You would think that, after spending most of June in Mexico, eating my fill in Michoacan, Puebla, and Mexico City, that I wouldn't crave Mexican food. But you'd be wrong. While I have not found </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Regarding Dining</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Fried chicken is weirdly popular in London. On my first trip, I came to appreciate the ubiquity of KFCs in London. I also came to appreciate the many KFC imitators in London. I had my first take at Chicken Cottage, which is like KFC but halal and crappy. The Pepsi was served warm, the chicken was meh, and I felt like I wasted

my money. Last year, I went to Tennessee Fried Chicken</p><p class="" data-rte-preserve-empty="true" style="white-space:pre-wrap;"></p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Chinese food is my constant companion. </p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Nothing makes me</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Regarding Mexican food, the restaurant
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</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">The British LIbrary is, without of doubt, my least favorite archive in the UK. The ordering system of manuscripts seems to be </p> </div>

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the crown's burden
/blog/2016/the-burden-of-the-crown
<div class="sqs-html-content">   <p>Having binged-watch Netflix's The Crown these last few weeks, I can happily say it's the best show I've watched since Breaking Bad. Sure, I enjoyed a wide variety of show since 2013, including Narcos, House of Cards, The Expanse, Game of Thrones, and my recent viewing of The West Wing. And while I think Westworld is a brilliant show, The Crown edges it out for me. Why? Because The Crown's message subverts the audience's expectations in a manner that is both subtle and more powerful than the simple plot twists. That despite the regal setting of The Crown, the institution of the crown is more a curse than a blessing. </p> </div>   <div class="sqs-video-wrapper" data-provider-name="" data-html="<iframe src="//www.youtube.com/embed/JpNCuMRurmc?wmode=opaque&enablejsapi=1" height="480" width="640" scrolling="no" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen="">
</iframe>"></div> <div class="sqs-html-content">   <h2>Contraints</h2><p>Admittedly, the notion that the crown is burdensome sounds absurd. What's burdensome about jewel encrusted scepters and numerous palaces? But this focus on the monarch's material wealth misses the point. The crown is burdensome because the expectations and duties associated with the institution obviates and constrains the monarch's own agency. </p><p>To understand why the crown is a burden, it is important to understand the source of the crown's aura, which is the cumulative history that makes the crown an indispensable institution for a given society. Over time, customs and practices have emerged within the given society that reinforces the authority of the crown. In the case of Britain, these customs range from the assumption of dynastic succession, the union of crown and religion, the constitutional organization of government, and the expectation by the British at the continuation of the monarchy. Even if we discount the symbolic power that singing "God save the Queen" or minting Queen Elizabeth's face on the currencies of the Commonwealth Realm has on popular perceptions toward the monarchy's permanence, inertia is itself a powerful thing. Even in nations where the impact of the British monarchy are not as intense, such as in Australia, the inertia of the monarchy has stalled the republicanism from talking hold. If the monarchy is viewed as a neutral force, why bother changing things?</p><p>The inertial power of political institutions is not limited to monarchies, nor contemporary history. An perfect example is that of the Emperor Augustus (27 BCE - 14 CE) and transition of the late Roman Republic into the Roman Empire. The genius of Augustus's reign is not based on magically transforming the republic into a monarchy overnight. The anti-monarchical impulse of Rome was still a powerful force, legitimizing to many the assassination of Caesar and the

prior bloodshed of Sulla. Instead, Augustus solidified a dynasty by acting as if the status quo was the same. That peace had been restored to the Roman Republic, with authority restored to the Senate and People of Rome. Augustus was merely the princeps - the First Citizen, first among equals. Consuls were still elected, the Senate still convened, and the Republic continued. Except it didn't. The perception of continuity was so strong that the Romans could be forgiven for thinking that the Republic suddenly died.</p><p>To maintain their crown, the monarch must comport themselves to the expectations and traditions of the crown. But these constraints are compounded when the monarchy is so full of tradition, expectations, and history that novelty threatens the core of the institution's survival. The most extreme example of the constraints of privilege lies with the Papacy. It was under Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) that the dogma of Papal Infallibility was established as part of church doctrine. This infallibility centers on the interpretation of Christian doctrine, whereby the Pope is not only perpetually correct when interpreting church doctrine, but is unable to be wrong to begin with. Error is not a possibility under the doctrine of infallibility. Superficially, the doctrine seems to be all-powerful, giving any Pope the ability to define the church doctrine in any which way they would like. But in fact, infallibility greatly constrains the Pope from actually redefining the faith. Why? Because the doctrine of infallibility extends to all Popes through all of history. For example, if Pope Francis wanted to overturn certain conservative practices of the church, he'd have to contradict the infallibility of prior Popes and councils. But in doing so, Francis would show that the church is actually fallible, since any new innovation would mean the old innovation was in error. To preserve the doctrine of infallibility, the Pope must never actually use it. The doctrine is there to defend the status quo, and nothing more.</p><h2>The Crown (Spoilers Below)</h2><p>This gets us back to The Crown. The show's background is simply ornate, hosting the royal family from the halls of Buckingham Palace to the royal retreats in Rhodesia and Kenya, all contrasting sharply with the austerity of 1950s Britain. At the core of the show is the tension between the prerogatives of Elizabeth as a mother, wife, daughter, and sister with Elizabeth's prerogatives as Queen. </p><p>Elizabeth's attempts to assert her own independence are noted as predating her elevation as Queen, from her </p> </div>

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dual loyalties and double standards
/blog/2013/dual-loyalties-and-double-standards
<div class="sqs-html-content">   <p>This draft was first written in early 2013.</p><p>Much to my delight, the recent nomination of Chuck Hagel to replace Leon Panetta as the next Secretary of Defense has sent neoconservatives aflutter. Of particular note is Jennifer Rubin's apoplectic denunciation of Hagel. Imagining a mythical Senator leading a rousing philippic against Hagel, Rubin writes:</p><blockquote>If Republicans had nervy firebrands like the late Sen. Ted Kennedy, someone would rise up to declare, "Chuck Hagel's America is a land in which gays would be forced back in the closet and Jews would be accused of dual loyalty [bold mine-MC]. Chuck Hagel's world is one in which devastating defense cuts become a goal, not a problem; we enter direct talks with the terrorist organization Hamas; and sanctions on Iran wither."</blockquote><p>While a lousy fan fic, Rubin does brings up a valid point to discuss. The notion of "dual loyalties" is often used in the debates of Israel and Zionism by both skeptics and opponents of Israeli policies and by Zionists. In Rubin's case, the mere suggestion that Jewish Zionists are guilty of having dual (and inherently conflicting) loyalties to the United States and Israel is a hallmark of antisemitism. While the claim that

Hagel is an antisemite is laughable, I do think there is an inherent double standard, where Jewish Americans expressing loyalties and fondness for the State of Israel are given a greater leeway than other American ethnic groups expressing loyalty or pride to their ancestral homelands.</p><p>While nominally from a British newspaper, the sentiment expressed by the Daily Mail is normal in any comment threads on any news story of a match between the US and Mexico:</p><blockquote><p>If the U.S. soccer team were hoping for the home advantage during Saturday's Gold Cup final then they were in for a nasty surprise.</p><p>Despite being the 'home' side in California's Rose Bowl stadium, the majority of fans - most of them American born of naturalized Mexicans - booed and jeered the U.S. team</p></blockquote><p>The Daily Mail piece continues, linking the support of the Mexican soccer team with the minority-majority ethnic makeup of the state of California.</p> </div>

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idealism and human nature
/blog/2010/07/18/idealism-and-human-nature
<div class="sqs-html-content">   <p>How do you describe human nature to be? Is man intrinsically good or evil?</p> <p>Or is man a thinking capable of so much wonder and idealistic virtue...but also a creature of flawed thinking and vices?</p> <p>I ask this since the political debates that plague the blogosphere and society all boil down to what is is the true nature of man. In studying history, there are those you read about who have an idealistic - almost utopian - vision of society. With their theories on a given economic/political/ethical philosophy, these dreamers and thinkers have the plan and solution to lift man up to something new and better.</p> <p>Traditionally, the term "liberal" was used to describe this lot; those who believe that the creation or modification of institutions can be use to change the condition of man. But the term has the obvious connotation of lumping all idealists into the center-left of the political spectrum, when this is clearly not the case.</p> <p>When we talk of idealists in the political context, this include disparate groups ranging from the Moral Majority of the 1980s to the Anarchists of the 1890s; from the Progressive activists in the turn to the 20th century to the Tea Party activists of the turn of the 21st century. Idealism knows no boundaries and knows no political party - idealism is a common part of every ideological faction we know of.</p> <p>Idealism is not universal, and there are those "realists" who have the view that human nature is unchanging and eternal. To Realists, the way man behaves is hardened over generations and generations - to the point where the action of most people is predictable and repetitive.</p> <p>Whether you consider yourself an Idealist or Realist depends heavily on your take of human nature - is man a flawed and defected creature? Or can man be bettered and reformed?</p> <p>Can the ills plaguing the world - whatever you think they are - be ended if those problems stem from the innate nature of man?</p> <p>For most of my life, I had the view that someone can change the world; I hoped to change the world. But in reading history and current events over the years, my idealism has been tempered and my cynicism sharpened. What's that saying from Socrates? "The more one learns, the less one knows"? I don't know of an adequate way to change the world without changing human nature itself. And can that be done?</p> <p>I think it boils down to the scope of "changing the world": can world peace be achieved, or hunger be eliminated? I don't think so, at least, not yet. But can I do something to help another person and change their life for the better? Absolutely.</p> <p>While I still fee some hopelessness for our future, I still think doing something is better than nothing; at least we can say we tried. Right?</p> </div>

can the state ever be abolished? pt. 1
/blog/?p=180
<div class="sqs-html-content">   <p>The Industrial Revolution's work on </p><p>In reading various anarchist texts, you come across varieties of utopian visions for a future society, all tied together in the notion that the state (as an institution) is inherently unjust and has no valid justification for existence. It doesn't matter if the writer believes in the absolute abolition of civilization and a reversion back to a world reminiscent of the Mesolithic; another believes in a world of cooperates joining the industrial workers of the world; another may see the state as an evil, hindering society from engaging in a truly free market; it doesn't matter what their differences are: the abolition of the state is the ultimate goal.</p><p>I'm not going to make a normative judgment as to the function or justification of the state as a human institution, other than to say that the state emerged out of a perceived around the same time as agriculture emerged some ten thousand years ago. To be clear, the fact the state exists does not justify its own existence and the link between the state as an institution and the institution of slavery has been drawn in anarchist literature various times. Slavery still exists in many guises, but the prevalence and social acceptance of this ancient human institution has declined significantly since the 19th century. What would cause an institution as ancient and ingrained in human civilization to lose its stature?</p><p>Technological advances allowed machines to do the work of what would have been done manually. A single tractor can harvest a farm or sow the fields much faster than what an army of slaves could have accomplished. Instead of a slave washing your dishes, cooking your food, cleaning your house, you have a dishwasher, microwave, and roomba doing that for you. The increasing use of robots in the manufacturing sector also points to a increasing reliance on machines over manual labor.</p><p>Slavery is not eradicated from the Earth, but is increasingly an obsolete relic of our shared past. If slavery, once prevalent, is in relative decline due to technological advances, what will it take to make the state irrelevant?</p><p>One of the things I've noticed is unlike slavery's recent decline, the state is increasingly growing in function and increasingly relied upon by society for needs the state did not perform in the past.</p><p>In the past, social organization revolved around the family. To Westerners hailing from a modern, post-industrial society, our idea of the family is one of social and emotional connections where we see our parents ever so often to laugh (or bicker) over shared memories. But family is not as important as an economic unit as it once was in our agrarian past. We can never truly grasp how important the rearing of children was to our ancestors.</p><p>To summarize, children were an economic asset. The more children you had, the more hands you had to work your plot of land or earn their keep at the local factory. Essentially, kids were a source of income. Likewise, when you grew old and could no longer work, your surviving children will help take care of you (assuming you didn't die before hand). This economic relationship between parents and children stayed constant from the neolithic revolution to the early stages of the industrial revolution.</p><p>As the industrial revolution chugged along, we began to see changes in how the family - as an institution - functioned. With industrialization, families could no longer rely on extra income from handmade crafts made by the household. Such crafts were made obsolete by the more efficient mass production of machines. Likewise, as tractors and other machinery saw increasing yields while reducing the hands needed to produce, families needed to find ways to earn extra income from their children. As a result, children were sent off to factories to bring in extra cash.</p><p>But with the rise of the Labor

movement, child labor became a taboo. Regardless of why labor fought against child labor - to remove competitors that would "accept" lower wages or out of a genuine sense of humanitarianism - the result was that children were no longer a potential source of income. While acknowledge that many, many more factors were at played, the result remains the same - children were now a financial liability to parents, no longer an asset.</p><p>Which leads us today. In the United States, eighteen years of child rearing costs about 390,000. Is it any wonder why this is one reason birth rates are declining throughout the Western world? Not coincidently, the decline of birth rates and changes that industrialization has wrought in the tradition family unit, the elderly are only left with governments as the only definitive support system. While libertarians and right-wingers may scoff at the notion, the idea that boot-strappy individuals provided sufficient support for their retirement and old age was only feasible within the last century, and only feasible for some of the society. I'm sure people had worked on a nice, tidy savings only to see it evaporate due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances.</p><p>It's self-evident that the welfare state for the elderly is going nowhere. Paul Ryan has walked back on his proposals for Medicare, and neither the Democrats or Republicans are eager to touch Social Security. This situation is seen throughout other developed nations, and will begin to solidify in China and India, as both countries are currently in the thralls of industrialization and declining birth rates.</p><p>
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Thoughts
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History
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Philosophy
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beliefs (religious)

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<p>I am both an Atheist and an Agnostic. Contrary to popular belief, these two concepts are not mutually exclusive. I do not hold a belief in any particular deity, be it Thor, Ra, Shiva, Quetzalcoatl, or Yahweh. The evidence for the existence of any deity is not really credible. There is no current evidence to suggest any gods exist. At best, a believer can only commit the logical fallacy of circular reasoning.</p> <p>For example, "God exists because the Bible says so, and the Bible gets its validity from God" is an example of circular reasoning.</p> <p>Using the Bible or any religious text to prove the existence of whatever god you believe in is not based on sound logic. If you do hold a belief in a deity, admit that it's based on only blind faith. Any "spiritual" events</p> <p>This isn't to say that there cannot be a god; it's foolish to say there is no chance that a god can exist. All we can say is that we do not know whether there is a deity or their isn't. Yet, we must remember that logic dictates we cannot prove a negative. I cannot prove the nonexistent of something. The burden of proof lies solely on the claimant.</p> <p>That said, I take the attitude that as long as we</p> </div>

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Principally my interest is on the formation of national identity within the late Ottoman Empire of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This interest is part of a wider interest towards the formation of national identities and of nationalism in general.</p><p>With regards to my Master's Thesis, I am studying the connections between European perceptions of Egypt and the emerging Egyptian nationalistic view towards what constituted the territory of "Egypt." From my cursory research to the solidification of the Egyptian state under Muhammad Ali and his dynastic successors was that the core of the Egyptian state included both Lower Egypt, Cairo, and the northern reaches of Upper Egypt. The campaigns of Ali's immediate Mamluk predecessors and of Ali himself consolidated Cairene rule over Upper Egypt, the Sa'id . The conquest of Muhammad Ali saw the incorporation of the Sinai, the Hejaz, Crete, and the Sudan into his domains. Near the end of Ali's rule, Egyptian arms captured (albeit temporarily) Palestine and Syrian, with Egyptian military victories deep in the heart of Anatolia.</p><p>Ali's successors would see most of this empire dissolve as a result of Western pressure. Nonetheless, Egyptian arms continued to march down south on the Nile, culminating to Egyptian expeditions to the Great Lakes regions of Equatorial Africa. The 'Urabi Revolt and the subsequent British rule over Egypt would see the Egyptian boundaries rule over a region nominally consistent with her modern-day borders, as well as classical depictions of ancient Egypt's might ending at the First Cataract, near modern-day Aswan.</p><p>Ultimately, my research aims to focus what role - if any - British demarcation of Egyptian territory was colored by both classical representation of Egypt as well as Egyptian internalization of such coloration.</p><p>As I am still learning Arabic, my focus is on the British administrative </p> </div> </div></div></div></div></div> </div> </div> </section> </article>
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<h1>about me</h1><p>My name is Miguel Angel Chavez, and I am currently a first-year PhD student at Vanderbilt University. I graduated with my M.A. in History at the University of North Texas in 2015, and my B.A. in History from the same school in 2011. </p><p>My research is focused on the intellectual and scientific assumptions underpinning imperial cartography during the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries. In my M.A. Thesis The Shifting Borders of Egypt, I outlined the intellectual and cultural assumptions of cartographical representations of Egypt in the context of Egypt's military successes under Muhammad Ali, and later Egypt's incorporation into the wider British Empire by 1882. Specifically, I focused on the Greco-Roman and Biblical references cartographers unconsciously used. These includes a "temporal stasis" of the drawing of Egypt's border with Palestine, the use of Herodotus and Ptolemy when demarcating the Egyptian/Sudanese border, and the lack of engagement in indigenous modes of knowledge and geographies.</p><p>My own work can be categorized as part of the wider History of Science, and I am expanding my own research to the development of Geography, Surveying, and Cartography at large. </p><p>○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○</p><p>prolegomena is my personal website/blog, a place where I can expand on my research, and where I can comment upon the happenings of the world. </p><p>If you have any questions or comments, you can find me in the following places:</p>
university email - miguel.a.chavez@vanderbilt.edu   personal email - miguel.chavez@me.com   twitter - @_etruscan   academia.edu - profile page   vanderbilt - profile page   <p> </p><p> </p><p> </p> </div>

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57
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58

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Professionalization brought middle-class scientists into scientific disciplines at a time that the middle class increased their political and economic representation in wider society. Industrialization and colonialism brought a transnational dynamic that connected British scientific communities with continental, transatlantic, and colonial networks of knowledge production. The creation of distinct scientific disciplines occurred as universities and businesses emerged, alongside established learned societies, as venues for scientific research and funding. As scientists navigated networks, institutions, and practices that were in a state of flux, they also changed science, developing new conventions about scientific method, research management, and presentation of scientific findings.</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">British geography and its most visible enterprise, African exploration, played a central role in this transition. In charting geographers and explorers of Africa as agents of these changes, this project identifies the mid-nineteenth century as an inflection point in the organization, practice, and perception of science. Operating worldwide, explorers came from social groups that had not been part of the scientific community, such as career military men, adventurers, sportsmen, missionaries, and merchants. Drawn from diverse backgrounds, the British geographers of the late-nineteenth century drew financial and scholastic support from institutions such as the Royal Geographical Society (RGS). This diversity in backgrounds further signaled a diversity in geographers' motivations, including humanitarian, personal, political, and economic concerns. These clashed with the gentlemanly scientist's idealized view of science as a disinterested pursuit. Geographers became vocal in their patriotic fervor and their enthusiasm for the imperial project. In the race to discover new lands, the potential of wealth and celebrity proved a tempting desire for many geographers. Geographers touted their enthusiasm for moral missions, such as religious conversion and abolitionism, as benefits of exploration. British geography served as a microcosm of British science by reflecting how societal changes intersected with scientific practices and knowledge production.</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">I examine British geography from the 1830s to the 1930s in the context of these societal, economic, and academic changes. Centered on the exploration of the Nile Valley, my study examines these changes in three parts. In the first section, I evaluate how geographers fashioned their personas as scientists to respond to prevalent social, professional, and ideological pressures in the context of Nile exploration from 1830 to 1870. They did so in part by bolstering geographers' scientific credentials to include a greater emphasis on measurement and the translation of exotic field notes into more "scientific" records. Changes in the basic practices of scientific work took place against the background of a new landscape of learned societies and institutions in financing and sponsoring expeditions and fieldwork, such as the Royal Geographical Society (RGS). I investigate how scientists navigated the transition to institutional support instead of the personal wealth or patronage that existed during the era of the gentlemanly scientist.</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">In the second section, I examine geographers' transnational support networks to assess the degree to which the internationalization of scientific communities was integral to trends of professionalization. With the financial backing of the RGS, explorers could assume the personal risks of venturing into Africa without the financial restrictions imposed by their own wealth, or lack thereof. Thus merchants like John Petherick, soldiers like John Hanning Speke and James Augustus Grant, hunters like Samuel White Baker, and missionaries like David Livingstone became explorers. They came from social classes previously excluded from scientific knowledge production. Instead of the private financial support indicative of Alexander von Humboldt's South American expedition or the explicit military nature of James Cook's voyages, I show that the RGS functioned as a hybrid of a privately supported and state- sanctioned organization reminiscent of the private-public partnerships defining scientific practice in the twentieth century.</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Third, I conclude my study by looking at the work of scientists associated with the Wellcome

Tropical Research Laboratory in Khartoum. Founded by the pharmaceutical magnate Henry S. Wellcome to foster the economic and scientific development of Anglo-Egyptian Sudan in the wake of the Mahdist War, the Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratories in Khartoum became one of the region's primary scientific research centers. From 1903 to 1935, the laboratories published research on the epidemiology, pharmacology, entomology, and the medicinal anthropology of Sudan. I document the ways in which Henry Wellcome's patronage of Henry Morton Stanley and the RGS guided his decision to donate funds for the creation of the laboratory. Further, I show that researchers stationed at the Wellcome laboratory relied upon the knowledge and practices of prior explorers in the course of their work. I argue that these continuities complicate our understanding of histories of disciplinary geography; that instead, exploratory field work functioned as an antecedent for the fieldwork of other scientific disciplines.</p><p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">For more information as to my historiographic intervention and my research plans, feel free to look at my dissertation prospectus: Link.</p><p class="" data-rte-preserve-empty="true" style="white-space:pre-wrap;"></p> </div>   </div></div><div class="sqs-block spacer-block sqs-block-spacer sized vsize-1" data-block-type="21" id="block-95d28e5d29a4d9785e45"><div class="sqs-block-content"> </div></div><div class="sqs-block socialaccountlinks-v2-block sqs-block-socialaccountlinks-v2" data-block-type="54" id="block-7ec13ba45de4fbeb6eec"><div class="sqs-block-content">   <div class="sqs-svg-icon--outer social-icon-alignment-center social-icons-color- social-icons-size-small social-icons-style-regular " >   <style>   #block-7ec13ba45de4fbeb6eec .social-icons-style-border .sqs-svg-icon--wrapper {   box-shadow: 0 0 0 2px inset;   border: none;   }   </style>   <nav class="sqs-svg-icon--list">   <div>   <svg class="sqs-svg-icon--social" viewBox="0 0 64 64"> <use class="sqs-use--icon" xlink:href="#twitter-icon"></use>   <use class="sqs-use--mask" xlink:href="#twitter-mask"></use>   </svg>   </div>   </nav> </div> </div></div></div><div class="col sqs-col-2 span-2"><div class="sqs-block spacer-block sqs-block-spacer sized vsize-1" data-block-type="21" id="block-6af8826d38e5e5d626ca"><div class="sqs-block-content"> </div></div></div></div></div> </div>   </div>   </section>   </article>
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/burton-dictonary
Burton Dictonary
Fri, 12 Jan 2024 04:45:17 +0000
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61

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PW Pics Post

/new-blog/2021/pw-pics-post

<div class="sqs-html-content"> <p class="" style="white-space:pre-wrap;">Hello! If you find this page, bad on you! This is for my Politics and War nation page pics. Don't know what I'm referencing? lol </p> </div> <div class=" image-block-outer-wrapper layout-caption-below design-layout-inline combination-animation-none individual-animation-none individual-text-animation-none " data-test="image-block-inline-outer-wrapper" > <figure class=" sqs-block-image-figure intrinsic " style="max-width:2621px;" > <div class="image-block-wrapper" data-animation-role="image" > <div class="sqs-image-shape-container-element " style=" position: relative; padding-bottom:53.94887161254883%; overflow: hidden;-webkit-mask-image: -webkit-radial-gradient(white, black); " > <img data-stretch="false" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/fab54c41-5ea1-4746-9f9e-38a42f901869/PW+Map+44.jpg" data-image="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/fab54c41-5ea1-4746-9f9e-38a42f901869/PW+Map+44.jpg" data-image-dimensions="2621x1414" data-image-focal-point="0.5,0.5" alt="" data-load="false" elementtiming="system-image-block" src="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/fab54c41-5ea1-4746-9f9e-38a42f901869/PW+Map+44.jpg" width="2621" height="1414" alt="" sizes="(max-width: 640px) 100vw, (max-width: 767px) 100vw, 100vw" style="display:block;object-fit: cover; width: 100%; height: 100%; object-position: 50% 50%" onload="this.classList.add("loaded")" srcset="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/fab54c41-5ea1-4746-9f9e-38a42f901869/PW+Map+44.jpg?format=100w 100w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/fab54c41-5ea1-4746-9f9e-38a42f901869/PW+Map+44.jpg?format=300w 300w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/fab54c41-5ea1-4746-9f9e-38a42f901869/PW+Map+44.jpg?format=500w 500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/fab54c41-5ea1-4746-9f9e-38a42f901869/PW+Map+44.jpg?format=750w 750w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/fab54c41-5ea1-4746-9f9e-38a42f901869/PW+Map+44.jpg?format=1000w 1000w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/fab54c41-5ea1-4746-9f9e-38a42f901869/PW+Map+44.jpg?format=1500w 1500w, https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/502efadcc4aa66e82317fb6f/fab54c41-5ea1-4746-9f9e-38a42f901869/PW+Map+44.jpg?format=2500w 2500w" loading="lazy" decoding="async" data-loader="sqs"> </div> </div> </figure> </div> <div class=" image-block-outer-wrapper layout-caption-below design-layout-inline combination-animation-none individual-animation-none individual-text-animation-none " data-test="image-block-inline-outer-wrapper" > <figure class=" sqs-block-image-figure intrinsic " style="max-width:2621px;" > <div class="image-block-wrapper" data-animation-role="image" > <div class="sqs-image-shape-container-element " style=" position: relative; padding-bottom:53.94887161254883%; overflow: hidden;-webkit-mask-image: -webkit-radial-gradient(white, black); " >

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ankhx100@hotmail.com
open

Test
/new-blog/2019/test
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determine whether this webpage works or not. I guess it does. </p> </div>
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2019-11-09 12:18:16
ankhx100@hotmail.com
open