

# TROPICS OF META

HISTORIOGRAPHY FOR THE MASSES



## The Democratic Primary Field as a History Department

BY JASON TEBBE | JULY 9, 2019



The Democratic primary field is a mix of clashing personalities who like to hear themselves talk and where older white men are overrepresented. For those reasons I was reminded during the recent presidential debates of the dynamics in a university history department. With that in mind, here is the Democratic primary field (or at least most of it) as a history department.

**Joe Biden** is the old professor still teaching off of notes he typed up in 1975 who gets handsy at the holiday party after one too many scotch and sodas. His colleagues have been privately asking themselves for years why he hasn't retired yet.

**Bernie Sanders** is the old Marxist scholar who doesn't show up to all of the faculty meetings, but when he does he's salty and still holds grudges established in 1983. While most of his colleagues are ambivalent towards him, the grad students and adjuncts like him a lot because he's one of the few tenured people to actually bring their concerns to the faculty.

**Kamala Harris** is the hotshot rising associate professor known for showing up to job talks and destroying weak candidates with withering questions. She also suddenly became a transnational historian once that became a popular topic, abandoning her dissertation on diplomatic history.

**Elizabeth Warren** is the established full professor who is still putting out highly regarded research while maintaining a good reputation as a teacher. She also has managed to take Professor Sanders's side in faculty meeting disputes without alienating her colleagues.

**Beto O'Rourke** is the young, run-of-the-mill assistant professor who thinks he is above his current department, and tries and fails every year to land a job at a more prestigious university.

**Jay Inslee** makes sure every job talk and seminar question he ever asks relates to environmental history, even if that has nothing to do with what's being said. His colleagues secretly hate that his once obscure research has now become much more relevant than theirs.

**Tim Ryan** thinks his obsession with grade inflation is the reason that his class enrollments are low, not the fact that he is an insufferable ass who lacks empathy for his students.

**John Hickenlooper** spends most of his time trying to keep Professor Warren from being the department chair and bases his courses on historiography circa 1986.

**John Delaney** is the military historian who spends all his time complaining that military history is a marginalized field because postmodernism has ruined “real history.”

**Kirsten Gillibrand** got ostracized by half of the department for backing grad student accusations of sexual harassment against a popular senior male colleague.

**Amy Klobuchar** is the professor who has racked up a lot of publications but has never mentored a graduate student on through their dissertation, despite taking on several of them in their first year at the school. When asked about this her former advisees, who always take on a different advisor or drop out, go silent. Junior colleagues pray that she’s not on their tenure committee.

When **Tulsi Gabbard** comes up in conversation her colleagues sigh and point fingers over who was responsible for hiring her.

**Bill de Blasio** got tenure based on a highly-regarded first book based off of his dissertation. He has not published anything since, but talks about his book in every single class, faculty function, colloquium, and job talk.

**Eric Swalwell** hits reply-all to the chair’s emails to the faculty.

**Pete Buttigieg** is the Type A personality assistant professor who got hired while he was still ABD at an Ivy League university. He was the golden child of his well-known advisor, but he mysteriously hasn’t published anything yet.

**Michael Bennet** speaks up a lot in faculty meetings, but his colleagues usually just let his comments die on the vine and then move on.

**Andrew Yang** runs a center on campus with a very vague name that produces all kinds of emails about “innovation” and “disruption.” Everyone is surprised to see him in faculty meetings.

**Mike Gravel** is the emeritus professor whose name is still on his office door and whose mail keeps getting picked up but is somehow never

spotted in the hallway.

**Julian Castro** is the new hire that nobody talked about when he arrived but had the fattest binders when he applied for tenure.

**Cory Booker** is the professor who is constantly talking about himself. This draws a core group of impressionable students who don't understand why the other professors roll their eyes when they express their admiration for him.

**Marianne Williamson** is the professor who burns incense in her office and invites grad students over to her home to try edibles.

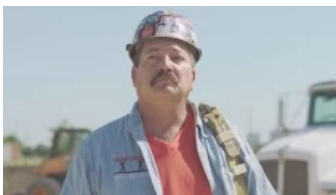
*An **earlier version** of this piece appeared on the blog **Notes from the Ironbound** on June 30, 2019.*

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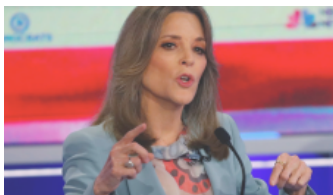
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**Black Professor**

July 24, 2019 at 9:26 am

Funny but why is Dr. Robin DG Kelley's image in this collage? Unfortunately he's not running for president. I don't know who he could've possibly been mistaken for (or why)...

REPLY

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**Alex Sayf Cummings**

July 24, 2019 at 12:24 pm

Neither is Jill Lepore, but we're hoping Eugene Genovese might still get into the race

REPLY

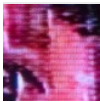
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