



Sarah Solberg PhD in English Literature Dickens and the Illustration of his Work, 1979

Who is your current employer and what do they do?
Southern Utah University

What is your job title and what does the job entail?
Student mentor/advisor (diplomatic service)

Since retiring from the U.S. Department of State as a Foreign Service Office in October 2011 I work part-time mentoring/advising students interested in joining the U.S. Foreign Service. The position entails talking to classes in Political Science, History, Economics... about possibilities in the FS. I also work with colleagues working in the university's core areas of Leadership and Management.

How did you achieve your current position?

After a year of post-doc work (publishing, job-hunting, teaching clarinet at St. Margaret's), I started an academic position at Southern Utah University. In that position, I taught English Composition classes, Intro to Poetry, Intro to Prose and upper-division (3rd and 4th year) courses in Shakespeare, Chaucer, Restoration and the Eighteenth Century, The Romantic Age and (my own specialty) Victorian Age. This position began as a one-year "sabbatical leave" replacement job. However, having demonstrated my teaching abilities and the ways in which I could contribute to the department and to the university, SUU sought and received funding for my position to be made permanent.

Eight-plus years later (having completed a long process of testing and completion of clearances [security, health, etc.]), I accepted a position with the U.S. Department of State as a Foreign Service Officer. In that position, I served a mandatory consular tour (issuing/denying visas, issuing passports, dealing with Americans in trouble [destitute, dead...]). I was also asked to serve a post-PanAm 103 "temporary duty" in Edinburgh. My main role in the FS was as a Management Officer – keeping my post/embassy running. In that role, I was responsible for overseeing Human Resources, Information Management, General Services (housing, procurement, receiving, warehousing, maintenance, customs, travel, shipping...).

I have served in: London, Washington DC, Oslo, Bucharest, Reykjavik, Bratislava, Skopje, den Haag and Nassau.

I retired from the Service in Oct 2011.

How do you feel you have used the skills and/or knowledge developed during your research degree in your career to date?

Aside from the Victorian Lit course (taught one ten-week quarter every 2 years), little of what I have done has been directly related to my research degree. Important skills have been analysis and synthesis of information, WRITING, oral communication and a willingness to be flexible about learning and doing new things – sometimes in cultures whose beliefs were considerably different from my own.

I have worked as a financial manager responsible for allocating millions of dollars of USG funding and as a post security officer (i.e. not a “guard”, but the individual in charge of implementing security measures necessary to protect an embassy in what became a growing security threat). I have served on committees dealing with Avian flu preparations and cost of living differentials. At one post I was responsible for devising a scope of work for the removal and relocation of thousands of bones from a long-defunct cemetery – and for finding funding and overseeing the project.

Other qualifications

B.A. and M.A., UCLA