

Greetings and good morning to you esteemed professors, parents, friends, and fellow graduates of 2016. I am Rafferty Lincoln, a 2016 graduate with degrees in Classics and European History. I grew up in this town, and was raised with a rich family history. My course of study was never a question, but I could not have thought how it would shape me.

Like many of you, I stand before the question of “what to do with history?” and the imminent prospect of the real world. Now that these five years have passed by and time has flown away, I find myself often in reminiscence of that first Wednesday morning of class, freshmen year.

I met a dorm mate for breakfast with whom I shared my first class, a 9:30 lecture course in Ancient Greek History. We discussed what expectations we had for the course, but we had certainly not expected the quirky, brilliant professor that is Charles Hedrick to come trotting into the room, clad on that cool September morning in shorts, and a faded-red sweatshirt with the small logo ATIS—which I would later learn stood for Adirondack Trail Improvement Society—carrying a bike bag, and diving into a topic he clearly enjoyed thoroughly: iclickers. Indeed, professor Hedrick showed just as much enthusiasm for these dual-functioning testing-and-opinion-polling devices as he did with the Peloponnesian War, because they allowed him to instantly ask the hundred-something person classes’ opinion on any question he posed, and graph it! Charles’ questions of our prima facie opinions of obscene scenes from Greek vases or systems of democracy were not just cheap tricks. These questions were my first introduction to the important part of history: how we perceive it.

My predecessors on this stage these past few years as my memory serves me have addressed the most pressing issue in humanities, which has likewise set historical journals, blogs, and lectures buzzing: *In the time of STEM, what’s history good for?* Here I do not intend to debate the value of history as a marketable skill, rather I will tell you why I study history. Professor Hedrick says in the beginning of one of his works:

“History is a story the present tells itself about the past, and its meaning lies in the interaction of the two. To understand history it is not enough to know the past; it is necessary to come to terms with the nature of the present desire for the past.” (Hedrick, *Ancient History*, 1)

Although I only read this passage a couple of months ago, it made me realise what it is I like about history, classics, and the humanities. A harkening back can be noticed in any period, be it imitation of Greek poetry by Latin poets, the 19<sup>th</sup> century’s strange affixation with the Greeks and Romans—likely in an attempt to cover-up its own general strangeness—or today whenever one makes the vague, undefined statement that improvement can come from becoming something *again*. We as historians must recognize how those stories were told in the past, lest we fail to analyse how they are told today.

That is one of the most important lessons I have taken from my education; and I would like to thank my par excellence professors teaching me the roles of women in first century Roman politics, the political intricacies of 15<sup>th</sup> century Florence, the hour-by-hour events of July 1914 beginning the Great War, discussing the role of race in politics in the American Revolution, and certainly Charles Hedrick’s general musings on medical taboos or the human

affliction toward dichotomy. It has not just been the parallels which can be drawn from these to our modern world which interests me, but how I and my classmates react to and perceive these things.

Either while reading *Antigone* in Greek literature with Professor Karen Bassi, recognizing the parallels between Kreon and this year's Republican Presidential Candidate (at which point many of us concluded *Kreon 2016* would be a preferable option), or while observing how rioting in 15<sup>th</sup> century universities was as common as it is today, albeit with fewer halberds and fewer incidents of exam proctors being shot with arrows, discussions in my courses here have examined the juncture of the ostensible past with the present.

I am proud to hold a degree from UCSC—my professors are developing online courses in the classics for science majors; my friends participating in pan-Pacific research with the Gail Project, or are creating accessible digital models of ancient Egyptian sites for future students; here we offer courses such as *Smoke, Smallpox, and the Sublime, 19<sup>th</sup> C. environmental history*; here we study the pan-Eurasian “Silk Roads” as one history; and here we don't not limit the Classics to Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, but include with it Sanskrit and Arabic, in recognition of the borderless reality of human interaction; I am proud to come from a humanities division that hires professors who study talking birds in ancient Rome, or scholars who study classics, literature, theatre, and music performance together as one field.

We have not only sought truths in a company of friends, but have studied our perceptions of those truths, and recognized how they shape us today. That is the value of history. Study in the humanities does not need to be excused or compared in value, for it is essential for our all, for our own *humanitas*, our human-ness. Recognizing this, I know what to do with history: be human, in whatsoever endeavour I pursue.

Yea, verily, as John Bercow, MP, said “History is more than the path left by the past. It influences the present, and can shape the future.” (25 May 2011)

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Before I conclude I would like to thank my friends and family who have been with me along this journey, outstanding TAs such as Rita Jones and Muiris MacGiollabhuí, Professors Cindy Polecristi, Greg O'Malley, Maya Peterson, Martin Devecka, and Mark Cioc, who have more, or less, gently pushed me towards strong scholarship, and Professors Jenny Lynn and Charles Hedrick, who have been most influential overall in my courses, office hours, and department socials, and helped me to understand who I am today, and who I would like to be tomorrow. Congratulations graduating classes of History, German studies, Jewish studies, East Asian Studies, and Classics, 2016, you've earned it! Go forth, and shape our world.

