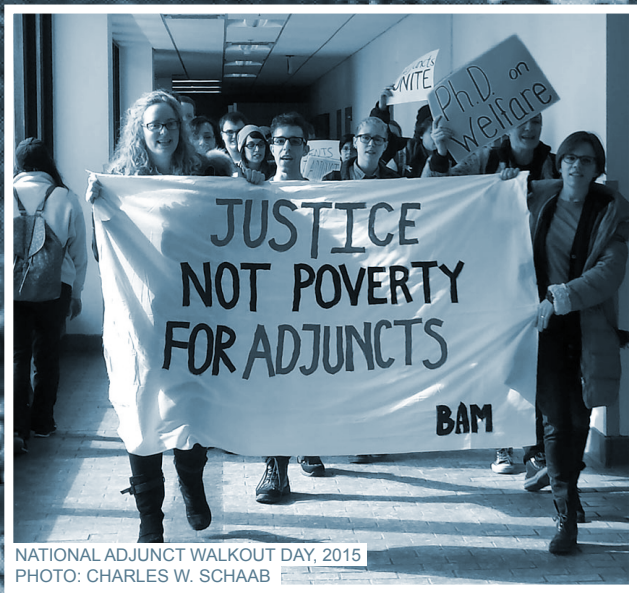


RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING



NATIONAL ADJUNCT WALKOUT DAY, 2015
PHOTO: CHARLES W. SCHAAB



UC BERKELEY FREE SPEECH MOVEMENT, 1964



AFT MEETING AT THE MANHATTAN CENTER, 1940.
COURTESY: CUNY DIGITAL HISTORY ARCHIVE



FOSSIL FUEL DIVESTMENT STUDENT PROTEST AT TUFTS UNIVERSITY, 2013 PHOTO: JAMES ENNIS

Teaching Critical University Studies

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Introduction: Teaching Critical University Studies

by Robert Samuels

For this cluster, Robert Samuels is guest editor and James Davis and Richard Ohmann are board editors



JOHN CURTIS, ROBERT LANDSMAN, AND JAMES LEE, "STUDENT WEARING NIXON MASK," COURTESY OF CUNY DIGITAL HISTORY ARCHIVE

This issue of *Radical Teacher* focuses on why we should teach courses and collaborate with students in research in Critical University Studies (CUS)— a handy label, but please take “university” as a stand-in for many kinds of post-secondary institutions.

A Brief History of Critical University Studies

This interdisciplinary endeavor employs history, sociology, economics, and political science to analyze the ways higher education is being shaped by larger cultural forces. One of the historical ironies examined here is that as the public university grows in importance, its support and funding are downsized. This trend forces us to ask how we can educate people in an unequal society and what role universities play in reinforcing the ideological myths that naturalize and rationalize the political and economic status quo.

As Christopher Newfield has shown in *Unmaking the Public University*, higher education has been shaped by the politics of austerity and by changes in national demographics. According to Newfield’s narrative, at the same time more people of color entered into public universities, a tax revolt led to a defunding of these institutions. Then, in order to make up for a loss of state support, these schools had to turn away from their public missions and seek private support for research and other activities. Thus, due in part to the ideology of neoliberalism, the reduction of public funding for higher education was coupled with a more general retreat from welfare state policies and a turn to the free market as the supposed solution to all social and economic problems.

Jeffrey Williams, another leading scholar in Critical University Studies, argues that we now have a Post-Welfare State university system shaped by reduced state funding and a massive increase in student debt. Moreover, as both Newfield and Williams point out, the more students are forced to take on the burden for paying for college, the more a public good is seen as a private good. Since many people now believe that the main reason to pursue a college degree is to get a good job in the future, they do not think they should have to support other people in the competition for a dwindling number of high-paying positions.

The neoliberal university represents both this privatization of public institutions and the use of public funds by private institutions. As Suzanne Mettler illustrates in *Degrees of Inequality*, private for-profit colleges are now receiving most of their support from federal loans and grants, and so as the publics become more private, the privates become more public. Mettler also emphasizes that both private and public universities are no longer providing social mobility or decreasing economic inequality; instead, higher education now tends

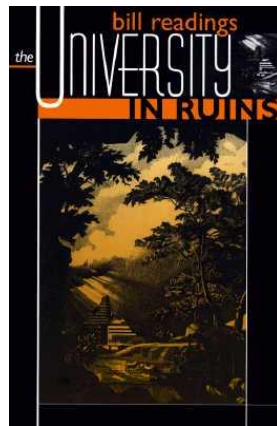
to increase social stratification. Due to the way that we fund and rank schools, wealthy students on average go to wealthy institutions with high graduation rates, while low-income students often go to low-funded schools with low graduation rates. Furthermore, as our society becomes more unequal, all levels of education also become more stratified.

Most people—including students—still want to believe we have a meritocracy that rewards people for their talent and hard work in an equal manner; however, as we know from research on SAT tests, high scores and school achievement are highly correlated with family wealth, and so this meritocratic test works to support an aristocratic system. In this combination of aristocracy and meritocracy, one can understand the central conflict of the contemporary university as a battle between hierarchy and equality: universities often want to be highly rated, so they admit the students with the highest SAT scores, but these same schools want to be seen as open, democratic, and unprejudiced. Exploring this disturbing contradiction with students is an important task for CUS.

According to Bill Readings’s *The University in Ruins*, the fight between hierarchy and equality has been smoothed over by focusing attention on excellence as a universal marker of value that has no real value in itself; globalization and the spread of market capitalism have resulted in a situation where universities no longer have a national or cultural mission; the values of higher education are fused into the cash-nexus of global capital through a discourse of empty excellence (3). Universities want to be excellent in all things in the same way. Readings, an early leader in CUS, goes as far as saying that Americanization means the end of national culture, and this loss of cultural identity undermines the social role of the university.

Thus, a Critical University Studies approach has to look at how society and history affect institutions of higher education, and how these same institutions affect society.

Readings echoed Robert Nisbet’s much earlier *The Degradation of Academic Dogma*, which traced the undermining of the public university to the flood of governmental money that poured into these institutions after World War II. Nisbet held that when the federal government increased its support for research, many professors turned away from teaching and the work of their departments, realizing that they could increase their pay and prestige in that way. If we accept this explanation we can locate the central cause of the degradation of instruction and corresponding casualization of the academic



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labor force in a tacit collusion of federal government and careerist researchers.

Whichever narrative one chooses, and whatever additional forces one includes in the mix (the “culture wars” on post-1960s theory and curriculum; the 1970s fiscal crisis of the state; etc.), clearly universities have been shaped by both internal and external social forces. Thus, a Critical University Studies approach has to look at how society and history affect institutions of higher education, and how these same institutions affect society. For example, the casualization of the academic labor force is not only the result of following broad, neoliberal economic imperatives; universities have themselves been innovators in developing new forms of de-professionalization and just-in-time labor practices. We often fail to see this role higher education is playing in neoliberalism because we believe in the myth that universities are progressive, liberal institutions.

While it is difficult to specify a precise origin for Critical University Studies, and while there have been many critical books about the higher learning in America, going all the way back to Veblen, the project of consolidating this discourse and self-consciously developing a new discipline around it has gained momentum chiefly since the Great Recession.

One of the challenges for CUS is that it’s hard to imagine universities and colleges creating and funding departments in this area. After all, much of this critical work challenges the self-presentation of these institutions and their traditional ways of teaching and researching. It is unlikely that we will soon see a Department of Critical University Studies, but we are witnessing instead a production of scholarship and practices that resist traditional university structures. It is our hope that this special issue will open a conversation about how and why we should take part in the endeavor.

To help our students understand the political economy of knowledge production inside and outside of the academy, it is also vital to think about what pedagogical methods are most likely to engage students in these issues and help them think past their resistance to learning new and often upsetting things about higher education.

Research as Teaching

An essential argument the authors in this special cluster of *Radical Teacher* make or take as a premise is that Critical University Studies should not be just another area of academic research; it is important also to focus also on teaching, on how to close the gap between research and instruction at colleges and universities. In fact, an important claim of much of this work is that all research and teaching is shaped by political, cultural, economic, and historical forces, but we often teach and

publish knowledge as if it is divorced from political and economic concerns. For instance, students rarely understand the academic labor system and how the reliance on contingent faculty affects their education. They also are not aware of how the external grant funding system can shape what is taught; instead, knowledge, especially in the sciences, is usually communicated as if it is without context. The role of capitalism and political ideology, then, in shaping who teaches and what is taught is hidden from view.

To help our students understand the political economy of knowledge production inside and outside of the academy, it is also vital to think about what pedagogical methods are most likely to engage students in these issues and help them think past their resistance to learning new and often upsetting things about higher education. It is not enough to present students with the facts or logical arguments; rather, we need multiple media and fresh pedagogies.

All of the articles stress that Critical University Studies calls for new ways of teaching both inside and outside of the college classroom. As a self-reflexive discourse, the discipline pushes us to think about how we teach and research and the ways our work is always embedded in particular social, institutional, historical, and economic contexts. For example, in “Waking Yourself Up: The Liberatory Potential of Critical University Studies,” Mikaila Arthur and Scott Renshaw present their account as a dialogue between a professor and a student, describing a general education course that featured guest lectures by administrators, staff, and faculty. One of the goals of this class was to introduce students to the diverse jobs and roles shaping the school, but the inquiry began with students naming their own problems with and complaints about their educational experience. By commencing with the students, instead of the guest expert speakers, the professor set the students thinking in their own way about how their education was structured. Furthermore, the dialogical nature of the teaching pointed to a democratic model of education, and therefore challenged the traditional Introduction to the University course. When students got to question the administrators and other staff who made presentations to the class, they were thus engaged in a direct inquiry they had initiated, about matters affecting them on a daily basis.

Another example of format matching content is Arthur Leigh Binford’s “Teaching the Adjunct Experience.” Binford structured this capstone research seminar for sociology and anthropology majors in four sections: 1) “readings, lectures, and discussions about globalization, Fordism and neoliberalism, and flexible and contingent work both outside and within higher education”; 2) the development of a survey of other students at the college on their knowledge about adjunct labor; 3) interviews of adjunct faculty members by students in the course; and 4) a final essay by each student. Students themselves became key researchers in Critical University Studies as they learned the methods and techniques of their own major field.

Heather Steffen also focuses on students as researchers. But “Inventing Our University” takes CUS

outside of the classroom, and shows how to build knowledge collaboratively, over a period of more than a semester. Steffen describes her ambitious project in this way: "Together, we are conducting a series of interviews with [University of California Santa Barbara] student workers, asking them about their jobs, career plans, educational experiences, finances, and how working affects their academic, social, and family lives. Our analysis of the interviews is qualitative and situated within critical university studies, student affairs, pedagogical studies, and public debates about higher education. As a project fusing research, writing, and social justice goals, we present our analyses in multiple modes: we are creating a website at www.allworkeditup.org, writing in academic and public genres, attending conferences, facilitating workshops and community discussions, and collecting footage for a documentary film." The project makes the work of students and faculty public and empowers students to be producers of research, not simply consumers of already produced knowledge.

In the final part of her article, Steffen discusses how her group procured institutional funding, a nice example of how CUS can simultaneously critique the institution and take advantage of its resources and structures, transforming it from both inside and outside.

Her work raises the difficult question of how to situate this new discourse in existing institutional structures. Stephen Brier's "Why the History of CUNY Matters" offers another approach. We learn about the creation of a digital archive documenting the political and economic transformations of this important institution. As part of a doctoral course on the history of higher education, students engage with this online archive and produce their own contributions to it. Their final projects focus on "student, faculty, and/or staff activism; curricular innovations, local community input and struggles, or local or city-wide administrative and political action or inaction that encouraged or hampered institutional or pedagogical developments and transformations. The learning objective

is for doctoral students to incorporate historical thinking and primary historical sources and methodologies into the ways they understand and write about the history of higher education." As in the project at Santa Barbara, CUS helps students learn vital research skills as they learn about their own institution, and about the history and political economy of higher education.

Douglas Schuler offers still another example of engaged student-faculty research, in "What do we rank when we rank colleges? Who determines how and who benefits? Student empowerment and the development of alternative college rankings." Here he describes working with students over more than one academic year to develop a system for ranking colleges that is based on fostering "civic intelligence," and that contrasts sharply with influential schemes such as that of *U.S. News and World Report*. This project allowed students to concentrate on an educational value that is a commitment of their own institution, Evergreen State College, and that can be set against the values that drive conventional ratings: prestige, selectivity, economic payoffs, and so on.

All our authors would probably agree that Critical University Studies can be at once a subversive activity and an effort to promote positive social change and active student engagement.

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RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Waking Yourself Up: The Liberatory Potential of Critical University Studies

by Mikaila Mariel Lemonik Arthur and Scott Leo Renshaw



GREEN HALL, UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND, 2008, PHOTO BY TNRICCI

In Fall 2012, Mikaila had the opportunity to develop a new course on higher education as part of a new general education program at Rhode Island College. Rhode Island College is a public comprehensive college enrolling a diverse population of primarily commuter and first-generation students. Our new general education program requires students to take an upper-level course which is comparative across period, place, or perspective, and thus Mikaila chose to design an interdisciplinary course which would show how people from different perspectives—including higher education professionals—think about aspects of higher education.

This course was designed to help students think critically about their own experiences as students and to develop a sense of self-efficacy in shaping their educations. It also included a considerable focus on the practical organization of our own college, a focus that enabled students to learn to “debunk commonplace views” and work against or outside “academic practice as usual” (Williams 2012) by questioning what they took for granted about their own experience and their own institution. The realist perspective of critical university studies provides, as Williams writes, “a content” in which to “teach the conflicts,” “one that has immediate relevance to our students in their own lives, as well as to their understanding of our society.” How much more immediately relevant can a course be than one in which students have the opportunity to investigate and interrogate the very structures shaping the education they are in the midst of pursuing?

This paper is designed as a conversation between Mikaila and Scott, one of the students who enrolled in the course the first time it was offered, in Spring 2014. Scott is now a graduate student in sociology. By developing a sustained, paper-length conversation about the course, we hope to provide a sense of the liberatory potential of critical university studies as a pedagogical practice.

Mikaila: On the first day of class, I asked students to introduce themselves and to tell the group the thing they found most annoying about our college. The answers to this question may not have generally been surprising (many comments involved parking woes and bureaucratic hurdles), but this beginning made clear to students that our class was a different kind of endeavor—one that took their struggles seriously. As I told students that very first day, our course would try to develop an understanding of why those annoying things happen. Though I did not explain it this way on the first day of class, considering the contexts which generate such annoyances can be a crucial window onto larger power structures. For example, parking would not be such a problem in a context in which reliable, accessible public transportation were available to get students to class, yet public transportation is often a sacrificial lamb in local and state politics due to its role in serving the poor and working class.

I also asked students why we go to college, and we had an interesting conversation about vocationalization, general education, and students’ motivations. Most of the

students in the room were quite clear that their purpose in going to college was to improve their labor-market outcomes. Many of my working-class students did not have parents with four-year college degrees; even those who came from middle-class backgrounds often had parents who had succeeded as small business owners. They saw, as many students do, a college education as a ticket to a more stable and prosperous life than the one their parents had. While a college degree certainly gives individuals a much better chance of economic success than they would have without further education (Hout 2012), the bachelor’s degree is no guarantee. One of the issues we returned to again and again throughout the semester was what students need to do to increase the chances that their degree will pay off, strategies that come as second nature to many privileged students but which often remain mysterious to those from working-class backgrounds (Rivera 2015).

While a college degree certainly gives individuals a much better chance of economic success than they would have without further education (Hout 2012), the bachelor’s degree is no guarantee.

Scott: What Mikaila did not ask on that first day is why students chose to take the course, as the answer for most would have been that it fulfilled a requirement and fit in their schedule. Since most students were taking the class to fulfill a course requirement, I was probably the anomaly, picking the course for another reason. Earlier in the first semester of my junior year at Rhode Island College, I was enrolled in Mikaila’s research methods course. What I enjoyed most in this course was Mikaila’s ability to showcase the often paradoxical conflicting ends in sociological research, giving credence to not only her preferences but showcasing all approaches in an objective light. When she mentioned to our class that she would be teaching a course more closely related to her research interests on higher education, I saw it as an opportunity to learn from the “source,” so to speak, about a topic and interest area she was passionate and most knowledgeable about. Further, the course’s title Comparative Perspectives on Higher Education encapsulated the aspect I enjoyed most about Mikaila’s approach as well as offering a challenge to learning more about the paradoxical nature of the higher education system, one that I had thought I was familiar with as a college junior. What also piqued my interest in this course was that I knew that Mikaila had constructed the course herself, and I had some idea—despite my limited knowledge—that being able to develop a general education course focused on one’s own research and political interests could be quite difficult within the bureaucratic structures of the higher education system. I felt like it would be the best combination of sociological inquiry and an opening awareness that could be meaningfully applied in my day-to-day interactions, decisions, and thoughts while within a higher education institution.

My first impression upon reading the course's syllabus was being surprised by the large periods of class sessions in which speakers from different administrative roles within the college would come and discuss their professional functions. This included practical academic and institutional resources like a reference desk librarian and staff from student support services as well as what I assumed were more mundane positions like the director of campus dining services and director of athletics. At first, this seemed a bit out of place compared to Mikaila's normal lecturing and group discussion style, and I had little interest learning more about our institution's dining hall and sports (although later on these ended up being the more interesting discussions). I distinctly remember having anxiety when, as part of the course's assignments tied to weekly readings, I was told we were to construct questions to ask these administrators directly when they came to discuss their role in class.

For example, students are often surprised to learn that there is a real purpose to general education, that declining state appropriations play a major role in cost increases at public colleges and universities, or that many faculty members do not have extensive training in teaching collegiate courses.

However, these discussions with administrators shed quite a bit of light on the institutional processes in which our education is embedded. We were able to see first-hand the political posturing of the administration as they worked to protect their normally unquestioned positions. For example, an administrator with dining services came to discuss his role and the role of the dining services division within our school's structure. We learned that the on-campus dining services were a for-profit agency, as are other auxiliary enterprises (Ehrenberg 2000); subsequently, the college has privatized its bookstore, with little discussion of the costs of privatization. Upon learning this, more general questions about the quality of the food became insignificant, and I turned my attention to how a for-profit agency wedges itself into a public education institution. I thus began connecting dots to the lived experience of students to observe that it is weird that each residential student is required to buy an outrageously overpriced food package and that students, at the end of the semester, have to buy cases of soda (20+) or other unneeded items to ensure that they get their money's worth from leftover dining dollars. Therefore, I asked the dining services administrator what the organization did with its excess profits. His response was something to the effect that "we don't have excess profits; anything that goes over the base amount is put back into functioning costs and maintenance." While it may indeed be true that no one is extracting excess revenue from the operation, there is a contradiction here between the stated nature of auxiliary enterprises and his explanation of how dining services finances work, one that provides a more

accessible entry point for students to understand the nature of the corporate university (Tuchman 2009).

Mikaila: The idea of inviting administrators and requiring student discussion leaders to ask them questions directly stemmed from the specific administrative requirements of the general education program, which mandated the comparative (in this case interdisciplinary) nature of the course and that students develop their oral communication skills as part of the course. Many faculty members, accustomed as we are to the questioning nature of research and intellectual inquiry, think of posing questions as second nature. However, through observing students like Scott as they developed and asked questions of administrators and staff, I was reminded that for first-generation college students asking questions of authority figures and administrators may not come easily. At the beginning of the semester, students were often nervous about asking questions, especially those which had the potential to challenge our visitors. Thus, requiring students to develop and pose questions has benefits far beyond growth in oral communication skills—it helps students develop the self-confidence to mount a critique of the institution and ask why things are the way they are. And, indeed, students' questions did develop in depth and complexity as the semester progressed.

In developing the course, I was aware that my students did not have deep knowledge about higher education as an institution, or about navigating our own college successfully. For example, students are often surprised to learn that there is a real purpose to general education, that declining state appropriations play a major role in cost increases at public colleges and universities, or that many faculty members do not have extensive training in teaching collegiate courses. Indeed, this last discovery launched quite a discussion in class, as students presented examples of faculty members who were inaccessible and unapproachable despite being, in the students' words, "brilliant."

But I was surprised, as I taught the course, at how little many upper-level undergraduates actually know about navigating college. For example, many students were not aware that they had a designated financial aid counselor in the financial aid office or that a career development office was even available on campus. Students were especially shocked to learn how graduation rates are calculated, based on the share of first-time full-time freshman who complete college within 4, 6, or 8 years (Cook and Pullaro 2010); given these metrics, many of the students sitting in my classroom were considered dropouts from their prior colleges. These graduation rate calculations matter for colleges in today's age of performance funding, and students were angered that their enrollment decisions—made based on personal and financial realities—would be taken as a measure of the college's success. By the end of the course, many students commented that a course like this should have been required early in their studies. Though they may not have all had the language for this, students saw how a course on higher education could

uncover the hidden curriculum of college that many struggle so much to master.

Scott: Before enrolling in this course, my understanding of higher education as an institution was more of a black box, lacking perception of structural nuance. Earlier in college I had taken a course on the sociology of education, but I found that the orientation of the class didn't challenge my thinking about the structure itself. While I did not understand the larger implications of my normalized perspective—that college was what I was going to make out of it—I felt that, in general, the institution was looking out for my best interests and it was just my job to seek out and take advantage of these resources. I think what this position takes for granted is my lived experiences prior to college. During my high school years, the academic work was typically uninteresting but conceptually I knew that through getting my college degree I would be able to have better career outcomes than if I was only a high school graduate. However, I never saw the degree as the ultimate ticket. Instead, I craved experiences like my high school sociology course in which I was engaged in active questioning and critical discussions of things that seemed relevant to my lived experience.

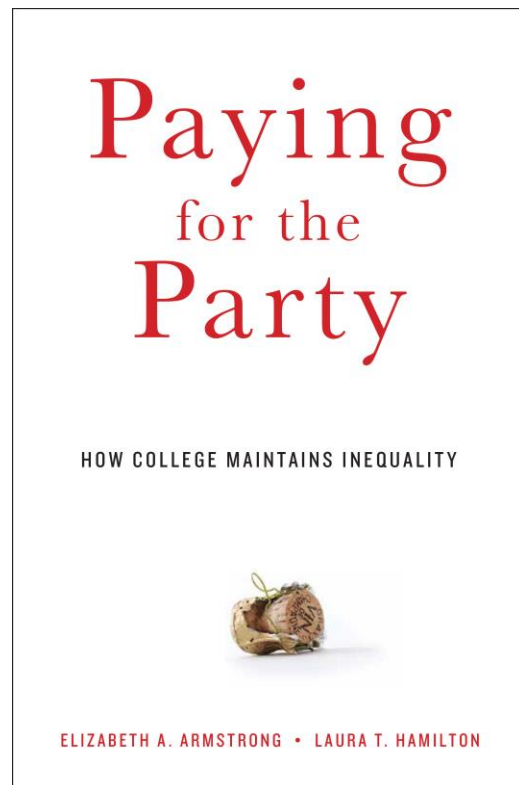
I saw myself as groping blindly towards the degree, trying to soak up as much as possible and bouncing thoughts off of as many alternative perspectives as possible. The sociology of education course was not as critical as I had liked, and therefore I did not engage as deeply in the course work since I saw it as a means to an end. Yet, in Mikaila's course, roughly on a similar subject, everything seemed so pertinent to my lived experiences, helping me identify invisible structural pathways and trajectories onto which students are conveyor-belted.

For example, let me briefly note two books we read in the course, *Paying for the Party* (Armstrong and Hamilton 2013) and *Creating a Class* (Stevens 2009). Stevens's work highlights the role of stratification in shaping college admissions and allowed us to see and understand the process of selective college admissions up close. This process differed in some ways from the process I, and many of my classmates, took to select a college, in part because our institution enrolls approximately 70% of applicants (Rhode Island College Office of Institutional Research and Planning 2015). These insights flowed perfectly into our reading of *Paying for the Party*. In this book, Armstrong and Hamilton highlight various pathways students take through college and show how dependent which pathway a student ends up on—and how successful they are in navigating that pathway—is on economic status, background, and social network dynamics.

While I had thought I understood the process of higher education structurally, what had really occurred was that I was unconsciously able to take advantage of covert or hidden structural paths through college. To some extent, I was able to navigate my college experience differently because I had not previously thought I would actually go to a four-year college and thus I felt I had nothing to lose. I

felt like because I was open to new experiences and didn't have as many preconceived beliefs or hang-ups about going to college, such as seeking the party pathway (Armstrong and Hamilton 2013) or pursuing a vocationally-oriented focus, when I saw an opportunity arise, I was able to more dynamically take advantage of it. But, in addition, I also experienced what Armstrong and Hamilton call "creaming," or selection for special programs for talented strivers (p. 149), which gave me access to opportunities not available to all students. I also believe that I was afforded more attention and received more benefit-of-the-doubt because of my embodied personhood as a White male.

The most notable thing that I learned in this course was an overall uncovering of the system. Before this class, my overall perception of college was that it was truly meritocratic, without having gained the language for such a label. I did poorly in high school because I wasn't "trying hard enough" and my lack of opportunities reflected that level of achievement—only because of a sociology class that critically engaged me did I try at all in high school. Therefore, in my mind I connected my inability to succeed educationally with my lack of merit within the given system, and to a certain extent a system I didn't want to be successful in. Mikaila's course revealed, to me at least, that the way in which the black box of meritocracy or achievement-based reward is only a facade, and that underneath are complex mechanisms (many of which occur via unconscious bias) that route individuals onto paths and which ultimately give more advantages and opportunities



PAYING FOR THE PARTY: HOW COLLEGE MAINTAINS INEQUALITY
BY ELIZABETH A. ARMSTRONG AND LAURA T. HAMILTON,
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

to a White male than to women and people of color. Our causal perceptions of “the way things are” in the institution come crashing down when we learn specifics relating to the admission policies, sports, economic implications of food services, on campus workers, and social network trajectories—all of which are structurally unequal and replicate themselves through their own lack of self-awareness.

This lack of self-awareness extends to many faculty members as well. My experiences in college suggest that some professors take for granted their knowledge of a given field and project their own normalized experiences of higher education onto their students. The instructors I tended to connect most with in high school and college were those who followed non-traditional paths, in that they either returned to education later in life, perhaps after having children, or struggled to attend part-time while working. These experiences encouraged my instructors to orient their teaching in a way which made the material connect with us as students and helped us understand why it mattered. Many other students are denied the awakening process that occurred in my sociology classes in high school and college because the teacher does not show them why the material matters. Thus, it makes sense that many students see college as only a route to a credential.

The fact that our students are unfamiliar with the hidden curriculum of higher education and the rationalized but sometimes irrational structures of the university does not make them any less intelligent or less skilled.

Mikaila: As faculty, we know on some level that our students come to college lacking a robust understanding of the nature of higher education, but our knowledge of this is abstract. For those of us who teach critical university studies, the abstractness of this knowledge is even further from our lived experience, as we are the people who know, study, and teach “How the University Works” (as Chambliss and Takacs 2014 put it). It is easy for us, and for our colleagues, to forget that our students may not know who to contact if they get dropped from their courses, why they lose credits in transfer, what the purpose of general education coursework is, what the difference between an M.A. and a Ph.D. is, or that the treatment and compensation of adjunct and tenure-track faculty are so wildly disparate. As Scott points out above, we faculty are much more likely than our students are to have attended college without family or major work responsibilities, to have successfully navigated the demands of higher education, and to have understood why the material in the courses we took matters.

The fact that our students are unfamiliar with the hidden curriculum of higher education and the rationalized but sometimes irrational structures of the university does not make them any less intelligent or less skilled. However, these gaps in knowledge may deprive our students of

opportunities—and they may not even realize they have been so deprived, given their lack of self-efficacy (Arthur 2010). I tend to think, as Scott suggests above, this is at the root of the vocationalist turn in many colleges and universities. Students, of course, come to college looking for an opening to a better future, but without a robust understanding of how higher education works, they may reasonably believe that the credential is the only thing we have to offer, and that they should reasonably seek to achieve that credential as quickly as possible with a minimum of distractions.

Scott’s notion of being “conveyer-belted” thus requires urgent attention in this era of cohort-based programs and reduced choice, where working-class students are told that they need to select and remain on a particular path in order to proceed efficiently to graduation and a career. Such programs may indeed speed time to graduation and reduce time and money “wasted” on exploring alternatives. But at elite colleges, students are encouraged to explore various majors, and the hidden curriculum of college has long included the idea that these four (or more) years are the time to find yourself and your interests. It is increasingly possible to imagine a future in which such explorations are only available to the privileged few. This future would deprive working-class and first-generation students of the opportunity to discover different futures. Had Scott remained on the conveyer belt on which he started, he would not have found his way to a Ph.D. program today. Getting off the conveyer belt helped one of his classmates find her way to teaching innovative sociology courses in a high school and several others to avoid the risk of dropping out when things did not turn out as planned. Thus, critical university studies coursework—and even smaller interventions in other courses—can open students’ eyes to the broader potential higher education has for improving lives (Hout 2012). It enables students to better contextualize their own experiences in a broad understanding of the systems of power which shape college trajectories and thus, when possible, sidestep the impact of such systems.

Achieving these broader impacts of higher education is not automatic. In other words, it is not simply earning a degree which improves your health and your civic participation. As Arum and Roksa (2014) have shown, those students who “learn the most” in college (or at least see the greatest improvement in their scores on a standardized assessment of critical thinking skills) are the most likely to get and keep good jobs, move out of their parents’ house, be civically engaged, and achieve other desirable outcomes, while those who “learn the least” are more likely to find themselves cooling their heels as underemployed residents of their parents’ basements. And even before getting to graduation, some college students have had their ambitions cooled out as the pathways through college have shifted them away from academic success and towards the kinds of vocationalized degrees that do not always pay off in the long term (Armstrong and Hamilton 2013; Humphreys and Kelly 2014; Youngman 2015). Such cooling-out processes are particularly likely to ensnare working-class and first-generation students who may not know that by choosing the vocationalized option

they are reproducing the class-based constraints they have struggled to escape.

A well-conceived liberal arts course of the nature of the one I am writing about here has the potential to provide students with some of what they are seeking in terms of vocational outcomes while simultaneously providing them with the liberation that a good education should. One of the ways I sought to combine these elements in the course was through a collaborative project in which students worked to develop a plan to transform, enhance, or better promote some campus program or service. Students themselves selected an area to work on, conducted background research into the current status of that area on campus and in the literature, collected pilot data from their peers, and proposed a plan to address the limitations they uncovered. They were then required to craft a written report and deliver a multimedia oral presentation. Two examples of students' projects will be discussed below.

Such an assignment provides a variety of vocationally and professionally relevant skills, including collaborative work, written and oral communication, information-gathering, and interdisciplinary problem-solving. But it also helps students come to see themselves as potential change agents, as people with something to contribute. One group of students, for example, worked on a proposal to improve the new-student orientation for transfer students, an issue many students in the course had identified as particularly problematic. While new first-year students spend two summer days on campus (already a considerably less robust orientation program than the week-long extravaganzas found at many private colleges), new transfer students get just a few hours based on the assumption that transfer students already know how this college thing works. The majority of our transfer students come from community colleges, where some have been enrolled in structured programs requiring little course choice, and navigating each college is different—transfer students may be just as much in need of orientation as first-year students. This student group worked together to survey peers about their orientation experiences, interviewed orientation professionals, and proposed some small and manageable but significant changes in the orientation process—most notably an icebreaker activity inviting groups of transfer students to reflect on their personal identities and connect with other transfers, and a group campus tour. One of the students in this group was ultimately invited by our academic support office to be part of a committee rethinking the transfer student orientation. When she wrote to tell me of this invitation, she said: "Isn't this awesome? Thank you so much for making me do this project thus making me pay attention to something that matters to me here at Rhode Island College." What she did not say, but what her message clearly meant, was "Thank you for making me feel like I could make a difference."

Scott: While Rhode Island College is a commuter school, it does have a reasonably sized on-campus population, with over 1,000 students living in dorms

(Rhode Island College Office of Institutional Research and Planning 2015). One of the concerns which I initially recognized upon enrolling at Rhode Island College was that the dry-campus alcohol policy (mandated by the state legislature) created a dangerous secrecy around drinking. The black and white nature of the policy, permitting no drinking—among a population that societally is more or less culturally normalized to partake in alcohol consumption and experimentation—creates a catch twenty-two in which students are at once expected to experiment with drugs and alcohol but are not allowed to do so within the framework of residential life. The dissonance is palpable at Rhode Island College due to the population of working-class, first generation students, who, as we have discussed, often see college as an opportunity to experience new social boundaries, learn about themselves, and partake in the partying our mainstream culture depicts. In a way, the culture of drinking on college campuses like Rhode Island College is a kind of inverted hidden curriculum, with the overt message of the institution being that drinking is prohibited while all the implicit messages about college tell students that the party pathway will provide a key component of their college education.

In a way, the culture of drinking on college campuses like Rhode Island College is a kind of inverted hidden curriculum, with the overt message of the institution being that drinking is prohibited while all the implicit messages about college tell students that the party pathway will provide a key component of their college education.

What is so dangerous about this combination, I felt as a junior, is that because of the strict policy, an unspoken expectation of college life was pushed into private spaces. As my classmates who worked as Resident Assistants told us in class, they were responsible for carrying out backpack searches and door check-ins to ensure that students in their halls were not bringing in alcohol. Such practices make it harder to smuggle a 6-pack of beer than it is to roll up a handle of vodka in a sleeping bag, or a dozen nips (liquor shots) at the bottom of a backpack. The compounding effects culminate in an "upping-the-ante" with students getting their money's worth relative to the punishment they may face—their level of drunkenness thereby increasing. Once you increase the alcohol content among inexperienced drinkers, risks of alcohol poisoning and heavy episodic binge-drinking increase, while the reporting of cases potentially decreases due to the strict measures enforced, thus creating an unsafe environment in which students might be unwilling to call emergency services for a friend who has passed out for fear of strict punishment afterwards.

As I observed this process unfolding with some of my close friends at Rhode Island College, my group and I decided to focus on alcohol policies for our project in

Mikaila's class. We looked at alcohol policies at other institutions to create a dialogue around the complexities of drinking and whether or not a dry campus is the safest or most logical option. The dry campus model seems to me like teaching abstinence as a way to protect against sexually transmitted diseases—neither policy logically fits with the socio-cultural realities that students inhabit. While our project did not result in change within the institution, we did feel that systemic institutional change can be potentially affected by the students. We have a voice that matters and if we put some time and effort into building a united front, we could stake a claim with rational evidence. Had we sought to tweak our project and pushed the policy more, we could have reasonably created a dialogue at the level of the student government or even with the college president and administration more broadly.

The last assignment of the course asked us to write an educational autobiography in which we contextualized our educational experiences in relation to the books we read and the discussions we had in the course. Through this assignment I was able to re-narrativize my lived experiences within higher education as well as other academic and social processes of which I had been part. Without changing or judging the paths and trajectories I had taken, this assignment allowed me to recontextualize them, see the underlying mechanics, and open my awareness for the making of future decisions. Prior to this recontextualization I had blamed myself for my trajectory, given my perceptions of structural meritocracy—indeed, I believed in the boot-strap fallacy. Allowing the students to connect the dots, for themselves, at the end of the semester gives them the opportunity to build important cognitive bridges between the course's content, their complex personal histories, and the unfolding trajectory of their future within higher education, explicitly unmasking the conveyor-belts we had been blindly riding all along. This process of non-leading subtly asks the question, "Would you like to try another way?" This gives the student the ability to nurture their own sense of self-efficacy, to grab ahold of their own trajectories going forward, through building their awareness of the seemingly rationalized and often irrational structural nuances of higher education.

As I write this, I am about to begin my journey deeper into the black box that is higher education as I enter a Ph.D. program in sociology. Except now, part of my cognitive toolbox is a sort of mental lantern that has been essential in helping me navigate the cavernous, pitfall-ridden maze of higher education institutions with all of their complexities and nuances. You could call it a sort of pre-emptive checklist or perhaps a double consciousness that allows me to critically and dynamically engage within my decision-making processes. Already this has been helpful in the early stages of my pursuit of graduate education, for I am cognizant of not only the "unitary path" as presented via the spoken rules of the institution through the mouthpieces of the bureaucratic system (graduate school administrators and official university documents) but I can also ascertain potential hidden paths that seemingly conflict with the narrative of "normal process through grad school" as written on these websites and sent in mass emails to the new matriculants.

Students who do not have the confidence or self-efficacy to interrogate the curricular options available to them and to find out which rules have exemptions and what unspoken opportunities exist do not even realize that they are losing out on critical resources that could make all the difference in their trajectory within the system. By only knowing of the unitary path, students accept the taken-for-granted narrative with which they are provided. Students on such a path may elevate faculty to a mythic-like status in which they see them as more than human, and believe that their presentation of the structure is truth and that the system is as it appears to be (two-dimensionally, uncomplicated, simplistic).

"It must be by analogical extension, as a way of making the implicit explicit, that the culminative sociological issue is to be confronted" (Burke 1984:336). When it comes down to it, the process of our critical discussions on the "hidden curriculum" is to try to make it explicit to those who do not catch the cues, hints, and nudges. Students who have not been groomed for higher education success through their education and families often see the classroom dynamics unfolding elementally differently than those who have developed the social and cultural capital privileged in higher education. Many students, especially those coming from more disadvantaged backgrounds, come to college with a vastly different set of views, schematics, frameworks, and orientations which make them unaware of the very things they are missing out on that could, quite literally, change their lives.

The compounding effect is that, in many public comprehensive colleges (as well as in other sectors of higher education), the cultural and demographic distribution of the student body is often not reflected among the faculty.

The compounding effect is that, in many public comprehensive colleges (as well as in other sectors of higher education), the cultural and demographic distribution of the student body is often not reflected among the faculty. Thus, a cue or suggestion to work harder or challenge oneself with something more than rote coursework, such as participating in unpaid internships, taking a higher course load, or enrolling in tougher classes in "scary" fields like computer science (the nudges and hints of the hidden curriculum) might not be trusted by students who do not share similar racial, socioeconomic, religious, or cultural realities with their professors. Indeed, the inaccessibility of doctoral-level education to working-class students and students of color from broad-access colleges will continue to perpetuate such dynamics, depriving students at comprehensive colleges of mentors who can help them bridge the gap.

If in fact students' end goal is the degree, the ticket to the promised land of employability and out of poverty or

economic hardship, taking a risk, confronting a challenge, and going out on a limb for someone whom we do not fully relate to or even trust might seem like a pathway antithetical to our ultimate goals. Therefore, the imposition of suggesting alternative options or pathways, the non-easy way, may appear incongruous or even dangerous to individuals who are unable to trust the place and position of the faculty. To make the implicit (or what we think is implicit, the unspoken) explicit may be the best way to illuminate alternative pathways so that the students can make the decision to trust themselves within their own mental calculus. The ticket here is not being the teacher who “woke them up” but rather the process of critical inquiry leading the student to continuously “wake themselves up” when they have a gut feeling that there are deeper, implicit, and hidden social and economic trajectories. By understanding the unequal mechanistic aspects of the structure of higher education, they can look for new opportunities that may appear in their view because they are now awake to these systems of inequality and path dependence.

Mikaila: In Scott’s final autobiographical essay for the course, he wrote in the first paragraph, “The entire educational system is set up in a way that is not beneficial to certain students, students that do not fit a certain paradigm.” Critical university studies courses can provide an intervention that gives at least some such students a handle on the system they are struggling to navigate. By making explicit the unspoken norms, hidden pathways, and structural inequalities of higher education, such courses can help students who do not fit the taken-for-granted paradigm of higher education find their way onto a different kind of path.

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RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Teaching the Adjunct Experience

by Arthur Leigh Binford



PHOTO BY SCOTT SHEIDLLOWER, 2016

As colleges and universities deepen their commitments to a corporate model that delivers an educational “product” to student “consumers,” adjunct and other contingent faculty play a growing role enabling administrators to balance their budgets while swelling their own ranks (and pockets) and investing in programs that enhance the perceived competitiveness of their institutions in the educational marketplace: luxury dorms, sports complexes, and athletic teams, among others. The College of Staten Island (henceforth CSI), part of the City University of New York (CUNY) system, is no different from most public (and the majority of private) schools in this regard (*sans* the high-ranking sports teams). I was poorly informed about this trend until hired in August 2010 to chair CSI’s Department of Sociology and Anthropology after a dozen years of living and working in Mexico. For the next five years, during the days, I listened to administrators express concerns about the exorbitant adjunct budget; when I returned home in the evening, my partner, who had begun adjuncting at CSI, discussed her experiences with overcrowded classrooms, broken equipment, and the administration’s endless reporting demands (attendance verification, mid-term grades, mandatory classroom observations, etc.).

During this period the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) union that represents both CUNY full-time and adjunct faculty entered into negotiations with the CUNY administration in an effort to arrive at a retroactive contract to replace one that had expired in October 2010! My partner was active for several years with a small group of adjuncts that met, shared experiences, drew up lists of demands, and devised strategies for pressuring both the union and the CSI administration. Activist adjuncts debated the question of remaining independent of the PSC or being good union brothers and sisters, but they did not include undergraduate students in their discussions, overlooking potentially valuable allies in the struggle.

I was scheduled to teach two sections of the Research Seminar in Sociology (SOC 400), required of every sociology-anthropology major. The theme is at the discretion of the instructor, and for the spring 2016 semester I decided to focus both sections of the class on the adjunct situation at CSI and undergraduate student understandings of that situation. I hoped that if students in the course gained an appreciation for the problems faced by the faculty that teach over half the courses in the college, they might support adjuncts’ present and future struggles for social and economic justice. Departmental colleagues fully supported my choice of topic.

SOC 400: Adjuncts as precarious workers

Enrollment in the required Research Seminar in Sociology and Anthropology was capped at fifteen students per section. (For the fall 2016 semester the Dean of Social Science and Humanities raised the cap to twenty.) Both sections (one daytime section and one nighttime section) met in the same “smart” seminar room with students seated around a long, rectangular table; a podium at the front of the room housed a computer and DVD player, and an overhead projector channeled images to a retractable

screen. The ragged carpet and torn cloth on the chairs evidenced the New York State legislature’s slack commitment to public education for immigrant and working-class students, which make up a substantial proportion of the student body at CSI and the other eight senior colleges in the CUNY system.

I organized the course into four parts or sections. Part I consisted of a four-week introductory phase of readings, lectures, and discussions about globalization, Fordism and neoliberalism, and flexible and contingent work both outside and within higher education. We read a short article titled “What is Neoliberalism” (Thorsen and Amund n.d.) and several articles about the increasing precarity of work (Kalleberg 2008; Ross 2008; Arnold and Bongiovi 2012). In the third week of the course, the class read and discussed (and I lectured on) basic reference works on the changing structure of higher education and the transformation of work therein (Berry 2005, 1-16; Bousquet 2008, 1-51). Also for that week, students divided up, read, notated and presented in class articles that described and analyzed the conditions and struggles of contingent academic workers, as well as college and university administrations’ endeavors, legal and otherwise, to stifle dissent (Gilbert 1998; Tirelli 2014; Johnson and McCarthy 2000; Merklein 2014; Marvit n.d.; Jesson 2010).

During the fourth and final week of introductory work, students read several articles by Ruth Wangerin (2016, 2014a & b), an activist adjunct faculty member at CSI, and brought in posts from the following blogs that they shared with their fellow classmates:

- <http://adjunct.chronicle.com/>
- <http://adjunctfacultyassembly.blogspot.com/> (the CSI adjunct faculty blog)
- www.newfacultymajority.info (New Faculty Majority blog)
- ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/workplace (*Workplace: A Journal for Academic Labor*)

This part of the course drew heavily on the despised “banking approach” to knowledge acquisition on the premise that “dialogue and other elements of participative education not grounded in information and rigor would be detrimental to the working class” (Mayo 1999, 48).

Also during the fourth week, I lectured about the working conditions and remuneration of adjunct faculty at CSI and other schools in the CUNY system and gave a detailed explanation of full-time lines, the hiring process, and the tenure system. I noted that CSI contains 361 full-time tenured and tenure track faculty (TTTF) and 36 full-time lecturers, compared to 799 adjunct faculty (AF), and that full-timers receive health insurance, paid sick time, parental leave, pensions (through university contributions to TIAA-CREF), paid sabbatical leaves (TTTF only) and private (occasionally shared) offices—all of which are benefits denied or granted only in part to all or most adjunct faculty. Taking the Department of Sociology and Anthropology as an example, I explained that contingent faculty (adjuncts, graduate students, and fixed-term hires) were teaching courses accounting for 58 percent of credit

hours during the spring 2016 semester but that they taught a much higher percentage of students because they staffed introductory and lower division courses with caps of 45 to 50 persons. By contrast, full-time faculty taught all special topics courses and most core courses required for the major, which were capped at 35 (or fewer students in the case of the Research Seminar) but often ran with enrollments in the 15-25 range, which make for a more intimate and enjoyable classroom experience for all concerned. I did not have the exact figures on hand, but estimated that contingent faculty accounted for 70 to 75 percent of seats (students) overall. With one or two exceptions, the thirty students in the two sections of the Research Seminar—all seniors and on the cusp of graduation—were unaware that a significant percentage of courses they had taken at CSI had been taught by contingent faculty laboring in difficult conditions, at low pay and with few or no benefits.

In Part II students designed (with my assistance) and distributed a survey to learn about other undergraduate students' knowledge of and opinions about adjunct faculty. Students in the two sections of the seminar administered the survey to 329 students in 15 classes, coded the results and entered them into an SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) data base for basic analysis. The survey instrument was kept short and simple because we would be using valuable class time volunteered by instructors (both full-time and adjuncts) teaching classes that ranged from Theater Arts to Accounting, Chemistry to Sociology. The first section of the survey solicited basic demographic information from the anonymous respondents: sex, age, major, number of semesters attending college, estimated GPA, and whether or not they worked and if so how many hours. The second section consisted of 18 statements with the request that respondents indicate for each statement whether it "always," "usually," "sometimes," or "never" applied to adjunct faculty (e.g. "Adjunct faculty have private offices"; "Adjunct faculty earn less per course than full-timers"; "Adjunct faculty are unionized"; "Adjunct faculty are eligible for parental leave," and so on.). The third and last section of the survey contained eight questions, which included a request for respondents to estimate the average level of remuneration that adjunct faculty received for teaching a 4-credit course (with choices ranging from a high of \$10,000 to a low of \$1500), the maximum number of credits they were permitted to teach at CSI per semester (5 choices ranging from "6" to "as many as they want"), and the amount of work and grading standards of courses taught by adjuncts compared to those taught by full-time faculty. The survey concluded with the statement "This class is taught by an adjunct" and a request that subjects circle or underline "yes," "no," or "I have no idea."

In Part III the class collaborated in the design of a semi-structured interview schedule, which two-person teams of student researchers employed as a guide when they interviewed adjunct volunteers. Interviewers elicited information from adjunct faculty interviewees about their educational trajectories, work and family life, relations with full-time faculty in the department in which they worked, complaints and satisfactions regarding the job, and future

plans. Each team interviewed two faculty members, trading off the roles of interviewer and note taker. Students did not tape interviews and they assigned volunteer subjects pseudonyms for purposes of anonymity. All interviewees were asked to read and sign a standard consent form that explained their rights as detailed in human subject research protocols. The class discussed research ethics on several occasions, and all students were required to present proof of having completed an on-line course on Human Subjects Research for Undergraduate Students, offered free by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program, before being allowed to administer surveys or conduct interviews. All statistical summaries from the analysis of surveys and notes from the semi-structured interviews were posted on Blackboard and made available to all students for purposes of their term papers.

I set aside roughly three weeks each for Parts II and III of the course. Students then had approximately a month in which to develop a global analysis and plan and write the final paper, worth 40 percent of the semester grade (Part IV). To summarize, Part I supplied background, Parts II and III involved collecting information, and Part IV required each class member to craft an essay based on her analysis of the survey and interview data, taking into account classroom discussion and the readings in Part I.

Upwards of 70 percent of CSI students work, averaging 28 hours weekly in order to keep up with car notes and insurance, pay cell phone bills, purchase clothing, pay for entertainment, and/or cover tuitions, books, and school supplies

That's "the skinny" on the course, though as usual the devil is in the details, a few of which merit brief mention here. Let us begin with the students. CSI is in New York City, one of nine senior colleges (in addition to the Graduate School, various community colleges, etc.) in the gargantuan CUNY system. Many parents of CSI students labor as police officers or firefighters in the public sector, in insurance or health care, as carpenters and plumbers, hairdressers and office assistants, and some own or manage one of Staten Island's countless small businesses: restaurants, hair dressing parlors, quick marts, and so on. Upwards of 70 percent of CSI students work, averaging 28 hours weekly in order to keep up with car notes and insurance, pay cell phone bills, purchase clothing, pay for entertainment, and/or cover tuitions, books, and school supplies. Portions (in a few cases, most) of the income of some, especially adult night students, go to rent, food, and utilities. Capstone courses like the one I was teaching are intended to provide students the opportunity to creatively utilize the skills and knowledge acquired and developed earlier in their college careers. However, in designing and implementing the course, I had to take into consideration the high demands that work and family make on students and the competition for their time between school, work, and family life.

Also, a significant percentage of Sociology-Anthropology students declare the major after having attempted something else, most commonly Psychology, Social Work, Nursing, Education, or Business, all majors that at CSI require students to maintain grade point averages of 2.5 to 3.0 (on a 4-point scale), which proves difficult for many working students. A summer 2014 study of more than 90 randomly selected transcripts revealed that 30 percent of Sociology-Anthropology majors had cumulative GPAs *under* 2.5. Given wide variation in background, preparation, and work and family obligations, many students found the course requirement of a 20-page final essay very challenging. Aware of this, I reserved a month at the end of the semester during which they were

in order to provide students a meaningful educational experience. During classroom discussion, many students expressed concern over the low pay, job insecurity, lack of office space, etc. that is the daily experience of adjunct faculty. However, most term papers employed a more “neutral” tone with the writers reticent to draw general conclusions.

I attribute such reticence in part to the results of the research, which demonstrated the vast range of human experiences, interests, and objectives that lay behind the “adjunct faculty” label. Only a few persons among thirty-three interviewees (between the two sections) claimed to survive exclusively on their adjunct teaching earnings,

which provide a fraction of the income needed for a minimally dignified life in one of the world’s most expensive cities. CUNY adjunct faculty are bound by a 9/6 rule that limits them to teaching 9 credit hours on any one CUNY campus and one additional course, with a maximum of 6 credit hours, elsewhere in the system during any single semester. Nine credits translate to \$10,000 to \$12,000 gross per semester, depending on adjunct faculty “rank” and the corresponding hourly pay. (Each credit hour is equivalent to 15 contact hours.) Some faculty would like to teach four or five courses each semester at CSI and complain more about the 9/6 rule than they do



DEMONSTRATION ORGANIZED BY PROFESSIONAL STAFF CUNY AND CUNY RISING ALLIANCE, 2016

to work through the final paper section-by-section. Some students were surprised at how much they had to say and took discernible pride in the result. Others agonized over the task, especially when mental and physical exhaustion set in as the end of the semester—and the long-awaited graduation—approached. I recall a May evening when one student requested permission to have pizza delivered to the classroom during the break. That day she had worked an eleven-hour shift managing the accounts of three 7/11 stores and had not eaten before coming to school for the 6:30 PM class.

Learning about adjunct faculty

The students’ relative maturity and high class standing led most students to take the interviews seriously. Every faculty interviewee who later contacted me praised the student research teams for their demonstrated professionalism. On their part, the students, for the first time in most cases, seemed to gain an appreciation for the dedication of adjunct faculty and the sacrifices they make

about the low pay, which at the time of the interview averaged \$1050 per credit hour. Those who work in more than one institution chafe against a rule that forces them to travel as “Freeway Flyers” from school to school in order to string together a sufficient number of courses to cover the cost of rent, food, and other expenses. The Professional Staff Congress (PSC) union, which represents adjunct and full-time faculty before management, supports the 9/6 rule, reasoning that it impedes administrations from replacing full-time positions with adjuncts. Many part-time faculty at CSI use teaching to complement income from a day job, pension, and/or Social Security. A few stated that they were adjuncting “between jobs” after having been let go from a failing or downsizing business in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and that they were awaiting an upturn in the economy. The underpaid labor of others was subsidized by their partners’ better-remunerated work. Indeed, in several cases, the non-academic income of spouses or partners freed up interviewees to do what they most loved—to teach. The pool of interviewees also included a few graduate students

working on doctoral dissertation projects, optimistic about their future academic job possibilities. They did not consider that soon after graduating they might be among the recent graduates who would become transformed into what Marc Bouquet referred to as “waste” in the academic system—sent to the provinces, recycled into another industry, or otherwise disposed of so as not to contaminate new cohorts of graduate students (2008, 21-27). Finally, the class learned that some contingent faculty work more for the health insurance than the pay. CUNY provides health insurance to adjunct faculty during any semester they teach 6 or more credit hours.

As students in the class learned about adjunct faculty, they also reflected on their pre-existing misconceptions, manifest in the similarity of the undergraduate survey responses to the perceptions and representations of the seminar students at the beginning of the class. I noted above that between the two sections, student-researchers surveyed 15 classes and collected 329 questionnaires. Only 15 percent of respondents thought that adjuncts “never” have a private office; half the respondents indicated that adjuncts “always” (16.4 percent) or “usually” (33.1 percent) enjoy job security; and only 1 in 5 (20 percent) understood (correctly) that they “always” earn less than full time faculty. Furthermore, over 40 percent of respondents thought that adjuncts “always” (9.1 percent) or “usually” (34.6 percent) move to full-time positions. In fact, seasoned adjuncts rarely obtain full-time faculty positions, and the few who do tend to be hired as “lecturers” at lower pay and with greater teaching responsibilities than FTTT faculty.

The 16.3 percent of student respondents that indicated (correctly) that adjunct faculty “never” get parental leave was slightly lower than the 17.3 percent that thought (incorrectly) that they “always” receive it. More than 1 in 3 respondents indicated, correctly, that adjunct faculty receive an average of \$4,200 per 4-credit course. Roughly another third selected a higher figure, either \$10,000 (9.3 percent) or \$6,500 (25.3 percent). Many adjunct activists would be pleased with \$5,000 per course, though others consider \$7,500 a more reasonable figure. Finally, close to half the students thought that adjuncts taught 50 percent or less of CSI courses. The overall percentage of courses taught by adjuncts and other contingent faculty exceeds 60 percent, rising to 75 percent or more in the departments of English, Mathematics, and World Languages and Literature.

Many survey responses illustrated that most students are poorly informed about who teaches college courses and the remuneration, benefits, and working conditions of adjuncts, who represent more than two-thirds of the faculty overall. In their rush to abolish tenure and eliminate public sector unions, conservative politicians and consultants, drawing on the work of right-wing think tanks, ignore or understate the living and working conditions of contingent faculty. We should not be surprised that so many students have internalized these views, which are seldom challenged directly by the mainstream media and are regularly reproduced by Fox News and other conservative outlets. Adjunct faculty members are not in the habit of declaring their liminal status before the students in the classes they teach. Even some activist

adjunct faculty express concern that they will not be assigned courses the following semester if they go public about the low pay, limited benefits, lack of job security, and occasionally demeaning treatment to which they have been subjected. Meanwhile, the CSI administration laments the “high” adjunct budget and regularly pressures departmental chairs to ensure that FTTT faculty “teach to the contract” (accrue the number of credit hours contractually mandated) as it simultaneously projects to the world outside the college an image of academic excellence that makes no mention of adjunct labor. Adjunct labor is a dirty little secret best kept hidden from the public!

Most students in the course gained a better understanding of adjuncts’ situations at CSI, but it is less clear that they would share that knowledge widely or act on it in the future. For one, some students acknowledged the difficulties that adjuncts confront but treated their decisions to adjunct in terms of free choices with insufficient attention devoted to unpacking the contexts within which the “freedom” is exercised. One student researcher concluded that “most if not all adjuncts desire a full time position in the world of academia. Some adjuncts are happy doing part time work while others are continuously striving for tenured positions. We learned that adjuncts in general love teaching and find it rewarding, despite the uncertainty and insecurity of the field.” The human costs of this “uncertainty and insecurity” did not come across in many essays and was understated in others. Adjuncts were older than the student researchers, and it was easy for the latter to consider the former as either satisfied with their situations (which they were in some cases—at least before the interviewers) or reaping the consequences of bad decisions—the kinds of decisions that students in the class were confident *they* would be able to avoid. The belief that the individual controls her destiny regardless of class and ethnic-racial origin and normative social circumstances runs deep in U.S. society. The course may have challenged that belief in a few circumstances but did little to dislodge it.

The belief that the individual controls her destiny regardless of class and ethnic-racial origin and normative social circumstances runs deep in U.S. society. The course may have challenged that belief in a few circumstances but did little to dislodge it.

Second, as graduating seniors most students in the course will have a limited on-campus presence in the future—though friends and younger siblings may. Sometimes I think that for political reasons this course should be moved back in the curriculum, so as to recruit students earlier in their college careers. I’ve also wondered about the potential for class solidarity between students, themselves mostly low-paid workers, and adjuncts. I did not press students as hard as I should have to draw comparisons between the work of adjuncts and the work

they (students) do, that is, to generalize from the contingent features of labor in the corporatized university to contingent labor in general. Most students in the class worked in some casualized capacity in the restaurant industry, in the service industry, or in commerce; few received health insurance, paid vacation, and other benefits. Only two or three were employed in union shops that provided basic protections against management abuses. If I teach this course again, I will consider splitting each section into two groups, with half the students focusing on adjunct faculty and the other half on another group of flexible workers, similar to class members themselves, in the private sector.

Connecting the course to adjunct struggles for better remuneration and working conditions should be one of the course's principal goals. To that end, offering the course in the fall semester and arranging public presentation of the results by the student-researchers, either in the spring undergraduate research symposium or a student government sponsored venue, would be one way of disseminating the results to a broader public. Students might also present to adjunct faculty or before the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) that represents all faculty before CUNY. The objective should be for students to share their newfound knowledge with others and deepen and expand discussion and debate around the present and future of higher education in CUNY and elsewhere, and particularly the current and future educational role of adjunct and other contingent faculty.

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RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Inventing Our University: Student-Faculty Collaboration in Critical University Studies

by Heather Steffen



GLORIA CAMPOS FROM UC SANTA BARBARA, PHOTO BY STEVE RHODES, 2013

Composition scholar David Bartholomae famously argues that “Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion...he has to invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language while finding some compromise between idiosyncrasy, a personal history, on the one hand, and the requirements of convention, the history of a discipline, on the other. He must learn to speak our language. Or he must dare to speak it or to carry off the bluff” (61). Bartholomae’s point is that learning academic writing is a trickier business than we imagine. It forces students to claim a starting point, a place of authority from which to begin “writing their way into a new community” before they have attained (or realized they possess) authority over the subject (Bartholomae 78). “Inventing the university” means re-inventing the university’s discourse over and over until the student can “appropriate (or be appropriated by)” the language of scholarly argument (Bartholomae 64). What strikes me about Bartholomae’s opening lines is the implication that somewhere out there lies “the university” and that the student’s job is to locate it and enter through the gateway of academic discourse.

In what follows, I tug at the threads of Bartholomae’s statements to explore the ways that student-faculty collaboration in critical university studies might reveal spaces of agency, knowledge, and solidarity that open up when we pause together at moments of assemblage, mimicry, and compromise. At the moments, I mean, before the university’s invention is a fait accompli, when we encounter the university as an unfinished institution and when we might “dare to speak” what we want from it, to call its bluffs, to mock rather than mimic its “requirements of convention.” I hope to show that partnering with undergraduate students in critical university studies research offers an opportunity to multiply these moments of possibility.

My interest in collaborative research grows out of my participation as a researcher and mentor on All Worked Up: A Project about Student Labor. My partners on the project are two University of California, Santa Barbara, seniors, Chelsea Brandwein and Erika Carlos, and a recent alumna, Nastacia Schmolli. Together, we are conducting a series of interviews with UCSB student workers, asking them about their jobs, career plans, educational experiences, finances, and how working affects their academic, social, and family lives. Our analysis of the interviews is qualitative and situated within critical university studies, student affairs, pedagogical studies, and public debates about higher education. As a project fusing research, writing, and social justice goals, we present our analyses in multiple modes: we are creating a website at www.allworkedup.org, writing in academic and public genres, attending conferences, facilitating workshops and community discussions, and collecting footage for a

documentary film. All Worked Up will be a multi-year project, and we are just one year in.

In this essay, I draw on my recent participation in the All Worked Up Project, my experience teaching critical university studies (CUS) and as a CUS researcher, and the scholarly literature on undergraduate research to consider what students get from and contribute to CUS. What does critical university studies offer to students? What can students bring to critical university studies? And how might such exchanges lead us beyond scholarship, enable us to build solidarity, and empower us to invent a new university, *our* university, that serves students, scholar-teachers, and its diverse publics rather than the imperatives of neoliberal capital?

Research as Learning

Undergraduate research is the object of a lively, if small, wing of education scholarship. Students have assisted faculty since the beginnings of the research university, but educators’ and administrators’ interest in undergraduate research as a pedagogical tool really intensified with the publication of the Boyer Commission’s *Reinventing Undergraduate Education* in 1998. The Boyer Report issued an imperative to reform undergraduate education to emphasize research- and inquiry-based learning. Institutions of every type responded by establishing offices of undergraduate research, hiring coordinators, and funding grants. A number of models exist for undergraduate research: independent studies, directed readings courses, research assistantships, senior theses or capstone projects, and collaborations between students and faculty. No matter the model, undergraduate research projects typically serve one or more of three purposes: to foster student learning, to contribute to the advancement of knowledge, or to assist faculty (Beckman and Hensel 43). (They may also serve activist and social justice purposes, which I discuss below.) Educators debate whether undergraduate research should be product- or process-oriented, whether the science model works in the humanities, and whether topic choice should come from students or faculty, but the pedagogical consensus is that research experiences are immensely beneficial for student learning and development.

The scholarly literature on undergraduate research demonstrates that student research promotes cognitive, social, and emotional learning, and it provides a site for the development and practice of writing, communication, and argumentation skills. It sparks interest in advanced education, improves retention of minority and at-risk students, and makes resumes stand out.¹ Student research supports genuine, sustained, one-on-one contact between faculty and students, and it erects teamwork and negotiation challenges with real stakes. It is a form of problem-posing education. When universities and professional organizations provide venues for students to share their research, they can hone presentation and



design skills and experience what it means to speak as an expert. When mentors guide students through a thesis or coauthor with them, college writers have a chance to practice the whole academic writing process, not just its rushed end-of-term analogue. They get to read and compose in the invisible but ubiquitous genres of application and review—conference abstracts, panel and workshop proposals, pitches, submission guidelines, readers’ reports, grant applications, and business emails. They learn to tackle feedback and persist through rewrites, resubmissions, and rejection. As John Orr relates, his student collaborator was struck by the duration of the revision process: “a part of her learning process was seeing the need for exhaustive revision, something that she—a very skilled undergraduate writer—was not particularly experienced in doing” (4). Student investigators begin to know “the frustrations and exhilaration we all feel as researchers” (Grobman and Kinkead xxii). Undergraduate research experiences move students from being “undergraduate writers” to writers who can speak with authority, clarity, and precision—and who know how much work that takes.

While developing investigative and communication skills, student researchers are exposed to new ways of conceptualizing knowledge, learning, creativity, and innovation as processes. They experience intense, sustained attention to an object of study or problem, getting to see what happens if you let your curiosity play out. As collaborators or principal investigators, they face the messiness of knowledge production, including the menial labor, clerical acumen, and administrative effort it requires. They have to find time in busy schedules to get research and writing done, even if it feels at times like a burdensome hobby, and they have to decide when to privilege their research over other commitments and when to let it slide. Student researchers encounter the uncertainties of inquiry, “learn to handle ambiguity,” and find out that “failure is a possible outcome,” though not necessarily a negative one (Beckman and Hensel 43; Schantz 29).

Perhaps most importantly, student researchers confront the incompleteness of knowledge. Today’s undergraduates grew up in the era of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Common Core, and Race to the Top. They should not be faulted if their concept of knowledge reflects the assessment movement’s epistemology of “predictability; quantification and comparison; standardization, transparency, and a reductive notion of democratic publics” or its emphasis on acquiring “discrete skills and pieces of information in place of genuine intellectual engagement” (Emery 259). Research experiences can undo some of this damage because they offer students what Kim Emery calls “the true key to the academic kingdom: the secret that our future is unknown, that research will reveal surprises, that difference offers a safeguard against narrow-mindedness, that incoherence is a condition of possibility, and that knowledge is neither finite nor fixed” (259). When we give students the chance to become producers of knowledge rather than consumers, we counter the neoliberal socialization of NCLB, college

applications, and lecture courses. We give students the chance to redefine themselves as meaning-making agents.

Questioning the University

Research in critical university studies may be a particularly effective site for developing student agency, because undergraduates often know more about their universities than their faculty, at times seeming to occupy an alternate institution, existing unnoticed alongside ours. (Compare for a moment the way your students use the library and what you do there.) They come to critical university studies as experts in their own right, so the task of building students’ confidence is already underway, as is their development of questions and curiosity. When I assign research projects in critical university studies courses, students investigate topics from sexual assault to compensation for athletes to affirmative action, the causes of high tuition, and support for undocumented students. Their interests understandably skew toward student life issues, but they never have trouble coming up with research questions. I am constantly reminded of how different are their immediate concerns from those of most CUS scholars. Students ask us to view the university through different lenses.

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In turn, critical university studies defamiliarizes the institution and transforms students’ everyday lives into objects of study. In a 2007 *Radical Teacher* article, Jonathan Vincent and Danny Mayer describe teaching a unit about 1960s campus activism in their writing classes and bringing students to their universities’ archives to develop projects about the protests and conflicts in which their predecessors took part. Vincent and Mayer explain that “teaching our students the histories of campus-based political radicalism and taking them to on-campus sites of struggle allowed us to work against the increasingly corporatized agendas actively recoding campuses as ‘ideologically neutral’ bastions of allegiance to social order and capitalist production.” As their students pored over photos of crowds, police lines, and draft card burnings, they came to a broader vision of “what a university campus *is* and *can be*” (Vincent and Mayer 19). Similarly, when students begin to wonder what kinds of lives their TAs, lecturers, and groundskeepers are living or when they ask why it’s so hard to get a seat in a 1,200-person lecture course, they take a step toward viewing the university as an institution built up by a series of choices made by people in particular historical, political, economic, and cultural contexts.

As I've witnessed again and again in my CUS writing classes, the immense potential of this first, questioning step often dissipates into hurried final papers and wishes for a lovely break. A one-term course does not afford time for extended analyses and the development of informed strategies to reclaim the university. But in collaborative research projects, we can find the intellectual space, resources, and dedicated time to move from questioning to analysis, critique, and collective action.

Critical University Studies as Analytical Framework

In research projects and collaborations, students get to spend a significant amount of time sitting with a problem, reading the literature on it, and possibly even producing their own data. They have time for real analysis of the problem, not just a surface-level overview of its main contours. Student researchers in critical university studies can come to understand how their own experiences are situated in the broad sweep of historical, political, economic, and cultural trends. Learning the long history of the U.S. university is critical for such projects, because the historical functions of higher education and the political and economic forces that have shaped its mission shape our expectations for today's universities.² Faculty mentors and collaborators should also be attentive to students' understanding of recent shifts that impact higher education. The historical juncture in which students find themselves is defined by the post-Fordist mode of production and by the hegemony of neoliberal thinking in politics and policy making. These two facts constrain our students' lives, but most are unable to name or explain them.

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The All Worked Up Project's interviewees, for instance, are keenly aware that they will graduate into an economy that has not bounced back from the 2008 crisis, and they recognize the historical specificity of student debt and campus diversity. But they are hard-pressed to connect their experiences with economic or political shifts that took place before 2008. As listeners and researchers, however, Chelsea, Erika, and Nastacia, are contextualizing interviewees' comments within the university's current situation. Part of the AWU project is asking how universities participate in the creation of flexible workers ready to accept insecurity and trade unpaid labor for a shot at paid employment. As our interviewees describe "side hustles" driving for Uber or working under the table to avoid losing financial aid, it is becoming clear to the AWU

team that "higher education is an instrument of its social structure, reinforcing class discrimination rather than alleviating it" (Williams).

Chelsea, Erika, and Nastacia are practicing the approach of CUS scholars. They are testing out what Jeffrey J. Williams has called the "oppositional stance" of critical university studies and exploring what insights emerge when one "turns a cold eye on higher education . . . and foregrounds its politics, particularly how it is a site of struggle between private commercial interests and more public ones." College students have a lot of chances to learn how to read texts and rhetorical acts, but it is much more challenging to teach them how to find points of articulation between a close reading and its relevant contexts. By prompting institutional analysis, critical university studies research can bridge this gap.

Undergraduate research also offers many opportunities to understand the bureaucratic workings and hierarchies of the university that surround all our pedagogical, scholarly, and extracurricular activities. Even a simple grant application can open up questions about how institutions work. When the AWU team decided to apply for a UCSB Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities (URCA) Grant, for instance, Chelsea and Erika discovered that their official faculty mentor had to be "senate faculty," and I wasn't on the list of potential mentors. Asking what that meant opened a space to talk about the different faculty ranks and why a contingent, non-senate lecturer and postdoctoral researcher like me might not be allowed to mentor students through a long-term funded research project. As Chelsea drafted the URCA grant application and, later, a proposal for the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) Undergraduate Research Poster Session, we addressed the two genres' different rhetorical situations—audiences, purposes, and contexts—and the reasons UCSB and CCCC have chosen particular modes of supporting undergraduate research. In moments like these, the AWU team is encountering the ways ideas can be shaped and structured by the demands of institutions. We are thinking together about the complicated funding and decision-making structures that always enmesh teaching and knowledge production. As part of a collaborative CUS research project, even mundane academic tasks can become opportunities to learn that "the university is [both] a discursive and material phenomenon" and how those two realms interact (Williams).

In the extended analytical space of a collaborative research project, students have the freedom to practice mixed methods research. Because critical university studies is a "cross-disciplinary" field, its work tends to "draw on research from any relevant area to approach the problem" at hand (Williams). Student researchers can explore the power of investigations that mix interpretive, quantitative, ethnographic, and archival research strategies. The core of AWU's research on student labor is our interviews, but we are also collecting data about our participants' financial situations, weekly schedules, academic achievements, and extracurricular activities that could later be used for quantitative analysis. As we move further into the project, we are performing interpretive analyses on the interviews

themselves, lining up our findings with the literature on student affairs and studies from multiple disciplines, and planning community discussions to capture faculty perspectives. Though AWU has not yet taken us to the archives, Vincent and Mayer's teaching about sixties student activism demonstrates the powerful inspirations and lessons that might be found there as well.

Critique Is a Transferable Skill

The ability to critique the work of institutions is a particularly important skill for students to gain in our present political climate. The political traction of populist distrust of government, experts, and universities makes it crucial that students be equipped to understand how institutions may serve democratic purposes while simultaneously contributing to structural racism and inequality. Learning to critique an institution means learning to distinguish its positive social functions from its damaging ones and to develop a position that avoids unwarranted generalizations like those found in mainstream political discourse.

In our work on All Worked Up, one small example of an opportunity to develop the nuances of a critique has emerged around the issue of training student workers for emotionally and physically risky campus jobs. Resident advisors (RAs) at UCSB receive intensive training in how to handle situations like excessive drinking, reports of sexual assault, and other emergencies, and they enjoy strong support from supervisors who emphasize self-care strategies, like the motto that RAs are people first, students second, and RAs third. RAs tend to feel well-equipped to deal with difficult scenarios and know how to get help when they need it.

On the other hand, when we interviewed a former Community Service Officer (CSO), one of his chief complaints about the job was lack of training. CSOs are students who work for the UC Police, acting as liaisons between police and the undergraduate community, patrolling the campus at night, following suspicious individuals, and sometimes serving as first responders to dangerous or violent events. When UCSB's neighboring student community, Isla Vista, was the site of a mass shooting, CSOs in the area were asked to aid the police in keeping order and steering students away, even before the shooter was apprehended. Our interviewee noted that he was trained for dealing with fires and mental health emergencies, but the training was limited and did not cover many situations he encountered. Despite risks and bad conditions that led him to quit, he has little hope for improvement because there are always more students applying to work as CSOs than there are jobs. Training for student workers in high-risk positions has become one of the AWU team's key areas for further investigation, and Chelsea in particular is working toward a critique of campus training protocols that asks how RA training could be used as a model for improved CSO preparation.

Building a critique of an institution and its functions forces you to define your criteria of evaluation, to envision and describe what you believe should be the university's

mission and its social roles. Undergraduate research in critical university studies provokes students' civic imagination and invites them to "develop the habit of asking 'what if' and 'why not'" (Beckman and Hensel 43). The All Worked Up Project aims to offer students (and eventually faculty as well) a forum to conceptualize a better university. We ask our interviewees how they define the "college experience," what they believe is the purpose of higher education, what they would change about it, and how faculty could better understand the lives of working students.

Today's students think a lot about what higher education can and should be, and they are hungry for chances to articulate and refine their ideas. This was brought home to me during a discussion about "Democratizing Education, Race and Privatization" held during a January 18 teach-in, the Day of Democratic Education, organized by the UC Santa Barbara Faculty Association. Diane Fujino opened the doors of her class on Asian-American social movements to students and faculty from across the university, and panelists spoke about NCLB, juvenile crime policies, and civil rights era Freedom Schools. During the Q and A, a professor in the audience suggested that we all take a few minutes to talk with a partner about our visions for higher education. Then students were invited to share their thoughts. So many hands went up that we didn't get to hear from everyone who wanted to speak, and the students who were called on had clear ideas. For example, they emphasized a desire for ethnic studies courses to take a central place in the general education curriculum and replace western-centric requirements, and they forcefully advocated for our campus to take steps to become a truly inclusive, diverse space, pointing out ways that its reality does not match its rhetoric.

The policies that are wrecking higher education— austerity budgeting, the casualization of teaching, and the exploitation of students as sources of revenue and labor, among others—have all been established by coalitions of administrators, politicians, foundations, and corporate interests who are deeply connected by shared economic interests, ideological orientations, and resource pools.

Enacting Solidarity through Citizen Professionalism

In fields with both intellectual and social justice goals, like critical university studies, radical scholar-teachers must continually look for ways to connect our research and writing to collective action. Research collaborations involving students, faculty, staff, and community members are not only important sites for learning and teaching, but

also for creating the personal relationships, networks, knowledge base, and skills required to build solidarity and enact change in the U.S. higher education system. In the struggle to reclaim the university, we are up against incredibly powerful antagonists. The policies that are wrecking higher education— austerity budgeting, the casualization of teaching, and the exploitation of students as sources of revenue and labor, among others— have all been established by coalitions of administrators, politicians, foundations, and corporate interests who are deeply connected by shared economic interests, ideological orientations, and resource pools. As Marc Bousquet has put it, “management enjoys solidarity.” To have any chance at re-inventing our universities, students, faculty, and community members must develop our own strong bonds of solidarity, pool our resources, and share our skills and knowledge.

If critical university studies scholars and their allies want to “teach for social justice,” Eric Gutstein explains, “it is important to express solidarity with one’s students and their communities, in both words *and* deeds” (“Building” 201). Meaningful political relationships with students, according to Gutstein,

Involve taking active political stands in solidarity with students and their communities about issues that matter. Political relationships also entail teachers sharing political analyses with students as much as possible. Finally, they include talking with students about social movements, involving students themselves in studying injustice, and providing opportunities for them to join in struggles to change the unjust conditions. (*Reading* 133)

When scholar-teachers invite students into the “inner sanctum” of our research and writing, and when we partner with them in their struggles, we lay the relational foundations of trust, commitment, and mutual support that enable collective action (Orr 3).

In her research on “Faculty and Staff Partnering with Student Activists,” Adrianna Kezar explores how faculty enact solidarity with student activists. She spoke with faculty from colleges spanning the institutional spectrum to discover what motivates them to partner with activists, how deeply they get involved, and how different campus contexts shape such partnerships. Kezar’s key finding is that faculty contributions to student causes do not have to be flashy or highly visible to be incredibly effective. Most faculty, Kezar discovered, prefer to partner with students in “invisible” or “moderately visible” ways that serve educational goals as well as activist purposes (471). Pursuing change in higher education through collaborative CUS research projects may attract new faculty allies, especially those without tenure, who feel more comfortable mentoring or working with undergraduate researchers than cosigning an editorial or holding a protest sign.

In fact, according to Kezar, moderately visible partnerships like collaborative research may be even more useful than turning up at a protest. In “common and everyday experiences” like these, Kezar contends, “students have the most opportunity for student development because the experiences occur regularly,

provide ongoing opportunities to practice activism, and teach students the everyday skills of being a good citizen” (476). Through behind-the-scenes connections, faculty and students can work to benefit each other. Faculty can mentor student activists in developing strategies, negotiating with administrators, and mapping campus power dynamics (Kezar 471). For their part, students can undertake certain direct actions, like occupations, boycotts, walkouts, or media appearances, that could pose significant employment risks for the contingent faculty majority (Kezar 470). By partnering with student activists in research projects, we can build not only the critical and analytical skills discussed above, but also shared bases of practical and strategic knowledge about our institutions.

In this brief discussion of the educational and political potential of student-faculty collaboration in critical university studies, I have so far left aside the important issue of power differentials between students, faculty, and other community members. I don’t have space here for the serious consideration this topic deserves, but I would like to suggest that a promising point of departure for conversations about power, knowledge, and public service in critical university studies is Harry Boyte’s concept of “citizen professionalism” (citizen in its broad, not legal, sense). A veteran of the civil rights movement, Boyte is now a scholar of public work and civic education, and an abiding concern of his research and teaching is to answer the question, “What is the role of the credentialed expert in struggles for social justice and equality?” The history of university critique gives ample evidence that academic professionals’ commitments to public service and democratic engagement can easily morph into discourses of elitism and technocracy if scholar-teachers are not sufficiently reflective.

Boyte proposes a version of politically-engaged professionalism that can serve as a model for how critical university studies scholar-teachers should interact with student researchers and our university communities. Citizen professionals, he writes, “decide to work *with* citizens”; “are proud of their knowledge and the craft of their discipline, but also know their limits”; and “recognize that solving complex problems requires many sources and kinds of knowledge” (Boyte 144). Rather than assuming that training and credentialing automatically afford accurate, objective, or privileged knowledge, Boyte’s citizen professionals seek to integrate technical and professional knowledge with the community’s values. They “learn respect for the insights of those without formal credentials,” “develop a sense of everyday politics as the negotiation of the gritty plurality of the human condition,” and “recognize their own uncertainties” (Boyte 145). As teachers, scholars, and collaborators, I believe proponents of critical university studies should strive to live up to this definition and to model an engaged, committed, and professional approach to learning, researching, and writing for both our students and our publics. If we are to rescue what is best in the university and to preserve its ability to fulfill its public mission, faculty can no longer work alone. We must meet our students where they are, help them imagine what is possible, and work with them in solidarity

and partnership to invent an institution that will be genuinely *our* university.

Coda: The All Worked Up Story

Our work on the All Worked Up Project is possible only because our team has the right combination of people, skills, commitment, and institutional support, and those have come through a combination of initiative and luck. In this coda I share how these factors work together for readers interested in taking on student-faculty collaborative research projects.

As a scholar of academic labor and the history of the U.S. university, I have wanted to investigate student labor for a while now, because it's something of a black box in both traditional higher education studies and critical university studies. In CUS, researchers have only scratched the surface of student labor and related issues. Marc Bousquet's *How the University Works* features a chapter about student workers at UPS' Louisville hub, Jeffrey J. Williams has written extensively on the ways debt affects all aspects of student life, and I have looked at the hidden curriculum of student internships.³ Chelsea planted the seed of the AWU Project with a striking autoethnographic essay on resident assistants' labor that she wrote for my fall 2015 Writing for the Humanities class. When the UC Santa Barbara Writing Program later that year announced the creation of the Raab Writing Fellowships to support undergraduate research and writing, I thought of Chelsea right away because I knew she was keen to expand her study if she could get the resources and find the time. We talked a week later, and I asked what kind of product or text she would like to work toward. Chelsea said without hesitation, "A documentary." "Let me think about it," I hedged, wondering how to find a midpoint between a feature-length film and yet another research paper.

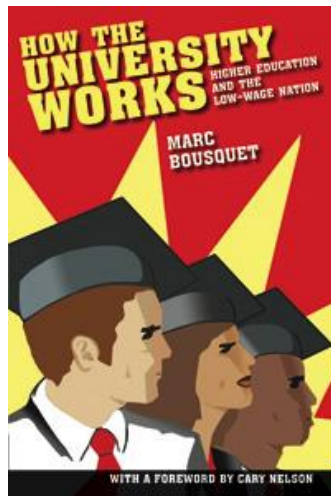
Around that time, I also talked to Erika about the project and the challenges Chelsea and I were anticipating as newcomers to multimedia writing and design. The next morning I had an email from Erika asking if she might join the team. Knowing Erika's talent and skill in multimedia from her work as the Writing Program's tech and design assistant, I was thrilled. The three of us got together, Chelsea and Erika hit it off, and we started mapping out research questions, methods, and a work plan. By the time they had drafted the fellowship application, the documentary film was back on the table, but now it was just one part of a sprawling multimodal, mixed-methods research project that would also include interviews with dozens of students, a website, presentations, and writing for popular and academic audiences.

As their faculty mentor and not having collaborated to this extent with undergraduate students before, I was a little daunted by the prospect of the next year's work. I was more daunted when we received the Raab Committee's responses—everyone was enthusiastic about the project, but the word "ambitious" appeared enough times to set my academic codeword alarms buzzing. My fears were put to rest, though, when Chelsea, Erika, and I discussed the responses. For Chelsea, Erika, and Nastacia, "ambitious" is not just a description of All Worked Up; it is a gauntlet thrown down, a welcome challenge to do more and do it better. "Ambitious" has become the fight song of the AWU team.

We began recruiting and interviewing student workers in early fall 2016. The interviews are long, about two hours each, and the conversations are sprawling. Before each interview we collect the participant's work history, academic profile, demographic data, and extracurricular commitments on an information sheet; and we choose several primary questions. Even with this preparation, we have discovered that it is almost impossible to keep the interviews on any linear or narrow track. Once students begin to talk about their work or their choice of major, they get into the backstories of their families and finances, explanations of why they work, or the reasons they're majoring in accounting rather than music (or why they're majoring in music anyway). It was during one such interview that we discovered Nastacia's difficult story and her extraordinary ability to reflect on its meaning and context, and we invited her to join the team. The interviews are videotaped, and we share them amongst our team on a secure university-provided cloud storage site.

The logistics of group research, especially when it explores an understudied area, are complicated and time consuming. Our team has been meeting for two hours a week every week this academic year and for a portion of the summer before. Each meeting has an agenda we set ahead of time, because two hours a week is a lot but it's also not really enough time together. We use the meetings for planning, goal setting, document and draft reviews, and all the minutiae of applications, travel plans, and reimbursements, most of which are new tasks for Chelsea, Erika, and Nastacia. Between meetings each team member completes several "assignments," which may be interviewing, website coding, video editing, participant recruitment, or drafting abstracts, proposals, or articles. In this way, we have managed to get a very complicated application for the use of human subjects approved by UC Santa Barbara's Institutional Review Board, submitted two successful conference proposals, been awarded multiple grants, completed twenty two-hour interviews, published ten edited videos on www.allworkedup.com, composed a research poster and workshop for faculty, and drafted a blog post and three articles.

Without the combination of independent work, constant group discussion, and collaborative writing workshops, none of us could be this productive for a



HOW THE UNIVERSITY WORKS BY
MARC BOUSQUET, NYU PRESS, 2008

project that is an add-on to our usual work. Both Chelsea and Erika are full-time students who work at least twenty hours per week. They considered taking independent studies with me to reserve time for All Worked Up, but as we looked into that option, we realized it boiled down to paying the university for research work we could do without their taking out more loans. Nastacia has four part-time jobs while she searches for full-time employment. And I am appointed as a lecturer in Writing and postdoctoral scholar in English, teaching writing and English courses, working on a book manuscript, and participating in a collaborative multi-year project for my postdoctoral research.

Most undergraduate research projects will not appear on students' transcripts without raising their tuition, and most faculty will be compensated or earn time off from regular teaching duties for mentoring or collaborating with students. Thus, in our team's opinion—and it's something we talk about a lot—scheduling tasks at a reasonable and regular pace, dividing up the interesting work and the grunt work equally, relying on each other for feedback and inspiration, and meeting weekly will likely be key to any successful, long-term student-faculty collaborative research project. To sustain energy and engagement, team members should use each other as resources, be honest about their abilities and available time, and approach writing and other creative activities with humility, enthusiasm, and the knowledge that they will turn out better with group workshopping and revision.

For the ambition toward student-faculty collaboration to come to something, institutional supports—both material and cultural—are also crucial. Our project and its outcomes thus far have been enabled by a patchwork of small grants and fellowships from different programs at UC Santa Barbara. The Writing Program's Raab Fellowships offered Chelsea and Erika \$1,000 each to use in any way that would benefit the project. With these funds, we were able to purchase microphones, memory cards, and other technical equipment required to make high-quality interview videos. They also applied for and were awarded a UCSB Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities (URCA) grant of \$400, with which we printed a poster, bought web hosting space, and purchased Adobe Creative Cloud licenses. Supplemental URCA Travel Mini-Grants of \$250 helped to pay for Chelsea and Erika to travel to Portland, OR, to present a poster on "Writing the Lives of Working College Students" at the Conference on College Composition and Communication. As a Raab Writing Fellows faculty mentor, I earned \$500 in travel funds, and I applied for a UCSB Non-Senate Faculty Professional Development Grant to cover my travel to Portland. We used most of my Raab funds to defray Nastacia's CCCC travel costs as well. Currently we are preparing to facilitate a praxis session on "Enacting Solidarity with Student Workers and Students in Debt" at the May 2017 Cultural Studies Association conference in Washington, DC. Chelsea and Erika have applied for CSA's Student Travel Grants, and I will apply for funding through the Writing Program to attend.

This is a long list of small grants, but we have discovered that there is great enthusiasm at our institution

to support student research, even though the project's collaborative nature is throwing up some roadblocks. We feel strongly that at research universities and other colleges, faculty and students should not be shy about going after funding, even arguing for the creation of new funding streams to support undergraduate inquiry. They can make all the difference in being able to achieve ambitious goals by offering both financial opportunities and recognition of the work's value. As we enter the next phases of the project—ramping up our interviewing pace, analysis, writing, and planning to begin work on the documentary in January 2018—we are encountering the challenge of seeking large external grants. Again, institutional resources are proving to be available and invaluable, as we have begun discussions with a foundation relations specialist in our development office. Though it can seem strange to reach out, humanities faculty and contingent scholar-teachers should begin making more use of such experts and resources on our campuses, especially as available public funding comes under political threat.

Most important to undertaking a project like All Worked Up might be finding oneself on a campus whose institutional culture honors not only research but student-faculty collaboration and research about students' lives. In the UCSB Writing Program—which is staffed almost entirely by NTT lecturers who teach full-time—we have found all these factors, as well as colleagues who demonstrate interest in our work, support Chelsea and Erika to write about student labor in their courses, and respect my research about students as just as valuable as research on any other topic. Further, the job security I enjoy, even if it comes in two-year contracts, was a determining factor in my decision to take the risk of devoting so much time to an "extra" project.

Moving forward, the AWU team hopes to publish and present our findings in a number of venues and modes. Chelsea, Erika, and Nastacia have plenty of experience writing argumentative essays for coursework, and they are all planning careers they know will incorporate a lot of writing. They want to practice genres they know (personal narratives, blog posts, and creative nonfiction), but they also want to stretch and try out new modes of communicating in academic articles, research posters, long-form multimodal and online essays, biographies, interviews, and, of course, documentary film. Chelsea, Erika, and Nastacia are all working on article drafts right now, writing in genres from news stories to memoirs to advice columns, and they just published a coauthored essay, "Conference Call: Putting Academic Research into Practice," on UCSB's Undergraduate Research blog.

The topics and questions coming up in the interviews have both confirmed our hypotheses and brought to light issues that Chelsea, Erika, and Nastacia have not encountered as students and that I have not found in the literature. We hope to add new dimensions to the existing scholarly and public conversations around student debt, the difficulties faced by new graduates on the job market, time management, self-care for student activists, and the gig and sharing economies. New questions we want to raise for community members and critical university studies scholars primarily revolve around the centrality of

experiences of inequality in the lives of students. Our interviews are revealing a stark and somewhat unsurprising divide between students with financial support from their parents and those who depend on grants, scholarships, loans, and their income to pay for tuition and living expenses.

What has surprised us, however, are the different ways this inequality impacts students: For instance, many of our Chicana and Latina interviewees are supporting their families while attending school, either financially or with caregiving labor. The traditional responsibility to take care of one's spouse and children later in life weighs heavily on some students, most of whom are cis straight men, and they worry that this responsibility will be more difficult for them to meet than it was for their parents' generation. Several of our women interviewees have narrated experiences of sexual assault and harassment with calm, strength, and wisdom, but when we ask about their debt, they break down and cannot finish sentences. The picture of today's undergraduate workers emerging from the All Worked Up Project at times confirms CUS scholars' worst fears about student life in the neoliberal university, but it also reminds us that students are capable of incredible resilience, tenacity, creativity, and power. The job facing the AWU team now is to communicate this picture in all its complexity.

Notes

1. On the learning and development benefits of undergraduate research, see Mary Beckman and Nancy Hensel, "Making Explicit the Implicit: Defining Undergraduate Research"; Lisa A. Burke and Monica K. Cummins, "Using Undergraduate Student-Faculty Collaborative Research Projects to Personalize Teaching"; Joyce Kinhead, "Learning Through Inquiry: An Overview of Undergraduate Research"; Biren A. Nagda, et al., "Undergraduate Research Partnerships Affect Student Retention"; and Reed Wilson, "Researching 'Undergraduate Research' in the Humanities."
2. See Jeffrey J. Williams, "History as a Challenge to the Idea of the University."
3. See Williams, "Debt Education" and "The Pedagogy of Debt"; and Steffen, "Student Internships and the Privilege to Work."

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The CUNY Digital History Archive

Consonant with the theme of this issue of *Radical Teacher*, this essay will indicate some of the ways various historical sources contained in the CUNY Digital History Archive (CDHA)¹ might be utilized by teachers and students to help them undertake critical study of the history of their own college or university system. In 2013, a group of City University of New York (CUNY) faculty, staff, librarians, digital producers, historians, and students met to consider how to study, collect and preserve CUNY's history. The American Social History Project provided an institutional home for CDHA, with Andrea Vasquez serving as Project Director; I serve as Project Historian.² Our goal was to create a publicly accessible resource that could help convey the rich history of the largest urban public university in the country (and the third largest public university system in the United States). Four years later it has become a robust and growing digital archive that contains more than 450 discrete items and a dozen collections. Scores of contributors, curators, archivists, retirees, and CUNY librarians as well as students from the Graduate Center's programs and the Queens College Graduate School of Library and Information studies have made up the ever-widening group working on CDHA.

The CDHA is designed as an open, participatory digital public archive and portal that gives the CUNY community and the broader public online access to digitized archival materials related to the long and consequential history of what became the City University of New York. It can be approached in several ways, including chronologically, institutionally via specific collections, and thematically. Over the past three years we have worked to create and contextualize a range of documents and collections on topics as diverse as:

- the free speech struggles at CCNY in the 1930s;
- the evolution of the free tuition policy at the municipal colleges and, after 1961, at CUNY, and the relationship of free tuition to the demographics of student admissions at CUNY in the 1960s;
- the battle for Open Admissions across CUNY in 1969-70;
- the creation and survival of new CUNY colleges (e.g., Medgar Evers and Hostos colleges);
- the rise of the Women's Studies program at Brooklyn College in the 1970s;
- academic unionization efforts; and
- ongoing student activism to fight state budget cuts.

We believe that open and flexible online access to materials that document the history of CUNY—including collections only available on the CDHA site as well as digital links to existing online resources and collections held at

several CUNY libraries and archives—provides teachers, students, researchers, and the public with a vital resource. The archive makes possible an examination of the larger meaning of the City University's history in the context of the history of the city, state, and nation and can also be used creatively in classrooms to teach various aspects of CUNY's past. In addition, the CDHA team plans to ask teachers, students, and researchers to participate in and curate the ongoing development and production of new collections and historical resources that can be used to integrate CUNY's history into a range of social science and humanities courses taught across CUNY at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.³

In what follows I will explore some of the rich history of NYC's public colleges and the special contribution that CUNY has made over the past half century to the development of democratic and open pedagogy in higher education.⁴ I will highlight several examples of collections and resources currently available in the CDHA archive and portal that either have been or can be used by teachers and students interested in learning more about CUNY's history and its connection to contemporary issues in public higher education. I will also briefly describe several innovative digital programs and initiatives that have helped catapult CUNY to the forefront of the development of digital and open pedagogy in higher education nationally and even internationally over the past half dozen years.

The History of New York City's Municipal Colleges

A dozen years before the Civil War the city of New York made a singular educational and political commitment. Its citizens embraced the concept of public, tuition-free, and municipal taxpayer-supported higher education. Approved overwhelmingly by a referendum of city voters, the Free Academy, initially a preparatory high school, opened its downtown Manhattan campus in 1847; the Free Academy changed its name to The College of the City of New York (familiarily known as CCNY) in 1866. Its mission, in the words of its first president, Horace Webster, was simply stated in 1849:

The experiment is to be tried, whether the children of the people, the children of the whole people, can be educated; and whether an institution of the highest grade can be successfully controlled by the popular will, not by the privileged few.⁵

The children of the whole people for most of CCNY's first century were almost exclusively white middle-class and working-class young men. They were drawn in the school's first half century from the city's public schools in older immigrant neighborhoods, especially the German and Irish ones, as well as areas of the city where native-born New Yorkers resided. The direct link between the city's public schools and its municipal colleges was therefore established at the outset and the two systems' fates remained wholly intertwined: how well CUNY undergraduates did and continue to do in college was and remains in the present closely tied to the quality of the primary and secondary school education they received in

the New York City public schools. City College was joined in 1870 by the Normal College of the City of New York (Hunter College after 1914), which educated, also tuition free, young women to become teachers in the city's public schools.

New York City's dramatic population growth and ethnic transformation beginning in the late 19th century (especially the huge influx of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe) changed the demographic characteristics of the student body in CCNY and Hunter and pushed the city's Board of Higher Education (established by the state legislature in 1926 to govern the two municipal colleges) to expand beyond its two Manhattan-based campuses. New four-year colleges were approved by the state legislature and launched in Brooklyn in 1930 and Queens in 1937.

The city government continued to make a substantial and sustained investment of municipal tax dollars in its public higher education system in the decades prior to World War II, paying more than 90 percent of the system's total operating costs out of the city's tax coffers. Beginning in the 1930s the four tuition-free senior college campuses now admitted young men and women together, almost all of whom were white. Admission to the municipal colleges was based on high school class rankings and grades and remained tuition free for full-time day students (part-time and evening students paid tuition). That meritocratic system would face significant demographic, financial, and political challenges, however, in the post-World War II era.

The postwar years witnessed an enormous expansion across the country of state-based public higher education systems, including both senior and community colleges. The State of New York finally created its own state university system (SUNY) in 1948, making it almost the last state in the Union to do so. SUNY would not be significantly expanded, however, for another decade when Nelson Rockefeller became governor in 1959. Following the fourteen years of the Rockefeller governorship SUNY had grown from a handful of colleges to nearly 60 campuses across the state, enrolling more than 350,000 undergraduates, making it the largest state university system in the country.

While the rest of the country aggressively built community colleges to meet the spiraling postwar public demand for higher education access, the Board of Higher Education and New York City, which was still responsible for providing the lion's share of funding for its four municipal colleges, did so only reluctantly. The first municipal community college in New York City finally opened on Staten Island in 1955, with two more to follow in the Bronx and Queens over the next four years. And unlike the full-time students who attended the senior colleges tuition free, community college students were initially required to pay tuition.⁶

The Founding of CUNY

In 1961 Governor Rockefeller and the state legislature, in response to growing demographic and political pressures in the city, agreed to combine the seven existing senior

and community municipal colleges into a single entity, the City University of New York. New York State also agreed to provide substantial operating funding for CUNY's senior colleges beginning in 1960 as well as much-needed capital funding to allow the new CUNY system to begin to build new campuses. CUNY did manage to open nine new college campuses over the course of the decade following its creation in 1961.

Though the city's municipal college system continued to be lauded in the 1950s and 1960s as the "the poor man's Harvard," especially because it remained tuition free, the New York City public colleges, despite state support, could not expand sufficiently or quickly enough to meet the skyrocketing demand for higher education among the city's population, as SUNY had begun to do statewide. Totalling nearly 8 million residents, New York City experienced a major demographic transformation in the postwar era, with nearly one million African Americans and Puerto Ricans replacing an equal number of white New Yorkers who had moved out of the city to nearby suburbs during the 1950s and 1960s.

Despite these demographic pressures, as late as 1964 CUNY's *total* undergraduate enrollment remained relatively small at only 49,000 students (SUNY's enrollment, by comparison, already reached 138,000 by 1967, only eight years after the Rockefeller administration undertook to expand it). But despite its efforts to build new campuses as the decade of the 1960s unfolded, CUNY remained a largely exclusive enclave, requiring an ever-higher high school average to secure entry into the system's senior colleges (a 92 high school average, or an A-, was needed to gain admission to CCNY, for example, in 1965) and even to gain admission to its community colleges. That continuing exclusivity helped assure that the municipal colleges remained overwhelmingly white (undergraduates attending Brooklyn College as late as 1968, for example, remained 96 percent white), increasingly middle class, and largely Jewish throughout the 1960s.

CUNY's second chancellor, Albert Bowker, understood the impending demographic changes and pressures that the CUNY system now faced, not only from the large number of the city's baby boomers demanding access to its public colleges but also from the insistent calls of Black and Puerto Rican New Yorkers for increased access to the city's still exclusive public institutions of higher education. Those political pressures were especially acute in Brooklyn, where community activists and parents argued that CUNY's proposed expansion plans needed to include poor and working-class communities of color. That pressure led ultimately to successful efforts, beginning in 1966-67, to form "Community College No. 7" (which would later become Medgar Evers College) in the Bedford-Stuyvesant community of central Brooklyn. The CDHA contains a major collection of 33 items on the "Founding of Medgar Evers College," developed by CUNY emerita professor Florence Tager (see screenshot below). CUNY faculty at Medgar Evers College (MEC) and elsewhere can use this CDHA collection of primary sources materials (including reports, memos, letters, and telegrams as well a short history of the founding of the college) to explore the special connection that MEC had and continues to have with the

Bedford-Stuyvesant community and the political and institutional struggles undertaken by community residents, faculty and students to force the CUNY central administration to launch and sustain the college in its early years.



writing has been carried forward in our own time by a number of dedicated doctoral student writing fellows who are part of the thriving CUNY composition and rhetoric community of scholars. One great resource to explore that early history is English doctoral student (and now William Paterson University faculty member) Sean Molloy's website of oral history interviews with early SEEK pioneers.⁹ We have invited Sean to work with us to curate a special CDHA collection that features his oral history interviews, in this case using the CDHA as an open portal to allow CUNY Composition teachers to access Sean's oral history interviews with early SEEK instructors as well as other documents to sharpen and deepen their own pedagogical practice in their Composition classrooms.

The Struggle for Open Admissions at CUNY

SEEK's innovative qualities and lasting impact could only support a relatively small number of new CUNY undergraduates in the 1960s, however. The BHE and Bowker had assumed they had until 1975 to fully transform CUNY's admissions policies and remedial teaching practices to adjust to the city's changing ethnic and racial make-up. But they were, in fact, sailing toward a major confrontation between growing public demand for public higher education access and anger over continuing racial and class inequalities on the one hand, and the still deficient supply of CUNY instructors as well as campus facilities on the other. This confrontation would play out on many CUNY campuses during the 1969 spring term in a fight for Open Admissions that would reshape the look and very purpose of CUNY. The larger implications of that struggle are felt throughout the system to this very day.

The decade of the 1960s was marked by widespread social and political turmoil centered on the historic struggles for voting and human rights in the South and calls for racial justice in the North and West, including major confrontations over desegregation of public institutions, alongside battles to end the deeply unpopular war in Vietnam. Much of this militancy was the result of student activism centered in the colleges and universities across the country. In the spring of 1969 this wave of student activism swept across CUNY as students of color and their white allies fought for broader access for all New York City residents to public higher education.

Students of color across the CUNY system, inspired in part by the intensification of the civil rights struggles and urban unrest and by a wider embrace in the 1960s of Black Power, ethnic pride, and grassroots activism, mobilized during the spring 1969 term. They organized to defend and expand both the modest presence that students of color had managed to attain in CUNY as well as remedial programs such as SEEK that had helped support minority student success. The growing gulf between increased political demands for access to college education and the CUNY system's restrictive admissions policies could be traced, in part, to endemic political resistance to allocating sufficient city and state monies to fund CUNY's expansion. But it also can be traced to the entrenched commitment to

CUNY Chancellor Bowker had already begun to pressure CUNY's BHE to adopt an "open admissions" policy, guaranteeing a seat somewhere in CUNY for every New York City high school graduate. That open admissions policy, finally approved by the board in 1966, was not scheduled to officially take full effect until 1975, however.

At the same time, Bowker also helped sustain a series of innovative pedagogical experiments at CUNY. He supported the launch of two nationally renowned remedial education programs—College Discovery and SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge)—to provide needed educational support and assistance to students entering CUNY from the city's troubled K-12 system academically underprepared to undertake college-level work. Especially important was the SEEK program's approach at CCNY to teaching what was called "basic writing" to students of color. The CCNY SEEK program's responsive pedagogy was the brainchild of legendary CUNY writing teacher Mina Shaughnessy, who hired talented writers and poets, including June Jordan, Tony Cade Bambara, Adrienne Rich, and Audre Lorde, to work with the new cadre of students of color entering CCNY after 1966.

SEEK's responsive pedagogy developed in these years helped motivate a generation of composition and rhetoric students at CUNY and beyond and inspired the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program that CUNY launched at the turn of the 21st century.⁷ WAC and SEEK continue to this day to spark curricular innovation across the CUNY system, including exciting new forms of digital pedagogy in undergraduate instruction through the [CUNY Graduate Center's Writing Fellows program](#) and the [Interactive Technology Fellows program at the Macaulay Honors College](#).⁸ The history of SEEK's approach to teaching

the idea of meritocracy that rewarded the best and the brightest (which, in practical terms, meant the whitest) with tuition-free access to CUNY's colleges, despite the institution's historic claims to want to "educate the children of the whole people." In response to this profound disjuncture over the meaning and purpose of taxpayer-supported public higher education in New York City, early in the 1969 spring semester African American and Puerto Rican students at the City College of New York demanded that the college administration create special programs to meet the needs of entering Black and Puerto Rican undergraduates, including the development of new black and Puerto Rican studies programs; the continued underwriting of existing academic support programs such as SEEK; and the admission of larger numbers of Black and Puerto Rican students to CUNY. The Black and Puerto Rican students at CCNY were soon joined by fellow CUNY students, both those of color as well as white students, in open conflicts that erupted across the CUNY system.

A series of mass rallies and physical confrontations over the next several months culminated in student strikes and building occupations at CCNY, Brooklyn College, Queens College, and Bronx Community College and the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC). New York City police were called in on several campuses to retake occupied buildings by force. Boycotts of classes quickly followed, led by students of color, and supported by many white students and faculty members, disrupting the remainder of the spring 1969 term. Several CUNY campuses were patrolled by the police for the remainder of the spring term.

The Early Years of Open Admissions at CUNY

CUNY administrators, who were in active negotiation with student protesters as well as the city's political leaders, were under intense pressure to respond to the striking CUNY students' demands. Mayor Lindsay and Chancellor Bowker quickly announced their support for dramatically expanded access to CUNY. The BHE voted to accelerate its original timetable and implement the CUNY Open Admissions plan immediately in the fall of 1970, five years ahead of schedule. Earlier steep barriers and formal academic requirements for admission to CUNY were lifted, guaranteeing every city high school graduate a seat somewhere in the CUNY system (dependent still on high school class ranking). The primary goal of the BHE's decision was nothing less than "the ethnic integration of the university," in the words of the BHE's resolution accelerating Open Admissions, a striking change from the meritocratic ideal that had defined the municipal colleges for the previous 120 years. To help convey the impact of this striking expansion of the CUNY system, the CDHA has conducted several oral history interviews with CUNY faculty members who participated in the struggles for Open Admissions across the CUNY system. One such interview, with full transcription (see screenshot below), was completed with long-time BMCC faculty members Bill Friedheim and Jim Perlstein (now both retired) who joined the faculty of the Manhattan Community College (later

named BMCC) in 1968. Both taught at BMCC for more than 45 years.



This shift toward an Open Admissions policy essentially remade the CUNY system overnight. The rapidity of the change and the breadth of CUNY's actions in support of open admissions were unprecedented steps in American public higher education and served as a model nationally and even internationally. In Fall 1970 the first "Open Admissions" entering class was 75 percent larger than the previous year's; one year later Black and Puerto Rican student enrollment in CUNY's colleges was already 24 percent of the total as contrasted to half that number a year earlier. White, working-class students, many of Italian and Irish descent, who had been unable to gain admission under the old, highly restrictive admissions standards, also benefitted from CUNY's new Open Admissions policy. By 1975, CUNY had created a much more racially and ethnically diverse pool of 253,000 matriculating undergraduates (a 55 percent increase in total enrollment since 1969), all of whom attended tuition-free if they were enrolled full-time. CUNY had also agreed to the development of a series of ethnic and Black Studies programs and centers on many of its campuses (including at CCNY, Brooklyn College, Hunter College, and Queens College and the Borough of Manhattan Community College), which contributed substantially to the growth of more diverse university curricula and programs nationally. CUNY had thus thrust itself to the forefront of national efforts to make tuition-free public college education available to any high school graduate who wished to attend college, to remake the traditional curriculum with broader, more inclusive attention to questions of diversity and identity, and to continue its pioneering remedial education programs. Once again it should be noted that not only CUNY but also the contemporary American university as a whole could trace many current policies to those consequential decisions about access and curricular transformation at CUNY in the late 1960s.

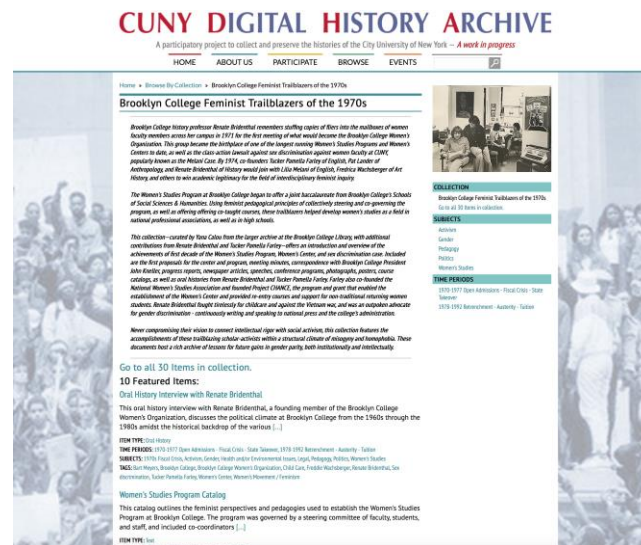
With this critical era in mind, I am using the CDHA in the history of public education seminar that I am teaching this semester (Spring 2017) for first-year doctoral students

in the Urban Education PhD program at the Graduate Center. We will spend two class sessions near the end of the term discussing the long history of the city's municipal college system and then the creation of CUNY in 1961, using as a basic text the two historical chapters (chapters 2 and 3) on CUNY in Mike Fabricant's and my recent book, *Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2016) as well as primary source materials either contained in the CDHA's eight historical periods or available through CDHA's direct links to digital source materials (for example, campus-based student newspapers) held by various CUNY archives and libraries. For their final paper in the doctoral seminar the students will be asked to use CDHA resources to research the creation and/or subsequent development after 1961 of one or several campuses in CUNY or the central CUNY system as a whole, to find and examine other historical documents and oral history interviews held at various CUNY libraries (e.g., CCNY, Hunter, Hostos, and LaGuardia Community College's Wagner Archives), and then to write a 15 to 20 page research paper on various historical issues or developments relevant to the evolution of that campus or the CUNY system. These topics could include student, faculty, and/or staff activism; curricular innovations, local community input and struggles, or local or city-wide administrative and political action or inaction that encouraged or hampered institutional or pedagogical developments and transformations. The learning objective is for doctoral students to incorporate historical thinking and primary historical sources and methodologies into the ways they understand and write about the history of higher education.

Despite CUNY's demonstrated successes and important steps toward democratic inclusiveness, opposition to its transformative Open Admissions policy quickly emerged. The opponents ranged from traditional faculty members who lamented Open Admissions while nostalgically recalling CCNY's "high standards" and reputation as the "poor man's Harvard," to conservative politicians, ideologues, and business leaders in New York and across the country vehemently opposed to expanded use of public funds to pay for publicly supported higher education. These conservative voices were soon amplified by breakdowns in the implementation of the Open Admissions system in its first few years, ruptures that could be traced to the persistent inadequacy of state and city funding that had hampered CUNY's ability to meet the educational needs of a newer, much larger, and academically more challenged student population. Despite facing such immediate and long-term challenges, Open Admissions remained a triumph. It had helped transform CUNY into the most open and perhaps most envied higher education system in the country by the early 1970s.

One measure of that triumph was the spread of Black, Puerto Rican, and Women's Studies programs across the CUNY system after 1970. One of those pioneering programs was launched by women faculty members at Brooklyn College (BC) in 1971. BC librarian Yana Calou has curated a CDHA collection of more than 30 items, drawn from BC archives, including oral history interviews with BC Women's Studies pioneers Renata Bridenthal and Tucker

Pamela Farley, that conveys the struggles of women faculty members, in the face of strong institutional opposition, to establish both the Women's Studies Program and Center at the college.



Despite Open Admissions (or perhaps in part because of it), CUNY continued to suffer enormous budgetary constraints and deficits throughout the 1970s. One result of this underfunding was that two-thirds of the students, many of them poor and working-class, who entered CUNY in the early 1970s left the system within four years of admission without graduating, a problem we continue to have at CUNY to this day. Faculty workloads varied widely among CUNY campuses and the number of adjunct faculty hired across the system also increased dramatically. By 1974, adjunct faculty comprised one in three of the teachers at CUNY, especially at the newer senior and community colleges, again a situation that has only worsened four decades later in CUNY today, where more than half of the undergraduate teaching is done by contingent academic labor.

The 1976 New York City Fiscal Crisis and Its Impact on CUNY

These fault lines and tensions inside CUNY intensified as state and city officials sought to rein in CUNY spending in the mid 1970s and get the BHE finally to impose tuition on CUNY undergraduates. The battle between the state and city forces over CUNY's budget seasawed for several years without clear resolution until the worldwide economic crisis that began in 1973 with the OPEC oil shock, which wreaked havoc on the overall U.S. economy, especially New York City's.

Mayor Abe Beame announced massive layoffs of city workers in 1975-76, targeting many of the city's innovative social experiments. The expanding CUNY system and the now 130-year old free tuition policy were especially vulnerable. One prominent example, drawn from the CDHA, would be Hostos Community College, which opened

in 1970. Longtime Hostos faculty member Gerry Meyer has gathered a collection of more than 60 items detailing various battles throughout the 1970s fought successfully by Hostos faculty, students and the surrounding Puerto Rican community to "Save Hostos!" (as they called their movement) from sharp funding cuts and even total elimination of the college.



In June 1976, with CUNY's budget in tatters after a failed effort to get the federal government to provide a bailout, the Board of Higher Education finally approved the imposition of tuition on CUNY's full-time students in exchange for a total state takeover of senior college finances (the community colleges would still largely be carried on the City's budget). The silver lining in this dark cloud was that the state had finally accepted the argument that city politicians had made since the early 1960s that CUNY senior colleges should receive state financial support comparable to SUNY's four-year schools. Despite the state takeover, all capital construction at CUNY was halted and nearly 5,000 faculty and staff members were laid off, albeit temporarily. While formal Open Admissions at CUNY remained in place for more than two decades after 1976, the decision to charge tuition and tighten admissions standards, especially at the senior colleges, dramatically eroded the underpinnings of CUNY's truly open admissions policy. The abandonment of free tuition was tied to a resurgence of major obstacles facing the city's poor and working-class residents to secure access to public higher education, including diminished public support and growing poverty in the city. It is hardly an accident that CUNY's free tuition entitlement ended a short half dozen years after the institution opened its doors to large numbers of students of color.

One powerful pedagogical possibility is to use the CDHA to link CUNY's past history with its present circumstances. One of our CUNY colleagues, Marcia Newfield, an adjunct instructor at BMCC, employed this approach. She had two of her freshmen English intensive writing courses in Fall 2016 read and discuss several recent newspaper articles (including my own piece¹⁰) considering calls for a return of free tuition at CUNY (which ended after

the 1976 fiscal crisis). Marcia then asked her students to choose two of the eight historical periods included on the CDHA website, study the primary historical materials available on those two historical periods, and write in response to the following question: "What part did struggle play in creating changes in CUNY?" (see Appendix A for the full assignment). The BMCC students were then asked to consider what future struggles might be necessary for CUNY students to engage in (and, as Marcia reported, many responded that the fight for free tuition was now essential).¹¹

What happened at CUNY over the next four decades, though that is a story that can and should be told and must be linked to the broader history of public higher education in the contemporary era, exceeds the bounds of this essay. We are hopeful that the CDHA will continue to collaborate with CUNY faculty, staff and students in the coming years to develop collections of digital materials for the archive related to the post-1976 fiscal crisis era at CUNY, including creating lesson plans and pedagogical approaches to teaching about CUNY's past. Suffice it to say, CUNY and its students, faculty, and staff have struggled right down to the present with straitened financial circumstances brought on by uncertain state and city budget allocations and the antagonism of various governors, including the current one, Andrew Cuomo, toward CUNY and its unique public educational mission to serve the needs of a diverse urban constituency. Such fiscal uncertainty and political hostility, tied to increased use of exploited adjunct faculty, decaying physical structures, and regular attacks from conservative and neoliberal politicians and policy mavens intent on undermining CUNY's radical experiment in democratic, public higher education, have converged at this especially fraught moment in the City University's history and in the broader history of public higher education institutions and systems across the country. Nonetheless, the history of CUNY sketched above hopefully reminds us that only through a commitment to progressive ideas, mass action, political will and organization, and, last but certainly not least, innovative forms of teaching and learning, can an institution like CUNY be sustained and enhanced in the coming decades.

Appendix A

English Intensive Writing: Fall 2016 – BMCC, CUNY. Marcia Newfield/adjunct lecturer

I encourage you to write all three essays/responses separately. Then show them to me for feedback. Then combine them into one essay.

Response 1. Journal: Your experience of education so far.

Response 2. Readings: Stephen Brier, "Free College for All: An Idea Whose Time Has Come (Again)," (www.independent.org #213, March 4, 2016); *NY Times* Opinion Room for Debate, "Should College Be Free?" (January 20, 2016)

Essay: What is the argument for free tuition and how persuasive are the arguments against making education free? Interview someone who has gone to CUNY or another college to find out what they know and where they stand on public higher education.

Response 3. Readings: CUNY Digital History Archive (cdha.cuny.edu)

Essay: Compare two periods in CUNY's history. What part has struggle played in the history of CUNY? How have these struggles created change? What do you think is next?

Notes

¹ <http://cdha.cuny.edu/>.

² I'd like to thank Andrea Vasquez for her thoughtful suggestions and edits on an earlier draft of this article.

³ Anyone interested in contributing digital material to the CDHA or curating a special collection should contact Chloe Smolarski, Collection Coordinator, at cuny.dha@gmail.com.

⁴ The history of CUNY that follows is drawn from Michael Fabricant and Stephen Brier (2016). *Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press), 50-57; 65-72; 80-88.

⁵ <http://www.nycbar.org/member-and-career-services/committees/reports-listing/reports/detail/part-1-remediation-and-access-to-educate-the-children-of-the-whole-people>.

⁶ Mayor Robert Wagner would finally remedy the inequity in 1965 when he eliminated tuition charges for CUNY's community college students.

⁷ A report on the initial decade of WAC work that describes the origin and evolution of the program can be found here: https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/ue/wac/WAC_10YearReportJune2010.pdf.

⁸ Information on the Graduate Center's Writing Fellows program can be found at: <https://www.gc.cuny.edu/About-the-GC/Provost-s-Office/Governance,-Policies-Procedures/Detail?id=4936>; information on the Macaulay Instructional Technology Fellows program can be found at <http://www.macaulay.cuny.edu/academics/technology.php>.

⁹ <https://compcomm.commonsgc.cuny.edu/cuny-oral-histories/>.

¹⁰ <https://indypendent.org/2016/03/04/free-college-all-idea-whose-time-has-come-again>.

¹¹ Email communication, Marcia Newfield with the author, February 14, 2017.



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RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

What Do We Rank When We Rank Colleges? Who Determines How and Who Benefits?: Student Empowerment and the Development of Alternative College Rankings

by Douglas Schuler



GLOBAL HUNT FOR CIVIC INTELLIGENCE AT THE MARCH FOR SCIENCE, PHOTO BY ALLAN NYARIBO

Introduction

This story began when my students and I at the Evergreen State College began looking into college rankings. We started this inquiry more or less because of an article on the "Smartest Colleges." As a faculty member (and alumnus) at a non-traditional liberal arts college I am aware that we do things differently and consequently I look somewhat dubiously on conventional ranking systems for colleges. With the class focus on "civic intelligence," approaches that purport to measure abstract social concepts can be relevant to us, especially if they could help us in furthering our understanding of civic intelligence. This short article describes how that somewhat casual initial inquiry led to a more purposeful project with substantial goals far beyond our pay grade. It highlights several of the interesting aspects of our project and its implications for educational activities in the classroom and beyond.

What is the Value of Colleges and Universities?

Every year 20 million people apply to colleges in the United States. To help them identify the schools they'd like to attend many of the hopefuls consult one or more rankings. Although there are many alternatives (such as Greenest Colleges, Best Party Schools, Best Value Colleges, and Colleges That Change Lives) many, if not most, people turn to the *US News and World Report's* (USNWR) annual college rankings ("The Best Colleges") as their go-to guide.

When we dig deeper into how these ratings are devised we uncover some interesting factoids. Stanford University (and Alice Lloyd College, a small Christian school in rural Kentucky), for example, lead the United States in the percentage of applicants they reject (95%). Harvard's alumni harvest is the most impressive (\$650 million in 2015) and MIT graduates tend to earn the highest salaries right after graduation (\$110,200 annually on the average).

Although all of that information is actually factored into the ratings, we may ask (as many *Radical Teacher* readers have undoubtedly also asked) how much it actually tells us about which colleges are "best"? And best for whom? Without actually thinking about it, many people accept information like this as meaningful, legitimate, and authoritative when they rely on college rankings to make important decisions.

While the need to simplify the process of college selection for potential applicants is real, the reliance on approaches like the USNWR's may be problematic. For one thing, these rankings may be failing to advise students thoughtfully. The damage, however, may be more broadly significant: degrading our vision of education, perpetuating social privilege, skewing education towards a market orientation away from public problem-solving, and helping, even, to discourage real learning in schools and classrooms—including, for one thing, downplaying the educational importance of time not spent in classrooms.

Civic Intelligence at Evergreen

Over the years my attention has been increasingly drawn to the question of how groups of all types and sizes, from a handful of people to entire countries or the world, address shared problems. There is no question that some groups do this better than others. For over a decade I've been using civic intelligence as the name of that social capacity or phenomenon. The "amount" of civic intelligence the group has is reflected by the extent that they succeed in addressing problems they face efficiently and equitably and that they have the knowledge, skills, attitudes, social relations, and other resources that are likely to be useful in the face of future challenges (Schuler, 2001). Civic intelligence exists to some degree in all groups and to the degree that it is applied will determine how humankind addresses issues such as climate change, whether wars can be avoided, and how equitable societies are. Thus the quantity and quality of civic intelligence will determine quality of life and possibly even survival itself.

Over the years as my students and I considered civic intelligence the more we realized that studying it was not enough. Civic intelligence must actually be practiced through thought and action if a deep understanding of its potential, challenge, and significance is to be realized. One implication of this is that we ask questions and seek answers rather than just read about cases in a book. Hence we frequently look at our own circumstances, including how education is approached at our own school, the Evergreen State College. Evergreen is a public liberal arts college in Olympia, Washington whose basic philosophy of interdisciplinary studies integrates theory and practice and is strongly rooted in the progressive education tradition of John Dewey, Jane Addams, and others. Evergreen strives to serve non-traditional and other marginalized groups and approximately 50% of Evergreen's students are at or below the federal poverty line.

Evergreen Students Tackle Ranking

As part of our exploration a few years back in our Social Innovation and Civic Intelligence program, which looked at various ways that social reforms were enacted, my students and I became acquainted with a recent news story on the "Smartest Colleges" in the United States. The study was conducted by Lumosity, a "brain training" company. The "smartest" college designation, which was determined by how well students performed on a variety of online puzzles, was awarded to MIT, with Harvard and Stanford the first and second runners up. I prepared a short presentation to help us understand and critique the various approaches to college rankings. As we dug deeper into this we were somewhat surprised to see the often flimsy foundations (generally invisible and unquestioned) for products that had such profound implications. It was also illuminating to learn about the sporadic shenanigans of colleges in their struggle for higher scores (waiting to accept students with lower GPAs until after the rankings had been published, for example).

Looking deeper at the individual indicators that are used to support the ranking revealed that many of them

help enforce social norms such as individualism, privilege, and elitism. We couldn't help but notice that many of the indicators were biased against Evergreen's philosophy but also against the circumstances of many of our students. One of the dubious elements is the use of the alumni giving rate. In some of the rankings this directly equates the quality of the school with the wealth of its students and their families. For that reason colleges who want high rankings should think twice about allowing students from low income families to sneak past their ivy covered gates. Similarly, looking at the rejection rate as an indicator of high quality education should encourage a rational school to do everything in its power to garner many more applications than it could ever accept. Another indicator used by USNWR is based on how quickly the average student graduates. What's wrong with this? In the first place, that information doesn't really seem relevant: It not clear how much (if at all) a student might suffer if they attended a college where all students don't complete their degree in exactly four years. More significantly, however, it discriminates against economically disadvantaged students. It is basically telling colleges not to accept students who are in more precarious positions economically, because they are more likely to interrupt their education or take a less than a full load in any given term, due to health or job related issues that more advantaged students are better defended against.

Looking deeper at the individual indicators that are used to support the ranking revealed that many of them help enforce social norms such as individualism, privilege, and elitism.

Prominent approaches such as USNWR's reliably rewarded the elite, well-funded institutions. At the same time, they also seemed too narrow and diverted attention away from more important perspectives. One of the students in the program suggested that we embark on an alternative ranking project. This was definitely in accordance with our focus on civic intelligence. It would help us focus on what a college could do to cultivate citizens who are interested in working for the common good and what they could do to better equip students for this critical role. Society needs citizens who can help come to terms with "wicked problems" (Rittel and Webber 1973) such as inequality, oppression, climate change, and environmental degradation that defy simple analysis and that citizens must actually help address (and not just through voting) if genuine change is to be achieved. We wanted to challenge the mistaken and dangerous idea that finding answers to our complex social problems is either irrelevant to higher education or that the answers will simply "emerge" via elites, the market, or just plain good luck. Based on that we felt that a more valuable orientating question for a college ranking would be something more like the following: "What are colleges doing to help cultivate citizens who are more likely to feel responsibility

towards their fellow citizens and have the 'democratic faith' that John Dewey (1980) valued?"

Ranking Process and Indicator Development

The students and I were intrigued with the idea of our own ranking project and decided to jump in. Our analysis led to the desire to design something that represented our views, not the implicit views of the economic elites. We wanted to identify indicators that would encourage educational systems that were more equitable and empowering for students and, at the same time, that would encourage the development of traits in citizens that would help address pressing social needs. Our goal was to envision and articulate measures that colleges could answer somewhat definitively and honestly based on verifiable evidence.

Our ranking project work was inserted into our other classroom activities several times over the following term. For our first homework assignment everybody brought in specific ways that they believed the civic intelligence of a college could be demonstrated. As we worked individually, collectively, and incrementally over the course of several weeks, our vision of a ranking system that highlights civic intelligence coalesced into five categories and some specific ways to think about them.

(1) How does the college conduct its own affairs in civically intelligent ways?

This perspective focuses on the college as an institution, specifically on its administration, transparency, governance, and organizational structure.

(2) What does the college do to promote civic intelligence among students? This perspective includes activities in the classroom as well as other activities that take place outside the classroom such as informal and formal student organizations and activities.

(3) How does the college cultivate civic intelligence in the community? This examines how the college cultivates civic intelligence in the community and to what extent the college influences the wider world. It looks at the prevalence of students at the college who are engaged in internships with educational, service, or non-profit organizations and whether there is a legacy of non-profit groups in the community. (See, for example, the Sustainability in Prisons Project, <http://sustainabilityinprisons.org/> that was launched at Evergreen.)

(4) How does the college addresses significant societal issues and needs? This refers primarily to how well and to what extent the college performs in terms of broad social expectations. A college, for example, that accepted a large number of students who are statistically more unlikely to graduate runs the risk of receiving low marks in many ranking systems. But if the college educates these students and graduates them in higher number and they secure meaningful employment those schools should receive high marks.

(5) What were the enduring lessons in respect to civic intelligence that the college imparted to its graduates? Addressing this question probably means learning about relevant activities, attitudes, awareness, skills, or even social imagination when students enter the college and when they leave, including perceptions as well as actions, probably by gathering feedback from graduates at regular intervals.

While the criteria and the indicators are still preliminary, the fact that the undergraduate students developed the framework above and a variety of indicators helps demonstrate new possibilities for college rankings as well as the non-traditional educational approach that prompted this work.

Further Refinement

Since our initial effort the project has moved forward somewhat. I discussed the project with Evergreen's Director of Institutional Research and Assessment. I also contributed a blog posting about our work for the Social Innovation Generation group (Schuler 2011). I had been hoping (perhaps not so realistically) that potential co-conspirators would get excited about the project and together we would incite the rest of the world's colleges to drop everything and re-orient their efforts to the study and cultivation of civic intelligence.

Recently several students from the Civic Intelligence Research and Action Laboratory (CIRAL) that I facilitate at Evergreen became interested in picking up the work where we left off. CIRAL provides an open framework for students to work together on research and action projects that they have developed themselves (Schuler, 2016). The next task was identifying some indicators to focus on. In thinking about that we realized that it would be possible to draw other students into the project while drawing on the "wisdom of the crowd" as well. That would be in keeping with our focus on civic intelligence and the interplay between group and individual cognition and collective intelligence. We developed a survey containing the initial list of indicators and asked the students in the Global Hunt for Civic Intelligence program to rank them in terms of relevance to civic intelligence in higher education.

The idea of putting the survey on our CIRAL FaceBook page came several days after we had developed it. The FaceBook approach was more or less an afterthought but it helped raise consciousness and extend the idea generation to students from previous civic intelligence programs. It also helped surface three quite valid new indicators. Two had to do with financial transactions (how the money is allocated at the college and where the money comes from) while the other one dealt explicitly with preparing students to do civic intelligence work. Although obtaining comments (or new indicators) was not part of the original motivation for using social media, FaceBook's commenting feature promoted commentary on the subject. For example, when we asked people to note their preferences among the indicators in category 5, it prompted this richer response from a former CIRAL student:

This is a question I keep bumping into, as I feel that while Evergreen has avenues for self-directed study and perhaps group-directed study, by the time students get to Evergreen their internal-authority has been trained out of them...I am reaching the end of my time at Evergreen and wish I knew at the beginning what I know now. This is one way this college fails to conduct its own affairs in civically intelligent ways that support and promote civic intelligence among students—there is little scaffolding in place to make new students fully aware of the opportunities available to them and guide in the intimidating task of figuring out how to take advantage of these opportunities.

This response prompted the creation of another indicator in time for it to be added to the survey that was handed out in class. This indicator, "College provides necessary knowledge, skills, and other preparation to study and practice civic intelligence," although added after some initial responses to the survey had been made, ended up being the most popular within its category. It also has prompted me to rethink some of ways that we organize our CIRAL work. This indicator could also play a very strong role in the civic intelligence of Evergreen if it were considered holistically, possibly by using the fairly extensive list of "enablers" of civic intelligence (Schuler 2014) that my students and I developed over the years, to develop programs, workshops, and learning objectives on campus.

Similarly, the schools themselves are trapped into ranking systems that often reinforce standards and pedagogy that are not keeping pace with today's challenges.

Learning, Critique, and Power

One perspective on power is that it constrains how groups of people are formed and what the group can do; it determines the challenges and opportunities that the groups will encounter, including, significantly, the rewards or punishments that are received from taking various actions. In the case of education, students are generally trapped into a system not of their making where their paths are largely circumscribed. At the same time, the net worth of their work is collapsed into a single letter or numeric score. Similarly, the schools themselves are trapped into ranking systems that often reinforce standards and pedagogy that are not keeping pace with today's challenges. It is a rare endeavor indeed when students are engaged in the classroom in critical reflection on the conditions under which their education is conducted.

Although we did not originally examine the reasons why this exploration might be valuable educationally, several lessons can now be identified, even as the project carries on. One capability that can be improved by the exercise, which may be the most important, is self-efficacy, both individual and collective, the belief that obstacles can be surmounted (Maddux 2009). This capability is generally



ENABLERS OF CIVIC INTELLIGENCE, GRAPHIC COURTESY OF DOUG SCHULER

not foregrounded as a "learning objective" or something that the student is graded on, although it is necessary in the real, i.e. non-academic, world where problems often must be embraced, rather than assigned, and are often "wicked" (Rittel and Webber 1973), rather than handcrafted by teachers into bite-size chunks.

During the exercise, we also reviewed other relevant assessment rubrics including the National Survey of Student Engagement, Self-Assessment Rubric for the Institutionalization of Service-Learning in Higher Education, and Evergreen's Self-Study on Core Themes & Indicators. It could be argued that we should have looked at those before we developed our provisional set of indicators; after all, Why reinvent the wheel? Regardless of the unsurprising fact that we found no rubrics based specifically on civic

intelligence, we were not interested only in rubrics, but also in the process that creates them. In other words, we were interested in thinking as much about how the wheel came to be as the actuality of the wheel itself.

Looking at ranking systems with a critical eye provides an interesting and relevant focus for student inquiry. For one thing, many, if not most, of the students will be familiar with them. This exercise helped hone our critical inquiry skills and undertake social critique. It helped us question implicit givens such as social, economic, and political imperatives, to get a better look at the man behind the curtain. This exercise helped us see the ongoing maintenance of the normative framework that is necessary to sustain the systems.

We had a chance to see how concepts are developed and cultivated over time, to essentially "do" social science. By developing a ranking system (albeit an unfinished one) we got a good idea about the process that anybody would essentially go through. By necessity we developed creative, collaborative skills as we went along. Also, because we picked up the project again after a lag, the message came through that projects can essentially be thought of as open-ended and somewhat never-ending; they don't end when the term ends. When we reached one milestone (small or large) the next step was more easily seen. Thus students were left with increased confidence that they could successfully undertake efforts typically considered to be untouchable.

Not only was the project proposed by students, it was moved along by students at every stage. The categories, for example, emerged (and were refined) after

everybody had brought in a handful of ideas that were written on the board.

Every student had a chance to move them around, combine them, develop provisional categories, and ultimately agree on the categories discussed above. From the onset to (at least partial) fruition the project was student-led and inclusive, not directed from the top down. Moreover, by embarking on a project at the beginning we got a much better understanding for how projects like this are done in the "real world"— including the decisions behind the choices, and the pitfalls and challenges of the project.

When we saw the need we developed a critical stance and initiated a counter-project. Students were engaged in developing utopian ideas about how education could or should be conducted. Hence, their self-efficacy and social imagination were encouraged. Opening up the idea of

rankings in a broader way to question their validity and impact, the work implicitly became a bottom-up critique of institutionalized education. The project helped surface the assumptions, stated (and unstated) purposes, and social implications of major college rankings specifically but also about issues of research in general. It also helped us develop a preliminary framework for the colleges that we'd like to see, a vision that could be introduced into a more public discussion.

Improving Civic Intelligence in Higher Education?

While a college may gain a higher ranking by attempting to replicate the characteristics of elite institutions as much as possible, America's democracy depends on the civic intelligence—which includes creativity, skills, compassion, and many other characteristics—of everybody—not just a select few. We are continuing to refine our initial framework to create a solid rubric that colleges could use to conduct a self-evaluation in relation to civic intelligence. The most important thing might be that students become cognizant of their role in their own education and that of others. We like to think that it is possible to increase civic intelligence and to reduce civic ignorance. One of the most important lessons of civic intelligence is that practicing civic intelligence is one of the best ways to learn it.

The rankings that we developed are intended to be aspirational, to encourage the improvement of civic intelligence of the world's colleges and universities. We believe that if colleges and universities were to explicitly acknowledge—and "own"—in a deeper way their responsibility and their dedication to cultivating civic intelligence, societies in the twenty-first century would likely be far better equipped for twenty-first century realities. The point is to encourage colleges to think in these terms and it may even be possible that other students (and their faculty) can develop new systems which are comparable to ours.

The election of 2016 raises new questions and suggests new challenges to the theory and practice of civic

intelligence. Whether a country survives and thrives or whether it self-destructs ultimately depends on the civic intelligence of its citizenry. This depends, to a large degree, on its educational systems. The rankings that we use to evaluate our educational systems need not be tacit enablers for elitism, inequality, and the status quo. With thought and effort, they can reflect broader issues that increase our chances of working together for the common good. For this reason we encourage educators to facilitate exercises like this in their classrooms. Beyond that, however, we encourage students and their professors to promote ranking systems like the one we have been discussing here while pushing reforms within their institutions.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to all of the students in the Social Innovation and Civic Intelligence program who initiated this project and took it to the first level. Thanks also to Rudyard Cashman, Thea Pan, and others in the Civic Intelligence Research and Action Laboratory who have picked up where we had left off and are helping to move it to reality.

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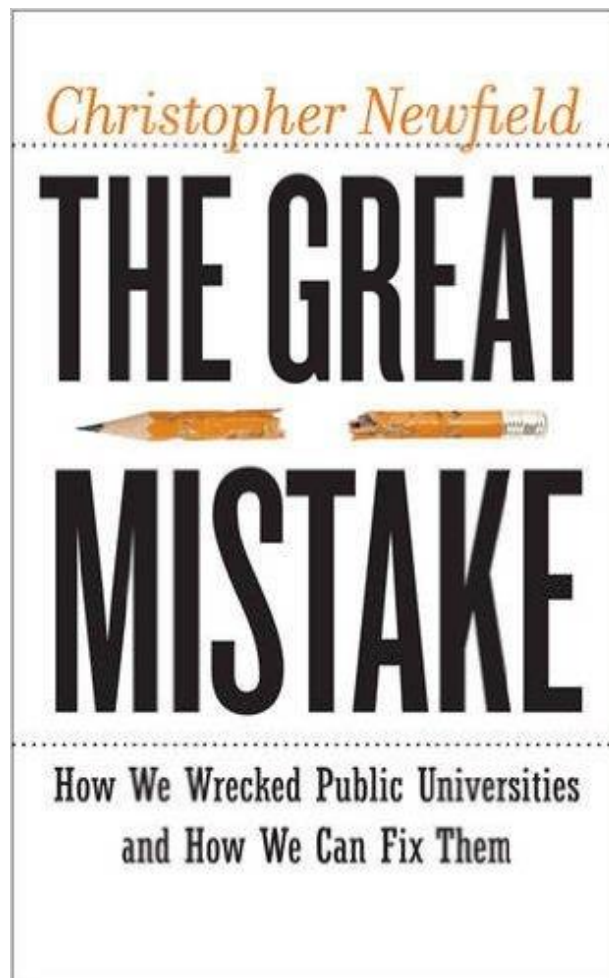
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RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Review
The Great Mistake: How We Wrecked Public
Universities and How We Can Fix Them
By Christopher Newfield

Reviewed by Sarah E. Chinn



The Great Mistake: How We Wrecked Public Universities and How We Can Fix Them by Christopher Newfield (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016)

Reviewed by Sarah E. Chinn

Over the past few years there has been something of a cottage industry in analyzing higher education's woes and trying to find solutions for them. Some have been in the "kids today/get off my lawn" camp (most notably Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa's grumpy *Academically Adrift*); others have embraced a self-help, albeit politically aware, vibe (I'm thinking here of Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber's *The Slow Professor*); some have simply drunk the neoliberal Kool-Ade (Gregory Colón Semenza's *Graduate Study for the Twenty-First Century* is a prime example of Jeff Bezos's famous-yet-terrifying boast that "new economy" employees have to work fast, smart, and hard all at once). But only a few of these books have engaged in a thoroughgoing analysis of trends in higher education, especially public higher education, that takes a long, historicized look at where we are, how we got there, and what we can do to change the situation.

Christopher Newfield's *The Great Mistake* is one of those books. A sort of companion piece to Richard Brier and Michael Fabricant's *Austerity Blues*, as well as a sequel to Newfield's own 2008 study, *Unmaking the Public University*, *The Great Mistake* is a systematic, deeply researched, and clearly written analysis of why public universities have experienced a drop in state investment, student skill levels, and public respect. And although it may seem daunting to read 350 pages of budget analysis, policy critiques, and bar graphs, Newfield whisks his readers through a compelling, if wonkish, investigation of how privatization, corporatization, and student debt have hacked away at the foundations of what used to be thought of as a public good.

The Great Mistake effectively challenges some of the assumptions even those of us who champion public higher education believe. For example, he convincingly proves that state disinvestment is more the result of tuition hikes than the other way around, and that foundation and government funding for STEM fields actually drains money from university coffers to cover all kinds of indirect costs.

While Newfield mentions the glory days of the post-GI bill expansion of public higher education, he doesn't dwell there long, not least because he's aware of how access was parceled out depending on students' race and gender. His

focus is on the post-Reagan era (although he traces its roots even further back), the rise of bringing "market solutions" to social services, and the steady – and more recently, precipitous – disinvestment by state legislatures and governors in the colleges and universities they fund. And he makes a bold claim: "Private sector 'reforms' are not the cure for the college cost disease – they *are* the college cost disease" (4).

To my mind, this is the most striking part of his argument. Critical University Studies has taken on the corporatization of higher education as compromising teaching, learning, and research; it has pointed to the enormous growth in the administrative ranks as a repudiation of faculty expertise; and it has argued that austerity has taken a disproportionate toll on poor, working-class students and students of color. But Newfield's argument is couched in the very same terms as those the "disruptor class" uses: cost, efficiency, effectiveness. Tuition hikes, private student loans, the "entrepreneurial campus" are ultimately worse for state budgets in terms of administrative costs, startup needs, and the loss of revenue from defaults, even though they may benefit private interests.

Critical University Studies has taken on the corporatization of higher education as compromising teaching, learning, and research; it has pointed to the enormous growth in the administrative ranks as a repudiation of faculty expertise; and it has argued that austerity has taken a disproportionate toll on poor, working-class students and students of color.

The Great Mistake is laid out systematically: Newfield identifies eight stages in the "cycle of devolution" of public universities, provides a general overview of them, devotes a chapter to each stage, and, finally, offers possible solutions. At the core of his argument is that education is a public good that fosters what he calls the "democratization of intelligence." The goal of public education is "the combination of broad access and high quality" (3), a goal that in the past four decades has been undercut at every turn.

Indeed, the first stage in Newfield's "Eight Stages of Decline" is "University retreat from public goods." While

the other stages – subsidizing outside funders, tuition hikes, cuts to public funding, increased student debt, the increasing reliance on private vendors to leverage public funds, unequal cuts between institutions and disciplines, and “post-productivity capitalism” – all play a crucial role, and bolster each other, for Newfield, neoliberalism’s original sin has been the ongoing destruction of the concept of education as good for everyone. In these terms, higher education plays a cultural and social role much as vaccines protect the public health. It lays the groundwork for other kinds of attainment, both personal and professional, and raises the basic level of intellectual engagement for the entire population.

Newfield has certainly done his homework. The chapters that discuss the budgetary mess that privatization has caused are thick with graphs and charts and a flurry of numbers. At one point even he realizes that this might be overwhelming for the lay reader, and gives the fainter of heart permission to skip the recitation of some pretty in-depth budget wonkery. But I was glad that I soldiered through the numbers, not least because, as Newfield points out, the only way we can counter the fiction of “market solutions” is to have a clear and detailed understanding of how university funding and expenditure actually work. Similarly, *The Great Mistake* has one of the clearest, most comprehensive analyses of quite how damaging the shift from grants to loans was for students, as well as the collusion between banks, loan consolidators, and government that allowed outrageous interest rates and nonpayment penalties, and exempted student loans from bankruptcy provisions.

The Great Mistake effectively challenges some of the assumptions even those of us who champion public higher education believe. For example, he convincingly proves that state disinvestment is more the result of tuition hikes than the other way around, and that foundation and government funding for STEM fields actually drains money from university coffers to cover all kinds of indirect costs. Moreover, he warmed my humanist heart by confirming what I had always suspected: that rather than being a drain on the economy, the arts and humanities actually produce more revenue for universities than they consume resources and, ultimately, that they subsidize the outsize expenses of the sciences.

Ironically, the book is least effective in its final chapter, in which Newfield outlines his plan for reversing these trends and restoring public higher education to its rightful purpose: high quality education on a mass scale. He approvingly cites Bernie Sanders’s proposal of free college for all as a remedy for neoliberal logic. This goal has recently proven less clear-cut, as Andrew Cuomo’s Excelsior Program in New York state has shown. While it provides free tuition for all New York public college and university students, it requires them to complete 30 credits each year to maintain eligibility, a provision that excludes the least privileged populations of college-goers: part time

students, many of whom work and/or care for family members; community college students who can rarely maintain 5 classes each semester; and full-time students who register the current requirement of 12 credits each semester but due to hardship, insufficient preparation, or personal difficulties have to drop at least one course (this is very common at Hunter College, where I teach). Finally, one strategy that might make earning 30 credits each year manageable – taking one or two classes over the summer – is out of reach for many students now that federal TAP grants no longer cover summer school.

This book is a major addition to the Critical University Studies corpus, and should be required reading for anyone concerned about the fate of public education in the United States. It will be especially useful for students of US higher education since it is so heavily grounded in data as much as argument and polemic (which is not to say that it isn’t polemical). I could even imagine faculty assigning chapters or parts of chapters to first-year composition classes – Newfield’s writing is clear and accessible enough for beginning college students even as his larger argument is sophisticated enough for graduate-level study.

One small critique: while I greatly appreciated the macro-level analysis of the book, and the focus on large, nationwide policy shifts, it was hard to know how to translate his insights into my own teaching (beyond assigning the book itself). Certainly this book doesn’t try to be all things to all people – it has a clear agenda and it follows that path diligently and effectively. But I would have appreciated some discussion of what those of us who teach in public colleges and universities might do in our own institutions to counter the logics he so powerfully anatomizes, both in relation to our administrators and in connection to our students.

This book is a major addition to the Critical University Studies corpus, and should be required reading for anyone concerned about the fate of public education in the United States.

I recognize, though, that this is not his goal. Newfield is going after the big fish. He argues for a massive ideological shift in state legislatures, university administrators, and the general public. I wish I could feel more confident in that possibility. But at the very least, Newfield provides a useful primer in the failures of privatization as well as a road map for political action, and spells out the terms on which radical and progressive educators should work towards the reinvigoration of the public university.



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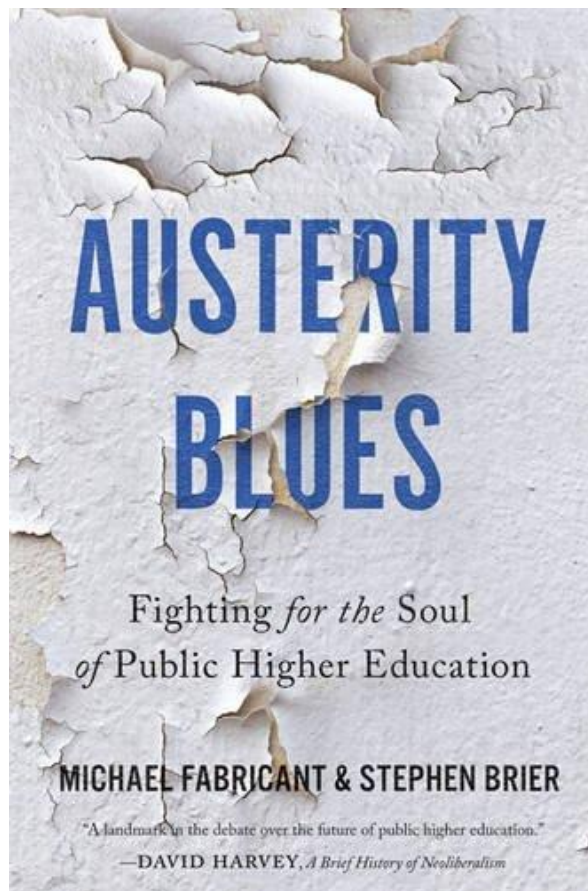
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Review
Austerity Blues:
Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education
By Michael Fabricant and Steve Brier

Reviewed by Susan G. O'Malley



Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education
by Michael Fabricant and Steve Brier
(John Hopkins University Press, 2016)

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Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Education is a useful book for teachers and students in Critical University Studies and for those engaged in public higher education organizing both in governance and academic unions. What makes it useful is its situating of the erosion of the funding of public higher education in the neoliberal agenda of devaluing the public sector and its reviewing of the history of the City University of New York and State University of New York and the California State and University systems. Too often those of us in higher education forget that the steady decreases in higher education budgets are not unique to us but part of a larger plan of austerity throughout the public sector. Learning the history of previous struggles in the two largest public university systems in the United States helps us to imagine and strategize how to strengthen public higher education and counter the neoliberal agenda. How did student occupations of campus buildings and faculty and student strikes at Brooklyn College and CCNY cause open admissions to start in fall 1970, five years before it was planned to start? And how were the SEEK and College Discovery programs put in place to help students who had not been prepared in high school for college? And how was free tuition essential to CUNY's mission for most of its history? And how does this connect to the free tuition movement today, particularly given the decreases in state funding? And how were these innovations slowly eroded? Knowing about past organizing with its victories and setbacks pushes back against the feeling that the neoliberal agenda is inevitable.

A number of years ago, when I was Chair of the CUNY University Faculty Senate (22 campuses), I was arguing with a member of then Chancellor Goldstein's senior management. He stated, "But there will never be an increase in state appropriations for CUNY. That is the way it is now." I fought against his pronouncement, but he was adamant: accept budget cuts and look to philanthropy and technology to make up for the lost money. Chancellor Milliken, the current Chancellor, also has not pressured Albany for increased money but hopes to save money through more on-line courses, as he discussed at the University Faculty Senate meeting on 7 February 2017. To explain this, Fabricant and Brier state, "Neoliberal advocates see the privatization [and monetization] of all things public as part of a naturalized landscape without alternatives" (30) or "the new normal" (203). "New market-based reforms" become "a viable alternative to an expanded public sphere" (17). Often faculty and students internalize this and believe what is public is inferior and

that the decline of public higher education is inevitable. Using *Austerity Blues* in the classroom, whether at CUNY or other public universities, could encourage students to learn the historical struggles in their universities and how student and faculty movements influenced and can continue to influence change in their universities. The Professional Staff Congress (PSC), CUNY's Union, has established Teach CUNY days during which faculty focus on the history and funding of CUNY, including adjunct salaries. On May Day 2017 many CUNY faculty taught "Teach Trump," analyzing Trump's policies and higher education.

Chapters 1- 4 ("Public Assets in an Era of Austerity," "The State Expansion of Public Higher Education," "Students and Faculty Take Command," and "The Making of the Neoliberal Public University") in *Austerity Blues* are a good antidote to the passivity and the feeling of helplessness that neoliberalism evokes in students and faculty.

Looking at CUNY's struggle for open admission once again (Chapter 3) is important because it came out of the community-led struggles to improve public schools in working-class neighborhoods and the political activism of the late 1960s. From 1969 to 1975, after open admissions was passed, CUNY's enrollment increased 55 percent and went from 78 percent to 30 percent white (84); that accounted for much of the push-back against open admissions. CUNY has had a 40 percent drop in state funding per student between 1992 and 2012 (92); college tuition has risen 112.5 percent after adjusting for inflation at four-year public universities (92). Many public universities such as Minnesota, Illinois, and Ohio State receive less than 10 percent of their operating budget from public dollars (92). One might ask, when does a public university cease to be public? Consequently, education is rarely thought of as a public good but as a commodity to be bought and financed. We need to use the increased activism today in reaction to Trump's policies to educate people about the cuts in funding public higher education and organize to have it properly funded.

Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Education is a useful book for teachers and students in Critical University Studies and for those engaged in public higher education organizing both in governance and academic unions. What makes it useful is its situating of the erosion of the funding of public higher education in the neoliberal agenda of devaluing the public sector and its reviewing of the history of the City University of New York and State University of New York and the California State and University systems.

Chapter 5, "The Public University as an Engine of Equality," provocatively states that "the conjunction of fiscal austerity, imposition of a neoliberal business model, and consequent institutional restructuring has resulted in public higher education becoming an active agent in the growth rather than reduction of social inequality" (118). Examples of this in CUNY are the reduction in SEEK and College Discovery to prepare and support students for college courses, the increasing tuition that causes students to have to work and attend part time and, therefore, not qualify for TAP (Tuition Assistance Program), the need for more full-time faculty to teach upper-level courses required for graduation (students often have to postpone graduation because of being shut out of sections of required courses), and the reliance on contingent faculty who do not have the time to advise students because they have to work on several campuses. The pressure on colleges to graduate students in four years has also led to a weakening of the basic education requirements at CUNY, as demonstrated in Pathways, an administration policy to streamline basic education. Austerity is also reflected in the money spent on a student's education: In 2006 colleges with low selectivity spent about \$12,000 per student with the most selective colleges spending about \$92,000 per student (129). From 1975 to 2008 the number of administrators in the California State University system grew from 3800 to more than 12,000 while faculty positions remained essentially the same (121) with many administrators paid significantly more than faculty and hundreds of times more than contingent faculty. In 2009-2010 ten public university presidents made between \$750,000 and \$2 million (154).

To attract the middle class, CUNY has spent a lot of money on the Macaulay Honors College, initially funded by a \$30,000,000 grant that admits high performing students and provides them with free tuition, a computer, and a cultural passport that gives them access to cultural events and travel. There are fewer students of color admitted to Macaulay than there are in CUNY's general population; many have a more middle-class background. Governor Cuomo's new free tuition plan for CUNY and SUNY is a plan to attract the middle class because students must attend college full-time and take 15 credits. Because no money is provided for books, transportation, housing, or food, most working-class students need to work and have difficulty going to college full time and passing their courses while working.

Because of concerns about accumulating debt and the perception that private colleges are better than public colleges, many working-class students have turned to for-profit colleges. There have been intense advertising and promises of loans and grants such as the GI Bill and Pell grant. In 2010 eighty-six percent of taxpayer money for higher education went to 15 publicly traded for-profit education companies (141). At for-profit colleges there is often not enough academic support for students unprepared for college work or sufficient counseling, so graduation rates are very low. Faculty is primarily part time and cannot devote enough time to their students, and the accumulation of debt has caused students to drop out without a degree. Fabricant and Brier discuss this in several places in *Austerity*, although they do not mention

that students who default on their student loans cannot declare bankruptcy and are not allowed to refinance their debt for a lower interest rate but must attempt to pay it off throughout their lives. (The loan may be paid off by borrowing money at a lower interest rate, but it is unlikely that they will find a bank to loan them money.)

Chapter 6, "Technology as a 'Magic Bullet' in an Era of Austerity," recounts the history of using different instructional technologies outside of the classroom to educate large numbers of students while making money. Beginning with the first correspondence course in 1892 and progressing through film, radio, television, and finally digital technology, all promised to revolutionize education and get rid of the traditional classroom. At first I puzzled why this chapter was included in *Austerity Blues* – do we really need all this detail? – but the chapter is a fascinating account of the false promises of different technologies that all use the same rhetoric of salvation.

Because of concerns about accumulating debt and the perception that private colleges are better than public colleges, many working-class students have turned to for-profit colleges.

Supposedly correspondence courses or film or radio or television or on-line teaching would revolutionize higher education and allow a university to teach the masses with fewer costs and fewer faculty; this ignores the fact that technology in its many forms may be used judiciously to improve teaching. So, yes, to technology when it is determined as pedagogically enhancing by faculty teaching in a face-to-face course as was demonstrated to me in Steve Brier's US Social History Project many years ago, and no to technology when it is used to shrink labor costs and generate profits. Academically challenged students need interactions with instructors to become successful learners (291). An example of CUNY's attempting to use on-line education to cut costs was when faculty were asked by the administration if we wanted to sell our course syllabi for \$5,000 a course. When one faculty member asked, "I include my research in my course. Does that mean you own my research?" the administration said, "Yes, we would own your research, but you would be allowed to teach the course for a number of years before we would let other people, presumably adjuncts, teach it." The faculty member refused to sell his course; many others, however, agreed to sell.

Austerity Blues concludes with a section on "Resistance Efforts and the Fight for Emancipatory Education" that includes Chapter 7, "Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education," and an Epilogue that envisions reinventing public higher education. Resistance efforts include the fight for free tuition in the U.S. (209-210); the struggle at the City College of San Francisco around access (239-241); organizing for progressive redistributive taxes to fund higher education, a fight against the Millionaires Tax Cut in California that ended in a compromise; the

resistance against diluting the curriculum to increase graduation rates as demonstrated in the fight against CUNY's Pathways Program (241-246); and the successful Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) (213) in which I taught.

Pathways was the CUNY's administration's plan to weaken basic education requirements by not requiring a lab science, foreign language, or history course in order for students to graduate more quickly using the false claim that students lost credits transferring (245). Essentially it was the administration's ploy to wrest control of the curriculum from the faculty, although faculty were told that they could determine what was taught in the courses, just not what was required for an Associate's or Bachelor's degree. Faculty resistance was fierce, with the union and governance working together. This is the only time in *Austerity* that Fabricant and Brier mention governance being involved. Both governance and the union have historically been involved in the struggles at CUNY: the union contract makes the union stronger than governance, but governance has the power to educate and shame in its close contact with the administration. Ninety-two percent of the two-thirds of the faculty that voted in the referendum on Pathways were against. Although the struggle is still on going, the CUNY administration, pressed by their own "budgeting and accountability demands of austerity," (245) seem impervious to data.

Students in ASAP received free tuition, had to attend full-time, had excellent academic and personal counseling, and moved together through their classes in a cohort of about 25. They were required to attend full-time, but if they needed to work, their counselors would help them get jobs on campus or manageable jobs close to their homes and arrange their schedule to allow time for work. Many of the students were recent immigrants; all had passed the CUNY English skills test. After three years, "researchers at the Manpower Demonstration Research Corp. note[d] that 'at the three-year point, the cost per degree was lower in ASAP than in the control condition. Because the program generated so many more graduates than the usual college services, the cost per degree was lower despite the substantial investment required to operate the program'" (213). This program was discontinued because of cost. However, in my trolling around on various CUNY websites, I found that this program is being offered again in all CUNY community colleges.

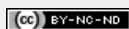
The concluding "Epilogue" puts forth a succinct and powerful vision of emancipatory education. Increased investment in higher education with the greatest increases for institutions with the most academically challenged students is called for. Adjuncts must be given job security, benefits, and increased pay, and public higher education must not be financed with student debt. New forms of technology should be used to enhance instruction, not to generate profit and shrink labor costs. Finally, the content of academic courses and what determines an academic

degree must be under the aegis of the faculty with students and administrators having input (250-251).

Pathways was the CUNY's administration's plan to weaken basic education requirements by not requiring a lab science, foreign language, or history course in order for students to graduate more quickly using the false claim that students lost credits transferring (245). Essentially it was the administration's ploy to wrest control of the curriculum from the faculty, although faculty were told that they could determine what was taught in the courses, just not what was required for an Associate's or Bachelor's degree.

Austerity Blues is an important book, although I wish it had had a better editor. There is a lot of repetition, and Fabricant and Brier have very different writing styles: Fabricant uses surprising word choices like "the private sector has cast its steely gaze upon public sector-resources" while Brier is more prosaic, working through a topic chronologically and thoroughly. That said, *Austerity Blues* is a must read for people engaged in public higher education and an important addition to Critical University Studies.

[For full disclosure I need to say that I am a friend of both of the authors. I worked with Stephen Brier in the development and teaching of CUNY's American Social History Project multimedia curriculum *Who Built America?* in the pedagogy seminar and co-taught the curriculum for two years with history and English high school teachers at Telecommunications and Paul Robeson High Schools. I also served with Mike Fabricant on the executive committee of CUNY's union, the Professional Staff Congress, for nine years.]



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RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Overcoming being Overwhelmed in the Trump Era

By Navyug Gill



DER SPIEGEL DEPICTING TRUMP AS AN ASTEROID HEADING FOR EARTH
COURTESY OF DER SPIEGEL

Over the past several months, I have noticed a growing sense among undergraduate students of being overwhelmed by mainstream electoral politics. From the long, vitriolic primary campaigns, to the scandal-plagued lead-up to the vote, the disbelief after November 8th, the confusion during the transition period, and the ongoing turbulence since the inauguration, it seems their sensibilities and expectations have been under repeated assault. What started out for many as a joke and then an embarrassment turned into a circus and then a threat, and then, finally, a disturbing reality.

At the same time, students have been inundated with various commentaries that seek to give coherence to all that has happened during the election cycle and its aftermath. Dozens of articles appear almost every day dissecting one or another aspect of Trump's victory and what it means for different groups of people, the country as a whole and the wider world. The attempt to ban Muslims from several countries, the push to end subsidized private healthcare and the renewed targeting of undocumented migrants are only the most recent measures compounding their sense of uncertainty and anxiety.

One way to overcome this feeling of being overwhelmed is by teaching the current conjuncture in a broader historical context yet with a sharper analytical focus. At William Paterson University, a mid-sized public institution located in northern New Jersey, my students come from mostly working-class families with a remarkable degree of ethnic and religious diversity. In my introductory Modern Global History course, I have adopted a three-pronged strategy to encourage them to think through the Trump presidency without succumbing to the pitfalls of exaggeration, conflation and exceptionality.

At the outset, I emphasize the need to attend to the specificity of Trump. It is critical to avoid generalization and hyperbole, no matter how cathartic. Students ought to understand Trump not as a crazed tycoon or a ridiculous imbecile, or even an ominous fascist-in-the-making. Instead, I ask them to choose appropriate adjectives: he is erratic and opportunistic, no doubt, but plainly right-wing, with regressive positions on a host of fiscal, social and environmental issues. Just as we would not accept students characterizing, say, Southern slave-owners, Napoleon or East India Company officers as "crazy," "stupid" or "evil," we should prevent Trump from being merely ridiculed in our classrooms. Only when we lack faith in the acuity of our analysis do we resort to caricature.

Beyond the careful use of language, I ask students to divide the Trump presidency into two categories. On the one hand, we identify as *rhetoric* the content of all of the statements he and his spokespersons have made over the past year. This entails overt expressions of racism, xenophobia, sexism and war-mongering, as well as convoluted claims about American greatness amid an ever-growing assortment of falsehoods. On the other hand, we list as *policy* all of his actionable positions, the concrete decisions he has already implemented or seeks to do so. This includes building a wall along the Mexican border, reducing taxes on the wealthy, restricting immigration and

refugee resettlement, and eliminating a range of government programs, subsidies and regulations. Perhaps less conventionally, it also encompasses plans to increase infrastructure spending, cancelling "free" trade agreements and withdrawing from the NATO military alliance.

In reality, of course, there is no simple separation between rhetoric and policy. The two are inextricable, and serve to inform and justify each other. Calling Mexicans "rapists" underpins the building of the wall, just as defunding Planned Parenthood exemplifies a routine degradation of women. The reason for the artificial divide, however, is to encourage students to focus on the material effects of policy rather than be distracted by the bombast of rhetoric. Too often the aspects of Trump's presidency that garner the most attention— and thereby generate the most impassioned responses—are his ignorant and offensive utterances. Yet outrage over his call to kill the families of suspected militants can quickly descend into outrage over his angry tweets about Saturday Night Live or the supposed size of the crowd at his inauguration. While issues of tone and temperament are important, they cannot overshadow confronting the tangible consequences of exercising presidential power.

One way to overcome this feeling of being overwhelmed is by teaching the current conjuncture in a broader historical context yet with a sharper analytical focus.

In order to comparatively analyze Trump's policy positions, I next ask students to map out the current political spectrum in the United States. We start by drawing a horizontal line, with the left-end identified by students as Liberal and the right-end as Conservative. Leaving party affiliations aside, I ask how one would determine if a person was a liberal or a conservative? Usually, they answer with issues such as abortion access, gun control, same-sex marriage, the death penalty and military spending. Less frequently, students mention taxation rates, environmental protections and raising the minimum wage. I then ask them to locate certain politicians along the spectrum. We plot the position of George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush and Jimmy Carter, before moving on to Hilary Clinton, Ted Cruz, Barack Obama, Chris Christie and Bernie Sanders.

And then I ask them to place Trump along this spectrum. The mention of his name usually elicits hoots, with calls for placing him at the extreme right-end, or even off the line altogether. I remind them that they constructed this spectrum on their own, without any limitations, and therefore no one can be outside of its bounds. But why, I probe, do we think Trump is the furthest, most extreme type of conservative? We then go through each of the issues in the criterion, identifying his position and contrasting it to Clinton, Cruz and Sanders. Quite strikingly, students realize the need to adjust the location of these figures along the spectrum. It turns out Trump is

not an arch-conservative, that Obama is far from the most leftward, and that Clinton ends up in the middle on many issues. From corporate bailouts to trade deals and criminal justice reform, the initial distance between these politicians shrinks considerably. By focusing on Trump's actual policies instead of his rhetoric, students are better able to evaluate the meaning of his presidency.

At this point, I shift gears to discuss a different kind of political spectrum, that of nineteenth century Europe. We construct the same horizontal line, but now locate various groups of Reactionaries, Liberals and Radicals from right to left. I again ask how one would identify the political orientation of a person in this era? Based on previous discussions of assigned readings, students know the key issue at that time was what was to be done about the growing inequalities generated by industrial capitalism. For reactionaries, inequality was either natural or divine, while liberals believed it to be unfortunate but unavoidable. Only radicals sought to abolish it, even as different factions disagreed on how best to accomplish this task and what society would look like in the future. More importantly, the radical desire to transcend capitalism is what brought reactionaries and liberals closer together, united in a common fear of revolution to broadly defend the status quo.

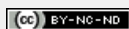
Juxtaposing the political spectrum of twenty-first century America with nineteenth century Europe brings to the fore a few key observations. First, students realize the bulk of seemingly polarized Liberal-Conservative politics in the United States today largely falls within a rather narrow realm of Liberal politics from two centuries earlier in Europe. What appears at opposite ends of the current political spectrum was, in another context, merely what different groups of liberals disagreed on among themselves. Students also recognize that the issues that animate politics today are mostly social and cultural—from abortion to gun control and same-sex marriage—with far less attention paid to worker rights, universal healthcare and public ownership of industries. In an earlier period, however, the problem of economic inequality was paramount. This is what generated the sharpest divide between various political orientations, and from which the majority of other divisions followed. Finally, this exercise reveals to students a much larger, more open world of politics than what they presently imagine. The narrowness of the current spectrum, and the limited scope of disagreement within it, points to the need to extend the boundaries of contestation, to more fundamentally question the parameters of political life in the United States.

A final point to the comparison is to collapse the space of historical difference. I tell my students that in most of the world today, the political spectrum is akin to nineteenth century Europe rather than contemporary America. That is, most countries have a much more diverse terrain of politics, with a far larger number of parties contesting a

vastly broader range of issues. Throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America, as well as Europe, there are an assortment of right-wing nationalists and fiscal and religious conservatives along with left-wing social-democrats and militant communists and anarchists among different strands of liberals, all using parliamentary and extra-parliamentary means to further their respective agendas. While each of these groups has a specific position on various social and cultural issues, they usually do not confine themselves to debating within that sphere alone. Instead, they struggle more capaciously to define the kind of society they want to live in and the way it should be achieved.

At this point, I shift gears to discuss a different kind of political spectrum, that of nineteenth century Europe. We construct the same horizontal line, but now locate various groups of Reactionaries, Liberals and Radicals from right to left.

At the end of this exercise, students begin to see Trump and the country he leads in a different light. No longer is he simply a fool or villain, but a representative of a kind of politics that requires patient, detailed analysis to understand. At the same time, the current political binary ceases to appear natural and inevitable as compared to earlier and elsewhere in the world. Perhaps most importantly, students are able to overcome the sense of being overwhelmed by opening up possibilities to imagine and engage in a new kind of politics for today, and tomorrow.



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News for Educational Workers

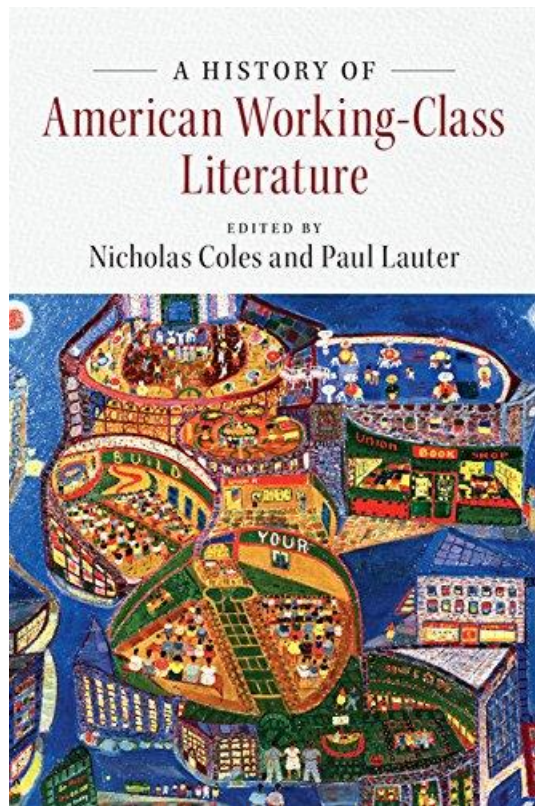
by Leonard Vogt

News for Educational Workers has been a featured column of *Radical Teacher* almost since the journal's conception. With this and the previous issue of the journal, however, news items of interest to progressive and radical educators will be posted on the new *Radical Teacher* blog at <http://www.radicalteacher.net/wp-admin/>.

Other less timely resources, such as books, films, journals, articles, and resources will continue to be featured in this newer, abbreviated News for Educational Workers column which will continue to be published with each of our forthcoming online issues.

Books

A History of American Working-Class Literature edited by Nicholas Coles and Paul Lauter

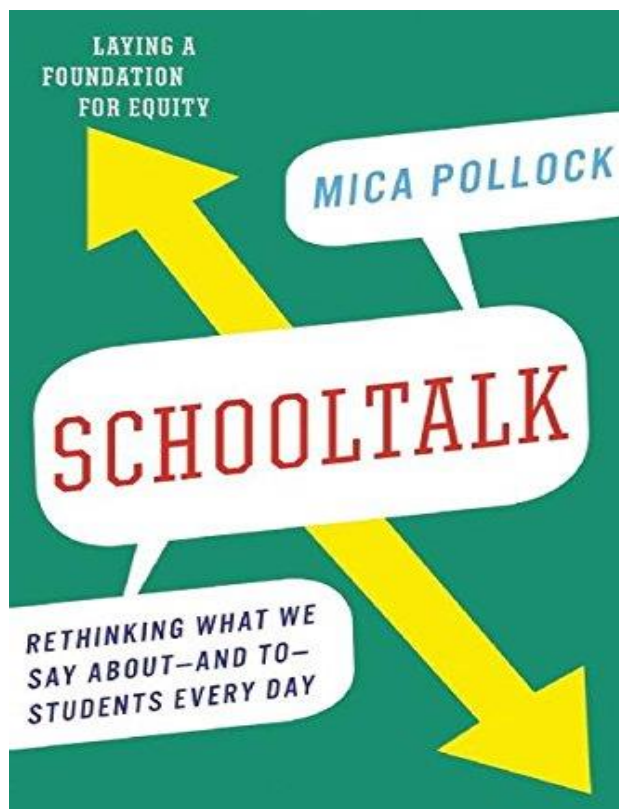


A History of American Working-Class Literature sheds light not only on the lived experience of class but the enormously varied creativity of working-class people throughout the history of what is now the United States. By charting a chronology of working-class experience, as the conditions of work have changed over time, this volume shows how the practice of organizing, economic competition, place, and time shape opportunity and desire. The subjects range from transportation narratives and slave songs to the literature of deindustrialization and globalization. Among the literary forms discussed are memoir, journalism, film, drama, poetry, speeches, fiction, and song. Essays focus on plantation, prison, factory, and farm, as well as on labor unions, workers' theaters, and innovative publishing ventures. Chapters spotlight the intersections of class with race, gender, and place. The variety, depth, and many provocations of this History are certain to enrich the study and teaching of American literature.

Schooltalk: Rethinking What We Say About—and To—Students Every Day by Mica Pollock

Mica Pollock, editor of *Everyday Antiracism*—the progressive teacher's must-have resource—now turns to what it takes for those working in schools to match their speech to their values, giving all students an equal opportunity to thrive. By juxtaposing common scenarios with useful exercises, concrete actions, and resources,

Schooltalk describes how the devil is in the oft-dismissed details: the tossed-off remark to a student or parent about the community in which she lives; the way groups—based on race, ability, and income—are discussed in faculty meetings about test scores and data; the assumptions and communication breakdowns between counselors, teachers, and other staff that cause kids to fall needlessly through the cracks; or the deflating comment to a young person about her college or career prospects. *Schooltalk* will empower educators of every ilk, revealing to them an incredibly effective tool at their disposal to support the success of all students every day: their words.



Film

Passionate Politics: The Life and Work of Charlotte Bunch tells the story of Charlotte Bunch, from idealistic young civil rights organizer to lesbian activist, to internationally-recognized leader of a campaign to put women's rights on the global human rights agenda. Charlotte has been both a product and creator of her times: every chapter in her life is a chapter in the story of modern feminist activism, from its roots in the 1960's struggles for social justice to international campaigns against gender-based violence today.

PUZZLES: When Hate Came to Town tells the story of a hate crime that occurred in a LGBTQ bar called Puzzles Lounge in New Bedford, MA when a teenager brutally attacked its patrons. *PUZZLES* explores the correlation between economic hardship and homophobia, intolerance, and, ultimately, violence. In the wake of the devastating attack at the LGBTQ nightclub PULSE in Orlando, Florida that killed 49 patrons, this documentary is particularly important as it asks hard questions and frames the

connection between hate crimes and extremist ideologies and the increase in hate violence against LGBTQ communities. This 53-minute documentary is available through New Day Films.

Bullfrog Films has five new offerings for use in the high school or college classroom:

In 2012, California amended its "Three Strikes" law--one of the harshest criminal sentencing policies in the country. *The Return* examines this unprecedented reform through the eyes of prisoners suddenly freed, families turned upside down, reentry providers helping navigate complex transitions, and attorneys and judges wrestling with an untested law.



THE
RETURN

Dr. Feelgood: Dealer or Healer?, the story of Dr. William Hurwitz—a preeminent pain specialist sentenced to 25 years in prison for drug trafficking—provides a window into the ethical dilemma of opioid prescriptions.



DR. FEELGOOD:
DEALER OR
HEALER?

Disturbing the Peace follows former enemy combatants—Israeli soldiers and Palestinian fighters—who have joined together as the peace activist group, Combatants for Peace, to challenge the status quo and say "enough."



DISTURBING
THE PEACE

The Activists: War, Peace, and Politics in the Streets brings to life the stories of ordinary people who tried to stop and end the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.



THE ACTIVISTS:
WAR, PEACE AND
POLITICS IN THE
STREETS

In his new film, *How to Let Go of the World and Love All the Things Climate Can't Change*, Oscar-nominated director Josh Fox (*Gasland*) continues in his deeply personal style, investigating climate change—the greatest threat our world has ever known. Traveling to 12 countries on 6 continents, the film acknowledges that it may be too late to stop some of the worst consequences and asks, what is it that climate change can't destroy? What is so deep within us that no calamity can take it away?



HOW TO LET GO
OF THE WORLD
AND LOVE ALL
THE THINGS
CLIMATE CAN'T
CHANGE

All films available at www.bullfrogfilms.com.

Journals

"The Makings of a Heroic Mistake: Richard Wright's 'Bright and Morning Star,' Communism, and the Contradictions of Emergent Subjectivity" by Joe Ramsey (<http://www.mediationsjournal.org/articles/heroic-mistake>) appears in the new issue of *Mediations*, the journal of the Marxist Literary group. The entire text of issue 30.1 can be found as a PDF at http://www.mediationsjournal.org/files/Mediations30_1.pdf.

Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers announces the publication of a new special issue, Vol. 33, No. 2 (2016): Recovering Alice Dunbar-Nelson for the Twenty-First Century. Guest editors: Katherine Adams, Caroline Gebhard, and Sandra A. Zagarell.

Resources



The Network for Public Education just published the NPE Toolkit: School Privatization Explained, with the following 13 Toolkits or chapters, explaining anything there is to know about school privatization:

Introduction 1

Are charter schools truly public schools? 2-3

Do charter schools and school vouchers "hurt" public schools? 4-5

Do charter schools get better academic results than public schools? 6-7

Are charter schools and vouchers a civil rights cause? 8-9

Are charter schools "more accountable" than public schools? 10-11

Do charter schools profit from educating students? 12-13

Do school vouchers help kids in struggling schools? 14-15

Are charter schools innovative? 16-17

Are online charter schools good options for families? 18-19

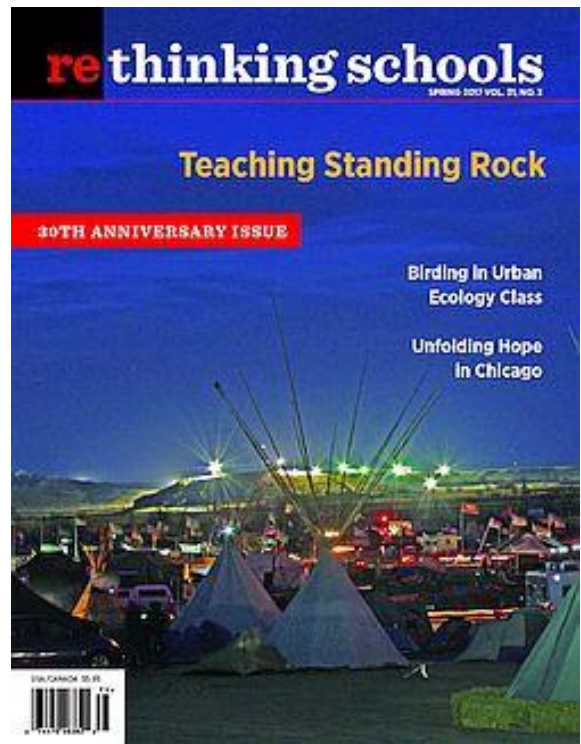
Do "Education Savings Accounts" lead to better results for families? 20-21

Do education tax credit scholarships provide opportunity? 22-23

Are tax credit scholarships a voucher by a different name? 24-25

Do charter schools and vouchers save money? 26-27

The 30th Anniversary Issue of *Rethinking Schools* (Spring 2017 Vol. 31, No. 3) has a cover story on "Teaching Standing Rock" as well as an editorial on "Teaching in the Time of Trump" and an article, "Teachers Take on Trump Era." Inside the issue is a small pamphlet featuring publications of the last 30 years from this "Voice of social justice educators."



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Contributors' Notes

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Stephen Brier is a social and labor historian who teaches the history of public education in the PhD program in Urban Education and is the founder and coordinator of the Interactive Technology and Pedagogy doctoral certificate program, both at the CUNY Graduate Center. He also served for eighteen years as the founding director of CUNY's American Social History Project/Center for Media and Learning.

Sarah Chinn teaches English at Hunter College, CUNY. A member of the *Radical Teacher* editorial collective, she's the author of three books, *Technology and the Logic of American Racism: A Cultural History of the Body as Evidence* (2000), and *Inventing Modern Adolescence: The Children of Immigrants in Turn-of-the-Century America* (2009), and *Spectacular Men: Race, Gender, and Nation on the Early American Stage* (2017), as well as articles in *Signs*, *GLQ*, *Prospects*, *American Quarterly*, and *WSQ*.

James Davis teaches in the English Department and American Studies Program at Brooklyn College, City University of New York.

Navyug Gill is Assistant Professor in the Department of History at William Paterson University. He received a B.A. from the University of Toronto and a Ph.D. from Emory University. His research interests include modern South Asia, the politics of caste, labour and hierarchy, and comparative histories of global capitalism.

Richard Ohmann has been on the board of *Radical Teacher* since 1975. Or was it 1875?

Susan O'Malley is on the editorial board of *Radical Teacher* and is one of its founders. She taught at CUNY for 37 years (Kingsborough CC - English) and (Graduate Center - Liberal Studies). From 2002-2006 she was Chair

of the CUNY Faculty Senate. She also served as Chair of the KCC Union and was on the Executive Committee of the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) for 9 years. She is currently Chair of the NGO, the Committee on the Status of Women/NY, that works with UN Women and the Commission on the Status of Women at the UN.

Scott Renshaw is a graduate student in the sociology program at the University of California Irvine.

Bob Samuels teaches writing at University of California, Santa Barbara. For twelve years he was the president of UC-AFT, the union representing over 5,000 non-tenure-track faculty at the University of California. He is the author of nine books, including *Why Public Higher Education Should be Free* and *Educating Inequality*.

With a background in computer science, **Doug Schuler** has spent over three decades looking at opportunities and risks of information and communication systems. Schuler has presented his work around the world. In 1987 he co-founded the Seattle Community Network, an all-volunteer, free public access computer network. Working with over 85 contributors he developed *Liberating Voices*, a pattern language for communication revolution, that is available as a book and is online in five languages. He also wrote *New Community Networks*, co-edited six books, and authored dozens of articles and book chapters. Schuler is former chair of Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility. He directs the Public Sphere Project and is working on projects such as *eLiberate*, an online application that supports distributed meetings using Roberts Rules of Order. He is continuing to explore civic intelligence, the collective capability of society to address its problems, with his research, organizing, and teaching at the Evergreen State College.

Heather Steffen is a Postdoctoral Scholar in the Department of English and a Lecturer in the Writing Program at the University of California, Santa Barbara.



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