

# Doing History

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As a history student you learn to be a reflective thinker, to view the world through an alternative lens that allows you to see systems and patterns that transcend time and geography. To see how humans come to understand and make sense of the world. To appreciate how individual experiences, no matter how small, can have ripple effects across communities and countries. To appreciate that events occurring in the distant past, continue to carry weight and meaning as we grapple with their effects in the present. You learn all this as a history student. As a history teacher, you learn to communicate and share this lens with others. My journey into both pursuits as a student and teacher was shaped by my experience as a graduate student at Fresno Pacific in the Individualized Master of Arts Program.

In 2008 I knew that I wanted to “do history.” I was not sure what this would look like in a career, but I loved reflecting on the meaning of past events. I was especially influenced by a research assignment that focused on the travels of Marco Polo. I had also participated in living history events and worked as a tour guide at Alcatraz (spending nights in dusty old cell blocks). History was something I did. Not just something I studied. If you approach the field of history as an opportunity to create, design, and publish the past, you are more likely to find joy and fulfillment in the field. Studying History is interesting, but doing history is exciting!

It was this approach to history that led me to pursue a master’s degree in an individualized program. I selected Fresno Pacific due to numerous positive recommendations from friends and family members. The strongest recommendation came from my wife who was at the time pursuing a degree in School Psychology. My first assignment in the program was to construct a schedule of classes with advisor Rod Janzen. I found this process rewarding as I thought deeply about the type of history I wanted to study, the instructors I wanted to work with, and types of historical material I wanted to research.

Over the course of the program I studied with many FPU professors who shared their own passion for history and had a strong desire to maximize the student experience. Later as I pursued a career as a teacher, those close interactions, and attention to student driven learning provided by FPU professors,

was a valuable foundation. Instruction in the program ranged from seminars and forums, to small group work and individual research assignments. Most classes were small and focused on a particular historical theme or period of time. I was excited to have the opportunity to sit down with many of my professors and receive one-on-one instruction and feedback. Other courses dealt with historiographical questions that delved into how historians come to understand the past.

My favorite part of the program was a two-year research endeavor that became a Master's thesis, "Sir Francis Drake and The South Seas Project." Here was a historical topic that had been approached from many research angles, but still offered opportunities for fresh insights. It was a topic that had intrigued members of the general populace historically (even in the media) due to the involvement of two legendary figures of the Elizabethan Age: Sir Francis Drake, and Queen Elizabeth. Through this project I learned valuable research skills that I continue to use. One that is especially important is the art of narrowing the size and scope of a large topic. Sir Francis Drake's South Seas Project took Drake around the world through an assortment of documented adventures from the Barbary Coast of Africa, to small fishing villages in South America.

My research focused on "Drakes Bay" at Point Reyes, north of San Francisco. Helpful here was the discovery of a primary source written by Francis Fletcher, Drake's ship chaplain, who described a small harbor that Drake and crew stayed in along the Northern California coast. Drake took possession of the land in the name of the English Empire and named it Nova Albion. Full of intrigue, speculation, and pirates, the Drake project seamlessly combined world history with American and California history. Documenting Drake's movements, and his intentions at Nova Albion, took me from coastal Northern California native Miwok sites, to the Tower of London where Drake's private journals and ship logs mysteriously disappeared. It was a unique research assignment that combined many of the skills and content dealt with in Fresno Pacific classes.

My association with Fresno Pacific has culminated in the opportunity to teach undergraduate and degree completion courses for the university. I now work with students who pursue their own unique historical interests and career options. This calling was molded and shaped through my experiences as a FPU student; it continues to evolve as an adjunct professor.