

# Reflections on Writing an Honours Thesis

## Kristen Becker

On my first day at Dalhousie, I remember being terrified, eager, and baffled. I was so excited to move forward with the next stage of my journey, but scared as well. Looking back, as I close one door and open another, I get that same feeling. The difference being that now I know I am prepared for what is to come.

My journey through my undergraduate degree, and more specifically the Honours Thesis, is different from the general accord, in that I was originally enrolled in a general science program with the hope of becoming a Marine Biologist and minoring in History. Over the first two years of my degree, I quickly realized I was not cut out for the sciences and decided to focus solely on History. I have always been interested in Medieval and Early Modern European history, without a specific focus on geography or theme. Yet, now I can say that I have specialized, as I focus solely on law, war, and crime in English and Scottish history from the Medieval era until c. 1800.

My Honours thesis focuses on torture in England and Scotland c. 1660-1707 to determine how its use affected Anglo-Scottish Relations and the 1707 Act of Union. During this period, judicial torture was used by governments and monarchies in cases concerning the safety of the state or the crown, such as treason. As the number of these cases are limited, torture itself was not very often used within England and Scotland. Yet, the use of torture in the past is fascinating and important to our understanding of torture's implications on modern society.

Concentrating on the Medieval and Early Modern eras, this thesis examined the judicial and government proceedings within England and Scotland to determine how crime was punished and the role that each parliament played therein. Furthermore, it examined the use of torture within England, Scotland, and on the continent to determine the differences and similarities between European states: torture in England could only be ordered by the crown or privy council as an extra-judicial proceeding via Royal Prerogative until 1642, when the Privy council lost this privilege; torture in Scotland was legal as Scottish law was a mixture of Roman-Canon law and trial

by jury but limited to specific cases; the use of torture on the continent was more common than in England and Scotland due to differences in legal processes. My thesis also examined in detail the torture of two Scots arrested in England, William Spence and William Carstares, and an English man arrested in Scotland, Henry Neville Payne, to determine why the crown believed they could torture both Scottish and English men in Scotland, as well as the public viewpoint on this. This thesis found that the public viewed the use of torture on anyone as moving against their rights as subjects, cruel, an act of tyranny, and an attempt to become an absolutist. Furthermore, this thesis argues that the use of torture by Charles II and James II influenced the Glorious Revolution in 1688, and that the use of torture by William III stimulated Jacobite ideologies influencing future Jacobite rebellions. Overall, this thesis argues that the use of torture by Charles II and William III promoted negative relations between England and Scotland influencing riots and rebellions, which prompted the crown and parliament in 1705 to begin conversations regarding union. Furthermore, by examining the various proposals of union in 1603 and 1705, we determined that the abolishment of torture in 1708 by the 1707 union was due to harsh Anglo Scottish relations promoted by the use of torture in previous years.

Overall, writing the honours thesis allowed me to gain new skills important to historical research and writing, such as organization and time management. The hardest obstacle to overcome was determining how much time to allot to the thesis when also completing a full course load. Originally, I attempted to allot one day a week for my thesis, however, as assignments increased this day became used for finishing assignments and catching up on readings. Around Christmas, I found myself falling behind in research, and for most of January and February I attempted to play catch up with my writing, to stay within my original deadlines. Figuring out how to properly manage my time when completing a large project is one of the greatest skills I learned during this experience. In some ways I managed this by relating my research essays in other courses to areas in which I was already exploring for my thesis, as well as communicating effectively with others in the honours program to keep myself on track.

Yet, I also had my fair share of lack of sleep from writing late at night to meet self-imposed deadlines.

Another skill which I gained through this experience was proper organization in terms of research and writing. For my thesis, I had to use both primary and secondary sources all of which came from different locations. To provide a wide consensus of secondary literature, I used sources from other universities as well as the Dalhousie libraries; thus, I needed to keep an accurate record of where the sources came from. The hardest part of source work was keeping an organized record of primary sources due to the vast number of databases and online sources available. Although I had used the majority of these databases before, keeping track of what I had already read, what was important, and an accurate copy of sources was difficult. After continually losing sources and having to spend time finding them again, I began to keep a research diary in which I would write down what database I was in, which keywords I used, and all the titles of the articles. I also got into the habit of downloading or favouriting sources online to avoid losing them.

Besides gaining new skills, I was also faced with the problem of containing my personal emotions and modern views. For example, I found I became very numb while reading trial records and details of torture sessions. In comparison, when reading pamphlets and public views on torture, I became very much absorbed into the negative views and popular opinions of the time. Thus, in some circumstances, I found it quite hard to not become anachronistic.

Aside from the skills and obstacles which I gained and overcame, I am also so grateful to this experience for the people I met and bonded with. First and foremost, I would like to thank Professor Cynthia Neville and Professor Krista Kesselring for sparking my interest in their 2nd year courses and encouraging me forward in my studies. I am also very grateful to Professor Kesselring, for acting as my advisor during this experience, without her guidance I probably would have left all of my writing to the last minute. Furthermore, the knowledge that I was meeting with her on a specific day kept me on the straight and narrow, and helped me force myself to have something new completed. This experience also allowed me to make new friends and meet new people who I may not have approached otherwise. Through

sharing hardships, experiences, and techniques, as well as many group therapy sessions, I was able to complete my thesis on time and in good health. Finally, I would like to thank Professor Christopher Bell for allowing us this opportunity and for providing a classroom setting which allowed for friendships to be made.

The Honours Program is a great way to learn new skills, further one's knowledge of a topic, and build new relationships with your peers. Personally, the honours program helped me decide what type of career I wanted and allowed me to build relationships which I hope to keep in the future. Working alongside Professor Kesselring, opened new doors for my studies leading me to decide on a master's at Dalhousie under her supervision, in Anglo-Scottish relations. Furthermore, this program pushed me to new heights and helped me further myself as a researcher, writer, and historian.

To close, I would like to encourage all those students interested in the honours program to not be afraid of taking that step and joining, it may seem like a daunting project, but its worth it in the end. A few words of advice: allow yourself an easy course load if possible, find an advisor whose work you are interested in and who you feel comfortable around, and pick a topic that you are interested in. The main thing, however, is to not be afraid of taking the next step in your journey, whether that is into the honours program or into another history class, believe in yourself because you are not alone in the process.

## **Jacob Bolton**

To Whoever is reading this, hello!

My name is Jacob Alexander Bolton and I am currently completing my undergraduate degree as an honour's student in the history programme at Dalhousie. My undergraduate career began in 2016 and has been full of ups and downs as I have worked to succeed as a student while juggling the responsibility of playing varsity soccer. My efforts have culminated in my nominations as an academic all-Canadian in 2017-18-19. While I currently find myself in an environment where I feel as though I can fulfil my academic and athletic potential, this was not always the case. Prior to my arrival at Dalhousie, I, like many other university students and student athletes, struggled to find an area of study which truly interested me at the beginning of my academic journey. This, together with the difficulties surrounding work-life balance, posed challenges that I needed to overcome.

After a false start in my first year at Ryerson University, I enrolled at Dalhousie as a first year and attended as an undeclared student. I decided that if I was going to complete a four-year degree it should be in something that genuinely fascinated and challenged me. As a result, I found myself returning to the study of a subject that had drawn my interest since childhood: ancient Rome. An interest in Roman history had been with me since I was a young boy growing up at my Grandparents house in Montreal where I would regularly stay up past my bedtime spending countless hours reading comics about *Astérix* and *Obélix*. As I got older, I continued in this vein by moving on to the more advanced and detailed works of historical fiction written by eminent authors such as Simon Scarrow, Conn Iggulden, and Bernard Cornwell. These writers managed to vividly portray a traditional, violent, and scheming ancient world, in which the likes of Cicero, Cataline, Cato, and Caesar vied for political and military power, while masterfully portraying the fascinating social and cultural settings in which their stories took place. This kind of literature nurtured and developed my fascination with the ancient world and led to my initial decision to study classics. From there I was thrust into the world of history as an academic discipline where I was able to read and encounter

the primary works of the characters whom I had read so much about. As a student I was able to read seminal works such as Caesar's Gallic wars and Sallust's Conspiracy of Cataline which, if not as prosaic and fantastical as the novels of my childhood, depict an equally dramatic, scheming, and violent world that continues to fascinate me.

My interest and study of the ancient world allowed me to gradually expand my horizons as an undergraduate student and investigate other periods of history. And, as a result of my branching out, I developed a passing interest in the medieval world which eventually came to influence the selection of my thesis topic: Merovingian regency. My current project deals with the study of medieval France in the sixth and seventh century. What led me to the Medieval world was a fascination with the fall of the western Roman empire and the numerous calamities, transitions, and changes which followed. This left me at a juncture which bordered on the classical yet was changing into something new and exciting: what is now referred to as the early medieval or late antique period. Next, this fascination led me to try and understand the processes by which various Germanic groups came to dominate and rule the former Roman provinces of the west. This in turn led me to the discovery of the Franks and the ruling dynasty of the Merovingians.

The study of the Merovingians captured my interest for several reasons and was a logical choice for a number of others. One of the reasons for my interest was the relative obscurity of the Merovingians; regardless of all the fascinating aspects of the Merovingian period it receives considerably less scholarly attention than maybe it should, much of which is lost to the more well known ninth century Frankish dynasty: the Carolingians. This lack of attention results from the erroneous view that the Merovingians were relatively unimportant in the grand narrative of Europe's history together with the relative lack of primary material concerning the period. Another reason for my interest in the Merovingians is the general time period (late 5th-8th CE) in which they ruled and its tumultuous nature. As previously stated, the context of Roman collapse and the arrival of various barbarian tribes is fascinating. This context, together with the intriguing and fractious nature of Merovingian rule itself, (their rule having been described elsewhere as "despotism tempered by assassination") makes the

subject highly appealing. The more logical reasons for my study of the Merovingians is my natural interest in the ancient world and my ability to communicate with the large body of secondary literature written in French. Ultimately, the time period, political context, and nature of Merovingian rule, together with my access to French materials, not only led to my decision to focus on the medieval world but also informed the selection of my thesis topic.

My thesis deals directly with the decline of the Merovingian dynasty. More specifically, it looks at how periods of regency in the seventh century contributed to the myriad factors that resulted in the collapse of Merovingian royal authority. My paper makes a case study of three separate periods of regency to highlight the various ways in which these contributed to the weakening of royal authority and the destabilization of the Frankish kingdoms. My first chapter looks at the rise of the Franks under the leadership of the Merovingian dynasty in the fifth and sixth century. This chapter provides political and geographical context for the reader and introduces some of the most important and formative Merovingian leaders. The second chapter deals with the role of Merovingian kingship, the narrative of Merovingian decline, and the historiography of the period. This chapter aims to give the reader a baseline of what Merovingian kingship entailed, provide an understanding of the reasons and mechanics behind the dynasties decline, and analyze the primary sources used throughout the paper. The third chapter contains the three case studies and looks to establish the role of regency within the larger narrative of decline by analyzing the ways that regency impacted the seventh centuries political climate and undermined the authority of Merovingian kings.

Dalhousie university has given me an opportunity and a venue where I have been able to couple my passion for history with my passion for sport, and has provided me with the ability to develop good time management skills and forge relationships that I hope will last a lifetime. The process of writing my thesis, with the help of my mentor and supervisor Dr. Jack Mitchell, has taught me a number of things about myself and the difficulties associated with the completion of an extensive and thoroughly researched paper. The hours spent in the library, the bouts of lethargy, and the periods of uncertainty all contributed to my growth as an individual because I was forced to

push through them in order to complete my thesis. And, while this was certainly the most difficult and ambitious project which I have attempted during my undergrad it is also the greatest accomplishment of my time at Dalhousie and something which I believe will benefit me as a person and in my future goals.

A final thank you must go out to the individuals and groups that were instrumental in my completion of this project. First, a huge thank you goes out to my afore mentioned supervisor Dr. Jack Mitchell. From his constant support and willing smile, to his ability to put up with my indecisive self, his support has been nothing short of amazing and for this and much more I will be forever grateful. Secondly, I must thank friends and family who have both supported me in this stressful time and helped in the completion of my thesis. Through their assistance with things as important as copy editing (thanks Dad) and as mundane as sitting and talking for a few hours, those around me have been of incalculable assistance in something that would not have been possible were it not for their diligence.

A final word for anyone who reads this synopsis with thoughts of joining the honours program in the future. What I have found in my experience is that, while the honours program is no cake walk, the friends you will make along the way and the euphoria you will feel upon the completion of such a daunting task is well worth the effort and is something you will look back upon with pride further down the line.

Yours,  
Jacob Bolton



## **Matthew Scott**

My thesis has a pretty simple concept. I wrote about the premiership of R.B. Bennett, during which time Canada suffered the worst of the Great Depression. I was interested in this topic after taking a class about radical movements in Canadian politics. My initial question was how the existing parties dealt with the rise of new political movements in the 1930s. I find periods of change very interesting historically and the Depression seemed like a textbook example, as the whole economic order collapsed and appears in hindsight to have been totally discredited. New political movements emerged with ideas for an entirely different order. Yet these movements failed for the most part. The CCF and NDP have been able to win a few provincial elections and some of their policies, most notably Medicare, were adopted. Nevertheless, no alternative political movement was able to totally transform the country. Canadian politics kept the two-party system to this very day. My thought-process heading into this project was that these parties had to interact with these new ideas in some way and I wanted to examine how and why they did so.

Dr. Ruth Bleasdale, my wonderful advisor, helped especially with starting me off on the right path. A critical flaw in my initial approach was that I had a topic in mind, but not a real method for studying it. How one studies a subject is an important topic and has been a key part of discussions in the honour's seminar. Dr. Bleasdale suggested that my priority should be finding a quality primary source and build up from there. This is a good approach because it allows one to enter research with an open mind. Primary source documents serve as raw information that one can analyze and draw conclusions from. Once that is done, one can examine the secondary literature and see if they came to similar conclusions and if not then why.

My search for primary source information led me to the Nova Scotia Public Archives. I wondered if any of the major parties had prominent figures from the province and if they did, whether their papers were in the archives. I was fantastically lucky as R.B. Bennett's finance minister, Edgar Nelson Rhodes, who was Nova Scotian and was even premier, papers were publicly accessible. This appeared to be an immensely useful source. It promised to contain a host of documents

related to government like speeches, internal memorandums, reports and the like. All of which would be invaluable sources for examining how a government goes about its business. This also offered me an opportunity to do something I had never done before: actual archival research. All my previous papers had been based mostly on secondary material or on published sources like memoirs.

Research proved something of a challenge. I have no frame of reference for what an archive ought to look like, but I found the Rhodes fond difficult to work through. The archive is very large, very diverse and labelled vaguely. For example, a specific volume might contain several folders. Each folder was given a broad label such as “Budget 1933.” The contents of a folder were only rarely described. This meant that each volume was a mystery box. A file on a budget might contain the budget speech or distribution letters or press clippings or a host of other materials. This meant that research was haphazard. In hindsight I should have gotten more done earlier, ensuring that I covered the archive more quickly.

Still this is an area where my chosen field allows a certain flexibility. In my experience Canadian history is provincial meaning only Canadians find it interesting. So, in contrast to writing about the United States or the UK, there is less secondary literature to work through. This means that the overall topic and methodology of the paper is somewhat conservative. This paper is a work of political history, but because Canadian political history remains a comparatively smaller field a more conventional project still has room to work. The honours seminar covered a wide variety of interesting modern developments in history, such as the use of oral history to capture the voices of those left out of standard narratives, or post-colonial theory that examines the basis of our historical understanding and its political significance. Unfortunately, I was not able to use any of those innovative approaches. My project describes figures who are all long dead, and even if they are unknown outside the country, they were still important enough to have all their papers collected publicly. Another useful part of this project has been broadening my knowledge of Canada. I did not know much contemporary Maritime history before this project. Growing up in Alberta and going to school in Ontario, the conventional narrative is of a prosperous 20s followed by a massive crash, with the west putting

slightly more emphasis on farmers. I was not aware of the hardships experienced out in the Maritimes, which had been in an economic slump since the end of the First World War.

Despite the archive's challenge, I found the information I wanted: what the government did and how it justified its actions. I began with budget speeches. The budget sets the agenda for the year and, given that the country was in an economic crisis, would seem to be where the government's plan to tackle the crisis would appear. My expectation was that there would be some sort of evolution over the course of the speeches, but this proved to be incorrect. After reading through all the speeches it was clear that there was almost no change. The same concerns: debt, the deficit, previous reckless spending, emerged again and again. The Conservatives refused to do anything too radical.

Further examination of the archive provided more information on economic thinking. There were press clipping of speeches that proved the Conservatives maintained the same message outside of parliament, but more importantly was the material from third parties, such as reports from NGOs or public intellectuals. One element jumped out from all those documents. With very few exceptions, they had the same perspectives as the Conservatives. This was very illuminating because it seems to explain the lack of Conservative evolution. The Government's actions were the same as those suggested by leading members of the business community, prominent academics, and notable public figures. The alternatives had no such backing. The CCF had no Nobel prize winners like Nicholas Murray Butler to advocate for their ideas on national broadcasts.

This led me to write a paper that in hindsight appears a bit obvious. A Conservative government was extremely reluctant to change anything to drastically. In all the areas I examined, the government was very reluctant to move to quickly or go to far. As the Depression strained relationships with the provinces, they referred to the constitution and demanded that provinces assume their proper responsibilities. The government was extremely reluctant to move to far with relief efforts. They had no intention of creating anything like a modern welfare state. The government may have changed little, but this project still has value. It examines how, when there is an established mode of thought providing a coherent explanation for events, a change in perspective

is difficult and people are unlikely to abandon their cherished beliefs. I think this is a subject that is continually relevant as I am writing this as a pandemic sweeps the globe. What effects will it have on people's thinking? Maybe not as much as one might expect.

Finishing this project leaves me feeling peculiar. I am proud of the work I have done. Are there things about this project I could have managed better? Of course, there always are. Yet, I am graduating, and I will not be continuing further on into academia. I suppose this makes the thesis a sort of capstone to my whole academic career, one last big event before I move onto something completely different. Principally I am filled with relief. I am just happy to be finally finished.

## Jeremy Spronk

Historians are often faced with the dreaded “so what?” question, directly challenging the significance and relevance of works they produce, and subjects they research. My attempt to abate this dilemma birthed a project at the crux of economic, social and European history. The resulting project was thus an examination of sailing conditions on board the ships of the Dutch East India Company in the middle of the eighteenth century. The Dutch East India Company holds the distinction as the world’s first publicly traded multi-national company, whose status as a proto-conglomerate lasted unchallenged for almost two centuries.

In my thesis a micro-historical, case-study based approach was taken to individualize the experiences of sailors under contract with the Dutch East India Company. This approach was used in an attempt to create a broad description of sailing conditions in the Dutch East India Company (VOC), and to examine the similarities or differences from other mercantile enterprises. The examination of writings from the captains as opposed to those of sailors before the mast was beneficial for a number of reasons. The captains were typically more literate than ordinary sailors, and this allowed for a more detailed and eloquent explanation of events on board. Through the examination of the journals of three VOC captains, with support from valuable secondary research, these case-studies examine the sailing conditions onboard ships of the VOC through five main elements. Incidents noted on board will be categorized into canonical issues that maritime professionals faced. These categories will be: discipline, danger & desertion, the wages men earned, the size of the crew and the monotony of life at sea.

The three captains that were chosen had all written detailed ship’s logs that have been preserved by the Dutch National Archive in The Hague. This micro-historical methodology required a significant amount of paleography, all of which was in middle Dutch. While this process seemed rather daunting prior to the commencement of my research, the nature of the journals made it a relatively humane task. The journal entries are rather formulaic in nature. Every entry commences with a description of the wind and the weather, followed

by an account of the events of that day. The journal is kept daily, providing us with incredibly detailed insight into the day-to-day life on board the three ships.

One of the most important characteristics of sailing conditions on early modern merchant ships was the brutal discipline the crew had to endure. Corporal punishment was incredibly common on both merchant and naval vessels during the early modern period. There were many methods used by captains and officers to keep their crews in line, including various methods of flogging, keel-hauling and beatings. These disciplinary procedures were often conducted on the main deck so as to make an example of the offending sailor. Different captains had their own methods of controlling their crew, and some even took sadistic pleasure in their enforcement of rules aboard their ship.

During process of my research I was able to deduce key aspects of the mercantile sailing experience, particularly the wages that men earned while under contract with the VOC. The wages that were paid to the sailors were a fundamental part of sailing conditions on all ships, but particularly on merchant vessels. Wages were the only method of positive motivation available to merchant captains, thus they made up a significant percentage of the expenses of a particular voyage. The size of the crew was also a fundamental facet of conditions faced by sailors. This was a sliding scale, as a larger crew would mean less work for an individual sailor, but also more cramped living conditions, a smaller share of prize money and fewer victuals.

My selection of a thesis topic was a natural one. Perhaps my favorite part of this thesis is the fact that it embodies many of the facets that define me as a historian. My interest in maritime history (particularly the world of mercantile shipping) was sparked at a young age, having spent time living in three port cities in three different countries. My time spent living in Boston, Nantes and Halifax was influential in the development of my interest in maritime history, highlighting the similarities and differences that sailors and dock workers face(d) in each region. I finally found an outlet for these interests when I began my studies with Dr. Jerry Bannister, and it was his guidance that allowed my keen interest in the field to develop into a scholarly quest. His seminar on the history of seafaring focused a great deal on the social history of sailors, and this allowed me to narrow my focus and create the monster that my honours thesis has become.

The examination of the Dutch East India Company for this thesis also required me to explore sources in my second (of three) languages, further expanding my understanding of both Dutch paleography and the history of the Netherlands as a whole. I had previously thought about writing an honours thesis on some aspect of Dutch history, having already covered certain aspects in relative detail. Having previously written on both the exploits of Maurice of Orange and the Napoleonic occupation, it seemed appropriate to explore a new era and to delve beyond the military history of a country that is not necessarily known for its military prowess. During a meeting with the Curator of the Maritime Museum in Rotterdam, Irene Jacobs, in June of 2019 I finally nailed down a topic. As we were walking through the museum's collection and library, the role of the VOC in the history of both the Netherlands and the broader maritime world became clearer and clearer. Given my aforementioned focus on the social history of sailors, it dawned on me that an examination of sailing conditions in the VOC would be the perfect project for me. On that beautiful June afternoon in Rotterdam I was still incredibly naïve to the colossal project that this would eventually become, but much like the sailors I have written about, I jumped headfirst into the project without thinking about the potential ramifications.

I'm sure that in a decade or so I will look back at the writing process with fond memories and appreciate the skills that it helped me develop and relationships it helped me foster. As of right now however, I'm in what one might call recovery mode. From the headaches that hours of pouring over eighteenth-century manuscripts can cause, to the sleepless nights of early March grinding out the last couple of chapters, this thesis has been an endeavor of the level which I could never have foreseen. It was not all bad of course, as I developed a new appreciation for my espresso machine and the house cat for keeping me company during those long lonely nights of writing.

I would be remiss if I did not thank certain people for their role in helping me complete this project. The most important person throughout the process, and thus the biggest acknowledgment must go to my advisor, Dr. Jerry Bannister. His ability to help me shape the scope and direction of this project were essential in its completion, and his understanding and willingness to put up with my nonsense,

procrastination and general unpreparedness was on a level for which I will be eternally grateful. I must also direct a massive thank you to my roommates, for their unwavering support throughout this process and lack of protest while being forced to read sections of this thesis that were entirely too long. So, to the boys on Preston, I owe you big time, and when I'm back in Halifax, the first round is on me. The last acknowledgement must go to the group therapy cohort of HIST 4986. The role y'all played in my ability to survive the year and the writing process cannot be understated. To be able to take an hour (or four) after every class and re-hash and analyze the seminar of that day added a level of enjoyment and social cohesion to this honours process that I did not think was possible. You know who you are... Love you guys.

For those who are reading this in Pangaea and are contemplating participating in future Honours programs, I have only one piece of advice. Do it. While the thesis can seem daunting and overwhelming at times, it truly is worth it.

—Jeremy Spronk



## **Derek Van Voorst**

The proper study of history is superlatively sublime due to it uniquely encapsulating all components considered essential in determining actuality: independent of history one is not capable of actually ascertaining the properties of actions, occurrences, or beliefs of all varieties, therefore limiting knowledge as to extent of degree, a most foundational prerequisite for those inclined towards familiarity with the world in which they exist. This transcendental study orders, if one considers innate interconnectivity, the collection of independent actions into a comprehensive totality, therefore attaining the objective inextricable from the inception of advanced inquest: a maximal recognition as to how and why events occur, or, reiterated, the essential properties of the occurrences which constitute effective reality. What purpose does the investigation of a certain innovation, rebellion, advancement, recession, conflict, exploration, ratiocination, or ideology possess if not framed relative to other such occurrences? Naught. All fields of study depend upon the annals of history to transmogrify from merely a skilled specialist to an individual deserving of their subject's occupational noun. Who is more deserving of such title? Is one to be truly considered a philosopher, mathematician, psychologist, or metaphysician in an approximation of the ideal sense, if singularly familiar with their subset of research and ignorant of their field? Improbable. Woe betide those reprobate relativists who defile and besmirch the lofty objectives of history by dragging its exceptional qualities to the type of studies temporally bound. On this basis all should engage in the proper study of history if desirous of deserving the title of their profession.

My thesis, with the supervisor being Professor Hanlon, involved a quantitative analysis of potential infanticide in Aquitaine, annis 1689 to 1696, in five parish districts: Sainte-Foy-la-Grande, Lalande-de-Libourne, Castillon-la-Bataille, Aubie-et-Espessas, and Noaillan. The years may be partitioned as follows: 1689-1692 (pre-famine); 1693-1694 (famine); 1695-1696 (post-famine). The hypothesis of this investigation is that a considerable alteration of sex ratio should manifest concurrent with the famine periods, with the most probable factor for such a shift being infanticidal praxis. The data

for this investigation was obtained by analyzing the parish registers, documents which contain the locale's births, marriages, and burials, of the five areas aforesaid in the years described. The data, posterior to its compilation by location, was configured in SPSS (a statistical package primarily employed for the social sciences) using chi-squared tests ( $X^2$ ) using two discrete parameters, the calculation formula involved being depicted immediately succeeding:

$$X^2 = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$$

The total analysis, ephemerally depicted, runs a crosstabulation of 'sex of child' and 'periodization', subsequently providing the probability of the latter impacting the former. Two tests, employing alternate parameters as to 'periodization', were conducted. The first test analyzed statistical significance of sex distribution utilizing 'famine' and 'non-famine' classifications. Structuring the analysis employing these dichotomous categorizations did not present statistical significance when all five towns were undifferentiated by location, id est, there was insufficient reason to suppose on the variance of data so categorized of there being a connection betwixt sex ratio and famine status, this being due to general partiality towards males. However, of considerable interest, the second analysis considering 'prior to and including the famine (pre&famine)' compared to 'post-famine' depicted a statistically significant ( $p = 0.002$ ) impact upon sex ratio if situated in the 'post-famine' period. This indicates that a non-random factor impacted the proportion of males to females born in the 'post-famine' period. A power analysis, id est, an investigation as to the sufficiency of sample size, was conducted and concluded a power rating of 95%, a standard in statistics; this indicates that the 'control' to 'experiment' groupings were appropriate in proportion, and that extending the analysis in time would not produce a meaningful effect.

In the thesis, prior to the analysis proper, a discourse upon historical infanticide and the biological mechanisms in sex ratios was provided. These prerequisites may be condensed as follows: humans universally

have engaged in acts of ‘infant expungement’, with the specific qualities of these acts dependent upon region and biological factors influence sex ratios. In the Greek and Roman instances, infanticide is frequently depicted in the action of *ἐκτίθημι* or *expositio* (exposure), resulting in the infant being displaced to a common location and often collected by an alternate entity to be raised or function in a servile capacity; the Oriental practice, considering the exemplars of China and Japan to modernity, often performed ‘infant expungement’ in a more properly infanticidal (etymologically) manner, with drowning being the most popular method. The influences involved in impacting sex ratios biologically are quite interesting, specifically the nascent testing concerning the factor of nutritional quality. Various factors are involved in determining the sex ratio, the most significant being the antecedent child sex ratio, the time of insemination, and the mother’s socioeconomic security; the less significant components include the presence of certain cancers, the procreators’ age, et cetera. Furthermore, an inequality of physiological durability exists in fetuses and neonates, with males possessing a higher probability of fatality due to negligence.

In conclusion, the thesis represented a statistically significant shift in sex ratios corresponding with the ‘post-famine’ period and considered potential explanations for this effect. Infanticidal actions (regardless if the infant was actually killed) possess, as an intrinsic property, the ability to substantially alter the newborn population’s distribution, in a degree higher than alternate biological explanations. This is not to suggest that the totality of shift may be attributed to infanticide, for potential factors concerning oscillations in stress and nutritional sustenance appear to impact distribution, though currently it is most reasonable to suppose the dominant influence of families engaging in reactive infant extirpation.