



The

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What's Happened to College History and English?

A survey of British teenagers recently reported that a fifth of under-twenties kids believe Winston Churchill, Richard the Lionheart and Florence Nightingale were fictional characters, but that Robin Hood, Sherlock Holmes and King Arthur were real people.

We hope American students are more knowledgeable, but evidence is not reassuring. They scored an F, or just 53.7 percent, in a new survey by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute of 14,000 freshmen at 50 U.S. colleges and universities. Students were asked 60 questions to test their knowledge of American history and government. And, after four years of college, their knowledge didn't improve much. In general, the higher a college ranked on the widely publicized *U.S. News & World Report* list, the lower it ranked on civic learning.

Another just-released survey found that a significant proportion of U.S. teenagers live in "stunning ignorance" of history and literature. That survey was conducted by a new research organization called Common Core.

An earlier survey of college seniors at 50 top colleges conducted by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni found that more than half didn't know that George Washington was the commanding general of the Continental Army during the American Revolution who accepted Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown. Some 36% thought it was Ulysses S. Grant, and 6% said it was Douglas MacArthur.

According to Pulitzer-prize-winning author and historian David McCullough, ignorance of American history among U.S. students and teachers is so widespread that it is a threat to national security. He told a Senate panel that only three U.S. colleges require a course on the U.S. Constitution: West Point, Annapolis, and the Air Force Academy. "For a free, self-governing people," he said, "something more than a vague familiarity with history is essential if we are to hold onto and sustain our freedom."

Diane Ravitch, author of *The Language Police: How Pressure Groups Restrict What Children Learn*, contends that "students who learn about the world" from today's history textbooks "are unlikely to understand why some civilized nations flourished and others languished, or why people vote with their feet to leave some places and go to others."

In 1995, the Federal Government gave \$2 million to leftwing

professors at UCLA to write *National Standards for United States History*. The *Standards* were filled with so many attacks on Western civilization that American Federation of Teachers chairman Al Shanker said this is the first time a government has tried to teach children to "feel negative about their own country." The U.S. Senate voted 99 to 1 to repudiate the *Standards*, but that didn't stop the book from being distributed nationwide and having a profound effect in rewriting American history textbooks to comport with liberal revisionism and feminist ideology.

Fortunately, two important new books now tell 20th century history the way it really happened, instead of the way the liberals and feminists wish it had happened. Here are two new books that every college student ought to read in order to learn the history that colleges don't teach. Both describe how Reagan-style conservatism replaced New Deal liberalism during the half century following World War II, an event of great magnitude and good fortune for America. Students should read both books: the first written by a historian, the second from the view of participants in historic events.

The Conservative Ascendancy: How the GOP Right Made Political History by the distinguished historian Donald T. Critchlow (Harvard University Press, 2007) is the indispensable account of one of the most exciting political events in modern history. A small unorganized band of writers and an equally unorganized collection of grassroots activists launched a counteroffensive against the prevailing economic and political order of the 1930s and 1940s, and by the 1980s became the dominant force in American politics.

Long after Franklin D. Roosevelt was gone, conventional wisdom still considered his New Deal liberalism to be the wave of the future, while conservatives were believed to be an ineffective remnant waging a holding action against the inevitable socialism.

The first cannon ball of the half-century battle was fired by Friedrich Hayek in *The Road to Serfdom*, but that would have been just a shot in the dark if grassroots citizens hadn't joined the action. The Soviet threat and Communist infiltration of our government and other institutions motivated small groups to educate themselves and enter the political arena.

Critchlow traces the travails of the conservative movement through the political battles of Robert Taft, Barry Goldwater, Richard Nixon, and Gerald Ford. Those who lived through those years will delight in the extraordinary detail and more than 500 footnotes produced by Professor Critchlow's extensive research, and those too young to remember will gain a look at history they cannot get anywhere else.

Conservatives found their leader in Ronald Reagan, who fortified their resolve with his faith that the tide of history is moving in our direction and that it is morning in America. Liberalism was bankrupt of ideas and no match for the vibrancy of conservative writers and speakers.

Critchlow skillfully shows how the Reagan coalition that produced the victories of the 1980s depended on the grassroots activism of disparate groups: the fiscal conservatives still standing after the Goldwater campaign of 1964, the alumni of the anti-Communist groups who were well educated about external and internal threats to our country, and the social conservatives who newly came into the political process in the campaigns against the Equal Rights Amendment and *Roe v. Wade*.

Professor Critchlow's important book should be essential reading in college courses in history and political science.

Upstream: The Ascendance of American Conservatism by Alfred S. Regnery (Simon & Schuster, 2008) is a fascinating account of how conservative authors combined with conservative activists to shake off New Deal socialism of the 1930s and become the dominant ideology in America. As the author boasts, "We are all conservatives now."

Regnery's book leads us to know and understand dozens of conservative leaders from various walks of life, voluntary organizations that played a role in the movement, mail-order fundraising, and foundations. He puts the broad scope of the conservative movement in focus, including the importance that the courts play in our culture. He deftly explains the fundamental differences between conservatives and big business, and between conservatives and neoconservatives. Conservatives want limited government, but those two latter groups seek an activist government to promote their particular agendas.

Al Regnery's father, Henry Regnery, was an essential player in the nurturing of the conservative movement in the late 1940s and 1950s. He was a patriotic businessman who put his fortune on the line to publish conservative books when we had no other sources of reliable information. Regnery's books gave us the truth about Communist strategy and tactics (William Henry Chamberlin, Louis Budenz, Freda Utey, Anthony Bouscaren), Soviet slave labor camps (Elinor Lipper), U.S.-Soviet agreements (George Crocker), the United Nations (Chesly Manly), and education (William F. Buckley, M. Stanton Evans).

Al Regnery, the author of this new book, carries on the tradition of telling us the history we need to know in order to be fortified in our work. His book is based not only on his first-hand involvement with many icons of the conservative

movement, but his face-to-face interviews with many who are still living and able to tell their stories.

Regnery ends his book by describing the unexpected conservative uprising (all the way from Bill Kristol to Pat Buchanan) against President George W. Bush's nomination of Harriet Miers to the U.S. Supreme Court. The success of that revolt augurs well for conservatives' ability to maintain their identity apart from Republican mistakes. No doubt the author hopes that readers will absorb the hopeful message that conservatives are still on the way up. That's why the book is titled *Upstream*.

Setting the McCarthy Record Straight

Ronald Reagan was dismissed by the intelligentsia as just an actor who read speeches written by others until history professor Kiron Skinner discovered a box of Reagan's original radio scripts written in his own hand on ruled yellow paper from 1975 to 1979. Since he had no staff to research and write for him in those years, the scripts prove that Reagan was a one-man think-tank, well versed in political philosophy and history, fully capable of writing his own speeches.

Professor Skinner's discovery, and the subsequent publication of many of Reagan's more than a thousand hand-written radio commentaries, changed the way history now respects Reagan. Scholar M. Stanton Evans has performed a similar transformation for the most reviled American in modern history, Senator Joseph McCarthy.

Evans' monumental 663-page work, *Blacklisted by History: The Untold Story of Senator Joe McCarthy and His Fight Against America's Enemies* (Random House, 2007), is the result of six years of reading primary sources. Evans proves that almost everything about McCarthy in current history books is a lie and will have to be revised.

It's an interesting sidelight that one of Reagan's old radio commentaries referred to Evans as "a very fine journalist." He is, indeed, but this book shows that he also is a Sherlock Holmes-type detective who chased every clue to find the truth and to write accurate history in elegant prose.

Evans' vindication of McCarthy was made possible by recently released files, such as the Venona papers (the secret messages between Moscow and its U.S. agents decrypted by our government), data from Soviet archives, and executive-session transcripts of Senate committees that were finally opened after a 50-year ban. Evans' book is copiously documented and reproduces some critical pages from never-before-released files.

In the early 1950s, Joe McCarthy was one of the most popular men in America. Average Americans recognized him as Horatio at the Bridge battling against our nation's sworn enemies, the Soviet Communists.

McCarthy understood, long before Ronald Reagan, that the Soviet Union was an evil empire, one of whose strategies was to infiltrate agents into our government to guide our policy to favor Communist goals. In fact, our government was much

more infested with Soviet agents than McCarthy imagined.

It's now well known that Communist agents embedded in high-ranking positions included White House confidant Lauchlin Currie, State Department official Alger Hiss, and Treasury Department official Harry Dexter White. Evans quotes FBI files identifying atom bomb scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer as a secret Communist as early as 1942.

Taking on the anti-Communist mission locked McCarthy in mortal combat against powerful forces: two U.S. presidents, the vast federal bureaucracy, malicious adversaries in Congress, leftwing lobby groups, and the leftwing media who made him their daily target.

McCarthy was concerned only with Communist security risks who influenced U.S. policies. Contrary to liberal anti-McCarthy propaganda, he never targeted Communists in Hollywood or academia.

One of McCarthy's early investigations exposed the gang of Communist agents embedded in our government whose mission it was to change U.S. policy to abandon our wartime ally Chiang Kai-shek and turn China over to the Communists. Owen Lattimore was the point man for articulating the Communist line, and the magazine *Amerasia* was the communications outlet for an interlocking network of Soviet agents.

Evans describes how McCarthy deserves the credit for exposing the *Amerasia* scandal. Evans publishes for the first time McCarthy's lists of security risks employed by the State Department, proving that his charges were amply supported by FBI files.

Recent unrelated political controversies have shown that the cover-up is often worse than the crime, and the cover-up was McCarthy's prime target. He fought the federal bureaucrats who tolerated and even encouraged the widespread infiltration of our government by Communists whose first loyalty was to Russia.

The Truman Administration and the Democrats in Congress engaged in a massive cover-up, circling the wagons with their media friends. Their game plan was to deny the problem, evade political responsibility for tolerating security risks in government, and kill the messenger.

Evans' book proves that there was not a single innocent victim of McCarthy's investigations. The Senate committee transcripts prove that he was patient with witnesses, and never allowed anyone to be named a Communist or subversive unless he was given the chance to respond directly.

Joe McCarthy himself is probably the most investigated man in American history, far more investigated than the Communist agents. Much of his energy had to be spent in defending himself against vindictive investigations initiated by the Democrats. McCarthy's career came to an end after he was censured by the Senate, but 45 out of the 46 charges had to be dismissed as baseless. He was censured only for failing to pay proper deference to the committees that were maliciously bent on destroying him.

Everyone who henceforth writes about Joe McCarthy will have to check his facts with Evans' documented discoveries.

The truth about Joe McCarthy can also be found in several chapters in Ann Coulter's 2003 book called *Treason: Liberal Treachery from the Cold War to the War on Terrorism*.

What's Happened to Shakespeare?

The bad news is that Shakespeare has disappeared from required courses in English departments at more than three-fourths of the top 25 U.S. universities, but the good news is that only 1.6% of America's 19 million undergraduates major in English (according to Department of Education figures). When I visit college campuses, students for years have been telling me that the English departments are the most radicalized of all departments, more so than sociology, psychology, anthropology, or even women's studies.

In the decades before "progressive" education became the vogue, English majors were required to study Shakespeare, the preeminent author of English literature. The premise was that students should be introduced to the best that has been thought and said.

What happened? To borrow words from *Hamlet*: "Though this be madness, yet there is method in it." Universities deliberately replaced courses in the great authors of English literature with what professors openly call "fresh concerns," "under-represented cultures," and "ethnic or non-Western literature."

When the classics are assigned, they are victims of the academic fad called deconstructionism. That means: pay no mind to what the author wrote or meant; deconstruct him and construct your own interpretation, as in a Vanderbilt University course called "Shakespearean Sexuality," or "Chaucer: Gender and Genre" at Hamilton College.

The facts about what universities are teaching English majors were exposed this year by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA). English majors are offered a potpourri of worthless courses.

Some English department courses are really sociology or politics. Examples are "Gender and Sociopolitical Activism in 20th Century Feminist Utopias" at Macalester College; "Of Nags, Bitches and Shrews: Women and Animals in Western Literature" at Dartmouth College; and "African and Diasporic Ecological Literature" at Bates College.

Many undergraduate courses focus on extremely specialized subjects of interest only to the professor who is trying to "publish or perish," but of virtually no value to students. Examples are: "Beast Culture: Animals, Identity, and Western Literature" at the University of Pennsylvania; and "Food and Literature" at Swarthmore College.

Some English departments offer courses in pop culture. Examples are: "It's Only Rock and Roll" at the University of California at San Diego; "Animals, Cannibals, Vegetables" at Emory University; "Cool Theory" at Duke University; and "The Cult of Celebrity: Icons in Performance, Garbo to Madonna" at the University of Pennsylvania.

English professors now love to teach about sex. Examples are: "Shakesqueer" at American University; "Queer Studies" at Bates College; "Promiscuity and the Novel" at

Columbia University; and "Sexing the Past" at Georgetown University.

Some English-department courses really belong in a Weirdo department. Examples are: "Creepy Kids in Fiction and Film" at Duke University, which focuses on "weirdoes, creeps, freaks, and geeks of the truly evil variety"; "Bodies of the Middle Ages: Embodiment, Incarnation, Practice" at Cornell University; "The Conceptual Black Body in Twentieth-Century and Contemporary Visual Culture" at Mount Holyoke College; and "Folklore and the Body" at Oberlin College.

Replacing the classics with authors of children's literature is now common. Assigned readings for college students include Dr. Seuss, J.K. Rowling, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *Snow White*.

The classicists were cowed into silence, and it's now clear that the multiculturalists won the canon wars. Shakespeare, Chaucer and Milton have been replaced by living authors who toe the line of multicultural political correctness, *i.e.*, view everything through the lens of race, gender and class based on the assumption that America is a discriminatory and unjust racist and patriarchal society.

ACTA says "a degree in English without Shakespeare is like an M.D. without a course in anatomy. It is tantamount to fraud." College students: don't waste your scarce college dollars on a major in English.

English at Virginia Tech

What was the motive behind 23-year-old Cho Seung-Hui's killing of 32 students and teachers at Virginia Tech in April 2007? Why was he consumed with hate, resentment and bitterness?

Cho was an English Department major and senior. A look at the websites of Virginia Tech's English Department and of its professors reveals their mindset. We don't know which courses Cho took, but it could have been any of these.

Did he take Professor Bernice L. Hausman's English 5454 called "Studies in Theory: Representing Female Bodies"? The titles of the assigned readings include "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature," "The Comparative Anatomy of Hottentot Women in Europe, 1815-1817," "Selling Hot Pussy: Representations of Black Female Sexuality in the Cultural Marketplace," "The Anthropometry of Barbie: Unsettling Ideals of the Feminine Body in Popular Culture," and "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power."

One of the assignments in this course (worth 10% of the total grade) is to "choose one day in which they dress and comport themselves in a manner either more masculine or more feminine than they would normally."

Hausman uses "feminist pedagogy" theory, believing that sex and gender are merely "rhetorical constructs" resulting from cultural experiences, and that "students are more responsible for the creation of knowledge." She lists her areas

of expertise as "sexed embodiment, feminist and gender theory, and cultural studies of medicine."

Other titles authored by Professor Hausman include *Changing Sex: Transsexualism, Technology, and the Idea of Gender*, "Do Boys Have to Be Boys?," and "Virtual Sex, Real Gender: Body and Identity in Transgender Discourse." Perhaps Cho took Professor Hausman's English 3354 on "Fundamentals" for which the syllabus promises an understanding of "deconstruction" (a favorite word in English departments).

Did Cho get evil egotistical notions from Professor Shoshana Milgram Knapp's senior seminar called "The Self-Justifying Criminal in Literature"?

Did Cho take Professor J.D. Stahl's senior seminar, English 4784, on "The City in Literature"? The assigned reading starts with a book about an urban prostitute who finally kills herself and a book about a violent man who kills his girlfriend.

Virginia Tech's Distinguished Professor of English, Nikki Giovanni, has built a reputation as a "renowned poet," even though many of her so-called poems feature violent themes and contain words that are not acceptable in civil discourse. She specializes in diversity, post-modernism, feminism, and multiculturalism. Giovanni appeared at a public celebration in 2006 to open Cincinnati's new Fountain Square. She used the occasion to call Ken Blackwell, then the Republican candidate for Ohio Governor, an "S.O.B.," and when challenged, simply repeated the slur.

Did Cho take a course from Professor Paul Heilker, author of another peculiar piece called "Textual Androgyny, the Rhetoric of the Essay, and the Politics of Identity in Composition (or The Struggle to Be a Girly-Man in a World of Gladiator Pumpitude)"?

Or maybe Cho preferred the undiluted Marxism espoused by English instructor Allen Brizee, who wrote: "Everyday, the capitalist system exploits millions of people. . . . Our role in the capitalist system makes us guilty of oppression!"

At the campus-wide convocation to honor the victims, Professor Nikki Giovanni read what purported to be a poem. On behalf of the English Department, she declaimed: "We do not understand this tragedy. We know we did nothing to deserve it."

Maybe others will render a different verdict and ask why taxpayers, parents and students are paying professors at Virginia Tech to teach worthless and psychologically destructive courses.

**Books recommended in this issue can
be ordered online at www.eagleforum.org/psr**

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