

# Academic Labor: Research and Artistry

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Volume 1

Article 2

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2017

## From the Editors

Editors of ALRA

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### Recommended Citation

Editors of ALRA (2017) "From the Editors," *Academic Labor: Research and Artistry*: Vol. 1 , Article 2.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/alra/vol1/iss1/2>

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## *From the Editors*

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*ALRA* seeks to highlight the work of scholars and creators who are addressing issues of labor in the academic setting. Prior to the development of *ALRA* and the broader site of CSAL (Center for the Study of Academic Labor), those interested in research and creativity, as it pertains to academic labor, often struggled to find sites to locate their work. *ALRA*, like CSAL more generally, hopes to provide a scholarship home for academics who explore these issues.

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**E**stablished to promote forms of knowledge production and artistic production that expose labor conditions in the academy, *ALRA* exists to motivate research on matters relating to contingency in the academy. The pages of forthcoming issues of this journal will represent a range of contributions, from the statistical to the historic/archival, from the theoretical to the applied, from the researched to the creative, and from empirical to essayist forms. *ALRA*'s editors and reviewers include social scientists, artists, and theorists specializing in labor issues. The goal is to offer a diverse body of scholars, policy-makers, researchers, activists, and artists a location to come together in a spirit of collective strategizing and consciousness-raising about key issues in the academy, particularly as they relate to labor.

The journal is open access to make the issues and content available to as broad an audience as possible, and this same spirit of access and inclusion governs our submission guidelines as well: In future issues of *ALRA*, we hope to present a broad range of genres and approaches to understanding labor in the academy. These genres may include, but are not limited to, reports, policies, position statements, essays, organizing and advocacy toolkits, photographs, photographic essays, personal narratives, social science research, original art, and

reviews in print and multimedia formats. The goal here is to bring into conversation the broadest range of practitioners who are affected by the labor conditions characterizing higher education today.

We are actively seeking submissions on topics such as coalition-building in the academy, collective action and emergent strategy, governance in the academy, hidden labor and cultural taxation among faculty and staff, the place of labor in critical university studies, “labor of love” ideology in the academy, recruitment and retention, and topics pertaining to diversity and inclusion in the academy.

We see this inaugural issue as continuing and spurring on a conversation--a conversation that has taken place across a range of sites: in board rooms, senate hearings, campus hallways; in teachers’ union newsletters and newspaper editorials. *ALRA* exists as a forum for these conversations and for resource-sharing as issues of contingency are addressed on diverse college campuses.

Our inaugural issue explores academic labor from a multitude of fronts. You’ll find personal stories and firsthand accounts of how contingency influences professional identity and professional decision-making. You will also read about academic labor on a larger scale, as articles delve into economic factors surrounding the growth in contingency and the future of unions in higher education.

The scholarship presented in this issue offers a snapshot of some of the far-reaching ramifications of the precarity--affecting not only hiring and retention of faculty and staff, but also curriculum and scholarly output.

Shulman, in “Contingency in Higher Education: Evidence and Explanation” presents a data-driven analysis of casualized faculty hiring. A commonly heard story in higher education is that the increase in part-time and non-tenure-track labor is the direct result of state budget cuts and lower revenue from decreased enrollment. Steven Shulman debunks that myth in “Contingency in Higher Education: Evidence and Explanation.” In this detailed analysis, Shulman looks at the trends and economic factors surrounding contingent employment. Tuition increases have more than made up for budget cuts, and even the wealthiest universities have increased their contingent labor force. So if lack of money is not the cause, then what is? Shulman offers up several reasons for the growth in contingency.

Amy Lynch-Binieck, in her article, “Don’t Rock the Boat,” examines how curricular choices differ between contingent and full-time composition faculty. Lynch-Binieck finds that contingent faculty are more likely to use textbooks and writing assignments based on departmental recommendations. Due to lack of job security, less academic freedom, and feeling disconnected from departmental culture, contingent faculty are less likely to “rock the boat” in their curricular choices.

Kathleen Vacek offers an in-depth examination of what it means for a contingent faculty member to identify as an academic writer. In “It’s Not as Rosy as I’d Like It to Be,” we’re introduced to Elle, a recent Ph.D. grad who struggles to find time to pursue journal publications alongside the demands of a high teaching load, spread among three colleges. Despite her past publications and research distinctions, Elle

strains to find motivation to continue publishing, as it is not required of her as a part-time instructor. Each round of applications that doesn't result in a full-time position serves to further her self-doubt as a researcher and strikes blows to her professional identity.

In "Saying Goodbye to Unions in Higher Education: Labor Policy under the Trump Administration," Raymond L. Hogler offers an historical understanding of labor unions in the U.S. and how they have weakened in recent times. Policies under a Trump administration—including appointments to the National Labor Relations Board and the Supreme Court—are likely to further weaken unions and threaten the American labor movement.

And finally, in "The Labor of Scholarship: Rhetorical Advocacy and Community Engagement," Erik Juergensmeyer suggests that faculty ought to engage more with the community in order to bridge the gap between the academy and the larger world. Using Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered* model to explain different types of scholarship, Juergensmeyer argues that faculty should participate in civic discourse and rhetorical advocacy, rather than limiting their expertise to within the college or university. In today's world, where people feel their rights being threatened, a call for the academy to advocate for peoples' rights seems more important than ever.

Please look ahead to our second issue which will focus on discussions of "the slow professor" and efforts by academics to (re)gain control of their professional and personal lives. We see this issue offering solidarity with other workers who are seeking a workplace that demands less than the proverbial pound of flesh--i.e., a workplace that respects one's boundaries and one's dignity. This issue will focus on how faculty, staff, and students persist under current academic conditions. Send us your manuscripts! We hope this issue will generate responses and will fuel a conversation that will take us forward.

We thank the writers appearing in this first issue for bearing with us as we worked out the kinks of the journal, and we also thank our generous peer reviewers. The labor of peer review so often goes uncelebrated but it is on the collegiality of reviewers that so much of academic scholarship depends. We hope you enjoy the inaugural issue of *Academic Labor: Research and Artistry!*

*Dr. Sue Doe, Colorado State University*

*Dr. Janelle Adsit, Humboldt State University*

*Jillian Wojcik, Assistant Professor, Social/Behavioral Sciences,  
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*Dr. Jessica Beard, Executive Director of the West Valley-  
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*Mary Hickey, Colorado State University*