

Dr. Susan Hinely is a scholar, researcher, lawyer, and mother, just to name a few. I had the opportunity to speak with her about her impressive educational background, career history, her interest and active role in women's rights, and the importance of studying global history in order to apply our knowledge to modern issues.

Dr. Hinely describes her newfound interest in women's roles as a "thunderbolt of awareness" that she experienced in college, as well as a "consequence of a liberal arts education." She grew up in a small, conservative town in Northern Texas during the 1960s-70s, and the idea that her future would be limited by her identity as a woman did not even cross her mind. It was not until she got to the University of Texas Austin, where she took a few basic courses in feminism, that she began to realize the importance of studying women's roles. Dr. Hinely notes that feminism was a brand-new topic in terms of being a scholarly subject at the time she was taking those courses, but reading basic feminist theories from prominent writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone de Beauvoir, and Margaret Fuller was enough to completely turn her head around on the subject of women's roles. She carried her interest in women's roles to a much deeper degree in her doctoral work at Stanford. Her thesis was, to briefly summarize, a biography of a late 19th- early 20th century English anarchist and suffragist.

For her bachelor's degree, Dr. Hinely studied at the University of Texas Austin. At first, she was majoring only in history but due to high school placement exams, she found that she was expected to graduate earlier than she wanted to. Thus, she decided on political theory in government as a second major. As graduation was approaching and she did not have a clear idea of what she wanted to do after graduating, she was encouraged to apply to law school because of her interest in politics. After taking the LSAT and scoring very well, she found herself on a path to attend Harvard Law School. Dr. Hinely comments that almost immediately after starting her classes at Harvard, she felt as though she had made a mistake. In her opinion, studying at law school shut down her intellectual curiosity, and as a result, she decided to drop out after completing her first year.

Right after finishing her first year at Harvard Law, Dr. Hinely moved across the country to pursue a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in history at Stanford University. She fell in love with her research, the program, and finished in two years. During this time, she became interested in history as an intellectual theory, and in particular, the history of anarchism. While she was studying the history of anarchism, she realized how similar it was to law and decided that she wanted to go back to Harvard to earn her Juris Doctor degree (J.D.). In between her years at Stanford and going back to Harvard Law school, Dr. Hinely traveled to Europe and conducted research for a year.

By the time she was 28, Dr Hinely had a J.D. and a Ph.D. She chose to work at a White & Case, an international law firm based in New York City. As a litigator, she litigated in lawsuits and pretrial procedures that usually ended up in a settlement. In addition to the lawsuits and pretrial procedures, Dr. Hinely did amazing pro bono work for the United Nations, women's rights, and refugee settlements. Although she absolutely loved her work as a litigator, it was not what she really wanted to do because she saw the elitist aspect of practicing at a large law firm, and felt that ultimately, she was paving the path for people who are already well on their way. After leaving the firm, Dr. Hinely moved to the Stony Brook area and was offered a job to teach in the history department at Stony Brook University. In her 30s, Dr. Hinely had four kids in the space of seven years!

Dr. Hinely taught various courses throughout her time at Stony Brook University. Overall, Dr. Hinely truly loves to teach, so there were very few courses that she didn't enjoy teaching but there were two courses in particular that she would say were her favorite: "Geography and Global History" and "Constitutional History." She taught these courses nearly every year at the undergraduate level. The first course is geared toward providing a basic literacy of the geographic features of our Earth, but also the political boundaries and how they connect to the way we see our world and how these boundaries are connected to global history. The reason why she loves teaching this course is because it encompasses history as a narrative that allows us to ask open-ended questions while also providing a very concrete and scientific point of view. The second course that Dr. Hinley taught was more law-orientated, as it was a history of the interpretation of the U.S. Constitution by the Supreme Court. This course allowed students to gain hands-on experience through simulation and role-play activities. Dr. Hinley describes that the class was entertaining for her and the students because it had a game-like essence. More importantly, this course made a larger point that the Constitution is a valuable document and encouraged students to realize that the interpretations of the principles of the Constitution can change over time.

In general, Dr. Hinely believes that studying history is important because it reminds us that the way we do things today is a choice. She makes an important point that we tend to assume that the way we organize ourselves and our roles in society have been the same overtime, when the truth is that they have not. She argues that history is not learned or studied to make sure that we do not repeat the past—the past can never be repeated because the conditions of the past are no longer the conditions of the present. Rather, we can look at the past and be reminded of our own ability to look critically at what we do. Think about history in this way, she says, "the past is a foreign place and yet it is a place where we should recognize ourselves. History gives us the tools with which to slap our faces and other people's faces and wake ourselves up to realize that this is a chosen way of life and if we wanted to live differently, we could."

Dr. Hinely met Professor Christoff at Stony Brook University and became interested in Professor Christoff's project because the project was connected to what she was doing in that they were both looking at women's particular challenges and responses to global trends, both on the political and environmental level. For the upcoming symposium, she is planning to use a historical example to talk about women's roles in what the other members of the panel are talking about in a contemporary way— that is, using gender networks, particular skills, and labor roles that women have to address larger global climate problems. To briefly introduce her historical example, she will be talking about a particular group of elite women in India that forged connections with other high class women from different parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland to figure out how to combat a series of environmental calamities that were taking place in India—floods and famine, as well as a plague.

