

Brown Bag Lunch Readings – Spring 2008

Education's End:

Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life

by Anthony T. Kronman

Reviews from Amazon.com

"Just when we need them most, the humanities have relinquished their role at the heart of liberal education—helping students reflect on what makes life worth living. In this bold and provocative book, Anthony Kronman explains why the humanities have lost their way. With eloquence and passion, he argues that departments of literature, classics, and philosophy can recover their authority and prestige only by reviving their traditional focus on fundamental questions about the meaning of life."

—Michael J. Sandel, author of *The Case against Perfection* and *Public Philosophy*

"In a brilliant, sustained argument that is as forthright, bold, and passionately felt as it is ideologically unclassifiable and original, Anthony Kronman leaps in a bound into the center of America's cultural disputes, not to say cultural wars. Although Kronman's specific area of concern is higher education, his argument will reach far beyond campus walls."

—Jonathan Schell, author of *The Unconquerable World: Power Nonviolence and the Will of the People*

Excerpt from the Introduction of *Education's End*

Why did the question of what living is for disappear from the roster of questions our colleges and universities address in a deliberate and disciplined way? What is the source of the appeal of the research ideal, and why is it so hostile to this question? Why are the ideas of diversity and multiculturalism and the belief that values are merely expressions of power so corrosive of the attempt to explore the question of life's purpose and meaning? What have the consequences of the disappearance of this question from our colleges and universities been for the culture at large, where our churches now monopolize the authority to address it? And what are the prospects for its restoration to a position of respect in the academy?

These are the questions I ask and answer in this book. (Kronman 7-8)

January 9	Introduction	pp1 – 8
January 16	Chapter 1: What Is Living For?	pp 9 – 35
January 23	Chapter 2: Secular Humanism [first half]	pp 37 – 65
January 30	Chapter 2: Secular Humanism [second half]	pp 65 – 90
February 6	Chapter 3: The Research Ideal [first half]	pp 91 – 114
*February 13	The Way I See It... (a teaching and learning forum)	Center Hall 216 at 12:15
February 20	Chapter 3: The Research Ideal [second half]	pp 114 – 136
February 27	Chapter 4: Political Correctness [first third]	pp 137 – 159
*March 12	The Way I See It... (a teaching and learning forum)	Center Hall 216 at 12:15
March 19	Chapter 4: Political Correctness [second third]	pp 159 – 180
March 26	Chapter 4: Political Correctness [third third]	pp 180 – 203
April 2	Chapter 5: Spirit in an Age of Science [first half]	pp 205 – 234
*April 9	The Way I See It... (a teaching and learning forum)	Center Hall 216 at 12:15
April 16	Chapter 5: Spirit in an Age of Science [second half]	pp 234 – 259
April 23	Recap	

An Invitation to the
Brown Bag Lunch Discussion Series

Weekly Conversations About Topics and Texts of Interest to Wabash College Faculty and Staff

Hosted and Sponsored by the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts
Facilitated by Mark Brouwer

You are invited to attend the Brown Bag Lunch Discussion Series, weekly conversations among faculty and staff at Wabash College; the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts is the traditional sponsor and host. This semester, as in the past, interested faculty and staff will convene in Trippet Hall, room 325 from 12:15 to 1:00 p.m. on most Wednesdays; Mark Brouwer will facilitate these discussions; this semester we will be reading Anthony T. Kronman's new book *Education's End* (Yale 2007). Copies of the book are generously provided to interested faculty and staff by the Center of Inquiry. All faculty and staff are invited and encouraged to attend, even when unable to read for the given week. The general model of the conversations is shared inquiry into what we do and why we do it, centered around a specific reading.

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This semester's reading will be somewhat different than previous texts for two, primary reasons: One, Kronman's focus of attention is on the humanities. Two, Kronman presents a sustained, complex, historical and theoretical argument. These two differences highly recommend this text for Brown Bag discussions. I believe *Education's End* will be particularly relevant to reflections on C & T; in addition, Kronman's careful and elaborate prose will force us to pay close attention to what precisely he's arguing for, and from what this argument follows. As always, differences of opinion are welcomed and encouraged; there is certainly no expectation that participants decide whether Kronman is right or wrong. On the contrary, by examining Kronman's claims and the reasons for them I hope that we all learn something important about our professions, our teaching and the values that underlie them.

Please contact Mark Brouwer (x6182, brouwer@wabash.edu) for a copy of the book or with any questions, comments or concerns. The first meeting will be held January 9 at 12:15 in Trippet 325; the first reading is available on BlackBoard / Center of Inquiry Brownbag Series [under My Organizations] / Documents / Spring 2008 / Kronman_Introduction.pdf