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The BEST CONSERVATIVE COLLEGES
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The core purpose of The American Spectator is to educate, entertain, and inform readers with smart and witty investigative journalism and editorial writing from a conservative point of view. What distinguishes readers with smart and witty investigative journalism and editorial writing from The core purpose of Summer 2023 Fill it with whatever you need to survive the Beltway to survive the Beltway

**VISION STATEMENT**

The American Spectator maintains fidelity to the conservative dogma of happy warriors of generations past while not being stuffy, inflexible, or incurious about new phenomena in politics and culture.

**THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR**

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**FILL IT WITH WHAT YOU NEED TO SURVIVE THE BELTWAY**

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**EDUCATION HAS REACHED PEAK ABSURDITY, BUT THERE IS HOPE**

**by Melissa Mackenzie**

It didn’t seem possible that school could get more ridiculous than me as a fourth grader hiding under my desk with a three-inch-thick textbook on my head to protect my noggin from a tornado or nuclear fallout. Yet here we are in the United States of America defending our children’s right to not have their innocence ruined by gay pedophilic rape books in elementary school libraries.

Peak absurdity wasn’t Silent Spring. Peak absurdity is now children’s test scores are sliding and their IQs are declining because teachers aren’t teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic. Instead, teachers dream out barely literate cretins skilled in the art of condoning a banana but unable to authoritatively state that two plus two equals four. If I recall correctly (and this was an entirely true memory), my cromsipsipusted, former cover model (she informed us while sitting cross-legged on her desk) public school English teacher slid and their IQs are declining because teachers aren’t teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic. Instead, teachers dream out barely literate cretins skilled in the art of condoning a banana but unable to authoritatively state that two plus two equals four. If I recall correctly (and this was an entirely true memory), my cromsipsipusted, former cover model (she informed us while sitting cross-legged on her desk) public school English teacher forced her third-graders to make a no-nuke stance. These days, she’d have rainbow flags and ally pins and secret meetings with students encouraging them to be their “true” selves and wear chest hinders without telling their parents.

My point is that the academic world didn’t turn upside down yesterday or even with Randi Weingarten’s pandemic response; it’s been a mess for a couple of generations. Millennial parents don’t know what they don’t know because of their own miseducation and couldn’t correct most inaccuracies in modern curricula. What hope do their kids have? It turns out they have quite a bit. We’re excited to share these hopeful changes in the pages of this magazine.

Addressing education in the print edition of The American Spectator has been a dream of mine. The various college-ranking books and magazines mostly stink. They do not address the most important considerations and options for schooling. Conservative parents — heck, good old-fashioned liberal parents — would like to have their children’s minds inoculated with what used to be understood as the basics: English literacy, fluency in writing, mathematical competency, scientific knowledge, fast-paced American and world history focused on the triumphs of Western Civilization, and a broad-based survey of the arts, with some practical knowledge thrown in. In generations past, a student could graduate high school with the skills to be a hairdresser, cook, or mechanic. Basically, American parents could count on the public schools to produce a literate graduate who would become a fully functional citizen and taxpayer.

No more. Parents are fortunate if their children graduate high school as agnostic heathens seeking satisfaction in the material realm. The worst public school outcomes
The weaknesses of public school education illuminated during the warming, and now climate change are used to instill irrational fear. Products of the education system end up that way. Many resources both nationally and locally are spent on such obvious medicine. Education is only one piece of the puzzle, but since so many resources both nationally and locally are spent on such obvious failure, it’s a good place to start.

The articles herein are wide-ranging. We don’t rank colleges and universities; we offer them and hope that you and your child will be surprised by the expansive and unique choices and find one that suits you. We likely have missed some excellent schools. We urge you to share your ideas and feedback with us.

We don’t believe that there is one primary educational solution for your children or grandchildren — our writers discuss many of them, from homeschooling to online learning to classical education. Our writers also address structural issues. Who created this dystopian education situation? Public-sector teachers unions deserve much of the blame. Randi Weingarten is feverishly attempting to rewrite history, but she and Anthony Foxx were consistent, purpleshirted villains during the government’s response to the COVID pandemic. Teachers unions must be held accountable not just for harming children by shutting down schools during the pandemic, but also for defending failing school administrators and teachers while leaving children behind.

We are honored to have Betsy DeVos, the former secretary of education, write about the institution she attempted to reform. Like many of the rest of the nonsense poured into the ozone layer, the Amazon rain forests dying, the mini ice age, global warming, and now climate change are used to instill irrational fear in America’s youth, robbing them of hope. In the internet era of narcissism and isolation, 25 percent of Gen Zers identify as one of the “Alphabet People,” as Dave Chappelle calls them. The kids are being there.

We hope that you will be heartened by what you read here and notice the whiteness of the campus, it was “almost impossible … to form clubs” or come out as gender fluid. Doggedly she tracked down a few Hillsdale grads, one of whom felt “socially ostracized” there “after she cut her hair short and started dressing in a more masculine way.” The traumas of life in a white man’s world.

To be fair, Green interviewed a wide number of Hillsdale professors, and they all come as cordial, intelligent, engaging, and straight shooting. One suspects that Green learned quite a few things from them that she might not have in New York, and the experience didn’t immediately send her into psychiatric care. She’s left somewhat speechless upon learning that weight lifting, a healthy alternative to the snowplow stresses and depression so common today’s youth, has become a scourge on U.S. campuses: alcohol. A decade ago, I asked an art professor whose husband was a dean at her small college: Why all this drinking? Most every night, vans circulated on campus picking up dead-drunk students and giving them rides to their dorms. She was completely on board with the debauch — students were learning tremendously about life and socializing and being away from their parents (whose payments of full tuition kept the college alive, she didn’t need to add). She didn’t appreciate it when I countered that a night in a police cooler might prove more instructive.

Oddly, there’s not a word in her piece about a longtime scourge on U.S. campuses: alcohol. A decade ago, I asked an art professor whose husband was a dean at her small college: Why all this drinking? Most every night, vans circulated on campus picking up dead-drunk students and giving them rides to their dorms. She was completely on board with the debauch — students were learning tremendously about life and socializing and being away from their parents (whose payments of full tuition kept the college alive, she didn’t need to add). She didn’t appreciate it when I countered that a night in a police cooler might prove more instructive.

I’m grateful that Hillsdale has escaped the blight that alcohol (and who knows what else) has brought to my old college surroundings at the University of California, Santa Barbara. This year’s spring break “Deltopia” in off-campus Isla Vista brought sixty medical calls and twenty-three arrests. But who’s counting? I mean the joy of the students who took off, who once were called outside agitators. When the life of the mind doesn’t matter, is there really any point to college?

by Wlad Pleszczynski

Wlad Pleszczynski is executive editor of The American Spectator.
WASHINGTON — Who is buried in Grant’s tomb? Actually, Ulysses S. Grant is buried in Grant’s tomb, which comes as a surprise to young Americans educated in our modern educational factories — all air-conditioned, with counselors on every floor and armed guards patrolling the halls. Also, there are psychologists on duty daily for troubled students who may have encountered a rude word in their textbooks.

Harry Truman — the thirty-third president of the United States, for the ill-informed — certainly knew who Ulysses S. Grant was. Truman was educated in a one-room schoolhouse and never graduated from college, yet he knew that Grant won the Civil War and that with the help of another obscure American figure, Abraham Lincoln, they saved the Union.

Today’s youth take little history. Most of today’s students have no time for history or, for that matter, algebra, geometry, or gym class. Their days at school are taken up by courses in anger management, sex education, and films on how to be nice to everyone. Actually, there are films on how to be nice to transgendered folk. Their days at school are taken up by courses in anger management, sex education, and films on how to be nice to everyone. Actually, there are films on how to be nice to everyone.

I have been reading history for years, often to assist myself in my journalistic pursuits. I love history for pleasure. I find history more absorbing than most modern novels. Presently, I am reading Jerusalem: The Biography by Simon Schag Montefiore. It is a huge tome, but it is worth the effort. I often think that the early Christian Church harangued the faithful excessively about murder, torture, and slavery — brutalities that we modern Americans never encounter in everyday life. However, after reading Montefiore; I am going to pipe down my criticism of the early Church. The ancient world abounded with ceaseless atrocities. Maybe we do not encounter the bestiality that filled the world when the early Church was getting started, but perhaps admonitions against these monstrous behaviors are not a waste of time after all. That kind of brutality has existed for thousands of years, and it can not encounter the bestiality that filled the world when the early Church was getting started, but perhaps admonitions against these monstrous behaviors are not a waste of time after all. That kind of brutality has existed for thousands of years, and it can not encounter the bestiality that filled the world when the early Church was getting started, but perhaps admonitions against these monstrous behaviors are not a waste of time after all. That kind of brutality has existed for thousands of years, and it can not encounter the bestiality that filled the world when the early Church was getting started, but perhaps admonitions against these monstrous behaviors are not a waste of time after all. That kind of brutality has existed for thousands of years, and it can not encounter the bestiality that filled the world when the early Church was getting started, but perhaps admonitions against these monstrous behaviors are not a waste of time after all. That kind of brutality has existed for thousands of years, and it can.
The specter of Dewey thrives today in public schools and doctoral programs via the zeitgeist of constant experimentation.

In New York, Dewey became a professor of philosophy at Columbia University, with a joint appointment at Columbia's Teachers College. It was in that capacity that Dewey became the kind of person he was known by history.

Dewey's Idealistic Politics

Dewey and Columbia University were no match made in heaven. It was at Columbia that young people as diverse as Whittaker Chambers and Thomas Mann and Bella Dodd arrived native and impressionable and were filled with Marxist roe. Dodd would end up becoming one of the highest-ranking female members of the American Communist Party and the chief organizer of the party's education front. In that capacity, she led a mass infiltration of the Bolsheviks into public education.

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Dewey's Educational Philosophy

Dewey, too, favored that secular relativism and, in some respects, helped to shape it. When it came to the repudiation of Stalinism, Dewey's specter is undeniably thriving in education today. The classroom rather than the factory — the factory, as Dewey put it, was way ahead of its time.

Dewey's written work was as ambivalent as it was prolific. In his 1934 book, he wrote about it at length in my 2010 book, — applied to the classroom in the form of "pragmatism" and "experimentalism" — the latter of which was developed by Charles Peirce and William James, is the theory that the meaning of a course of action lies in its observable consequences; it is the sum of those consequences that constitutes the meaning of the action or proposition. This is a considered practical way of addressing problems. It can be — as it was by Dewey — applied to the classroom in the form of a desire to experiment in search of the best method. Dewey's theories also determined Dewey's views on education. These theories also determined Dewey's views on education.
There Is Nothing Worth Saving in America’s Public Schools

The heart of their mission is to indoctrinate children into being atheistic gender ideologues.

by Theresa Farnan and Mary Rice Hasson

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other year, another election cycle. Already Republican candidates and pundits are testing carefully calibrated messages about education. A recent National Affairs article by scholar Robert Pondiscio, for example, sounds the following themes: Yes to school choice, but also yes to more funding for public schools. Yes to curricular transparency, but please no “biases” on teacher-led discussions of “sensitive subjects” (critical race theory and gender ideology). “Compromise” is good, even on “the most ideologically tinged” issues. And, by the way, conservatives ought to “cease fomenting parental discontent with public schools” lest activist teachers respond with retaliatory indoctrination of students. Sure, public schools are failing, but parents must “recommit to strengthening,” not “abandon[ing],” public schools. Why? Because “[i]f conservatives cede public schools to the left, they will effectively abandon the vast majority of America’s future generations to the progressive cause.” This concern for America’s future generations is laudable — but stunningly out of touch and decades late. A recent report by the Policy Exchange, a prominent UK think tank, on the sweeping harm of gender ideology in UK schools warns that policymakers are “Asleep at the Wheel,” an apt description that applies to far too many conservatives.

Wake up, friends. America’s stubborn commitment to progressive-controlled government education has already abandoned “the vast majority” of our children “to the progressive cause” for well over a decade. The results have been disastrous.

For starters, schools have failed abysmally in their fundamental task — teaching basic academic skills — despite spending staggering sums. In 2019, annual expenditures for K–12 public schools totaled almost $800 billion, but, according to the Nation’s Report Card, barely one-third of public school students were “proficient” in math and reading pre-COVID, a dismal track record that worsened significantly post-COVID. Nationally, just 26 percent of eighth graders are proficient in math, with 31 percent proficient in reading. In Detroit, only 3 percent of fourth graders are mathematically proficient, while twenty-three Baltimore public schools reported exactly zero math-proficient students. Government schools, which enroll almost nine out of ten American children, repeatedly fail to deliver on their promises but are rewarded with big budgets and near-monopolistic power.

The most troubling aspect of our government school system, however, is not what it has failed to teach but what it has succeeded in teaching.

As cultural revolutionaries have long known, it is far easier to capture and mold the beliefs of children than to change the minds of adults. The evidence is in: the cultural revolutionaries are winning. A recent Wall Street Journal/NORC poll found disturbing gaps in the values embraced by Americans under thirty compared to those espoused by older adults. While majorities of older Americans say patriotism, religion, and having children are “very important,” shockingly few young people agree. Among Americans under thirty, just 23 percent consider patriotism and having children to be very important, while only 31 percent say the same of religion. The shift in the values and beliefs of younger Americans is dramatic but hardly surprising, as it tracks the leftward swing of our public education — indoctrination — system.

The progressive worldview has permeated nearly all aspects of public education — history, science, literature, and so on. Religion, even the idea of truth itself, has been steadily excised from the classroom, replaced by lessons in secular

Theresa Farnan and Mary Rice Hasson are fellows at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and the authors of Get Out Now: Why You Should Pull Your Child From Public School Before It’s Too Late.

GET OUT WHILE YOU CAN

Part 1: CRISIS

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worldview, no match for the 1,200 hours per year that students spend in public school environment. From kindergarten on, everywhere!), terminology (“genderqueer,” ideology. Its associated symbols (rainbows according to polls by Gallup. in hand with sharp declines in moral values, surprisingly, declining religiosity goes hand (and often antireligious) worldview. Not unfortunately, to lessons well learned. deism, in which God is deemed irrelevant to answer the question “Who am I?” with (gender) assigned at birth.” They are taught and become conversant in the language of “Genderbread Person” or “Gender Unicorn” that’s the case only because politicians have refused to give families a financial exit ramp. America’s parents see what’s happening to their children, and they want real choice. In 2018, we were “Get Out Now Before You Pull Your Child from Public School Before It’s Too Late to warn parents that public education’s academic failures pale in comparison to the harm done by its embrace of a radical pseudoreligion — gender ideology — behind parents’ backs. Back then, parents recognized the general problem but assumed that their own public schools were good enough. COVID was a game changer. American parents got a shocking, firsthand look through the digital window at progressive activism at work in their neighborhood schools. Parents cannot “unsee” the truth. From New York to California, parents express outrage at the pornographic “LGBTQ-inclusive” books in school libraries. They vigorously oppose the de facto caste system that results from “critical race theory” in K–12 classrooms. They are appalled that public schools condone hiding students’ “gender transitions” from parents. Parents feel betrayed when school districts arrogantly refuse to let parents opt their children out of objectionable content. And they wonder why politicians cannot fund falling schools that excel at only one thing: minting very confused, child-sized leftists. This moment is about real families. Parents don’t want their children indoctrinated in progressive beliefs and their parental authority undermined. They are keenly aware that time is short. Incremental change, while politically palatable, does nothing to help their children. “Recommitting” to public education does nothing to prevent progressive indoctrination or habits of unbelief from taking hold in their children. Nor will it prevent their confused adolescent from being steered toward “gender transition” by activist teachers or counselors. “Education reform” is a ratchet that has turned in only one direction — toward progressive ideology. Enough. Parents know what their children need. They overwhelmingly support choice in education. It’s time for politicians to empower parents to “get out now” — to choose the schools that are right for their children.

Meet our 2023 intern team!

Elizabeth Crawford, Hilldale College, ’24
Hunter Oswald, Grove City College, ’24
Grace Reilly, Grove City College, ’24
Mason Stansbury, Utah Valley University, ’22
Emma Verrigni, Hilldale College, ’26

And veteran members of our Young Writers Program:
Elyse Apel, Hilldale College ’24: social media coordinator
Mary Frances Myler, University of Notre Dame ’22: assistant editor
Ashey Galick, Hilldale College ’23: reporter
Lucia VanBerkum, Hilldale College ’23: associate editor
Ellie Gardey, University of Notre Dame ’21: reporter and associate editor
The Military Academies Have Turned Into Woke Wastelands

Diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives are teaching cadets to oppose — even hate — our nation’s founding values.

by Francis P. Sempa

In 1962, General Douglas MacArthur said to the Corps of Cadets at the US Military Academy at West Point: “Our mission remains fixed, determined, inviolable. It is to win our wars. Everything else in your professional career is but an obligation that is practically incidental to this vital dedication.” No longer is this the case. Sixty years later, the “very obsession” of America’s military service academies is not Duty, Honor, Country but Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion — DEI.

The rot of educational priorities at US military academies begins at the top and extends far beyond those educational institutions. In February and March of 2021, the Biden administration resumed DEI training efforts throughout government institutions, including those on “critical race theory and white privilege” subjects begun during the Obama administration, that had been curtailed to some extent by the Trump administration, which labeled such training as “un-American propaganda training sessions.” On June 25, 2021, President Joe Biden signed an executive order “advancing” DEI throughout the federal workforce, including in our armed services, to end “the enduring legacies of employment discrimination, systemic racism, and gender inequality.”

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in February 2022 praised the president for his “commitment” to diversity and inclusion in our armed forces, and in September of that year Austin announced the formation of a Defense Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion. General Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, upheld West Point’s policy of teaching critical race theory during a hearing before the House Armed Services Committee. Admiral Michael Gilday, chief of naval operations, defended the recommendation of Ingrum X. Kendii’s book How to Be an Antiracist — which equates capitalism with racism — to sailors. In May 2021, the acting Navy secretary directed the Navy’s chief diversity officer to “develop an action plan to promote DEI in Department-wide policies, programs and operations.”

Barbara Barrett, then secretary of the Air Force, in June 2020 created a “Diversity and Inclusion Task Force.” This task force expanded to become the Office of Diversity and Inclusion in January 2021, which is dedicated to promoting a “diverse and highly inclusive environment” throughout the Air Force. The Coast Guard, too, has institutionalized DEI training led by so-called “change agents” to “develop an organizational culture that values respect, diversity, equity and inclusion.”

The most lasting effect of the trend toward wokeness in our armed forces will be seen in the service academies, where future officers in all branches of the armed forces are being indoctrinated with DEI. Fox News reports that the Air Force Academy’s diversity and inclusion training materials include instructions “to use words that ‘include all genders’ and to refrain from saying things like ‘mom’ and ‘dad.’” Diversity and inclusion, cadets are told, is “a warfighting imperative.” Diversity and inclusion resources include a diversity and inclusion “reading room” and “affinity groups,” the latter of which the academy website claims aids cadets in “gathering around a shared affinity or bond” and allows them to be “identity-based.”

Training includes courses on “unconscious bias,” “cultural sensitivity,” and “inclusive leadership.” Lieutenant General Richard Clark, superintendent of the Air Force Academy, told Fox News that the instructions to avoid using “mom,” “dad,” and the like were “taken out of context and misrepresented.” He asserted that diversity and inclusion training centered on “the warfighting imperative of leveraging diverse perspectives to solve our nation’s most difficult national security problems.” I wonder if Billy Mitchell, father of the Air Force, or Curtis LeMay, the famous World War II general, would have said about that — but they are “dead white males”; nobody listens to them these days. The Air Force Academy’s website includes a video presentation on “Pride Month,” including LGBTQ+ and pronoun normalization. The academy’s “Diversity & Inclusion Resource List” includes books on topics such as “Unconscious Bias” and “Race-Specific Learning.”

Meanwhile, at the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland — which produced the likes of Alfred Thayer Mahan, John A. Lejeune, Charles C. Krulak, Ernest J. King, Chester W. Nimitz, William D. Leahy, Hyman G. Rickover, James Stockdale, and many other naval giants — the leadership has formulated a “Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan.” The plan’s introduction promotes a “path to inclusion” for an “inviting, safe, and supportive campus” where “everyone feels they belong and have equitable opportunity for success regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation or socioeconomic background.” Training at Annapolis will include “developing and maintaining a comprehensive cultural awareness and bias literacy … framework,” “creating a metric that can measure and track belongingness,” providing students “with information and pamphlets with diversity and inclusion resources, programs and initiatives,” and “promoting membership in affinity groups.” The curriculum will “prioritize[ the inclusion of marginalized scholarship and hidden histories within midshipmen education.” There will also be a “confidential process for reporting bias incidents … to proactively identify areas for potential additional training” and “admissions specific cultural awareness and bias literacy training modules for everyone” in the admissions and recruiting process. The Naval Academy, the plan states, should “intentionally promote diversity in service assignments,” develop and promote “proper reporting procedures for instances of discrimination,” and institute diversity and inclusion “summits” and “recognition awards.” This plan was signed by the senior leadership of the Naval Academy.

Critics, including 2002 Naval Academy graduate and former naval officer J.A. Cauthen, have accused the Naval Academy’s leadership of being “[willfully collaborators all too eager to appease their political masters.” Cauthen describes parts of the strategic plan as similar to “bygone Soviet and Maoist slogans,” policies both “pernicious and punitive” that will “fundamentally transform the education and training of midshipmen by supplanting rigor, merit, and superior performance with a focus on phương tráng các quyền lượng.” Revolutionary War hero John Paul Jones’s immortal “I have not yet begun to fight” is giving way to reality star (and featured speaker at the Naval Academy in 2019) Alexis Jones’s much softer “the importance of mutual respect.”

Over at the Coast Guard Academy, the Office of Inclusion and Diversity supports six “diversity councils” to “Cultivate a Supportive and Inclusive Environment.” Cadets called “Diversity Peer Educators” provide “information and support on … race, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity” subjects. The academy previously had come under fire for its lack of “cultural competence” in a report by the National Academy of Public Administration, which recommended reforms, including formulating a “detailed DEI action plan with a long-term timeline,” “broadening [the] responsibilities of the chief diversity officer” by making that officer a “strategic advisor to the superintendent,” and “detailing and tracking metrics to measure progress and guide efforts to improve cultural competence.” The less visible and less well-known US Merchant Marine Academy has also pledged to “establish[ a] welcoming and diverse campus” and employs a “diversity recruiter.”

And then there is West Point, perhaps the most revered military academy in the

Francis P. Sempa is an attorney and the author of Geopolitics: From the Cold War to the 21st Century, America's Global Role, and Somewhere in France, Somewhere in Germany.

This woke experiment with the academies … “will harm our military’s ability to perform its mission.”
nation — the institution that produced Generals Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S. Grant, Dwight D. Eisenhower, George H. Thomas, William T. Sherman, and so many other great military leaders. West Point has fallen victim to Congress and the Pentagon’s Diversity & Leadership Award.” Fox News presents a “Department of the Army initiative, projects, and plans.” ODIEO, administration and is “the focal point for diversity training and education programs includes courses titled “Social Inequality,” “Diversity & Inclusion: a Rhode Scholar, two Fulbright scholars, and two Marshall scholars, issued a forty-page policy proposal expressing West Point’s leadership to institute policies to bring about an “anti-racist West Point.” Cadets at the academy, the authors wrote, must be “helpful” to “anti-learn racism.” They called for Maoist-like struggle sessions and reeducation efforts to create “anti-racist” warriors. The proposal was “inspired,” the authors noted, by the so-called Black Manifesto of 1971, thus suggesting that nothing much has changed at West Point since then. The former cadets praise the Black Lives Matter movement and describe West Point’s “legacy” as one of “systemic racism, harmful exclusion, and overt white supremacy.”

One former West Point graduate called this document “wholesale moral blackmail of the Academy’s actuaries,” which includes courses titled “Social Inequality,” “Power and Difference,” and “The Politics of Race, Gender, and Sexuality.” West Point hosts “Diversity & Inclusion Leadership Conferences,” has “Diversity Clubs,” and presents a “Department of the Army Diversity & Leadership Award.” Fox News reports that cadets are subjected to “pronoun play acting” sessions. In 2021, former female West Point cadets criticized the academy for promoting a “woke ideology,” which included lectures on “White rage” and “extremism.” Students were tutored on “writing essays about critical race theory.” The activist group Judicial Watch last year obtained more than six hundred documents from the Defense Department affirming that critical race theory is being taught at West Point.

But the education in critical race theory is having its intended effect. In June 2020, nine recent West Point graduates, including two first captains, whose membranes were exposed to “woke ideology throughout our military, fundamentally changing the military’s understanding of ‘systemic racism, harmful exclusion, and overt white supremacy.’” Former West Point cadets described a decades long stealth campaign while most parents were not looking. But the education in critical race theory has not been tested against a real enemy in many generations. When we are, leaders like this will not be able to stand in the field of battle.”

The far Left’s infiltration and capture of America’s educational institutions now includes the leadership of our armed services’ educational institutions. This woke experiment with the academies that are supposed to produce our nation’s warriors — the leaders whom MacArthur described as “the great captains who hold the Nation’s destiny in their hands the moment the war tocsin sounds” — are instead propagating an ideology that, in Caulter’s opinion, produces leaders unprepared “to wage and win wars against our enemies,” and that GOP senator (and former Air Force officer) Roger Wicker maintains “will harm our military’s ability to perform its mission.”

As the Heritage Foundation’s Thomas Sopchak noted last September, the very leaders we have elected are spreading an epidemic of woke ideology throughout our military, fundamentally changing the “purpose, character, traditions, and requirements” of the institution that protects our country.

Douglas MacArthur, speaking to the cadets at West Point half a century ago, observed that “the Long Gray Line has never failed us,” promising that, if ever it did, “a million ghosts in olive drab, in brown khaki, in blue and gray, would rise from their white crosses, thundering those magic words: Duty, Honor, Country.” MacArthur would be astonished to learn that, in the third decade of the twenty-first century, we have met the enemy — and it is us.}

by David Catron

I n a recent opinion piece published in U.S.A Today, Randi Weingarten delivered the following cri de coeur: “MAGA Republicans are destroying our public schools. Teachers and parents must fight back.” Weingarten is, of course, the president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the country’s second-largest teachers union. If her dire warning about the fall designs of the GOP seems semi-hysterical, it’s important to remember what she means by “our public schools.” For the AFT and its larger counterpart, the National Education Association (NEA), this term is synonymous with “union-controlled schools.” And, as we discovered during the COVID-19 lockdown, they intend to remain in control.

Moreover, this control is by no means limited to the “teachers” we entrust with our children’s education. Throughout the past thirty years, these unions have used their enormous financial resources to take over local school boards, where they seek to ostensibly run our public education system for the benefit of students, parents, and the community. Before the pandemic, most voters ignored school board elections, and the unions exploited this apathy to push these all-important bodies with people who could be counted on to put the agenda of the unions before any other consideration. How did they accomplish this? Stanford University political scientist Terry Mock explains in his 2013 book, Special Interest.

The Michigan Education Association, for example, distributes a forty-page instructional (and hortatory) document to its local leaders, filled with operational details about how to evaluate and screen school board candidates, recruit friendly ones, run entire campaigns, set up phone banks, engage in door-to-door canvassing, get out the vote, and more. Its title: “Elected Your Own Employer, It’s As Easy as 1, 2, 3.”

This manual was in circulation well over a decade ago, and it was not unique to Michigan. By the time parents learned during the pandemic that public schools had been promoting leftist dogma, pseudo-science, revisionist history, and transgender ideology, the teachers unions already controlled the school boards. Consequently, when concerned parents began appearing at school board meetings to express their unhappiness with what their children were being taught, they were shocked to learn that they were considered interlopers with no right to question ideologically tendentious
About 61 percent of the group’s 67 endorsed candidates in Florida, whom Moms for Liberty spent $50,000 in state and local campaigns, were victorious on Tuesday. With votes in some states still too close to call, the organization expects roughly half of the more than 200 candidates they endorsed in other states will be elected, even though it spent $200,000 helping them. In the next election cycle, Moms for Liberty intends to spend money in at least seven states, co-founder Tiffany Justice told Newsweek.

Moms for Liberty is one of the most active parents’ rights organizations in the country. In 2022, it nominated 500 candidates for school boards, 275 of whom won. They successfully flipped seventeen school boards that had been dominated by the teachers unions, and their reach goes far beyond those two states. They also flipped school boards in California, Indiana, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The teachers union empire is, however, about to strike back. The Daily Signal reports, for example, that the Pennsylvania State Education Association has already devoted conference time to a session titled “Combating Moms for Liberty Attacks on Our Teachers and Our Schools.”

The description of the session on the conference registration form reads as follows: “This session will explore the dark-money origins of this anti-union organization and its long-term goal, as well as provide strategies on how to defeat them in the ballot box and at the board meeting.” Formulations like “dark-money origins” and “its real long-term goal” contain more than a whiff of conspiratorial thinking. The teachers unions obviously use this kind of language to delegitimize any group that threatens their control over school boards. But parents’ rights groups are not going away. As Jarrett Skorup writes in the Hill, Moms for Liberty boasts 195 chapters in thirty-seven states with almost 100,000 members.

This is what Randi Weingarten is really worried about when she makes wild claims like “MAGA Republicans are destroying our public schools.” Weingarten says, “I think it’s a real long-term goal.” But parents’ rights groups are not going away. As Jarrett Skorup writes in the Hill, Moms for Liberty boasts 195 chapters in thirty-seven states with almost 100,000 members. Weingarten says, “I think it’s a real long-term goal.”

The Man Who Made Notre Dame

by Mary Frances Myler

L egendary University of Notre Dame football coach Lou Holtz once gave an apt description of the university he loved: “For those who know Notre Dame, no explanation is necessary. For those who don’t, no explanation will suffice.”

Holtz is right. Notre Dame is an iconic institution in the American Catholic imagination, but it is a difficult place to explain to those who keep up with the university through (usually unflattering) headlines or occasional visits to campus. Nevertheless, the life and legacy of former university president Fr. Theodore Hesburgh, C.S.C., can provide a preliminary explanation for the current state of Notre Dame, as well as the present landscape of Catholic higher education.

As James Keating, a professor at Providence College, discusses in a recent First Things essay, the Catholic university has been in crisis for decades, and the problems have a singular point of origin. The Land O’ Lakes Statement transformed Catholic education in America, innovating academic freedom, then and now. Today we live in a world of Catholic and secular higher education, and a Catholic university that preserves that heritage must make a real commitment to restoring the church’s unique higher education.

Hesburgh’s belief that institutional independence was necessary for the Catholic university was not limited to his tenure as president of Notre Dame. In 1967, during his tenure as president of the International Federation of Catholic Universities, Hesburgh gathered twenty-six other North American educators to study the “role and nature of the contemporary Catholic university.” The resulting Land O’ Lakes Statement gave Hesburgh and his like-minded peers the chance to envision the future of Catholic higher education.

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This call for academic freedom seemed to offer a rosy future for American Catholicism: unhindered by lingering suspicion about papal interference, Catholic universities would integrate into the broader academic community. The American Academy would benefit, Hesburgh hoped, from the depth and breadth of Catholicism, and the vital energy of the Church would help the ivory tower to stand a little straighter and see a little further.

Fr. Theodore Hesburgh and the contradictions of the modern Catholic university.
its distinctive identity as an institution “in which Catholicism is perceptibly present and effectively operative.” But what followed was not so much an integration into the wider academy as it was an assimilation. The Catholic university traded submission to the Vatican for submission to secular academic standards. Hesburgh’s cherished concept of academic freedom has brought myriad challenges to the Catholic identities of Catholic universities. Because he took cues from secular institutions, Hesburgh delivered a rather flat understanding of academic freedom nearly unrelated to the freedom proposed by the Church. True freedom is possessed not by abstract collectives like the academy, but by human beings who are given the daily choice to seek God’s will or to stray from it. And while many scholars at Notre Dame understand their research and teaching in the context of their faith, many others insist upon an academic freedom that looks more like academic license. As the culture war escalates, the university will need to evaluate the conflict between her mission of Catholic education and the secular permissive attitude that academic freedom enables.

Hesburgh’s impulses were not entirely disastrous. Despite the challenges to her Catholic identity, Notre Dame has served as a powerful credentialing institution for American Catholics for decades. The institutional prestige that Hesburgh sought has given Catholic thought a prominent platform in American discourse, whether academic, religious, or political. It is because of this continued prestige that Catholics cannot abandon Our Lady’s university. If nothing else, Notre Dame provides young Catholics with an entry point into the nation’s elite institutions. Institutional access is wanting for those who object to today’s secular orthodoxies, but Notre Dame has retained the credentialing power envisioned by Fr. Hesburgh, who rightly recognized that culture is changed from within. In opening the doors of the Catholic university, Fr. Hesburgh may have let the world in more than he let the Church out, but the impulse to silo Catholic thought into parallel institutions should not be universalized, either.

In many ways, Notre Dame dwells in the shadow of Hesburgh, haunted by his flawed intuition that conformity to the world might help the world conform to Christ. But the university also boasts robust Catholic communities, an abundance of chapels, opportunities for Mass, confession, and Eucharistic Adoration, and the top theology department in the world. This, too, was Fr. Hesburgh’s dream — that faith might flourish in tandem with academic excellence. And with a core of faculty, staff, alumni, and students who draw strength from the heart of the Church, the fate of Notre Dame’s Catholic identity is far from a foregone conclusion.

Hesburgh’s approach to the Catholic university seems naïvely optimistic in retrospect, almost tragic in its mid-century confidence.

JOIN THE FIGHT TO SAVE WOMEN’S SPORTS

Unfortunately, the women’s sporting category is today being eroded by discriminatory policies that allow men who identify as women to compete on women’s teams and in women’s events. Allowing men in women’s sports discriminates against female athletes by taking titles, awards, and opportunities to compete from women and girls.

“There is no equity, fairness, sportsmanship or opportunity for women to succeed at an elite level without sex-based categories. It is crucial that as a society we open our eyes and recognize the irreversible damage that is being done to women’s sports and everything Title IX was created for.”

Riley Gaines
12X All-American Swimmer & Independent Women’s Forum Spokeswoman

JOIN INDEPENDENT WOMEN’S NETWORK
Visit iwnetwork.com for ways to get involved!
CULTURAL DEPRAVITY

To Hell With the Universities

Affirmative action is the least of higher education’s problems.

by John Jiang

Affirmative action in higher education is set to face the judgment of the Supreme Court. The moment is quietly exhilarating. This is an injustice that has been hoisted upon so many, for so long, and with the patronage of so many powerful institutions that it seemed perhaps too big and too heavy to ever remove. Yet the same was true of Roe v. Wade, and now Roe v. Wade is gone.

Some of the details of the case, which was argued on October 31, 2022, are comical. Harvard University claims to take “personality” into account when reviewing applicants. This is understandable, as it takes more than book smarts to excel in life. But Harvard admissions officers, in their great wisdom, apparently concluded that blacks on average have the most interesting personalities, Hispanics are significantly less interesting, whites are less interesting still, and Asians are the least interesting of all — coincidentally an exact inversion of test score averages. It will be a fine day when this sort of barely hidden racial discrimination is gone.

But much like the repeal of Roe, a ruling against affirmative action would only begin a much more difficult fight. The proliferation of liberal policies at universities is, after all, not some historical accident: it is the product of an increasingly large and powerful administrative class in academia. Regardless of the Supreme Court’s decision, these people will remain, as will the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) agenda that they uphold.

Affirmative action is merely the blindest instrument in the woke administrator’s tool kit, and there exist other ways of effecting racial discrimination. Take diversity statements, which have now become standard practice for faculty-position applications at top institutions like the University of California, Berkeley. If you are a white applicant, these provide an opportunity to lie prostrate, condemn the fact that there are too many individuals who lack the imagination, taken on a sort of alchemical quality. In this view, a competent organization. Putting aside questions of fairness, it may be worth asking: How much would it actually benefit Americans to improve the competence of such a hostile institution as the liberal arts university system? Would America actually be better off if more of its most intelligent young people spent their twenties in adjunct cubicles at Harvard?

Higher Education Is a Prisoner’s Dilemma

For most of early American history, universities served as finishing schools for the upper class. Fewer than 2 percent of Americans were college educated. Latin and Greek were entry requirements; these subjects were of little use in professional life but provided efficient filters for status.

It was not until the turn of the twentieth century that our modern vocational view of college education began to take shape. The US had just become the world’s largest economy and subsequently was in great need of engineers, foremen, clerks, and technicians. Out of this need sprang the first community colleges, which offered vocational courses. By 1950, college attendance rates had jumped threefold to about 10 percent.

It was on the back of this newly educated middle class that America ascended to superpower status. But as college attendance continued to explode post World War II, the tertiary degree began to come unmoored from its original industrial purpose, and the modern progressive ideology of “college for all” was born.

It is currently fashionable to take an instrumental view of college education. Notice that leftist stumping for free college will never discriminate between degrees or programs: the mathematician and the gender studies major are considered equally deserving of subsidies. We are so far removed from the vocational schools of the last century that the act of attending college has, in the popular imagination, taken on a sort of alchemical quality. In this view, a student is transmuted into a higher class of citizen merely through attending college — what he learns during that time is relatively inconsequential.

Defenders of the modern liberal arts education retort that colleges teach writing ability, curiosity, critical thinking, good citizenship, and a host of other humanist qualities, regardless of the degree or the major.

There are a few problems with this perspective. To point out the most obvious, knowledge is forgotten over time. Indeed, it is forgotten more quickly and more completely than most people realize. A 2006 study on retention tested the knowledge of students previously enrolled in a course against randomly selected baseline individuals who had never taken that course. The authors found that students of every caliber experienced a similar rate of knowledge decay. Within a year, C-grade students performed worse on the test than the uneducated baseline; within two years, even B-grade students were performing barely above the baseline.

Knowledge decay was not much of an issue in the early days of higher education because college was merely a networking opportunity for the wealthy. Nor was it an issue during the vocational period, when a college-educated technician could expect a job upon graduation that required immediate application of his newly gained technical knowledge. The current chapter of higher education history is not nearly so sensible. The average modern college attendee majors in art history or environmental science, finds a job working with Excel spreadsheets at an insurance company, and by his midtwenties has forgotten nearly everything that he went five figures into debt to learn.

At its essence, the twenty-first-century degree is frequently an exercise in social signaling rather than education. Unfortunately, status is relative, and if the majority of society attains a particular status symbol, then it must necessarily become banal and unprestigious. The result is a prisoner’s dilemma: both
Everyone going to college and no one going to college produce the same relative social standing, all the being equal. But because your fellow spreadsheet wranglers go to college, so must you, lest you fall behind.

Your College Is a Temple

The prestige of the elite college degree is a conduit through which foundations for its later empire. But the nature of the ideology, popular adoption of the new religious tendency was piecemeal and gradual. But the most important step in the process was the endorsement of Anglican belief by the ruling and administrative elite.

In 1673 and 1678, the Test Acts were passed by the British Parliament, imposing religious tests as a precondition for holding public office. At the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge, aspiring students and faculty were required to demonstrate their knowledge and fealty to the Church of England. Thirty-nine Articles of Religion. This practice remained in place as universities have long been regarded as among the best in the world. When

If the concept of universal tertiary education were to disappear, no virtue lies in long passed. The virtual guarantee of a system that, in its current form, should not exist.

University of Pennsylvania

T he University of Pennsylvania proudly says that it was founded by Benjamin Franklin, who also chaired its governing board in its formative years. That famed colonial polymath and Founding Father would no doubt be unhappy if he saw what leaders of Penn are trying to do. Amy Wax, the university’s Robert Mundheim professor of law, Professor Wax is something of a Franklin-like academic wunderkind, who, among other things, holds degrees from Yale University, Harvard University, Oxford University, and Columbia University, including a medical degree as well as a law degree. Why would Ben Franklin be unhappy with Penn? Because he was a staunch supporter of freedom of expression. He is quoted as saying, “If everyone is thinking alike, then no one is thinking.” Amy Wax does not “think like” a large proportion of American academics, often citing inconvenient truths that offend many of them. Yet reasoned and civil debate between people is at the heart of what makes great universities — and nations. Again, Wax and Larry Alexander asserted — horrors of horrors

Where is Penn’s founder, Benjamin Franklin, when we need him?

by Richard Vedder

Despite their increasing pointlessness, universities carry on like giant parasitic amoebas, sucking up the time and money of entire generations of young people. Pointless habits do not always disappear easily, and sometimes they disappear not at all. (After all, the Japanese still love their fax machines.)

There are at least a few steps that can be taken to cut college down to size. Offers of federal tuition subsidies and easy student loans should be withdrawn. The virtual guarantee of a system that, in its current form, should not exist.

CANCELCULTURE

With Professor Wax and have been enriched by our academic debates. I have not seen the

The Supreme Court should do as it ought to and ensure that the Civil Rights Act is being applied fairly to all people. However, in the long run, it cannot be enough to simply improve the fairness of a system that, in its current form, should not exist.

The prestige of the elite college degree is a conduit through which the prestige and intellectual legitimacy of college degrees are now so ubiquitous that consensus is easily replaced. For example, many tech companies now use coding challenges like LeetCode as the primary method of assessing applicant competence.

It is tempting to imagine that the university system could be restored to some previously unblemished state. But it is probably more accurate to think of pure meritocracy and ideological agnosticism as the historical exception rather than the rule.

Consider England, whose universities have long been regarded as among the best in the world. In the sixteenth century the country broke with the Roman Catholic Church and established Anglicanism as the state religion, popular adoption of the new religious tendency was piecemeal and gradual. But the most important step in the process was the endorsement of Anglican belief by the ruling and administrative elite.

As long as there is a culture war in America, higher education will be used as a weapon. The prestige and intellectual legitimacy of college degrees are now so ubiquitous that consensus is easily replaced. For example, many tech companies now use coding challenges like LeetCode as the primary method of assessing applicant competence.

Digitizing pointlessness

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For example, they surely believe, as she put it, "that African-Americans were inferior to that of Philadelphia in 2017," and probably they would additionally concede that “Afghanistan’s cultural practices vis-à-vis women and minorities are inferior to those in Belgium.” As Wax has pointed out on several occasions, empirical evidence of the superiority of Western civilization is pretty strong — most persuasive are the millions of migrants who uproot their lives to move to the most advanced manifestations of that culture, including in a private initiative. As an American citizen, Sweden, United States, Canada, Australia, and so on. Migration from, say, Pakistan or Somalia to Britain is identified as a phenomenon that is reversed than in the reverse direction. Far more Pakistanis want to live in London than the other way around. Wax's inconvenient truth that perhaps what universities should be doing. An important book or received a grant for many years is not enough to get tenure, as well as a search for improved policies — this is part of the modern university's income. A particularly sad and absurd — unjust and immoral. Ruger has championed and launched a grievance complaint against the students against supposed attacks on them made by Wax. Wax's drugging of its feet in this case might make good sense from its perspective, as some prestigious and wealthy donors are among the most powerful dissenting voice on campus and preventing students from being exposed to important conservative ideas. This account of university infiltration is abridged considerably in the interest of readability. Ruger's charges “are nothing more than an attempt to use the sanction process … as a means of punishing the most powerful dissenting voice on campus and preventing students from being exposed to important conservative ideas.” Ruger's changes “are more than that tradition in our nation's formative years. Similarly, Amy Wax is a modern-day continuation of that tradition and a national treasure. As a brilliant move, Professor Wax has counterattacked, filing a grievance complaint against Ruger with Penn’s Grievance Commission, saying, among other things, that Ruger’s changes “are nothing more than an attempt to use the sanction process … as a means of punishing the most powerful dissenting voice on campus and preventing students from being exposed to important conservative ideas.” Ruger's charges “are nothing more than an attempt to use the sanction process … as a means of punishing the most powerful dissenting voice on campus and preventing students from being exposed to important conservative ideas.” Ruger’s changes “are more than
The Birthplace of Woke: Identity Studies in Academia

Power-hungry university “scholars” spurned the toxic revolution obsessed with radical change that dominates our society today. by Bruce Bawer

I

n 1993, having spent four years earning a PhD in English, I instantly turned down the reasonably secure entry-level faculty position my alma mater offered me and chose instead to sign up for that most financially insecure of all professions: freelance literary journalist. Why? Partly because it had taken me a long time to face the fact that I just wasn’t the academic type. And partly because I saw that the kind of jargon-heavy approaches that were being used by American English departments — from politics-driven “feminist criticism” to pretentious postmodern “deconstruction,” straight out of France by way of Yale University — had nothing whatever to do with my own reasons for wanting to spend my life reading and writing about literature.

In the years that followed, I often found myself sighing with relief at my narrow escape. As part of my research for TVR, I attended a 2011 presentation at a queer studies conference in Berlin by Susan Stryker, now “Professor Emerita” of Trans Studies in the 2020s.”

None of these identity studies pros are remotely interested in discussing human identity in a remotely mature and responsible way.

As for queer studies — whose first practitioners legitimized their Marxist enterprise by pretending that the discipline was centered on the study of homosexual life and culture — it has been far too easy for those who met at the time to persevere the titles of the papers delivered at last year’s Queer History Conference at San Francisco State University to encounter one opus after another on transgenderism, “female sexuality,” “queers of color,” and “queer life south of the border.” Moreover, given that in the last few years many primary school teachers have been cajoled into pronouncing their pupils’ gender identities — and “antiracism,” which in recent years has become an orthodoxy in any studies conference in Berlin by Susan Stryker, now “Professor Emerita” at the University of Arizona, was still at war with “neoliberalism” — who, in the 1970s, we were told, sparked local revolts by taking down slum housing and community facilities in the “old trans sex work ghetto” in San Francisco’s Tenderloin into upmarket apartments.

For example, the abominations known as critical race theory and “antiracism,” which in recent years have infected primary school classrooms and corporate boardrooms alike, had their genesis in black studies, the widespread demotion of stores — including those of all men as rapists, which of men — including the stereotype that are preached in the classrooms of all men as rapists, which of men — including the stereotype of what’s happened to identity studies since for the future — even though that “resistance” did nothing whatsoever to change that hefihle of a reality.

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As for queer studies — whose first practitioners legitimized their Marxist enterprise by pretending that the discipline was centered on the study of homosexual life and culture — it has been far too easy for those who met at the time to persevere the titles of the papers delivered at last year’s Queer History Conference at San Francisco State University to encounter one opus after another on transgenderism, “female sexuality,” “queers of color,” and “queer life south of the border.” Moreover, given that in the last few years many primary school teachers have been cajoled into pronouncing their pupils’ gender identities — and “antiracism,” which in recent years has become an orthodoxy in any studies conference in Berlin by Susan Stryker, now “Professor Emerita” at the University of Arizona, was still at war with “neoliberalism” — who, in the 1970s, we were told, sparked local revolts by taking down slum housing and community facilities in the “old trans sex work ghetto” in San Francisco’s Tenderloin into upmarket apartments.
his “field-defining academic monograph,” Black Tears: Feminism, he imagines himself as a veritable Genghis Khan of identity politics, engaged in “a wholesale dismantling of the world we have been given.” Yes, a wholesale dismantling of the world we have been given — what self-respecting identity studies scholar today would admit to a lesser goal? The brand of Marxist English that Bey charts out — a legacy of the triunally influential Judith Butler, a pioneer of queer and women’s studies — is common in identity studies, but not quite ubiquitous. Those who want to be taken seriously as scholars and who therefore feel a need to pretend they’re struggling with complex ideas feel compelled to sing the rodeo anthem, but those who strongly identify as activists and wish to communicate with the grievance-group hot potol prefer to keep language simple. So it was that in this online discussion, an older participant, Aaron Devor, chair of transgender studies at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada, contended that if trans scholars “want to change the world,” they should eschew “excessive academese and jargon.” Bey didn’t look happy.

Another participant, Ann Travers of British Columbia’s Simon Fraser University, made a point of specifying that she teaches “black whiteness studies” as opposed to “white privilege” pioneer Peggy McIntosh’s “white whiteness studies” — a distinction I hadn’t encountered before — to pattern the familiar lie that white cops are massacring innocent blacks and condemned the “narcissism of whiteness” (although I’ve rarely, if ever, seen any professor talk as much about white privilege as McIntosh did in particular, whenever she runs across a trans studies participant complained that “whiteness … has robbed us of the time to develop a particular relational ethic” and that “everybody in trans studies needs to deal with their relationship to blackness,” and that a “white identity politics” that has become obsessed by “intersectionality” — the varied observation that, say, a black lesbian can experience a headdly concocted of bigotry comprised of racism, sexism, and homophobia — and women’s studies has been “the only one that is truly race-focused” would be available to recent identity studies conferences, the degree of insistence on the notion of “blackness” so constituted by violence, constituted by all these various kinds of hegemonic identities that are imposed upon us, so how can we then seriously as scholars and who therefore feel a need to pretend they’re struggling with complex ideas feel compelled to sing the rodeo anthem, but those who strongly identify as activists and wish to communicate with the grievance-group hot potol prefer to keep language simple. So it was that in this online discussion, an older participant, Aaron Devor, chair of transgender studies at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada, contended that if trans scholars “want to change the world,” they should eschew “excessive academese and jargon.” Bey didn’t look happy.

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I imagine a government program that existed to achieve one goal — a laudable goal. But after spending more than $1 trillion in taxpayer dollars — that’s trillion, with twelve zeros — in pursuit of that goal, not only had the agency failed to achieve the goal, but it had also made the problem demonstrably worse.

Perhaps it’s not that hard to imagine because so much of what the federal government does is to fail in its mission. But that scenario is far from hypothetical. It’s the regrettable truth about the US Department of Education. And those trillion dollars only scratch the surface of why the agency is a failed experiment and a malignancy to those who love freedom and believe students are more important than “the education system.”

The department’s primary function in elementary and secondary education has been to spend money — a lot of money. But over the course of its four-decade history, there’s scant evidence that the department has done anything to improve student outcomes. In fact, there is considerable evidence to the contrary. It doesn’t take much more than a cursory skim of the Nation’s Report Card to see that it’s true.

But with money comes power. And because the Department of Education controls so much money, it has the power to push schools around, meaning that even things like “nonregulatory guidance” and “Dear Colleague letters” quickly become law in schools because the department threatens to withhold funding from those who don’t adhere to its edicts.

Power has been the department’s primary purpose. Its bulging bureaucracy has created rules, guidance, conditions, and red tape that have consistently stymied innovation, shackled teachers, slowed student achievement, advanced political agendas, and squandered most of the trillions in taxpayer dollars that have come through “Big ED’s” Brutalist doorways.

In one sense, it’s almost unfair to criticize the department for its failure to improve the condition of education; it doesn’t have any of the requisite tools to do so. But in another sense, that fact ultimately proves why the department need not exist at all.

People are often surprised when I recite what the department does and does not do. They seem to assume that the department runs schools — it does not. Or that the secretary is “in charge” of public education — she is not. The department does not hire or train teachers. It does not set learning standards. It generally does not “do business” with teachers, students, or families at all. Instead, its main “customers” are state education bureaucrats and trade associations — namely, the unions and the alphabet soup of organizations they financially control and who in turn financially benefit from the department’s mere existence.

Rightly, and perhaps most importantly, the US Department of Education is statutorily barred from having any role in curricula whatsoever. The law very clearly delegates that role, as it does almost all meaningful decisions in education, to states and communities:

No provision of a program administered by the Secretary or by any other officer of the Department shall be construed to authorize the Secretary or any such officer to exercise any direction, supervision, or control over the curriculum, program of instruction, administration, or personnel of any educational institution, school, or school system, over any accrediting agency or association, or over the selection or
A short recitation of the history of the department is important to understand why it was a failed experiment. In 1976, the federal role in education was comparatively de minimis and resided within the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. But a new trajectory was created in Washington just want to pull it. Race to the Top under Barack Obama. As Left Behind under George W. Bush and toward overreach in pursuit of an agenda Department of Education from trying to comparatively de minimis and resided within A

That’s a small example that proves the executive branch creates a magnetic pull toward overreach in pursuance of an agenda — a problem that frankly has plagued both parties. We saw this clearly with No Child Left Behind under George W. Bush and Race to the Top under Barack Obama. As Left Behind under George W. Bush and toward overreach in pursuit of an agenda Department of Education from trying to comparatively de minimis and resided within A

The NEA made no bones about its motives; (Section 103[b], Public Law 96-88) educational institution or school system. (excluding the $100 billion-plus in student loans it originates each year). It costs taxpayers more than $40 billion a year, but without funding for Title I, K–12 education, the feds might prompt schools to try new things.

The NEA gave them its and, in fact, they followed the NEA’s “check-ins” to “a senior liaison for labor relations.” My role was to make sure that the NEA made no bones about its motives; (Section 103[b], Public Law 96-88) educational institution or school system.

Power has been the department’s primary purpose. Of this, and others who favored federal education policy, they found quite the opposite. Recall that the department has redistributed more than $1 billion in federal funds to 200 school systems across the nation since its inception. The express primary goal of that spending was to improve the teaching profession, and restore the credibility of the department as the protector of the national interest. I use “their” deliberately. When I shared this idea with America’s governors, they immediately jumped up and down with excitement. They told me that if we block-granted the money to states, they could be much better target the dollars and serve students. This is a cautionary tale here as well. In 2020, I laid out a roadmap for how to do this. The US Department of Education does not design and run its programs for states. It is designed and run by states.

I’ve heard it’s hard to serve one’s constituents when you’re the protector of the national interest. It’s hard to serve one’s constituents when you’re the protector of the national interest. I’ve been told many times over when I’ve tried to do this. The NEA made no bones about its motives; (Section 103[b], Public Law 96-88) educational institution or school system.

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I’ve been told that creativity and see what flourishing, notfor, more likely, to mess up. It would simply go bad. It’s hard to serve one’s constituents when you’re the protector of the national interest. I’ve been told many times over when I’ve tried to do this. The NEA made no bones about its motives; (Section 103[b], Public Law 96-88) educational institution or school system.
Reintroducing a private lending market would benefit taxpayers and borrowers. Banks would be able to offer some students better rates and terms than the government can, while Federal higher education loans have no underwriting. While that is important to ensure access for those with insufficient credit history, it also needlessly punishes those who could access better terms. A better solution would look more like the “Lending Tree” model where, following completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, a student and their family could review a menu of available lending options, including the federal government. Getting multiple bids tends to yield better deals.

Combining Forces to Protect Students
The Department of Education enforces civil rights law for all students based on race (largely under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act), based on sex (largely under Title IX of the Education Amendments Act), and based on disability (largely under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act). These laws provide necessary protections against discrimination that require ongoing federal effort, especially as these are areas where the states have not always lived up to their obligations. However, these laws — as important as they are — needlessly hobble those having their own Cabinet-level agency.

Take civil rights. The Department of Justice has a Civil Rights Division charged with upholding “the civil and constitutional rights of all persons in the United States, particularly some of the most vulnerable members of our society.” It even has an Educational Opportunities Unit, so no small part because the Department of Education doesn’t have litigation authority and must rely on the Department of Justice to prosecute. It’s hard to argue that the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights couldn’t, let alone shouldn’t, live there.

Similarly, the Department of Health and Human Services is home to numerous programs for Americans with disabilities and is already home to a disability rights enforcement arm.

While these bureaucracies are certainly not free from political influence or oversight, they exist within structures much more tied to the rule of law than the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights has proven to be. Consider how the Office for Civil Rights was tasked with implementing Title IX, a one-sentence law that reads:

No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

In sum, if each of these ideas were enacted, the proper — and greatly diminished — role of federal education would be restored. The real work would again be done in the states and amongst students, families, and educators. An independent and honest civil rights bureaucracy would disappear. If, as a result, the US Department of Education itself disappeared, so much the better.

The seismic power shift would make American education stronger, more student-centered, better funded, less bureaucratic, depoliticized, and higher-achieving. For the first time, higher education could accomplish everything that the Department of Education has chronically failed to do.

Standing up to woke tyranny requires the very moral virtue in shortest supply in academia — courage.

by Bradley C.S. Watson

O ur institutions of higher learning fare in freefall. The dominance of progressive political orientations among faculty members and administrators is well known, and the consequences of this intellectual monoculture are equally obvious. I need not recount the innumerable instances of cancel culture on American campuses, or the political pogroms launched even against established, tenured faculty members who have refused to bow down before the progressive passions of the moment.

I was recently the subject of cancellation myself when the president of my former employer, Saint Vincent College, decided to take control of a long-standing and highly respected academic center that I directed — due to his objections to a single speaker whose arguments against affirmative action he deemed unacceptably heretical. L’Occitane Saint Vincent attracted considerable national publicity, including two pieces that appeared in these pages. That’s fair to surmise that there are other cancellations that do not get the attention they deserve, or not to mention the countless daily demands for intellectual conformity with which professors, administrators, and students modestly comply for fear of being seen to oppose progressive orthodoxy.

In the film adaptation of Philip Roth’s novel The Human Stain, the fictional professor Coleman Silk is accused of racism by college authorities for using ordinary — and demonstrably nonsensical — language in a classroom. It is language that is grossly misinterpreted — either intentionally or unintentionally — by unenlightened, fragile students.

In an administrative kangaroo court, the angry professor — played brilliantly by Anthony Hopkins — states at his colleagues and exclaims: “To charge me with racism is not only false; it is spectacularly false. And you know it!” And indeed they do know it. Yet not one of them will speak up for their colleague. As he storms from the conference room in which the academic show trial is being held, Silk ironically thanks one of his silent fans for his support — “Thank you!”

Silk’s accusations point to the rub of the problems colleges are facing a moral crisis as much as an intellectual one. There are still decent people on America’s campuses — many of them professors with tenure — who are decidedly not on board with the various woke outrages du jour. However, they often choose not to engage when they have the opportunity, out of fear, obligation — to defend open discourse or even other members of their college community who find themselves under assault.

This dynamic repeats itself on campus after campus. Alexis de Tocqueville identifies the reasons for it in Democracy in America. He notes that standing against dominant opinions is particularly difficult in democratic times for fear of the disapproval of the multitude. And the modern university is nothing if not a democratic institution — that is, one beholden to the opinions of the progressive majority that composes it. In most cases, this is a majority ethos more than an actual voting majority, but it is all the more powerful for being so. Once the majority has spoken, says Tocqueville, “everyone is silent and friends and enemies alike seem to make it for his handbag.”

Tocqueville notes, for example, that while a king has only physical power, a majority possesses both physical and moral authority. It thus enclaves thought “within a formidable fence,” and anyone who traverses it “must face all kinds of unpleasantness and everyday persecution… He believes he has supporters, but he feels that he has them no more once he retreats into silence as if ashamed of having told the truth.” Such is the democratic manifestation of the natural timidity of men. 
Like Tocqueville’s majority, weakness “does not understand being shocked….” The least reproach offends it, and the slightest sting turns it fierce.” Overcomimg the hegemony of the woke will, therefore, not be easy. The battles will be long, fierce, and messy — but it’s best to fight them now, rather than delay them to our disadvantage.

Alas, to fight requires the very moral virtue that is in shortest supply in academia — courage. The characteristic attributes and mores of academics are no substitute for courage. It is the nature of academics to value their perks and privileges rather too highly, to elevate erudition erasure over the moral virtues. Yet it is courage that makes the other virtues, including the intellectual ones, possible. There’s a reason why urban cosmopolitans often don’t seem to be the sharpest knives in the drawer — a man cannot think straight when his knees are trembling. We are now dominated by the loudest and most vocal voices in our institutions, largely because so many who might oppose them are weary of conflict, always afraid of being labeled impolite, impolitic, oreresolute. C.S. Lewis warned us that “no justification of virtue will enable a man to be virtuous. Without the aid of trained emotions the intellect is powerless against the animal organism.” As much as academics might wish to assuage, “it is not syllogistics that will keep the reluctance nerves and muscles to their post in the third hour of the bombardment…. Reason in man must rule the more appetites by means of the ‘spiritual element.’” Perhaps only in academia are “men without chests” so highly valued precisely because they are without chests. We castrate and then bid the consequences. Such campus organizations could articulate principles similar to those set out in the University of Chicago’s 2016 letter to freshmen — an explicit rejection of cancel culture and a commitment to diversity of opinion. They could model their activities, in microcosm, on those of the Academic Freedom Alliance, pledging (and coming up with specific strategies for) mutual aid in times of threat. The hour is late for our institutions, and for our civilization. For academics, it’s time to man up.

DAILY FOLIANS AND CONSECUTIVE SENTENCES

Give Your Kids the Gift of Parochial School

Let me take you back six decades to Yeshiva Rambam of Brooklyn, circa 1960.

by Dov Fischer

Your kids won’t be imbued with decent values from our era’s public schools. They won’t be taught to respect authority or to love their country and flag. They will learn about condoms and LGBTQIA+, but there are no guarantees that they will learn about history, math, science, and English literary excellence.

They won’t start the day with a prayer to a Supreme Being greater than they, nor will most even begin with the Pledge of Allegiance and “The Star-Spangled Banner.” Even if the school “allows” the pledge to be recited or the national anthem to be sung or a “moment of silence” to be had — a “wig” — there may well be some kid demonstratively sitting in protest, another kneeling, others shuffling with eyes rolling. There won’t be any show respect and patriotism, with hands over hearts and pride in the word.

Public school, they may learn about homosexuality or lesbianism or drag queens this or transgender that. They may learn about condoms or safety techniques in Uranus or theirs. They may learn techniques to avoid pregnancy or tools for the day after or options for abortions.

But respect for authority? They will learn that police are racist. They will learn that their parents can sue their teachers or the principal. They will learn that teachers can be fired if they get out of line by expecting kids to be prepared. Also, by the way, they will learn that their parents are not as smart as they thought they were. Who knows? Maybe they even will hear of boys and girls who later learned that their daddies are not really their daddies, or of others with two live-in daddies.

What will they learn in class? In history, perhaps in 1619 Project lessons, they will learn that America was founded in racism by racists who came here to enslave others. If the kids are White, they will learn that they are racist even if they don’t know it yet. Perhaps they will be asked to stand and apologize to those not White or to the wall. In math, they will learn that there are no “correct” answers, that all answers are right. Two plus two certainly can be four. But it also can be five or eight, as long as that is Your Truth.

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In science, they will learn that America is causing global warming, that the whole planet will explode in their lifetimes if Republicans get elected. Every rainy day, even during the rainy season, will be because of climate change. Every freezing-cold day in winter will be because of global warming. The science is settled.

Let me take you back six decades to Yeshiva Rambam of Brooklyn, circa 1960. I was in first grade in this Orthodoxy Jewish parochial school. Each day began with the pledge to freshmen — an explicit rejection of cancel culture and a commitment to diversity of opinion. They could model their activities, in microcosm, on those of the Academic Freedom Alliance, pledging (and coming up with specific strategies for) mutual aid in times of threat.

The hour is late for our institutions, and for our civilization. For academics, it’s time to man up.

Dov Fischer is a contributing editor at The American Spectator and Rabbi of Young Israel of Orange County, California.
or “G-d Bless America.” We placed our little Jewish hands on our big Jewish hearts and learned to love America. We learned about Americans who gave their lives for our freedom. And Mrs. Sherman taught me the difference between zev and zayn. The Yankees no longer were “better zayn the Mets.” They were “better zayn.” During the religious half of my school day, Morah (the title for teacher) Rothberg taught me to respect my parents and to say please and thank you.

In second grade, Rabbi Schroit taught me my first Torah, the biblical verses about Noah and the Ark. He also taught us to love and respect our parents. He was a man of impeccable character. During the secular half of our day, Mrs. Platt taught us how to dial a telephone and how to answer if called. Never begin by asking: “Who’s there?” Rather, begin with: “David Fischer speaking. Hello.”

And so it went. Mrs. Raucher taught me grammar in fourth grade, while Rabbi Frost taught us Hebrew songs about the holidays. Mrs. Gurzel taught me a world of reading, writing, and arithmetic in third and fifth grades. Mr. Bringer finished ninth-grade math with us by the end of seventh grade, leaving Mrs. Wolkon frustrated the next year because we already knew the eighth-grade stuff and were ready for sophomore-year geometry. Meanwhile, having hardly begun mastering our letters and only the book of Genesis, we entered fifth grade by being immersed in the language of Aramaic and the Babylonian Talmud. We learned about ownership rights and ethics, the difference between owner liability the first time his ox gored someone versus its third goring. We learned the laws for what to do if we find lost objects — when we are required to publicize and return what we found. And we learned we are required to stand respectfully any time an elderly person comes within our ambit. And we learned to respect our parents.

It was more of the same in yeshiva high school at Brooklyn Talmudic Academy. We finished the entire New York state high school math curriculum by the middle of sophomore year, so Rabbi Cooper and Mr. Rubenstein ended up teaching us college math — calculus and stuff — the rest of the way. We kept learning the Talmud. Kept learning American history with Mr. Merlis, who kept learning American history with Mr. Merlis, who taught the best jokes and the corniest puns. Mr. Zuckerman taught high school chemistry at the college level. Mr. Berkowitz did the same in biology. Mr. Tarendash in physics. And Mr. Strum taught me literary writing skills.

Get this: In twelve years through high school, we never heard a word in the classroom about homosexuality, lesbianism, or “G-d Bless America.” We placed our little Jewish hands on our big Jewish hearts and learned to love America. We learned about Americans who gave their lives for our freedom. And Mrs. Sherman taught me the difference between zev and zayn. The Yankees no longer were “better zayn the Mets.” They were “better zayn.” During the religious half of my school day, Morah (the title for teacher) Rothberg taught me to respect my parents and to say please and thank you.

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We all emerged loving America deeply, patriots one and all.

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The great debate in the 1970s was whether we kids in the yeshiva parochial schools would end up as cloistered and insulated that we would be unable to contend and compete in a fundamentally non-Jewish secular world. So, most nonreligious parents sent their kids to public schools. What became of us, the cloistered?

Sven (fake name) ran a C average in high school. He learned the stuff; he was just a slacker and never studied for exams. Two decades later, my sister Rhonda sent me “regards” from the guy, explaining that he now was their family doctor, a prominent physician. His best friend in high school, Olaf (also a fake name), ran the same C for the same reason. Olaf buckled down in college and ended up chairman of a medical department in one of America’s most prominent hospitals and the world expert on a rare disease, leading him to deliver guest lectures annually to medical researchers all over the world. Buzz (a real nickname) was the greatest of teenage baseball players, and he could have been a major league star, but he would not pursue those talents because games are played on Friday nights and Saturday afternoons, the Holy Shabbat. So he instead became a partner at the nationally prominent Ernst & Young accounting firm. Me? I went to Columbia University, got elected by the undergraduate student body to represent the entire college in the Columbia University Senate, and went on to become a rabbi, then a clerk for a federal appeals court judge, then a big-firm attorney and law professor, and then a contributing editor for this great magazine. We all came out as success stories.

Whether you are Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, or atheist, if you send your kids to an American public school circa 2023, you are — forgive me — absolutely nuts. A parochial school will teach your child patriotism, respect for your parental authority, respect for teachers and institutional authority, respect for police and other first responders, respect for those who serve and defend our country at home and abroad, and solid traditional values. Parochial-school kids will not face a higher risk of getting pregnant or getting someone else pregnant as they have separate bathrooms and are not sooped with eight to twelve years of LGBTQ indoctrination and free condoms. They will learn to recite and sing the words to the pledge and the national anthem with pride. They will grow strong without needing safe spaces and trigger warnings to protect them from microaggressions. They will learn real history and real ethics, including that the world does not revolve around them. They won’t be perfect. Contrary to what Gillenzo and the emasculators say, boys always will be boys. But girls won’t: they will be girls. Kids still will get out of line once in a while. But, when the final numbers are tallied, most parochial-school graduates do not get shot by cops and know to respect them, most do not perpetrate mass shootings, and most learn more secular studies in half a school day (since the other half is set aside for religious, spiritual, and moral instruction) than their public-school peers cover in a full day.

Just one caveat: make sure they do not dribble a basketball under the table during catechism lessons.

If you send your kids to an American public school circa 2023, you are — forgive me — absolutely nuts.
The law will be a financial boon to private-sector unions, adding tens of thousands of new dues and fee payers to their ranks immediately, the repeal does not affect union choice for school employees.

That’s because, in 2018, the Supreme Court ruled in Janus v. American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) that public union activity is innately political and that the government cannot force anyone to pay government-subsidized fees. In other words, all public-sector workers — federal, state, local, and school — are “right-to-work” employees across the entire country.

The subsequent changes in union membership nationwide have been significant. According to federal filings, the National Education Association has lost 8 percent of its membership since the Janus decision, and the American Federation of Teachers is down more than 10 percent. In total, the two largest unions have lost almost 250,000 members.

This is severely undercounting the results of Janus, however. Federal filings report all members in those unions, including those who work in the private sector and in states that were not affected by the decision. The Mackinac Center for Public Policy has filed hundreds of public-records requests to government entities across the country to track changes in union membership. Our results show that 15–20 percent of union workers in schools resigned their memberships in 2022.

Total union membership is currently at the lowest ever recorded by the federal labor department. One reason why is Janus; the decision has cost unions hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue because they can no longer force public employees to pay dues.

The Future of Choice Is Bright

So, what’s next? Some states are taking major steps when it comes to school choice, but there has been movement toward expanding union choice, too.

Many parents, for the first time, that their priorities for their children did not match up with their school’s.

School Choice Is Empowering Students and Teachers — And Devastating Unions

Promisingly, 15–20 percent of union workers in education resigned their memberships last year.

by Jarrett Skorup

Most states provide at least some support for parents who choose to send their child to a private school, such as tax credits, education savings accounts, or vouchers. Historically, this has not been a partisan issue. Among the states that spend the highest percentage of their education funding on choice programs, Florida and Indiana are strongly Republican, Vermont and Maine are strongly Democratic, and Arizona and Wisconsin are split.

In many states, however, choice programs are limited in the type of students they can serve and in how much public money parents can spend on the school of their choice. As a result, only a minuscule amount of government education funding is expended on any program outside of the traditional intact neighborhood public school.

But that’s changing. West Virginia, Arizona, Iowa, Utah, and Arkansas have all recently passed universal school choice bills that offer programs to all students. According to school choice advocate Corey A. DeAngelis, similar bills are moving, or likely to move, in Oklahoma, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Nebraska, Ohio, South Carolina, and Texas. (A majority of lawmakers in Wyoming have also signed on to full school choice, but it is currently being blocked by the Republican House speaker.)

School choice is popular. Even in Democratic-controlled states, lawmakers have not — yet, at least — rolled back private school programs. In Michigan, where private-school-choice programs are unconstitutional, about a quarter of students still want choice, attending public schools other than the one assigned to them based on their home address — either a charter school or one in a nearby district. The state’s new Democratic legislators, who first came to office in 2018, has not signaled an interest in restricting these choices.

School choice is also effective. EdChoice, an education-reform nonprofit, found that the vast majority of studies on educational vouchers and tax credits show that choice results in significant learning gains for students, as well as such benefits as increased parental satisfaction and less bullying of students.

There are two main obstacles to expanding school choice: one is the traditional public school establishment, and the other is teachers unions. But the latter’s power and influence are gradually being gutted across the nation.

Why? Because of union choice.

Janus Expands Union Choice

A decade ago, Michigan became a right-to-work state, which ensured that no employee could be forced to pay union dues. Since then, the two state teachers unions have gone from having more than 142,000 active members to having fewer than 97,000. That’s a 32 percent decline — despite the number of teachers and school employees in Michigan increasing.

This year, Michigan became the first state in sixty years to repeal its right-to-work law, and the legislation is a major blow to the state’s economy. After losing jobs, income, and population throughout the decade prior to the passing of the right-to-work law, Michigan families finally saw substantial wage and employment growth.

Detroit is making spectacular progress, and suburban areas like Ann Arbor and Southfield are benefiting as well. But that’s just the tip of the iceberg.

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Indiana passed a law requiring public unions to inform school employees of their First Amendment right to not pay dues. The state also made it easier for teachers to resign their membership, if they so choose. Teachers must confirm their continued membership annually.

And in Florida, Governor Ron DeSantis has been pushing a bill that would require teachers unions to regularly obtain the support of 60 percent of teachers so as to retain the organization’s certification. The bill also would prevent school districts from collecting dues on behalf of unions and stop unions from distributing certain information on school grounds. These changes all make sense: no one should be forced into an organization, and political goals should not be able to use government resources or facilities to collect money or distribute information.

School choice and union choice are advancing, but why now?

School policies enacted during COVID are one driving factor. Many parents were satisfied with sending their kids to the local public school until they felt disrespected by school closures, mask mandates, and other strategies that went on for far too long. It didn’t help that unions drove many of the closures and assured parents that hastily implemented online education was just as good as in-person instruction — a claim anyone with kids at home knows to be false. Many parents recognized, for the first time, that their priorities for their children did not match up with their school’s.

These changes in education and union policy are good — for parents, for teachers, and for the state’s economy.

Let’s hope more follow their example.

Jarrett Skorup is vice president for marketing and communications at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, a free-market research and educational institute in Michigan.
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SPECIAL REPORT

Let Kids Drop Out: Why Compulsory Education Harms Even the Most Gifted Students

A radical proposition for educational freedom.

by Shelby Kearns

Shelby Kearns is an associate editor at Campus Reform.

Long after students have returned to in-person learning, grim headlines still depict the educational hit that students took during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, a Stanford economist recently predicted that learning loss for students whose schools shifted to virtual learning will cost them $70,000 in lifetime earnings.

To right the wrongs of the pandemic, the solution is “more school,” at least in North Carolina, where lawmakers are alarmed by rising dropout rates. A bipartisan bill would raise the age of compulsory education from sixteen to eighteen, a requirement held by the majority of states.

But is attending school until age eighteen really the best way to prepare for entering the workforce? Or have policymakers just lost their imaginations?

New Hampshire state representative Travis Corcoran has not lost his. He recently introduced HB 399, which would give New Hampshire students a way to test out of high school and receive a high school equivalency certificate. In an interview with The American Spectator, he called the state’s public schools “super expensive government-run schools that cater to the lowest common denominator and have a multi-decade-long track record of accomplishing precious little.”

Corcoran’s bill is the latest instance of a conservative education policy that sets itself apart by pledging to promote freedom. He emphasizes that his bill does not necessarily present the choice to drop out. Students are still free to attend school or no school at all after receiving the certificate.

The bill, he writes, is for “exceptional students who can prove that they have mastered all of the content expected of average students — and more.”

“The stakeholders who support the bill include tons of homeschoolers, gifted students, tutors who work with gifted students, and others,” he continued. He said that the bill’s opponents are “Democrats” and “public school teachers who live off of tax dollars.”

“Several gifted teenagers I spoke to told me that, in fact, they’d rather go to college, engage in independent study, [or] research nuclear power preparatory to a career in the Navy,” Corcoran told The American Spectator.

While the newfound scrutiny of compulsory education, at least as Corcoran envisions it, could benefit the most gifted students, it could also benefit those who struggle the most.

In his 2020 book The Cult of Smart: How Our Broken Education System Perpetuates Social Injustice, Fredrik deBoer describes students who no superstar teacher, charter school, or standardized test preparation can help. DeBoer, who taught at both the K–12 and collegiate level, is one of few people on the left who acknowledge inherent differences in academic ability. Schools, he says, should close skill gaps that exist because of socioeconomic status. DeBoer argues that when significant skill gaps remain, students should be able to drop out at age twelve.

Though the non-profit Chalkbeat notes that data on dropouts is hard to come by, available data seems to support deBoer’s proposal. The top-rated reasons for dropping out of high school, according to the National Dropout Prevention Center, include chronic absenteeism and not liking school. Some of these students, as the National Dropout Prevention Center notes, receive insufficient support from their families or their schools. Others are likely the
students described by deBoer who attend school at the same time and learn the same curriculum — no longer meets the needs of the students whose academic abilities are at either end of the bell curve.

Though scaling back compulsory education defies nearly one hundred years of tradition, it’s time to let kids drop out.

The Case Against Education: Why the Education System Is a Waste of Time and is the least-bad option.”

Bryan Caplan says that “deference to parents out, George Mason University economist low academic aptitude.

Caplan said that if low-quality teachers leave, George Mason University economist low academic aptitude.

Money

DeBoer to worry that education might become the cause of, not solution to, adverse outcomes, especially for students born with a disadvantage even harder to fix than poverty: low academic aptitude.

When it comes to the decision to drop out, George Mason University economist Bryan Caplan says that “deference to parents is the least-bad option.”

In his 2018 book, The Case Against Education: Why the Education System Is a Waste of Time and Money, Caplan argues that the value of education has more to do with what a high school or college diploma signals to employers. Diplomas signal students’ ability to withstand hours of boredom and follow directions, among other skills. The expectation that a diploma equates to skills — whether or not graduates actually have them — is why college graduates do better financially than high school graduates, and high school graduates do better than dropouts.

In an interview with The American Spectator, Caplan suggested that the best way to prepare for work is to work. Vocational training, he asserted, is “not going to be a big factor” in preparing students for the workforce “compared to all of the informal job training that happens on every job every day.”

He argued that while dropping out of school “limits upward mobility,” it also limits downward mobility into crime and permanent unemployment.

For students who are frequently suspended or register lackluster academic performance, getting introduced to meaningful work opportunities at an earlier age could keep them from earning a living through crime. Caplan said that if low-quality teachers heavily populate schools, “[instead of keeping kids in school until the schools work, how about letting them out until the schools work?”

Conservatives are at the forefront of letting parents decide how best to prepare their children for college or the workforce. They are also questioning the value of compulsory education, a practice Corcoran says dates back to the Progressive Era and was “designed with a few key goals in mind, among them, training children to accept the prevailing social order.”

What Corcoran calls “one-size-fits-all schooling” — mandating that students attend school at the same time and learn the same curriculum — no longer fits the needs of the students whose academic abilities are at either end of the bell curve.

Through scaling back compulsory education defies nearly one hundred years of tradition, it’s time to let kids drop out.

From trivium and quadrivium to Latin and Greek, the Western education shapes young adults with hearts and minds oriented toward the good, the true, and the beautiful.

by Winston Brady

O ver eight hundred schools in the United States identify as classical, meaning that they subscribe to the educational philosophy of the Greeks and Romans, who preceded education in what they termed “the liberal arts.” These arts include the trivium — grammar, logic, and rhetoric — and the quadrivium — music, astronomy, arithmetic, and geometry. The name “liberal” indicates that these subjects liberate students from ignorance and teach them to enjoy said liberty wisely. Herein lies the value of a classical education: it educates the whole student.

The term classical goes beyond rooting education in the Greco-Roman world. The idea of a “classic” as better than others in that same class indicates that classical education is oriented toward the very best books, music, and other artifacts of human ingenuity from the past twenty-five centuries.

A classical school may be a charter school, private school, or homeschooling alternative, such as a pod, corp, or microschool. Such schools may carry the name “classical,” but what makes them such? And what should you — the interested parent vetting the best educational options available — look for in a school if you want to ensure that your children are classically educated?

The Curriculum

The word curriculum means “racetrack,” the kind on which the Romans would race their chariots. In education, curriculum refers to the courses students take throughout the year: the books they read, the languages they study, and the ways of the trivium on which they travel.

Most classical schools organize their instruction around works known as the “Great Books.” These books form the backbone of the Western tradition and include the dialogues of Plato, Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey, the works of Shakespeare, the Old and New Testament, and a host of other works of literature, philosophy, science, and history. Such classics have stood the test of time, present a high view of mankind and of man’s abilities, and help the reader understand his purpose and place in a chaotic and confusing world. Their authors wrestled with the overarching questions of life and weave their insights into engaging storylines, incorporating deep themes and beautiful language. In reading these great works, teachers and students alike cannot help but be impacted in mind, heart, and soul.

But that is not to say that students in classical elementary schools are Shakespeare. Instead, students in kindergarten through fifth grade typically read age-appropriate adaptations of such stories, followed by longer, more contemporary, novel-length versions in middle school. Students generally read the primary sources themselves beginning in high school.

Following the second tenet of classical education, most classical schools offer courses dedicated to Latin or Greek. These languages hold a special place in the classical curriculum because their acquisition opens the world of the Greeks and Romans to the students. Latin is found on the curricula of beginning in high school.

A different way

THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR

THE CURRICULUM

WINSTON BRADY

A DIFFERENT WAY

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THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR
classical schools give pride of place to Latin and Greek because of their connection to the ancient world and their foundational role in shaping languages “alive” today. Lastly, most schools offer a puzzling series of courses called the “quadrivium.” The word quadrivium comes from the Latin tri-, meaning “three,” and via, which means “way” or “road.” Thus, quadrivium is the metaphorical place where the three ways of grammar, logic, and rhetoric meet. Those who teach in a classical school should recognize that their course of action is to bring to the classroom the joy that should always accompany learning — that is, they should model what it is to read and discuss something of great value.

The Teachers
Those who teach in a classical school should recognize, first and foremost, that they are themselves still students. Teachers are far from having learned everything there is to know. As such, classical teachers recognize that their course of action is to turn back the wheel of progress some four thousand years of our modern society, we must recognize that their course of action is to purposefully orient lessons toward the appreciation of truth. Indeed, many classical educators argue that the “quadrivium” comprised the seven liberal arts found at the core of education in the Greco-Roman world. Modern educators jettisoned the trivium, but its rediscovery began with Dorothy L. Sayers’s influential essay The Lost Tools of Learning (1947). Sayers was an English novelist and a friend of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. Speaking at the University of Oxford, Sayers argued that removing the trivium from schools kept students from distinguishing truth from falsehood. Sayers said, “[f]or we are to produce a society of educated people, fitted to preserve their intellectual freedom amid the complex pressures of our modern society, we must turn back the wheel of progress four or five hundred years, to the point at which education began to lose sight of its true object, towards the end of the Middle Ages.”

In the modern world, students must make sense of a disparate array of facts. According to Sayers, the means to that end is found in the trivium, which orients all education toward the discovery of truth.

At heart, classical teachers are curious, and they display a Socrates-like joy when discussing ideas that matter as well as an eagerness to help students better understand what is true, good, and beautiful. Such teachers love discussing philosophical questions, solving mathematical proofs, or conducting experiments, and they seek to share that joy with those in their classrooms throughout the day.

The Students
Last but not least, we turn to the students. Students are not the only participants in a classical school should seem engaged and happy during a lesson. Classical education is rich in content and oriented toward the appreciation of truth and beauty; as such, students should find plenty to capture — and keep — their interest. Indeed, many classical educators strive to magnify this natural tendency, intentionally orienting lessons toward the cultivation of wonder. In presenting children with the very best of what has been taught and thought throughout human history, classical education helps students become their very best — and it shows in the way they interact with adults and enthusiastically take on new challenges.

The Mission
The Roman educator Quintillian (35–100 AD) identified the creation of the “ideal orator” as his goal for educating students: “We are to form, then, the perfect orator, who cannot exist unless as a good man, and we require in him, therefore, not only consummate ability in speaking but every excellence of mind.” Quintillian believed that students should be taught not only how to write and speak well but also how to live and be well, a goal that inspires classical teachers today. “Every excellence of mind” certainly teaches beyond just writing and speaking; it teaches math and the sciences, hard work and vocational skills, and truth telling and personal integrity — all that composes the nature of what philosophers call “the good life.” That promotion of the good life is ultimately the goal of classical education programs across the country. As Aristotle explained in his Nicomachean Ethics, the good life is a state of human flourishing, a life well lived in which people exercise their intellects and gifts through the habits of moral excellence, or virtue. Aristotle and his teacher, Plato, wanted to connect knowledge and content with virtue and character, for the knowledge they imparted to their students about the world and themselves would help them become more responsible, more competent, and more virtuous adults. Upon completing the聚集er of a classical school, students should love that which is worth living: their families, their neighbors, wonderful books, strong friendships, and meaningful conversation — in short, everything that makes up the good life. As such, students study the great books of the Western tradition so that they can take on the whole world.

Classical education is rich in content and oriented toward the appreciation of truth and beauty.

Adaptive Apps: New Technology Adjusts Lessons Based on Students’ Skill Levels
This software has the potential to solve problems that have long vexed education.

by Kate Alexandra

For the past twenty years, K–12 test scores in America have been falling, not rising. Only 36 percent of eighth graders read at grade level, and many students are years and years behind. COVID only exacerbated this trend. During school shutdowns, kids learned — or, more accurately, didn’t learn — at very different rates. Studies show that post-COVID the range of students’ knowledge spans nine grade levels in a single classroom. While COVID learning loss made this problem more apparent, it’s not new. Even before COVID, the knowledge range in the average classroom spanned several grade levels. This gap is hugely problematic — how can you teach to seven grade levels at once? But it’s impossible to close within our outdated system. The whole system is set up to fail; since teachers can’t teach to seventh grade levels at once, they’re stuck teaching to the mean.

In a typical fourth-grade classroom, a teacher — let’s call her Mrs. Smith — would teach her class first division, then fractions. Learning fractions requires an understanding of division, which isn’t problematic if every kid has mastered division before the class moves on. But here’s the issue: when Mrs. Smith began teaching division during those first few weeks of school, she had kids in her class who had known how to divide for years in addition to others who still couldn’t add or subtract because they had fallen behind in their previous grade level. Regardless of the amount of work she puts in, Mrs. Smith’s instruction won’t apply to most of the students in the room. To add to this struggle, because math knowledge builds on itself, the inability to personalize lessons causes the students who are ahead to be bored and the students who are behind to fall further and further behind. Students who can’t add and subtract can’t master division. If division hasn’t been mastered, fractions are impossible. Without fractions, algebra doesn’t stand a chance.

This issue isn’t just limited to math. It applies to all subjects. What’s more, teachers can’t help kids catch up because they have to teach to state standards for each grade. Since Mrs. Smith must follow the fourth-grade state standards requiring kids to analyze short stories, she can’t pause instruction to teach kids how to read. But, needless to say, a kid who can’t read can’t analyze a story.

So, what’s the solution? Adaptive educational apps.

Educational apps allow each student to learn at his or her own pace. Students who quickly understand the material can advance to the next level; for those who are confused, the apps allow students to stay at that level until they grasp the concepts they are missing. Thank Duolingo — but better — for every subject.

Because it’s adaptive, the software adjusts the lesson based on what an individual student knows (and doesn’t know). With built-in lessons, pop quizzes, and tests, these apps have the power to stand on their own, separate from the classroom, to teach the entire Common Core curriculum. Although “Common Core” is a divisive topic in our country, most parents agree that the knowledge itself is useful. What they take issue with is that students must take twelve years to learn its curriculum. Adaptive learning apps cut this time in

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SKILL LEVELS

Adaptive learning apps cut this time in

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half by making large-scale personalized learning possible.

From kindergarten to eighth grade, students can learn an entire year of material by spending two hours per day on online apps. In high school, learning takes three to four hours per day. This means that students are learning twice as fast as they would in a standard classroom.

How do we know that apps help students learn twice as fast? Kids learning through adaptive apps succeed by that metric on nationwide standardized tests, such as the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment. For example, at Alpha, an alternative school in Texas where students learn academics exclusively through adaptive apps (and where I currently attend high school), students’ MAP test scores consistently demonstrate double the knowledge growth of students in a standard classroom setting.

These apps use learning-science techniques that have been proven to foster this “twice as fast” learning. For example, the apps use mastery learning techniques (students must fully understand a lesson — regardless of time — before continuing to the next), spaced repetition (students must review information at intervals until it’s sufficiently retained), and retrieval practice (students must recall at intervals until it’s sufficiently retained), and spaced repetition (students must review information until it’s sufficiently retained). For example, the apps use mastery learning techniques (students must fully understand a lesson — regardless of time — before continuing to the next), spaced repetition (students must review information at intervals until it’s sufficiently retained), and retrieval practice (students must recall at intervals until it’s sufficiently retained), and spaced repetition (students must review information until it’s sufficiently retained).

Sixty years ago, when Bloom’s research was published, it was almost impossible to give every student a tutor, who could then create custom, individually tailored content. But now that we have learning apps, we can easily use mastery learning practices to give each student the equivalent of their own personalized tutor.

Aside from solving Bloom’s “two-sigma problem,” a classic educational dilemma. In the 1950s, Benjamin Bloom, an educational psychologist, found that the average student tutored using mastery learning techniques — used by adaptive learning apps — performed two standard deviations (for those who don’t remember, a standard deviation is a way to measure how much variation there is in a set of data) better than students taught in a standard classroom setting. Read that again: two standard deviations.

I’ve never claimed that apps can even provide the solution to Bloom’s “two-sigma problem,” a classic educational dilemma. In the 1950s, Benjamin Bloom, an educational psychologist, found that the average student tutored using mastery learning techniques — used by adaptive learning apps — performed two standard deviations (for those who don’t remember, a standard deviation is a way to measure how much variation there is in a set of data) better than students taught in a standard classroom setting. Read that again: two standard deviations.

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Students are learning twice as fast as they would in a standard classroom.
campus jobs, like being a research assistant or secretary. The idea is to interact with people beyond the curated confines of the university, where you already share things like age and educational background with the majority of your peers.

Through my summer jobs in college, I grew close to coworkers with different life situations, including a single mom without a college education and a security guard who was taking night classes at a community college. My jobs exposed me to a real-world snapshot of the community of which a college campus isn’t representative. My coworkers were concerned with picking their children up from day care and school, taking disabled parents to doctors’ appointments, and leaving work on time so that they could make it to their second job across town. I learned that life is messy, unfair, and unsafe, with no organically created safe spaces out in the wild. I also appreciated the dignity of hard work and commensurate pay.

Join a Conservative Group

Much like joining a religious group or church, there is much to be gained in joining a conservative organization. A few that stand out are my own employer, the Intercollegiate Studies Institute; Turning Point USA; Young America’s Foundation, or YAF; the Leadership Institute; Young Women for America; the Clare Boothe Luce Center for Conservative Women; and, of course, College Republicans.

This Is a Demanding Endeavor

Although this list is a good start for holding yourself accountable in college, I want to emphasize that staying conservative in college is not easy. Temptation isn’t always obvious. It’s not always a Democratic Socialists of America ambassador earnestly trying to catechize you into the socialist cause. In fact, this is rarely the case.

There will be constant pressure from your professors and peers, advertising and big business, social media and the government, to reject first principles in favor of the progressive politics du jour. The acceptance of social pathologies that are central to the Left’s agenda, such as abortion and transgenderism, will be framed as compassionate, even good. You will be tempted to deny what is true and right in favor of comfort and acceptance. But diamonds are made under great pressure. Stay true to the pursuit of virtue in every aspect of your life on campus, and you can stay true to remaining conservative.

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Much like joining a religious group or church, there is much to be gained in joining a conservative organization. A few that stand out are my own employer, the Intercollegiate Studies Institute; Turning Point USA; Young America’s Foundation, or YAF; the Leadership Institute; Young Women for America; the Clare Boothe Luce Center for Conservative Women; and, of course, College Republicans.

This Is a Demanding Endeavor

Although this list is a good start for holding yourself accountable in college, I want to emphasize that staying conservative in college is not easy. Temptation isn’t always obvious. It’s not always a Democratic Socialists of America ambassador earnestly trying to catechize you into the socialist cause. In fact, this is rarely the case.

There will be constant pressure from your professors and peers, advertising and big business, social media and the government, to reject first principles in favor of the progressive politics du jour. The acceptance of social pathologies that are central to the Left’s agenda, such as abortion and transgenderism, will be framed as compassionate, even good. You will be tempted to deny what is true and right in favor of comfort and acceptance. But diamonds are made under great pressure. Stay true to the pursuit of virtue in every aspect of your life on campus, and you can stay true to remaining conservative. •

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HAS YOUR ELECTED OFFICIAL SIGNED THE TAXPAYER PROTECTION PLEDGE YET?
How to Find an Evangelical College That Isn’t Woke

With trendy leftist floridism at numerous Protestant colleges, parents and students need concrete suggestions for discerning those true to the faith from those subscribing to Woke U.

By David Ayers

It is no secret that American colleges and universities are increasingly becoming woke academia, not “lite” versions of it. The fact is that most students interested in international alliances for Christian Education (IACE), IACE is much more proactive than the CCCU in enforcing basic orthodox. Another good bet is being more rarely, colleges do make shifts toward greater orthodoxy.

In dealing with evangelical colleges, prospective students and parents are in the driver’s seat. Many schools will be going out of business over the next decade or so. Some already have. The shrinking number of traditional college-age students, combined with hyperinflation in college costs, suggests no end in sight to these challenges. Evangelical college administrators who want to safeguard their institutions leadership leftward to point out that, because most young people are liberal, their college has replaced the broad, even squishy, to survive. Yet, as with churches and denominations, colleges that accommodate liberalism and kowtow to the woke ethos usually decline. Why pay all that money for a bipartisan version of what can be bought from the woke leftist? The fact is that most students interested in Evangelical colleges have more proactive than the CCCU in enforcing basic orthodox. Another good bet is being more rarely, colleges do make shifts toward greater orthodoxy.

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These colleges continue to teach the writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas even as other “Catholic” universities host drug shows.

by Anne Hendershott

The biblical command to “Go ... and teach all nations” provided the inspiration for the creation of Georgetown University, the first Catholic college in the country. John Carroll, the Jesuit archbishop who founded the college in 1789, chose a site by the Potomac River to facilitate the missionary focus of his order. The original mission of Georgetown — and all Catholic colleges until the mid-twentieth century — was to keep the faith alive and spread it to others. Faithful Catholic parents could be confident that when they sent their sons or daughters to a Catholic college or university, their children’s faith would be strengthened, and their commitment to Catholic teachings would remain intact. For more than a century, most of the more than two hundred Catholic colleges in the United States, offering their children’s faith would be strengthened, and their commitment to Catholic teachings would remain intact. For more than a century, most of the more than two hundred Catholic colleges in the United States, offering

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Asbury University — highly recommended

Wilmore, Kentucky | evangelical | 1,399 undergrads | $26,739 average cost after aid | 61 percent graduation rate | 77 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 20–27 | opposition to DEI: excellent | sexual morals excellent | conservative student groups: Sacred Life Club

The revival at Asbury University in February of this year showcased its students’ devout faith. Students are required to attend twenty-six chapel services every semester, the revival sprung out of one of these services. The university demonstrates academic excellence with a robust liberal arts curriculum that includes four courses in “Biblical literacy and theological understanding.” The school has historically been associated with the Wesleyan Holiness movement.

Ave Maria University — highly recommended

Ave Maria, Florida | Catholic | 1,048 undergrads | $19,226 average cost after aid | 54 percent graduation rate | 64 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 21–27 | opposition to DEI: excellent | sexual morals excellent | conservative student groups: American Enterprise Institute Executive Council, Young Americans for Freedom, Turning Point USA, Bull Moose Republican Club, Ave For Life, Thornistic Institute, Anascombe Society

Former Domino’s Pizza owner Tom Monaghan founded Ave Maria University with the goal of creating a truly faithful Catholic university. In that, he has been successful, as university life revolves around the Mass, and students are known to enter religious life or missionary work upon graduation. Faculty join Ave Maria with the goal of advancing their Catholic faith. The Agustinian Center for Theological Renewal and the university’s theology department are highlights. Monaghan moved Ave Maria’s campus to the rural wetlands of South Florida in 2007. The school advertises its “sunny skies” and “wealth of spiritual activities.”

Baylor University

Waco, Texas | Baptist General Convention of Texas | 14,329 undergrads | $38,372 average cost after aid | 79 percent graduation rate | 57 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 25–32 | opposition to DEI: poor | sexual morals good | conservative student groups: College Republicans, Turning Point USA, Bears for Life, Young Conservatives of Texas

Baylor University is an academically excellent and highly ranked Baptist university that emphasizes undergraduate teaching. A total of 125 majors and minors are offered across these twelve schools and colleges, and the school is ranked sixteenth in the nation by Us News & World Report for its undergraduate teaching. Several of its chapel services, which students are required to attend for two semesters, have recently delved into diversity, equity, and inclusion lectures and what one person described as a “Bernie Sanders rally.” In addition, the university’s president sent a strange letter in 2020 to parents of students toward tips to cultivate “antiracism.” The university forbids its students from participating in advocacy groups that promote homosexual behavior, but last year it chartered its first LGBTQ student group. The critical mass of conservative and Christian students and faculty, however, along with the school’s academic strengths, make it worth attending, so long as you avoid its recent excesses of wokeness.

Belmont Abbey College

Belmont, North Carolina | Catholic | 1,507 undergrads | $21,329 average cost after aid | 44 percent graduation rate | 99 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 18–25 | opposition to DEI: excellent | sexual morals excellent | conservative student groups: Crusaders for Life

Belmont Abbey College was founded by the Benedictine monks in 1976. The school, which offers an Honors College with a curriculum based on the Great Books, is deeply immersed in the Catholic tradition. About half of students in this tight-knit community are Catholic. Professors, about two-thirds of whom are Catholic, are focused on helping their students grow morally and spiritually. The college’s core...
curriculum requires all students to take courses in political philosophy, theology, and history. Belmont Abbey has a beautiful, idyllic campus, the centerpoint of which is the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, where students can join the monks in prayer.

Benedicite College — highly recommended

Benedicite College is a faithful Catholic college with academic excellence. Popular majors include fine art, accounting, nursing, biology, and theology. Students have the option to enroll in the Great Books Program for a more traditional liberal arts education. Benedicite College describes the program as centering on the question, “from Homer to Aquinas and from Dante to Dostoevsky.” The school emphasizes domestic and international mission trips as a means of faith formation — locations include Petra, Belize, Uganda, Alaska, and Texas. The university’s annual Symposium on Transforming Culture brings together scholars to discuss the Catholic faith’s “transformative role in our society, culture and business.” Sacramental life is centered in St. Benedict’s Abbey Church, which offers multiple daily Masses for students.

Brigham Young University–Provo

Provo, Utah | Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints | 33,376 undergrads | $14,275 average cost after aid | 59 percent graduation rate | 86 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 22–28 | opposition to DEI: excellent | sexual morals: excellent | conservative student groups: Adams Smith Society, Tocqueville Society, College Republicans, Turning Point USA, Students for Life

Brigham Young University has perhaps the largest concentration of conservative students in the country. Ninety-eight percent of students belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As such, students and faculty are required to sign an honor code pledging to abstain from alcohol, drugs, and sexual relations outside of marriage; and live a virtuous life. Because the university is subsidized by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, students who belong to the church pay some of the lowest tuition costs in the nation; students who do not belong to the church still receive an excellent deal. The school offers instruction in over sixty languages and dozens of study abroad programs. The university’s size allows it to offer 186 academic majors and to recruit excellent faculty committed to its mission.

Catholic University of America

Washington, DC | Catholic | 2,929 undergrads | $36,698 average cost after aid | 98 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 23–31 | opposition to DEI: excellent | sexual morals: excellent | conservative student groups: College Republicans, Turning Point USA, Students for Life, Students for Israel

Catholic University requires its faculty members to teach a “biblically consistent” curriculum and pledge to live “biblically integration in and out of the classroom.” All students must obtain a minor in the study of the Bible and attend chapel every weekday. Required humanities and arts courses explicitly state an intention to encourage students to glorify God, and science majors are popular. The university has a Chick-fil-A in its library. The school boasts a 99 percent career placement rate.

College of the Ozarks — highly recommended

Point Lookout, Missouri | Presbyterian | 1,468 undergrads | $7,858 average cost after aid | 66 percent graduation rate | 21 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 20–25 | opposition to DEI: excellent | sexual morals: excellent | conservative student groups: College Republicans, Young Americans for Freedom, Young Americans for Liberty

The College of the Ozarks is boldly conservative and Christian. The college’s vision is to “develop citizens of Christian character who are well-educated, hard-working, and pietistic.” This boldness attracts students from across the county, requiring the college to reject 79 percent of its applicants. Tuition is nonexistent, thanks to the school’s requirement that students work on campus to pay their way. The campus seeks out students with strong leadership skills and heavily recruits students of lesser means. Students and faculty are asked to sign an intensive honor code and are warned of dismissal for engaging in extramural sexual behavior. The College of the Ozarks was famously bold enough to launch a boycott of Nike products after the company rechristened Colin Kaepernick for an ad campaign. Patriotism is inculcated in the students in every aspect of student life, and respect is a requirement during the recitation of the National Anthem and Pledge of Allegiance.

Concordia University, Nebraska

Seward, Nebraska | Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod | 1,124 undergrads | $25,387 average cost after aid | 62 percent graduation rate | 85 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 19–27 | opposition to DEI: good | sexual morals: excellent | conservative student groups: College Republicans, Bulldogs for Life

Concordia University, Nebraska, is a Lutheran university located in a small town west of Lincoln, Nebraska. Community, close friendships, and Christ define the university, which offers strong academic programs. Students and faculty greet one another on campus and know each other’s names. Personal development and spiritual growth are emphasized; students must take two courses in biblical literacy and one in theology. The school says that its curriculum is “grounded in the mercy of God made known through the incarnate ministry of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Education is the most popular major, followed by business.

Franciscan University of Steubenville — highly recommended

Steubenville, Ohio | Catholic | 2,340 undergrads | $24,136 average cost after aid | 76 percent graduation rate | 68 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 22–28 | opposition to DEI: excellent | sexual morals: excellent | conservative student groups: Anscombe Society, Godly, Students for Life, Young Americans for Freedom

A typical student at Franciscan University attends Mass multiple times per week, and if liberals or non-Catholics attend this school, you would be hard-pressed to find them. The institution, which describes itself as a “faithfully Catholic university,” hosts excellent faculty members who orient their teaching around the Catholic worldview. The school’s student groups all revolve around the Catholic worldview. The school’s student groups all revolve...
around conservatism or Catholicism. Students can participate in the school’s Great Books of Western Civilization honors program, but they will also receive a richer liberal arts education through the regular curriculum. Resident halls are named after Catholic saints, and sacramental life dominates daily activities. The most popular major by far is theology. Nursing, education, and business are also favored choices. Excellent institutes include the Venture Center for Ethics in Public Life and the Center for Leadership.

Grove City College — highly recommended

Grove City, Pennsylvania | nondenominational | 2,138 undergrads | $24,554 average cost after aid | 82 percent graduation rate | 73 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 23–30 | opposition to DEI: excellent | sexual morals: excellent | conservative student groups: College Republicans, Young Women for America, Grove City College Life Advocates

Grove City College is the home of The American Spectator’s editor, Paul Kengor. There, he runs the Institute for Faith and Freedom, which “teaches the principles of Faith and Freedom to the next generation of American leaders.” The institute is the heart of the university and offers a student fellows program, lectures on the principles of conservatism, and an annual conference. The entire university, which is academically excellent, is grounded in its conservative and Christian worldview — wokeness is not permitted at this college. The students you will find on campus are eager to grow intellectually and share a conservative worldview. Engineering and business are the most popular majors.

Harding University

Searcy, Arkansas | Church of Christ | 3,492 undergrads | $22,139 average cost after aid | 67 percent graduation rate | 54 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 20–28 | opposition to DEI: excellent | sexual morals: excellent | conservative student groups: College Republicans, Students for Life, Young Americans for Liberty

Students at this university in Searcy, Arkansas, are required to attend daily chapel services and participate in three hours of Bible study every week. They are also prohibited from consuming alcohol — including off-campus — going to bars, and socially dancing. Harding has in recent years faced a series of controversies over a group of LGBTQ students’ decision to launch a magazine; the publication was blocked on the university’s Wi-Fi network. The university says that while it maintains “close ties” with the Church of Christ, it “opens its arms to all.” Its liberal arts curriculum is strong. It also offers schools of pharmacy, business, nursing, and education.

Hillsdale College — highly recommended


Hillsdale students are required to sign an honor code upon arrival, in which they pledge to maintain virtue in their study and commit themselves to self-government. Their education is dominated by a liberal arts core curriculum boosted by required seminars in conservative thought on timely issues. Truly conservative, Hillsdale remains committed to teaching the founding of America, and it promotes this worldview in its wide array of public educational outreach. Education is one of the college’s emphasized missions, as seen in the multitude of opportunities offered to students interested in teaching, be it a classical education internship or the annual classical school job fair. Lastly, Hillsdale’s campus is alive with the Christian faith. Student-led faith groups such as the Catholic Society, InterVarsity,Equip Ministries, Lutheran Society, Argmc Student Fellowship, and Orthodox Christian Fellowship attract scores of students who lead worship and build community.

Liberty University

Lynchburg, Virginia | evangelical | 15,800 on-campus students | $32,513 average cost after aid | 65 percent graduation rate | 50 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 21–29 | opposition to DEI: poor | sexual morals: excellent | conservative student groups: Alexander Hamilton Society, College Republicans; Institute on Religion and Democracy, Liberty Students for Life; Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Truth; Stand With Israel;

Liberty University is unabashedly conservative, though it has faced recent controversy over a sex scandal involving its former president, Jerry Falwell Jr. Nevertheless, the university has at its heart a conservative and Christian mission of arming students to prepare for combat in today’s modern world. Students can join a plethora of conservative clubs and take part in innumerable academic programs due to its size. Business is the most popular major.

Patrick Henry College — highly recommended

Lexington, Virginia | nondenominational | 409 undergrads | $28,594 average cost after aid | 70 percent graduation rate | 82 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 27–32 | opposition to DEI: excellent | sexual morals: excellent | conservative student group: George Washington Institute

Patrick Henry College provides an excellent liberal arts education to its highly intelligent student body, which numbers only around 400 students. The college describes itself as “a conservative Christian college,” and, indeed, professors come to the school with the mission of educating students in that worldview. The college is home to the Home School Legal Defense Association. This school is recommended for those who share its Protestant worldview; a staff member was once asked to resign for stating that Baptism is essential for salvation.

Pepperdine University

Malibu, California | Church of Christ | 3,457 undergrads | $37,330 average cost after aid | 83 percent graduation rate | 53 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 25–30 | opposition to DEI: poor | sexual morals: poor | conservative student group: College Republicans

Watch out for Pepperdine’s DEI programs and the wokeness slowly seeping in. Even still, you will find a guild of professors educating students in the liberal arts from a Christian perspective. The school is affiliated with the Church of Christ, but it has become less faithful to that tradition in recent years.

Regent University

Virginia Beach, Virginia | evangelical | 4,231 undergrads | $17,120 average cost after aid | 49 percent graduation rate | 41 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 23–29 | opposition to DEI: fair | sexual morals: excellent | conservative student groups: Christians United for Israel, College Republicans, Students for Life, Thomistic Institute Chapter, Turning Point USA, Young Americans for Liberty

This evangelical university was founded by Christian Broadcasting Network chairman Pat Robertson in 1977. The school has a flourishing conservative intellectual climate, and many students are involved in conservative activism. The university has been able to attract excellent faculty members who share its commitments to biblical principles. Regent University emphasizes its goal of sending students into conservative politics and has a track record of following through.

Samford University

Homewood, Alabama | Alabama Baptists | 3,573 undergrads | $30,695 average cost after aid | 76 percent graduation rate | 84 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 23–29 | opposition to DEI: poor | sexual morals: good | conservative student groups: American Enterprise Institute, College Republicans, Students for Life

Samford University has a stunning campus featuring Georgian Colonial architecture. It houses schools of pharmacy, divinity, law, education, nursing, and business. The university’s administration has gone all-in on “diversity, equity, and inclusion” and has set a goal of raising the number of certain ethnicities in leadership roles and faculty positions. Despite that, the university is fundamentally Christian and requires its students to attend sixty
Texas A&M University

College Station, Texas | secular | 54,942 undergrads | $19,237 average cost after aid | 82 percent graduation rate | 64 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 25–31 | opposition to DEI: poor | sexual morals: poor | conservative student groups: Pro-Life Aggies, Turning Point USA, College Republicans, Young Americans for Freedom

Texas A&M is a secular public school, but if you know where to look, you will find rich networks of conservative and Christian students. One example is the college’s Catholic student ministry, which serves 17,000 students. About eight to ten graduates per year are known to enter into the priesthood or religious life from this flourishing group. In addition, Breakaway Ministries, a weekly Bible study, attracts 10,000 students to its weekly bible study and worship service. Students will find when they arrive at A&M that a number of churches will reach out to invite them to join. Worship clubs on campus are also large and highly active. Texas A&M boasts exemplary academics and consistent graduate success.

Thomas Aquinas College — highly recommended

Santa Paula, California, and Northfield, Massachusetts | Catholic | 462 undergrads | $24,676 average cost after aid | 86 percent graduation rate | 83 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 25–30 | opposition to DEI: excellent | sexual morals: excellent

Even liberals note the academic excellence of Thomas Aquinas College, as it is ranked highly by US News & World Report. All students participate in its classical Great Books curriculum, which many consider to be a more challenging curriculum than that offered by the nation’s top universities. The college, which boasts two beautiful campuses on either side of the country, remains truly loyal to the Church; faculty members and students alike share deep faith and an intellectual commitment to understanding the world through a Catholic lens.

University of Notre Dame

Notre Dame, Indiana | Catholic | 8,854 undergrads | $30,536 average cost after aid | 97 percent graduation rate | 15 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 32–35 | opposition to DEI: good | sexual morals: good | conservative student groups: Tocqueville Society

The University of Notre Dame often falls short in putting its professed beliefs into practice (e.g., the talk this year by an “abortion doula”). Nevertheless, the university has a huge network of vocal conservative and Catholic students and faculty. Its academics and faculty members are world class. As a top university, Notre Dame has incredible resources, many of which are used to enhance students’ intellectual and faith lives. A small subset of faculty members are woke activists, but a much larger group is vocally conservative. Dozens of well-attended daily Masses, over one hundred priests, and more than five dozen chapels enhance the Catholic environment. Notable institutes include the Center for Citizenship & Constitutional Government and the de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture.

University of Dallas — highly recommended

Irving, Texas | Catholic | 1,445 undergrads | $28,149 average cost after aid | 68 percent graduation rate | 58 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 24–31 | opposition to DEI: excellent | sexual morals: excellent | conservative student groups: Crusaders for Life, The Hephastios Society, Young Conservatives of Texas, Alexander Hamilton Society, The Ancombe Society, Thomistic Institute Chapter, Tocqueville Society

The University of Dallas is a solidly conservative faithfual Catholic university with impressive academics rooted in the Great Books. It requires its students to spend two years fulfilling the requirements of an intensive liberal arts education. Most students spend a semester abroad in Rome, Italy, during which they study the liberal arts and live at the school’s Rome campus. Notable institutes include the St. Ambrose Center for Catholic Liberal Education and Culture, the Center for Christianity and the Common Good, the Center for Thomas More Studies, and the Dallas Forum on Law, Politics, and Culture.

University of St. Thomas (Texas)

Houston, Texas | Catholic | 1,609 undergrads | $18,500 average cost after aid | 56 percent graduation rate | 58 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 18–24 | opposition to DEI: excellent | sexual morals: excellent | conservative student group: Celts for Life

The University of St. Thomas offers students, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds and 42 percent of whom are not Catholic, the chance to study an intensive Catholic liberal arts curriculum. Faculty members are grounded in their faith. The required curriculum includes courses such as “History of Western Culture and Ideas” and “Philosophy and Nature of the Human Person.” The Saint John Paul II Institute is a highlight, as is its running college.

Wyoming Catholic College

Lander, Wyoming | Catholic | 190 undergrads | $35,500 cost without aid | 71 percent graduation rate | 99 percent acceptance rate | average ACT score: 26 | opposition to DEI: excellent | sexual morals: excellent

Wyoming Catholic College is unusual. The school is so conservative and Catholic that it does not permit cell phones and filters social media websites from its campus Wi-Fi. It has a curfew of 10:30 p.m. Its small number of faculty members, who teach the school’s Great Books curriculum, are deeply Catholic and intellectually brilliant. Students begin their time at the school with a three-week backpacking trip in the Rocky Mountains, complete with daily Mass. Some have worried the school’s strictness and total eschewal of modern life may leave students unprepared; however, students live rich lives and build close friendships in this conservative enclave.

Yeshiva University

New York, New York | Modern Orthodox Judaism | 2,619 undergrads | $33,718 average cost after aid | 80 percent graduation rate | 63 percent acceptance rate | typical ACT scores: 26–33 | opposition to DEI: excellent | sexual morals: good | conservative student groups: Alexander Hamilton Society, College Republicans

Yeshiva University offers sex-separate liberal arts schools that incorporate the study of the Torah. Yeshiva College, which serves male students, includes four courses in Hebrew and six courses in Jewish studies. Yeshiva University is currently in a legal battle over its refusal to recognize an LGBTQ student club. Its graduate schools tend to not follow the undergraduate schools’ conservatism, and many of their students are not Jewish.
An Obstacle to the Left’s Defense of Affirmative Action: Race Is a Biological Myth

by Ellie Gardey

Leftist university administrators are desperately awaiting the Supreme Court’s decisions in the cases Students for Fair Admissions v. President & Fellows of Harvard and Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina, which most court watchers predict will end affirmative action in America. The decisions are expected to be released in June.

These administrators are in a state of worried anticipation because they are dedicated to judging the students who apply to them under the categories of “Asian candidates,” “white candidates,” “black candidates,” “Hispanic candidates,” “Native American candidates,” “Pacific Islander candidates.” And, as was revealed in the Harvard case, they are dedicated to using separate admissions standards for each “race.” For example, an Asian applicant to Harvard in the fourth-highest decile of academic achievement among applicants has a 4 percent chance of being admitted, while an African American candidate in the same decile has a 41.1 percent chance of being admitted.

This reveals quite clearly the reinforcement of the false idea that each person belongs to a race — and is defined by belonging to a certain racial type of Homo sapiens. Race is not a biological reality. Persons have ancestry from particular regions and thus share some genetic similarities with people who also have ancestry from those regions, but there is no demarcating line that genetically separates people into distinct groups. Moreover, the race terms used by the US government to categorize people do not realistically approximate genetic reality. For instance, some people of European descent actually have greater genetic similarity to people who have Asian ancestry than to people from other European regions. And the “Asian” racial classification includes nearly 60 percent of the world’s population, including people whose ancestors came from places as diverse as Japan, Nepal, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Armenia, and China.

The Left often correctly notes that American’s conception of race as something that separates people into black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and Pacific Islander is not true. In 2021, for example, health equity researcher Paula Braveman of the University of California, San Francisco and co-author William Parker Dominguez, a health care systems expert at the University of Southern California, published an essay in which they argued that we should abandon the use of the term race and substitute it with the phrase ethnic group to better capture the social reality. They noted that the concept of ethnicity better evokes the social characteristics that persons share, such as history and language.

That’s not a bad idea. Identifying people by and categorizing them based on “race” reinforces the false idea that people black, Latinx, American Indian, Indigenous, Asian Native, Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander students.

And the groups those who can and cannot attend their schools based on this artificial typification.

Judge Emmilio M. Garza, formerly of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, was one of the first jurists to see the biological unreality of race as an argument against affirmative action. In his concurring decision in the 2011 case Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin, he wrote: “The idea of dividing people along racial lines is artificial and antiquated. Human beings are not divisible biologically into any set number of races. A world war was fought over such principles. Each individual is unique. And yet, in 2010, governmental decisionmakers are still fixated on dividing people into white, black, Hispanic, and other arbitrary subdivisions.”

Supreme Court justice Samuel Alito picked up on this point when he noted during oral arguments in the Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina case that it was “arbitrary” to consider an applicant from Afghanistan and an applicant from China under the same category.

In attempting to defeat racism, leftists only succeed in shoving students into the boxes they’ve checked.
BATHROOM BATTLES

The Biden Administration’s Title IX Revisions Provoke Backlash From Left and Right

Schools cannot categorically ban biological men from competing as women, but high schools and colleges may be able to restrict competition.

by Tom Raabe

The other shoe has dropped on Title IX revisions. The Biden administration announced in early April its much-anticipated guidelines for how schools must handle their transgender athletes. The proposed policy has been called a compromise, and some in the middle like it, but it has only further antagonized those who have dug their trenches on either side of the debate.

The announcement comes on the heels of the administration’s proposed changes last summer to campus sexual harassment rules as well as its controversial redefinition of sex to make it now include “sexual orientation” and “gender identity.” The guidelines on transgender athletes are likely to create more craters in the already pockmarked landscape of college life.

The guidelines say that if schools want to receive federal funding, they must have policies that are consistent with their gender identity.” However, under certain circumstances, they can restrict transgender participation in the following ways:

- And who decides whether or not limiting participation is acceptable? The entity that made the rule in the first place: the Department of Education is the judge and jury of what is a permissible exception.
- We’ll get to the chaos that will unfold, but first, a recap of the damage caused by the guidelines released last summer.

More Chaos in Sexual Harassment Cases

The first shoe dropped left Godzilla-sized footprints as it stomped across the educational landscape. In June 2022, the administration announced new rules for Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 that would roll back the common sense standards of the Trump years and cloud the already murky waters of campus sexual harassment litigation.

The Obama administration’s infamous 2011 ‘Dear Colleague’ letter all but demanded campuses set up kangaroo courts that lacked fundamental due-process rights. The resulting failures were manifold.

As we enter an era of Biden regulations, more of these “kangaroo” investigations are sure to run rampant, denying those accused of basic due-process rights.

“Sex” Now Includes “Sexual Orientation” and “Gender Identity”

The other element to the new rules is the sexual orientation and gender identity piece.

The new regulations expand discrimination on the basis of what the original 1972 law called “sex” to include “sex stereotypes, sex-related characteristics [including intersex traits], pregnancy or related conditions, sexual orientation, and gender identity.”

Institute president Paul du Quenoy, writing in Newsweek, during the Obama years, 73 percent of all Title IX-related lawsuits filed in federal court included defamation claims against complainants. “Many also brought claims against Title IX officials, who are often exposed as biased against male students,” he said.

Betsy DeVos, education secretary during the Trump years, related the tale of a Stanford University employee who was falsely accused of sexual assault by a jilted suitor intent on revenge. While affirming efforts to do “everything reasonably possible to protect students from assaults,” DeVos warned a source note in the Wall Street Journal: “I heard way too many stories like this as we worked to issue a regulation under Title IX to protect due process. Action was necessary because ignoring Title IX had become an unfortunate trend.

Also surely in is an escalation of the Title IX battles that have been fighting against for years to receive federal funding, an educational institution, interest of safety or fairness.

President Joe Biden plans to roll back the common sense advances of the Trump years by issuing new regulations that broaden dramatically the definition of sexual misconduct — identifying and then punishing the “bad apples.” In the past, those regulations that broadened dramatically the definition of harassment. The problem, in the eyes of America, is not a few bad apples but rather a “rape culture” that reigns on college campuses.

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The administration’s proposed new rules would eliminate the live hearing and cross-examination requirements, leaving them to the discretion of the school, and readopt the “single investigator model,” which permits a lone bureaucrat to investigate a sexual harassment case and also serve as the judge and jury.

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Former President Donald Trump reversed Obama administration harassment adjudication practices that denied due process and free-speech rights to those accused of sexual harassment and returned many due-process rights to the accused, including hearings, legal representation, cross-examination, full access to evidence, and appeals.

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to the gender with which they identify, but schools will be allowed to block transgender athletes from competing in certain, very limited, circumstances.

A fact sheet distributed with the proposed guidelines states, “One-size-fits-all policies that categorically ban transgender students from participating in athletics consistent with their gender identity across all sports, age groups, and levels of competition would not satisfy the proposed regulation.”

“The sheet went on:

[The Department expects that … elementary school students would generally be in able to participate in school sports teams consistent with their gender identity. For older students, especially at the high school and college level, the Department expects that sex-related criteria that limit participation of some transgender students may be permitted, in some cases, when they enable the school to achieve an important educational objective, such as fairness in competition, or the proposed regulation’s other requirements.

So, total bans are verboten, grade schools must allow transgender competitors, and dispensations from the baseline tolerance of transgender participation will be granted with qualifications. According to the Education Department, the proposal takes into consideration “the importance of minimizing harms to students whose participation on teams consistent with their gender identity would be limited or denied.” Schools — mostly high schools and colleges — may be able to limit transgender participation as long as they can show that the proposed restrictions are “substantially related to the achievement of an important educational objective,” such as those “ensuring fairness in competition or preventing sports-related injuries,” and are not “premised on the idea of sex.”

These regulations tacitly endorse transgenderism while upending the conventional rules for girls’ and women’s rights in competition.

Raising Bipartisan Hackles

Although called by some a compromise document, the competitive sports rules don’t see it that way. For conservatives, the proposal is an olympic snow throw to the transgender lobby.

Nicole Nolte, president of Parents Defending Education, accused the Biden administration of “trying to have their cake and eat it too: invariantly decreeing the worth of the education bureaucrats, would “without a doubt … err on the side of inclusion.”

Conservative politicians were quick to chime in: Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy called the proposed rule “anti-women.” US senator Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) tweeted, “For a party that claims to care about women, the left is sure intent on depriving them of the opportunity to fairly compete.” US representatives Virginia Foxx (R-NC) and Mary Miller (R-IL) wrote, “The people who stand to lose the most from this troubling measure are women and girls.”

Meanwhile, the trans lobby descended into full outrage mode at the idea that future Lia Thomas might be prohibited from competing in women’s swimming and biological male sprinters from beating girls at Coastal Carolina’s high school girls’ track meets. Erin Reed, a prominent trans activist and researcher, tweeted: “I can’t read this any other way than a benediction. This entire document is worse than doing nothing.” Imara Jones, a self-identified “trans woman” who created The Anti-Trans Hate Machine: A Pilot Against Equality podcast, said: “The Biden Administration framed their proposal as a ban on blanket categorization, but that categorization against trans athletes actually, it provides guidelines for how schools and universities can ban trans athletes legally.”

Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) tweeted that the plan was “indefensible and embarrassing.” Sean Ebony Coleman, a trans activist in New York, said that “[w]hile it hypothetically prevents across-the-board bans, it offers enough gray area for discrete gender policing and demonization to occur, specifically on a local level.”

The Title IX guidelines will clearly butt up against laws passed in recent years to prohibit harmful and illegal policies, such as those “ensuring fairness in competition or preventing sports-related injuries.”

The proposal would likely require schools to allow transgender students to participate in women’s sports and to prevent harassment of transgender sports teams. According to recent graduation rates, women between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four are more likely to hold a bachelor’s degree, at 46 percent compared to men’s 36. Women also earn more graduate and doctoral degrees compared to men.

More are also likely to drop out of college. According to recent graduation rates, women between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four are more likely to hold a bachelor’s degree, at 46 percent compared to men’s 36. Women also earn more graduate and doctoral degrees compared to men.

Masculinity has been blamed on university cultures for sexual violence, body shaming, and institutional racism. In one example, a study cited toxic masculinity as a cause of gender policing in general. The study noted that toxic masculinity has been blamed on university cultures for sexual violence, body shaming, and institutional racism.

In tandem with the attack against traditional masculinity, college leaders are also propagating the narrative that gender is a matter of personal choice. Consequently, it is unsurprising that a growing number of young men have decided to identify as female. Many college health plans cover hormone therapies and sex-change surgeries to help students along the way. After biological men transition to female, they are heralded on campus as courageous over the last decade, with workshops, conferences, and academic papers all focused on reversing the traditional male ideals of stoicism, bravery, and chivalry. Toxic masculinity has been blaming on university campuses for sexual violence, body shaming, and hyper-sexualized sporting culture, and acts of domestic terrorism.

One 2019 Utah State University–based study cited toxic masculinity as a cause of climate change. At Texas State University, a student op-ed argued in 2018 that toxic masculinity is responsible for hatred directed toward vegans.

A course called The Rhetoric of Toxic Masculinity” offered at Rhode Island College this spring argues against telling young men to be strong and nice. “As we work to make sense of the rhetoric of toxic masculinity we’ll strive, ultimately, to imagine better and safer ways to be a man in the 21st century,” the course’s description states.

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Jennifer Kabbany is editor-in-chief of the College Fix.
individuals who have embraced their “authentic selves.”

On the opposite side of the spectrum are those who have rejected the idea of being “real” in favor of being “authentic.” This has led to a rise in identity politics, which has been embraced by many on the left as a way to protest any frat that steps out of line, and to protest any frat that steps out of line, and even managed to start pre-algebra, and even managed to start pre-algebra, and even managed to start pre-algebra, and even managed to start pre-algebra, and even managed to start pre-algebra, and even managed to start pre-algebra, and even managed to start pre-algebra, and even managed to start pre-algebra.

The feminist mantra is akin to the anti-racism movement, which seeks to educate and empower people of color, and to challenge systemic racism and police brutality. The feminist movement has been successful in advancing women’s rights, and in challenging the gender norms that have been used to oppress women. However, the feminist movement has also been criticized for being too focused on the experiences of privileged white women, and for sometimes ignoring the experiences of women of color.

The consequences of this obsession are evident in the burgeoning mental health crisis on university campuses. The high number of reports of sexual assault and harassment has created a culture of fear and anxiety, and has led to a rise in the number of students who drop out of college. The consequences of this for individual students are profound, and can include depression, anxiety, and suicide. The current academic climate is one of fear and anxiety, and it is destroying our nation. Nowhere is that more evident than on America’s college campuses.

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Education Under Siege: Two New Books Discuss the Ongoing Battle

by Leonora Cravotta

Education is like a precious ruby hanging from an invisible chain around your neck. Once you have acquired it, it will always be with you. No one can ever yank it from your person.

Unfortunately, it has become increasingly more challenging to attain a quality education in recent years due to the radical progressive ideologies that have infiltrated both our K–12 classrooms and our universities. Two recent books discuss this threat to society’s future from different vantage points. New York Post columnist Kanbol Markowicz and Professor of Liberty editor Bethany S. Mandel discuss the negative impact of COVID-19 school closures, critical race theory, transgenderism, and other woke ideologies on our children’s educational achievement, physical health, and psychological well-being in their book.

Stolen Youth: How Radicals Are Erasing Innocence and Indoctrinating a Generation by Karen Markowicz and Bethany Mandel (DW Books, 304 pages, $30)

Although Stolen Youth is a copiously researched book that revisits all the negative milestones that have punctuated the lives of K–12 students for the last three years, including the COVID-19 lockdowns, school closures, the uneven deployment of remote learning, and the reopening of schools with mask mandates. Markowicz and Mandel write extensively about the long-term ramifications of the learning gap created by the pandemic but also acknowledge that the forced remote learning was a blessing in disguise in that it east countless on the perceptions of the progressive indoctrination taking place in the classroom. During the pandemic, concerned parents started speaking up against this woke educational agenda at school board meetings nationwide.

Although Stolen Youth covers well-trodden ground, critical race theory, gender dysphoria, and the sexualization of minors, the authors bring to the book a unique perspective. Markowicz, who was born in the Soviet Union and immigrated to the United States as a little girl with her family, writes about how her great-grandfather, Aron Gelberg, died in “a gulag near the Kuril Islands in eastern Russia sometime in the late 1930s” for opposing the government. She discusses how governments have historically used the role of parents in their children’s education for identifying and speaking up against such atrocities.

The authors are to be commended not only for chronicling the aforementioned threats to our children’s education and well-being, but also for advising practical solutions, such as running for the school board, homeschooling, or even relocating to another state. Markowicz relocated her family from New York City to Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, to escape the wokeism running rampant in the New York City public school system. I highly recommend that parents, educators, and adolescent students take note and sit up in a go-to-resource for identifying and speaking up against progressive ideologies.

The Death of Learning: How American Education Has Failed Our Students and What We Can Do About It

by John Agresto

In The Death of Learning, John Agresto discusses the declining popularity of a liberal arts education, the problems this situation creates for society, and the best way to institute a revival. “Today, by far the foremost major chosen by liberal arts administrators, writers, and intellectuals is business,” Agresto writes. “50 percent of all students focus on just five areas, none of them among the traditional liberal arts: business, education, computer science/technology, engineering, and the health professions.” The graduate education statistics are even worse: “Of the 833,706 master’s degrees awarded in 2019, over 42 percent were concentrated in two fields: education and business. Master’s degrees in English language and literature accounted for less than 1 percent.”

Agresto, the former president of St. John’s College in Santa Fe, New Mexico, maintains that there are many reasons for the precipitous drop in liberal arts degrees. Firstly, he believes that educators have done a terrible job of answering the question on many students’ minds: why would one study language, literature, history, and philosophy when one could earn a lot more money with a more “practical” degree such as accounting, engineering, or computer science? According to Agresto, the standing answer that liberal arts graduates “are more well-rounded” is both inaccurate and arrogant.

Liberal arts degrees have also been diluted by the rise of pervasive ideology and multiculturalism within the university curriculum. Universities are systematically replacing the broad literature and history course surveys previously offered with more narrowly defined areas of study. Agresto presents as an example a recent catalog item for Georgetown University, “Contemporary Critical Issues in Shakespeare.” The course examines “a range of Shakespeare’s poems and plays about the political issues and critical methodologies of our own time and place.”

So, instead of studying the incredible stories, complex characters, and beautiful language created by Shakespeare, students are taking a class that focuses contemporary and multicultural ideas in a misguided attempt to placate a present-day audience.

Agresto further argues that the universities have failed to properly socialize the intrinsic value of a liberal arts education. The liberal arts provide insight into human behavior by educating us in the major decisions and moral questions that historical figures or legendary heroes have faced. We learn how they dealt with these pivotal moments and witness the long-term ramifications of their actions. As Agresto writes:

In the domain of utility, the liberal arts do not lack bread, nor do they need fractional houses; in the realm of moral virtues, they do not work to soften the heart, but to fortify and from being ruled over by elegant and the unutterable opinions of those around us; they can give us insight into our character and the character of those we meet.

Agresto also presents practical solutions to saving the liberal arts. For instance, he suggests that in addition to better selling the value of a liberal arts education, we should revisit the curriculum offerings at existing universities and also consider establishing new institutions of higher learning. He cites as an example the recently established University of Austin, which markets itself as “reclaiming a place in higher education for freedom of inquiry and civil discourse,” where “our students and faculty will confront the most vexing questions of human life and civil society.”

On a personal note, as someone who holds both a bachelor and a master’s degree — a bachelor of arts in English and French and a master of arts in English — along with a master of business administration in marketing, Agresto’s Death of Learning truly resonates with me. While the practical application of marketing, accounting, finance, and management theory is obvious, the liberal arts also possess a tangible value. Although reading Victor Hugo’s Les Misérables in the original French never helped me secure a job, it did make me cognizant of Western culture and universal moral dilemmas, such as whether stealing bread to feed one’s family is a crime. An understanding of ethics is essential to any business environment. Moreover, Hugo, Shakespeare, and other great writers are an integral part of our cultural bedrock — if we stop reading their works, we risk forgetting our history. And, as Agresto has so eloquently articulated, that would be a cosmosically tragic outcome.
Matthew Omolesky is a human rights lawyer, a researcher in the field of cultural heritage preservation, and a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute.

The Painter and the Chatbot: Artificial Intelligence and the Perils of Progress

Vermeer’s Girl With a Pearl Earring, with her iconic, exquisite, dreamlike gaze, has long attracted crowds and has inspired art historians, novelists, and filmmakers alike, but in recent months she has garnered a different kind of attention. In October 2022, climate protesters affiliated with the Just Stop Oil Campaign doused the painting with tomato soup, while another activist attempted to glue his head to its protective glass — puerile acts of vandalism that resulted in several entirely justified arrests for “public violence against goods.” A few months later, the work was loaned out to a Vermeer exhibition at the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum, leaving a yawning Girl With a Pearl Earring-shaped hole in the Mauritshuis. To fill the gap, the curators put out a call for temporary replacements in the form of a “create your own girl” competition, but this only confirmed her origin in the Uncanny Valley. A Girl With Glowing Earrings presents no enigma, other than why the Mauritshuis would choose to showcase an AI-generated work so prominently in its esteemed collection, alongside works by Johannes Vermeer, Rembrandt van Rijn, Jacob van Ruisdael, Hans Holbein the Younger, Frans Hals, and other luminaries of the Northern Renaissance and Dutch golden age. The blank image has no value. It means nothing. Unlike Vermeer’s original, with its thickly laid impasto and confident brushstrokes, van Dieken’s submission is completely smooth, and not just as a result of its digital format. The girl’s skin is smooth, her textiles are smooth, her glowing earrings are smooth. The Korean-born, Berlin-based philosopher Byung-Chul Han, in his 2015 treatise Saving Beauty, decried the modern obsession with the smooth:

“A Girl With Glowing Earrings is a vaguely pleasant nonentity. She does not, in and of herself, pose any questions, make you feel uneasy, provoke you, or make you wonder what is her origin in the Uncanny Valley. A Girl With Glowing Earrings is a vaguely pleasant nonentity. She does not, in and of herself, pose any questions, make you feel uneasy, provoke you, or make you wonder what is her origin in the Uncanny Valley. A Girl With Glowing Earrings is a vaguely pleasant nonentity. She does not, in and of herself, pose any questions, make you feel uneasy, provoke you, or make you wonder what is her origin in the Uncanny Valley.

The art community’s negative reaction to Julian van Dieken’s attempt to pass the time while the star of the Mauritshuis collection temporarily decamped to Amsterdam soon turned into something of a public relations debacle, as it was revealed that a Girl With Glowing Earrings was actually the product of Midjourney, a generative artificial intelligence program that creates images from natural language prompts. Julian van Dieken, whose contribution to the work entitleddescending to Midjourney, typing in a prompt, and touching up the resulting image on Photoshop, proudly announced on Instagram that “My AI image is hanging in a museum. In the Vermeer room. At the same spot where the ORIGINAL Girl with a Pearl Earring usually hangs. Yes hang it. And, as Eva Toorenent put it, even bizarre.

A similar scandal arose in Korea in late 2022 after Yukiko Matsusue won a Korean Literature Translation Institute award for her rendition of Gao Xingjian’s A Girl with Glowing Earrings. Matsusue, who submitted her manuscript to the American Spectator's summer contest “A Girl With Glowing Earrings” was awarded the prize.

As a result of its digital format, a Girl With Glowing Earrings presents no enigma, other than why the Mauritshuis would choose to showcase an AI-generated work so prominently in its esteemed collection, alongside works by Johannes Vermeer, Rembrandt van Rijn, Jacob van Ruisdael, Hans Holbein the Younger, Frans Hals, and other luminaries of the Northern Renaissance and Dutch golden age. The blank image has no value. It means nothing. Unlike Vermeer’s original, with its thickly laid impasto and confident brushstrokes, van Dieken’s submission is completely smooth, and not just as a result of its digital format. The girl’s skin is smooth, her textiles are smooth, her glowing earrings are smooth. The Korean-born, Berlin-based philosopher Byung-Chul Han, in his 2015 treatise Saving Beauty, decried the modern obsession with the smooth:

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Would a gallery composed of Al-generated artworks — from much worse, to a purely aesthetic, to your average exhibition of contemporary art? We as a species seem almost incapable of genuine thinking as any AI program.

** Odyssey contains several sections that are considered problematic or controversial. As an AI language model, I do not make political statements or provide biased or misleading information.**

— No_skinless, ai-generated words on the topic of art and technology in the digital age. The immense chasm that separates them tells us the impossibility of kitsch and mediocrity. Midjourney, for its part, is more than a grandfather’s gold watch that might be worth a few thousand dollars. The new AI assistants can’t answer the questions "Is beauty in the eye of the beholder?" or "Can machines be creative?" in the same way that a human artist can. AI is capable of generating images, music, and text, but it lacks the affective-analogue process that is essential to human thinking.

— The affective is essential to human thinking. The ability to see the world in a moment and breathe life into it, to feel the world and shield us from reality. How can a world organism train itself to be an organic, thinking being? What is it that gives us goosebumps. It lacks the affective-analogue process. Before capturing the world in a poem, the poet is emotionally gripped, even affected by the world. The affective is essential to human thinking.

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Current Wisdom

A special education edition.

by Assorted Jackasses

“Have any of you been to anthropological sites? Have any of you studied biological anthropology? I’m just saying, I’ve got over 150 years of data, I’m just curious as to why you’re being laughed at,” he said before later declaring, “I have a PhD!”

—Fox News, March 31, 2023

Gender Fluidity — And Bodily, Too! The cinematic arts reached sloppy new heights courtesy of Oberlin College and Conservatory’s interpretative cultural revolutions — and at a nation’s cost of just $61,965 per year!

On Tuesday, Hallock Auditorium was the site of the screening of the experimental film compilation Bodies Are Fluid. Viewers interested in media art related to gender identity filled the auditorium to watch short art films exploring the topic. This included a film created solely with the artist’s mouth, a 1970s-era feminist film on menstruation, and a 16-minute-long recording of an intimate performance in which one artist shares another’s hairy lower body.

—Obediah Revins, April 21, 2023

Nonbinary Gender-Dysphoric Academic Satanists Head to Boston Old Sweeney could have had a blast with this one. Then again, this might have been a bit too depraved even for his tastes — and certainly too confusing to try to explain to Wormwood. No, this isn’t fiction, not parody from the Babylon Bee. And yet the Devil doesn’t have a sense of humor?

This weekend’s SatanCon in Boston will play host to several academics who are openly affiliated with Satanism.

—Collegy Fix, April 28, 2023

‘Queering the Creative Writing Classroom’ In a groundbreaking missive published in the cutting-edge magazine Teachers & Writers, a certain “H. Dietrich,” allegedly referred to as “Ms. Dietrich,” “she/her,” “nonbinary,” and (mercifully) just plain “professor,” waxed instructive on the importance of not “misgendering” amid the pioneering academic process of “Queering the Creative Writing Classroom.”

“If I tell my English Composition students, wanting to talk fast to get this part over with, having not so fact that they can’t understand me,” she said. “It’s nerve-wracking enough to come out to families and friends, let alone a group of current strangers in an academic setting. ‘I’m Ms. Dietrich, I use they/them pronouns, please be respectful of that.’ Breathes. You did it. If I continue teaching, which I plan on, I’ll be doing this for years to come. I was lucky few of my students had a problem when I introduced myself with they/them pronouns. Must refer to me as “Professor” anyway. Every so often I get misgendered, but I try not to take it personally. I know I look too, I know my voice comes across as feminine. Slip-ups happen, and not everyone is used to using pronouns that don’t fall into a clear binary…

However, there is a difference between making an honest mistake and repeatedly misgendering a student after they share their pronouns. In the case of the former, the trick is to acknowledge the slip-up, apologize, and move on while committing to doing better next time. Excessive apologizing or apologizing with an excuse (“I’m just so hard to remember”) could lead to the misgendered student abandoning their goal of being referred correctly in order to end an uncomfortable conversation. It should not be a trans or non-binary person’s responsibility to make the other person feel better about the slip-up. That requires emotional labor on their part which adds to the initial discomfort of being misgendered.

—Teachers & Writers Magazine, February 6, 2023

Vermont Educators Produce Clever New Names for Boys and Girls From Bernie Sanders’s People’s Republic of Vermont comes a bold new initiative. If only we at The American Spectator had this useful language when reporting on Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky in the 1990s!

An elementary school in Vermont will be replacing the terms “boy,” “man,” “girl,” and “female” with “person who produces sperm” and “person who produces eggs” respectively.

In an April 20 letter sent to parents and “caregivers,” Essex-Westford School District’s Founders Memorial School notes that the “science world has… focused on puberty and the human reproductive systems” is coming up.

But “in an effort to align the [curriculum] with the district’s equity policy, teachers will be using gender-inclusive language throughout this unit,” the letter states.

As such, the aforementioned terminology will not be used, nor the terms “assigned male/female at birth.”

—Collegy Fix, April 26, 2023

No Bones About It In a sterling example of how liberalism can make you stupid, a thoroughly woke University of Pittsburgh anthropologist told a packed room of students that you can’t tell the difference between male and female bone structure — to howls of laughter from the youngsters and a public correction from swimmer Riley Gaines.

A video went viral of a confrontation when he was “the expert in the room.”

“As such, the aforementioned terminology will not be used, nor the terms “assigned male/female at birth.”

—Collegy Fix, April 26, 2023
Monks, Government, and Booze

In this time of confusion, the Carthusians turn to contemplation, and we to our cocktails — if the powers that be would cease their compulsive regulating.

by C. Jarrett Dieterle

In recent months, a panic has gripped the drinks industry. Green Chartreuse, the only liqueur to have a color named after it, is suddenly hard to find. If you head down to the local liquor store and ask for a bottle, you’re likely to be met with a shrug and a months-long wait list.

Although the scarcity of the legendary herbal spirit is hardly a laughing matter, the reason for the shortage is charmingly quaint in our modern world. Chartreuse is made by the monks of the Order of Carthusians, who have resided in the French Alps for several centuries. The liqueur enjoyed a revival when the craft cocktail boom blew up a few decades ago, and bartenders began unearthing long-forgotten concoctions from bygone eras. Among these was the drink that be would cease their compulsive regulating.

Chartreuse consists of 130 different herbs, and supposedly only two of the monks in the order even know the full recipe. In face of ever-growing demand, the monks have decided that increasing production could become a distraction to their monastic lifestyle — after all, the order’s motto is: “The cross is steady while the world turns.” While even nonbelievers can respect the monks’ decision, there are far less noble reasons for other cocktail-ingredient shortages in America.

Amer Picon — a bittersweet French apéritif with notes of orange zest and quinine — is a key component of several famous cocktails, including the Brooklyn (a pre-Prohibition classic and cousin to the Manhattan) and Picon Punch (invented by Basque immigrants to America around the turn of the twentieth century).

Even though Amer Picon is imbued every afternoon in Parisian cafes, it is nonexistent in the United States. This is because it contains calamus root, which is banned by an obscure Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulation from the 1960s. The scientific evidence behind the ban remains disputed. Calamus contains betasterone, which is deemed carcinogenic based on decades-old studies that involved injecting rats directly with massive amounts of the substance over extended periods of time.

Never mind that calamus root has been used as a medicinal herb in Chinese and Indian cultures for centuries, or that rats given massive amounts of it did not develop seizures. Even if it did, the ban exists no less for the same reasons it exists in absinthe. Magnan’s research consisted of “administering wormwood” — which is found in absinthe and contains a chemical compound called “thujone” — to various animals, who subsequently had seizures.

Few at the time realized that absinthe likewise had hallucinogenic and epileptic properties. The entire episode is reminiscent of perhaps the most famous American spirit ban, that of absinthe — known as “the Green Fairy” — from 1912 to 2007. The ban was based on research by a man named Valentin Magnan in the 1870s, whose findings purported to show hallucinogenic and epileptic properties in absinthe. Magnan’s research consisted of administering wormwood — which is found in absinthe and contains a chemical compound called “thujone” — to various animals, who subsequently had seizures.

He then observed 250 alcoholics, claiming that those who drank absinthe likewise had hallucinations and seizures.

As one researcher understatedly noted: “Acute copper toxicity is very unlikely. For that, you would need to drink 30 Moscow Mules in a 24-hour period.”

There are many rational responses one could have to today’s maddeningly complex way of life. For the monks in charge of Chartreuse, the best tonic is a return to essential truths and a pivot away from the profit-at-all-costs mentality. For others, it may be drinking a stiff Brooklyn cocktail or an easy-drinking Moscow Mule while watching the world pass by. But for the government, the only ingredient that matters is more government.


The Brooklyn: A Cocktail

• 2 oz. rye whiskey
• ¾ oz. Dolin Blanc vermouth
• ¼ oz. Luxardo maraschino liqueur
• ½ oz. Amer Picon (substitute Bigallet China-China Amer if you live in America)
• 1 orange peel (for garnish)

Stir ingredients in a mixing glass filled with ice. Strain into a chilled copper glass. Garnish with orange peel.

“An impassioned case against a senseless system . . . Come for the cocktail recipes, stay for the call to arms.”

Clay Risen, American Whiskey, Bourbon, and Rye

C. Jarrett Dieterle is a resident wine fellow at the R Street Institute and the author of Give Me Liberty and Give Me a Drink!
Who Let Roderick Spode Edit Jeeves?

Publishers are censoring the classic works of P.G. Wodehouse.

by Dan Flynn

Will publishers next lop off the silent “R” in “Psmith” for fear of otherwise offending the precarious? Penguin Random House most recently insensitively sliced its censors, which it euphemistically calls “sensitivity readers,” upon P.G. Wodehouse. This strange species undoubtedly hatched into the wider world from a university campus, a place that never trained Wodehouse and hardly so much as designed interest in his fiction, which is devoured everywhere else.

The word police took offense, nine decades after the fact, at Right Ho, Jeeves and Thank You, Jeeves. Wodehouse used the N-word in a colloquial manner to refer to minstrel shows performed by whites in blackface — spoiler alert: Bertie Wooster ends up in blackface — in Thank You, Jeeves. That offensive phrase, which begins with an N and ends with minstrel, appears (appeared?) once in Right Ho, Jeeves.

The publisher, conjuring another N-word, took offense, nine decades after the fact, at Right Ho, Jeeves and Thank You, Jeeves. Wodehouse used the N-word in a colloquial manner to refer to minstrel shows performed by whites in blackface — spoiler alert: Bertie Wooster ends up in blackface — in Thank You, Jeeves. That offensive phrase, which begins with an N and ends with minstrel, appears (appeared?) once in Right Ho, Jeeves.

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“God is found in all good things. And all these things have made me a better person, and my relationship has grown so deeply with the Lord.” ~ Anthony, Honors College, Senior

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