

# UCD Clinton Institute for American Studies

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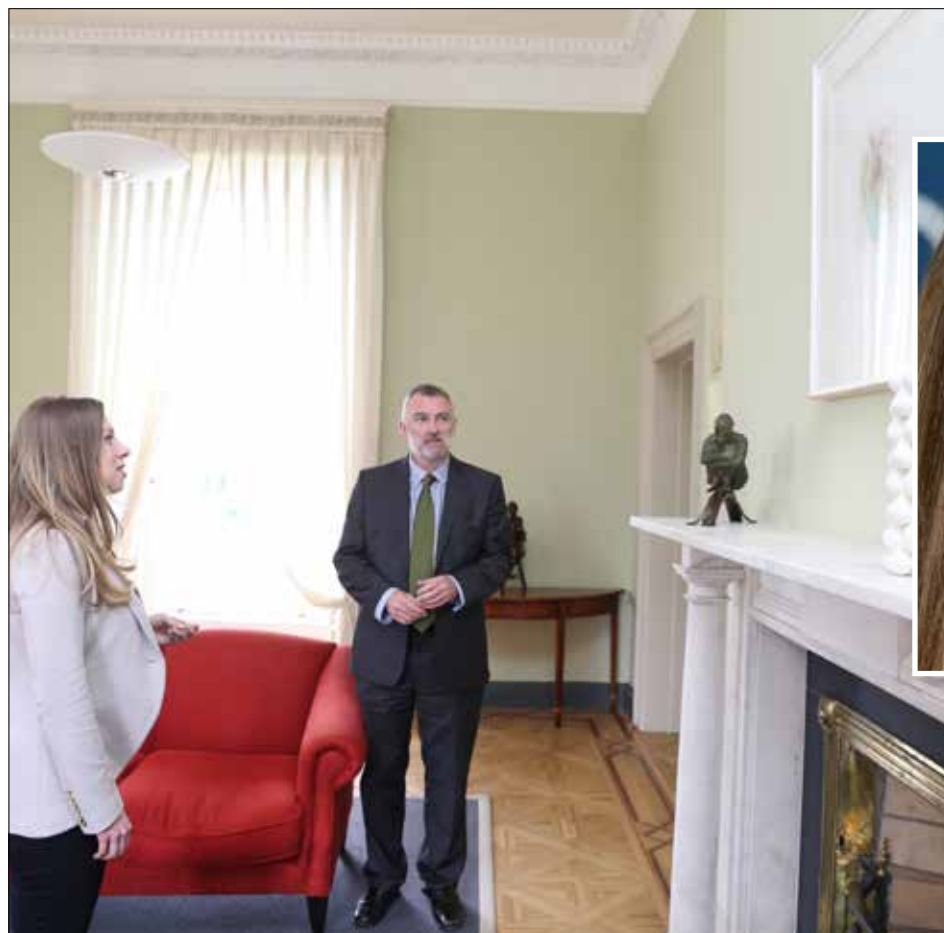
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## Young women must learn to navigate criticism, Chelsea Clinton tells students during UCD visit



**Chelsea Clinton and Institute Director Professor Liam Kennedy admire a portrait of her father by Louis le Brocquy during her visit and (right) Ms Clinton at the session with students.**



ON 10th June, 2014, Chelsea Clinton hosted “At Work: A No Ceilings Conversation” at UCD - to hear directly from women about entering and succeeding in the workforce. The event is part of the Clinton Foundation’s “No Ceilings: The Full Participation Project, working to advance progress for women and girls around the world”.

Chelsea also took time to visit the UCD Clinton Institute for American Studies, which was established in 2003 and named

in honour of her father, former US President William Jefferson Clinton, in recognition of his own crucial and personal role, as well as that of the US Government, Congress and people in the Irish Peace Process. She expressed interest in the work of the Institute and viewed and commented on a number of pictures and portraits representing her father’s visits to Ireland.

In an informal setting in the Clinton Auditorium, Chelsea took questions from an in-

vised audience of female students from UCD and DCU. These covered topics such as gender quotas, early education for girls, discrimination in the workplace, management participation by women, and the relationship between women’s rights and human rights.

She emphasised the importance of resilience - “I do think young women need a particular type of resilience. A thick skin is important but I think it’s even more important that we just don’t let [criticism] penetrate.” Alluding to her mother as an example, she spoke of the need for young women to “navigate criticism”, taking seriously what is meant seriously but resisting personal criticism which is “not about us [but] about the critic who’s trying to tear us down”. This struck a chord with many in the audience and several people stood to comment on their own experiences of criticism or ceilings.



Irish photographer John D. McHugh, who is based in Britain, was the speaker at the latest From the Front-line seminar in Dublin last February. UCD Clinton stages the event in association with The Irish Times. During McHugh's insightful presentation he recalled his experiences of being embedded with British troops in Afghanistan. He illustrated his talk with an impressive display of his work including this image. The evening ended with a lively Q&A session with the packed audience.

## New book examines US politics prior to 2016 Election

Dr Jack Thompson, of UCD Clinton Institute, is co-editor of the first comprehensive overview of US progressive and liberal politics

**I**N AMERICAN politics, it is never too soon to begin thinking about the next election. Indeed, pundits have been speculating for months about the contests for the Republican and Democratic nominations for 2016, and which party has the advantage. A new book seeks to lend some perspective to the principal debates that will shape these contests.

*Progressive Politics in America: Past, Present, and Future*, which Dr. Thompson is co-editing with David Woolner, of the Roosevelt Institute, offers the first comprehensive overview of progressive and liberal politics in the United States. Based on a conference held at the Clinton Institute in 2013, the book features essays by some of the leading historians, policy experts, and political commentators in the United States.

The book has three sections. First, it offers a comprehensive overview of the origins of liberal and progressive thinking about politics. Featuring essays by leading historians such as Charles Postel (San Francisco State University), Alan Brinkley (Columbia), and Kevin Mattson (Ohio), the book traces the ways in which Progressives such as Theodore Roosevelt and the New Dealers, led by

Franklin D. Roosevelt, laid the groundwork for the dealing with contemporary challenges such as unemployment, inequality, and climate change.

The second section of the book examines the chief policy challenges which face Progressives today. Income inequality, unemployment, and climate change are at the top of the list, and leading policy experts Mark Schmitt, Dorian Warren, both of the Roosevelt Institute, and Mark Lytle, of Bard College, respectively, address these issues. Other progressive priorities, such as social insurance and foreign policy, are the subject of essays by Jacob Hacker, of Yale University, and Rosa Brooks, of Georgetown.

In the final section, *Progressive Politics in America* discusses the prospects for the movement. On one hand, it sees considerable reason for optimism. Demographics, for one thing, favor progressives, as the country becomes increasingly diverse and younger Americans overwhelmingly favor progressive solutions for policy challenges. Most notably, inequality and climate change are emerging as major concerns, and the Democratic Party enjoys sizable advantages with the electorate on these issues. In addition, the Electoral College appears to favor the Democrats in Presidential elections, as once reliably red states, such as Virginia, Colorado, and Florida, turn purple or even blue.

On the other hand, as Lisa McGirr (Harvard) and Jack Thompson observe, conser-

vatives are not in the mood for surrender, or even compromise. Even though an era of conservative dominance of policy discussions appears to be ending – tax cuts and cutting the size of government no longer dominate political discussions – conservatives have succeeded in moving the party well to the right of the political spectrum. As a result, the political culture of the Republican Party is more hostile to progressive ideas than ever before. In fact, polling data demonstrates that while Democratic voters are generally eager for their political leaders to strike compromises with their Republican counterparts, conservative voters overwhelmingly reject the notion of seeking a middle ground.

And while the Electoral College may favor Democrats in Presidential races, it looks increasingly likely that Republicans will enjoy a structural advantage in races for the House and Senate. Democratic voters tend to cluster in major metropolitan areas, and in effect waste their votes on large majorities, while Republicans are found more often in rural areas and small towns, and dominate relatively sparsely populated states, such as Wyoming and Idaho, that nevertheless send two senators to Washington, D.C. In short, Democrats appear to enjoy the upper hand at the moment, but it is too soon to predict that we are entering another Progressive era.

*Progressive Politics in America* is under contract with Oxford University Press and should be released in 2015.

# Rethinking the origins of public diplomacy in transatlantic relations

## New study will focus on the first two decades of 20th century

**I**N RECENT years historians have begun to adopt a broader perspective when it comes to understanding the ways in which nations interact with one another. Whereas attention was once devoted almost exclusively to meetings between diplomats and elected officials, there is a growing recognition among scholars that international relations have long been manifested in many forms.

Often this has occurred vis-à-vis cultural interaction. Think, for instance, of the famous Ping-Pong diplomacy between the United States and China in the 1970s, as portrayed in the movie *Forest Gump*, or the ways in which surfing has shaped America's relationship with the rest of the world, as Scott Laderman (University of Minnesota, Duluth) discussed in a talk at the Clinton Institute in 2013.

Public diplomacy – attempts to influence public attitudes in other nations – has been another fruitful area of investigation for scholars in recent years. Policymakers and private citizens have long sought to shape the ways in which people abroad view their country and its foreign policy and have used a variety of methods to do so. Scholars in this subfield have focused mainly upon the Cold War and the post-2001 period, and have generally seen the 1930s as the starting point for such discussions, especially when



**Mao with President Richard Nixon during his visit to China in 1972.**

it comes to the transatlantic relationship.

However, there is reason to believe that historians should look to an earlier period. This is the premise for Dr. Jack Thompson's next book. Building upon some of the research in his first book, *Republican Power: Theodore Roosevelt and America in World Politics, 1882-1919* (forthcoming), Dr. Thompson places the origins of public diplomacy in US-European relations during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Drawing upon archival research in three countries, he examines the triangular relationship between Britain, Germany, and

the United States.

His initial conclusions are that, contrary to previous research, policymakers in each of these countries were sensitive to the state of public opinion abroad well before the outbreak of the First World War, and went to considerable lengths to influence it.

What is more, while historians have tended to focus upon American public diplomacy, Dr. Thompson finds that the origins of transatlantic public diplomacy can be found largely in British and German attempts to shape public attitudes in the United States. To be sure, American officials did, from time to time, engage in public diplomacy, but more often they found themselves in a reactive role, enabling or blocking attempts by Berlin and London to shape American perceptions. Hence, this research revises the literature in two respects. First, it internationalises what has tended to be an Anglo-American-centric subfield. Second, it places the origins of transatlantic public diplomacy at the turn of the twentieth century, or in other words several decades earlier than other historians.

In order to fund further research for this book, Dr. Thompson has begun to apply for research grants. He will present his initial findings for the first time at the Transatlantic Studies Association Conference in July 2014, in Ghent.

## THE PhD TRACK: Matthew Wall



**M**Y RESEARCH at the Clinton Institute examines the intersection of digital media and identity within the medium of video games. This form of media represents a unique window into American culture in the 21st century, specifically the latest iteration of American exceptionalism. It's my contention that video games suggest new complications in the construction and transmission of the American worldview, as literally inhabiting the hero within a digital space changes the way these shared stories are communicated. With the advent of the information age, many traditional forms of media have been forced to adapt to the changing way in which we now consume them. While newspapers and television have been forced to fit this new digital mould, video games are born of this new form of communication, and add a distinctly different perspective.

To better understand how video games fit within the current American cultural context, I am undertaking an analysis constructed around a close reading of several of these games. My research is focused on deconstructing the narrative, visual, and auditory elements of these games to tease out what each piece functions to communicate, how it does so, and what that may say about the changing cultural norms of post-9/11 America. A modern video game, and the paths it sets a player down, do not exist in a vacuum devoid of context in the same way a more classical game like chess would. One can imagine chess being

played centuries from now without any hesitation, whereas video games engage with the culture context of their times in order to satisfy the need of their creators to commercialise them.

Narratives often communicate explicit political goals and a shared history, a collective memory of a given event or national trauma, but in doing so serve as a mirror on the larger cultural context from which they are generated. It is my contention that these digital narratives of conflict not only serve a role as both a critical and therapeutic outlet for American society, but also serve to reignite the fires of its exceptionalism, regardless of the outcome of a given conflict. While this new form of media has not as yet become a prevalent focus of study in scholarly circles as such, video games remain a cogent cultural force. This project seeks to locate these games within the canon of new exceptionalist media as a personification of the "existential now," and thereby define the role that interactive media plays in the communication of the American worldview.

## Alumni Voices



Captain **Donal Gallagher**, Assistant Press Officer for the Irish Defence Forces, on how he came to study at UCD Clinton and what it has meant for him.

### In the Army now

**I**WORK IN the Press Office for the Irish Defence Forces, acting as a spokesman for the 9,500 members of the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps, including the personnel serving in 16 mission areas around the globe. Our office liaises with regional, national and international press, facilitating their queries and projects. For some that sounds like propaganda but it's not. We operate in a very transparent manner and are only restricted from answering a question if it compromises the safety of our members. We understand the role of the media is an important one, preserved in Article 40 of the Irish Constitution, and ultimately, an inquisitive media makes the military do their job better. A mutual respect exists there. We never shy away from a potentially damaging story, but thankfully most of our interaction is positive – for example we have won the 'Best Use of Social Media by a State Body' twice in the last three years at the Social Media Awards ("the Sockies") and are finalists again this year.

I originally studied law and had never envisaged studying media until I was de-

ployed to Kosovo. I am an infantry officer and all of my work till then had been robust and security-orientated, including reconnaissance training, parachuting and riot control. A short time before deployment I was told I would serve in a headquarters job dealing with press and regional leaders. My boss was Finnish, an Oxford graduate, and she had a lifetime of experience working with journalists. I learnt from her and the work opened my eyes to the vital role of the press.

Kosovo was formally part of Yugoslavia, a once vibrant state that tore itself apart with blind atavism and violence. The media, as a result, was ethnically divided and politically partisan. What one would imagine to be a simple issue could be distorted to inflame inter-ethnic tension; work was intense and demanding, but easy to become passionate about. The fruits of our labour were very visible and one would like to think contributed to the peace and security of this fledgling state.

Returning, I enrolled in the MA Media and International Conflict and completed

**Captain Donal Gallagher speaking to the media.** Photograph: Neville Coughlan

it part-time, over two years, while balancing full-time employment with the Army. For the first three semesters I was working with the EU Battlegroup. It was hard juggling study and work but certainly not impossible. At the end of my second semester, for example, when numerous assignments were due, I was sent at short notice to a training exercise in Ulm in Germany. While my colleagues slept I completed the assignments late at night using a red filtered head-torch on a German-configured keyboard. The Clinton Institute was more than understanding as to why my assignments were late, though the fact they were littered with dotted vowels and letters with pigtaails on them surely raised some eyebrows!

I thoroughly enjoyed the course and I feel it offers an education more than merely a qualification. One of the most important aspects of the MA Media and International Conflict is the students themselves and the type of person this course attracts. The media's role as societal oversight and the ethics that govern the relationship between the fourth estate and government will always be pertinent to our lives, even if we are conscious of it or not.

Over the two years I studied at Clinton I was constantly surrounded by bright people of various backgrounds and experience who all brought something different to the class. The syllabus transports issues of global importance, broad and encompassing, to a more focused immediacy. War, reportage, journalism, international relations and the ever evolving direction the media is taking are all brought to the table, by experienced and coherent lecturers. Irrespective of where life brings you after this course – the analytical skills and thirst for knowledge will always benefit you as a professional, or simply as a person.

•*Captain Gallagher was a member of the class of 2012/2013.*

### Board members of UCD Clinton Institute

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### Diaspora and development conference

The growing international dialogue on the importance of linkages between diaspora and development will be discussed at a major conference planned for UCD Clinton in the autumn. The conference is being supported by Irish Aid.

The conference will address how in both policy and academic sectors there is emerging if uneven focus on the topic, as governments and agencies attempt to identify optimal modes of diaspora engagement for home and host country development. It is clear that as we approach an important crossroads leading up to the post-2015 development agenda, there remains a knowledge gap on the forms and functions of diasporas in development practice.

The forum aims to help close this knowledge gap by bringing together international policymakers, scholars and a diverse range of diaspora actors and representatives to address global examples of diaspora engagement, explore fresh trends and share best practices.