Twitter Thread by Dan Nexon



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I've made some allusions to how embarrassingly smug and lazy Kyle "I went to Yale" Smith's series is. We're two (short) posts in and it's still difficult to find substantive criticisms underneath an onslaught of purple prose and obvious contempt for community colleges.

> My first piece on Jill Biden\u2019s dissertation was just me getting warmed up. This gets into the substance and contains lots of direct quotation of her shockingly bad writing. https://t.co/VeA67VVhIf
>
> — Kyle Smith (@rkylesmith) December 17, 2020

The main allegations of his post are that Dr. Biden isn't a great writer and that she didn't do what Smith considers an adequate amount of work to justify her degree. It isn't shocking that he'd avoid substantive critique, as he lacks the expertise to make it.

In the paragraph below ■, Smith takes Biden's citation pattern – for a potted, perfunctory history of community colleges (which isn't intended to be anything else) – as evidence that she couldn't be bothered to do the reading.

Did he bother to look at the books? At least check their tables of contents? One can find some basic information online. Cohen & Brawer (2003) appears to be a standard textbook on community colleges (cited 5400+ times). The page ranges reflect... relevant parts of the text.

I couldn't find a TOC with pagination for Witt et al., but here's a summary of the contents ■. Again, given the substance the page ranges aren't terribly surprising, especially since she cites a different source for her *two sentences* on the pre-crash 1920s.

Now, most academics would probably cite multiple works for the same piece of basic knowledge, but Biden mostly sticks to one source in each in-line citation. Which is... fine. She's rotating sources.

If you don't know why I'm so annoyed by this... well.. Smith claims that Biden doesn't deserve the title as she received a professional Ed.D.

He thinks that he's scoring points by arguing out that her "dissertation/executive position paper" (h/t @bparsia) doesn't look like what he expects from a PhD – and that somehow his BA (ICYMI, from Yale) entitles him to set standards for who gets to

call themselves a "Dr."

It sure as hell feels like he's trying to imitate those of us who went over Dr. Gorka's credentials with a fine-tooth comb (and here he is ■https://t.co/GuDVDP4XiZ quoting both me and @reynolds in a piece about Gorka's descent into peddling fish oil).

But we did our homework. We checked his citations. Most importantly, we held the dissertation to *the standards of our shared discipline*.

Gorka's insistence on being called "Dr." mattered only insofar as it was part of his intellectual grift: of pretending he had genuine expertise on terrorism..... something actual experts on terrorism made clear wasn't true.

Biden, OTOH, has an extensive background in educational practice, doesn't make outsized claims about her expertise, & isn't in contention for a policy position (although, FWIW, she's easily more qualified than DeVos).

Indeed, I ruled out a deep dive into Page's reputedly awful thesis, noting that "The abysmal quality of Gorka's dissertation was directly relevant to his claims of expertise and his [WH] position. Besides, he used it as a cudgel against his detractors." https://t.co/iuoanFVkBV

That is all.