Who needs any more proof of the awful decay of higher education in America than the unveiling of its effectual truth, would-be pogroms in Morningside Heights and on campuses from coast to coast? More common, though perhaps not less unsettling, is the characteristic boredom and confusion of the recipients of the great privilege of the baccalaureate in America. This boredom is as important to explaining the successful revival of violent anti-Semitism as is the ideological indoctrination that more directly causes it.

The moral decay of education has two conjoined parts: the elimination of higher civic education and the total subversion of liberal education. Young men and women trained, at best, for productivity have not been prepared for freedom and cannot distinguish between the politics of the gutter and the fortitude required of the highest duties. They enter their careers with technical skill but without memory, judgment, reverence, or real wonder.

A generation of students emerges from our most prestigious institutions able to code or to critique, but not to speak coherently about justice, law, liberty, or the human good. The result is a civic catastrophe. Fewer than one in five Americans can name the three branches of government. Even fewer can explain the principles of the Declaration of Independence or the architecture of the Constitution. This is not merely a civic failure. It is a failure of education at its very core.

At the same time, the humanities—the traditional stewards of liberal learning—have been hollowed out or worse. What once promised the cultivation of judgment, taste, and moral intellect is now justly derided as ideological indoctrination. Students whose deepest need is clarity on the most urgent questions—Why do I obey? What is a just regime? How ought I to live?—are met with irony, jargon, or disillusionment. The boredom of many is interspersed with the rabid, violent enthusiasms of the most "engaged." American universities once promised the meaningful integration of the power of science and the duties to our neighbor and to the Almighty. They now struggle to explain why the humanities matter at all, indeed, how they are distinct from sheer transmission of radical catechisms.

The manifest result of the contempt for civic seriousness and cultural stewardship is theatrical outrage staged atop the cracked foundations of intellectual collapse. Students will demand meaningfulness; ambitious students will expect to contribute meaningfully to the societies from which they come. If they are not provided intelligent, rigorous, morally serious paths by which they can integrate the truth about the world with their deepest longings, then they will remain susceptible to the violent

charlatanry that has passed for education at schools like UCLA, Columbia, and Harvard.

The establishment in recent years of schools dedicated to renewing the civic arts and humane letters at some of the leading institutions of public higher education in the country is naturally a cause for hope. These schools take as their mission renewing the duty public universities have to educate students for citizenship. But they have endeavored to do so by promising, additionally, a renewal of liberal education, a distinct though related task.

Their work is rooted in the conviction that neither liberal learning nor civic formation alone is enough. Liberal education untethered from the need to reflect on the obligations of citizenship, in a university with the administrative norms of the past half-century, becomes an instrument of the whims of the professoriate class: sometimes elevated, usually highly specialized and trivial, often ideologically weaponized. Meanwhile, civic education without the leavening element of true liberal education threatens to be just the counter-ideology to the professorial fashions, lately termed "woke," that have reigned for the past 50 years.

The intellectual architecture of the School of Civic Leadership at University of Texas Austin reflects these larger purposes. It shortly will be the home of three distinct but mutually reinforcing majors: *Civics Honors*, *Great Books*, and *Strategy and Statecraft*. The Civics major answers the question, *What should a leader know?* by directing students to three areas: (1) the fundamentals of economic liberty, (2) a deep immersion in the history, law, and principles of constitutionalism that make up the American civic experience, and (3) a rich tour through in the moral, literary, intellectual, and religious traditions of Western civilization. Students will be equipped to offer reflective, mature contributions to American society *as* *citizens in full*.
The Great Books major and the Strategy and Statecraft major, developed in partnership with other academic units on campus, extend and complete the mission of the school within the university. The Great Books major channels the deepening tide of interest across America in recovering classical education. As such luminaries as Allan Bloom, Leon Kass, and Eva Brann have reminded us, the study of the greatest minds, works of art, and spiritual testimonies remains the surest path to the cultivation of both wonder and awe, faithful to the twin roots of Western civilization in biblical religion and Greek speculative reason. Such a study has a natural home among contemporary efforts to revive civic and liberal learning. The Strategy and Statecraft major offers a humanities-based course of study that prepares students for careers in the military and in foreign affairs by offering a rigorous training in languages, diplomatic and military history, and the great texts of strategic thought.

Together these courses of study elevate, strengthen, and deepen ambitious young people, showing them a path to contribute to their communities which demands the cultivation of the mind and the discipline of their passions. New schools like SCL at UT Austin promise to be new ways in the desert.

https://ideas.tikvah.org/mosaic/essays/responses/the-moral-collapse-on-campus-is-a-result-of-the-hollowing-out-of-the-humanities