



# Faculty Spotlight

Kate Imy

## EIGHT QUESTIONS FOR DR. IMY:

### 1. How did you get interested in Military History?

According to family lore I was not an immediate convert. On one trip to a battlefield I apparently remarked (age 3 or 4) “we drove all this way to see dirt?” By high school my attitude changed and I was excited to see Gettysburg and other battlefields across Pennsylvania and Virginia. This inspired a minor obsession, including a spending spree on (mostly bad) books about the Civil War. I then majored in history at the United States Air Force Academy, where most history classes were military history by default. I soon realized that my true calling was reading and writing about history and left USAFA to become a historian.

### 2. What interests you most about being a professional military historian?

Military conflict is one of the most popular ways that non-historians engage with and think about the past. Video games, film, TV, and popular books often capture the public imagination in ways that (sadly!) few historians can. Recent centenaries of the First World War and its aftermath have also reinvigorated public interest. Military history, therefore, provides an avenue for engaging the public in the importance of history.

### 3. What place does Military History have in academia?

Most universities realize the importance of war in producing and influencing social, cultural, political, and economic change. There is a healthy and growing interest in various interpretations of military history—from war studies to peace studies to war & society—across academia. As a greater number of veterans, war migrants and refugees, and servicemen and servicewomen join the workforce and enter universities, scholars have a responsibility to document, analyze, and engage with multiple perspectives of war. It is imperative to give forums to these voices to educate the US public in questioning any uncritical glorification of war.

### 4. How do you integrate Military History in your curriculum?

As a historian of Britain and the British Empire, war is inescapable and essential for understanding power and historical change. I encourage my students to ask and think through tough questions about the relationship between war and empire to understand Britain as more than just an ally of the US and a “winner” in the world wars. My course on “Race and Gender in British Imperial Wars,” for example, highlights the experiences of soldiers and civilians in wars and colonial conflicts that ranged from New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, and Afghanistan.

**5. What are your current and future projects?**

My first book, *Faithful Fighters: Identity and Power in the British Indian Army* <https://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=31378>, examines the relationship between the colonial army and Indian martial cultures in the midst of global war and anti-colonial activism. My second book project considers the experiences of international soldiers and civilians during world wars and decolonization in Singapore and Malaya. I look forward to writing more on war and empire in Asia-Pacific.

**6. What was the hardest aspect of writing your most recent book?**

Writing any history/first book is challenging. For *Faithful Fighters* I wanted a layered account of colonial armies so I learned Hindi and Urdu to engage with scholars and military personnel in India as well as a wider source-base. I was fortunate with funding to spend two continuous years researching in India and the UK. However, living and working overseas (mostly) by myself for two years meant some expected challenges.

**7. Any advice to students aspiring to be military historians?**

Take all advice with a grain of salt and/or spoonful of sugar. Find supportive and reliable mentors and colleagues. Build a network of support within and beyond your university. Advocate for your students and colleagues. Promote equity, diversity, and accessibility. Take chances.

**8. If you could have any career in the world, what would it be and why?**

Court jester. It's a wonderful fantasy to use laughter to critique power in the face of the powerful.