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Abstracts

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Paper title	Contingent Faculty v. Intolerant Economics: Lessons on the Limits of Ecological Challenges to the Neoclassical Canon by Non-Tenured Educators
General theme	Educational strategies aimed at ecologically challenging the neoclassical canon in a contingent academy

Objective(s)

This paper shares experiences of a contingent, non-neoclassical lecturer who, after teaching in the Department of Economics at the University of Vermont from the years 2009-2017 (and teaching economics since 1989), was denied reappointment on the basis of making “provocative” statements (from an ecological perspective) about the standard economics model (Summa, 2018).

Methods

The lessons learned from teaching conventional economics, and doing well-informed critiques of the so-called standard model are discussed, with a view toward developing tactical resistance and alternative (non-academic) educational strategies aimed at ecologically challenging the neoclassical canon, which “implants an imprecise but still serviceable set of ideas in the minds of many [who are]... led to accept what they might otherwise criticize.” (Galbraith, 1973).

Results

The majority of appointments at colleges and universities in the United States for the past several decades have been non-tenured positions, a market driven process leading to what has been dubbed the “contingent” academy - where the traditional protections against retaliation for expressing controversial views have been weakened by a “more insidious and structural” threat. (Smith, 2015). This transformation leaves educators seeking to address pressing public concerns with challenging perspectives more vulnerable to encroachments on their right to free and open inquiry and teaching, especially where academic freedom is taken for granted (Gottfredson, 2010). The results presented in

this paper provide evidence of this “insidious and structural ” threat to freedom of expression from within an increasingly contingent academy.

Sources:

Galbraith, John Kenneth (1973). *Economics and the Public Purpose*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Gottfredson, L. S. (2010). “Lessons in academic freedom as lived experience.” *Personality and Individual Differences* (Online at Doi:[10.1016/j.paid.2010.01.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2010.01.001)).

Smith, Stephen A. (2015). “Contingent Faculty and Academic Freedom in the Twenty-First Century.” *First Amendment Studies*, 49:1, 27-30, (Online at DOI: [10.1080/21689725.2015.1016362](https://doi.org/10.1080/21689725.2015.1016362)).

Summa, John (2018). “Proposed Findings of Facts and Conclusions of Law.” Legal brief filed March 1, 2018 at the Vermont Labor Relations Board (VLRB). “John Summa v. The University of Vermont and State Agricultural Colleges” (Docket No. 17-27, *The Grievance of John Summa*).