

Books worth reading.(Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University)(Rethinking Faculty Work: Higher Education's Strategic Imperative)(Book review)

From: Change | Date: 9/1/2007 | Author: Huber, Mary Taylor



Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University. William Clark. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006, 576 pages, \$22.50 paperback.

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

Rethinking Faculty Work: Higher Education's Strategic Imperative. Judith M. Gappa, Ann E. Austin, and Andrea G. Trice. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007, 400 pages, \$40.00 hardcover.

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Readers of *Change* are probably familiar with Clark Kerr's observation about the historical endurance of universities. Some 85 institutions have survived in recognizable form from 1520 to the present, Kerr wrote in *The Uses of the University*, including the Roman Catholic Church; the parliaments of Britain, Iceland, and the Isle of Mann; a number of Swiss cantons--and about 70 universities. "Kings that rule, feudal lords with vassals, and guilds with monopolies are all gone. These seventy universities, however, are still in the same locations with some of the same buildings, with professors and students doing much the same things, and with governance carried on in much the same ways" (2001, p. 115). No doubt that is true. However, two important new books give these still waters a vigorous stir.

Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University, by William Clark, traces many of the contemporary academy's most characteristic practices--including written examinations, doctoral dissertations, and "publish or perish"--to a process of rationalization imposed on central European universities by markets and ministries from

the 16th to the early 19th centuries. Picking up the story in the United States today, *Rethinking Faculty Work: Higher Education's Strategic Imperative*, by Judith Gappa, Ann Austin, and Andrea Trice, shows how faculty careers continue to shift and what might be done to preserve what's most attractive about "traditional" professorial life. Clark is interested in the historical development of academic charisma, an elusive concept meaning (roughly) the changing grounds of professorial reputation and authority. Gappa, Austin, and Trice are concerned with the academic profession's collective loss of charisma, and they hope to stave off its impending demise.

It would be hard to overstate the pleasures of reading William Clark's fascinating book. It is indeed, as the title claims, about the origins of the research university--but it is not your standard institutional account. Instead, *Academic Charisma* is about the development of research as a recognized professorial activity and the values of "competition, novelty, fame, and fashion" (p. 67) that emerged with it as academic culture took on its modern form. The author juxtaposes Oxford and Cambridge "as upholders of traditional academic mores" with the Jesuit universities of Austria and France as "purveyors of a radical rationalization of academia." But the real focus is on German universities, especially the Protestant ones that "pursued a mediate way."

Clark tracks the rise of the "Germanic" research university--the model for research universities in the United States and around the world--and the transition from an oral to a written academic culture, in which professorial charisma "would be manufactured by publications and written expert or peer review, instead of by old-fashioned academic disputational oral arts, unsubstantiated rumors, and provincial gossip" (p. 29). The excellent prologue gently guides you through the historical argument and its theoretical background (Max Weber, Michel Foucault, and others). The first part, "Tradition, Rationalization, and Charisma," foregrounds the move towards academic writing. The second, "Narrative, Conversation, Reputation," concentrates on the continuing importance of voice, including lecturing style and buzz among students and colleagues. Finally, the epilogue looks ahead to the national systems influenced by the German research university ideal. As befits his theme, Clark pays special attention to "little tools of knowledge" such as catalogues, reports, questionnaires, and dossiers (photographs and appendices provide details). The author's wry tone conveys the mix of irony and nostalgia readers are likely to feel towards the often-surprising sources of our intellectual culture that this analysis reveals.

Perhaps the best way to follow the main argument is to start where Clark does, in lecture catalogues, which combined the features of a faculty directory and course listing. "The lecture catalogue," Clark tells us, "is a marvelous literary genre. If one had to save one and only one academic genre for alien anthropologists and interplanetary culturologists, one would be best advised--at the loss of university statutes, matriculation registers, and even academic satires--to save the lecture catalogues, the great subconscious of the academic world" (p. 67).

While these catalogues owe their very existence to the rationalizing efforts of state ministries aiming to police, and publicize the offerings of, their local university, the

earlier ones, like the University of Basel's for 1690-91, give us a glimpse into the traditional academy. This catalogue is in Latin, for one thing, and thus was edited (along with other official documents) by the professor with the best Latin skills--often the professor of eloquence and poetry. The professors are all men (of course), and they and their courses for the year all fit on one page. "Academia amounted only to a cottage industry until rather recently," Clark notes. "It was a collegial and 'moral' community, one where private and public life fused." Indeed, Basel was particularly ingrown: In the 17th century, we learn, there were about 80 professors all told, and 60 percent came from 15 families.

Academic charisma was then largely a charisma of office. Status was displayed in these early catalogues through the traditional order of precedence for the four university faculties: theology, law, medicine, philosophy. Within faculties, professors were listed by seniority (meaning, in Basel, how long they had held their current chair). People advanced through this hierarchy by the (to us) peculiar practice of opting up--"changing positions in a sort of musical chairs.... Like medieval canons, professors usually began at the bottom of the hierarchy--here in the arts and philosophy (and sciences) faculty--and tried to move up" both within and between faculties, without regard to their subject expertise (p.42).

This applied to everyone: ordinary professors, who had salaries as holders of endowed or budgeted chairs; extraordinary professors, who typically lived by collecting fees from students for their courses; and lecturers, who likewise lived on their fees and often taught subjects (like modern languages) for which there were no chairs. Clark tells us that in 1764, when Immanuel Kant was living what he himself called a "lousy existence" as a lecturer, his university (Konigsberg) attempted to promote him by offering him a chair in eloquence, which he turned down to wait for an appointment to a chair that better fit his expertise.

This "modern" academic outlook, in which subject mattered more than office, appeared in catalogues by the mid- to late-18th century. Professors were no longer listed in order of seniority but by discipline--a move promoted by state ministers so that they could keep better tabs on "what has been done or what has been lacking," in the words of one. Thus the 1822 catalog from the University of Berlin lists all of the courses within the Faculty of Philosophy by subject: philosophy, pedagogy, mathematics, natural sciences, etc.

The appointment of professors was rationalized at about the same time. Traditionally, faculties had made their own decisions about appointments, taking into account a professor's erudition (as demonstrated in lectures and disputations) but also local matters, like "need, nepotism, seniority, private academic capital, such as books and instruments, and so on" (p. 294). By the late Enlightenment, however, ministries rather than faculties were making the appointments. Based on confidential advice from "select academics," ambitious chancellors sought professors of distinction, as demonstrated not only by their lectures and disputations but also through their publications' reputation among peers. "Romanticism," Clark adds, "would embellish and gloss the charisma of fame as originality and genius" (p. 296)--the style of "academic charisma" still with us today.

Readers will find in Clark's full story many moments of illumination and delight. We learn, for example, what happened to disputation "over the near millennium in which it structured academic practice" (p. 77). Essentially an oral debate in which a respondent and an opponent argued for and against a particular thesis, the disputation was gradually displaced by written practices that fulfilled its several functions: "the written examination, the seminar paper, the doctoral dissertation, and the professorial ethos of publish or perish" (p. 78). It also appears that the ancestor of accreditation may have been a bishop's right of visitation in the medieval church. Though rarely exercised by bishops vis-a-vis universities, Protestant princes took over episcopal powers after the Reformation and began to send inspectors and demand reports, with clear parallels to modern routines of accountability.

Academic Charisma is long, and with so much going on, readers who are rusty on their early modern history would be well advised to read strategically (the chapter conclusions, for example, are very helpful). The theoretical armature can get a bit heavy-handed, in part because it reappears in chapter after chapter. Also, there are places, especially in the chapters on the persistence of oral culture, where even the author acknowledges that he may be reading too much into documents at his disposal. Still, Clark is an engaging writer, and while he never really pins down his chameleon concept of "charisma," it proves a useful touchstone for exploring the forms of academic culture in which stellar reputations emerge from quotidian careers.

What is happening to those careers in the United States today is the subject of *Rethinking Faculty Work: Higher Education's Strategic Imperative*. As authors Judith Gappa, Ann Austin, and Andrea Trice remind us, the American professorial ideal was influenced by a "European vision of scholarship" brought back to the U.S. in the 19th century by scholars who had completed their graduate studies at German research universities. The path of academic advancement we are familiar with today was pioneered at the land-grant universities established through the Civil-War-era Morrill Act, whose faculty were state employees.

Discipline-based departments, the doctoral degree as entree to the profession, and publication as the path to promotion followed and--with the founding of the American Association of University Professors in 1915--so too did the principle of "academic freedom" (also borrowed from Germany) and "the concept of continuous employment contracts to safeguard professorial freedom of expression and economic security." The AAUP's 1940 statement on academic freedom and tenure completed the modern matrix in which contemporary American faculty have lived their lives and established their reputations. With the expansion of higher education and the massive influx of federal funding for research after World War II, "academic professionals enjoyed unprecedented prestige and status" (p. 52)--a kind of collective charisma, if you will.

That charisma persists in memory more than in life. *Rethinking Faculty Work* provides an exceptionally lucid analysis of the gap that has opened up between academic careers in the golden age and the reality of faculty appointments today. Part I looks at the changing context of faculty work. The academy, the authors show, is not unique. Americans' strong

commitment to the vision of the "ideal worker" (whose devotion to the job is supported by a spouse at home) is everywhere at odds with the demographics of the workforce, modern domestic economy, the elevated demands of work, and changes in the relationship between employers and employees. In the academy, as elsewhere, faculty are less homogeneous, their needs and circumstances more complex, and "the sense of a common community of scholars ... more difficult to develop and support" (p.64).

These circumstances make the life of probationary (and even tenured) faculty difficult. But the problems for the profession are heightened by the extraordinary growth in new kinds of non-tenurable academic appointments, classified by the authors as contract-renewable and fixed-term (whether full- or part-time), which usually offer faculty "lower status, lower salaries, and a narrower range of opportunities" (p. 114).

Like Jack Schuster and Martin Finkelstein, whose fine statistical study of these issues, *The American Faculty: The Restructuring of Academic Work and Careers*, was reviewed here recently, Gappa, Austin, and Trice see the diminished appeal of the academic profession as (potentially) a very serious problem. But instead of railing against the trends, they ask how best to live with them. "What," they ask, "is required to attract and retain faculty today?" The authors' recommendation, provided in Part II, is that the best features of the "ideal career" be incorporated into the work experience of faculty regardless of appointment type. In particular, they identify five "essential elements" that ensure that all faculty can do their best work: equity, academic freedom, flexibility, professional growth, and collegiality--and deal in depth with each in Part III.

Consider, for example, their definition of equity in academic appointments as respect for each faculty member "as an individual who can make substantial contributions to achieving institutional goals for educational excellence" (p. 195). This involves, first, the ability to participate in governance, the protections of academic freedom, and opportunities to develop professionally. Second, it entails treating all faculty considerately and consistently across institutional units. Third, it accommodates professional and personal circumstances. And finally, it gives all faculty access to the tools (computers, office space, support staff) needed for their work. The chapter explores how these issues play out for each type of appointment, with excerpts from institutional policies and specific recommendations studded throughout.

Rethinking Faculty Work may not sparkle with the wit and wonder of *Academic Charisma*, but it is an exemplar of bold, clear, and careful policy writing on an issue of great importance. Although the two books make something of an odd couple (so different are they in period, genre, and tone), reading them together heightens each one's claims about the value of looking at academic culture through the lens of change. Perhaps nothing captures its direction as well as the shift in key terms from William Clark's "charisma" to Judith Gappa, Ann Austin, and Andrea Trice's "respect."

At the same time, Clark Kerr's encomium to higher education's historical continuity does suggest that *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. *Academic Charisma* and *Rethinking Faculty Work* both concern academic hierarchies, and both show that it

matters very much how they are constituted and displayed. Gappa, Austin, and Trice remind us that it is still common today--as it was in Basel in the 1690s--to find departmental directories in which lecturers are listed below those with appointments on the tenure track. The authors are to be commended for recommending credible ways to remedy the reality symbolized by that slight. Rethinking Faculty Work's vision of a future in which "all faculty are supported in their efforts to work effectively" (p. xiii) is certainly worthy of becoming what the book's subtitle claims, higher education's strategic imperative.

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