

*Remarks accepting
The Philip Merrill Award
for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education*

Preserving the Values of the West

by Ayaan Hirsi Ali

The Decline and Fall of History

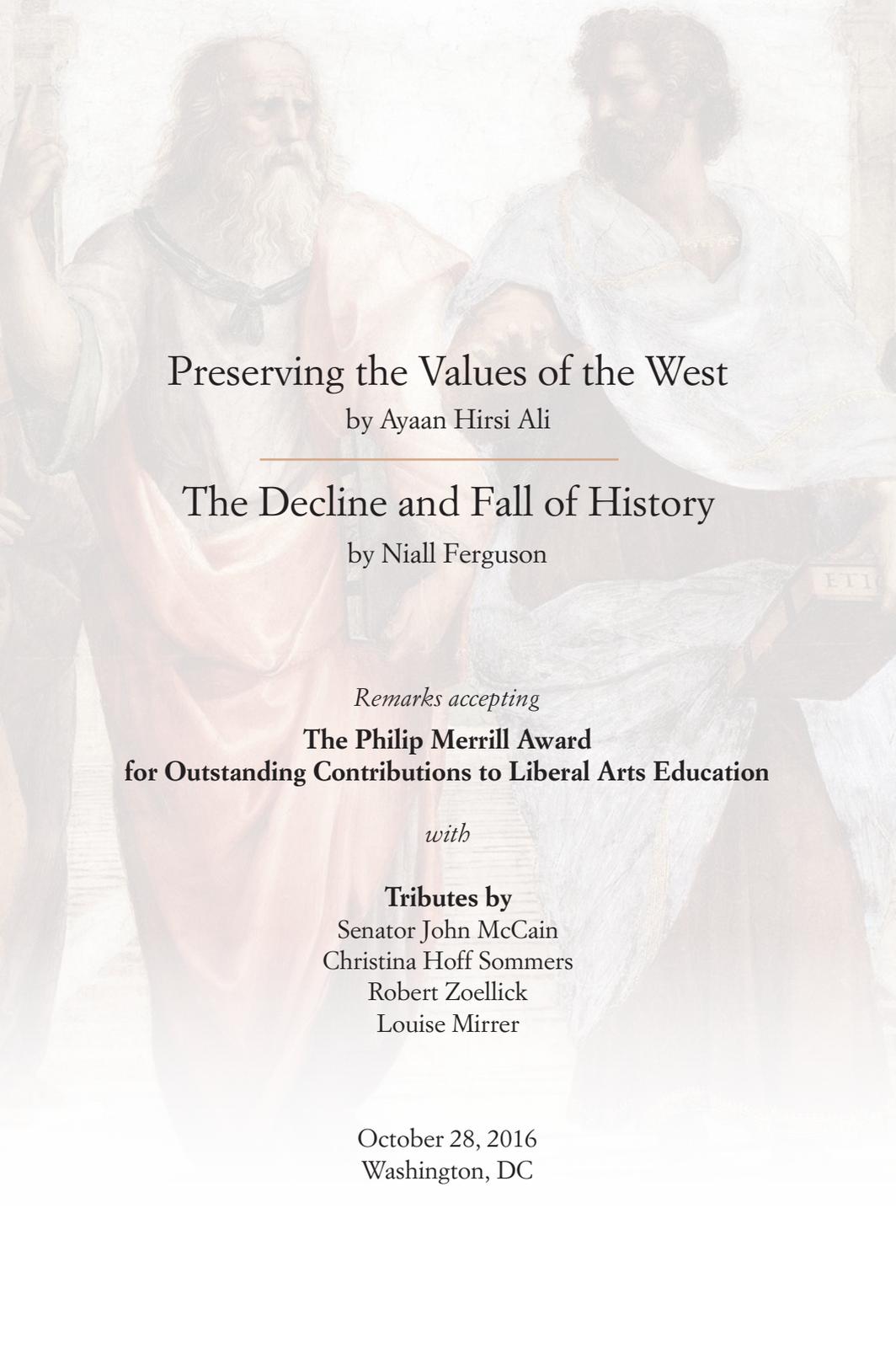
by Niall Ferguson



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Remarks accepting

**The Philip Merrill Award
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with

Tributes by

Senator John McCain
Christina Hoff Sommers
Robert Zoellick
Louise Mirrer

October 28, 2016
Washington, DC

Preserving the Values of the West

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank you for your kindness in honoring me with this award. For more than two decades, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni has defended the free exchange of ideas on American campuses.

The university is a place where knowledge is imparted to students. It is a place where students are introduced to new ideas, and to the notion that there are conflicting worldviews.

In a university setting, students hone their critical thinking skills so that they are able to discern what is true from what is false; what is of value from what is trivial; and what is moral from what is immoral.

All of this knowledge is built on a specific national heritage embedded in a Western culture and civilization that is distinct from other nations, cultures, and civilizations. Ideas do not arise in a vacuum; ideas form in a certain context, and have a genealogy, a history.

The concepts that university students should cherish—respect for the individual and his autonomy, the abolition of slavery, equality of citizens under the law, equality of men and women under the law, freedom of expression, religious tolerance, the separation between religious and political power—all of these are the products of *Western* civilization.

Some of these concepts were ideas that were forcefully argued with the written and spoken word, sometimes on the basis of Christian scripture; others, such as the secularization of international relations,

were the result of protracted military conflicts (in the case of the Treaties of Westphalia, the settlement of the Thirty Years' War).

Today, in a turbulent and chaotic world, students need a solid background in the attributes of Western civilization to be able to place events and ideas in context. Yet at a time when a rigorous formation is needed the most, the American campus today seems beset by a protracted intellectual malaise. The very term “Western civilization” is ruthlessly castigated without, however, being carefully *studied* and *analyzed*. In ignoring the many achievements and complexities of Western civilization, we do our college students a grave disservice.

In defending free inquiry, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni has played an indispensable role. Its hard work will, I fear, be increasingly necessary in the years ahead.

In 2016, a group of Stanford students proposed a non-binding resolution to create a “Western civilization” course requirement, something that had been abolished at the university more than 25 years ago. Alas, the proposal was overwhelmingly defeated in a student vote. The arguments of the resolution’s opponents were revealing. In the run-up to the vote, one Stanford student wrote in the *Stanford Daily* that “a Western Civ requirement would necessitate that our education be centered on upholding white supremacy, capitalism and colonialism, and all other oppressive systems that flow from Western civilizations.”¹

By reducing Western civilization to the worst excesses of its history, and by leaving out the best it has brought forth—to repeat: women’s equality; the abolition of slavery; individual freedom; religious tolerance; freedom of expression—the Stanford student who wrote those words makes a common mistake. Sadly, however, this lopsided view is shared by a growing number of students and professors.

One cannot dismiss the sum total of Western civilization without losing one’s moral compass. And one cannot participate meaningfully in the battle of ideas raging in the world today while dismissing the value of Western civilization as a whole.

With this background, the specific example I would like to address today is the relationship between men and women. All cultures have

strong views on marriage, family, divorce, promiscuity, and parenting. Not all cultures are similar or interchangeable, however.

Within Islam today, I believe that we can distinguish three different groups of Muslims in the world based on how they envision and practice their faith, with important consequences for women.

The first group is the most problematic—the fundamentalists who envision a regime based on Shariah, Islamic religious law. They argue for an Islam largely or completely unchanged from its original seventh-century version and take it as a requirement of their faith that they impose it on everyone else.

I call them Medina Muslims, in that they see the *forcible* imposition of Shariah as their religious duty, following the example of the Prophet Muhammad when he was based in Medina.² They exploit their fellow Muslims' respect for Shariah law as a divine code that takes precedence over civil laws.³ It is only after they have laid this foundation that they are able to persuade their recruits to engage in jihad. There is no equality between men and women in their eyes, either legally or in daily practice.

The second group—and the clear majority throughout the Muslim world—consists of Muslims who are loyal to the core creed and worship devoutly but are not inclined to practice violence or even intolerance towards non-Muslims.

I call this group “Mecca Muslims,” after the first phase of Islam and the peaceful Qur’anic verses that were revealed in Mecca. In this group, the position of women is contested.

More recently, and partly in response to the rise of Islamic terrorism, a third group is emerging within Islam—Muslim reformers or, as I call them, “modifying Muslims”—who promote the separation of religion from politics and other reforms. Although some are apostates, the majority of dissidents are believers, among them clerics who have come to realize that their religion must change if its followers are not to be condemned to an interminable cycle of political violence. Reformers generally favor equality between men and women.

The future of Islam and the world’s relationship with Muslims will be decided by which of the two minority groups—the Medina Muslims

or the reformers—can win the support of the rather passive Meccan majority.

In the West, most people of good will are committed to providing women with equal rights and the opportunity to build a good future for themselves, to develop into autonomous human beings.

The people I would call “Medina Muslims”—men such as Sayyid Qutb, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, or Osama bin Laden—offer an alternative vision. They claim that their vision, based on Shariah law, is in all ways superior to the norms prevailing in the West. Medina Muslims churn out the statistics—which are of course widely available in the West—of divorce, single parenting, prostitution, the hook-up culture on American campuses. They offer crude and simple remedies: segregate the sexes; cover women from head to toe (the modesty doctrine) to prevent men from losing sexual control; marry girls off as early as possible on Shariah terms; and a list of other measures.

Medina Muslims claim that, when all of these Shariah measures towards women have been adopted, the vexing problems of promiscuity, children born out of wedlock, and the social chaos (*fitna*) they view in Western countries will cease. Yet Medina Muslims are uncomfortable when pressed to explain why Shariah measures implemented in Saudi Arabia, Iran, and to some extent in Pakistan have not resolved every conceivable social ill. On the contrary, what we see in those countries is often appalling mistreatment of women and especially of young girls.⁴

In Saudi Arabia, a woman’s testimony is usually not accepted in criminal cases and is worth ½ a man’s testimony in civil cases.⁵ In 2009, Saudi Arabia’s Grand Mufti, Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al-Sheikh, said “a girl aged 10 or 12 can be married. Those who think she’s too young are wrong and they are being unfair to her.”⁶

In Iran, married women cannot leave the country without their husband’s permission.⁷ After a child is seven years old, custody of the child automatically goes to the father (unless the father is severely disqualified, for example insane). A mother also loses custody of her young children if she re-marries.⁸

In 2016, the chair of Pakistan's Council of Islamic Ideology, an important advisory body, sanctioned "light" wife beating.⁹

Feminist academics in the West might be expected to call out Medina Muslims, or at least to enable students to think through the consequences of implementing Shariah measures such as we see in Iran and Saudi Arabia.¹⁰

Yet what we see is rather different. It is striking how many American university professors and students reject any analysis of a real conflict between enlightened Western values and unreformed Shariah, even as Western civilization is mocked and its many contributions to human freedom and gender equality cynically dismissed.

This year, as one indication of the zeitgeist, Duke University's Women Center created a new (optional) nine-week seminar that aims to have young men "critique and analyze their own masculinity and toxic masculinities."¹¹ With reasonable confidence, I predict that the men participating in these sessions will be well-intentioned, mild-mannered young American men, who are already inclined towards respect for women. One topic that will not be examined, I suspect, is Islamic law, or the conflict between Western notions of women's equality and Islamic views on the subject.

At many American universities today, any critical examination pertaining to Islam, including Shariah and the treatment of women in Islam, is declared to be out of the realm of scrutiny. My thoughts on the crisis within Islam were so terrifying to Brandeis University—the university named for a champion of the First Amendment—that it withdrew its invitation to speak and accept an honorary degree. A strange irony that my story frightened the university more than the litany of honor killings and wholesale abuse of women in so many parts of the Islamic world.

This is a world turned upside down. A good education presupposes a free and open exchange of ideas on the basis of reason and reputable primary sources. This is why the work of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni matters: It calls clearly for the freedom to discuss and study the challenging issues of our times.

In so doing, ACTA defends the most important principles of the West, which offer the best hope for future students. It is through such principles that women gain the equality that ought to be their birthright, and civilization advances.

* * *

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The Decline and Fall of History

by Niall Ferguson

I

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by saying how deeply grateful my wife and I are for the honor that ACTA has bestowed on us.

However, I very much regret to say that there has been an error. Instead of giving the Merrill Award to a couple of underachieving immigrants, you should have given the award to a man who, by celebrating the life of an overachieving immigrant, has done more for the liberal arts than all the humanities departments in the United States put together. I refer, of course, to Lin-Manuel Miranda, the creator and star of *Hamilton: An American Musical*.

I make this suggestion not only because you—along with the Nobel Prize committee—have spoiled Mr. Miranda’s near-perfect sweep of all the prizes for which he is eligible. (He has all the rest: Tonys, Grammys, and a Pulitzer. He would have won the presidency if he had only run.) I say it also because, since it opened off Broadway in February 2015, *Hamilton* has educated more people about the history of this country than I could even if I were granted a thousand years of life. And this is just the beginning. In 2017, the musical will play in 16 other American cities, as well as London.

When I arrived in New York City in 2002—not quite as young, scrappy, and hungry as Alexander Hamilton was when he disembarked 230 years earlier—I was rather proud that I knew about him. At that time, he was the forgotten founding father, the enigma of the ten-dollar bill. I used to enjoy comparing notes with Richard Sylla, my colleague

at New York University, about Hamilton's legacy. We used to say that he was the only one of the founders who wouldn't be too surprised by what he saw if he were to walk down modern-day Wall Street. This was before Ron Chernow's biography, which appeared in 2005 and began the Hamilton revival.¹

Among his many qualities, Hamilton revered history. Like all the great heroes of the Age of Enlightenment, he used it regularly as a source of evidence in support of his arguments. Indeed, Hamilton sometimes expressed a preference for history over theory. "In all questions of this nature," he remarked in connection with the founding of the First Bank of the United States, "the practice of mankind ought to have great weight against the theories of individuals."²

"The practice of mankind" meant ancient and modern European history. In 1774, it was the tyranny of Rome to which Hamilton likened George III's rule.³ In 1781, it was to the experience of the "Commonwealths of Greece" that he appealed in arguing for a strong central government.⁴ His critique of confederal arrangements was also based on ancient Greek experience.⁵ Yet Hamilton could also cite the Treaty of Munster (1648) and the Treaty of Vienna (1738) when defending the payment of indemnities to defeated loyalists.⁶ And he knew his modern British history well, too: Witness his vivid and admiring reference to the Royal Navy as the "wooden walls" protecting the British Isles from the time of the first Navigation Act.⁷

Much that Hamilton wrote in this vein still resonates today. Here he is in coruscating form in the first of *The Federalist Papers*:

[A] dangerous ambition more often lurks behind the specious mask of zeal for the rights of the people than under the forbidding appearance of zeal for the firmness and efficiency of government. History will teach us that the former has been found a much more certain road to the introduction of despotism than the latter, and that of those men who have overturned the liberties of republics, the greatest number have begun their career by paying an obsequious court to the people; commencing demagogues, and ending tyrants.⁸

It was a theme he returned to in 1795. “It is only to consult the history of nations,” Hamilton wrote, “to perceive, that every country, at all times, is cursed by the existence of men who, actuated by an irregular ambition, scruple nothing which they imagine will contribute to their own advancement and importance . . . in republics, fawning or turbulent demagogues, worshipping still the idol—power—wherever placed . . . and trafficking in the weaknesses, vices, frailties, or prejudices” of the people.⁹ The contemporary relevance of these observations speaks for itself.

The most popular musical in Broadway history is thus not only about an historical figure. It is also about a figure who *applied* history to one of the most important decisions of modern times: how the new American republic should be constituted.

The Hamilton revival, then, should be a cause for celebration by history lovers. Instead, however, it exposes a troubling paradox. For even as history smashes the box office, it slumps where it should be best protected and promoted: at our universities.

II

History at U.S. colleges is suffering decline and fall, and faster than Gibbon’s Roman Empire. The most recent data, released in March 2016 for degrees awarded in 2014, show that the number of history undergraduate degrees fell for the third time in four years, this time by a startling 9%. The biggest decline was at the country’s most prestigious schools, where the number fell by more than 13%.¹⁰ Moreover, surveys indicate that between 2012 and 2015 overall undergraduate enrollment in history courses fell at three quarters of colleges. More than two fifths saw declines of 10% or more.¹¹

This is just the latest installment of a sustained decline. History as a share of all undergraduate degrees has fallen from 2.2% in 2007 to 1.7%. Taken together, the share of history and social sciences degrees has halved, from 18% in 1971 to 9%. And the decline seems likely to continue. The aggregate number of bachelor’s level majors reported in the 2014–15 directory of the American Historical Association is 19% lower than in 2009–10, so that the class of 2017 and 2018 is expected to have even fewer historians than the class of 2014.

There are a variety of explanations for this decline. For example, women consistently make up about 40% of all history majors so, as a rising share of college students are female, history should decline. Post-crisis economic conditions are also sometimes blamed.¹² So, too, is the rise of relatively new majors such as computer science. However, we cannot pretend that the changing content of history courses has nothing to do with it.

An article published by the AHA in December 2015 analyzed the changes in history faculty specializations over the last 40 years on the basis of the Association's *Directory of History Departments*.¹³ The data reveal a very big increase in the number of historians who specialize in women and gender, which has risen from 1% of the total to almost 10%. As a result, gender is now the single most important subfield in the academy. Cultural history (from under 4% to nearly 8%) is next. The history of race and ethnicity has also gone up by a factor of more than three. Environmental history is another big winner.

The losers in this structural shift are diplomatic and international history (which also has the oldest professors), legal and constitutional history, and intellectual history. Social and economic history have also declined. All of these have fallen to less than half of their 1970 shares of the profession. American political history appears to be flirting with extinction. According to Fred Logevall and Ken Osgood, there have been "just 15 advertisements in the last 10 years specifically seeking a tenure-track, junior historian specializing in American political history."¹⁴ In 2013 the National Association of Scholars published a report that asked the question (with reference to the courses offered at the University of Texas and Texas A&M University): "Are race, class, and gender dominating American history?"¹⁵ The question could be asked more generally.

I had also expected to find comparable shifts in the regional focus of academic history. However, that is not the case. The share of U.S. historians has remained relatively constant at 41%. Faculty specialization in European history has declined, to be sure, from 39% in 1975 to at 32%, but that seems a modest shift. Nevertheless, these

transformations of history as a discipline are generally celebrated as a triumph for “diversity.” I fear that this has come at a significant price.

If one poses the question “What are the most significant events in modern history?” no two people, and certainly no two historians, would give the same answer. For years, terms such as “significant” and “important” have been more or less proscribed in the academy for fear of “privileging” the history of elites. Even the word “event” was regarded with disdain by members of the *Annales* school. Yet when historians complain—as some now do—that their profession has “ceded the public arena, nationally as well as globally, to the economists and occasionally lawyers and political scientists,”¹⁶ they implicitly acknowledge that the priorities of the public arena should not be irrelevant to them. Not all historical subjects are equal in that arena.

I submit that a list of significant historical subjects that omitted the majority of the following twenty would be regarded as incomplete in the eyes of any reputable newspaper, magazine, textbook or encyclopedia publisher. To provide a rough measure of importance in this sense, the numbers in parenthesis are the number of times these terms appeared in the average professor’s newspaper of choice, the *New York Times*, in the past 12 months:

1. [Any period of] British History (31)
2. The Reformation (52)
3. The Scientific Revolution (8)
4. The Enlightenment (163)
5. The American Revolution (111)
6. The French Revolution (11)
7. The U.S. Constitution (87)
8. The Industrial Revolution (68)
9. The American Civil War (13)
10. German Unification (2)
11. World War I (609)
12. The Russian Revolution (21)
13. The Great Depression (245)
14. The Rise of Fascism (6)

15. The Third Reich (52)
16. World War II (2,746)
17. Decolonization (16)
18. The Cold War (846)
19. The history of Israel (7)
20. European integration (69)

In assessing the range of courses provided by three major U.S. history departments—those of Harvard, Stanford, and Yale—I have simply used this list as a benchmark. If you were an undergraduate at one of these institutions in the fall of 2016, which of these topics would you find covered by the courses on offer to you?

The answer in the case of Harvard is: Not many. To be precise, a historically inclined student would look in vain for a course on all but seven. German unification, fascism, and the Third Reich are covered by a single course, “HIST 1265: German Empires, 1848–1948.” There are also courses that cover the Russian Revolution, the Great Depression, the Cold War and European integration. This seems a somewhat meagre showing for a department that lists 55 faculty members, of whom only seven are listed as being on leave this semester. Twenty Harvard historians are listed as specialists in the history of the United States. Yet, this semester at least, the undergraduate looks in vain for education about the American Revolution, the making of the Constitution, and the Civil War.

The picture at Yale looks at first sight better, until one realizes that nearly all the coverage is provided by just two courses: John Merriman’s “HIST 202: European Civilization, 1684–1945,” and Paul Kennedy’s “HIST 221: Military History of the West since 1500.” Aside from these two, only four other faculty members—of a department numbering 67—are engaged in teaching any of the topics on my list. Similarly, at Stanford, six courses are on offer that relate to the twenty topics in our list. That leaves 42 faculty members whose interests lie elsewhere.

Now, this is not to say that the other courses available at these three universities are without value. It *is* to say that undergraduates looking to increase their familiarity with publicly significant topics in modern

history would be justified in feeling shortchanged. These findings are all the more surprising when one reflects on the relative stability of the geographical focus of history departments on American and European history.

III

To understand why history is an academic discipline in decline, it is worth looking at some of the courses that are available at Harvard, Stanford, and Yale this fall. Take, for example, Harvard's History 1954: "Emotions in History." The course description is as follows: "What is the place of emotion in history? The question itself holds multiple meanings, and in this course we consider two in particular: how to write the history of emotion(s), and how the historian's emotions affect the writing of history. Do historians benefit more from proximity to, or distance from, their historical subjects? Should historians of emotion suppress, or cultivate, their feelings of empathy? Does emotive writing inevitably fail the test of scholarly rigor and balance? We will explore some possible analytic frames for the history of emotion and debates over the subjectivity of history, and consider their application to case studies drawn from Australian history." It strikes me as not wholly surprising that this course has, according to the my.harvard site, a total enrollment of one.

Or consider the following course titles available at Yale, which were among the options available to students interested in North American History:

History 4XXJ: "Indigenous Religious Histories"

History 1XXJ: "Witchcraft and Society in Colonial America"

History 283: "History of the Supernatural"

History 260J: "Sex, Life, and Generation"

Stanford's History 41Q is entitled "Madwomen: The History of Women and Mental Illness in the U.S." It entices potential students by proposing to "explore how gender has shaped the experience and treatment of mental illness in U.S. history" and asking the question: "Why have women been the witches and hysterics of the past?" I do

not wish to dismiss any of these subjects as being of no interest or value. They just seem to address less important questions than how the United States became an independent republic with a constitution based on the idea of limited government, or how it survived a civil war over the institution of slavery. The contrast with the courses that were offered by the Harvard History Department in the fall semester 1966 is very striking (see appendix). For example, students of American history were offered “Hist. 61a: The Growth of the American Nation, 1600–1877” and “Hist. 160b: The American Revolution and the Formation of the Constitution,” as well as “Hist. 164b: The United States in World Politics.” There were no fewer than twelve courses in British history in the course catalogue: too many, no doubt, but better than nothing, which is what students in the fall semester 2016 were offered. In all, the History Department of 1966 offered 27 courses on my 20 important historical subjects, five times more than their counterparts today.

There are two problems with the new history that has displaced the old. The first is that some of it is so disconnected from our contemporary concerns that it is little better than the antiquarianism scoffed at by the *philosophes* 250 years ago. “The cultural history classes I have been forced to take at Harvard in order to graduate verge on heirloom antiquarianism,” a current undergraduate recently told me:

Generally, they focus on the customs of a small subset of an ethnic population within a certain area at a certain time. One gets to know the habits of New York restaurant-goers in the 1870s or the makeup of various Caribbean ethnic groups in areas of Brooklyn that made up the West Indian Day Parade in the 1960s (real examples from my last year) very well, but the subject matter is so obscure that any hope for comparison or relevance is lost.

These classes . . . take the place of history classes with greater appeal to a wider group of students. Few, if any, students . . . [are] interested in the habitats of restaurateurs during and after the Civil War. Many more would be interested in a class on the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Historians would find many more people who are interested in the French Revolution than in ‘Sex in the French Revolution’ (another recently taught seminar at Harvard).

I agree.

The second problem is that such *microcosmographia academica* is so often accompanied by overt politicization. Indeed, some of it is so skewed by contemporary concerns that is fundamentally unhistorical. For example, Stanford's History 3A, "Making Palestine Visible," claims to show how "Palestinian claims to rights" have been rendered "illegible for much of the American public." The course description goes on: "This learning experience, incorporating discussion and clarification at its core, connects with the national and Stanford campus discussion of activism on Israel-Palestine." The same university's History 263D, "Junipero Serra," requires students to participate in "a formal debate on the ethics naming university or public buildings after historical figures with contested pasts." (Pointedly, the course description adds: "Taught in English.")

To suggest that there is anything wrong with this kind of thing is of course to take a great risk in our age of "trigger warnings" and "safe spaces." But I am fairly certain there *is* something wrong with it, namely the overt importation into the classroom of politics—a practice that Max Weber famously and rightly condemned in his "Science as a Vocation."¹⁷

In Weber's time, the problem in German universities was that too many professors were inclined towards radical nationalism. But this kind of politicization is no less dangerous when the overwhelming majority of professors are liberals, as is the case in the United States today. It is to abuse the position of authority the educator naturally enjoys, not least because students quickly recognize that their performance in a class will likely suffer if they dissent from the professor's point of view.

Courses such as these are part of what might be called an anachronistic turn: an impulse to judge the past by the moral standards of the present—and indeed to efface its traces, in a kind of modern-day iconoclasm, when these are deemed offensive.

IV

History, in short, is in trouble. History departments neglect the defining events of modern world history in favor of topics that are

either arcane or agitprop, sometimes both. The result has been a sustained decline in history enrollments. The long-term effects on the elite who are educated at top American universities are unlikely to be positive. The “United States of Amnesia” will get no better at learning from history if the people who end up running the republic know next to no history at all.

To this there will doubtless be those who respond indignantly that it is not the proper task of the historian to learn lessons from the past. What could be more ingenuous, more jejune? I have heard this kind of thing ever since I was an undergraduate at Oxford. And yet it did not seem a naïve approach to the great Oxonian philosopher of history R. G. Collingwood.

In his autobiography, Collingwood summed up the case for what I call “applied history” in three propositions:

1. All history is the history of thought.
2. Historical knowledge is the reenactment in the historian’s mind of the thought whose history he is studying.
3. Historical knowledge is the reenactment of a past thought incapsulated in a context of present thoughts which, by contradicting it, confine it to a plane different from theirs.¹⁸

For Collingwood, the historian’s goal could only be “a knowledge of the present,” and specifically “how it came to be what it is,” because “the present is the actual; the past is the necessary; the future is the possible.” Thus, the study of history was in essence “an attempt to understand the present by reconstructing its determining conditions.”¹⁹

In a striking passage in his autobiography, Collingwood compared historians to “trained woodsmen,” precisely in order to emphasize the usefulness of historical study as a craft. “Nothing here but trees and grass,” thinks Collingwood’s unknowing traveler, and marches dimly on. “Look,” says the woodsman, “there is a tiger in that grass.” The aim of the woodsman-historian was “to inform [people] about the present . . . in so far as the past, its ostensible subject matter, [is] incapsulated in the present and [constitutes] a part of it not at once obvious to the untrained eye.”²⁰

Writing in 1939, Collingwood had good reason to see history in these terms. “True historical problems arise out of practical problems,” he wrote. “We study history in order to see more clearly into the situation in which we are called upon to act. Hence the plane on which, ultimately, all problems arise is the plane of ‘real’ life: that to which they are referred for their solution is history.” He did not have to spell out that the most compelling objections to the policy of appeasement had been historically framed.²¹

I believe trustees and alumni have an important role to play in responding to the decline and fall of history in our universities. I also believe that they will find allies amongst the large numbers of undergraduates who thirst to study applied history, rather than the antiquarian or anachronistic options with which they are increasingly presented.

Let me be frank in my conclusion. I have come to doubt that the pathologies that I have described within our history departments can be cured. Strange though it seems, those who have driven this transformation of history are too deeply entrenched and too committed to their cause to pay heed to the declining enrollments. I sometimes think some of them would rather ply their trade in empty classrooms than appoint a single junior professor who studies and teaches the subjects I have the temerity to call important.

Yet we, especially in our roles as trustees and alumni of great universities, cannot afford to subcontract the historical education of our fellow citizens to the composers of hip-hop musicals. As Lin-Manuel Miranda’s libretto puts it, history has its eyes on us—even if we do not have our eyes sufficiently on it.

* * *

End Notes

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18. R.G. Collingwood, *My Autobiography* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1939), 111–115.
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20. Collingwood, *My Autobiography*, 100.
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Appendix

The Teaching of Important Events in Modern History, Fall 2016 and 1966

	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Harvard</i>	<i>Stanford</i>	<i>Yale</i>	<i>Harvard 1966</i>
1	Any period of British History			HIST 238: Britain's Empire (to 1776)	Hist. 118, 199, 219r, 140b, 142, 143b, 144b, 240ar, 240br, 241r, 242r, 243r
2	The Reformation		European Reformations (HISTORY 331G, RELIGST 231, RELIGST 331)		Church History 103a, 233r, History 238r
3	The Scientific Revolution		The Scientific Revolution	HIST 236: The Scientific Revolution	
4	The Enlightenment			HIST 202: European Civilization, 1684-1945	Hist. 134a: Intellectual History of Europe in the 18th and 19th Centuries
5	The American Revolution		Colonial and Revolutionary America		Hist. 61a: The Growth of the American Nation, 1600-1877, Hist. 160b: The American Revolution and the Formation of the Constitution
6	The French Revolution			HIST 275: Revolutionary France, 1789-1871	Hist. 132: History of Europe, 1750-1914
7	The U.S. constitution				Hist. 61a: The Growth of the American Nation, 1600-1877, Hist. 160b: The American Revolution and the Formation of the Constitution
8	The Industrial Revolution			HIST 202: European Civilization, 1684-1945	Hist. 132: History of Europe, 1750-1914
9	The American Civil War			HIST 221: Military History of the West since 1500	Hist. 61a: The Growth of the American Nation, 1600-1877, Hist. 161a, Hist. 165a: History of the South, 1790-1685
10	German Unification	HIST 1265: German Empires, 1848-1948		HIST 202: European Civilization, 1684-1945	Hist. 132: History of Europe, 1750-1914
11	World War I		All Quiet on the Eastern Front? East Europe and Russia in the First World War.	HIST 221: Military History of the West since 1500	Hist. 237br: History of International Relations in the 20th Century
12	The Russian Revolution	HIST 1280: History of the Soviet Union, 1917-1991			Hist. 255ar: History of Russia
13	The Great Depression	HIST 1457: History of American Capitalism		HIST 458J: Financial Crises in History	
14	The Rise of Fascism	HIST 1265: German Empires, 1848-1948	Life Under Nazism (HISTORY 201E)	HIST 202: European Civilization, 1684-1945	
15	The Third Reich	HIST 1265: German Empires, 1848-1948		HIST 202: European Civilization, 1684-1945	
16	World War II			HIST 202: European Civilization, 1684-1945	Hist. 135b: International Politics, 1920-1945
17	Decolonization				
18	The Cold War	HIST 82F: The Origins of the Cold War: The Yalta Conference (1945)		HIST 275J: Culture of the Cold War in Europe	Hist. 164b: The United States in World Politics
19	The history of Israel		Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict (HISTORY 388, JEWISHST 288, JEWISHST 388)		Hist. 181: Jews in Modern Times: From the French Revolution to the Emergence of Israel
20	European integration	HIST 1960: The European Union: Achievements and Crises			
	Total courses	5	6	5	27
	Number of faculty	55	48	67	n/a

Tributes

The following are tributes given in honor of Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Niall Ferguson at the presentation of the Philip Merrill Award on October 28, 2016.

Senator John McCain

Hi, I'm John McCain. Though I wish I could be with you all in person, I want to take a moment to congratulate Niall Ferguson and Ayaan Hirsi Ali on receiving the Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education.

For 12 years, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni has awarded this distinction to the true leaders in education—individuals who have advanced the kind of study that prepares college graduates for citizenship in a free society. It's named after the late publisher and philanthropist Philip Merrill, and it embodies the values he so prized.

The liberal arts have been known since antiquity as the studies for free people—philosophical and historical inquiry, celebration of great books and ideas. Ayaan and Niall's lives and work embody those principles.

Ayaan has truly been a voice for the rights of all people, especially women in the Islamic world, to self-determination and liberty of conscience. She reminds us how precious the values of a free society are and why, as citizens, we must never take them for granted or fail as educators to pass them on from one generation to the next. Her books and speeches offer a vision for how parts of the world that are not free can work to embrace human rights and democracy. Every college campus needs to hear this message.

Niall's masterful studies challenge the West to recognize its unique and essential contributions to civilization and challenge Americans to accept their indispensable role in maintaining the liberal world order. In his book, *Civilization*, Niall quotes R. G. Collingwood, the distinguished Oxford philosopher: "We study history in order to see more clearly into the situation in which we are called upon to act." In

these perilous times, Niall's admonitions are appropriate and urgent. He reminds us that the study of history is something that we neglect at our own peril.

Understanding our history, our purpose in the world, and our obligation to preserve these hard-fought freedoms—these are the duties of a free people, and Ayaan and Niall truly are remarkable advocates for this cause. Congratulations again for this well-deserved honor.

Christina Hoff Sommers

Resident Scholar, American Enterprise Institute

Christina Hoff Sommers from the American Enterprise Institute and the *Factual Feminist*, reporting for duty. Many years ago, the Nobel Prize-winning novelist V.S. Naipaul gave a lecture about the pursuit of happiness, and the lecture was entitled, "Our Universal Civilization." His words capture so much that I love and admire about Ayaan.

Naipaul says that the pursuit of happiness is an "elastic idea . . . it encompasses everyone." He says its history is "marvelous to contemplate." It is, he says, an "immense human idea. . . it cannot be reduced to a fixed system. It cannot generate fanaticism. But it is known to exist, and because of that, other more rigid systems in the end blow away." He added that so much is contained in it, "the idea of the individual, of choice, of responsibility." He said it implies a certain kind of "awakened spirit."

Well, Ayaan's spirit first awakened when she and her family fled to Kenya. She attended an English-speaking school, where she discovered some heretical literary tracts. Now I don't mean books by Tom Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, and John Stuart Mill—she would find those a few years later. Ayaan came upon a set of Nancy Drew mysteries. She would hide them inside a Koran and read them when no one was looking. Now, for her, they weren't simply exciting mysteries. They were manifestos of freedom. Nancy Drew introduced this 13- or 14-year old Somali girl to a world of adventure and action—a world of female agency. They introduced her to a heroine who was independent, self-directed, stylish—and who did not always do what she was told.

Ayaan began to devour other English books, books by Charles Dickens and even Jackie Collins. Well, these glimpses of freedom, these glimpses of happiness, they stayed with her, and when she was forced into an arranged marriage as a young woman, she knew there was something better out there. She fled this arranged marriage for asylum in the Netherlands.

Once in Holland, she shed the veil, she bought a pair of blue jeans, she learned to ride a bike, she got a job, she mastered Dutch, she secured a college education. She got herself elected to the Dutch parliament.

The Dutch have a word, *gezellig*, which means a fun and convivial atmosphere. In fact, Dutch life specializes in *gezelligheid*, and so does Ayaan. So you might think that Ayaan would have achieved happiness there. But as V.S. Naipaul says, the ideal of pursuing happiness doesn't stop at contentment—it entails responsibility. And Ayaan took those responsibilities seriously, she took the responsibilities of freedom to heart. She was dismayed to find that there were many poor Somali women living in Holland who were trapped in violent and repressive marriages. Somali girls were taken out of school at nine or ten years old. Yet, Ayaan discovered that many seemingly enlightened Dutch colleagues were unwilling to intervene. Why? Because they thought it would be intolerant to interfere with the cultural practices of a minority population. Ayaan knew otherwise. As Naipaul says, the pursuit of happiness is all-encompassing. It applies to everyone. Ayaan believed it applied to those Somali women and girls. She believed it encompassed millions of women across the globe who remained captive to radical Islam. At grave risk to herself, she took up their cause.

Her experience in Holland taught her a lesson she has never forgotten. Freedom is not only threatened by repressive ideologies and states—it is threatened when those of us in the free world become unwilling or unable to defend it.

Ayaan never takes freedom for granted. She never stops defending it. She has become an indefatigable opponent of post-modern relativism, and for legions of Americans, this self-made immigrant woman epitomizes—she exemplifies—responsible citizenship and authentic liberalism.

Now, even though Ayaan has taken the responsibilities of freedom very seriously, she has also availed herself of its joys. She has made a wonderful life for herself in the United States with her husband Niall and young son Thomas. She has a large and devoted circle of friends. And, as anyone who knows her well will tell you, she has a great capacity for fun. A few years ago, we were together on a ship off the coast of Alaska. It was a warm and sunny day, and the boat came equipped with jet skis. Did we want to take them out, somebody asked? “Yes!” said Ayaan. Before I knew it, she was driving at high speed—sort of like Nancy Drew in that roadster—she was just racing across these icy deep waters making exuberant twists and turns. When she returned, I asked “Was it scary?” She said, “No, it was wonderful—and I don’t even know how to swim!”

To paraphrase a devoted friend of Ayaan, the late Christopher Hitchens: The three most beautiful words in the language of freedom and the pursuit of happiness are Ayaan—Hirsi—Ali.

Thank you.

Robert Zoellick

Former Deputy Secretary of State and President of the World Bank

My name is Bob Zoellick, and I want to open by thanking all of you for your support of ACTA. As I think you’ve heard tonight, this is a tremendous institution that does fantastic work. My introduction was through Anne Neal, who was my law school classmate, so we go back a few years—but we won’t acknowledge how many.

I want to begin with the basics, and that is that Niall and Ayaan are immigrants; they’re immigrants who have enriched the United States, and we’re very grateful that they came. I first got to know Niall through his work, which I hope for a scholar and a public intellectual is a form of compliment. For those of you who know Niall’s work, he is a wonderful writer. It’s smooth and informative, his research is extraordinary (which he does)—I don’t know when he manages to fit it in—but it’s a rich resource for anyone who reads his work. He offers

tremendous ideas and insights, and now and then a bit of provocation as well.

Now, Niall and I agree on many things, but there are differences, as you would expect from independent minds. And one is that, as some Great Britons are prone to do, Niall sometimes seeks to apply the imperial experience of Britain to that of the United States. This is one with which I profoundly disagree. Not only did we have to fight for our independence, but we managed over the years to overcome the fact that they burnt one of our best libraries nearby, although they did give us some of their Shakespeare, as we see in this office as well. But Niall is different from some Britons who tend, as they look at the United States, to apply the view of the world-weary Englishman trying to teach Americans how to yield power gracefully. That's not Niall's style, because Niall understands the dynamism of the United States; he appreciates its ongoing ability to reinvent itself under all circumstances; and, perhaps because he's done so much work on the economic side of history, I think he has a special recognition and appreciation for the economic underpinnings of what makes the United States exceptional in the world.

But Niall also has an eye for character and individuals. So as any of you who had the opportunity to read his book about Henry Kissinger know, the first volume—and we're all eagerly awaiting volume two—*The Idealist*, what you see is he has this capacity to understand a character that you can only find in the United States: a man who came as a German refugee from Fürth, Germany, in the 1930s and within a decade is returning in the U.S. army as a counterintelligence officer, and, as he comes back to the United States through a combination of writing and a little bit of intrigue, manages to climb to the very top level and layers of American politics. It's an incredible story.

Now I've also had an opportunity to meet Ayaan, and I wanted to share that with you, because it's a somewhat unique experience. When I was deputy secretary of state in 2006, I was on a diplomatic call—I didn't expect it to be very exceptional or unusual—to the Netherlands. And I was reading in the newspapers about this Dutch Member of Parliament, Ayaan, who seemed to be caught up in what

Americans would call a brouhaha about the nature of how she came to the Netherlands. But I also suspected that there was something else involved, and that is, as you've heard, that the story of her early years is one that was tragic. One might expect that that would get some support in the Netherlands, but there was a bit of a sense that this woman didn't really want to be treated as a victim, and indeed she had some concepts of Islam that for Dutch society were a bit uncomfortable. So I was prepared when asked by a Dutch correspondent, "What do you think of all this attention and dispute going on?" And I was still a diplomat, so I said respectful things about the nature of the law and legal process in the Netherlands, but then I added, "She sounds like a very interesting person, and she's the sort of person we would welcome in the United States, if, for some reason, things don't work out here in the Netherlands."

Now there's a reason that the State Department gives guidance even to very senior officials. Alas, I'd been through this a few times, so I tended not to pay as close attention to it as I should. So when I returned to the United States, I got a call from Chris DeMuth at AEI, saying, "You know I read what you said, and I just wanted you to know, we would like Ayaan to come to the United States—can you help with the visa?" So, only with appropriate procedures, of course, the consular service was doing the right thing anyway. But I thought this was a splendid idea.

And so Ayaan came to the United States, and the rest is not only her history, but that of Niall as well. So, together we've got two immigrants, wonderful contributions, extraordinary human beings, and, for those of you that haven't had the chance, delightful conversationalists. And I was thinking about Phil Merrill—Phil would definitely enjoy a conversation with those two over dinner, although if anyone else were at the table, I'm not sure we'd get a word in very effectively. But so, I want to thank ACTA for recognizing them, but most of all, I want to thank the two of them for coming to the United States and enriching the lives of all of us. Thank you.

Louise Mirrer

President and CEO of the New-York Historical Society and 2014 recipient of the Philip Merrill Award.

Good evening, I am Louise Mirrer. I am the President & CEO of the New-York Historical Society, and Niall Ferguson, as a New-York Historical Society trustee is one of my bosses. So I am going to be very careful about what I say tonight.

As many of you may know, the New-York Historical Society is a very old institution, at least by American standards—we were founded in 1804. But a bit more than a decade ago, we decided to make ourselves new again, resolving to use our collections and our headquarters on Central Park West as a locus for demonstrating history’s enduring importance—its usefulness in finding explanations, causes, and insights relevant to our present day. The appointment of Niall Ferguson as a New-York Historical trustee in December 2009 was among the most compelling evidence we could offer of our newfound resolve. Niall’s fresh, inspired, and provocative reflections on history and current events underscored the myriad ways the stories of the past can engage and delight, as well as provoke new thought and new action. His talent for expanding our vocabulary with phrases that both charm and instruct—phrases that show his inimitable cleverness, like “Empire state of mind,” “Chimerica,” “the West and the Rest,” and a surprising but wonderfully revelatory “Ooh la la!” an expression that played like a fugue through an op-ed which he wrote and which I read just last week in *El País* on my way over to Madrid—make patent history’s incredible power to challenge conventional wisdom and to motivate people to act.

During one of Niall’s visits to our institution, he stood literally inches away from a star of our great Hudson River School collection, Thomas Cole’s five-painting *Course of Empire*. In an extraordinary *tour de force*, Niall located this prized work at the center of a discussion of the life cycle of a great power, single-handedly bridging the gap that traditionally separates history and art, making of this great suite of paintings an entire theory of history. What better evidence of Niall’s exemplary advancement of the liberal arts than this brilliant,

creative edge, demonstrated so wonderfully that day, a differentiating characteristic that makes of him an exemplar of the best of the West—and the rest. Congratulations, Niall, on your receipt of the Philip Merrill Award.

Now, Niall has recently advocated the formation of a Council of Historians to advise the American president on challenges and choices our nation faces today. The new Council would consist of a small group of scholars charged with practicing public history, analyzing precedents and historical analogues so that our American president can avoid making the same catastrophic mistakes that lack of historical knowledge has led to in the past. I want to applaud this brilliant and timely idea and also to nominate Niall's fellow Philip Merrill awardee, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, for the job.

Like Niall, Ayaan has a special New-York Historical Society connection: We honored her last spring with our Women in Public Life award. Her dedication to the urgent and pressing problem of violence, particularly honor violence against women and girls; her own subjection to such violence as a young girl; her escape from a forced marriage; her membership in the Dutch parliament, where she focused on furthering the integration of non-Western immigrants into Dutch society, and on defending Muslim women's rights; the international attention she gained following the murder of Theo van Gogh, who had directed her film *Submission* about women's oppression under Islam; her move to the United States and her founding of the AHA Foundation to protect and defend the rights of women in the U.S. from harmful traditional practices, all much more than qualified her for an award that focuses on recognizing women's achievements in the arena of public life. The Philip Merrill award that she receives tonight recognizes, in addition to all of these extraordinary accomplishments, her keen understanding of the value of the liberal arts: the importance of knowing history, of studying the texts of the past with sufficient depth to be able to, for example, quote chapter and verse from ancient legal codes, articulating these documents' consequences and implications for today's world. What she has taught us about the importance of studying the ideas and beliefs of the past that continue to

guide people today; of valuing disciplines like the history of religion so as to be able to actually comprehend the claim of theological rationale in ancient scriptural text; to see through the lens of history how religious doctrines have led to extremist views and acts could not more vividly underscore the connection between liberal arts education and our challenges right now; how knowledge of the liberal arts enriches us and makes us stronger as a people. Ayaan has, as Niall has as well, already been named one of *TIME* magazine's 100 most influential people. Still, imagine how the breadth of her knowledge, her talents as a leader and thinker, and her unblinking honesty about the past could be put to use were she to be part of the new Council of Historians that Niall has so brilliantly proposed! Congratulations, Ayaan, on your receipt of the Philip Merrill Award.

* * *

Ayaan Hirsi Ali



Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a fellow of the Future of Democracy Project at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government and founder of the AHA Foundation, is among the most stalwart and courageous defenders of Western Civilization.

After a daring escape from repression and coercion, she gained asylum in the Netherlands in 1992. Ms. Hirsi Ali then worked as a translator for immigrants and earned an M.A. from Leiden University. From 2003 to 2006, she served as an elected member of the Dutch Parliament. She has scripted a short film, *Submission*, and authored several books, including *Infidel*, *Nomad: From Islam to America: A Personal Journey Through the Clash of Civilizations*, and *Heretic: Why Islam Needs a Reformation Now*. In each of these endeavors, Ms. Hirsi Ali has fought for the rights of Muslim women and has sought to end the practice of honor violence. Her outspoken leadership has been unwavering, even in the face of fatwas calling for her death and the 2004 assassination of her *Submission* collaborator, Theo van Gogh.

In 2005, Ms. Hirsi Ali was named one of *TIME* magazine's 100 most influential people. Her story and her activism offer an urgent reminder of the importance of Western Civilization and what it means to live without it. As she has observed, "Our civilization is not indestructible: It needs to be actively defended."

Niall Ferguson



Niall Ferguson brings to bear upon the most urgent issues of the western world his profound understanding of the economic, military, and political forces that have shaped civilization. Educated at Magdalen College, Oxford, he currently holds several distinguished appointments, most notably as a senior fellow of the Hoover Institution at Stanford University and as a senior fellow of the Center for European

Studies at Harvard University. He previously served as the Tisch Professor of History at Harvard.

Dr. Ferguson is the award-winning author of more than a dozen books. Among his most celebrated works are *Civilization: The West and the Rest*; *The Ascent of Money: A Financial History of the World*; and *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire*. His most recent is *Kissinger*, the first volume of a two-part biography. Several of his books have won major prizes, including the Wadsworth Prize for Business History, and they have appeared on the annual *New York Times* list of notable books. Several have also been turned into PBS and BBC television series.

In his scholarship, Dr. Ferguson has championed the oft-neglected but vital study and ideals of Western Civilization. His warning for readers is prescient and powerful: “The biggest threat to Western Civilization is posed not by other civilizations, but by our own pusillanimity—and by the historical ignorance that feeds it.” For his “astonishingly prolific” work, he has been named by *TIME* magazine as one of the 100 most influential people in the world.

The Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education



ACTA is most pleased to present the 12th annual Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education. The awarding of this prize, made under the guidance of a distinguished selection committee, advances ACTA's long-term goal to promote and encourage strong liberal arts education.

The Merrill Award offers a unique tribute to those dedicated to the transmission of the great ideas and central values of our civilization, and it is presented to inspire others and provide public acknowledgment of the value of their endeavors.

The prize is named in honor of the late Philip Merrill, a distinguished public servant, publisher, businessman, and philanthropist who served as a trustee of Cornell University, the University of Maryland College Park Foundation, the Aspen Institute, the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, and the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

Throughout his career, Mr. Merrill was an outspoken proponent of academic excellence and an articulate spokesman for the importance of historical literacy in a free society. Mr. Merrill was a founding member of ACTA's National Council.



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