

Palgrave Critical  
University Studies

Series editor: John Smyth

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**NEOLIBERALIZATION,  
UNIVERSITIES AND  
THE PUBLIC  
INTELLECTUAL**

Species, Gender and  
Class and the Production  
of Knowledge

**Heather Fraser  
and Nik Taylor**



# Palgrave Critical University Studies

Series Editor

John Smyth  
Huddersfield, Australia

Universities everywhere are experiencing unprecedented changes and most of the changes being inflicted upon universities are being imposed by political and policy elites without any debate or discussion, and little understanding of what is being lost, jettisoned, damaged or destroyed. The over-arching intent of this series is to foster, encourage, and publish scholarship relating to academia that is troubled by the direction of these reforms occurring around the world. The series provides a much-needed forum for the intensive and extensive discussion of the consequences of ill-conceived and inappropriate university reforms and will do this with particular emphasis on those perspectives and groups whose views have hitherto been ignored, disparaged or silenced. The series explores the effects of these changes across a number of domains including: the nature of academic work, the process of knowledge production for social and public good, along with students' experiences of learning, leadership and institutional politics research. The defining hallmark of this series, and what makes it markedly different from any other series with a focus on universities and higher education, is its 'criticalist agenda'.

More information about this series at  
<http://www.springer.com/series/14707>

Heather Fraser • Nik Taylor

# Neoliberalization, Universities and the Public Intellectual

Species, Gender and Class and the Production  
of Knowledge

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## SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

The *Critical University Studies Series* has a distinct and clear agenda. The overarching intent is to foster, encourage and publish scholarship relating to universities that is troubled by the direction of reforms occurring around the world.

It is clear that universities everywhere are experiencing unprecedented changes. What is much less clear – and there are reasons for the lack of transparency – are the effects of these changes within and across a number of domains, including

- the nature of academic work
- students' experiences of learning
- leadership and institutional politics
- research and the process of knowledge production
- the social and public good.

Most of the changes being inflicted upon universities globally are being imposed by political and policy elites without any debate or discussion, and with little understanding of what is being lost, jettisoned, damaged or destroyed. Benefits, where they are articulated at all, are framed exclusively in terms of short-term political gains. This is not a recipe for a robust and vibrant university system.

What this series seeks to do is provide a much-needed forum for the intensive and extensive discussion of the consequences of ill-conceived and inappropriate university reforms. It does this with particular emphasis on

those perspectives and groups whose views have hitherto been ignored, disparaged or silenced.

The defining hallmark of the series, and what makes it markedly different from any other series with a focus on universities and higher education, is its 'criticalist agenda'. This means that it directly addresses questions such as:

- Whose interests are being served?
- How is power being exercised and upon whom?
- What means are being promulgated to ensure subjugation?
- What might a more transformational approach look like?
- What are the impediments to this happening?
- What, then, needs be done about it?

The series intends to foster the following kind of contributions:

- Critical studies of university contexts, that while they might be local in nature, are shown to be global in their reach;
- Insightful and authoritative accounts that are courageous and that 'speak back' to dominant reforms being inflicted on universities;
- Critical accounts of research relating to universities that use innovative methodologies;
- Looking at what is happening to universities across disciplinary fields, and internationally;
- Examining trends, patterns and themes, and presenting them in a way that re-theorises and re-energises knowledge around the status and purposes of universities; and
- Above all, advancing the publication of accounts that re-position the study of universities in a way that makes clear what alternative robust policy directions for universities might look like.

The series aims to encourage discussion of issues such as academic work, academic freedom and marketisation in universities. One of the shortcomings of many extant texts in the field of university studies is that they attempt too much, and as a consequence, their focus becomes diluted. There is an urgent need for studies in a number of aspects with quite a sharp focus, for example:

1. There is a conspicuous absence of studies that give existential accounts of what life is like for *students* in the contemporary university. We need to know more about the nature of the stresses and strains, and the consequences these market-driven distortions have for the learning experiences of students, their lives and futures.
2. We know very little about the nature and form of how *institutional politics* are engineered and played out, by whom, in what ways and with what consequences in the neoliberal university. We need 'insider' studies that unmask the forces that sustain and maintain and enable current reform trajectories in universities.
3. The *actions of policy elites* transnationally are crucial to what is happening in universities worldwide. But we have yet to become privy to the thinking that is going on, and how it is legitimated and transmitted, and the means by which it is made opaque. We need studies that puncture this veil of silence.
4. None of what is happening that is converting universities into annexes of the economy would be possible without a particular version of *leadership* having been allowed to become dominant. We need to know how this is occurring, what forms of resistance there have been to it, how these have been suppressed and the forms of solidarity necessary to unsettle and supplant this dominant paradigm.
5. Finally, and taking the lead from critical geographers, there is a pressing need for studies with a focus on universities as unique *spaces and places* – possibly in concert with sociologists and anthropologists.

We look forward to this series advancing these important agenda and to the reclamation and restitution of universities as crucial intellectual democratic institutions.

*John Smyth,*  
Professor of Education and Social Justice,  
University of Huddersfield, and  
Emeritus Professor, Federation University Australia





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We dedicate this book to everyone affected by and struggling to resist neoliberalism.

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# The University Goes to Market: The Infiltration of Neoliberalism

**Abstract** In this first chapter, we explore some of the foundational concepts for this book. We start by outlining the impacts of the neoliberalization of the academy and advance our central argument: that such impacts go beyond the interpersonal or the administrative to determine the very generation and dissemination of knowledge itself. Drawing on our own work that addresses the intersection of species, gender, and class, we articulate how the power/knowledge paradigm of neoliberalism has begun to dismantle the idea of a public intellectual. We consider what the costs of this are to research located within, and seeking to highlight issues pertinent to, marginalized communities and issues. We conclude with a brief overview of the book and its main themes.

## INTRODUCTION

Having lived through recent decades of neoliberalization of Australian universities, we are writing this book to connect with others concerned about this globally destructive force. Our three main aims are to (1) examine the negative impacts of this process on the production of knowledge deemed marginal and by doing so; (2) contest the neoliberalization of the academy and the normalization of neoliberal values and processes; and (3) consider ideological, epistemological, and practical acts of resistance to the neoliberalization of academia, along with acknowledging attendant constraints.

We are aware that one of the terribly clever aspects of neoliberalization is to silence dissent. We refuse this silence and, by writing this book, call on others to engage—with us and with others—to tell their stories and of their own methods of resistance, and thereby challenge the neoliberal colonization of knowledge and of the higher education sector. By chronicling the negative effects of the neoliberalization of the university, we examine the deleterious effects on the production and dissemination of knowledge, sometimes referred to as testimony, data, evidence, and interpretation. We do this drawing on our own experience as feminist scholars who research with, and for, marginalized groups including non-human animals. In so doing, the book works in and between the borders separating the political from personal, public from private, human from animal, rational from emotional, theoretical from practical, and abstract from embodied.

We start, in this introductory chapter, by outlining some of the effects of the neoliberalization of the academy, including the consequences of neoliberalism for academics, for higher education, and for the production of knowledge. We pay attention to the use of ‘metrics’ as a way of determining what, and whose, knowledge should count and to narrowly determine academic value and argue that this is a central part of the marginalization of critical knowledge production.

## THE RISE OF NEOLIBERALISM AND ACADEMIC CAPITALISM

In recent decades, higher education in the West has rapidly expanded in scale and orientation, and is being transformed by neoliberalism. Neoliberalism involves the revival and modified (or ‘new’) use of past liberal ideas about individual property rights in deregulated ‘free market,’ corporate capitalism (Harvey 2005). Advocates of neoliberalism promote the use of private business practices rather than government interventions, prioritizing economic goals over all others, even—if not especially—for public welfare and higher education (see Beddoe 2014; Ferguson and Lavalette 2006, 2013; Grimaldi 2012; Navarro 2007; Reid 2013). The academy (higher education institutions, particularly universities) is increasingly constituted not in educational but economic terms, with most emphasis given to it as a growing market and lucrative export (Giroux 2002; Heath and Burdon 2013; Metcalfe 2010; Ylijoki 2003). Faculties and departments are now conceptualized as small business units that use New Public Management techniques to prioritize expanding economies of scale, work intensification processes, improved international rankings, and positive identification and