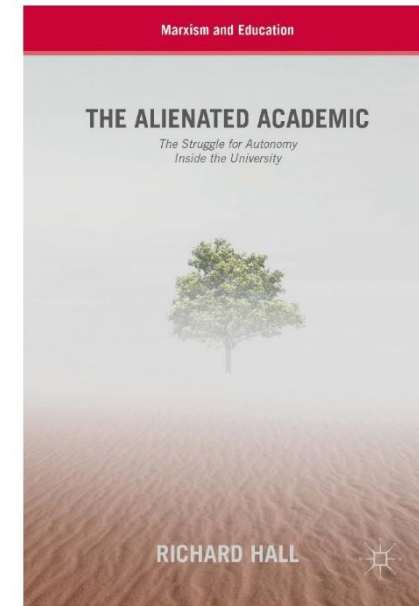
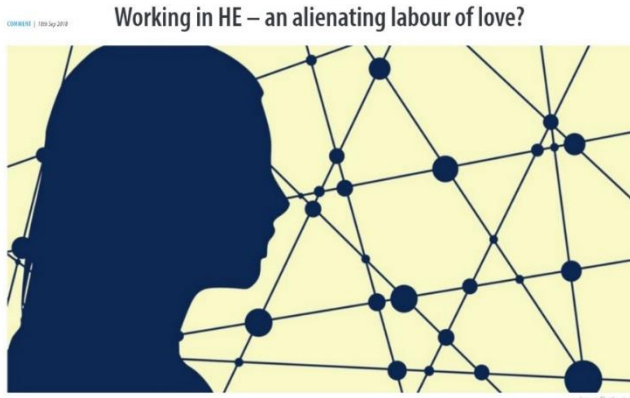


Re-engineering Education: the University as Anxiety Machine*

*Images in this presentation are hyperlinked to their source

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an intervention on how anxiety at university is inherent in a neoliberal HE sector that distorts the student experience into a value-for-money exercise

Re-engineering Higher Education: The Subsumption of Academic Labour and the Exploitation of Anxiety

Richard Hall, Kate Bowles

A desiring machine: humane values

That learning process comes easiest to those of us who also believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students.

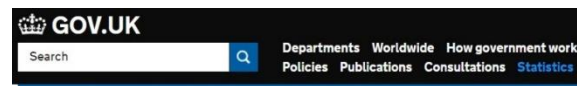
To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin.

bell hooks. 1994. Teaching to Transgress, p. 13.

A performative machine

HE policy:

- commodification and human capital theory;
- proletarianisation of academic labour through competition;
- a narrative that catayses academic and student ill-health or quitting, and in particular of a rise in anxiety.



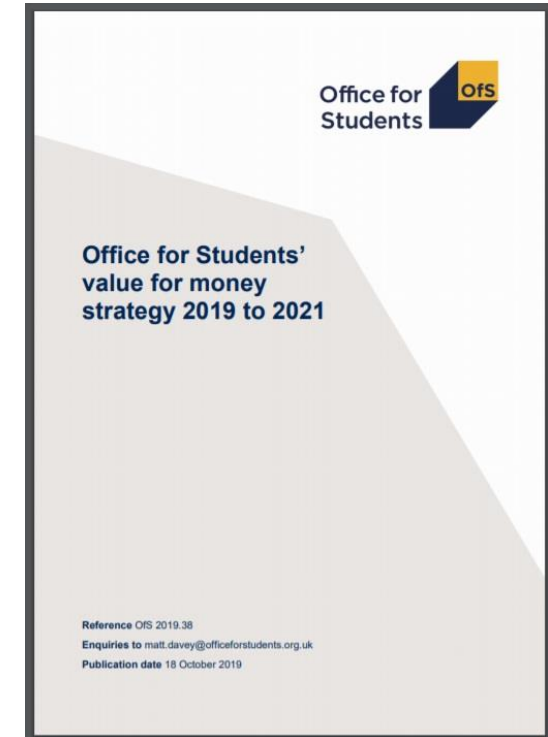
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Official Statistics

Graduate outcomes: longitudinal education outcomes (LEO) data

From: Department for Education
Part of: Statistics: higher education graduate employment and earnings, Higher education participation, and Data collection and statistical returns
Published: 4 August 2016
Applies to: England

Experimental statistics on employment and earnings of higher education graduates using matched data from different government departments.



Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones.

All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify.

All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and [woman] is at last compelled to face with sober senses [her] real condition of life and [her] relations with his kind.

Marx, K., and Engels, F. (2002). *The Communist Manifesto*. London: Penguin, p. 13.

[T]he creative power of [an individual's] labour establishes itself as the power of capital, as an *alien power* confronting [her]...

Thus all the progress of civilisation, or in other words every increase in the *powers of social production...* in the *productive powers of labour itself* – such as results from science, inventions, divisions and combinations of labour, improved means of communication, creation of the world market, machinery etc., enriches not the worker, but rather *capital*;

hence only magnifies again the power dominating over labour... the *objective power* standing over labour.

Marx, K. (1993). *Grundrisse Outline of the Critique of Political Economy*. London: Penguin, pp. 307-8.

EDITORIAL · 13 NOVEMBER 2019

The mental health of PhD researchers demands urgent attention

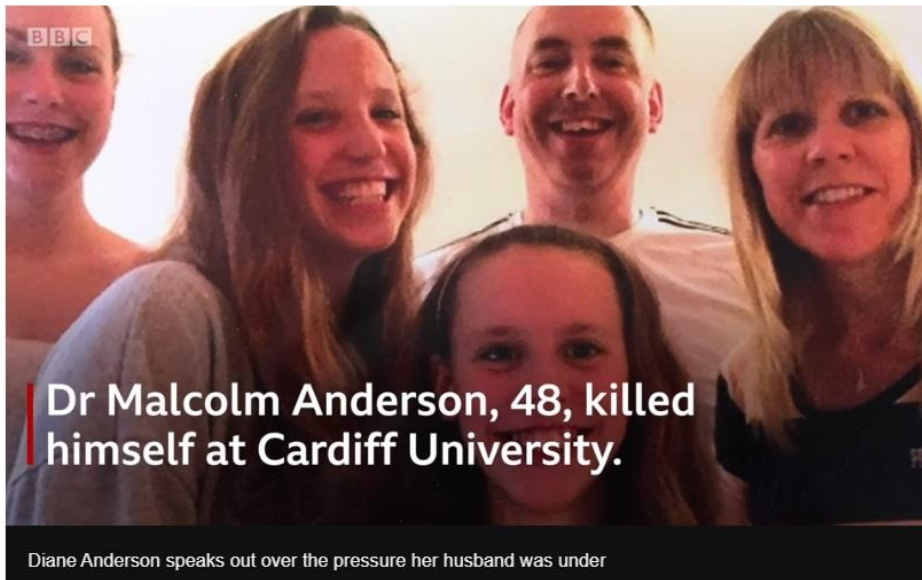
Anxiety and depression in graduate students is worsening. The health of the next generation of researchers needs systemic change to research cultures.

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By Catrin Haf Jones
Wales Live

🕒 20 February 2019

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First Published December 1, 2007 | Research Article

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764207307742>

The anxiety machine

- *normalised*: anxiety-driven overwork as a culturally-acceptable self-harming activity
- *pathological*: the design of a system driven by improving productivity and the potential for the accumulation of capital
- *structural*: forms of anxiety that generate automated, hyperactive and repetitive institutional responses, which are of such competitive advantage that they are not a systemic bug
- *identity*: academic peloton moves through overwork, performance management and discourses of entrepreneurship, excellence, impact

to reconsider anxiety as the normalised response of a radically-altered academic identity, in a sector that has been aggressively reorganised to subordinate the labour of learning to the free reproduction of capital.

Weltschmerz, or a world weariness that lies beyond anxiety, anguish or ennui, reflects a deeper sense of hopelessness about the academic project.

such despair is connected to a loss of autonomy that is itself rooted in the inability to escape from capital's domination.

the cultural terrain upon which capital works reinforces within us a sense that we are not productive enough, and that this is sinful.

reflects not only their loss of self in their work, but also constant self-judgement through internalised performance management. (Hall, 2018, pp. 161-2)



A desiring machine: humane values

Living a feminist life:

- does not mean adopting a set of ideals or norms of conduct;
- although it might mean asking ethical questions about how to live better in an unjust and unequal world (in a not-feminist and antifeminist world);
- how to create relationships with others that are more equal;
- how to find ways to support those who are not supported or are less supported by social systems;
- how to keep coming up against histories that have become concrete, histories that have become as solid as walls.

Ahmed, S. (2017). *Living a Feminist Life*. Durham: Duke University Press, p. 1.