

# Antonioyrocinate's Blog

## The people of academia (The good the bad and the ugly)

Posted: October 4, 2016 in [Uncategorized](#)

Tags: [academia](#), [Arizona State U](#), [David William Foster](#), [ego](#), [Frank Dominguez](#), [Kierkegaard](#), [maturity](#), [Noel Valis](#), [Prof. Irene Gomez-Castellano](#), [The Labor or Longing](#), [three stages of life](#), [Yale](#)



The beautiful, wise, awesome, funny Prof. Valis presenting her novella at UNC

My dear Kierkegaard explains how a person's life goes through three stages. Simply stated: the young aesthetic where everything revolves around the ego, the more mature ethical stage where we concern ourselves with what is right and wrong and hopefully and eventually the religious stage where with some wisdom gained from pain and loss, we realize that it all boils down to love and giving and forgiving. These three stages of maturity are evident in academia. You find the young guns that know all the big words and trendy phrasing to write brilliant articles and books that say very little, but show off their brilliance. The ethical writers where everything is correct but boring, and a handful of scholars that "get it" and go beyond the big words or the correct arguments to delve into the spiritual.

Of course if you are in the aesthetic phase yourself, then you cannot see beyond the ego and the writing that caters to that. You think that the young, hip professor is the bee's knees. It takes time, but more importantly spiritual growth that will only come from hardship to get to the religious phase.

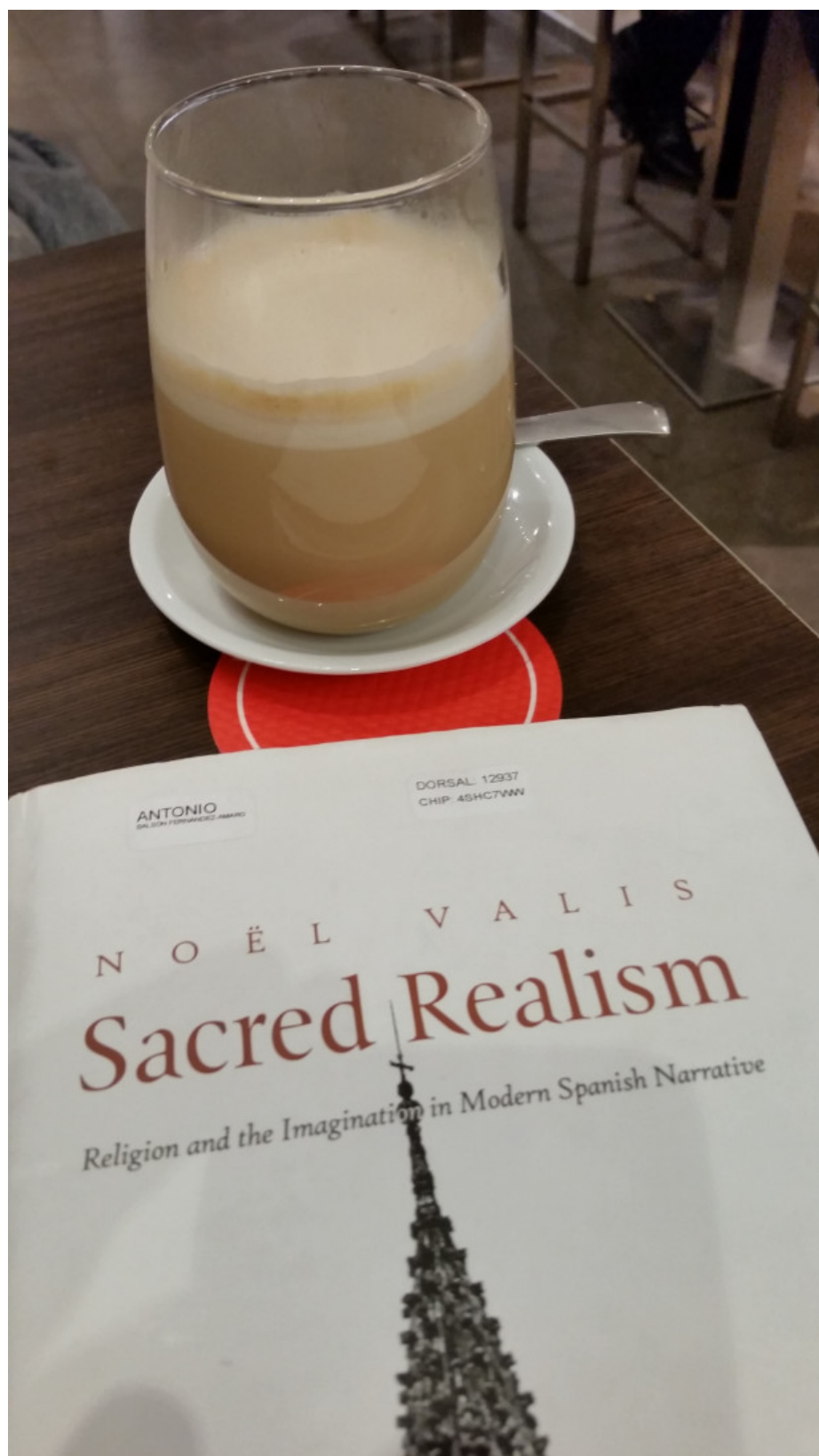
During my time in the upper echelons of academia, I was able to experience this division in the quality of scholarship. Seeing these ego driven scholars, it is easy to understand the anti-intellectualism in vogue in certain social circles.

Flip the coin, however, and you find some of the nicest, most brilliant, most humble people around. I was blessed to have had some of those enlightened folks in my department and in my doctoral committee. I also got to meet some fantastic professors that came to present their work at Carolina.

David William Foster is one such fellow. Never mind that he is the Regents Professor of Spanish and Women and Gender Studies at Arizona State and President of the Latin American Jewish Studies Association, blah, blah, blah. He is a deep, brilliant, understanding person. I was honored to show David around UNC's beautiful campus and then we went to lunch with two other colleagues. I did not want that lunch to end! It was funny, insightful, thought-provoking, just a pleasure.

Another such person is Noël Valis. Yes she works at Yale and has published a shelf full of books and articles, but more importantly, she "gets it" she understands humanity in all its difficult intricacies, our weakness, our idiocy. I was working on my dissertation most of the time Prof. Valis was at UNC, but I eventually managed to go to her presentation of her own book of fiction: *The Labor of Longing*. After that intimate and enlightening (sorry to use the same word twice) chat I had the privilege of showing her around campus. For a glorious North Carolina autumn Friday afternoon we walked and talked and I did not want that walk to end, I kept adding bits to our tour, until I had to let go of her.

I could go on and on about marvelous professors that enrich academia and the world. I have already talked about the ones on my Doctoral Committee on other posts. On the other hand I could also talk about ego driven, academic climbers, more interested in publishing their work than on what is really in that work. Unfortunately not all the latter will eventually become the former.



Enjoying one of Noël's books with a cafe con leche.