

Academic Matters

OCUFA'S JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION
LA REVUE D'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR D'UAPUO

Spring 2017

The populist challenge for universities

Steven Tufts and Mark Thomas

The university in the populist age

Grace Karram Stephenson

*International students and
Canada's future on the right*

Mark Kingwell

*A populist wake-up call
for universities*





FIGHT FOR
\$15 & FAIRNESS

Join the fight for Decent Work

**Decent Hours / Paid Sick Days / Right to Organize
Respect at Work / Rules that Protect Everyone / \$15 Minimum Wage**

15andfairness.org



2 The university in the populist age

Steven Tufts and Mark Thomas

Right-wing populism threatens the future of higher education, but remaining passive and retreating to a disinterested vision of the university will actually strengthen the attacks. Faculty have a responsibility to work in solidarity to fight back against these threats.

7 Trump, Brexit and the academy

Peter Scott

There is some truth in the populist attack that the academy has sold-out to corporate interests and become inaccessible to many. Universities should unambiguously reassert themselves as transparent and open institutions that serve the public interest.

11 A populist wake-up call for universities

Mark Kingwell

For many, universities do not represent opportunity or self-realization, but instead elite self-regard and academic exchanges in which they see no relevance. What can faculty do to change these perceptions?

16 International students and Canada's future on the right

Grace Karram Stephenson

Populist and anti-immigrant sentiment in the US and UK means that more international students are coming to study at postsecondary institutions in Canada. But, what Canada will they find when they get here?

19 Canada's university administrators must pay attention to right-wing activism on campuses

Steven Zhou

The surge in racism on university campuses is part of a broader right-wing awakening across the country. University administrators must counter these developments, or the credibility of their institutions will suffer.

22 Global higher education, social solidarity, and the new nationalism

Simon Marginson

Higher education serves both national and global interests in the pursuit of knowledge and student learning. Given populism's nationalist roots, there is mounting pressure to redefine the university's mission. How should universities respond?

27 Populist citizen politics—beyond the manichean mindset

Harry C. Boyte

A positive political alternative to the rise of demagogic populism will require a vibrant vision of democratic society and the empowerment of individuals to work through these differences. Universities should not be just observers, but engaged participants.

31 Telling stories: U of T scholar discovers new role as radio host

Minelle Mahtani

In a new radio show, university professor Minelle Mahtani is creating a space where fellow researchers feel respected, honoured, and heard.

36 Editorial Matters

Academic Matters

OCUFA'S JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION
LA REVUE D'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR D'UAPUO

Academic Matters is published two times a year by OCUFA, and is received by 17,000 professors, academic librarians and others interested in higher education issues across Canada. The journal explores issues of relevance to higher education in Ontario, other provinces in Canada, and globally. It is intended to be a forum for thoughtful and thought-provoking, original and engaging discussion of current trends in postsecondary education and consideration of academe's future direction.

Readers are encouraged to contribute their views, ideas and talents. Letters to the editor (maximum 250 words) are welcome and may be edited for length. To provide an article or artwork for Academic Matters, please send your query to Editor-in-Chief Ben Lewis at editor@academicmatters.ca.

Reproduction of articles requires the permission of the author and publisher. Copyright in material accepted for publication remains with the author. The publisher may choose, however, to translate and/or reproduce material in print and electronic form. All published material expresses the view of the author(s) and not the publisher.

Academic Matters accepte volontiers des articles écrits en anglais ou en français.

Publisher:

OCUFA; Mark Rosenfeld, Executive Director

Editor-in-Chief:

Ben Lewis

Associate Editor:

Erica Raymont

Assistant Editor:

Brynne Sinclair-Waters

Assistant Editor:

Cheryl Athersych

Art Direction:

Eva Kiss, Neglia Design Inc., www.NegliaDesign.com

National Advertising Sales:

DOVETAIL COMMUNICATIONS
30 East Beaver Creek Road, Ste. 202
Richmond Hill, ON L4B 1J2

Sales Manager:

Kim Cristini, kcris@dvetail.com
Phone (905) 707-3510

ISSN 1719-010X

For subscription information, please contact:

OCUFA@ocufa.on.ca

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:

Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
17 Isabella Street, Toronto, ON M4Y 1M7

Phone (416) 979-2117 Fax (416) 593-5607
www.ocufa.on.ca www.academicmatters.ca

MORE ON ACADEMICMATTERS.CA

OCUFA

Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
Union des Associations des Professeurs des Universités de l'Ontario

union
logo
here

Cover illustration: Marie-Claude Carignan

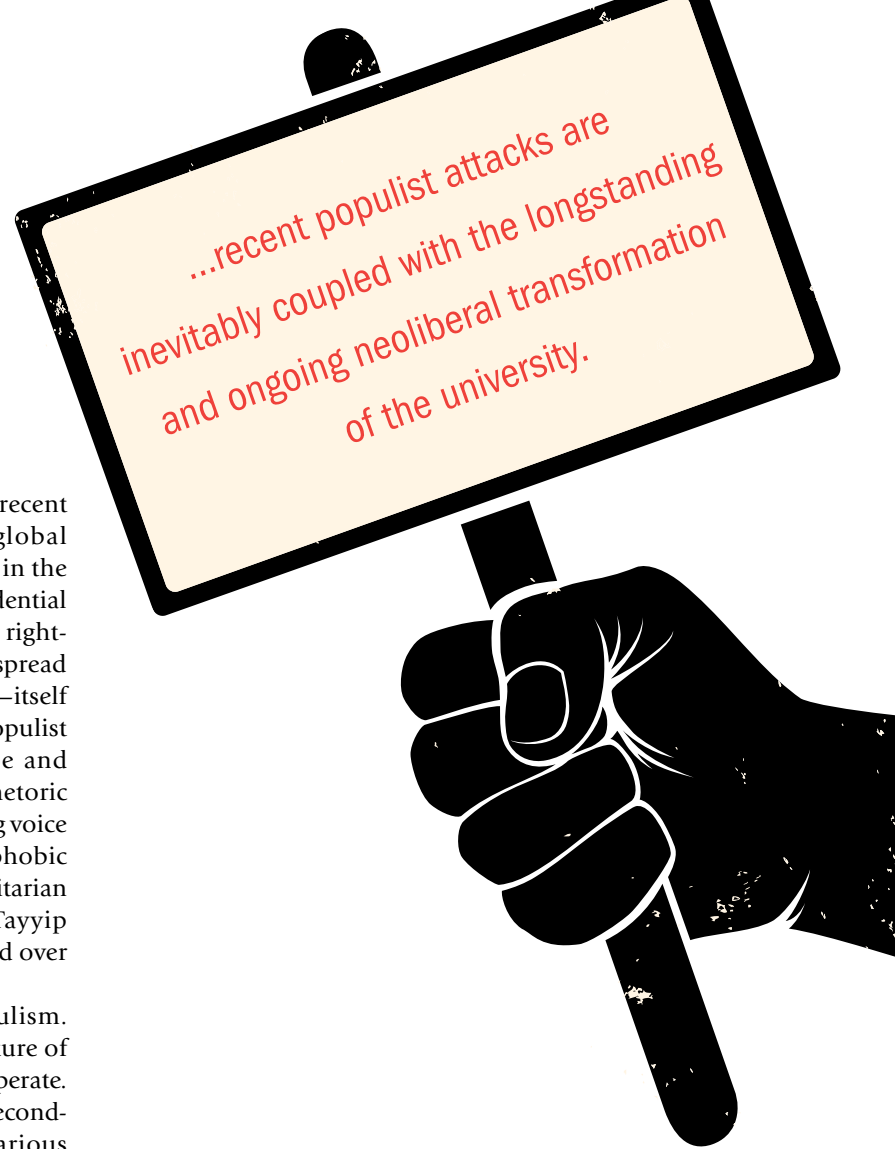
The university in the populist age

Steven Tufts and Mark Thomas



Right-wing populism threatens the future of higher education, but remaining passive and retreating to a disinterested vision of the university will actually strengthen the attacks. Faculty have a responsibility to work in solidarity to fight back against these threats.

Le populisme droitiste menace l'avenir de l'enseignement supérieur, mais en réalité, demeurer passifs et se retrancher dans une vision détachée de l'université renforcera les attaques. Les professeurs ont la responsabilité de travailler en solidarité pour lutter contre ces menaces.



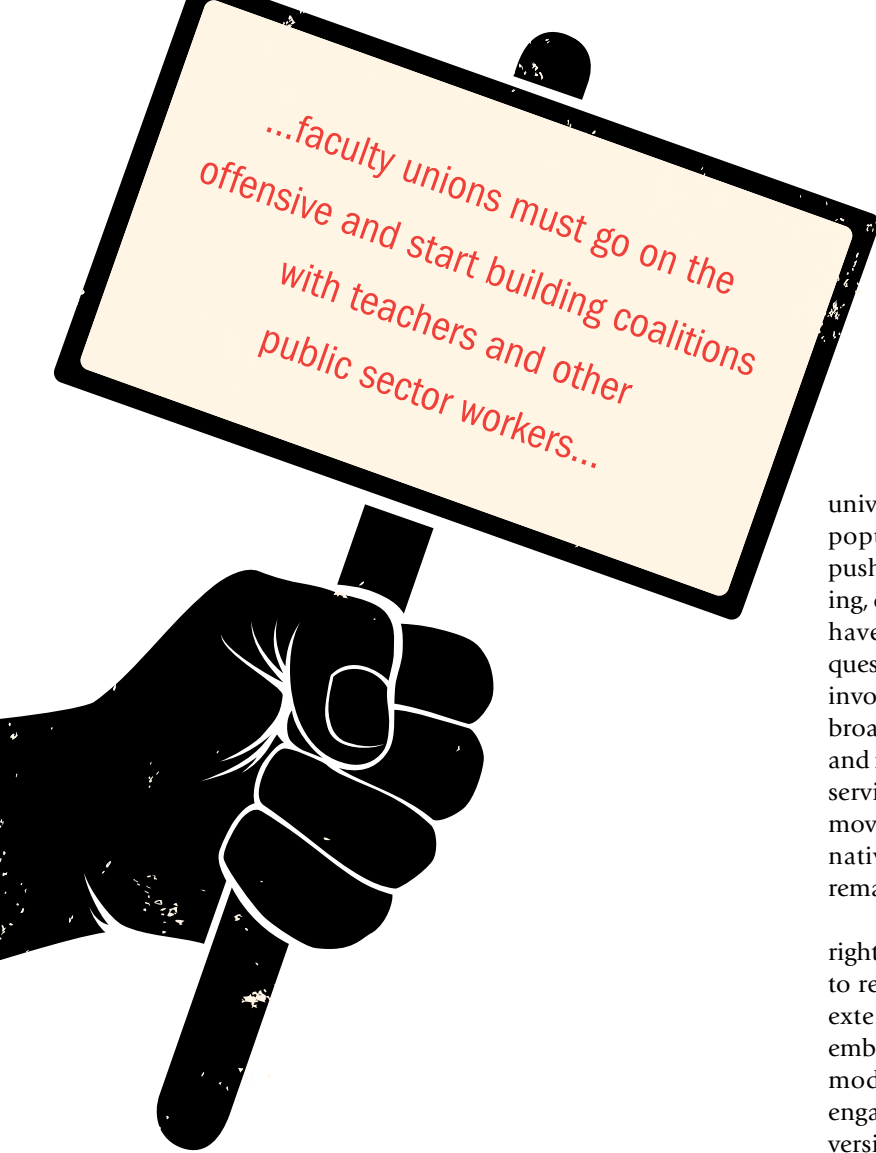
Right-wing populism has been on the rise in recent years, intensifying following the 2008 global financial crisis. 2016 marked a key moment in the right populist turn, with both Brexit and the US Presidential election constituting formal political legitimacy for right-wing populist leaders and movements. Despite widespread opposition following the election of Donald Trump—itsself often taking populist forms—a range of right-wing populist forces continue to push forward. In both Europe and North America, anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic rhetoric and violence has escalated. Populist figures are giving voice to and emboldening longstanding racist and xenophobic currents in western societies. Other variants of authoritarian right-wing populism are also growing. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's government in Turkey has now dismissed over 7,000 academics and in some cases jailed scholars.

Not surprisingly, many academics fear populism. Distrust of elites, perhaps the primary defining feature of populism, is a threat to universities as they currently operate. The threat extends to those who make a living in postsecondary education, be they tenured professors, precarious contract faculty, or staff. Of course, populist attacks on the university are nothing new. Beginning as Plato's training ground for elites, disagreements about the role of universities as sites of advanced education for the masses versus institutions for the aristocracy have long existed. Most recently in Ontario, the Mike Harris years were harsh for universities. As Paul Martin cut transfer payments to the provinces in the mid-1990s, Harris followed suit with a 25 per cent cut to postsecondary funding at a time when enrolment was growing. Budget cuts were facilitated by popular skepticism towards traditional academic research and an emphasis on the need for job relevancy in university programs. There were protests, but it was relatively easy for Harris to gut education spending (as opposed to healthcare) as he operationalized his populist Common Sense Revolution.

We noted the fluidity of the term populism in a 2014 article in *Labor Studies Journal*, in which we identified core elements of the term (e.g. anti-elitism, productivism, etc.). Despite the democratization of postsecondary education in Canada in the post-war period, universities remain vulnerable to right-wing populist agendas. Consider the everyday productivist attacks on public sector workers who allegedly produce nothing of value. These attacks extend to well-paid university faculty, often perceived as privileged elites with

secure jobs and pensions, who are constantly scapegoated by both politicians and right-wing media. Academic research is written off as obscure, inaccessible, and simply not up to the task of addressing society's real problems or of providing students with the skills they need for the labour market. Critics claim the only thing university education offers is mounting student debt and a degree that no longer leads to a middle-class job.

Populist attacks extend into the realm of conspiracy as universities are cast as breeding grounds for political correctness, the feminization of society, and Marxist thought police. Protests organized against campus visits by extreme right-wing public figures such as Ann Coulter, Milo Yiannopoulos, or Gavin McInnes are cited as threats to freedom of speech. Students fighting racism, colonialism, and xenophobia on and off campus spawn nativist backlash. Authoritarians craft the above narrative to strengthen their own cult of leadership and pave the way for funding cuts when they are in power, creating a nexus between right-wing populism and austerity. Indeed, these recent populist attacks are inevitably coupled with the longstanding and ongoing neoliberal transformation of the university. This transformation, supported by



right-wing populism includes the casualization of academic labour and the shift away from tenure-stream appointments; increases in performance measurement; work intensification for all employees; and a top-down managerialism that undermines processes of collegial governance. All of this occurs in the midst of manufactured fiscal crises and escalating tuition fees.

Populist attacks on universities are not, however, merely external: they also come from within. As Steven Zhou has reported in articles for the CBC and Now Magazine, there has been an upsurge in racism on campuses in Canada, masquerading as right-wing populism. Our own campus at York University has recently seen both racist graffiti and alt-right recruitment materials. The University of Toronto's Jordan Peterson has parlayed his refusal to recognize genderless pronouns into a freedom of expression crusade adored by the right. If we further consider that Kellie Leitch, one of the Trumpian contenders for the leadership of the Conservative Party of Canada, had an academic administrative career before entering federal politics, we see that right-wing populists do emerge from our own university ranks.

At the same time, there has been resistance from within universities by those who contest neoliberal and right-wing populist visions. Workers on university campuses have pushed back against casualization through union organizing, collective bargaining, and striking. Faculty associations have challenged the power of central administrations, questioning elitist and anti-democratic practices. Coalitions involving students and university workers have supported broader movements of resistance against economic injustice and racism, such as the recent successful strike of York food service workers against Aramark. There are signs that such movements will continue to grow, offering hope that alternatives to right populism and the neoliberal university remain possible.

Yet the struggle against current forms of authoritarian right-wing populism is only beginning. Our instincts may be to resist all populist attacks on universities, internal and external, but what if university workers and students embraced populism? Here, we are not suggesting any accommodation to right-wing populism, but rather a serious engagement with the underlying structures that make universities its fundamental targets. A counter populism must acknowledge the real disconnect between universities as sites of knowledge production and the broader public good. Imagining a progressive populist university as a means of resistance is possible.

First and foremost, a progressive populist university will have to seriously address the persistent elitism of the academy. While there has been ample work on democratizing the classroom and knowledge mobilization, this is far from a complete project. In the US case, it is argued that commodified universities are increasingly Platonized institutions where accessibility is limited, liberal education remains elitist, and academics have retreated into obscure, idealist research divorced from the issues facing communities. There will always be a place for theory for theory's sake in academia, but research and teaching that engages communities is necessary and should be promoted. We are not speaking about communities as sites or objects of research, but rather about a research process that is deeply rooted in community-based concerns. Genuine academic-community partnerships are oriented towards addressing the interests of all those involved, not solely on producing measurable research outputs.

As to questions of tenured job security and academic freedom, these are interpreted as elitist privileges. There are

countless opinion pieces and blog posts arguing that professors should abandon tenure as a Cold War relic and face accountability and job performance measures similar to other workers in precarious labour markets. However, there is another possibility not often considered: the expansion of employment security as a more universalized practice. Such an extension is realistic if one considers the popular support society has demonstrated for protecting whistleblowers and dissenters who witness wrongdoing. Viewing tenure only as a necessary protection for full-time academic workers simply fuels anti-elitism. Defending the tenure system requires the promotion of secure employment across labour markets as a more general social and economic goal. Here, faculty unions must go on the offensive and start building coalitions with teachers and other public sector workers to extend job security and academic freedom protections beyond the university walls.

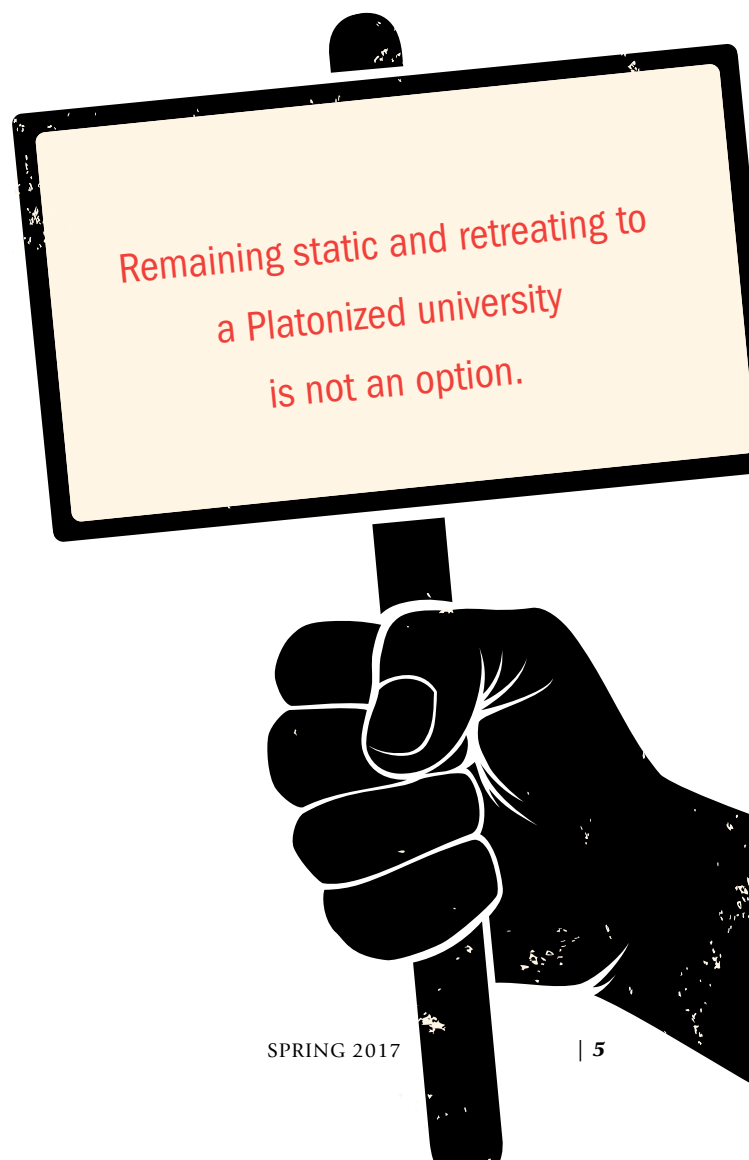
A progressive populist university could channel anti-elitist politics towards the highly paid administrators who have ushered in neoliberal managerialism. In this case, a healthy distrust of administrative elites is warranted. Populist campaigns against exorbitant presidential and senior administrative salaries, the dramatic expansion of administrative ranks, the undermining of collegial governance, and investment in vanity capital projects may provide the means to reconnect universities with the broader public good.

Most academics rightly condemn conspiratorial thinking. Warnings about the supposedly evil machinations of elites cannot substitute for analyses of the systems of colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy that right-wing populism seeks to reproduce. Yet, naming the institutions and actors that reproduce oppressive structures is a necessary part of any analysis. Universities can play a role in exposing those behind the right-wing think tanks who attack liberal education. In Ontario, proposals promoted by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario to differentiate the university system into flagship, research, and teaching institutions can be addressed as a conspiracy to cut costs, devalue research, and tier the university system. This must be countered by revealing how this vision will produce a future system with grossly unequal universities incapable of confronting authoritarian power.

As white supremacy and nativism are entrenched in right-wing populism, so must a progressive populism construct a cosmopolitan ethos that recognizes universities as institutions with the power to build social justice. A clear stand must be taken to reject accusations that campus-based actions to counter the spread of hatred limit free speech. A progressive populist university creates space for campus coalitions that appreciate both the context of specific campus struggles and the importance of broader solidarity in achieving social justice across society.

Further, as counter to the current climate of xenophobia, universities can play a role in providing sanctuary for students and academics fleeing conflict zones. A progressive populist university would not only support these scholars, but also value their experiences as necessary to understanding and improving the global condition. At the same time, we should support racialized faculty who find themselves restricted from traveling to the US for research or large conferences—whether by the travel ban itself or due to conscientious objections and expressions of solidarity. This may involve a larger populist critique of US academic imperialism, especially as the global centre of intellectual exchange.

Building a progressive populism will require change, which must include a transformation of our faculty unions. First, faculty unions will have to stop acting like ancient guilds protecting the narrow interests of members. A start will be to reach out to contract faculty and start using the power we have to normalize employment relationships away from precarity. In the short term, this may involve unions shifting demands away from wages and working conditions and towards demands for more full-time hiring.



Material sacrifices will have to be made (especially by senior administrators). Failing to do so threatens the very existence of a full-time professoriate.

Second, community engagement must be taken seriously and must not be dismissed as a retreat to anti-intellectualism. Many researchers are already deeply engaged in community research and have been for decades. We must learn from others and work to accept different sources of knowledge as legitimate—whether they are from Indigenous groups, labour unions, environmentalist organizations, the business community, or community-based advocacy groups. These collaborative methodologies and relationships must be developed and heralded every time we are accused of disengaged, solitary, elitist research. Continuing in this direction will require replacing a narrow emphasis on academic publishing in specialized journals with a more expansive valuing of a range of research and dissemination activities.

Community engagement can extend into the university classroom. The intern economy has been critically challenged in recent years, as exploitative unpaid internships detached from real training have grown rapidly. Yet, students demand experiential learning opportunities outside the classroom. Such opportunities should be restructured in ways that contribute to meaningful training and skills development, and that expose students to other forms of learning.

Inevitably, this leads to the debate about whether a liberal education trains students for jobs or citizenship. A progressive populist university rejects this false binary. If we are educating students for their future lives, it should be for the many aspects of what that life might be—and of which work is just one consideration. Only emphasizing the Platonic intellectual life of students or their prospects for employment ignores their multiple material and social needs.

But who do we trust to usher in a progressive populist university? Here, we can turn to our unions; but we may require a more radical imagining of collegial governance than that which unions are trying to salvage in the face of growing managerialism. Efforts to contest the lack of transparency of administrative appointments and the centralization of decision-making are crucial. At the same time, we must not be overly nostalgic for past models of collegial governance that were flawed. Small groups (of mostly white men) determining policy and allocation of resources with (mostly white male) Deans was far from a democratic ideal.

If a progressive populism is to challenge the administrative elite of universities (and reduce the number of managers), we will have to rebuild our self-managerial capacities. Taking back our universities will involve educating faculty, students, and staff about university budgets and the strategic goals of the state. Fortunately, there are signs

that this is happening, including in the efforts of campus coalitions working to develop alternative university budget models that expose the financial manipulations of university financial officers.

Remaining static and retreating to a Platonized university is not an option. Building a progressive populist university as a means of fighting back against right-wing populist attacks on our institutions may be a necessary strategy. In the face of the rising tide of right-wing populism, the very real threats of ongoing and further violence against racialized and im/migrant communities, and the potential for deeper tendencies of authoritarian austerity, reshaping the university in the age of populism is not just about the postsecondary system. Rather, the struggle constitutes an element of the most pressing political crisis of our time. Failure to push back against authoritarian right-wing populism now may very well lead us to the point of contemplating the university in an age of fascism. **AM**

Steven Tufts is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography at York

University; Mark Thomas is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Director of the Global Labour Research Centre at York University.

BLACK ROSE BOOKS

Changing the discussions that change society

www.blackrosebooks.com

THE RISE OF CITIES

The Rise of Cities: Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Other Cities

DIMITRI ROUSSOPOULOS, BILL FREEMAN, PATRICK J. SMITH, SHAWN KATZ AND OTHERS.

250 pp, \$19.99, bibliography, index
Paperback: 978-1-55164-334-2, hardcover: 978-1-55164-335-9

This book analyzes the key role of cities in the modern world, how they coalesce, develop and thrive, and how they can remake themselves for better or worse

NEW!
May 2017

Pioneers of Ecological Humanism

Pioneers of Ecological Humanism: Lewis Mumford, Rene Dubos, Murray Bookchin

BRIAN MORRIS

275 pp, \$26.99, bibliography, index
Paperback: 978-1-5164-607-7, hardcover: 978-1-55164-609-1

Anthropologist, botanist and philosopher Brian Morris examines the life, work and philosophy of three pioneering, although underestimated, thinkers in the field of modern ecology.

NEW!
May 2017

Friendly Fascism

Friendly Fascism: The New Face of Power in America

BERTRAM GROSS

410 pp, \$27.99, index
Paperback: 978-0-92005-7-230, hardcover: 978-0-92005-7-223

Bertram Gross' enduring classic is a provocative and original critique of the signs of a growing yet subtle fascism in North America, in many ways predicting the ascent of Trump.

Sales representation by Brunswick Books.

Distribution: University of Toronto Press.

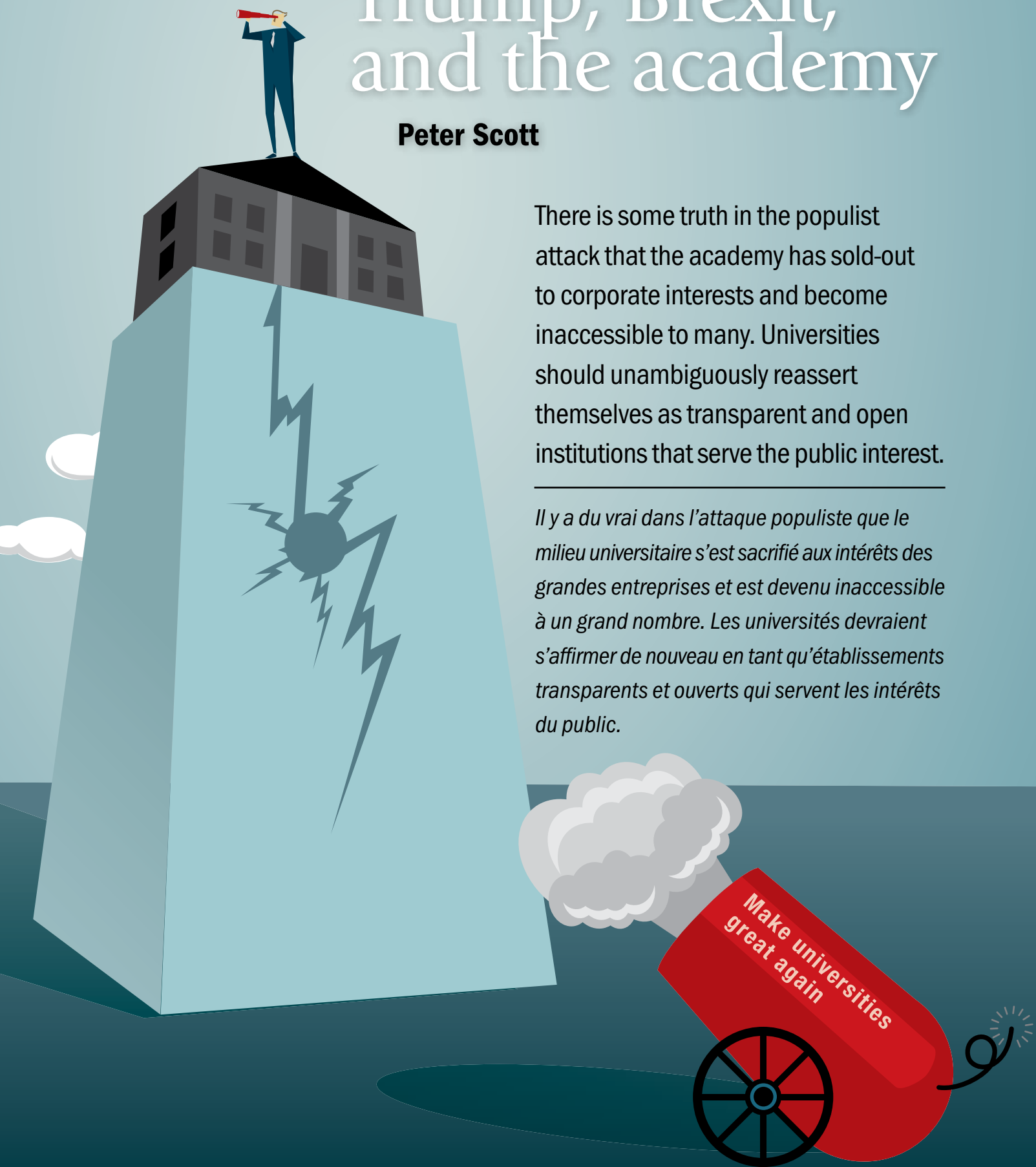
To order: utpbooks@utpress.utoronto.ca; or call toll free: 1-800-565-9523

Trump, Brexit, and the academy

Peter Scott

There is some truth in the populist attack that the academy has sold-out to corporate interests and become inaccessible to many. Universities should unambiguously reassert themselves as transparent and open institutions that serve the public interest.

Il y a du vrai dans l'attaque populiste que le milieu universitaire s'est sacrifié aux intérêts des grandes entreprises et est devenu inaccessible à un grand nombre. Les universités devraient s'affirmer de nouveau en tant qu'établissements transparents et ouverts qui servent les intérêts du public.



"The Brexit vote and the Trump campaign, as well as the success of populist candidates around the world, highlight a distrust of traditional government institutions that is manifesting itself as a dislike of credentialed expertise."

- Beth Simone Noveck, Yale Law School and NYU's Governance Lab

The academy has been spooked by the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States and the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union in last June's referendum. In fact, any political eruptions—past, present, or future—that can be shoehorned into the now dominant media narrative about the rise of populism raise concerns in academic circles. Colleges and universities, accustomed to thinking of themselves as the vanguard of progress, now worry they may end up on the wrong side of history, stigmatized as (re)producers of elites, founts of amoral even toxic expertise, and agents of a hated globalization that has remorselessly destroyed jobs, communities, and national (and local) cultures. Nonsense, of course. But in an age dominated by the post-truth politics of the alt-right, dangerous nonsense may be half-believed by too many people.

Nevertheless, it is important to keep a sense of perspective. In many other democratic systems, Hillary Clinton would have been elected President. After all, she got three million more votes. Donald Trump is only President because the United States, unwilling to tamper with its sacred-text Constitution, has retained an archaic 18th-century device—the Electoral College—deliberately designed by the Founding Fathers to moderate, if not mute, the will of the people. The UK's decision to leave the EU was made by a narrow margin, 51.9 to 48.1 per cent. In effect, the country was split down the middle. London, most major cities, Scotland, and Northern Ireland all voted strongly to remain. Whatever alarms there may be, politics in the Netherlands, France, and Germany look poised to remain dominated by the centre-right or centre-left. The EU will survive Brexit and may even be strengthened by the shock, which could kick-start overdue reform. The danger is not so much that we will all be drowned in a tsunami of alt-right populism, but that otherwise sensible politicians (and leaders, including university presidents) may be spooked by this great illusion and do the populists' work for them.

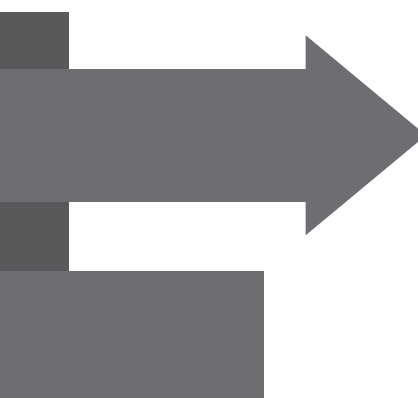
However, necessary as it is to challenge the dominant media narrative about the rise of populism, it is also necessary to take seriously the list of charges against the academy, and to find ways in which colleges and universities can regain the popular trust they may have lost. The main charge against universities is that almost half a century of mass expansion has predominantly benefited the middle classes, leading to almost universal participation by students from more socially advantaged backgrounds, while higher education

Universities are
vibrant, increasingly
multi-cultural places...

remains a rationed privilege for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This stubborn access gap is even more pronounced in the case of elite universities, often the focus of national pride as world-class institutions. This first charge is just one strand in a wider right-wing critique of the welfare state and tax-supported public services—that the haves have benefited at the expense of the have-nots. Ironically, it is the right wing's tax agenda—the reduction in direct and progressive taxation, and its replacement by indirect and regressive taxes—that has increased inequality and made fairer access to higher education even more difficult to achieve.

But there are powerful counter-arguments against the charge that access to higher education is increasingly unequal. First, definitions of middle class and working class have changed. As a result of far-reaching shifts in economic structures and occupational patterns over the past half-century, the former has grown as a proportion of the population and the latter, in its classic heavy-industry proletarian form, has declined. In parallel with this, there are alarming signs of the growth of the new precariat in the so-called gig economy (many of whom may be college graduates). So, it is hardly surprising that today's much more open higher education systems still appear to be dominated by the 'middle class'. Of course, this leaves aside the role higher education has played in upward social mobility, surely a beneficial outcome. Second, although the access gap remains, far more students come from less privileged backgrounds than was the case 50 years ago. Third, some previously disadvantaged groups have made spectacular gains—for example, some (but not all) ethnic and cultural minorities and, most decisively and visibly, women (although this fuels another complaint, that middle-class women have crowded out working-class men). Of course, true equality of opportunity remains to be achieved. Minority students tend to be concentrated in lower-status institutions, and female students are concen-





There is a sliver
of truth in the
allegation that
the academy has
sold-out to powerful
corporate interests.

trated in particular subjects—arguably excluding them from some elite positions and professions.

However, the claim that the expansion of mass higher education has been a socially regressive phenomenon is plainly false. Of course, there is a far bigger elephant in the room: the growth of income inequality since the 1980s—produced by the erosion of higher-tax welfare states, deregulation, and privatization. The same right-wing critics, who complain about the alleged elitism of higher education, enthusiastically support these anti-state policies. So they can hardly complain about their inevitably divisive effects, whether in terms of health outcomes, school attainment, or patterns of postsecondary participation. The available evidence suggests that the wider availability of higher education, as a result of mass expansion, has mitigated this rise in social inequality. But colleges and universities reflect wider social, economic and cultural trends. They cannot reverse these trends unaided.

Three other charges are levelled at the academy by the Trumpists, Brexiters, and their fellow travelers around the globe. The first is that the expansion of higher education has contributed to the growth of what these groups call an expertocracy—a body that dominates public debate and stifles contrary voices on a whole range of issues from climate change to women's rights. By default, nearly all of these 'experts' are college graduates and many are professors. It is difficult to know how seriously to take this charge. More recently, Milovan Djilas, the Yugoslav leader turned dissident, complained that postwar Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe were creating a new class of privileged ruling elites. Mass higher education may have created a new graduate class in a similar mode. Contemporary rantings against the Washington or London (or Paris or Berlin) establishment have a long historical pedigree. However, a new twist is provided by the alt-right's rhetorical assault on

globalization as a destroyer of jobs and communities at home (rather than as an agent of post-imperial exploitation fueled by global hyper-capitalism).

Second, universities are also implicated as the producers of much of the science on which advanced, and sometimes disruptive, technologies are based. The historical responsibilities of scholars to uncover truths that conflict with received wisdom, and of scientists to think the unthinkable, have always been disturbing to some. A more solid argument is that some new technologies are reshaping lives, and even personal relationships, in radical and not always immediately welcome ways. Social media are clearly an example—although Donald Trump has shown no more willingness to abandon his Twitter account as a primary channel of Presidential communication than the students who enthusiastically embrace social media as learning tools. The growth of the sharing economy, through online tools such as Uber or Airbnb is another example.

The third charge is that the academy is spreading cosmopolitanism, which for these critics appears to be a mixture of the re-heated culture wars of the last century (most notably in the United States), new fears about immigration, mass flows of refugees, and the threat of terrorism. To this, the academy can only plead guilty. Universities are vibrant, increasingly multi-cultural places, typically at the heart of Richard Florida's creative cities—where economic dynamism, technological innovation, and social and cultural experimentation fruitfully coexist. Overwhelmingly, the academy has nothing for which to apologize.

How to respond to this charge sheet? The first response must be to refuse to be spooked by the hypocritical allegations of elitism levelled by ultra-conservatives masquerading as populists, and not to do their work for them by apologizing and abandoning the high ground currently occupied by the academy. Modern higher education systems play a key role in the civic and economic emancipation of millions around the world. Democratic societies, for all the weaknesses revealed by the (hopefully, transitory) triumph of Trump and Brexit, cannot function without a well-educated citizenry. The choices we face are difficult and complex. Beware of so-called populists peddling easy and simple ones. Similarly, the success of our economies, which have generated historically unparalleled wealth (however unequally it may be distributed), depends on the experts so despised by the alt-right and, more broadly, on the skills of an increasingly well-educated workforce. The academy has been a key agent in both the processes of individual and social emancipation and economic betterment. The development of increasingly open higher education systems has been among the most powerful social transformations of the past half-century.

However, a second response is also needed. There is a sliver of truth in the allegation that the academy has sold-

out to powerful corporate interests. By incessantly talking up world-class universities at which students from predominantly socially privileged groups are enrolled, we have talked down the need to promote increased access to the widest possible populations. But, for all the research funded by big pharma, energy companies, or the military, there is an equivalent or greater quantity of research on progressive social interventions, new legal principles, and environmental agendas—and elite universities are under constant pressure to open their doors to a more diverse student body. With all this, it is important to remember that one of the lessons of 21st-century politics, manipulated by behind-closed-doors data analytics and shouted through the Twitter-sphere, is that doubts, impressions, and perceptions—even when contradicted by hard evidence—are more influential than ever. This is the age of alternative facts, after all.

So, the academy must counter the pseudo-populist narrative with an even more compelling narrative, which should include four key messages:

- The first is a shift away, in both language and strategy, from ‘world-class’ universities and back to widening participation. The language of world-class institutions is divisive, because talk of the best universities inevitably implies the rest are second-rate. However, it is the ‘rest’ that will always enroll the majority of students, including new groups of students from less privileged backgrounds. It is hardly surprising that the students, faculty, and staff at these universities resent such derogatory language. This language also produces perverse policy outcomes. Being in the top 10/50/100 conveys little about the real research quality and capability of these universities, however hyped it may be by marketing departments, and it carries the real risk that institutional strategies will be distorted by focusing excessively on the metrics that determine league-table positions.
- The second is that higher education should resist the galloping commodification, and outright commercialization, of teaching. Of course, academic programs should be subject to proper business-like planning so that revenues and expenditures can be properly understood. Of course, there should be greater flexibility in how students can learn—not everyone wants to study full-time in campus-based environments created for the social elites of the past. But both aims can be realized through the action of democratic communities of students and their teachers. Entrenched discipline-bound orthodoxies should also be challenged with more courses in post-2008 financial crisis economics alongside the inevitable ones in econometrics. University education should not be put up for sale, either by turning

students into spurious customers (and charging them high fees) or by abandoning academic integrity.

- The third is to develop new forms of research—how research topics are identified, how research is undertaken, who are defined as researchers, how findings are disseminated, and how quality and value are assessed—alongside more traditional forms of research and scholarship. Closed scientific communities, with their silent hegemonies and powerful hierarchies, need to be vigorously challenged by more democratically-formed research communities in which producers, users, and beneficiaries have voices that are more equal. This goes far beyond action research or practitioner research. University-based research should not be something that is done to people, even with the best intentions, but what people do to (and for) themselves—actively engaging the widest possible sections of our many communities.
- Fourth is the involvement of universities in their communities—not simply as large-scale employers and spenders, in the familiar guise as economic multipliers; not simply in terms of their vital contributions to urban, regional, or national development as conduits through which global knowledge can interact with these local environments; and not simply as key elements with the clever cities in which they are embedded, as beacons of culture and engines of innovation. All three are crucial. But to consolidate, or win back the trust of the whole of society, including those at risk of being suborned by Trump, Brexit, and other ‘populist’ deceptions, they need to become activists for their communities in the fullest possible sense.

Above all, what may be required is a simple thing: a change of tone. It is a tough call. For too long the academy has been absorbing the worst habits of the market. Too many university leaders have concluded that there is no alternative to this course. They raise (or introduce) tuition fees to replace dwindling state support, reimagine students as both customers and units of production, build closer links with the corporate world, and re-engineer universities as business organizations. The rise of this thinking alarmingly coincided with the rise of multinational banks and global corporations. The shipwreck of the former and the growing resistance to the latter should be a wake-up call to the academy, as perhaps should be the backlash to elite political institutions around the world. The academy needs to locate itself, unambiguously and radically, in the public realm and in the common wealth. **AM**

Peter Scott is a Professor of Higher Education Studies at the University College London Institute of Education in the United Kingdom, and Scotland's Commissioner for Fair Access to Higher Education.

A populist wake-up call for universities

Mark Kingwell



For many, universities do not represent opportunity or self-realization, but instead elite self-regard and academic exchanges in which they see no relevance. What can faculty do to change these perceptions?

Pour bien des gens, les universités ne représentent pas l'occasion de s'épanouir, mais plutôt la suffisance de l'élite et des échanges universitaires dans lesquels ils ne voient aucune pertinence. Que peuvent faire les professeurs pour changer ces perceptions?

Can we step out of our bubble for a moment? I hope so, because unless we do we will not see that we are losing the battle.

What battle is that? Just the one for the hearts and minds of our fellow citizens, within the nation and without. Just the contest between the forces of rationality and those of darkness and ignorance. Just the eternal struggle to make ideas, and not force, relevant to the plight of those oppressed by ignorance and bad rhetoric. Just that.

If you have not seen the mainstream media lately, if you prefer more filtered sources of experience or retreats into sanity, maybe this is not obvious. However, a glimpse into the abyss of larger public discourse is enough to make the point vivid. Academic research, once celebrated as the

vanguard of the best that was thought and expressed, is on the run. Enrolments are down. Public denunciations are routine, running a gamut from casual dismissal (“useless” degrees and the like) to open hostility (“incubators of social justice warriors,” “ideological fog-machines,” etc. etc.).

You can dismiss these bleats if you like. Of course, the comments boards of right-wing newspapers are no place to look for sane assessment of a liberal education. Of course, there are columnists who will base their flailing careers on mocking a world they do not understand.

This move, a reversal of the injunction to check your privilege, is swiftly self-defeating. Enforce your privilege is not much of a rallying cry, after all, at least when it comes to the rational justification of living the life of the mind with ironclad tenure and on a Sunshine List salary. Is that all we have, a retreat into a cocoon of superiority? Rex Murphy and Margaret Wenthe may be doltish on the subject, but saying so does not really meet the case, does it? They have a point, especially when it comes to the traditional liberal education, once thought to be an instrument of emancipation.

Inside, meanwhile, things are not much better. The neoliberal overproduction of graduate students, essential for government funding, and steady supplies of sessional teaching, is a pyramid scheme of such magnitude that in another sector it would warrant regulatory intervention. For example, placement rates for tenure-track jobs in humanities have been stuck at about 30 per cent for years, with no discernible effect on intake. Not for nothing is grad-school culture lately compared to a cult, where the desires of the innocent are blithely annexed to a system that chews up individual will as cheap labour. Citing the palpable desire of junior scholars to enter an academic field is akin to college football coaches shrugging away the fact that young men are more than willing to endure life-shortening concussions in pursuit of a one-percentile payoff.

We are losing when it comes to reason and critical intelligence and civility. We are losing when it comes to the basic justification of what we do. We are losing on defending universities as forces for good.



Here is an idea: think of every graduate admission as a sort of concussion waiting to happen. (In case anyone cares, I am currently director of graduate studies in my department, a job nobody wants; I do my best to be, at least, honest.)

Against this background, indulgences such as the “slow professor” movement, however well intentioned, constitute a somewhat sick joke—something that renders the notion of “First World problem” wildly inadequate. I am sure that people feel rushed to produce journal articles and positive teaching evaluations, to sit on this committee or that. But can you seriously compare this to actual work? Surely, there is a better term for such high-end special pleading. Ultra-first-world problem? Point-one-per-cent lament?

The humanities and social sciences often appear to be scholarly echo chambers, driven by prize-chasing and chatter-swapping that is only of interest to a comfortable few. The emancipatory promise of learning, once the core mission, lies broken on the floor. There is no freedom here, no route to self-realization. There may be, in some cases, employment. But there is, less defensibly,

the mere carapace of radical politics, a pathetic shell of commitment polished and maintained by a collective delusion that what we do still makes a difference to the larger world.

Let me put it in this contentious way: The only justification for the privileges we enjoy is that they should work to make the world better, in some sense of that word. This is, *mutatis mutandis*, a basic tenet of any theory of justice, whether it is John Rawls’ notion of distributive fairness, Mill’s utilitarianism, or Hume’s regulation of moderate scarcity. There may be no direct material results from our work, but there should be intangible ones: the accretion of wisdom, a deepened sense of what it means to be here. Privilege for its own sake is malign. Intellectual privilege is complacency dressed up with fancy vocational window-dressing.

Look, I know: crisis in our universities is a familiar trope. We have heard all of this before, and scholarship keeps making its steady headway. Stop worrying! Keep your head down, make a contribution, be moderately nice to your colleagues and students, and take home the pay. There are worse ways to measure a mortal span.

I sympathize with this attitude, I really do. Sometimes, like many of us, all I want to do is go to the library and make notes for an article or critical notice, which I am certain will not be read by more than a few like-minded colleagues. Moreover, I am as impatient as anyone with the misrepresentations of what happens in our classrooms and on our campuses. I have no interest in indoctrination, preach no particular political line in lectures, and do not believe my students ought to exit a course as fired-up activists, just as more thoughtful citizens.

But, friends, we are losing. We are losing when it comes to reason and critical intelligence and civility. We are losing when it comes to the basic justification of what we do. We are losing on defending universities as forces for good.

Populism might be a political force we revile, but its lesson cannot be ignored: for the vast majority of people, universities do not represent opportunity or self-realization but elite self-regard, out-of-touch levels of comfort, and a discourse that enjoys no traction on the politics of everyday life.

Assuming that we see this as a problem that needs to be addressed, what can we do about it?

* * *

As a fan of campus literature, I always read with some envy the depictions of earlier iterations of academic life. I think of Evelyn Waugh, John Williams, Iris Murdoch, or Willa Cather—even David Lodge, Kingsley Amis, and Malcolm Bradbury. Whether taken seriously or wrapped in

Is there any life in the traditional promise of liberal learning?



the chilly embrace of satire, professors in these worlds enjoy implicit status because of their learning. Undergraduates accept authority and the idea that a bachelor's degree is a good in and of itself. The public at large considers a liberal-arts degree a mark of distinction, the sign of potential, not a sad comment on bad life-choices.

I do not need to tell you that this has all entirely vanished. Universities are now sites of consumer preference and casual student entitlement. Expertise in something as frangible as poetry and philosophy is a matter of routine mockery. Administrators multiply at a rate unknown to any other walk of life. Passionate interest in ideas, meanwhile, is considered a sign of eccentricity, something to be deprecated among the post-grad barista class as adolescent indulgence.

From behind the retail counter, Thoreau's cry in *Walden* (1854) about intellectuals as rational rebels for humanity sounds a romantic note. "There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers," he intoned. "To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a

school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically."

If only. So, the question becomes one of what other possibilities exist given current conditions. Is there any life in the traditional promise of liberal learning? Suppose we denied ourselves the comfortable retreat into privilege, a return to the bubble, what would our duties be then? And what would be the real outcomes, not the ones measured by the dean's office apparatchiks?

We can note several false trails right from the start. The worst possible course of action is to try to recast liberal learning according to a reductive notion of utility. This is the error coiled in the heart of every faculty demand for learning outcomes and transferable skills. Sure, there are such outcomes

and skills emerging from the ether of classes in metaphysics or pure mathematics. However, if we assess those classes on their ability to generate such results, we commit two errors—one theoretical and one practical.

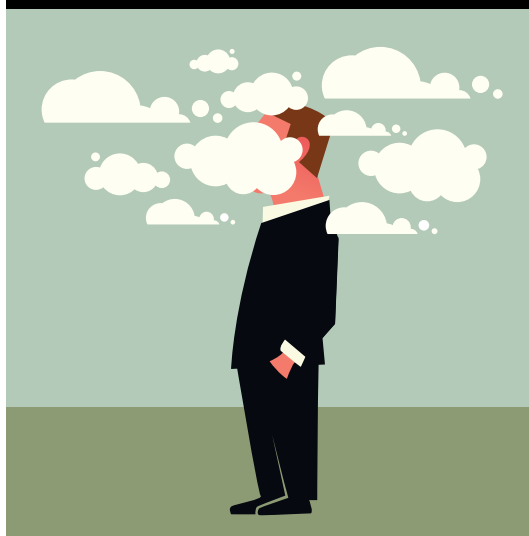
The theoretical error is counted as such only by those who are already committed to these esoteric pursuits. Utility-based arguments for math and metaphysics mistake the true value of these undertakings, erasing their special appeal. This is, alas, academic inside baseball. However, the practical error follows immediately and should be obvious to anyone. If we are really concerned with enhancing writing, critical reasoning, or calculating skills, teaching the works of David Lewis and Georg Cantor is a preposterously inefficient way of going about it. Life skills may be emergent properties of postsecondary study; they cannot ever be its point.

It is equally dangerous to devolve university education to either of two popular notions of self-fulfilment. One of these holds that education is entirely for the benefit of an individual subject: the so-called “mental spa” model. On this understanding, in public systems anyway, the taxpayers of a jurisdiction shoulder the costs of unequally distributed luxury goods, in the form of time and opportunity to read, write, and hang out for several years. Tuition provides a necessary cover of personal investment in this high-end experience, but in fact rarely covers the full costs.

The flip-side of this indulgent vision is the popular idea that education must be a matter of radicalization. The notion has a long and respectable history, and there is a kernel of truth in it that must be acknowledged beyond the newspaper caricatures of “political correctness,” that mythical bugbear, and the clichéd talk of microaggressions, safe spaces, and victimhood.

As Paolo Freire reminds us in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), education is either a trap-door into the current arrangement or an escape-hatch into freedom. However, there are sometimes side-traps and bait-and-switch games concealed within the passageways of thought. Freedom need not be standard leftist politics. In fact, it need not,

Critical intelligence means questioning all easy habits of thought; including the ones we indulge in service of our own political desires.



and should not, be any specific counter-ideology at all. Critical intelligence means questioning all easy habits of thought; including the ones we indulge in service of our own political desires.

It has been some years since I last read Cardinal Newman’s *Idea of a University* (1852), but in thinking about this article, I was motivated to crack my old paper-back copy. It is well thumbed. I bought it for a class I still recall, a first-year ‘great books’ evening course, co-taught in the far-off year of 1980 by two historians—one of them the award-winning Kenneth Bartlett, now a colleague.

Newman’s basic religiosity remains at odds with his self-avowed secularism about education, and his elitism is presumptive, as with any book from the era. Nevertheless, the optimism of his view is forever inspiring. The defence of education as an end in itself, in fact as the discernment of ends rather than means, is timeless. Students, Newman argues, must learn “to think and to reason and to compare and to discriminate and to analyze.” That is the point; that is the idea.

* * *

It happens that this spring is the tenth anniversary of a program run at the University of Toronto called “Humanities for Humanity.” My friends John Duncan and Kelley Castle, along with a host of student and faculty volunteers, have run this innovative series with extraordinary success over this decade.

In the program, people from different walks of city life, recruited through community centres and downtown churches, attend a series of lectures and discussion groups. They read very canonical material and hear from professors interested in the topics. (I have lectured every year on Machiavelli’s *The Prince*; also lately on Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* in a related program called “Theatre for Thought”.) There is a hearty dinner and free childcare, formal certificates at the end, and, above all, an intellectual fellowship I have not seen anywhere else.

Some 500 students have been inspired by the original program over the years, with another 300 graduating from the theatre-based offshoot. These might seem like small numbers, compared to the massive waves of populism that contend with the very idea of a university, and the huge annual intakes of students at all levels of our system. But, I can tell you that there is nothing in my experience more moving than to hear someone, excluded by language or background from regular attendance, wax emotional about the simple chance to attend a university lecture on power, or identity, or faith.

Speaking of faith, nothing renews my faith in the value of education more reliably than spending time with these students. A program like this will not solve the structural problems of graduate-school exploitation and the new academic precariat. It will not serve as a one-line reply to know-nothings and dopes who court a bogus populism with anti-intellectual ridicule and their comfortable salaries. However, it might sketch the beginnings of an argument about why we do what we do, why it matters, and how it affects actual people.

Our own students are rarely as grateful as these people, who are usually older and coming from situations of deprivation and often oppression. However, as Newman and Freire and a host of us have reason to know, planting the seeds of wisdom is not the same thing as witnessing its flowering. We cannot know, in advance, what effect our ideas and their halting expression will have on the individuals who pass before us in lecture halls, maybe bored and thinking of other things, irritated at the sheer non-utility of it all.

And yet, we go on because we believe in the mission. Or we should. It seems to me that the natural consequence of charges of elite privilege is a dangerous cynicism: the idea that this is all a game, a lottery where tenured faculty are the lucky winners after whom the door slams shut. Good luck, suckers! I'm all right!

Whenever I think about these questions of value, and the ends of university education, I recall the first hard years of my post-PhD career. The job market was experiencing another one of its cyclical crises. My home department at Yale, was in disarray and plummeting in reputation (there were no formal rankings then, just word-of-mouth taint). I struggled to find work, cobbling together what, nowadays, appears to be a fairly typical path: a post-doc, a sessional job, a limited appointment, tantalizing prospects of tenure-track jobs, along with various reversals and disappointments. I applied to join the Foreign Service, contemplated law school, and wrote for money. Of course I did.

Not surprisingly, I resented people who seemed to swan their way from graduate school into tenure-track jobs. I also recall the humiliation of having my name removed from a departmental mailbox because my re-appointment in the folding chair was briefly held up. "You don't teach here

anymore," I was told. I'm glad those days are gone, but I don't ever forget them. I am one of the lucky, lucky few: I made it into the clubhouse—or at least one chamber of its rigged, rickety expanse.

I will say it again: it is despicable to enjoy the fruits of academic success and not feel a profound sense of obligation. People who exist outside our bubble feel this too: hence the anger, the contempt, the disdain—and, maybe worst of all, the indifference. Still, we are all citizens together, and the world of the university is as real as anything else that transpires here in the sublunary realm. There is a call to community audible underneath all the hostility.

So I choose to believe, anyway. Every academic I know will tell you that she or he has many, many jobs. Sometimes, to be sure, it can feel like too many. But one of them, maybe the most important one, is to demonstrate why our efforts have wider value than just our personal satisfaction. That is not quite a new pedagogy of the oppressed, but maybe it is a start. **AM**

Mark Kingwell is a Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Toronto.

5th Annual Skills and Post-Secondary Education Summit 2017.

NOVEMBER 29–30, 2017 • TORONTO

Help Canada build a world-class PSE system.

Super Early Bird Tickets available to Academic Matters readers before June 30 for \$1,195. Use priority code **PRM2** when registering.

www.conferenceboard.ca/conf/education
1-866-242-0075



The Conference Board
of Canada

Le Conference Board
du Canada



International students and Canada's future on the right

Grace Karram Stephenson

Populist and anti-immigrant sentiment in the US and UK means that more international students are coming to study at postsecondary institutions in Canada. But, what Canada will they find when they get here?

Le sentiment populiste et anti-immigrant aux É.-U. et en G.-B. signifie qu'un plus grand nombre d'étudiants internationaux viennent étudier aux établissements postsecondaires du Canada. Mais, quel Canada trouveront-ils à leur arrivée?

The political events of the past year have been a recurring sitcom of oddities, leading many Canadians to bring out the popcorn and tissues. We watched with wry humour as the UK exited the European Union and we sat in stunned terror as the US elected Donald Trump. It has been more than a little unsettling. Our two closest allies—economically and culturally—have turned their back on the ideals of an open society and are instead pursuing narrow, protectionist policies.

The response in higher education has been ambivalent as institutions wonder what these political changes will mean for them. Most have held meetings and drafted statements to decry US policies while at the same time calculating the revenue they will gain if international students come to Canada instead of the UK or America.

Fortunately, several institutions have also seen the writing on the wall, foreshadowing our own potential to get swept away in the populist mania. Will this struggle become

Students who cannot or will not go to the US and UK, have to go somewhere else, and we hope it is here.

ours more directly? And what role is there for Canadian universities, many of whom are hoping these political events pay out in international students?

US CHAOS IS CANADA'S WINDELL

In the spring of 2016, as the UK made history by exiting the EU and Trump became a legitimate contender in the US, Canadians began to wonder what all of this meant for them. Trump's protectionist policies were the most immediate concern. Without smooth trade with the US, a Canadian recession is almost guaranteed. Yet, when Trump was officially elected, the higher education response was one of eager anticipation. Would Canada benefit from the hostile environment in the US? Would we see an increase in foreign students and the money they bring in? The evidence suggests the answer is "yes".

In the wake of Brexit, the EU ranked Canada as the most desirable English-speaking country for study abroad. This is a huge publicity bump for Canada. Shortly after this pleasant promotion, QS World University Ranking listed Montreal as the number one student city in the world, removing the romantic icon of Paris from first place. The world is watching Canadian universities.

In terms of actual numbers, Canada has never been the number-one destination for foreign students. According to the World Economic Forum, we are currently the eighth highest recipient of international students following the US, UK, France, Australia, Germany, Russia, and Japan. The reality is that we receive only 3 per cent of the world's mobile students compared to the US (18 per cent) and the UK (11 per cent).

So topping the US and UK is a big deal. Students who cannot or will not go to the US and UK, have to go somewhere else, and we hope it is here. The future looks even brighter when you consider that Canadian institutions have already had a 20 per cent rise in applications from American students. Canada is quickly becoming the ideal place to get a degree.

WHAT CANADA ARE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ENTERING?

What is this idyllic Canada that international students are entering?

Well, Canada turns 150 this year. If this were not a strong enough reason to revisit our national identity, US xenophobia certainly is. Social media is abuzz with messages that Canada is welcoming, from the Ontario-150 campaign video with its flagship Muslim teen, to reporters finding refugees who have walked for hours just to get to Canada.

We are looking for proof that we are made of superior moral fabric, that the hatred could not happen here, that we are not like them.

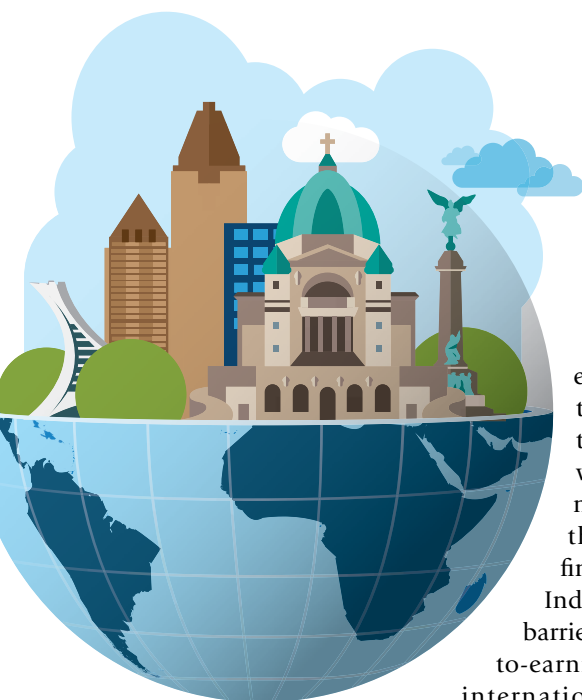
However, history is not our friend. In fact, Canadian politics has a concerning tendency to follow closely behind our US counterpart. Remember the 1980s, when the US elected conservative Ronald Reagan in 1981 and then Canada elected conservative Brian Mulroney in 1984? Ten years later the more liberal governments of Bill Clinton and Jean Chrétien both took power in 1993; Stephen Harper's conservatives followed George W. Bush by only five years. And now we have our own charming, young Prime Minister in the wake of Barack Obama.

So before we feel superior, let's stop to consider what will happen when Canadians begin to get disillusioned with our energetic Prime Minister and his diverse cabinet. An international student who eagerly applies for a Canadian degree in 2017 will only be starting their third year of study when Canadians have the chance to oust Trudeau and elect a right-wing leader. We even had our own celebrity-cum-politician vying for the job.

This scenario becomes even more hopeless if we add a recession fueled by US trade restrictions. Loss of employment, government deficits, and a rising cost of living could become a recipe for populist campaigning and protectionism. Even if we successfully construct an image that we are different from the US, that we make our own political choices and are open to the world, a recession would shatter this image fairly quickly. When unemployment hits, "me-first" politics becomes much more appealing.

The picture does not get brighter when you consider the findings of the international student survey by the Canadian Bureau for International Education. Only 13 per cent of international students reported that they faced cultural or religious discrimination from their peers inside the university campus, but 21 per cent said they experienced discrimination from the broader community. This supports the idea that universities are bastions of liberal thought, and many are working hard to create inclusive communities. But





eventually international students have to go out into the world and there is no guarantee that the Canada they find will be friendly.

Indeed, there are new barriers on the learning-to-earning pathways for international students in Canada as they are no longer able

to count their retail or food service jobs toward their permanent residency status. We want them to come, we need their money and cultural cache on campus, but not all of us want them to stay. And, if we do follow our neighbours to the south down the path of populism, it is unlikely that we will hold our top position for very long.

WHAT IS THE PLAN?

So how can we avoid this future? How can Canadian universities take action and ensure that Canada is, as Canadian Federation of Students Chairperson Bilan Arte recently wrote, the “antithesis to Trump’s America?”

Well, the first thing is to leverage all that “stuff” that universities do. The brick and mortar multiversity, which is still the mainstay across Canada, has its fingers in everything from policy advising and medical research to educating young minds. Universities do everything, but can they do it all with the aim of countering discrimination?

The day-to-day grind of competing for funding and marking exams leaves little time for esoteric reflections. Some of us are left looking enviously at our social science colleagues who always seem at the centre of action research and social change.

So, let’s take a step back from the heroic examples of faculty activism and consider three tangible ways all of us in higher education can bring equity and openness into our daily activities. Think postscripts, interventions, and open ears.

First, for faculty and staff—hone your postscript. Find that one message from your work or research that broadens the conversation, that brings it back to equity and caring for the underrepresented. *“Well Jim, those are the main findings from our genome project, POSTSCRIPT: I hope we keep in mind how this effects those in marginalized communities...”*

Second, a lesson from the safe-campus folk: be conscientious interveners. Choose a phrase that reflects you—be it

When unemployment hits, “me-first” politics becomes much more appealing.

gentle strength or pithy sarcasm. Speak up when things get uncomfortable. *“You know Ann, I felt uncomfortable with the way we treated that student...”*

And finally, just listen. Some people take this further, adding an extra 30 minutes of office hours for equity issues. The aim is not to solve all problems on your campus, but it will signal that you are willing to have these conversations. It shows respect for diverse students as valuable, not just lucrative.

INFLUENCING THE VOTE

In terms of actually influencing an election, can universities help prevent far-right victories?

Universities and colleges are uniquely positioned. They educate more than 60 per cent of Canadians between the ages of 18 to 24. That is huge. And, when it comes to voting, this group is inconsistent. In the 2011 Canadian federal election only 38.8 per cent of this group voted. But, in 2015, when the stakes were higher, 57.1 per cent showed up to vote.

One reason for the increase was that, in 2015, universities worked directly with Elections Canada to make it easier for students to vote. New elections offices were established on university campuses—sometimes more than one—to get students registered to vote. This is a move in the right direction.

If the research tells us that those with a degree are less likely to vote for a populist leader, then let’s make sure our students are voting. Let’s increase funding for “get out the vote” campaigns, provide incentives for students who register, and make it easy and imperative that students cast their ballot.

We also need to remember that our students are not just isolated voters. They may also be an important means of bridging the “education gap.” Research suggests that those who hold degrees were less likely to have voted for Brexit and Trump. In Canada, more than 30 per cent of university students and about 42 per cent of college students are the first generation in their family to attend postsecondary education. This means that the university’s connection to people without postsecondary education—like those unfairly shamed because they voted for Trump—is much closer than we have been led to believe.

Let us assume for a moment that these efforts pay off and Canada manages to ward off the populist surge taking place south of the border and narrow protectionist politics at home. We will, most likely, continue to receive international students and their high tuition fees. But, what will they find when they arrive? We hope it is a Canada that is welcoming and diverse. Whether this is the case is a daily choice for all of us. ■

Grace Karram Stephenson is a Post-doctoral Fellow in the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto.

Canada's university administrators must pay attention to right-wing activism on campuses

Steven Zhou



The surge in racism on university campuses is part of a broader right-wing awakening across the country. University administrators must counter these developments, or the credibility of their institutions will suffer.

La poussée du racisme sur les campus des universités fait partie d'une prise de conscience droitiste généralisée dans toutes les régions du pays. Les administrateurs des universités doivent contrer ces développements sinon la crédibilité de leur établissement sera compromise.

That a populist wave has swept over much of the Western world (and beyond) in recent years should not be lost on Ontario's post-secondary educators and administrators. Canada and its public institutions are also susceptible to the politics and rhetoric of exclusion and hate.

Aside from well-documented incidents in Alberta and British Columbia, alarmingly, the past two years have seen numerous cases of racist propaganda posted and distributed in and around Ontario's university campuses. In the fall of 2015, "White Student Union" posters were found at Ryerson University, York University, and the University of Toronto's

St. George campus. A year later, flyers decrying "anti-white racism" were found on the McMaster University campus in Hamilton, while a study room in McMaster's Innis Library was booked with the note: "McMaster KKK meeting." And then, last fall, some students posed in front of a giant #WesternLivesMatter banner at Western University.

These are just a few examples from a wave of incidents. This surge in publicly racist pronouncements is part of a larger right-wing awakening across the country. And though this emboldening of otherwise suppressed and marginalized views can be traced, at least in part, to the rise of Donald Trump

...campuses are not intellectual vacuums free
from a relationship with history.

and populist demagoguery in the United States, it is Canada's own history and phenomenon of far right movements that have laid the foundation for such a surge to take place.

As the far right continues to gain political and rhetorical ground in the US and Europe, university administrators in Canada should remain vigilant. Attempts to use the campus environment (and even the classroom) to reintegrate racist and xenophobic discourse and agendas back into the wider spectrum of acceptable ideas should be expected.

A CANADIAN PROBLEM

In a recent comprehensive study of right-wing movements across Canada, Professor Barbara Perry of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) and Ryan Scrivens of Simon Fraser University found that the country's right-wing extremist movement is "more extensive and more active than public rhetoric would suggest."

The study concluded that approximately 100 right-wing extremist groups have been active in Canada since the start of the 21st century. Concentrations of these groups have taken hold in British Columbia's lower mainland, Alberta, Quebec, and Western Ontario.

Additionally, CBC Marketplace did a recent study that focused on racist and intolerant language on social media, web forums, comment sections, and blogs. The study found a 600 per cent increase in such language in the past year. Although the researchers called this surge in online racism "The Trump Effect," internet intolerance and cyber bullying have long been a problem in the age of online communication. According to Statistics Canada, this surge in right-wing rhetoric and racism was preceded by a doubling of anti-Muslim incidents from 2012 to 2014. This also came before Donald Trump achieved serious media and political traction in the US.

It is the combination of a decidedly Canadian history of intolerance and racism along with the recent insurgency of right-wing activism, language, and electoral success in the US that has emboldened Canada's far right. The surge in racism literature and paraphernalia on major university campuses across Canada in the past two years is a function of this convergence.

THE EXPLOITATION OF FREE SPEECH

The perceived rise in "political correctness" has long been a central grievance harboured by those on the right. Since university campuses are supposed to be arenas where the free flow and engagement of ideas and viewpoints are encouraged, it makes sense that activists on the far right would use this principle to try and reintegrate otherwise suppressed beliefs that have long been discredited and marginalized.

Such usage of campus culture and the student body is catalyzed by the common perception that universities are biased against conservative thinkers and viewpoints. This discrepancy gives credence to a belief in the "elitist" culture of university campuses that have lost touch with society.

Thus, we see the injection and reintegration of xenophobic populism, often disguised as legitimate conservative activism. Its proponents and enthusiasts characterize this as a necessary attempt to recalibrate the skewed, left-wing university campus culture—one they say has long discriminated against conservatives who will not bow to the pervasive and repressive presence of "political correctness."

Yet the impacts of this kind of organizing go well beyond the university campus. Groups that seek to create concentrations of far-right activists on campuses do so as a means to galvanize support for movements that aim to have regional and even national influence. The campus or campus group is simply the locus where a certain species of political or cultural rhetoric can take root. The panels, lectures, and rallies that each group undertakes, perhaps with university funding, attract like-minded people. To be clear, this kind of dynamic is basic and germane to groups across the political and cultural spectrum and is not at all exclusive to right-wing activism.

However, as far as the right is concerned, the linkage of on-campus legitimacy and off-campus audiences attracts individuals or groups that exist on the fringes of society. Campus groups may purport to stand for issues related to free speech, taxation, or immigration, but in the age of Trump—who has turned xenophobic rhetoric regarding Muslims and Mexicans into popular political stances repeated daily on broadcast television—such issues act as a dog whistle, publicly galvanizing those further down the far-right spectrum. In this way, the university campus becomes the physical location for a coalescing of right-wing dogma.

Not all conservative groups or clubs purposefully stoke xenophobia via this galvanization of the far-right. However, the success of Trump, combined with Canada's own layer of extreme right-wing voices, may create a situation where even well-meaning student groups begin to attract voices and people that do not belong in arenas of civil debate and engagement. Currently, in light of the rather obvious state of right-wing politics, such inadvertent connections seem to be rare.

Administrators and faculty should keep an eye out for this kind of right-wing coalescing because regardless of wider impacts, it affects the university campus climate as well as minority students' and groups' safety and place within the campus community. Thus, the university administration's legitimacy rests on its ability to gauge the level, political nature, and limits of right-wing activism on campus.

THE POLITICS OF NORMALIZATION

Incidents of campus racism do not take place or occur within a sealed social vacuum. The language used in far-right paraphernalia found on Canadian campuses reflects Trump's rhetoric. This reinforces the theoretical connection between the rise in xenophobic campus propaganda and the political insurgency of the American right.

Professor Jasmine Zine of Wilfred Laurier University and Ameil Joseph of McMaster University, both of whom are informed by an extensive scholarly background in the study of discrimination, have related the rise and origins of such campus racism to a process of "normalization"—a gradual mainstreaming of previously unacceptable ideologies or politics by the advent of right-wing populism in Trump's America and elsewhere.

This normalization mirrors the mechanisms of reintegration that campus groups are capable of facilitating when it comes to far right politics. Just as former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard David Duke (along with an assortment of far right extremists) have come out and expressed allegiance to Trump, legitimate conservative groups on campus may attract the same kind of attention.

If such dog whistling has been achieved at the top-most levels of national politics in the US, then it is certainly not a stretch to posit that those in smaller venues who harbour similar ambitions and views are mirroring the effect.

If the goal is to drag the national conversation or political framework toward the right, then it makes sense to establish or reinforce this process of "normalization" at every level of society and in every available venue where the exchange of ideas is prioritized. This makes Canadian university campuses a priority for right-wing demagoguery as it looks to move out from the shadows.

THE POPULIST TOOL AND THE CANADIAN ALT-RIGHT

It is not just Donald Trump that provides inspiration and comfort to those on Canada's far-right fringe. Canada has a handful of political figures who have made it very clear that they hope to galvanize a similar electoral base. This brings the political context of campus racism into a domestic frame where it is bound to have serious consequences that warrant attention from university administrators.

Three candidates for the Conservative Party of Canada's national leadership spoke at Rebel Media's recent Toronto rally protesting Liberal MP Iqra Khalid's Motion-103, which condemns racism and Islamophobia. The audience of 1,000 people ranged from "Make America Great Again"-hat-wearing Trump supporters to members of the

Jewish Defense League (JDL), which the FBI has designated a terrorist organization in the US.

In other words, those in attendance represented the assortment of right-wing groups and voices that, in today's parlance, would constitute the Canadian "alt-right." That some of Canada's leading conservative voices find it necessary to play to this crowd is a clear sign of the political context within which campus politics will be conducted in the years to come.

The crowd was symbolic of the larger make-up of today's ever-coalescing right wing, which has evolved into a big-tent and surprisingly multi-ethnic group that share a single purpose: to use today's political climate to reintegrate their allegedly suppressed viewpoints and rhetoric back into the national conversation. Due to the diversity of right-wing thought, the extreme right can use the legitimacy of those whose history and rhetoric don't ring as many alarm bells to provide themselves with political cover. And although different right-wing groups may have varying levels of respectability, all are looking to capitalize on today's Trump-inspired political climate to gain acceptance and more influence.

The high level of visibility and political influence that clearly xenophobic and dishonest views have reached will certainly affect the tenor and character of conservative groups and activism on Canadian campuses. A failure of university administrators to monitor and counter these developments will erode the university's credibility.

Due to the current political atmosphere, large segments of the student body are looking to those in places of institutional power to re-legitimize their presence as full-fledged and welcomed members of Canadian and university communities. These minority populations and groups have become an absolutely integral and indispensable aspect of Canadian universities—known around the world for their emphasis on diversity of ethnic background, as well as ideological and philosophical viewpoint.

When anti-black racism, anti-Semitism, or Islamophobia are found on campuses, university administrations should, at the very least, make a very visible effort to rhetorically marginalize these acts of discrimination. Additionally, administrators should hold regular consultations and meetings with different student organizations on campus to get a better idea of what students are feeling and experiencing.

Although universities are arenas where the largest spectrum of ideas and worldviews can be engaged with and critiqued, campuses are not intellectual vacuums free from a relationship with history. There is no such thing as a functional space of ideas or intellectual exchange that tolerates those who are absolutely intolerant. For instance, university spaces have no responsibility to include the neo-Nazi or pro-Ku Klux Klan perspectives. To do so would be to facilitate the corrosion of such open spaces. Thankfully, history has cast many of these unhelpful visions aside. Today's universities should not play any role in their resurrection. **AM**

Steven Zhou is a Toronto-based journalist, editor, and writer focusing on national security issues and foreign affairs.

Global higher education, social solidarity, and the new nationalism

Simon Marginson



Higher education serves both national and global interests in the pursuit of knowledge and student learning. Given populism's nationalist roots, there is mounting pressure to redefine the university's mission. How should universities respond?

Les études supérieures répondent à la fois aux intérêts nationaux et internationaux dans la poursuite du savoir et dans l'apprentissage des étudiants. Étant donné les racines nationalistes du populisme, les pressions augmentent pour redéfinir la mission des universités. Comment les universités devraient-elles réagir?

The last twelve months have seen a great shift in the North Atlantic political landscape, with only Canada immune (so far). Nobody in universities saw it coming. It is urgent to grasp the nature of this shift. Higher education has become central to societies; it is inevitably caught up in all big political changes and it is directly involved in this particular shift.

There has been a surge of support for ethno-nationalism of the blood-and-soil kind, fearful of global openness and resentful of globally connected persons, whether migrants, traders, or cross-border professors and students. This surge has been strong enough to take the UK out of the European Union and, against the odds, propel a white nationalist protectionist into the White House. Donald Trump is bristling with threats to wage war on a long list of internal and external enemies; he is trying to turn those threats into policy. The alt-right political polarization, grounded in identity, not class (although white nationalism actually claims the mantle of the proletariat, capturing class within cultural identity) turns on an opposition between singular ethno-national identity, and global openness and plural identity. This has rendered Anglo-American higher education and science more controversial and vulnerable, affecting every higher education institution.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT THE ALT-RIGHT?

Though the alt-right is more nuanced and modernist in Western Europe, there is strong support for ethno-nationalist populism in France, Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands. In fact, Marine Le Pen may have won the French presidency by the time this article is published, and while Geert Wilders failed to sweep the March elections in the Netherlands, his fundamentalist Dutch identity has colonized the political language of the mainstream parties, just as the anti-migration anti-Europe rhetoric of Nigel Farage and the UK Independence Party have remade the strategies and policies of Theresa May's Conservative Party in the UK.

Nationalist populism and the rhetorical targeting of elites (often by politicians who draw their own support from the rich and powerful) is an old gambit. In efforts to shore up

their power, many other politicians have and are currently leveraging nationalist sympathy, including Vladimir Putin in Russia and Hindu-centric Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India. President Xi Jinping in China has also sharpened the patriotic rhetoric. However, alt-right populism is different from nationalist populism: a break from the past in two ways.

First, the alt-right is explicitly and consistently anti-globalization. It rejects the neo-liberal globalism that has shaped politics for the last 25 years, with its world-market dreaming and free flows of capital, labour, and products. Here the alt-right differs from Xi in China, Modi, and even, despite habitual Russian closure (a hangover from the Soviet past), from Putin. Open economic borders still facilitate the rise of China and India; but in the US, UK, and France, part of the economic elite has drawn the conclusion that open borders no longer translate into global dominance. Hence Trump's emphasis on that other source of US global power, military capability, and the reported desire of his chief adviser Steve Bannon for a "cleansing war". Second, the alt-right pitches itself against science, higher education, experts, and even graduates, which are all positioned on the wrong side of its simplistic elite/people divide.

A POST-NEOLIBERAL WORLD

Trump's abrupt switch from free trade policy to American isolationism has been startling. Nevertheless, US policy never fully discarded all protectionism. Perhaps the abandonment of multilateralism by a mainstream political party in the UK is the larger change. Since the Brexit vote, Prime Minister Theresa May has made it clear that ending free migratory movement from continental Europe is a higher priority for the UK government than either economic enrichment or attracting global talent. If necessary, the UK will leave the single market in Europe to end free movement. In the last generation, the UK's two most successful global sectors have been financial services, led by the City of London, and higher education and research. Different though they are, each has become collateral damage of ethno-nationalism. UK finance will no longer provide international firms with single-stop access to European markets —the passport to Europe which



Alt-right populism
is different from
nationalist populism.

has been primary in building London as a global business centre. Nigel Farage even argues that, when selecting partners for bilateral trade deals, the UK should give priority to countries that speak English. It is hard to imagine export nations like Germany or Korea giving priority to trading partners that speak German or Korean.

Who would have thought it? The UK and USA have entered a post-neoliberal world in which the goal of maximum capital accumulation has been partly eclipsed. This is a result of a hard-nosed politics of securing and maintaining power in fractured societies rife with material insecurity and frustrated hopes. Alt-right and mainstream centre-right politicians find it easier to scapegoat than to implement reforms to confront the one per cent and reverse growing inequality. This strategic shift may create openings for other opponents of neoliberalism, but it is not the post-neoliberal world that higher education wanted. We long chafed under the dominance of solely economic policy. We now have a larger problem.

Rampant global markets are associated with inequality, the undermining of labour conditions and the social wage, and pressures to privatize education. However, global convergence has not been solely economic. Since the 1990s, open borders and free movement have also been associated with the rollout of worldwide communications and common databases, a renaissance in higher education with unprecedented international collaboration, and the spread of indigenous scientific capacity and global research to more than fifty countries. A combination of widespread authoritarian national governments and border blockages would be the worst possible outcome for higher education and research at home and abroad.

It will be hard for Canada to remain entirely insulated from pressures to restrict cross-border movement. Nevertheless, the Canadian social consensus about multiculturalism and migrancy should protect the nation from the worst extremes of the alt-right. This is vital for Canadian higher education. Consider the effects already unfolding for higher education institutions in the US and UK.

The UK has 2.9 million resident EU citizens and 2.15 million in the workforce. This includes 43,000 EU citizen staff and 125,000 EU students in higher education. Their position is radically uncertain. Until last June, EU nationals were quasi-citizens with an unquestionable right to remain. That has disappeared. The UK government refuses to announce a blanket guarantee for existing residents. It has been overwhelmed by the volume of applications for residency (it kept no records of EU citizens that would confirm the validity of their applications) and is nudging as many EU

citizens as possible back across the border by imposing a difficult 85-page application form and steep requirements for proof of UK residency. This includes a record of private health insurance, though most EU citizens in the UK use the public National Health Service. Universities face the loss of many of their best faculty—in recent years 40 per cent of all new applicants for UK academic posts have gone to Europeans—and a massive drop in EU students entering the UK. After Brexit, EU students will no longer have access to income contingent loans for tuition and will face increases of 120 to 200 per cent in tuition fees. Further, UK researchers will no longer be eligible to participate in large-scale collaborative EU research programs, slowing the exchange of ideas between the UK and the continent.

In the US, Trump's ban on citizens from six Muslim countries immediately blocks large-scale flows of students, researchers, and faculty visitors. It imposes a discriminatory framework, violating the ideas of secularism, cultural diversity and equal respect, and academic freedom and democratic rights. It undermines the capacity of universities to provide the free cosmopolitan global space integral to their role. Further, Trump has targeted climate science and already cut the budget for Environmental Protection Agency research. No doubt National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health budgets will come under scrutiny. Trump's early confrontation with the University of California, Berkeley over free speech—on behalf of an alt-right leader who was, ironically, attempting to deny free speech to Muslims—suggests that a long culture war with US universities and colleges is likely.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND ELECTORAL POLARIZATION

A culture war that targets universities would be a conscious political strategy driven by alt-right ideology. Not only do universities embody values and cross-border practices that Trump detests; not only do they harbour many of his articulate critics; the social divide between those with college degrees and those outside higher education was crucial to his 2016 electoral strategy. The education/non-education divide, and attacks on experts also figured in the Brexit campaign in the UK.

We can see this by examining voting patterns. A word of caution here: binary political systems trigger heterogeneous voting blocs. Not all supporters of Brexit were persuaded by the alt-right—including many members of the British Labour Party for whom the EU is a bankers' conspiracy. In the US, Trump drew votes from lifelong Republicans who support the party of Lincoln while disagreeing with the candidate on some issues. Electoral polarization also differed between the US and

UK. Ethnicity and gender were larger factors in the US, but there was convergence in the winning ethno-nationalist arguments, particularly in relation to migration (“give us back our country”), national aggrandizement (“make America great again”), and the negative references to experts.

The best overall predictors of how people voted in the US and UK were not whether they were rich or poor. Support for Trump and Brexit cut across class lines, and in different ways: in the UK, the average income of Brexit supporters was less than that of EU supporters; in the US, the average income of Trump voters was higher than that of Clinton voters. The clearest indicators of how people were likely to vote were (1) whether they lived in large cities (they tended to support the EU and Clinton), or small towns and rural areas (they supported Brexit and Trump); and (2) whether they held degrees. The two factors are related. Like global connections, degree holders are concentrated in cities.

This association between higher education and global mobility is instrumental, not coincidental. Recently the OECD published *Perspectives on Global Development 2017: International migration in a shifting world*. The report contained a table comparing the cross-border mobility of people with, and without, university degrees. Among those without degrees, the tendency to move across borders was correlated to income. As income rose, people had more scope for mobility. The capacity for mobility is economically driven and it furthers the economic advantages of those already advantaged. End of story.

Except that it isn’t. Among those with university degrees—and current participation rates suggest this will soon be one-fifth of all people in the world—the OECD found a different pattern. First, at a given level of income, those with degrees are much more mobile than those without degrees. In other words, higher education helps to democratize mobility, providing you can get higher education in the first place. Second, for those with degrees, above a modest threshold of income there is little change in potential mobility. This suggests that because higher education helps graduates to achieve greater personal agency,

it reduces the limits set by economic determination and class, constituting greater personal freedom in its own right. Conversely, those who lack higher education have less freedom, which helps to explain the virulence of push-back mobilized by the alt-right.

Nate Silver’s analysis of the November 2016 election in the US shows that in the 50 least educated counties, as measured by the proportion of the electorate with college degrees, Trump made major gains. When compared to Obama in 2012, Clinton lost ground in 47 of these 50 counties with an average slide of 11 percentage points. In the 50 counties with the highest level of college education—otherwise diverse in terms of income and ethnic composition—Clinton improved on Obama’s 2012 vote in 48 of the 50 by an average 9 percentage points. These

highly educated counties include many with high proportions of white voters, who elsewhere tended to support Trump.

Clinton secured more than half the vote from only one group of white voters: college educated women. In the UK, only 26 per cent of degree holders supported Brexit, far less than the 78 per cent of those without degrees who voted in favour. Young people, the most educated generation in UK history—more comfortable with mobility and complex identity—overwhelmingly voted for the UK to remain in the EU.

Ironically, Trump could not have used level of education as a means of dividing the electorate if only 5 per cent of people went to university and it *was* solely an elite affair. Only when participation reached a third or more of all young people, and higher education had become much less elite, could it be used as a binary political weapon. The alt-right, which positions itself as egalitarian, yet supports low taxes for the rich and demonizes destitute refugees with nowhere to go, is bristling with Orwellian ironies of this kind.

It might be a weapon with diminishing power. If participation in higher education continues to expand then, in the long run, the potential alt-right base must shrink. Yet that is not the only possible scenario. In the neoliberal policy settings that have affected Canada and other countries, higher education has been rendered more vulnerable to alt-right



populism because of its growing focus on elite universities and private rates of return to degrees, rather than the contributions of higher education to the common public good. Universities defined as self-serving corporations are painted into a corner, and there is a danger that as the cost of public education rises and its social value is emptied out by stratification, the growth of participation will stop. This is already happening in the US.

GLOBAL, NATIONAL, AND LOCAL

Higher education institutions suddenly find themselves walking on eggshells. EU-voting UK university cities in the Midlands and the North sit amid strong Brexit majorities in the surrounding regions. Educated city-based people, comfortable with global mobility, have been pitted against those for whom life and self are geographically constrained and global engagement is on the wrong side of the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis. This newly constructed social division has entered the political mainstream, as shown by Theresa May's savage put-down of global values soon after the Brexit vote: "if you believe you're a citizen of the world, you're a citizen of nowhere". You do not belong in the UK. As if people must choose between singular identities, national or global, and it is unnatural to be both. This poses dangers for higher education institutions that are local, national, and global at the same time.

Higher education serves national objectives. It also works with universal knowledge and focuses on common global problems. This leaves universities ambiguous in the face of the essential ethno-national question: "Shouldn't we do more for our own citizens than those of other countries?" One virtue of universities is that they refuse to be trapped by that question. Nevertheless, when the choice becomes a dualistic national-vs-global, they are immediately suspect.


How should higher education respond to this new political landscape? There is no magic key but the following seem essential:

1. Universities must be even stronger advocates of open borders, global connectivity, and the cosmopolitan ideal, finding every way around ethno-national barriers. Mobility is a human right. Closer cross-border integration coupled with genuine diversity is the way forward. Universities must be relentless, articulate critics of national chauvinism and racism in every form. This is part of their historic mission. The alternative, that universities would be complicit in the slide into militarism in an ethno-nationalist world, is unthinkable.

2. The struggle over the freedom and validity of science is equally important. Only universities can effectively advance and defend research and the scholarly ideal.


3. Higher education institutions, regardless of individual mission, should maintain their role in nation-building and reposition themselves in solidarity with local and regional communities. They should focus more on their role as producers of public goods, as well as private goods. National social democratic policy alone will not defeat ethno-nationalism and advance global connectivity. The battle for a more global approach must be won in its own right. However, in the long run, only social democratic sensibility can pry class identity away from alt-right demagoguery. Universities can and must be local and global at the same time, combining social solidarity with multicultural and international solidarity. **AM**

Simon Marginson is a Professor of International Higher Education at the University College London Institute of Education in the United Kingdom, Director of the ESRC/HEFCE Centre for Global Higher Education, and is Joint Editor-in-Chief of Higher Education with Jussi Valimaa.



Looking for more?
Make us your union of choice.
We are stronger together!
Uniting education workers since 1919

Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants
des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario
1.800.267.7867 / www.osstf.on.ca



POPULIST CITIZEN POLITICS— Beyond the Manichean mindset

Harry C. Boyte



A positive political alternative to the rise of demagogic populism will require a vibrant vision of democratic society and the empowerment of individuals to work through these differences. Universities should not be just observers, but engaged participants.

Une politique alternative positive à la hausse du populisme démagogue exigera une vision dynamique d'une société démocratique et de l'habilitation des personnes à gérer ces différences. Les universités ne devraient pas être seulement des observatrices, elles devraient être des participantes engagées.

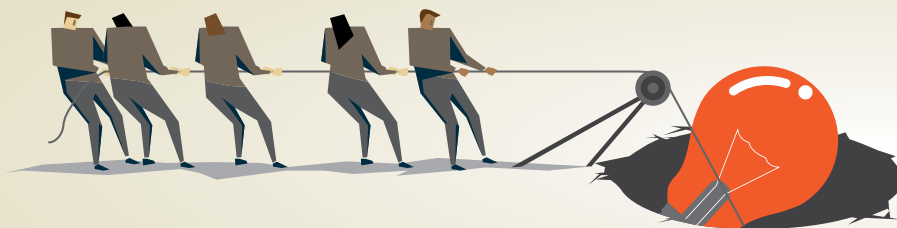
In the inflamed and divided public culture of the United States, we need a different understanding of populism than today's ideological anti-corporate progressivism and anti-government conservatism. The alternative is populist citizen politics, a politics of popular empowerment and democratic change across partisan divides. Citizen politics aims to repair civic life as well as democratize concentrated power, both corporate and technocratic. Higher education will play a crucial role guiding such populism as it recovers its relational and civic soul. There is a rich tradition of civic and relational practices on which to build. It is a mistake to underrate the civic and relational revitalization in and around colleges and universities—this leads to undue fatalism and hopelessness.

POPULISMS LEFT AND RIGHT: THE MANICHEAN MINDSET

In 2016, populism was a ubiquitous trope for describing the US election. "Trump and Sanders: Different Candidates with a Populist Streak," reported Chuck Todd on NBC. Most commentators used populism to describe the inflammatory rhetoric of the people against various elites.

for what was termed the "canvass". The canvass involves paid staff going door to door on an issue, raising money, and collecting signatures. Over the past four decades many canvass operations have developed, including ones run by environment and consumer groups as well as the Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) network that exists on many college campuses. I defended the canvass method in *Citizen Action and the New American Populism*, a 1986 book written with Steve Max and Heather Booth, founder of the Midwest Academy training centre which became the central hub for spreading the method. I remember the urgency we felt in the face of massive mobilization by corporate interests to roll back environmental, consumer, affirmative action, progressive tax, and other legislation in the early 1970s. We saw the canvass as a way to fight back.

The canvass had successes on environmental, consumer, and other issues, even during the Reagan presidency. The scale was vast, reaching at least 12 million households a year in the mid-eighties. By 2001, when I developed a broader analysis of the canvass in "A Tale of Two Playgrounds," a paper for the American Political Science Association, I became concerned about an unintended con-



This approach is paralleled in academic literature. Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell express prevalent views in defining populism as an ideology that "pits a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous 'others' who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity, and voice."

Right-wing populism—stoked by Republican politicians who target universities as elite institutions, far removed from the lives and concerns of everyday citizens—sparks fear among educators. However, such populism has parallels on the left as well. It manifested itself when students protested conservative speaker Charles Murray at Middlebury College—and, in the process, injured a professor trying to protect him. This incident illustrates a Manichean formula of effecting change that students have learned from my generation of activists.

The formula was developed in 1974 by the environmental group Citizens for a Better Environment, and used

sequence of the canvass: its Manichean formula polarizes civic life, objectifies the enemy, and erodes citizenship. It frames politics as warfare. However, it continues to spread through robocalls, internet mobilizations, cable TV and talk radio, documentaries in the vein of Michael Moore, and Karl Rove's "axis of evil" framework after 9-11. The formula is used by both right and left.

The Manichean model is also widespread in academic discourse. Gary Simpson, a theologian at Luther Seminary, shows the Manichean model in the transformation of his mentor, Carl Braaten. In Simpson's vivid account, Braaten's early writings were "a dialectically serious and critical, yet careful, generous, reverential and flourishing discovery [embodying] a poise that respects...particularity of real embedded humans...finite, fallible, and fragile." In the political and cultural wars of the 1980s and 1990s, Braaten's work took on a very different tone that "reduce[d] the state of affairs to stark binary opposites—good versus evil, angels

vanquishing demons." The Manichean model was accompanied by apocalyptic and totalistic thinking. "Crucial distinctions...dissipate under the white heat of apocalyptic fire and Manichean purism. If you oppose me on one point you opposed me on all points, all the way down."

Braaten became a conservative academic, railing against the "antinomian...neopagan gnostic culture" that he saw as growing from the new left and its progeny. However, examples abound on the left as well. Student protests and Manichean stances have sparked calls for defense of free speech, including a statement co-authored by Robert George, Professor of Jurisprudence and a well-known conservative scholar, and Cornel West, a progressive African-American Harvard professor. They challenged epistemic enclosure—the tendency of people to live in bubble cultures of similar beliefs. "It is all too common these days for people to try to immunize from criticism opinions that happen to be dominant in their particular communities," their statement reads. "Sometimes this is done by questioning the motives and thus stigmatizing those who dissent...or by disrupting their presentations; or by demanding that they be excluded from campuses or...disinvited."

it also emphasizes agency, "developing the capacities of grassroots actors, often from divergent backgrounds." Grattan emphasizes a combination of grassroots organizing and radical public imagination and critique, pointing to Occupy Wall Street as an example of the latter, which fed into the Bernie Sanders campaign.

Luke Bretherton, writing about populism as popular empowerment, emphasizes its political nature. "Orientations and sentiments in political populism are put in the service of forging a political space not limiting, subverting or closing it down." He points to broad-based community organizing like the Industrial Areas Foundation, which mix people across partisan divisions.

Populist citizen politics has aspects of both transformative vision and cross-partisan understanding. In my view, it reflects the distinctive tradition of civic action associated with American commonwealth history, not only through popularly elected governments, but also as a society that believes in public goods like libraries and schools, community centres and parks, bridges and roads, and the relational civic cultures that sustain them. Such citizen politics were cross-partisan, not ideological. It inspired Jane Addams,

We need a different understanding of politics that brings back culture and the profound complexity of the person.

Yet for those who feel the urgent need for change, calls for free speech are not sufficient. We need a different understanding of politics that brings back culture and the profound complexity of the person.

CIVIC POPULISM AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Populist citizen politics builds on movements in the United States—with parallels in Northern Europe, Russia, South Africa, and elsewhere—in which populism is not mainly a rhetorical invocation of people against elites, but rather civic organizing which builds popular power. Laura Grattan, author of *Populism's Power*, observes that advocates of such populism "downplay the logic of oppositional identification and instead elaborate...regaining popular control over the institutions of civil society, political economy, and governance." Such populism is different than "a politics of resistance." It not only exposes "the abuses and failures of established democratic orders," but

John Dewey, Alain Locke, and others' view of democracy as a way of life.

Many strands of higher education have been associated with this populist view of democracy and citizen politics, from historically black colleges and universities, to liberal arts schools like Augsburg College (the Sabo Center's new home), to today's tribal colleges. Scott Peters, a historian of land grant colleges (institutions built on land provided by the federal government and mandated to focus on teaching practical agriculture, science, and engineering), has described the subterranean populist tradition in which scholars, graduates and students are involved in the life of communities through public work that builds civic agency. They are citizen professionals, invested and active in their communities.

Liberty Hyde Bailey, Dean of the College of Agriculture at Cornell University and Chair of President Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission, argued that every aspect of higher education must be infused with a spirit of

public work. Specialists needed to see themselves as part of “a great public work,” grounded in respect for the farmers and rural communities’ capacity to be agents of change. Bailey saw the crucial focus of this “extension work” as increasing capacity for self-directed civic action. “The re-direction of any civilization must rest primarily on the people who comprise it, rather than be imposed from persons in other conditions of life.”

CIVIC POPULISM LOST

Sharp partisanship has eroded civic populism. Ron Johnson, David Manley, and Kelvyn Jones have described growing ideological polarization from 1992 to 2012 with people increasingly living in like-minded communities. Meanwhile, within local communities, mediating institutions that once brought people together across partisan and other divides have radically eroded. Grant Stevensen is an organizer for ISAIAH, a broad-based community organization. He observes that, “There used to be mediating institutions like union locals, neighborhood schools, PTAs, or congregations where people interacted with a lot of diversity. Now we’ve lost them. People’s public identities are thin.”

human—is lost.” This is the path toward a “McDonaldized” world of manufactured identities and flattened experiences.

How do we bring back the relational as the foundation of politics, education, and civic life?

CIVIC POPULISM REDUX

Populist citizen politics have been sharply eroded, but it is a mistake not to see stirrings of its revival. Examples abound in Peter Levine’s *We Are the Ones We’ve Been Waiting For*, Luke Bretherton’s *Resurrecting Democracy*, Doris Sommers’ *The Work of Art in the World*, and my edited collection, *Democracy’s Education*. David Mathews’ *Ecology of Democracy*, widely spread through the Kettering Foundation and its networks, is a manifesto for the revitalization of relational, self-organizing civic life as the “wetlands” upon which democracy necessarily depends. Kettering has made a major contribution to the civic populist project by showing the connections between relational politics and deliberative practices. In our own networks, the movement toward “citizen professionalism” led by William Doherty and his new “Citizen Therapists for Democracy” movement is a powerful and highly effective challenge to the secession of

Building a positive political alternative to the highly polarized populisms
of left and right will require a vibrant vision of democratic society.

Social fragmentation has also been growing. In 2006, a study published in the *American Sociological Review* reported radical erosion of social ties. “There really is less of a safety net of close friends and confidants,” said Lynn Smith-Lovin, a Duke sociologist involved in the study. “We’re not saying people are completely isolated. They may have 600 friends on Facebook.com and email 25 people a day. But they are not discussing matters that are personally important.”

In the last decade, these trends have dramatically accelerated, spurred by the digital revolution. Sue Halpern, writing in the *New York Review of Books*, describes the replacement of the relational with the informational. “The real bias inherent in algorithms is that they are, by nature, reductive... the infiltration of algorithms into everyday life has brought us to a place where metrics tend to rule. This is true for education, medicine, finance, retailing, employment and the creative arts...in each case idiosyncrasy, experimentation, innovation, and thoughtfulness—the very stuff that makes us

professionals from relational civic life over many decades. On an international level, Pope Francis’ climate encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, is a brilliant critique of the technocratic paradigm that replaces the relational with information systems.

In higher education, citizen efforts that seek to repair and build relationships across partisan and other divides are illuminated by the 500-plus page report of the National Association of Scholars (NAS), which attacks them. Four years in the making, *Making Citizens: How Universities Teach Civics* charges that a left-wing conspiracy, “the New Civics,” seeks to turn college students into left-wing radicals. Public Achievement, the youth civic education initiative I founded to counter the Manichean politics of the door-to-door canvass and to reintroduce today’s young people to the cross-partisan politics I experienced in the civil rights movement, is at the centre of their narrative.

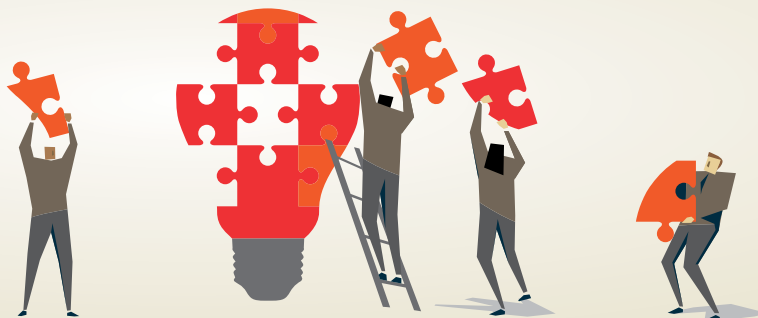
“The ideas of Saul Alinsky have entered into higher education,” says *Making Citizens*. “The most serious such

transfer occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s, via Harry Boyte's Public Achievement movement." Public Achievement, it proposes, is smaller than service-learning and other forms of community involvement, "but with a harder political edge. Service-learning generally works to forward progressive political ends. Public Achievement works toward these ends with more focus and organization, via the Alinskyite method of *community organizing*. The Alinskyite tactical model of Public Achievement is what makes the New Civics formidable." Public Achievement, it concludes, is "camouflaged Alinskyism" that "relies on the Alinskyite emphasis on *power*, which reduces politics to the use of force to defeat hostile opponents".

The NAS report sees the New Civics having huge impact. "The New Civics revolution has been staggeringly successful in the last 30 years... at the 419 institutions that responded to the [2014 Campus Compact] survey, nearly 100 per cent had institutional offices coordinating 'curricular and/or co-curricular engagement'—and 57 per cent had more than one office. Thirty-nine percent of graduate and undergraduate students, 1,382,145 in total, 'served an average of 3.5 hours each week through both curricular and co-curricular mechanisms.'"

"Why is there no socialism in America?", I argued that the absence of socialism is not a deficiency but a strength. America has an alternative tradition of politics based on civic autonomy and "building the commonwealth." Civic life has been sustained by the work of diverse citizens who create and care for goods of common use including libraries, parks, local government, bridges, and other public infrastructure, as well as by mediating structures that contribute to this work including families, congregations, schools and colleges, voluntary associations, locally rooted businesses, and labour groups. Such civic life depends on education in civic skills, best learned through experiential education where individuals work for the public good.

It is not only a caricature to propose that my aim is "to create a thoroughly administered state" and turn America's young people into "left-wing radicals." In fact, it is also a charge that turns my motivation—and the general gestalt of the civic engagement movement in higher education—upside down. The movement is encouraging because it presents an alternative to left-wing statist technocratic tendencies that are all too widespread throughout higher education.



What of the charges that the New Civics is a left-wing plot? Higher education has a progressive inclination, reflected in some, though not most, of its civic efforts. However, the NAS argument is radically mistaken in confusing tendencies with a Manichean mindset, which reproduces the binary thinking it decries. One way to show the NAS report's reductionism is to describe the evolution of my own thinking.

During the launch of the report, Stanley Kurtz (a former reporter for the *National Review*) expresses the conviction that when I left the Democratic Socialists of America after years of involvement with socialist organizations, it was not a matter of conviction but of rhetorical strategy. In fact, my movement away from socialism was a result of my embracing the civic populist tradition described in my book *Commonwealth: A Return to Citizen Politics* that launched our work at the University of Minnesota.

Against the dominant paradigm of left-wing intellectuals, preoccupied with Werner Sombart's 1906 question,

Building a positive political alternative to the highly polarized populisms of left and right will require a vibrant vision of democratic society. This approach requires ongoing public participation, not just during elections, and it requires a different understanding of politics in which all citizens are agents and architects of democracy. To revitalize this vision, we need a movement that awakens the democratic spirit throughout higher education and beyond. We need to reprioritize our institutions as participants *in* society, not observers studying it. **AM**

Harry C. Boyte is a Senior Scholar at the Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship at Augsburg College.

Many thanks to Marie-Louise Ström, Dudley Cocke, Laura Grattan, and Luke Bretherton for feedback and sources on this essay.

TELLING STORIES: U of T scholar discovers new role as radio host

Minelle Mahtani



In a new radio show, university professor Minelle Mahtani is creating a space where fellow researchers feel respected, honoured, and heard.

Dans une nouvelle émission de radio, la professeure d'université Minelle Mahtani crée un espace où des collègues chercheurs se sentent respectés, honorés et écoutés.

...I wanted to create spaces where scholars on race
could come together for a conversation...

"And the weather today—well, it's another rainy one, Vancouver—6 degrees in the city, with more rain anticipated for tomorrow. For more information, go to roundhouseradio.com..."

I still smile when I hear myself rattle off the temperature on-air these days. It's one thing to lecture three hundred students intently staring at you as you stand at the podium in an auditorium, but it's another experience entirely to sit in front of a microphone, banter with the news anchor, repeat time codes, and sit mere metres away from a stranger while having your intimate conversation broadcast across town. How did this happen?

I find myself in unusual territory this year, hosting a daily current affairs show at a commercial radio station in Vancouver. I am on leave from my job as a tenured journalism and geography professor as I try to complete some academic projects. I have worked in journalism before, as a former television hack from the world of national television news, but radio is an entirely new medium for me.

I had heard through the grapevine that a new radio station was opening in town—one that wanted to try something altogether different. It wanted to capture community voices and approach questions of social disparity through a more critical and constructive lens. The station is the brainchild of Roundhouse Radio's CEO Don Shafer, who dreamed of offering Vancouverites radio that could best be defined by the tag line: *Our City, Your Voice*. Somewhere in scanning the city landscape for a host for their mid-morning show, Roundhouse Radio approached me out of the blue.

When they called me, I honestly thought, who are they kidding? I have no radio background! Plus, I have to get these three articles done and that book review. But I was intrigued. I cobbled together a short, and admittedly amateurish, audition reel using voice memos on my iPhone.

Next thing I knew, I was hired. Great!

But I also remember feeling, uh-oh. Now what?

After the initial exhilaration wound down, I realized what I was up against. Throw together a two-hour radio show daily, I was told. You choose the theme, the content, the approach. I would be on air at the same time as the vaunted Q on CBC. I shook my head to myself. No pressure!

In some ways, it was a dream come true, a role that many academics would covet. I found it ironic that I would be in front of a mic, when I had spent so much of my career behind it as a producer, happily helping other hosts shine. I had never wanted to be in the public eye as a TV reporter, nor as a host. But there was something about this opportunity that appealed to me. It would give me a chance to consider

how I could amplify the voices of other academics, and act as a conduit for their voices to be heard.

Knowledge mobilization and knowledge transfer have become ubiquitous and almost vacuously bandied-about terms in the academy. Granting bodies like SSHRC require that researchers seek out innovative methods to disseminate research. Unfortunately, the practice is often riddled with problems.

I was struck by my colleagues' disillusionment with the often-dismal experience of engaging various media to attempt and get word out about their research. Most of them dread media interviews. I don't want to dismiss the opportunities we now have at our fingertips to produce podcasts and wrest agency to mobilize knowledge (as witnessed through the productive energetic force of social media vehicles like Twitter). I had noticed that too many of my researcher friends had at least one bad media experience that stuck with them (admittedly, they do make for great cocktail party conversation). Either the interviewer had not read the book, resulting in a superficial interview, or posed inane questions that only served to reinforce a repetitive narrative the interviewee was trying to quell. Or the interviewer just entirely missed the point of the research. It made the researchers shirk away from other media opportunities.

At its heart, the show had to demonstrate the violence of colonialism.

I wanted my show to create a space where fellow researchers felt respected, honoured, and heard. I also wanted to create a show that would appeal to listeners like me. I am a critical race geography scholar who focuses on matters of social justice. I kept thinking: what would an anti-racist and anti-colonial radio show look like?

I began by recognizing that journalism is no longer just about truth telling. It is, more than ever, about sense making. And one way we make sense of our world is by providing context. That sense-making, or presentation of context, is partly why I am a geographer. Nothing happens on the head of a pin—it happens in a place and it is my job to tell you where that place is. I knew I could most persuasively offer that deep context by telling stories about the communities we, as academics, work with, across, and in. That is why I called the show *Sense of Place*.

In dreaming about the possibility of *Sense of Place*, I wasn't sure how to begin, but I sure knew what I didn't want the show to be. I had already had too many frustrating experiences during my career as a journalist, where I witnessed decisions about representation made under the continuous rigid restraints of a racialized gendered hierarchy. Voices were ignored or discarded because of ongoing patterns of social and cultural capital, privilege, and power. Often, stories tended to legitimize hegemonic ideas. It is why sites of media intervention become critical to challenge the existing order.

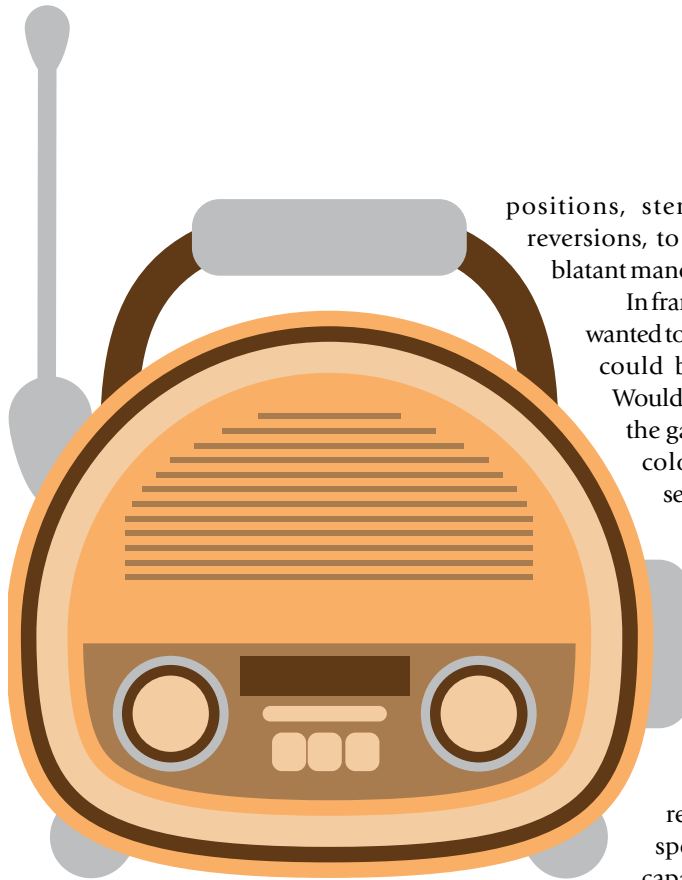
Mainstream media representations tend to fall back on the repetitive dissemination of dominant ideas. This formula is accomplished through particular discursive strategies tabulated by media scholars like Yasmin Jiwani. These strategies include, but are not limited to absences, displacements, juxta-

positions, stereotyping, inversions, and reversions, to name just a few of the more blatant maneuvers.

In framing an anti-colonial narrative, I wanted to ask how these dominant frames could be debunked and contested. Would it even be possible to shift or flip the gaze—to show the impact of the colonizers on the colonized by seeing it through the latter's eyes? I would not embrace an objective or neutral perspective. At its heart, the show had to demonstrate the violence of colonialism. I knew I had to embed these strategies through a focus on the specificities, experiences, identities, worldviews, and representations of the colonized. I specifically consider agency and capacity as means to make changes to reflect myriad struggles and realities.

We try to do our homework. We approach background research differently on *Sense of Place* by doing deep dives (as much as possible given the daily deadlines). We also try to bring academics together in conversation on *Sense of Place*. A core value of the show is encouraging connection across interdisciplinary divides. We try to look at the almost magical relationship that can occur between strangers who share passions and dreams. We bring together two or three academics who may never have met, but who are eager to meet and engage them in conversation with one another. We also rehearse this format with writers. For me, one of the most joyful moments on the show was when Orange Prize fiction winner Anne Michaels met Kyo Maclear, another best-selling author, on air. They had both known about each other, but had never met. The resulting conversation was mesmerizing.

We also talk about race beyond what is called "calendar journalism"—the focus on fun, food, and festivals as a way of celebrating ethnic snapshots of identity. We try to present racialized peoples as storytellers in their own right, to capture the magical modalities of how people connect. An example of this approach is when I invited



Poet Laureate George Elliott Clarke to speak with his mentee, Adebé DeRango-Adem, author of the beautiful book of poetry, *Terra Incognita*. It was important to capture those innovative partnerships, because relationships matter for me, on and off air, to not only build a connection with the guests and offer them a respectful, generous space to tell their stories, but also to provide a space where they can create relationships with others.

Another core value of *Sense of Place* is engaging and encouraging equity. I didn't want the show to become *the diversity show with mixed race Indian Iranian rainbow poster child, Minelle Mahtani*. It had to move beyond diversity, or even inclusion. It had to be about equity. To that end, I wanted to create spaces where scholars on race could come together for a conversation, and where that conversation would be amplified.

That has been the great surprise of *Sense of Place* for me—learning that the show is now played in lecture halls across the country because of the kinds of conversations in which we engage. In fact, I receive letters from professors around the country. Here's a snippet from one of them:

"Sense of Place is an exceptional show that does what my research suggests is very uncommon: it connects quality academic work with public debate and audiences. Most academics are uninterested in or incapable of bridging their scholarship with public debate, and when this kind of work is done, it often consists of simplistic popularization or appeals to sensational current issues. Minelle Mahtani and her producers do an excellent job in choosing timely topics, bringing in thoughtful scholars, experts, cultural workers and activists, asking probing but unintrusive questions and putting together a show that is both entertaining and illuminating."

So what's next? We are going to launch *Sense of Place Skool*—a kind of book club for radio. Once a month, a scholar interviewed on the show will be invited to lead a seminar with listeners at our station. We have a wonderful space at Roundhouse that includes a large oak table, and we want to invite regular *Sense of Place* listeners to sit around it, and join us in doing a close read of an article by a scholar, an author, or guest. Together the interviewee and I will guide a facilitated conversation with our in-person listeners. I see it as a kind of graduate class for our listeners, and an opportunity

to blur the spaces between experts and audiences.

And what have I learned? Well, I am no veteran broadcaster like Anna Maria Tremonti, that is for sure. I have a lot more to learn. I think I'm the most significant beneficiary of the show, given that I've now interviewed over a thousand guests and been privileged to hear their stories. I have watched as they wiped away tears, or laughed uproariously about events in their lives. I think it will shift how I teach in the classroom and how I engage with my colleagues. I am looking forward to bringing what I have learned back to the academy. In the meantime, I hope you will tune in. **AM**

Minelle Mahtani is an author, journalist and an Associate Professor of Human Geography and Planning, and Journalism at the University of Toronto-Scarborough.



Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa
University of Ottawa Press

The Academic Gateway
Understanding the Journey to Tenure
Edited by Timothy Sibbald and Victoria Handford

Investigates the experiences of professors employed in tenure-track positions who are starting their career within a university environment, but have not yet attained the affirmation and permanence that tenure offers.

Parcours jeunes et FLS
Activités pédagogiques en français langue seconde, niveau B2 – C1 du CECR
Par Laura Ambrosio et Miriam Hatabi

Un manuel avec outils multimédia à l'appui d'activités pédagogiques qui reflètent les approches actuelles en enseignement des langues, tout en proposant des pistes d'apprentissage fidèles aux orientations du Cadre européen commun de référence pour les langues (CECRL).

L'immersion française à l'université
Politiques et pédagogie
Sous la direction de Hélène Knoerr, Aline Gohard-Radenkovic et Alysse Weinberg

Cet ouvrage fait un état des lieux des politiques linguistiques et des aménagements de l'immersion en français à l'université et sert de cadre de référence pour les établissements universitaires au Canada et dans le monde.

www.Presses.uOttawa.ca | www.Press.uOttawa.ca



The comforts of common sense

"Keep hold of a few plain truths, and make everything square with them. When I was young ... there never was any question about right and wrong ... Every respectable Church person had the same opinions. But now, if you speak out of the Prayer-book itself, you are liable to be contradicted."

Those are the words spoken by Mrs. Farebrother in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* as she haughtily rejects the opinion of Doctor Lydgate. The book is set in the early 19th century, and Mrs. Farebrother has just asserted that overeating is the primary reason people need medical attention. Dr. Lydgate, who knows better, has disagreed, but his expertise means little to Mrs. Farebrother who is content with her own plain truths.

The disconnect between the expertise of the academy and the common sense of broader society has always been a challenge for universities. In some ways, bridging this divide defines their mission: to develop new knowledge and expertise and to disseminate both as broadly as possible, through teaching and publication. That is why the recent rise in populism has been such a concern for faculty.

This issue of *Academic Matters* is about the populist challenge for universities. It is an immense topic and understanding the implications requires one to step back, take a broad view of the current political and academic landscape, and ask some hard questions. Luckily, we have an incredible group of intelligent and insightful scholars to guide us.

Steven Tufts and Mark Thomas argue that faculty need to recognize their privileged positions and work to extend better working conditions to everyone, while Mark Kingwell

highlights the perception that universities do not represent opportunity or benefit for society. Harry Boyte speaks to the role universities should play in empowering citizens to work through their differences. Peter Scott calls for universities to assert themselves as public institutions where all have access to postsecondary education, while Steven Zhou pushes administrators to take responsibility for cultivating campuses as safe spaces for students and faculty of all backgrounds.

Taking an international perspective, Simon Marginson examines how the nationalist pressures of populism may affect the international circulation of knowledge, while Grace Karram Stephenson discusses its impact on the ebb and flow of international students. Finally, Minelle Mahtani tells her story of creating a space in the media where researchers feel respected, honoured, and heard.

Together, these contributors paint a compelling portrait of the populist challenge for universities. Not only do they provide a diversity of perspectives, but they reveal the many social and political tensions at play.

Populism has always been a political force. Most leaders, democratically elected or not, would argue that they listen to and represent the feelings of the majority. This assertion has become ingrained in the political rhetoric of democracies specifically.

However, there is generally an understanding of the important and constructive contributions experts offer for developing policy solutions. That is why it is so disturbing to see politicians take the position that experts are irrelevant, answers are obvious, and that questioning

common sense assertions of the populist right is akin to sacrilege.

Trump's argument for a return to simple, core values echoes Mrs. Farebrother's arguments in favour of a simpler world where there is no question of right and wrong. Despite the inclination, it is best not to simply dismiss this populist turn as a trend, or as celebrity-induced ignorance. Putting aside the rhetoric, this surge in populism certainly seems to be driven by rational grievances. In the wake of globalization and the economic turmoil that ensued in 2008, maybe it is time to hold some of these experts to account.

Certainly, it was the elite, equipped with expert economic opinions, driving the charge for more free trade and less regulation; although one could argue that many of these individuals did not call a university campus home. People feel left behind economically, ignored politically, and belittled culturally. They have lost trust in the opinions of experts and have begun to question the role of higher education in making their world a better place.

The challenge for universities is one of determining the degree to which those in the academy are complicit in allowing this to happen. This rise of populism provides us with a critical moment to reflect on the role of postsecondary education in society. Administrators and faculty have a responsibility to address the concerns of those struggling to make ends meet and have their voices heard. We should tackle this populist challenge enthusiastically, reach out empathetically, and collectively build stronger, more vibrant communities where knowledge, understanding, and diversity are valued. **AM**

This is my first issue as editor of Academic Matters and I owe much to those who helped me through the process, including Mark Rosenfeld, Erica Rayment, Brynne Sinclair-Waters, and Cheryl Athersych. Thank you to all our contributors for your thoughtful words. I enjoyed reading them immensely, and I am sure our readers will too.

Academic Matters is **ONE CLICK AWAY**



Academic Matters, an engaging journal of commentary, analysis, and research on trends in higher education, is available online. The website contains features from the popular print magazine, web-exclusive articles, blogs, and many other resources of interest to academics and the higher education community. Access is always free. Visit us today!

www.academicmatters.ca

GET A QUOTE & **GET A \$25** GIFT CARD*



OTIP gives you choice on more than just insurance. Choose to receive a
\$25 WINNERS | HomeSense | Marshall's or Amazon.ca Gift Card
when you get a car or home insurance quote.*

PROMO CODE:
SHOP

Visit **OTIPinsurance.com/AM-Promo**
or call **1-844-235-6847**

*Restrictions apply. See details. The \$25 gift card offer applies only when you complete an online auto or home insurance quote from OTIP, enter the promotional code: SHOP, choose "I'm Interested" or "Let's Talk" and speak with an OTIP broker on the telephone to confirm your quote. Maximum of one \$25 gift card per household. Must be a resident of Ontario and a member of the education community. To be eligible for this promotion, a member of the household must not have received a physical or electronic gift card for completing an auto or home insurance quote within the last six months. Offer only valid on quotes for policies expiring in the next 60 days. Please allow five business days for email delivery of gift card. A valid email must be provided in order to receive your gift card. This offer expires June 30, 2017. Amazon.ca is not a sponsor of this promotion. Except as required by law, Amazon.ca Gift Cards ("GCs") cannot be reloaded, resold, transferred for value or redeemed for cash. GCs may be used only for purchases of eligible goods at Amazon.ca or certain of its affiliated websites and may not be used to purchase other GCs. Amazon is not responsible if a GC is lost, stolen, destroyed or used without permission. For complete terms and conditions, including return policies for any purchases made with GCs, see www.amazon.ca/gc-legal. GCs are issued by Amazon.com.ca, Inc., a Delaware corporation. All Amazon®, TM & © are IP of Amazon.com, Inc. or its affiliates. No expiration date or service fees. TJX® Canada is not a sponsor of this promotion. Use of this gift card constitutes acceptance of the following terms and conditions. The card balance can be redeemed for merchandise only, at any WINNERS, HomeSense, or Marshall's store in Canada, cannot be redeemed for cash unless required by law, and cannot be used to pay a credit account. Items purchased with this gift card are subject to applicable store return policy. You can add to the balance of an active card at any time. For more information and to check card balance, please visit your local store. The value of this card will not be replaced if lost, stolen or used without permission. This card is issued by TJX® Canada.