

Professor Scott Lucas on American Studies

Scott talks about his research

Duration: 4:01 mins

My name is Scot Lucas, I'm officially Profesor of American studies at the University of Birmingham, but as an academic I've had the opportunity to become a bit of a mischief maker. Let me explain...

My training is in US and British foreign policy, studying what has happened in history and what is happening today. So for example I've been able to write books on the Clinton administration and the Bush administration in the United states. I've written about British foreign policy in the Cold War and about both countries and the Middle East. I've been quite fortunate to be able to do that here, working not only with colleagues but also with some very very good postgraduate students and with others who come to Birmingham to exchange ideas.

But beyond all those articles and books I'm able to do something else now. I started off as a journalist and now what I've done twenty five years after working for a paper is to use my academic training to support a different type of journalistic adventure. Studying not only the US and Britain but considering the world. Considering that events in Iran, the Middle East or China isn't dependent on what the US or Britain wants but what the people in those countries want. so this new venture links my academic work to a new website called EAWorldView.

EAWorldView started the night before Barak Obama became president of the United States in November 2008, but very quickly became a site beyong Obama or congress, or the supreme court because we started to become a news site. we found that in what is called 'new media' we could actually be ahead of the BBC or CNN in what's happening in Gaza, or in Afganistan or Iran. So day in, day out we look behind the headlines of what is actually happening in these important areas. all you have to do is flip on the site and you have a tour of the globe.

Has this replaced our academic work? absolutely not. The academic and journalist go hand in hand. we feel that we are better journalists because we can put events into a wider context - history, politics, religion, ideology. At the same time we think that when an academic book appears a few moths or a year from now it carries our added benefit of day to day observations. Seeing what has happened, not from our point of view, but from the viewpoint of others.

Academia is not about sitting in an ivory tower, it's not handing down tablets written in stone or distributed through cyber-space - it's actually about being part of a wider discussion. So far that reason I'm very fortunate, at the same time as i'm working on a book about the Bush administration in the United States- what it did for foreign policy and the American position in the world between 2001 and 2009, I'm also working on a second book about new media, including Twitter, this wonderous new thing that brings news almost to my fingertips within minutes rather than days for the New York Times of the Times of London to hand it down. A book on new media, Twitter and the post-election crisis in Iran, because in that country, thousands of miles away from where I work in Birmingham, thousands of miles away from Washington, there are new discussions about democracy, about justice, about religion, that don't mean a threat to the west or to replace the west, rather it complements what I've grown up with and what I study day to day.

so, stay tuned. don't just check in a year from now or a few months from now, but come back next week because by then the news will have changed but we'll be there with it. Learning just as you are, studying just as you are, and hopefully spreading a bit of that information to others around the world.

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