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## The Making of an Online Professor

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**Katie Stewart**

**The Making of an Online Professor**

I came to the History MA program at age 22 with curiosity and a love of reading—but very little in the way of professional or academic skills. I had only the vaguest notions of Turabian. After struggling through the first article assignment—a historiographical survey of American History by Eric Foner—I knew with certainty that I was under-prepared for the field and felt a dreadful suspicion that I might not like it all that much either. It was too late to back out, so I muddled through. I googled Turabian format. Dr. David Snead taught me to write a book review by assigning one every single week. I learned how to interpret the jargon and identify a thesis. By the end of the first semester, I discovered with surprise that my instructors had shaped me into a functioning member of the profession.

I also recognized they had passed on to me so much more than just the basic skill set I needed to survive in the field. They had initiated me into the “discipline” of History. And at Liberty University, that discipline was sanctified and redeemed through a shared commitment to ultimate truth. As one of my classmates put it, our seminar discussions were “edifying.” It’s a word we don’t use often these days, but it captures my entire grad-school experience.

My thesis advisor, Sam Smith, opened every class with a specific prayer. He prayed that in our discussions we would “worship God with our minds.” That sense of gravity about what we were doing was sobering, humbling, and encouraging. Dr. Smith’s prayer returns to my mind regularly even now. I pray it silently for myself as I mentor the history undergraduate students that I now teach through Liberty University Online. In a different, but no less significant application, I pray it out loud each morning for my three young children as the start to our homeschool day. I want them to feel the weight and inspiration of knowing that their endeavors in Pre-K and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade are an opportunity to worship and glorify the Creator—an opportunity they can embrace with joy or squander.