

I have been a student and advisee of Professor Lincoln's for eight years at both the masters and doctoral level. At every step of my graduate career, I have found Professor Lincoln to be an inspiring teacher, a trusted advisor, and an empowering mentor. On this occasion of his retirement, I'm pleased to share a few of the ways Professor Lincoln has been significant to my academic life, and to wish him well in his next adventures.

Professor Lincoln is without a doubt the best teacher I have encountered (at any level). Over the years I have known and worked with him, his courses and seminars have never failed to fascinate and challenge me. The breadth and depth of his scholarly knowledge is astounding, and his classes have taught me that there is almost nothing in the world unworthy of critical inquiry. In the classroom, he effortlessly pivots between text and context; every book or article has a background, a history, and to know that text means knowing the world from which it emerged and on which its impact was felt. His conversational, Socratic style fosters exciting, sometimes volatile class discussion. The rigorous back-and-forth between Professor Lincoln and his students—a staple of the classroom environment he facilitates—forces students to think on their feet and to defend the weakest points of their arguments. In my own development as a student, I have taken it as a personal point of pride when I have thoughtfully engaged him in such a way. Indeed, I've often said—only partially joking—that all PhD students in the Divinity School should be required to take a course with Professor Lincoln, because it will improve both their critical acumen and their own pedagogy.

This same power to shape the way we think, how we make arguments, and how we understand our texts is what makes Professor Lincoln a wonderful mentor. When I was an entering masters student, he took the time to discuss with me my interests and aspirations for graduate school. His ability to engage thoughtfully and patiently a curious, critical, but intellectually frenetic 20-something (which I was) is a rare talent. Then, as now, he listened intently, offered suggestions, advice, and some much needed perspective. In the ensuing years of PhD work, I have experienced these traits many times over, and continue to be grateful for them. At all levels of scholarly work—whether testing general ideas, research, or writing—I have come to count on Professor Lincoln for a careful and honest assessment of my work. His criticisms are always pointed but constructive, and his praise is never gratuitous. Altogether, this dynamic has cultivated a constructive working relationship between the two of us, and has giving me confidence in my own ability as a burgeoning scholar.

As I have written my dissertation, Professor Lincoln has offered valuable input on my chapters and advice on professionalization, and I have noticed our conversations have shifted toward collegial exchanges rather than merely the dynamics of student and teacher. I perceive this shift to be the most important contribution of a mentor, and it has enabled me to engage an uncertain professional market with confidence, hope, and a strong sense of who I am as a scholar.

As a scholar, a teacher, and a mentor, Bruce Lincoln has had a profound impact on my life. His retirement is a loss to his students, to the Divinity School, to the University of

Chicago, and to the academic community. He will be missed and I wish him well in this next chapter.

Andrew Durdin
Phd Candidate, History of Religions
University of Chicago Divinity School