

Call for Abstracts
SPECIAL ISSUE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Critical Sociology and Studies in Critical Social Sciences

“Governments don't want a population capable of critical thinking, they want obedient workers, people just smart enough to run the machines and just dumb enough to passively accept their situation.” George Carlin

How are we to understand the transformation of universities in the age of globalization? Are universities now governed as if they were businesses? Has there been a shift in the relation between academic work and capital accumulation to the degree that both research and teaching are more tightly directed, controlled by university administrations? Does it make sense to argue that ‘commodification’ of labour power now dominates the actual or stated purpose(s) of these and other changes in higher education. If so, what has that come to mean for the qualities of university life, especially the direction and control of academic labor? In the US, how do we understand the reasoning behind reductions in government spending on public universities alongside increases in spending on researchers at highly endowed private universities? What has been the impact on other countries by the export of a “US business model” of higher education? How are we to understand the decisions taken by higher education institutions to rely on student debt to fund their operations; and to treat students as consumers and faculty as workers? Why are faculty reluctant to challenge these premises through collective action, or students to mobilize in response to crippling debt?

We are seeking contributions from those on the front line of governance changes in higher education. Through auto-ethnographic or systems analysis, we seek work that reflects on the effects of changes in both direction and control over teaching and research. Of interest are systematic reflections on changes in who and how decisions are made regarding front line issues like research time, research resources such as sabbaticals and library holdings, class sizes, teaching loads, employment rights, status differentiation, and so forth. We look for work that considers how can such changes can be interpreted, and whether and how they ought to be challenged?

Governance of higher education includes but is not limited to explorations of any of the following themes:

- Changes in terms and conditions of research activity
- Changes in the mission of the university
- Changes in the geography of your University’s reach (who do they serve)
- Changes in teaching (class size and teaching load)
- Changes in hiring practices or shifts towards increasingly precarious faculty
- Changes in the ‘knowledge commons’: granting tenure, scholarly communication, journal rankings
- Changes in faculty job and status security (the tenure process, impacts of post-tenure reviews)
- Changes in the sources and uses of institutional revenue (what can decades of university annual financial report reveal to identify the impact of shifts in resourcing)
- Efforts (successes or failures) to organize educational and instructional staff at all levels
- Whether higher education was once a public good but now has been captured by private interests
- Whether and how higher education reproduces social class, racial and gender divides, and promotes inequality

Email inquiries to David Fasenfest (critical.sociology [at] gmail.com). Submit abstracts (max 400 words) and full contact information as an attachment, with the subject line “**Political Economy of Education,**” by 1 October 2019. Authors will be informed by 15 November 2019, with full papers expected by 1 March 2020.