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A New Deal for the Humanities: Liberal Arts and the Future of Public Higher Education (The American Campus)

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Many in higher education fear that the humanities are facing a crisis. But even if the rhetoric about “crisis” is overblown, humanities departments do face increasing pressure from administrators, politicians, parents, and students. In *A New Deal for the Humanities,* Gordon Hutner and Feisal G. Mohamed bring together twelve prominent scholars who address the history, the present state, and the future direction of the humanities. These scholars keep the focus on *public* higher education, for it is in our state schools that the liberal arts are taught to the greatest numbers and where their neglect would be most damaging for the nation.

The contributors offer spirited and thought-provoking debates on a diverse range of topics. For instance, they deplore the push by administrations to narrow learning into quantifiable outcomes as well as the demands of state governments for more practical, usable training. Indeed, for those who suggest that a college education should be “practical”—that it should lean toward the sciences and engineering, where the high-paying jobs are—this book points out that while a few nations produce as many technicians as the United States does, America is still renowned worldwide for its innovation and creativity, skills taught most effectively in the humanities. Most importantly, the essays in this collection examine ways to make the humanities even more effective, such as offering a broader array of options than the traditional major/minor scheme, options that combine a student’s professional and intellectual interests, like the new medical humanities programs.

A democracy can only be as energetic as the minds of its citizens, and the questions fundamental to the humanities are also fundamental to a thoughtful life. *A New Deal for the Humanities* takes an intrepid step in making the humanities—and our citizens—even stronger in the future.

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