

The Dessert of My Mixed Education

Writing an honors thesis at the University of California, Davis is a privilege and an honor. Not many students who graduate from college get the opportunity to form close relationships with professors, and even fewer are afforded the chance to work on an independent research paper with a professor's mentorship. Due to my acceptance to UC Davis as a University Honors Program student, I knew this was an opportunity I would be allowed, creating a drive inside me as a freshman to search for a topic to write on and an advisor to work with. After my first quarter at UC Davis, I knew that I wanted to double major in Political Science and Classical Civilizations to allow me the most well-rounded approach to political theory. Knowing that upon my graduation from UC Davis I would be attending law school focusing upon Constitutional Law, obtaining an undergraduate degree that revolved around theory only made sense to me. Little did I know that the solution to my quest would lead me to my capstone project that would incorporate both my majors along with faculty from both departments. Over the last year, I have tirelessly researched political theory from a wide range of time periods to discover the answer to the time-old question of why did the Founding Fathers create the United States government in the way that they did.

Although this question is extremely broad in scope, I narrowed my topic down to the influence of Rome upon the creation of the judicial branch, which I chose because of my developed love for the Roman Republic as well as my desire to learn more about the judiciary, seeing as I hope to be an Appellate Judge in the future. Over the summer of 2017, I gained an understanding of the overall literature written by scholars who were interested in the judicial

branch and ancient society. I mainly used the library database to narrow down what books and related articles that I should read. Many students do not understand the wealth of resources that are available in the Shields Library, but throughout my undergraduate education, I have actively sought out the treasure within the library. Something I love about libraries is that if I can locate one book that is related to my research, then I may preview all the books in the same area that most likely will assist me in research. Beyond just using the library, my UHP privileges were crucial in allowing me to conduct my research over the summer while I was in my hometown of Clovis. I also met with my mentors, Dr. John Scott and Dr. Rex Stem, over the summer to discuss potential questions that could guide my research and further resources to explore.

By the beginning of Fall Quarter, I had narrowed my topic down to the question of “To what extent was the Roman Republic an anti-model for the American Founding Fathers in the creation of the United States Judicial Branch?” To discover my answer, I established that I would use qualitative data. I ensured the use of both primary sources and secondary analyses, along with other researchers’ projects. The primary sources consisted of Roman philosophers and historians as well as the Founding Fathers, mainly looking for their awareness of the Romans. Exploring Roman philosophers and historians was crucial to understanding the foundation upon which the Founders started. The Founding Fathers’ education was filled with antiquity leading the thoughts of men such as Cicero and Polybius to be crucial to their understanding of the proper form of government. The secondary sources that were most helpful for my research project involved analyses of the separation of powers, the classical influence on the Founders, and in-depth reviews of the American judiciary at its creation. All my data consisted of quotes from these sources and summaries of the authors’ thoughts. It was important for me to use an

array of data throughout this time period in order to ensure that I surveyed all the possible influences on the Founding Fathers as well as contemporary opinions on the matter.

Beyond just my own research, I also wanted to ensure that this project was a learning experience that allowed me to connect with my mentors and understand their approaches to scholarly research. This led Professor Stem and I to read two books from modern scholars as well as Polybius and Cicero together to allow us to bounce ideas back and forth in weekly discussions. As a team, we had many brainstorming sessions and editing meetings to ensure that I was on the right track and keeping my research at an elevated scholarly level. In addition to what I did with this mentor, I also read some books suggested by Professor Scott, such as *The Revolutionary Writings of John Adams*. Throughout my Fall Quarter, Dr. Scott was unfortunately in England leading a study abroad trip at the London School of Economics that I had participated in the previous year. This led much of our discussion to be through email communication. Many of my previous professors and teaching assistants also took an interest in my project leading to discussions with more than just my mentors on my research. This allowed me to have a broad surveying of the directions I could proceed with as well as a better surveying of what had already been done. Through my independent readings and meetings with many people, I was able to not only find a new topic that had not been explored but also enlighten myself and all those around me.

By Winter Quarter, I saw through reading the primary sources from the Founding Generation juxtaposed with Polybius and Cicero that the ancient discussion of mixed government was key to the Founding Fathers' espousal for the need of a judicial branch and the component parts of that judicial system. With this interesting insight and my excitement for

finding something new, my paper essentially wrote itself in a few weeks time. Fortunately, throughout my readings, I took extensive notes and compiled many quotes from the primary and secondary sources that allowed for my writing to flow smoothly. I set aside time each day throughout the quarter to focus on my writing whether that be composing fresh material or editing previous written sections. Upon completion of my rough draft, I felt good about what I had produced and knew only a few tweaks would be needed. Now that my paper has been turned in and graded, I can officially say that I am proud of what I have produced even though I know there is much more I can do with it in the future.

Moving forward though, I will be presenting my research at the UC Davis Undergraduate Research Conference as well as at the Western Regional Honors Council Conference at Chapman University. At the completion of this project, I know that it is only just the beginning of my quest for knowledge and my inter-disciplinary approach to political theory. This paper topic was only possible because of the foundation laid through my many courses in American Government and Ancient Rome. Beyond this research project, I hope to continue to explore the many ways in which the Founding Fathers implemented the theory of mixed government into the United States Constitution throughout each branch. Although my next step in life is to be a law student at William and Mary Law School in the Fall, my love for research as instilled by the University of California, Davis will never fade, especially after an accomplishment as wonderful as my honors thesis.