

Back to the Core

Rethinking Core Texts in Liberal Arts & Sciences Education in Europe

Editors: Emma Cohen de Lara, Hanke Drop

by Ewa Atanassow, Joop Berding, Ruth A. Bevan, Emma Cohen de Lara, Allard den Dulk, Iko Doeland, Hanke Drop, Topi Heikkerö, David Janssens, Richard Kamber, David Kretz, Arie-Jan Kwak, J. Scott Lee, Geoff Lehman, Geliijn Molier, Christopher B. Nelson, Matthew D. Post, Andrea Rodríguez-Prat, Álvaro Sánchez-Ostiz, Sandra G. L. Schruijer

VERNON SERIES IN EDUCATION

"This collection of essays admirably reflects the Association for Core Texts and Courses conference in Amsterdam in September 2015 from which it was generated. The watchword is inclusiveness: authors from a variety of departments are represented from across the United States and Europe, there are no limits on what texts can be examined - from Plato to Wallace - and no restrictions on the approach taken toward the text. The spirit of experimentation pervades the writing and thinking and assures the existence of the kind of seminar protocol that was first elucidated by Socrates. His only rule in conversation was for his speakers to say what they truly thought, and what better way to stimulate original thought? This is a splendid achievement for the cause of interdisciplinarity."

Norma Thompson, Yale University

Summary

Whereas liberal arts and sciences education arguably has European roots, European universities have evolved over the last century to become advanced research institutions, mainly offering academic training in specialized disciplines. The Bologna process, started by the European Union in the late nineties, encouraged European institutions of higher education to broaden their curricula and to commit to undergraduate education with increased vigor. One of the results is that Europe is currently witnessing a proliferation of liberal arts and sciences colleges and broad bachelor degrees. This edited volume fills a gap in the literature by providing reflections on the recent developments in Europe with regard to higher education in the liberal arts and sciences. The first section includes reflections from either side of the Atlantic about the nature and aims of liberal arts and sciences

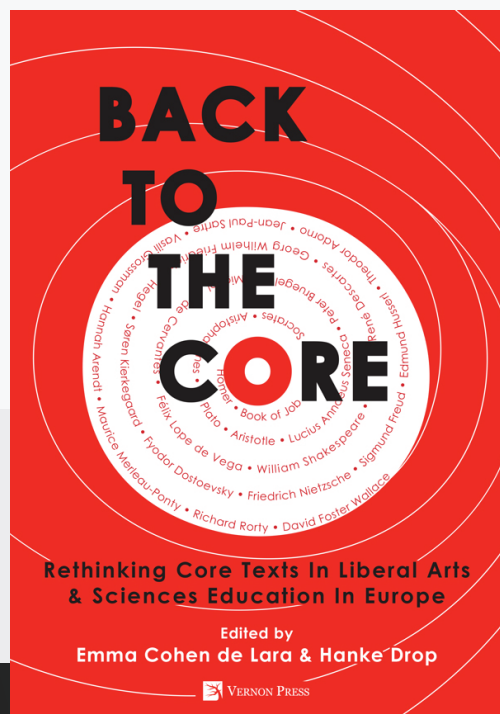
education and the way in which it takes shape, or should take shape in European institutions of

higher learning. The edited volume takes as a distinct approach to liberal arts and sciences education by focusing on the unique way in which core texts – i.e. classic texts from philosophical, historical, literary or cultural traditions involving “the best that has been written” – meet the challenges of modern higher education in general and in Europe in particular. This approach is manifested explicitly in the second section that focuses on how specific core texts promote the goals of liberal arts and sciences education, including the teaching methods, curricular reflections, and personal experiences of teaching core texts. The edited volume is based on a selection of papers presented at a conference held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in September 2015. It is meant to impart the passion that teachers and administrators share about developing the liberal arts and sciences in Europe with the help of core texts in order to provide students with a well-rounded, formative, and genuinely liberal education.

About the editors

Emma Cohen de Lara, PhD, is assistant professor in political theory at Amsterdam University College, which is the liberal arts and sciences college of the University of Amsterdam and the VU University Amsterdam. Emma holds master degrees in political science from the University of Leiden and the London School of Economics and a doctorate from the University of Notre Dame. She taught at the University of Vermont and the VU University Amsterdam before coming to Amsterdam University College. Her educational career has familiarized her with both European and American models of higher education. At Amsterdam University College she is a dedicated teacher of political theory and philosophy courses. She has published extensively in the field of ancient political theory and is extending her research interest to the development of liberal arts and sciences education. Her specific interest concerns the role of Bildung or character development in higher education.

Hanke Drop, MA studied physical therapy and Arabic & Islamic studies. She made a career in Dutch higher education, both in the field of teaching liberal arts values to students of educational leadership studies, as well as in the field of Arts education & research. She is preparing a PhD thesis together with her co-author in this edited volume, Iko Doeland, MA, about the impact of the embodied cognition paradigm for pupils' and students' learning processes, especially in relation to students of craftsmanship and the liberal arts.



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