

CO-EDITOR'S
INTRODUCTION

Section Two:
Research and Higher Education

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Higher education is regarded as key to the maintenance and flourishing of society, across diverse cultural and political contexts. It is a major venue for civics or citizenship education, whether formal or informal. It is also where ideas around how to train teachers, how to teach about foundational values and principles, and what these values and principles are receive sustained reflection, scrutiny, and rigorous debate. Yet, as the authors in this section elaborate, higher education has also become a political battleground in recent years. In higher education and research contexts, a variety of crises are apparent, related to political partisanship, the nature of free speech and academic freedom, and what is truth. These challenges require effective educational and intellectual responses. The essays in this section explore myriad challenges and crises faced related to global democracy as well as possible solutions. Read together, they provide a multifaceted picture of academic and research contexts today, what it means to be a scholar or researcher in tumultuous and divided times, and how we can respond as

thinkers and political actors in classroom settings and beyond.

All of the essays in this section explore political and intellectual crises faced in the academy while offering education-related responses. The first essays focus primarily on understanding and critically responding to current crises. Fazal Rizvi explores the meaning of dissent and pedagogies of dissent in his essay. As Rizvi explores, dissent has been a foundational act of citizenship within historical narratives of democratic governance. It has been used around the world in recent years, in Hong Kong, India, Turkey, and the United States. However, not all acts of dissent are equal, and not all are consistent with the principles of democracy. Thus, Rizvi considers what are more and less defensible expressions of dissent, what are reasonable limits on dissent, and the challenges in applying abstract criteria to real-world cases. He concludes with implications for pedagogies of dissent which can enable educators to cultivate modes of questioning, civic participation and engagement, and political discrimination in relation to ethical and political matters.

Sarah Stitzlein examines the nature of truth in her essay, arguing that it is time to study truth in philosophy and to teach about and with honesty. As Stitzlein notes, the concept of truth is one that some pragmatists and Dewey scholars have undervalued historically. Yet in this contemporary post-truth situation, where deceit and partisanship are rampant particularly in the United States, appreciating truth's role in democracy is essential to resolving collective problems. Stitzlein thereby puts forward a Deweyan view of truth and its significance for democracy. In relation, she argues that educators should foreground a sense of honesty as found within a Deweyan conception of democracy, wherein human relationships lead to better epistemic solutions and greater civic well-being. She concludes by recognising how learning about habits of honesty can enable students to take up meaningful problems within and beyond the classroom and cultivate a sense of intellectual humility with regard to facing new future social and political challenges.

John LeJeune also considers how to enable university students to better understand the social and political world

around them. In this case, he focuses on the notion of miracle in relation to the philosophies of Hannah Arendt and David Hume and the commonsense discourse surrounding us related to political crisis. As LeJeune notes, cynicism reigns today. People tend to assume that public actors are ineffective, partisan, and predictable, and that politics is simply about exploiting and manipulating predictable behavior. However, these assumptions can be challenged. In this context, LeJeune discusses miracles as interruptions of what is regarded as natural or predictable and argues that miracles can easily be identified that defy cynical commonsense. The essay ultimately argues for the importance of helping young people appreciate the existence and possibility of miracles to restore faith in humanity in public life.

Other essays in this section consider the academic and intellectual crises faced, while tilting their overall focus more toward educational responses. Wilson Lui and Adrian Lam consider how universities can engage students with present and future crises through pedagogies, student empowerment, and interdisciplinarity. In their essay, they

provide detailed examples from the University of Hong Kong to argue for educational reforms oriented toward not only responding to but also foreseeing and anticipating future crises. Only in this way, they argue, can higher education systems become more resilient in the face of inevitable ongoing and future crises.

Ming Ming Chiu, Jeong-Nam Kim, Yu Won Oh, Chong-Hyun Park & Hyelim Lee examine how fake news threatens liberal democracy and what can be done about it in higher education. As the authors point out, fake news makes it difficult for people to understand the world around them, establish a sense of common ground, and have confidence or trust in various information sources. In this case, the authors argue that machine learning can be a tool to fight fake news, but only if scholars in this area increase its transparency so as to reduce current biases in filtering systems. They conclude with a discussion of how educators can foster fake news expertise via media literacy and machine learning to prevent fake news from threatening the healthy information marketplace of ideas and paralyzing democratic processes.

Neil Dhingra's essay also explores the educational use of media, in this case exploring how the film *The Searchers* (1956) can be used in the classroom to understand the politics of ruthless power invoked in the support for Donald Trump in the United States in recent years. Likening Trump to a contemporary incarnation of John Wayne, in *The Searchers* John Wayne is presented as a protector inflicting redemptive violence in the broader context of an apparently innocent, but threatened, 'civilized' society. Drawing ties from the film to contemporary politics and choices in the United States, Dhingra's sustained attention to the film reflects a creative use of metaphor as a tool for students to think deeply and philosophically about the crises faced today.

In their essay, Fei Yan and Liz Jackson take us on a historical journey to the People's Republic of China where, as in the United States, a sense of innocence is used to pit national good guys against international bad guys, to the detriment of global civic society. Fei and Jackson note how in various crises in Chinese history a politics of national humiliation has been deployed which remains significant in

the present day, particularly in education. In this case Chinese international students may be thwarted in engaging in meaningful international exchanges due to limited international understanding and nationalistic civic education. This essay thus helps address a crisis related to international understanding in higher education, and it can be informative particularly for educators working with Chinese students in universities around the world.

The final three essays in this collection focus on the inner workings of academia in relation to democracy and civic engagement. Elke Van dermijnsbrugge focuses on what she describes as punk ethnography as a means for researchers to engage in more socially relevant scholarship working alongside community members. Van dermijnsbrugge elaborates punk ethnography as a useful response to a current obsession with numbers and 'what works' in educational research, which seeks collaborative engagement with research participants who help shape the research rather than merely being shaped by it. The central components of this methodology involve creating an anarcho-syndicate, which is bottom-up in orientation

rather than hierarchical; a punk ethos which emphasizes inventiveness and 'do it yourself'; and a postdisciplinary approach, which breaks with neoliberal conventions to focus on human flourishing over narrow conceptions of productivity. This piece ends with an invitation for readers to join this evolving practice toward imagining alternative futures.

Yulia Nesterova also focuses in her essay on community engagement with the university through research and knowledge exchange. Like Van dermijnsbrugge, Nesterova notes the importance of treating community members in an equitable and less controlling manner in research, not seeing participants as merely recipients of knowledge, but as partners who should also shape research agendas. In her essay, she gives an example of her work at the University of Glasgow with young peacebuilders where mutual understanding, trust, and respect is vital. Nesterova concludes by acknowledging the continued importance of addressing institutional racism on university campuses in order to enhance future efforts

toward collective action and knowledge sharing of academics with non-academic partners.

Anatoly Oleksiyenko also focuses on the inner workings of universities in his essay, which is the last essay in this section of the special issue. As Oleksiyenko notes, higher education has been significantly influenced in recent decades by neoliberal and corporate principles and priorities. Today the corporate university objectifies and uses students, who see no choice but to comply with the dominant agendas as set by universities. In this context, democratic processes have dissolved, as professors have had lesser roles and authorship of academic norms of organisation and community. Here, Oleksiyenko recommends that academics engage in critical reflection about the role of corporate agendas in higher education and consciously rethink university aims related to democracy and learning. This can in turn lead to universities engaging more effectively with diverse community stakeholders including underprivileged learners as values of purpose, charity, dignity, and benevolence are foregrounded over performance and competition measures.

Taken as a whole, the essays in this section make meaningful connections between political and social theory and educational practice, particularly at the higher education level. As such, they can be inspirational to academics thinking about their roles as researchers and educators, within and beyond western societies.