

Thinking the present with Max Weber

A series of seminar-workshops to be organised by the *Max Weber Study Group* of the British Sociological Association

Seminar-workshop 1: Co-organised with the University of Salford and UCU Salford

The University, the Scholar and the Student

7 December 2012 – University of Salford (Manchester)

The recent publication in English of Weber's complete writings (and speeches) on universities has thrown new light on his involvement in university politics and his concern with the 'type of scholar' that universities were producing: Weber imagines a university system in which researchers are becoming workers 'separated from their means of production', and academics 'people of the trade'. Inspired by Weber's observations, this seminar-workshop will reflect on the current state of the university and its attendant practices: what is the meaning of scholarly work when the scholar is faced by a series of sometimes contradictory conditions and imperatives (output targets in research, 'the student experience' in teaching coupled with compulsory debt-financing (huge fees) for students, the tension between instrumentalism and knowledge for its own sake, between a public and a market-driven university ethos, between a collegial institution and a hierarchical organisation). What is the meaning of the new regime under which universities are put to work, with its 'quality' indicators and debt-incurring devices, in terms of the pedagogy practised, the kinds of reason relied on, as well as the type of human being presupposed by such regime and resulting from its implementation? More generally, what kind of scholar, what kind of student, what type of human being, is being produced by these practices?

Programme

- 10 – 10:15 *Introduction to the seminar: posing some Weberian questions* (Carlos Frade, University of Salford)
- 10:15 – 11 *Science as a Vocation: Context and Genesis* (Keith Tribe, University of Sussex)
- 11 – 11:45 *Markets, expertise and democracy: rethinking the academic vocation under a neo-liberal knowledge regime* (John Holmwood, University of Nottingham)
- 11:45 – 12:30 *Indebted servitude – the work of 'the calling' in the new feudal professions* (Sarah Amsler, University of Lincoln)
- 12:30 – 1:15 LUNCH
- 1:15 – 2 *The external and internal conditions of academic vocation, revisited* (Sam Whimster, Käte Hamburger Kolleg 'Recht als Kultur', Universität Bonn)
- 2 – 2:45 *University reform as state-making: the Research Excellence Framework, the Bologna Process, and the 'Althoff system'* (Eric R Lybeck, University of Cambridge)
- 2:45 – 3:30 *The Government's Higher Education Reforms: Downgrading the Professional University and Upgrading the Entrepreneurial University* (Peter Scott, Institute of Education, University of London)
- 3:30 – 3:45 COFFEE BREAK
- 3:45 – 4:30 *Theme TBC* (Joyce Canaan, Birmingham City University)
- 4:30 – 5:15 *Goal-Rationality, the Scholar's Vocation and New Public Management* (Erik J Boström & Sharon Rider, Uppsala Universitet)

References:

Weber, 2008. *Max Weber's Complete Writings on Academic and Political Vocations*, edited by John Dreijmanis, trans. Gordon Wells. Algora Publishing.

Venue: Whitworth Clifford Conference Room (50 metres from Salford Crescent train station).

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