

# RE/PRESENTING CLASS

□ *Essays in Postmodern Marxism*

*Edited by*

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DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS

*Durham & London* 2001

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Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ©

Designed by C. H. Westmoreland

Typeset in Times Roman by Tseng Information Systems, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data appear on the last printed page of this book.

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ecutive in the electronics industry, initially firms will tend to greet regulation with half-hearted compliance or even resistance, yet within a decade or less many find that environmental compliance has become a major center of both cost-cutting and technological innovation (James Hamm, personal communication with the authors, Dec. 1999).

FRED CURTIS



## IVY-COVERED EXPLOITATION

### *Class, Education, and the Liberal Arts College*

Colleges and universities are educational institutions; business enterprises are economic; and power resides in government. These forms of reductionism are as common as they are uncomfortable. Anyone who has spent any time teaching at the college or university level has experienced power relationships and the rhetoric of competition and economic constraints as well as “education.” This chapter challenges such reductionist thinking by understanding the liberal arts college as a complex social site comprised, in part, of knowledge practices, disciplines, and forms of power (à la Foucault) and the production, extraction, and distribution of surplus labor (i.e., class processes). In particular, class is not understood as the province of the industrial capitalist enterprise; nor is academia seen as opposed to a classless “ivory tower.” In this way, the paper contributes to the growing antiessentialist literature that opens class analysis to various sites within society, including households, the state, labor unions, and nonprofit organizations, among others.

In extending Marxian theory to the liberal arts college, this paper argues that professors can be exploited there—producing more than they receive in value. By making visible the class structure of a college in this way, I highlight the remarkable similarity between the productive labor of a college professor and that of a worker on a factory assembly line or behind the counter of a fast-food establishment: All are productive of surplus value. In that sense, they occupy a similar class position in society, despite their otherwise very different positions of power, status, working conditions, and income.

## Education and Class

Education is a special human activity. It is a site of intellectual nurturing and it is also a way to get up and out, to improve one's life in both material and nonmaterial ways. As an educational institution, the liberal arts college is often viewed as an "ivory tower," an institution essentially different from the capitalist profit-seeking economy.<sup>1</sup> Capitalism is seen as affecting the college via *external* pressures on curriculum and teaching and by the employment of college graduates.<sup>2</sup> But this is not the whole story. Rather, the liberal arts college can itself be seen as partly constituted by capitalist class relations, and these *internal* class relations of the college create contradictions for the special educational purpose of the college.

In general, then, this chapter rethinks the traditional depiction of the liberal arts college as an essentially educational institution with non-profit, tax-exempt status.<sup>3</sup> In reconceptualizing the major revenue and expenditure flows of the college in class-analytical terms, the paper presents a new way of thinking about this institution including the multiple, interactive class and nonclass roles that faculty members play. In particular, it also allows us to understand how the teaching, curricular, tenure, and budgetary processes common to faculty work life are complexly related to class and to struggles over class.

By showing that educational or academic processes are joined together with the production, extraction, and distribution of surplus value within the liberal arts college, this chapter suggests ways in which such capitalist exploitation may itself undermine "the liberal arts education." It analyzes how disciplinary boundaries, tenure, the administrative structure of the college, and its nontuition sources of income may both support the extraction of surplus value from faculty members and, at the same time, contradict the curriculum and pedagogy of the liberal arts college. From this point of view, the educational dimension of the "academic" institution of the liberal arts college is complexly and contradictorily related to the class-exploitative dimension of the college.

## Class Analysis of the Liberal Arts College

The liberal arts college is a capitalist enterprise and faculty members are academic proletarians producing surplus value that is appropriated and distributed by trustee-capitalists. This is neither a familiar nor a comfortable view. A more common view is that the liberal arts college is a non-profit, tax-exempt academic institution, essentially different from the for-profit capitalist enterprise. This is both a structural judgment (the college is a nonprofit institution) and a subjective assessment by faculty members, administrators, and students (that the essence of the college is academic and that professors are scholars/educators and not workers). I have come, however, to see the liberal arts college as both a nonprofit educational institution *and* a capitalist enterprise, whose two "sides" both reinforce and contradict one another.

### *The Academic Commodity*

It is difficult for faculty members to see ourselves as academic proletarians producing commodities for sale, though perhaps today it is less difficult than it used to be. While we prepare and teach classes, develop new courses, work with students, and conduct our scholarly research, we also participate in faculty meetings and read reports where a common theme is our financial situation, competition from other liberal arts colleges and state universities, and ways in which faculty can help the college compete more effectively. We compete—as a capitalist enterprise—with other liberal arts colleges (and public and private universities) to sell our particular commodity. But what is it that we are competing to sell? What is the commodity produced by the college?

The liberal arts college produces and sells a specific educational commodity, the academic course, usually as part of a full-time package of courses.<sup>4</sup> The exchange-value of this commodity is tuition. The use-value of the course may include the specific knowledge gained, entertainment, credits toward fulfilling major or general graduation requirements and hence the bachelor's degree, and any usefulness the course might have in obtaining employment and future success in self- or paid employment.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the sales effort by the public relations and admissions offices

focuses on the special experience (use-value) of a specific liberal arts college, its curriculum, special programs, faculty, success of its graduates, prestige, and so on versus competitor schools. But the actual commodity being sold by the college and purchased by students, on their admission, is the package of courses.

To say that students purchase the course commodity from the college and that faculty members produce this commodity is to delineate only one aspect of the relationship between students and faculty members and of the complex work life of faculty members. Teaching produces not only a commodity but also new understandings, emotional responses, changed (power) relations, and so on. Faculty members befriend, advise, counsel, and learn from students as well as instruct them.<sup>6</sup> All of these aspects may—and in a liberal arts college, often are—part of “teaching,” as essential to it as the production of the academic commodity.

*Faculty-workers:*

*The Production and Extraction of Surplus Value*

One of the aspects of teaching at a liberal arts college is the class dimension.<sup>7</sup> Faculty members who teach courses produce, inter alia, both commodities (courses) and surplus value. They produce commodities whose value is greater than the salary of the faculty plus the portion of the academic means of production used to produce them. Faculty members are paid a wage (salary) for their labor-power; the means of academic production are purchased as commodities; and the product made with them, the course, is sold as a commodity to students. The college is thus partly constituted by a capitalist production process. Faculty members produce both value and surplus value.

This point can be illustrated with a numerical example (summarized in table 1).<sup>8</sup> Assume that the tuition at a liberal arts college is \$19,000 per year and that, on average, students take eight four-credit courses per year (the number needed to graduate in four years) for a per-course full-time tuition of \$2,375 (roughly \$600 per credit). Further assume that each course has an average enrollment of fifteen students for a per-course revenue of \$35,625. If half of this amount goes to pay for the means of academic production (electricity, computers, library materials, lab sup-

Table 1

A. Tuition	\$19,000
B. Per-Course Full-time Tuition (assumes 8 courses taken per year)	\$2,375
C. Number of Students per course, average	15
D. Per Course Tuition Revenue (B × C)	\$35,625
E. Assume Means of Production (= constant capital) – ½ value revenue, D	\$17,812.50
F. Value Added by Productive Laborers, per course (D – E)	\$17,812.50
G. Average Teaching Load per Faculty Member per Year	5
H. Value of Labor per Faculty Member per Year (F × G)	\$89,062.50
I. Value of Constant Capital per 5 Courses (E × G)	\$89,062.50
J. Total Value of Courses Taught per Faculty Member per Year (H + I = G × D)	\$178,125
K. Average Annual Faculty Salary	\$50,000
L. Average Annual Faculty Benefits (25% of Salary)	\$12,500
M. Average Annual Faculty Compensation (Variable Capital Needed to Produce 5 Courses = K + L)	\$62,500
N. Surplus Value (Value of Labor Performed less Variable Capital) (H – M)	\$26,562.50
O. Rate of Surplus Value (N/M)	42.5%
P. Rate of Profit (N/{I + M})	17.5%



plies, and so forth), the remaining \$17,812.50 per course is the value added by faculty members as they teach the course.<sup>9</sup> Assume that the average teaching load is five four-credit courses per year, so that the annual value of labor performed per faculty member is \$89,062.50.

If the average faculty salary is \$50,000, with an additional 25 percent in benefits, the average compensation is \$62,500 per year. This leaves \$26,562.50 in surplus value, equivalent to a profit rate of 17.5 percent or a rate of surplus value of 42.5 percent.<sup>10</sup> The amount of surplus value would be larger if: (1) faculty taught more courses per year; (2) there were more students per course on average; (3) faculty were paid less or had lower benefits, or (4) less of the academic means of production were funded out of tuition income. The first two of these possibilities constitute an increase in the work load (number of hours per week involving in preparing and teaching courses) or an increase in absolute surplus value.<sup>11</sup> The latter two constitute an increase in relative surplus value.

An objection to this example is that the "profit" (or "net income") calculated above leaves out many of the costs of operating a liberal arts college, including secretaries, administrators, and admissions staff, among others. They have been omitted in showing the extraction of surplus value just as General Motors' secretaries, marketing staff, and executives are omitted in calculating that amount of surplus value produced by auto workers while making cars and trucks. The wages and salaries of such nonfaculty employees are not part of variable capital (the productive labor payroll) necessary to the production of courses. The labor of support staff, administrators, and so on, while not directly productive of academic courses, is a necessary support to them. Their "unproductive" labor is paid out of surplus value, not out of capital.

The following equations describe the revenue and expenditure flows of the liberal arts college in class terms:

- (1)  $Y_{fc} = \text{gross tuition income} = c + v + s$   
 where  $Y_{fc}$  = the capitalist fundamental class income received as tuition dollars for the sale of the academic commodity;  
 $c$  = constant capital = the value of the academic means of production funded out of tuition dollars;

$v$  = variable capital = the salary and benefits of the faculty members who teach/produce courses;  
 $s$  = surplus value;  
 $v + s$  = the value added by faculty members as they teach courses.

- (2)  $E_k = c + v$  = expenditure out of gross tuition income to maintain the constant and variable capital of the college at an unchanged level.

- (3)  $Y_s$  = "net" capitalist fundamental class income  
 $= Y_{fc} - E_k = s$  [= net tuition income].<sup>12</sup>

- (4)  $Y_s = E_{sc}$   
 where  $E_{sc}$  = the distribution (expenditure) of the surplus value income to support various offices and functions of the college that are necessary to keep it functioning as both a capitalist enterprise and an educational institution.

#### *Trustees and the Distribution of Surplus Value*

If surplus value is being produced by faculty members, who is extracting the surplus and how is it being distributed? The surplus-extracting capitalists of the private liberal arts college are the members of the Board of Trustees. The trustees are the collective legal owners of the liberal arts college; they are empowered to hire, fire, and give tenure to faculty. By virtue of their complex position, they both extract surplus value from academic commodity-producing workers and distribute it, partly within the college.

Trustees set policy that determines how this surplus-value income is distributed. Typically, it is expended to reproduce the college as both an academic institution and a capitalist enterprise, including the appointment of administrators to carry out the day-to-day management of the college. Hence part of the surplus value is expended to support the admissions, business, financial aid, and public relations offices, all of which act to ensure that the academic commodity is sold and the extracted surplus

value is actually realized in the form of money income (tuition revenue). Another part of the surplus value goes to support the offices of academic administration, including the provost, academic deans, registrar, and department chairs.<sup>13</sup> Among other functions, these offices enhance the extraction of surplus value by maintaining faculty productivity, e.g., via administering course evaluations and the tenure process (discussed below) and negotiating faculty compensation. They may also develop curricula and new programs to keep the college's "product" competitive. Further, part of the surplus value is distributed to secretaries, laboratory assistants, library staff, and others whose work directly supports faculty teaching. Finally, part of the surplus value is, in effect, distributed to students in the form of tuition discounts or "unfunded financial aid."

The materials and equipment costs and the salaries needed to keep the nonteaching offices operating are paid out of the surplus value extracted from faculty productive laborers. This does not imply that the work done by "nonteaching" laborers is unnecessary to the survival of the college as both an educational institution and a capitalist enterprise. The "nonteaching" operations of the liberal arts college are functions similar to the marketing, sales, finance, supervision, collective bargaining, product development, and support staff activities of industrial capitalist firms. They are critical to the survival of the firm, but they are not productive of surplus value.

While private liberal arts colleges distribute surplus value in some ways analogously to industrial capitalist firms, there are two major differences between them. First, as nonprofit, tax-exempt institutions, private liberal arts colleges do not distribute surplus value to the state in the form of taxes. Colleges do not pay income, profits, capital gains, or sales taxes, although they do pay payroll and Social Security taxes (the latter often being counted as part of faculty and staff "benefits").<sup>14</sup> Second, in order to maintain its "tax-exempt" status, the college must maintain its "nonprofit" status by adhering to the so-called nondistribution constraint. The college may not distribute its surplus value to trustees or administrators (i.e., as in the form of dividends, profit shares, or bonuses) (Weisbrod 1988, 11-12). College trustees may not receive personal financial benefits due to their class position of capitalist within the college,<sup>15</sup> yet they still extract and distribute the surplus value.

### *Donations, Grants, and Capital Gains—Nontuition Income*

The "capitalist college" also differs from the industrial capitalist firm in terms of the former's particular noncommodity sources of income. The typical private liberal arts college is said to be only partially (60-70 percent) "tuition driven." Only a portion of its total income comes from the production and sale of the academic commodity by the college. The rest comes in the form of interest and dividend payments, donations, grants, and the like.<sup>16</sup> These income sources are critical for the financial survival of the college.

Nontuition revenues may be divided into two categories: (1) surplus value distributed to the college by capitalists; and (2) all other sources of income, or subsumed class and nonclass income, respectively.<sup>17</sup> College subsumed class income comes from two major sources. First, it is received in the form of dividends on shares of stock held in capitalist corporations and interest on corporate bonds (i.e., part of the college's "endowment income"). Second, it is received as donations from individuals, most notably capitalists who extract surplus value from productive laborers outside the college (e.g., in industrial firms). This latter distribution of subsumed class income to the college takes the form of monetary donations from trustees, alumni/alumnae, or other benefactors who occupy the class position of industrial capitalist. Thus, the income equation of the college is expanded to:

$$(5) \quad Y = Y_{fc} + Y_{sc}$$

where  $Y_{sc}$  = surplus value extracted by industrial capitalists and distributed to the college as subsumed class income.

All the other noncommodity sources of income are "nonclass": They are neither surplus value directly extracted within the college ( $Y_c$ ) nor surplus value directly distributed to it by capitalists from outside the college ( $Y_{sc}$ ). Such nonclass income includes donations from anyone other than capitalists, grants from the state or foundations, and capital gains on the sale of stock or other assets (another portion of "endowment income"). Thus, the college's income equation is expanded once again to:

$$(6) \quad Y = Y_{fc} + Y_{sc} + Y_{nc}$$

where  $Y_{nc}$  = nonclass income to the college.

To receive donations or grants, the college generally must maintain its nonprofit, tax-exempt status, which allows donors to write gifts off against their income taxes. The college must also balance its books and present the image of the kind of educational institution of interest to particular donors. Hence, educational decisions may be affected by the need to secure such incomes.<sup>18</sup>

Once received, such subsumed and nonclass revenues (i.e., nontuition income) are spent so as to reproduce the college as: (1) an educational institution; (2) a capitalist enterprise; and (3) a recipient of subsumed and nonclass incomes. These are not discrete expenditures or separate categories for three different purposes. Rather, the same expenditure may fulfill all three "functions."

For example, when an industrial capitalist or philanthropic foundation donates \$20 million for the construction of an academic building ( $Y_{sc}$  or  $Y_{nc}$ , respectively), that money is spent partly on construction of the building and partly on the overhead of the university. With its classrooms, scientific, computer and/or language laboratories and equipment, and faculty offices, the academic building becomes part of the academic means of production and thus supports the educational function of the college. At the same time, the fact that this portion of the academic means of production is funded out of subsumed class or nonclass income rather than tuition income ( $Y_{fc}$ ) means that less tuition income goes toward constant capital. This increases the amount of surplus value realized out of the sale of the academic commodity.

In this sense, the particular expenditure of  $Y_{sc}$  or  $Y_{nc}$  may create conditions under which  $Y_s$  is greater than it would otherwise be due to the lower  $E_k$  requirements. The additional surplus value thus realized may be distributed within the college to support the development or the alumni affairs office ("overhead costs") that secured the donation of the building in the first place or for other purposes. The expenditure equation of the college can now be written as follows:

$$(7) \quad E = E_k + E_{sc} + E_{nc}$$

where  $E$  = total expenditures of the college;

$E_k$  = expenditures to replace constant and variable capital;

$E_{sc}$  = expenditures made out of extracted surplus value to reproduce the capitalist fundamental class process of the college and hence the  $Y_s$  income stream;

$E_{nc}$  = expenditures made out of  $Y_{sc}$  and  $Y_{nc}$  (nontuition) income to reproduce the  $Y_{sc}$  and  $Y_{nc}$  income streams to the college.

In addition to purchasing the "big ticket" academic means of production, some of the nontuition dollars are spent ( $E_{nc}$ ) to support various administrative offices on campus, in particular the alumni/alumnae relations, development, and president's offices. These offices work to secure future streams of such subsumed and nonclass income. Some of this income is also expended in fees to portfolio managers and in making new investments in stocks, bonds, and real estate. Finally, a portion of this money may be spent on new programs or new faculty positions (e.g., endowed chairs).<sup>19</sup>

Seen from this class perspective, tuition need not cover all the "costs of academic production" for surplus value to be produced by faculty and other productive laborers. Thus, a positive rate of exploitation may exist simultaneously with a claimed accounting loss (tuition revenue less than costs) by the college. Further, the legal nonprofit status of the college signifies nothing a priori about the class relations of the academic institution. Nonprofit status may be a prerequisite for subsumed and nonclass income, however, particularly when such status makes donations tax-exempt. All such nontuition income, as illustrated above, may be essential for the survival and prosperity of the college both as an educational institution and as a capitalist enterprise in a competitive academic marketplace.

#### Contradictions in the Liberal Arts College: Class and Education

Having laid out this class analysis of the liberal arts college, the rest of this chapter shows how it can be used to illuminate the work life of faculty members and contradictions between class and education. These ex-



amples are intended as illustrations; much more can and should be said about each of them. The aspects of faculty life explored here are tenure, the disciplinary structure of the college, the budget process, and nonacademic work performed by faculty members.

### *The Labor Process and Tenure*

One way that the liberal arts college looks least like the industrial capitalist enterprise is in the labor process where faculty members teach courses/produce commodities. Faculty members control their work lives. They determine the curriculum, teaching assignments, course preparation and content, and the allocation of time between teaching and other work. These common perceptions highlight the autonomy of faculty members and hence their differences from productive industrial workers. While such autonomy is real, it is also limited and contested. It is the object of complex struggles, including class struggles, within the college.

One of the key requirements for the extraction of surplus value is that there exist political processes that secure the highest possible production of surplus value by workers. Where workers have specialized knowledge of the requisite concrete labor needed to produce the particular commodity (i.e., where the work takes place on a craft basis), such political processes of supervision may be limited in their effects. This is the case in liberal arts colleges where teaching is done by individual faculty members in specific disciplines and subfields and courses are not aimed at a mass audience (unlike some public universities). Further, courses are not standardized either across or within disciplines and fields, both as a result of the academic freedom and vision of faculty members and the need of the college to differentiate its curriculum (commodity offerings) from those of its competitors. Finally, in most liberal arts colleges, the faculty is understood to have control over the curriculum (the faculty "owns" the curriculum). This situation gives faculty the potential to resist efforts to increase the extraction of surplus value, especially once tenure has been achieved.

In class terms, tenure (appointment to the permanent faculty of the college) limits the extraction of surplus value by trustee-capitalists; this is one of the major reasons that it is continually under attack.<sup>20</sup> Tenured fac-

ulty members cannot be (easily) fired, and they usually receive the highest faculty salaries. This limits the ability of the administration to reduce faculty salaries, and hence increase the extraction of surplus value, either through collective bargaining or by replacing tenured faculty with lower paid junior or adjunct faculty. Further, tenured faculty are relatively immune from pressures (couched in terms of job security) to increase their "productivity." On the other hand, during the tenure process, junior faculty members may have less autonomy and control and be subject to high "productivity" pressures.

The tenure process is the evaluation (over a period of up to six years) of junior faculty members to determine whether they will be awarded a permanent position. It involves the tenured members of the candidate's department, faculty at other schools as outside evaluators, the department chair, the academic dean, the college tenure and promotions committee, the provost, the president, and, ultimately, the trustees of the college; only the latter are actually empowered to grant tenure. To earn tenure, junior faculty members must demonstrate proficiency or excellence in teaching, scholarship, and professional service, and also integrity and service to the college.

The tenure process may work to limit class struggles over surplus value by junior faculty members. Strong arguments by tenure candidates in favor of higher salaries and against increases in teaching load (or other work; see below) may lead to a negative tenure vote, particularly as one's case moves upward through the academic hierarchy. It may also lead junior faculty members to avoid joining faculty unions or opposing the administration (or senior members of their own departments) in faculty meetings or other arenas. Thus, the tenure process has a potentially negative effect on faculty class struggles over wages, work load, and working conditions. Overall, then, tenure has contradictory effects on class struggles.

It may also have negative impact on education in several ways. First, it may lead junior faculty members to teach only what is approved by senior faculty members and the administration. This may limit innovation, heterodoxy, and interdisciplinary work (which may not "count" toward tenure). Second, faculty may be loath to take risks in developing new courses or pedagogies that may result in poor student or peer reviews of their classroom performance. Third, tenure considerations may

lead junior faculty members to spend less time on teaching altogether, as they perceive—often correctly—that good teaching performance matters less than research output (publications).<sup>21</sup> Finally, the job security of tenure may result in less work of poorer academic quality by some faculty members.

Such negative educational impacts of the tenure process are not automatic, however. Tenure is also understood as the guarantor of academic freedom and thus supports critical approaches, innovation, and heterodoxy. Further, overt use of administrators' or trustees' power to fire or deny tenure to junior faculty members due to their participation in class struggles may well stir up other faculty members, including those with tenure, who regard such interference as a violation of academic freedom. Of course, such trustee or administrator power is not usually expressed nakedly but rather is cloaked in academic or meritocratic rationale. Much depends on the social relations of faculty members and institutional "ethos" of the particular college, including past tenure and class struggles.

#### *The Departmental Structure of the College*

The tenure process is connected to another aspect of the college that has impact on both class and educational struggles: the division of the faculty and the curriculum into academic departments. Faculty members are hired into specific departments by academics with training in particular disciplines (e.g., economists hire economists into economics departments).<sup>22</sup> Senior faculty members in their department and scholars in the same discipline at other universities (outside reviewers) are the first and second levels determining the tenure-worthiness of junior faculty members.

This departmental structure reinforces what Herman Daly and John Cobb have called "disciplinolatry":

The most important relations of the members of a department with persons outside it are not with members of other departments within the university, but with other practitioners of the same discipline in other universities. The primary loyalty of university professors is likely to be to the guilds and the promotion of their discipline rather than to their particular university or to

their students. . . . The discipline becomes their god. We call this "disciplinolatry." (Daly and Cobb 1994, 33–34)

Disciplinolatry in this sense weakens faculty members in class struggles over the appropriation and distribution of surplus value by reinforcing faculty identification as economists, chemists, philosophers, and so on. That is, it may reduce the class solidarity of faculty members within a given college.

Disciplinolatry is weaker (though certainly not absent) in liberal arts colleges than in the universities mentioned by Daly and Cobb; the ethos of the liberal arts and fairly common instances of interdisciplinary programs, research, and teaching undermine it in many liberal arts colleges. Yet at the same time that the ethos of the liberal arts may be less favorable to disciplinolatry, the tenure process (as noted) and the departmentalization of the college budget process (see below) reinforce it.<sup>23</sup>

Disciplinolatry has negative educational and ideological effects. It is antiholistic and reductionist; it inhibits or prevents students from understanding the connections among the theories and objects of analysis of the different disciplines; and it devalues critical perspectives. As Daly and Cobb put it:

Concentrated attention is paid to socializing students into the discipline and to preparing leaders for the future through graduate programs.

Once socialized into the guild, relations with other members of the guild are far more comfortable and satisfying than those with outsiders. There is a wide range of common assumptions that express themselves also in shared values. In this way the external threat to these assumptions and values is minimized. The result is, of course, what has come to be assumed within the discipline appears self-evident and in no need of critical analysis. New generations build on the work of earlier ones without asking whether these earlier achievements are truly relevant to the new situation. (1994, 34)

These effects of disciplinolatry concurrently tend to inhibit faculty class struggles, limit education to more reductionist and less interdisciplinary work, and socialize students into academic guilds that accept the abstractions of the guild as reality, to paraphrase Daly and Cobb (1994, 34). In so doing, such disciplinolatry, embedded in the institutions and class

struggles of higher education, may obscure class understandings and critiques, both in the industrial world and in academia.

### *The Budget Process*

Typically trustees and, through the power delegated to them, administrators, determine the parameters of expenditure of college revenues. One such parameter is the budget allocation for the academic or “instructional” program. Given this parameter and the constraints of tenure, contracts for junior faculty, and across-the-board raises (i.e., academic payroll rigidities), faculty then struggle among themselves for additional “discretionary” monies for merit increases, new programs, equipment, as well as for replacement or additional faculty members. Most of this “fighting over crumbs” (as one of my colleagues puts it) takes place on an interdepartmental basis, that is, it reinforces disciplinary or departmental boundaries. Such interdepartmental struggles over additional resources may encourage tenured faculty members to maintain their own teaching load at high levels, as deans and provosts reward high department teaching and service work loads. This pits department against department in ways that may: (1) increase the production of surplus value; (2) further reinforce disciplinolatry; and (3) inhibit faculty from successfully fighting against the budget parameters (i.e., by engaging more fully and successfully in class struggles over the extraction and appropriation of surplus value). Thus the tenure process, the division of the college into academic departments, and the budget process have complex effects on both the production and extraction of surplus value and also on education.

### *Faculty Time and Nonacademic Work*

In addition to teaching courses, faculty members at liberal arts colleges are also involved in academic administration (e.g., serving on curriculum committees). They are frequently asked to engage in “unpaid,” nonacademic, non-commodity-producing work.

College faculty members frequently sit on committees, direct programs, or chair academic departments. Such forms of academic administration are frequently uncompensated, whether by additional pay or by reductions in teaching responsibilities. It is unpaid, nonclass labor with

significant effects on the college. First, it frequently results in the effective operation of the academic programs of the college. Second, it may leave the impression with faculty members that they have some significant power in the college and that faculty and administrators have the same, similar, or complementary goals. This may reduce faculty opposition to administration moves that have the effect of increasing the extraction of surplus value,<sup>24</sup> especially if deans and other administrative officials are faculty members on “temporary” appointment to the administration.<sup>25</sup>

Faculty members do not just perform academic work (teaching, research, and academic administration); they also perform other, non-academic tasks. If, due to the particular labor process of teaching and tenure, the college administration is limited in its ability to extract greater amounts of surplus value from faculty members, assigning nonacademic work to faculty members may resolve certain fiscal contradictions by reducing some internal distributions of surplus value. For example, having faculty members do all their own typing and clerical work reduces  $E_{sc}$  distributions of extracted surplus value to faculty secretaries, thereby leaving more funds for other purposes (e.g., to support the staff of the dean).<sup>26</sup>

Further, faculty may be asked to participate in various admissions, alumni affairs, or development activities as part of the college’s struggle to compete—for both students and nontuition income.<sup>27</sup> Faculty may be more effective than nonfaculty staff in some of these activities, especially admissions and alumni relations functions involving personal contacts.

The use of faculty time in such nonacademic pursuits may have two financial benefits for the college. On the one hand, it may reduce certain  $E_{sc}$  expenditures; the work is done for no additional pay by faculty rather than by paid nonacademic staff. This relieves some financial tension even without increasing extracted surplus value. On the other hand, such use of faculty time may also increase sales of the academic commodity (help fill the freshman class) and increase alumni donations and other nontuition income (elements of both  $v_{sc}$  and  $v_{nc}$ ).

In addition, involvement of faculty in such activities both presupposes and reinforces an ethos of doing what is “good for the college” (versus what is good for faculty members), partly by reinforcing faculty contact with past and future students. It may also contribute to faculty aware-



ness of the competition faced by the college and of its financial problems. This may, ultimately, make it more difficult for some faculty members to struggle for higher wages or reduced work loads given their perception of a financial crisis or at least of strict financial constraints.

Many faculty members see the struggle for higher wages as a student-faculty conflict rather than as class struggle between faculty-workers and trustee-capitalists. Given the power relations of the budget process, they are not necessarily wrong: Higher salaries may indeed become higher tuition or less money to fund academic programs. In such a case, the class struggle within the college between faculty-proletarians and the trustee employers of academic labor-power is displaced onto the student purchasers of the academic commodity. Such displacement also inhibits pressure for increased wages due to faculty concerns about competition with other schools, the high cost to students of their education, and faculty desire to broaden the (class) base of the student body.

Faculty performance of unpaid nonacademic labor may have negative impacts on academic activities, both teaching and research. Faculty members in liberal arts colleges are engaged in a variety of nonacademic tasks virtually on a daily basis. This limits their ability to engage in research, keep current in their field, or spend more time in teaching their courses and working with students in groups or individually.

Less time spent in preparing classes and in meeting with students may worsen the (real or perceived) quality of the education students gain by taking courses and working with faculty members. Liberal arts colleges provide small class environments and ready access to faculty members as part of what is purchased by tuition. Reducing access to faculty members or reducing time faculty members have for keeping current in their discipline or preparing classes hurts the educational process. Given the often rigid deadlines and heavy demands of administrative and nonacademic work and the priority placed on research and publication (especially for junior faculty), the loser may often be teaching. The alternative is to increase the combined academic plus nonacademic work load for faculty members, a choice many faculty members do make given their commitment to both students (teaching) and research.

If the nonacademic work of faculty members reduces academic quality sufficiently, it will become more difficult to sell product (fill the incoming class).<sup>28</sup> Less time spent on scholarly activity may have the same effect

on product (educational) quality. In addition, less scholarship may ultimately give the administration more control over the labor process and the extraction of surplus labor in two ways. On the one hand, the less research faculty members do, the more they may come to depend on textbooks and the more their courses may be standardized, thus reducing their craft control over the labor process and making them more vulnerable to pressures to increase their teaching work load. On the other hand, less research leading to fewer publications in prominent journals reduces both individual and overall faculty bargaining power. Faculty become more easily replaceable and have fewer good alternatives regarding employment, either in or out of academia. Thus nonacademic work performed by faculty members “for the benefit of the college” has complex and contradictory effects on both education and class struggles.

### Conclusion

This chapter has presented a class analysis of the liberal arts college. In addition to all its other aspects, the college is constituted by the production, extraction, and distribution of surplus value. It is also comprised by the receipt of subsumed class and nonclass incomes. The analytical framework developed here can be used to examine the work life of faculty members—teaching as a labor process, tenure, academic departments, budget fights, and so on—and to show how many of the activities of faculty work life are complexly constituted by class and nonclass elements, thus providing a different way of understanding the issues and struggles of the liberal arts college.

But where does this leave us? Having developed this class analysis very consciously and now understanding the pressures and tensions of my job in a new, class-analytical way, I may still make choices as a faculty member that result in increased productive or unproductive labor by faculty members (i.e., by myself and my colleagues). I may vote or otherwise support my own increased exploitation. Faculty members have class as their essence no more than does the college; we may make choices that work against our “class interests” and in favor of students or education, despite partaking in a self-conscious class analysis.

Nevertheless, the class analysis of this paper gives us new ways to think about the possibilities for both class and educational struggles in

our work lives as faculty members. The analysis shows that the class goals of faculty-workers are not necessarily antithetical to the needs of education and students, such an opposition when it occurs being a complex result of the structure and relationships of a specific college. It opens the possibility of linking class and educational struggles, e.g., uniting faculty and students in budgetary struggles. Such struggles would aim at reforming the capitalist college without changing its class structure.

The analysis also raises the possibility of colleges where educational processes are not combined with capitalist processes of the production and extraction of surplus value—colleges where, for example, surplus labor is appropriated and distributed collectively by the faculty performers of that surplus labor. Faculty would no longer be excluded from decisions about how, to whom, and for what (educational or noneducational) purposes to distribute the surplus labor they produce. Faculty would be the trustees and might hire administrators to carry out their policies.

In such a communal college the requirements of surplus value extraction that reinforce disciplinolatry and limit heterodox and critical work might be eroded and power relations among faculty members and between faculty and students might be transformed. Thus the transition to a communal organization might work to enhance the educational mission of a college. These possibilities—opened up by the class analysis of this paper—need further thought and elaboration.

The paper has begun the task of examining the liberal arts college in terms of the production and extraction of surplus. A next step might be to consider how public (state-supported) and private universities differ from the liberal arts college in these class terms.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, nonprofit status, tax exemption, worker autonomy and control, professionalism, and other such “nonclass” characteristics may lead many to conclude that a given institution (e.g., a private liberal arts college or a not-for-profit hospital) is not a site where surplus value is produced and extracted. This chapter has shown that such characteristics may not only obscure class relations; they may also be conditions of existence for the reproduction of the capitalist extraction of surplus value in these institutions. In addition, however, the analysis has also shown that such “nonclass” characteristics may create the possibilities for profes-

sional workers to limit and resist the extraction of surplus value more than in overtly “for-profit” firms (despite lack of protection by labor laws). This recognition has importance for the Marxian analysis of higher education and other “nonprofit” institutions (such as some hospitals) and for the issues of the privatization of public enterprises and the commercialization of private not-for-profit charitable enterprises.

## Notes

I want to thank the following colleagues and students for their helpful comments on various drafts of this chapter: Masato Aoki, John Bleakney, Ron Caplan, Harriet Fraad, Dorene Isenberg, Josh Karan, Bill Olson, Steve Resnick, David Ruccio, Bernie Smith, Karen Thomas, Rona Weiss, and Rick Wolff.

- 1 This paper concerns the private liberal arts college and not other institutions of postsecondary education. The conclusions drawn here are not necessarily applicable to private or public universities, with their graduate programs, focus on research, and different income streams. Drew University, where I teach, is comprised of an undergraduate liberal arts college, a graduate school, and a theological school. This paper draws only on my experience with the undergraduate college.
- 2 See Aoki (1992) and Bowles and Gintis (1976).
- 3 The liberal arts college is defined here as an undergraduate institution whose curriculum and students are concentrated overwhelmingly in liberal arts disciplines, as opposed to professional studies (e.g., business). This definition is taken from Breneman (1994, 3). Faculty members’ academic work is concentrated on teaching undergraduates, although faculty are also engaged in scholarly activities and administrative duties.
- 4 The college also sells nonacademic commodities, including housing, meals, textbooks, supplies, T-shirts, toiletries, and snacks. Here, the college is acting as a merchant (Wolff and Resnick 1987, 197–200). The sale of such nonacademic commodities has sometimes put the liberal arts college in competition and conflict with stores in the local community. These issues are not discussed here given the focus on the academic aspect of the college.
- 5 Students do not purchase education, which is a complex social activity that may require courses (and interactions with faculty members) as one of its conditions of existence (see Aoki 1992.) Further, students do not purchase a college degree with their tuition dollars. Not all students matriculate or



- complete their degree requirements, even after they have paid tuition and taken courses. Students can and do fail.
- 6 On these nonclass dimensions of teaching, see bell hooks (1994).
  - 7 Class is also present in terms of the curriculum of class, the class background of faculty and students, and the relations of the college to the industrial capitalist economy (e.g., in preparing its future workforce). These aspects of class in higher education have received attention elsewhere (Aoki 1992; Bowles and Gintis 1996; Nisinoff et al. 1992; and Ryan and Sackrey 1984). Little or no attention, however, has been paid to the liberal arts college as a site of surplus value production and extraction.
  - 8 This example is loosely based on data from several liberal arts colleges.
  - 9 Other, large elements of the means of academic production (such as classroom buildings) are funded out of nontuition sources of income (discussed below) and hence not purchased out of capital.
  - 10 With a 1996–97 tuition of \$19,872 for full-time students, an average faculty salary of \$57,200 and benefits equal to 30 percent of salary, and an average (in the spring 1996 semester) of sixteen students per course, Drew faculty members will produce \$25,000 of surplus value per faculty member in the academic year 1996–97. This is equivalent to a rate of surplus value of 33.6 percent and a rate of profit of 14.4 percent. I want to thank Dorene Isenberg, Mike McKitish, Dick Rhone, and Horace Tate for the relevant data.
  - 11 In this context, attempts to increase faculty “productivity” are seen as often involving a lengthening of the amount of work time, either due to teaching more courses or spending more time per course due to larger enrollments.
  - 12 This is a different concept of “net tuition income” than that discussed by Breneman (1994). For him, net tuition income is gross tuition income less unfunded student aid. In Marxian terms, Breneman’s concept of net tuition income reduces capitalist fundamental class income ( $y_{fc}$ ) by the amount of one of the distributions ( $E_{sc}$ ) made out of surplus value ( $y_s$ ). His concept obscures the class incomes and expenditures that a Marxian analysis highlights.
  - 13 Department chairs typically teach a reduced number of courses for unchanged or increased salary. Financial support for their administrative activities is funded out of  $E_{sc}$ . In this case, chairs are both producers of surplus value and recipients of subsumed class income. If, however, department chairs teach the same load of courses as other faculty members and receive no extra compensation or reduction in teaching load, then no such subsumed class expenditures are made.
  - 14 I am indebted to Mike McKitish on this point.

- 15 They receive nonfinancial benefits, however, including considerable social recognition and status.
  - 16 I am omitting the income from room and board, and so on; see n. 4.
  - 17 For further definition of the terms “fundamental,” “subsumed,” and “non-class,” see the editors’ introduction to this volume.
  - 18 In this case donors (or administrators seeking such donations) may attempt to change college curriculum, control faculty hiring, or otherwise intervene in the operation of the college as a condition for such donations. Such interventions may be seen as threats to academic freedom and resisted strongly by faculty members.
  - 19 Thus the expansion of academic means of production and growth of the productive labor force (e.g., expansion of the teaching faculty)—or the accumulation of “academic capital”—may be funded out of subsumed and nonclass income rather than out of surplus value.
  - 20 For example, see Magner (1996).
  - 21 That research counts more than teaching in the tenure process—even in liberal arts colleges that value teaching—is a result of disciplinolatry, discussed below. The devaluation of teaching versus research is also the result of the faculty labor market, which unsuccessful tenure candidates re-enter. As Winston puts it, “the local, ephemeral, personal, real-time nature of good teaching—versus the durable, portable atemporality of good research—reduces the value of teaching in the faculty market” (1994, 11).
- Tenure considerations may also lead to faculty members concentrating on mainstream research topics that are more likely to be published in the major journals in their fields rather than critical, heterodox, or innovative work that either may not be published or may be published in less prestigious and thus “less tenure-worthy” journals.
- 22 Of course, only the Board of Trustees has the ultimate power to hire faculty or anyone else, power that in this instance they delegate to departmental and administrative managers.
  - 23 See Saltzman and Curtis (1994, 129–31) for an example of how disciplinolatry had contradictory effects on our interdisciplinary course on homelessness.
  - 24 Faculty members on budget or other administrative committees may be able to convince their colleagues that they should support this or that program ahead of salary increases “for the good of the college” more effectively than the dean, provost, or president could.
  - 25 The problematic aspects of this faculty role became starkly visible when the Yeshiva (University) decision denied National Labor Relations Act recog-

dition to a faculty union due to the administrative role of faculty members. This decision has prevented unionization and limited collective bargaining at liberal arts colleges; see Levy (1987).

- 26 On this point, Rick Wolff writes, "I have been struck by how subtle are the ways in which top managers of most capitalist industrial enterprises can allocate to themselves all sorts of surplus allocations that they 'are not supposed to.' In the case of private colleges, consider the plush offices, expense accounts, travel allowances, and dozens of other 'perks' that amount to surplus allocations. These are the 'special funds' and 'discretionary funds' so beloved of top college administrators (and often deeply resented by everyone else on the campus who rightly suspect them)" (personal communication, 1996). Such "special funds" can also be used to reward faculty support for administrators' priorities.
- 27 Untenured faculty may face special pressures to engage in such work as "service to the college," frequently an important criteria for tenure, though such work is not limited to untenured faculty. In recent years, tenured faculty members at Drew have, inter alia, participated in special weekend admissions events, written to or called prospective students, attended alumni functions, contributed articles to alumni newsletters, and worked to develop a new academic program, part of the (trustee) impetus for which was to get Wall Street executives more (financially) involved with Drew.
- 28 As students get less time with faculty members and as liberal arts college courses become less differentiated due to nonacademic demands, students may become less willing to pay the high tuition of private liberal arts colleges and more willing to attend cheaper public universities.
- 29 In this context, several graduate students at the University of Massachusetts have raised the issue of their relationship to faculty members in their academic departments, with whom they share a common class position as surplus-producing workers but have different nonclass positions with regard to the levels of their pay (teaching assistant stipend versus faculty salary), status, power relations, and degrees. I am indebted to Steve Resnick and Rick Wolff for raising this issue with me.



## NATURE AND CLASS

### *A Marxian Value Analysis*

Environmentalism has thus far failed to take hold as a mass movement in the Western countries where it has nonetheless emerged as a political force. One major reason for this failure is the widespread alienation of workers from environmentalists. The "jobs versus environment" dilemma so often encountered in ecological debates summarizes the seemingly intractable conflict between the interests of these two social groups.

In this paper, I suggest that an overdeterminist class analysis of the nature–society relationship can perhaps form the basis for closer collaboration or even coalition between these otherwise separated constituencies. Such a class analysis stresses the complex interdependencies among natural and social processes, rather than constructing a nature–society opposition that puts workers and environmentalists at odds (Harvey 1993).

Different class structures contribute to different kinds of production, competition, technical change, population movements and growth, and so on; all of these affect the natural environment in which these activities occur. Different class structures influence the people caught up in them to form different attitudes toward nature and one another, and these attitudes likewise affect the natural environment. Whatever happens to the natural environment is constituted, in part, by the particular class processes that exist and interact in that environment. Hence it follows that individuals concerned with explaining and/or intervening in the transformations of the natural environment may want to understand and address class structures.