

Concordia: Second Meeting Minutes

12 April 2019

In attendance: Paige O'Connor, Brianna Cedrone, Jack Rodgers (Moderator), Zack Coddington, Elizabeth Pritchard, Andrew Hamilton, Joe Hilleary, Ben Ratner, Lorenzo Meigs, Lauren Katz, Nikki Tjin a Djie, Dan Stone, Tim Bulens, Bruce Kohorn, and your notetaker, Mollie Eisner.

Jack began the conversation with some questions from our first meeting

- How relevant are the economic conditions of colleges and universities? Are they beholden to the markets?
- What kinds of things change students' lives? How do you know if it is in the classroom? What creates a soul-stirring moment?

The first topic of discussion: colleges and universities as political/legal spaces of exception

- Jack named underage drinking as one example (featured in "Is This Kansas") and HBCUs as another
 - Should college be an exceptional space, or should it be more reflective?

Ben: I don't like when people say college should reflect life

Andrew: German universities are more often "reflective" of life

- Not residential
- Not supposed to be a "bubble"

Elizabeth: It's interesting to consider what students are actually doing. Hours spent studying have gone down

Andrew: An overarching theme of the assigned readings is that, for some students, things other than the classroom are the most important parts of college life

Elizabeth: Maybe the classroom should become the one thing colleges do

Brianna: Academia has an impact on national discourse

Nikki: The Oberlin piece may be blown out of proportion. Does it actually reflect what's going on. Professors, is it true?

Rob: Contrast between "Is This Kansas" and the article about Oberlin

- Kansas situation is more common--and is actually more degrading

Ben: The political right is making these arguments about places like Oberlin. Seen as a threat

Mollie: Ironically, institutions like Oberlin give students the tools to protest. Using the language of academia against academia

Rob: National coverage does not tell the whole story. We have no idea what happened before. Maybe there is a backstory that helps to explain what happened

Elizabeth: In reference to "Ivory Tower" article--leftist academic machine supposedly driving culture

Ben: Academia creating engaged youth voter group

Joe: Idea within right of hidden leftist groups in "deep state" bureaucracy

Rob: Is that actually identifying the locus of power?

Joe: Could point to government choices getting lost in bureaucracy

Paige: Graduates of liberal institutions are going to be in charge of the Internet soon

Andrew: Institutions are creating a language

- If you don't keep up with them, you're labeled a racist etc.
- Acceptance rate
 - Eliteness associated with the fact that 92% of people can't go here

Jack: Always a new word to describe educational mission

Dan: And words you're not supposed to use (for example, "you guys")

Rob: To be nervous isn't bad

Ben: It's awareness of who is in your classroom

Tim: Only the elite have access to the exact vocabulary

Brianna: It's rare to have time to protest little things like "you guys"

Andrew: Bad faith efforts of opponents

- PC police conflation
- Miscalibration of where people place their time and effort

Elizabeth: Students have said, "I'm afraid of saying the wrong thing so I fall silent in class"

Mollie: What do you say in response to students like that?

Jack directed the conversation to trigger warnings

- Is the classroom an exceptional space? A place to be comfortable?

Break to talk in small groups and grab refreshments

Andrew: Do the faculty in the room use trigger warnings?

Elizabeth: Yes. "We're flesh creatures"

- She warns students about potentially upsetting material and provides remedies for their discomfort

Rob: Dislikes the term "trigger warning"

- The term itself is fraught with issues, but he believes in giving students fair warning

Dan: Provide a happy medium of comfort and exposure

- Warnings could potentially be excessive

Paige: Things like microaggressions shut down discourse on both sides

- People stop listening to each other

Zack: Even if you don't say, "This is a trigger warning," saying things such as, "You can step out of the room if this offends you" are interpreted as trigger warnings

- Prefatory remark compromises argument

Nikki: Antifragility argument

- Psychologists say that kids need to be exposed

Elizabeth: Certain content could cause students to shut down, at which point learning stops

- Warnings provide children the opportunity to stay engaged

Mollie: We could potentially use trigger warnings to open up the intellectual capacity of the conversation

Nikki: Students are already aware of the issues (i.e. women's oppression)

Lorenzo: Trigger warning allows you to know your professor is aware of the issues so you can move on

- Example of natural slavery in Aristotle's *Politics*

Brianna: Film class example

- It is helpful when the professor demonstrates that there is something strange going on

Jack: switching gears--asks us to think about the identity of educational institutions

- HBCUs moving in different directions
 - Increased Latinx population, for example (from podcast)

Joe: Education as job preparation (podcast)

Lorenzo: Most people need to be getting something out of college education

- Education for the sake of education should be available for the elite, but don't force it on citizens

Nikki: No one is forcing it

Andrew: We talk a lot about getting but not doing jobs

Elizabeth: What does it mean to be a "critical thinker"? Perhaps it's a vacuous term

Ben: As a citizen, it will help

Lorenzo: Isn't it more important to reform K-12 education?

Bruce: Where did the idea come from that you have to go to college to make more money?

Dan: People make more money with a degree

Rob: Employers lazily use degrees to limit the amount of people they have to consider for jobs

Bruce: Perhaps the pendulum will swing back around? Electricians make more money than Bowdoin students

Jack: Associated with college is the notion that it will be the best four years of your life

Bruce: Student debt is going to change things--people will stop going to college

Nikki: A lot of people aren't brave enough to not go to college

Rob: Tragedy to get rid of vocational schools

- We don't talk about intellectual flourishing that you can acquire in a vocational position

Tim: People not fulfilling their full potential

Paige: Bowdoin doesn't produce entrepreneurs

Tim: People who have a ton of money are miserable

Rob: recommends Matthew Crawford's *Shop Craft as Soulcraft*

We adjourn for a leisurely walk (or bike ride) to Moderation Brewing Company, where we reconvene for camaraderie. Our final meeting for the spring semester will be 26 April 2019