

## ***International Journal of Communication* Feature Special Section on Academic Labor and Administration in Communication Studies**

Edited by Jonathan Sterne

Academic labor today is characterized by a series of disconcerting trends: an increasingly casualized professoriate; universities that increasingly depend on chronically undercompensated part-time and graduate student labor to support their course offerings; a top-down managerial style and erosion of faculty governance; increasing economic exploitation of staff and undergraduates; rising student debt; governments that attack public education; shrinking endowments (for the schools that had them) and heightened expectations for sponsored research; wooden research assessment exercises; and the acute uncertainty of the academic job market for recent PhD graduates. Against these, there is a growing academic labor movement, with its own intellectual organs like *Workplace* and *Edufactory* and a wide range of activist manifestations, from labor unions to non-commercial alternative universities. Academic journals have also fielded debate in this area, from *Social Text's* foray into the Yale Strike to *Topia's* announced special issue on the anniversary of Bill Readings' *The University in Ruins*.

This special forum of the *International Journal of Communication* aims to make two contributions to the ongoing discussion of academic labor.

1. To encourage university administrators – current and former – who are sympathetic to the academic labor movement and the new student activism to reflect on their experiences in administration and thereby provide useful knowledge for activists, organizers, and others. Much of the existing literature on academic labor treats university administrations as a fairly monolithic “management,” yet university administrations are riddled with conflict, contradiction and constraint. In most instances, administrators used to be faculty members, and in many they will be again, once their administrative terms are over. A better understanding of the politics and conflicts of administration may be useful in the struggle for better conditions within universities as places to work and study.
2. To encourage people in Communication Studies – at all levels in the field – to reflect directly on the state of academic labor *in our field*. Much of the academic labor literature has come from fields with considerably worse job markets than Communication Studies, like English and History. Yet Communication Studies does not conform to so well to models of those other fields, either academically or institutionally. More importantly, it is possible that within professional organizations and within departments we can begin to address some of these issues. But first, we need to confront them.

Submissions should be 500-4000 words in length and may come in any form of critical commentary piece, ranging from academic analysis of some aspect of the current crisis; to personal/political reflection; to recommendations for activism,

policy, or best practices; or any other style of critical commentary. We are particularly interested in pieces that not only identify problems but offer potential solutions or new perspectives.

Multimedia submissions are also welcome.

Although the section will be edited and reviewed, it will not be subject to blind peer review.

For the purposes of this forum, "Communication Studies" will be interpreted broadly to include all related fields and subfields, theoretical and applied.

We welcome commentary from any and all parts of the world, though submissions should be made in English. Submissions by current or former administrators in fields outside Communication Studies are most welcome.

Send queries, proposals or essays to [al@sternetworks.org](mailto:al@sternetworks.org) .

Deadline for submissions: 1 June 2011

Decisions, and comments on accepted submissions will be returned by 1 July 2011

Expected date of publication will be September 2011.

All submissions must follow IJOC style. Author guidelines for the IJOC are available at: <http://ijoc.org/ojs/index.php/ijoc/about/submissions#authorGuidelines>