

Attacking Students, Denigrating Pedagogic Pluralism and Promoting a CORE Whitewash, a
Normal Day in the UK's Economic Orthodoxy:

Some Transcribed Evidence from the BBC

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“Teaching Economics After the Crash” Aditya Chakraborty reporting for the BBC.
Broadcast BBC RADIO 4 Tue 2 Dec 2014 20:00 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04svbjj>
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Transcribe text from timing 27.23-30.45 minutes

[Background to the Excerpt. The Post-Crash Economics Society established by students at Manchester University has campaigned for changes in the Economics curriculum. One lecturer, **Dr Devrim Yilmaz**, started teaching, in his own time, an heterodox undergraduate introductory course on “Bubbles, Panics and Crashes”; he and the students were led to believe this was to become part of the curriculum, but instead Yilmaz’s contract at the Economics Faculty was not renewed, i.e. his employment was terminated. The programme proceeds as follows about the Economics Faculty at Manchester, and the CORE project.]

[Aditya Chakraborty]

“One response by the faculty has been to hire some big names from the real world, indeed from some of its most desirable post codes. So former Goldman Sachs economist Jim O’Neill was now onboard. There’s also a new Professor of Public Policy, vice Chair of the BBC Trust, **Diane Coyle**, who wants to defend her colleagues.”

[Diane Coyle]

“[...] They’re launching a very wide ranging curriculum review, it might well decide that there needs to be a course that offers, um, heterodox economics or post-Keynesian economics, meanwhile there is a financial crisis course available to the students, in, in the Business School; its across the road, it takes them 2 minutes to get there and its, um, a course that’ll teach about the causes of the financial crises, it’s just pigheaded to say that’s not good enough.”

[Aditya Chakraborty]

“Diane’s not straight out of some economics polit bureau, she too wants the curriculum to be grounded in the real world but disagrees on the need for different perspectives.”

[Aditya Chakraborty asks Diane Coyle]

“What’s bad about what Post-Crash is calling for?”

[Diane Coyle]

“I think one thing is they have this fixation on schools of thought. They have this idea that there’s a monolithic, erh, neoclassical school of thought that dominated economics departments and the curriculum for a long time and that it needs to switch to, erh, a different school of thought, heterodox, or at least introduce lots of different schools of thoughts. I think that’s going backwards, that’s going back to the economics of the 1930s and there’s almost Medieval Scholastic debates about, erh, what your world view was.”

[Aditya Chakraborty]

“Diane has chipped in to the CORE project, a revamped introductory curriculum in economics that’s just begun a pilot at University College London. The lead author is Professor Wendy Karlin.”

[Wendy Karlin]

“The CORE project is animated by the idea that we can teach a new introduction course in economics rooted in the problems of the real world, so problems of instability, inequality, problems of environmental degradation; so this is a beginning I think in changing the way the core of economics is taught.”

[Aditya Chakraborty]

“Asking the student reformers what they think of CORE is a bit like asking a vegetarian if they fancy McDonalds now it sells salad. They can see the effort but it’s not quite what they are after. At the Cambridge Society for Economic Pluralism, Diana Garcia-Lopez.”

[Diana Garcia-Lopez]

“CORE is giving us an updated version of mainstream economics, though they do try to connect a little bit to current issues but it is still within the same framework of one single coherent view of economic theories, and we call for a pluralism in terms of methodologies, schools of thought, and interdisciplinarity, and CORE ticks none of those boxes.”

[Aditya Chakraborty]

Phillip Morowsky, author of *Never Let a Serious Crisis go to Waste*.

[Phillip Morowsky]

“The poor students who want something different, and are even being told they are getting something different, are basically getting more of the same. Where I come from this is called lipstick on a pig. This is the instantiation of that famous quote that ‘there is no alternative’. That’s the way the economic profession behaves.”

[Postscript: So, students asking for pluralism in economic teaching are taking us back to Medieval times, while asking for a single heterodox course in economics to be taught by economists is “just pigheaded”. Meanwhile people (especially non-economists) circulating CORE as a progressive step should take note that this is far from the case.]