"It is an affront to treat falsehood with complacence." Thomas Paine

CAMPUS REPORT

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THE CHATTERING CLASSES 2013

By: Malcolm A. Kline

Let us know if you would like to spend some quality time with these ladies and gentlemen.

Academics say, and do, the darndest things. This year:

- Brian C. Mitchell, president emeritus of Bucknell, described his chosen field by noting: "I replied that presidents are better thought of as King Solomon determining how to divide the baby."

- "In modern history, only the forced labor camps of the former U.S.S.R. under Stalin approached these levels of penal confinement," Alice Goffmann, a sociologist at the University of Wisconsin at Madison claims of the six million incarcerated in U. S. prisons. Actually, "From 1929 until Stalin's death in 1953, **an estimated 14 million people passed through the Gulag,"** Radio Free Europe **reports**. "About 1.6 million people died there."

- Cornell historian Holly Case claimed that many of Stalin's victims were of a pre-1934 vintage, despite evidence from the UN, the Library of Congress and many other sources never recognized as hostile to the Soviet Union.

- Andrew Seal, Ph.D. candidate in American Studies at Yale lamented in The Chronicle Review that "It's alarming to me that most [Das]Capital-quoters I have encountered are white men."

- Martin Kich who teaches at Wright State in Ohio claimed that the Obamacare information sites "have proven to be so in demand that some of them have repeatedly crashed under the heavy digital traffic."

- University of Kansas journalism professor David Guth was placed on administrative leave after his anti-NRA tweet on gun control in response to the Navy Yard shooting in Washington, D.C. last week. Guth's tweet, since deleted, said that "blood is on the hands of the #NRA. Next time, let it be YOUR sons and daughters."

- A professor at a Catholic college claims to make "A Catholic Case Against MOOCs [Massive Open Online Courses]" but his arguments never veer far from the secular. "Moral education, which Catholic institutions

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Director's Corner

By Malcolm A. Kline, Executive Director of AIA

January 2014

Dear Reader,

Happy New Year! By the time that you read this, our staff writer, Spencer Irvine, and I will have attended the Modern Language Association's annual convention in Chicago. Thousands of English professors from the U. S. and around the world will converge upon the Windy City to make it or attend even windier.

The conference stretches for four days and features hundreds of seminars given by hundreds of professors. We'll cover as many of these as we can because they will be previewing their courses. What we have found in the nearly 30 years of covering these meetings is that if you love great literature, or at least like good stories, the courses offered by English departments, most of which are represented at the MLA, will disappoint.

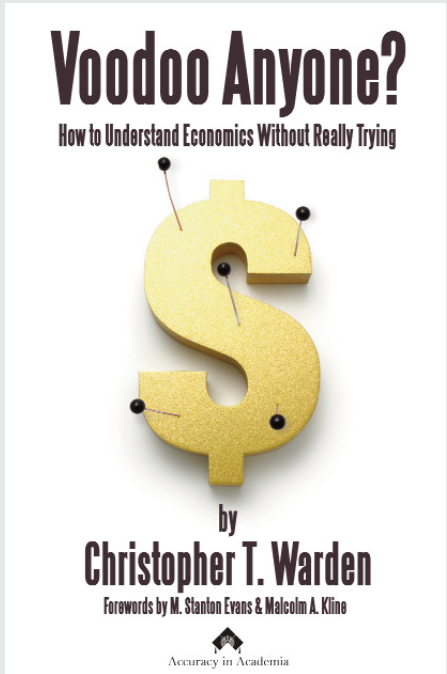
This year's conclave promises to be no exception to that trend. Among the highlights we expect to cover are:

- Literary Sociologies of Race and Ethnicity;
- Women's Education and the Rhetoric of Sexual Reformation;
- Labor Relations, Sad Clowns;
- Class Vulnerabilities in Academia;
- Animals and Animality;
- War, Scar: Representations of US Torture and Imperial Violence since Vietnam;
- Literature and Life after Capitalism: Socialism, Barbarism, Communism, or Just More Capitalism?;
- Red Chicago; and
- Jewish Monsters.

See the lengths we go to in order to keep you informed?

All the best,

Mal Kline,
Executive Director



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Editor: Malcolm A. Kline
Contributing Editor: Deborah Lambert

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promise (and secular ones, too, should offer), relies on dialogue and physical proximity. Students therefore need accessible mentors on the faculty as well as counselors, advisers, and chaplains," Jonathan Malesic of King's College in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, writes. Yet the moral education he envisions is not one that necessarily involves the seven sacraments but does primarily include himself. "By forswearing the production and consumption of MOOCs, Catholic colleges would also show that social justice entails not replacing human labor (here, faculty) with cheaper, less effective machine labor," he asserts.

- Meyer "Mike" Alewitz teaches Fine Arts at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). His Rate My Professor ratings indicate that he possesses, to put it mildly, an artistic temperament. "He told a girl he wanted to kill himself after he looked at her work, in front of the whole class!" one reviewer wrote.

- The Princeton catalogue proclaimed that "The Undead are everywhere: on movie and television screens, in books, even in the academy."

The Environment! Funny?

- Princeton also has a course entitled "The Environment Can Be Funny."

- Tulane University economist Douglas Harris. found that at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, there are "380 unique departments and almost 200 supervisors who managed a single employee."

- Economist Jonathan B. Wright actually attempts to connect the Ivory Tower with the outside world, yet his course in "Moral Antecedants of the Global Economic Crisis of 2008-9" could be too rooted in the faculty lounge to make much of an impact on Main Street. "Your job here is to engage yourself and improve your human capital," he tells his students. Yet, his method for doing so might prove a hard sell to employers."The seminar's first lesson was on the importance of ambiguity and the unknowable nature of truth," Berrett relates. "The students had come to the first class having read an essay by Andrew W. Lo that appeared in the Journal of Economic Literature in 2012." "It compared academic and popular analyses of the financial crisis to Akira Kurosawa's 1950 file Rashomon, in which a crime is recounted by four people, whose interpretations vary drastically."

- Stanford Law professor Deborah L. Rhode observed of the U. S. Supreme Court's gay marriage decision that "Although the outcome was a happy one, there is much to dislike about the process by which it was achieved."

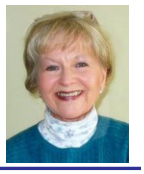
- Aaron Barlow, New York City College of Technology, English, Faculty Member, said of the idealistic youth he instructs, "I cannot, however, teach them grammar and proofreading in the course of a semester when their high-school educations have been shoddy."

- Dartmouth economist Ethan Lewis claimed at the Cato Institute that "We benefit from bringing low skilled workers" into the United States, but admitted that "we may be raising inequality."

Malcolm A. Kline *is the Executive Director of Accuracy in Academia.*
If you would like to comment on this article, e-mail mal.kline@academia.org.

SQUEAKY CHALK

by Deborah Lambert



IS WESLEYAN RE-THINKING DIVERSITY?

Wesleyan University has not only earned a nationwide reputation for being the "Diversity University," but has the dubious distinction of having some of its alums, students and professors advocate for "Keeping Wesleyan Weird."

The school presently serves as a bastion of "gender non-conforming" students or "trans," whose "gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth," according to Newsweek. Some of the "trans" interviewed for a recent Newsweek article reported that "they often won't use the bathroom if they can't locate one of the school's 'all-gender,' single use facilities. More than one said they experience panic attacks from the stress."

But during a recent gathering of hundreds of Wesleyan alums on campus, some of the discussion focused on a worrisome conservative trend at the school they held so dear, a cultural shift they feared would prevent "marginalized students from speaking out."

Case in point: Last October when a group of students using the pseudonym "Pissed Off Trans People" uploaded pdfs of "All Gender Restroom signs" reading "Men" and "Women" and pasted paper signs over them, proclaiming that "the space was open to all . . . regardless of gender identity or expression."

But unlike the good old days, administrators actually punished three of the perpetrators, which apparently marked the first time anything like that had happened to LGBT activists.

This policy change may actually be part of a broader financial shift that school president Michael Roth is trying to make during his tenure in order to put the institution on a firmer footing or in Wesleyan-speak, a "more sustainable path." Not only has Roth cancelled $200 million worth of capital projects, his staff cuts and other efficiency measures have added up to about $30 million in annual savings. This allows the university to move more money into the college endowment, which is significantly smaller than those of its peers such as Middlebury and Bowdoin.

There is nothing on the horizon that indicates any rise in tuition, which already hovers in the area of $60,000 per year, higher than that of its competition.

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OBAMA'S CASH FOR PRE-SCHOOL CLUNKERS

Columnist/author/pundit Michelle Malkin puts it this way: "It's elementary: When Democrats find themselves in political trouble, they reach for your wallets. After squandering billions on an ineffectual stimulus, failed green energy boondoggles and the disastrous Unaffordable Care Act, the Obama White House wants to dump $75 billion more into 'free' preschool for all. That'll solve everything."

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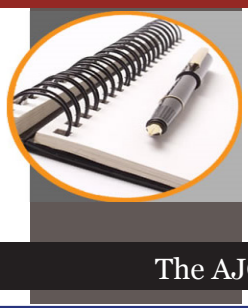

Ask about internships at the American Journalism Center, a joint program of Accuracy in Media and Accuracy in Academia. The AJC offers 12 weeks of research, reporting and writing experience in our nation's capital. Stipends or scholarships are available to program participants. For more information, e-mail Mal Kline at *mal.kline@academia.org* or visit us at *www.aimajc.org*

The AJC is a joint project of Accuracy in Media and Accuracy in Academia

Malkin goes on to say that this pre-K idea is routinely recycled by "Democratic speechwriters in need of State of the Union padding." However, this time the support is also coming from "big-business statists and academic shills."

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has emerged as Team Obama's biggest cheerleader for expanding preschool funding, along with former Obama insider Austan Goolsbee, who recently observed in The Wall Street Journal that early childhood education should be viewed as a public "investment," and at "$10,000 per child," he proclaimed that universal pre-K is a "bargain."

However, Malkin questioned the wisdom of using Austan Goolsbee as an education sage based on the wrong-headed opinions he voiced in 2007 about subprime mortgages (good) and their critics (bad).

Studies of three and four year olds who have taken part in Head Start programs, such as a recent report released by the Richmond Times Dispatch, have repeatedly shown that "at the end of kindergarten and first grade ... the Head Start children and the control group children were at the same level." But that doesn't stop supporters of the "endless Keynesian pipe dreams" from hyping the false claim that new mega-million-dollar investments in public education will "benefit the economy." Ultimately, Malkin concludes that "it's not about the money or improved academic outcomes for Fed Ed. The increasing federal encroachment into our children's lives at younger and younger ages is about control."

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BEWARE OF UNSAFE STAMP MESSAGES

For years no one had a clue that those icky, gluey stamps that we've pasted on thousands of letters could actually harbor unsafe messages. But thanks to First Lady Michelle Obama, the U.S. Postal Service might have to "destroy its series of 'Just Move' stamps because of safety concerns," according to Maya Salem in Yahoo.com

The "Just Move" initiative, as you recall, was designed to build awareness about the benefits of physical activity

and inspire us to get off the couch and enjoy the great outdoors.

At first glance, the colorful stamps of young people doing various forms of exercise in the series don't look unsafe, but apparently the President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition and some of Mrs. Obama's 'Let's Move' worry warts believe that danger lurks among the running, jumping and leaping figures. It seems that "a skateboarder sans kneepads, a swimmer doing a cannonball and a kid doing a headstand without a helmet" might just encourage the more impressionable among us not to take the proper precautions when undertaking these activities.

At present, the stamp series is "sitting at a printer in upstate New York, awaiting a decision" about its fate.

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RETHINKING MOOCS, ONCE AGAIN

The MOOC revolution is again showing its tendency to move five steps forward, and six steps back, in rapid succession. One of the latest backward moves occurred after a recent study of a million MOOC users released by the U. of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education showed that "only about half of those who registered for a course ever viewed a lecture, and only about 4 percent completed the courses," according to a recent piece in The New York Times by Tamar Lewin.

Then too, one of the most promising experiments at San Jose University has turned into a massive flop. The idea, backed by California Governor Jerry Brown, was to work with Stanford artificial intelligence professor Sebastian Thrun to introduce three online courses for

college credit. Thrun, who has been less than thrilled with the low completion rates, decided to be pro-active and "hire mentors to help students stick with classes."

But it appears that nothing worked out as planned. Despite access to mentors, only 25% of the algebra class on campus and 12% of the high school students passed the course.

However, despite the negative publicity about the recent experiment, there's no reason to think that MOOCs are going away. Some experts compare them to the early mobile phones, viewed for years as clunky and unreliable, while today they've become indispensable.

As for Professor Thrun, he is determined not to give up. "Few ideas work on the first try," he said, adding that "we are seeing significant improvement in learning outcomes and student engagement."

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BAN THE BOTTLE

Harvard University students have recently voted to ban the sale of single-use plastic water bottles on campus, leaving their fate in jeopardy, according to Jennifer Kabbany of The College Fix. The vote also sends a message that Harvard student are in solidarity with the widespread environmental trend to ban the bottle and "make drinking water more accessible through the installation of additional water fountains and reusable water bottle filling stations."

Those with more than a 20-minute memory span may recall that only a couple of decades ago, some of the same environmental groups who now regard bottled water as a potential health hazard and single use plastic water bottles as a plague on our environment, were saying just the opposite.

The Wall Street Journal's Eric Felten noted that entities such as the Environmental Working Group "issued report after breathless report about the lethal dangers spewing from American taps. There were the 1995 studies alleging that 1,000 Americans a year were dying from tainted municipal water, with an extra 400,000 sickened by faucet-flowing pathogens.. . .In 2002 the group warned that the chlorine used to disinfect tap water led to "a health risk for pregnant women."

What a turnaround. Today, it appears that plastic bottles might not only cause cancer but irreparable environmental harm. According to the "Container Recycling Institute, 86% of plastic water bottles used in the US become garbage that ends up in landfills throughout the country. Considering that nearly 60 million plastic water bottles are used every day in the US, we can assume that nearly 18,834,000,000 end up in the landfill each year."

Groups such as Ban the Bottle claim that although people think they are doing the right thing by recycling, "each bottle can take up to 700 years to decompose" in our nation's landfills, an observation that presumably has not been time-tested.

As for that deadly tap water, well, surprise, surprise – many environmental groups say it's actually less dangerous than bottled water, which may harbor germs and dangerous bacteria if left opened for more than 24 hours.

But one thing hasn't changed. While advocating for reusable water bottles has inspired a sudden epidemic of feel-goodism among its proponents, the creation of brand new water refilling stations at Harvard also costs a lot of money – up to $1,500 per station -- which "will be shouldered by a grant that the environmental action committee received, as well as support from the Harvard Office for Sustainability," according to Katrina Malakoff, chairperson of the Harvard Environmental Action Committee. (Meanwhile, no one has mentioned one possible solution to this problem might have been to use the drinking foundations already in place to refill water bottles – just a thought . . .)

"Single use plastic water bottles represent one of the most easily obviated threats currently plaguing the environment," said The Harvard Crimson newspaper in a recent editorial, supporting the ballot measure.

Meanwhile, some brave students have stepped forward to suggest that curtailing the sale of plastic water bottles on campus might lead to drastic measures, such as wandering into a local CVS for a soda or into a 7-11 for a Big Gulp.

The last word, according to Eric Felten: "One problem with fashionable causes—whether for healthy living or a healthy planet—is that the more broadly they are adopted, the less fashionable they become. Eco-chic isn't quite so chic when it becomes as common in Des Moines as it is in Marin County."

IVIED AMERICAN STUDIES

Perhaps a former vice-presidential candidate was right when he said that there are two Americas. From what we've found, there is the one we live in, and the one that is studied in academia.

That the two bear little relation to each other can be seen in what passes for American Studies in some Ivy League colleges and universities. For example, Yalies can explore:

US Lesbian and Gay History

- American Captivity Narratives
- Los Angeles, City of Migrants
- Gender and Sexuality in Media and Popular Culture
- Politics and Culture of the US Color Line

Meanwhile, at Columbia, undergraduates can take:

- Feminist Sexual Political-History
- Historical Approaches to Feminist Questions
- Bodies and Machines 1750-1939
- Equity in Higher Education
- Museums, Memory & Pub Culture

Not to be outdone, undergraduates at Cornell can take:

- Space Cowboys: The 60s Hero
- Race, Gender and the Internet
- Popular Culture in the United States, 1900-1945
- Popular Culture in the United States, 1950 to the present
- The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692
- Black History topics through film
- The Road Trip in American History and Culture
- The U. S.-Mexico Border: History, Culture, Representation
- Introduction to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies
- Cultures of the Cold War
- Culture and Politics of the 1960s
- Environmental History: The United States and Beyond
- Racial and Ethnic Politics in the U. S.
- America's Multicultural Origins to 1754
- Inequality and American Democracy
- Discovering Hip-Hop: Research and the Cornell Hip-Hop Collection

Students at Brown can study:

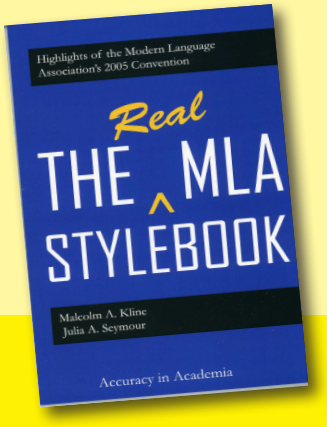
- Crises in American Capitalism
- Slackers and Hipsters: Urban Fictions, 1850-Present
- Revolting Bodies: Aesthetics, Representation, and Popular Culture
- Cities of Sound: Place and History in American Pop Music
- Rethinking Women's Bodies and Rights: Transnational Reproductive Politics

One wonders, with all the rethinking that goes on in academia, do they take the basic step of thinking first? **—MAK**

The REAL MLA Stylebook

To show what college and university English Departments are really teaching, Accuracy in Academia compiled *The REAL MLA Stylebook*, filled with quotes from a recent convention of the Modern Language Association (MLA) where thousands of English professors gather to push their politically correct, radical agenda. Outsiders who attend this event expecting to learn more about Chaucer, Milton and Shakespeare are in for a rude awakening when they discover that panels are more likely to focus on topics such as "Marxism and Globalization;" "What's the Matter with Whiteness," and "Queering Faulkner."

This book is must-reading for anyone interested in learning more about the mindset of faculty members who are tasked with teaching the great works of the English language to our nation's students.



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