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## Your humanities degree may soon become ancient history

BRUCE WALSH

PHILADELPHIA

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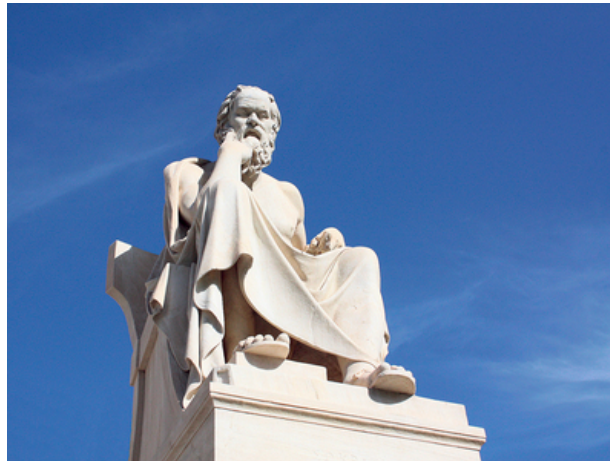
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Toby Miller's latest book is his most confrontational, polemic piece of writing to date. In "Blow Up the Humanities" --which will be released by Temple University Press in August -- the longtime author and media studies professor skewers his own field, painting humanities departments as antiquated relics with an overtly class-conscious agenda.

"It used to be that you couldn't get into Yale unless you were proficient in ancient Greek. The idea was that they would produce 'cultivated gentlemen who would be leaders of the country.' Eventually they dropped classical languages as the core and turned toward English literature and so on," says Miller, who is the chair of the media and cultural studies program at the University of California, Riverside. "At the same time the big land-grant universities were looking for a much more applied form of humanities. ... That's why if you go to the University of Michigan or Illinois, you learn speech communication -- but if you go to Yale or Harvard, you learn English literature."

Pointing to a downward trend in student engagement, research and publication opportunities, Miller proposes a decidedly practical curriculum focused on the job skills most students need. "Whether you work in PR or Metro or Greenpeace or Coca-Cola, you need to know how to design a webpage, the basics of narrative art, how software and hardware work and the conditions of labor in those areas," says Miller. "I'm looking for something that's very applied, in the way business is, but also has a critical edge, dealing with questions of labor and the environment, and not just how you can make a buck and become a corporate boss."

More about education , humanities , degree , Toby Miller



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These days, even Socrates might have trouble finding a job right out of college.

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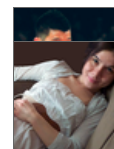


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