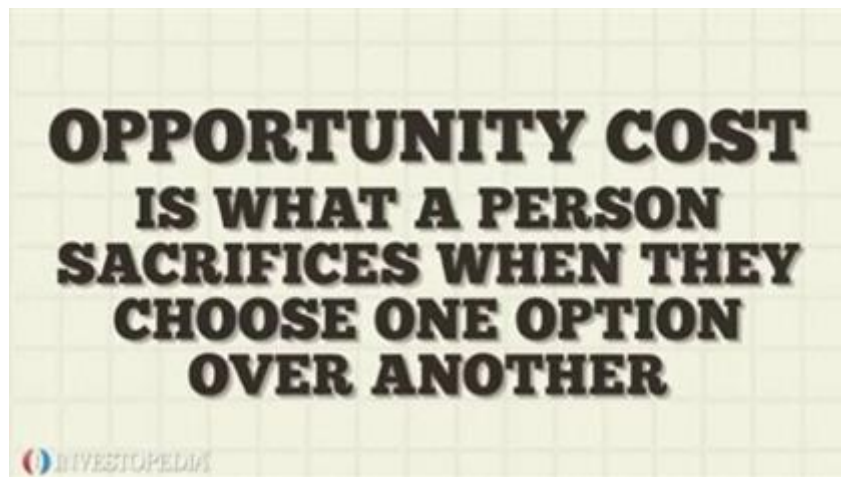


Adventures in Illinois Higher Education: The Opportunity (& Financial) Cost of College

By: Shane Radliff

March 26th, 2016

[Liberty Under Attack](#)



“Schooling”, in and of itself, places a massive burden upon students, even though most of them don’t see it that way. The majority of students go through government schooling (K-12), although they are not being “educated.” Rather, they are being molded to become the next cogs on the wheel of [voluntary servitude](#). After the initial twelve years of indoctrination, some will go onto higher level indoctrination. These young adults, their brains not even being fully developed, are expected to make decisions on what they want to do with the *rest of their lives*. Some may have interests, passions, or they may just want to follow in their parents’ footsteps. Just a year ago, they had to ask for permission to use the restroom, and now they are being shoved out into the real world; most of them, without a basic understanding of finances, politics, or more generally, the vast world that surrounds them. “Daunting” is an understatement.

That said, I was lucky enough to break through that indoctrination, and am in a position where I can break these “hard truths” to past, current, and future students, who may not want to hear them. My experience in college has been, for the most part, intellectually worthless. I have borne witness to [statements and advocations that I never thought I would encounter](#) (maybe I was naïve?). I have become aware of the free market, entrepreneurship, and the vast opportunities available vis-à-vis the Internet, and have come to this conclusion: college is, without a doubt, a waste of time, money, and effort.

To begin, the financial cost is exorbitant and enslaves the already enslaved individual even further, considering the fact that most graduates are in debt up to their eyeballs for years and years, thanks to their student loans. Additionally, there is the opportunity cost involved when someone decides to pursue the “college experience”; in short, all of the things they could have been doing, *if* they had decided not to go to college. Lastly, and maybe even more importantly, are graduates guaranteed a job, like they were in my parent’s days? Not in the least bit. Unemployment (and underemployment) have both increased substantially in the past eight years. Suffice it to say, you may get lucky and have a degree in a growing field (i.e. engineering, agriculture), you may spend years looking for work, or, worst case scenario, your degree may turn out completely useless, with nothing to show for your efforts.

To begin, I’d like to provide an analysis on those three subjects to solidify my argument. Let’s begin.

The Financial Cost

This is one issue that has been at the top of Bernie Sanders’ agenda since he announced his intention to run in the 2016 Presidential Election, and rightfully so. Although, increased government involvement (subsidies, student loans, etc.) is one of the major reasons why it is so expensive—the solution to this problem won’t be found by increased government involvement, or even increased extortion upon the taxpayers to fund this so-called “free” college. Subject education to the free market and I think you’ll see much better results.

Before I move forward, I’d like to tackle an opposing argument. It goes something like this: “Well, the reason that college is so expensive is because of those greedy capitalists, who are trying to gouge students.” That is an illogical argument, considering the existence of public universities, such as the one that I attend.

That said, let’s take a look at roughly how much will be spent just on tuition for my higher level indoctrination:

- [2 years at a community college](#): ~\$5,000
- [2 years at Illinois State University](#): ~\$26,000
 - Total: \$31,000 (not including books, or any of the other various fees that I may come across)

That’s quite a chunk of change, without considering those students who go all four years at a university; you do the math.

This part goes without saying, but just consider all of the other things that that money could have been spent on: food, shelter, capital investment for a start-up business, [financially independent early retirement](#), purchasing land to homestead (self-sufficiency), etc.

Time Spent (Wasted) In College

This part aligns with a future section, in regards to the opportunity cost of college, so this will be brief.

How much time does a student spend obtaining their bachelor's degree?

That question can be answered by basic math, and this is not counting the time studying, commuting to class, or the time spent in between classes (I have an hour between my first and second class on Mondays and Wednesdays, which means that I lose over a day waiting, approximately 30 classes in a semester).

15 credit hours a week (on average) × 16 weeks in a semester × 2 semesters a year × 4 years total = 1,920 hours total (on average), or roughly 80 full days

To reiterate, this is not counting those other variables mentioned previously. According to [College Parents of America](#), students should spend 2-3 hours of study time for each hour spent in class. This comes out to 15 hours in class and around 30 hours of study time (45 hours a week, **more** than a full-time job). That number I provided is probably far below the actual time spent, but at least you have an idea.

This is quite comical to me, as I spend hardly any time studying outside of class, and I have all "A's" and "B's". I suppose that means I'm wasting *less* time, but I digress.

Putting Your Degree to Use?

As a senior in high school, I consistently heard the predominately false assertions that a college degree is beneficial, and that you have a higher chance of getting a job than someone who doesn't have one. There was hardly (if any at all) discussion on trades (plumber, electrician, etc.), and certainly no discussion on entrepreneurship. If I would have been familiar with those, I probably would have never pursued a college degree—but hindsight is always 20/20 right? That, and the [sunk-cost fallacy](#).

So, the question is this: are you guaranteed a job in your field after you graduate?

With the ever-increasing supply of graduates, the answer is a resounding "no". And, if your degree is in "Women's Studies" or any of the other "Liberal Arts", you will soon discover the law of supply and demand, and will find yourself in a tough spot.

That said, let's [take a look at the statistics](#). In 2015, the unemployment rate of recent graduates was 7.2%, which is a 1.7% increase from 2007. The underemployment rate also showed an increase: 9.6% in 2007, up to 14.9% in 2015.

As you can clearly see, it's not an easy task for college graduates to find jobs, and if they do, it's likely they will be working part-time at a job that is far "below" what they had studied for; in other words, they could've easily gotten those jobs *without* graduating college first.

In summation, it's quite comical to see "progressives" advocating for "free" education and [student loan forgiveness](#) for all. It's easy to tell that they have no understanding of economics

whatsoever. If everyone gets a college degree, they will be worthless—it will be similar to having a high school degree, and from the “difficulty” of the classes, no one is truly getting “educated”—that is, at least on things that actually matter ([Austrian economics](#), the true nature of politics, history, etc.). As far as the debt forgiveness goes, that will be yet another loss socialized onto the already *taxed-to-death* taxpayers.

Intermission

Now that I’ve laid out that analysis, I’d like to get into some of my firsthand experiences at Illinois State University (ISU). If that wasn’t convincing, hang tight, and continue reading, as it gets worse—but, doesn’t it nearly always?

In this second part, I will discuss two classes, taught by the same teacher; namely, Mass Media and Communication Theory. On a lighter, and more pleasant note, I will also discuss a recent private meeting with my Ethics teacher.

Firsthand Experiences: The Opportunity Costs of College

Since I’m a journalism major, most of my classes are within the communications field. I’m sure it’s [a lot better than, say, a sociology major](#), but it’s still a struggle to get through. That said, I’ve written about, what seems like, the constant promotion of [Marxist communication theories](#), but other than that, things have been relatively quiet. During the week of the Illinois Primary Elections, there was a lot of promotion of voting, but that’s not worth an article—hell, that’s something [even the “Libertarian” Party does](#), and even some [\(inconsistent\) anarchists](#).

But, as I expected, I knew something would come up, and it surely has. Earlier, I mentioned the exorbitant cost of education, which should imply that students are being afforded the *highest quality propaganda*—well, unfortunately (or fortunately?), that is not the case, at least with Mass Media in particular.

Before moving forward into the absurdities, it’s worth noting the format of the class. Most weeks we are required to participate in [Packback forums](#), a place where students can ask questions and get responses from their peers. For me, it’s a total waste and the amount of [social justice warrior](#)-esque questions are surely no surprise. The questions I ask typically warrant no response, and actually this past week, I [inquired opinions on Hans-Herman Hoppe’s argumentation ethics](#).

crickets

The rest of the class consists of reading the online textbook and completing the lessons (typically 40 questions to ensure that you understand the reading), and *occasionally* lectures on the course material.

This past week consisted of two documentaries, making up the entire class time, and I thought, “You know, I could find these for free online, without wasting even more money or time.” That week prompted this article, but as I always say, it got worse.

According to the schedule:

- There are **30** total class periods.
- **2** of those class periods consist of exams.
- Another **2** of those consist of introductory classes (“Welcome”, “Setting up the Course”)
- **15** of those consist of in-class movies/documentaries.
- **2** of those classes were cancelled.
- That leaves **9** classes of actual lecture.

Not counting the behind-the-scenes work grading assignments (which, her graduate assistant probably does most of), working 30% of the time seems like a pretty easy paycheck (at least in regards to this class). That, and I’m wasting a lot of time in-class watching worthless documentaries, when I could be doing something productive; but, in the spirit of [the Trivium method, everything is grammar](#).

With that said, we had a test on Monday. Due to my trip to Chicago to meet up with fellow voluntaryists and also some medical concerns, I forgot all about it. I looked at the class schedule two hours before and was definitely worried. The day after, I checked my grade on the test and I received a 71%. Keep in mind, I didn’t read the sections or study.

That day, the class received this email from her:

Yikes.

What happened with exam 2? The average score was 63%. There were no A's. And this is the same exact test I have given for a few years - no other class has ever performed so poorly on it.

If you show up to class today, prepare to talk about it. You'll be glad you came - I promise you that.

Thanks. And don't forget packback this week! Clearly you need those points!

My initial thoughts: “Well, shit, above average with no effort at all. Sounds like my entire ‘college experience’ thus far.” To summate, with the curve, I received a “B” on the exam.

Is it really surprising to her that students did so poorly? With hardly any lecture, leaving [mindless millennials](#) to their own devices, what else could she possibly expect? I was definitely satisfied with my grade, but it is just another representation of the uselessness of college.

There is one other thing I would like to touch upon, before moving onto the pleasant part of this article.

This past week, we were discussing [situational theory, developed by James E. Grunig](#), who specializes in public relations. Real briefly, this theory postulates that **publics don’t create**

issues, issues create publics. For clarification, there are a few different classifications, such as non-publics (those that are not involved, and don't care), latent publics (affected, but not aware), aware publics (aware, and affected), and active publics (those who are affected, aware, and active). Between the aware publics and active publics, there is something known as a constraint recognition, which is a barrier for those that are aware, to become active. That is the theory in a nutshell.

There are also three other classifications, one of which will be significant. First off, are all-issue publics (those who are involved in every issue), single issue publics (those that will "vote" based on strictly things like gun control, gay marriage, or abortion), and apathetic publics—those are folks that are aware and affected, but they don't become active.

My professor mentioned that college students are the largest demographic within the latter classification. "We" are informed and aware, but "we" don't do anything—it takes some incentive, such as free pizza, to get "us" involved. Considering the fact that ["we" were sold off to the highest bidder as collateral for the national debt](#), is it really any wonder why "we Millennials" are *required* to be bribed so as to be enticed to do anything? Who **betrayed** who here?

Following that, she stated that, "If every one of you voted, for whoever you wanted to be President, your candidate would win." This is utter bollocks, yet from what I witnessed on campus the day of the elections, only the Bernie supporters are vocal, so I truly hope that my peers remain apathetic and continue to do nothing at the voting booth. As a form of strategic withdrawal, the lower the voter turnout percentages are, the less approval for government in general.

This was just one of the absurd statements I heard in regards to voting, so I figured it was at least worth a mention in passing, considering what I had discovered about [voting in Illinois](#).

A Private Meeting with my Ethics Teacher

I've been following [Kal Molinet's continued outreach to students and professors](#) alike in Richmond, Virginia, and as always, it inspired me to do more in my area, albeit unsuccessfully. I intended on confronting those at the Bernie Sanders rally earlier this month, but my prospective cameraman backed out on me. That said, I decided to setup a private meeting with my Ethics professor. He has fulfilled his role as mediator and has left his views, for the most part, unknown—no bias, no attempt to sway the beliefs of his students, and the continuous promotion of intellectual discussion.

Last Friday we met, and I had a long list of things to discuss. First off, (1) he complimented one of my critiques of error theory, a nihilistic, meta-ethical position, on a recent exam, and called it my strongest argument—definitely something I wanted to discuss. I also had him read one chapter from George H. Smith's book [Atheism: The Case Against God](#), as I was curious to (2) hear his thoughts on Smith's view of Ethics, since it essentially lined up with mine. Lastly, I

wanted to proffer the (3) libertarian case for the universality of morality (the twin libertarian axioms) and also get his (4) thoughts on [Hoppe's argumentation ethics](#).

So, how did it go?

(1) My argument was relatively strong, but as an amateur philosopher, I made some mistakes, as I would expect. He explained them to me, and we moved forward from there.

(2) The discussion on Smith's view of Ethics was interesting, and there was even a criticism of Ayn Rand in the same regard. Essentially, what I took out of it, is that since Smith isn't fond of the *is-ought* dichotomy (and, from what I've been able to find out, most libertarian philosophers don't like it either) he's completely skipping over an important part of philosophy—he's essentially shutting down the conversation, according to my professor. He didn't say that Smith was wrong, but he just wasn't fond of the jump, even though Smith (as he admitted), did a fine job in his shift from meta-ethics to normative ethics.

(3) This was the part that I was able to educate him on, so I certainly enjoyed it. Similar to the way Hoppe's argumentation ethics justifies property rights, that's how I went about presenting my argument for the twin libertarian axioms being the closest thing to the universality of ethics that has been discovered thus far. He stated that he was familiar with libertarianism, to the point of a layman (so, in other words, probably the anti-libertarian "Libertarian" Party). I laid out my axiomatic argument, with examples, and he agreed to that point, but he wasn't comfortable with asserting a position. I at least introduced him to the idea of libertarianism, although, I didn't push it too far—I didn't take it to its logical conclusion (government inherently violates person and property, therefore, it's illegitimate).

(4) This will be a quick one—I asked him if he was familiar with argumentation ethics and he of course said "no". I laid it out for him and inquired his thoughts, and he admitted that it was not within his realm.

Simple enough. I don't think much got accomplished, but he did ask me how I became so interested in philosophy and I pulled out Rothbard's [The Ethics of Liberty](#) and Mises' [Human Action](#) and explained my path to him. That, and my deep newfound interest in philosophy and economics. He appreciated that, and directed me towards classes I could take that focus on Aristotelian philosophy and logic. Beyond that, there's nothing for me at ISU.

Conclusion

I began this article with the burden of "schooling" on students, laid out the statistical arguments against higher level indoctrination, my firsthand experiences within the intellectually dishonest realm known as "college," and ended on a more-positive note, even though I was largely unsuccessful.

That said, I think the [Adventures in Illinois Higher Education](#) series is living proof that college is nothing more than an authoritarian hellhole, where dissenting opinions are either crushed or ignored. Questions are encouraged, insofar as they don't challenge the predominant opinion—what is the opinion, you may ask? [Cultural Marxism](#) (CM), is the best I can come up with. (*Note: As an aside, I was skimming through the CM Wikipedia page, and we've gone over most of that in at least one class, if not multiple—we're essentially studying the theories propagated by the Frankfurt School.*)

[Ludwig von Mises had something to say about this](#) in *Human Action*, when he discussed the revolt against reason:

“Marx had a solution at hand. Human reason, he asserted, is constitutionally unfitted to find truth. The logical structure of mind is different with various social classes. There is no such thing as a universally valid logic.”

I have seen this firsthand—the revolt against reason that Mises spoke about long before I was ever conceived, only now, it is far more aggressive and invasive. K-12ers are inculcated with the ideas, and then they are hammered home in higher level institutions. Marx and Engel believed that socialism would be the climax of human evolution, and unfortunately, I think we are seeing this presumption beginning to come into fruition.

What can be done, you may ask? Utilize your faculties of reason, the ability to critically think, and look at all sides of the arguments. There is only one side that can be logically (and morally) defended, and that is the defense of person and property—in other words, consistent libertarianism (anarchism). Any other path will surely be the road to perdition.