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Education

Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities
Martha C. Nussbaum
Princeton University Press
978-0-691-14064-3
(April 30, 2010)

Most will agree that training people to be economically productive citizens is a reasonable goal, but there is a downside. According to Nussbaum, the narrowed process of achieving a stable economy by eliminating the humanities from our educational system may be counterproductive, perhaps even dangerous. As parents, teachers, and politicians focus on the importance of making money, some have forgotten about common sense and the ability to reason. Individual ideals and critical discourse enable a person to think coherently and ultimately be successful. Students cannot attain a healthy life of contentment from a calculator and a financial spreadsheet alone.

Nussbaum believes that cutting the liberal arts from our academic programs will lead to undereducated graduates. To make responsible decisions, a student must comprehend more than a limited business-oriented curriculum can provide. She favors a balanced approach toward learning in an environment that encourages argument, imagination, and creativity. Social responsibility must be stimulated by understanding and empathy.

In *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, Nussbaum delivers a powerful warning to those who wish to remove so-called useless courses for economic purposes. Purging of the humanities, as though these subjects are a drain on the academic funds available, will not result in a stronger nation, but a weaker democracy. In the end, she asserts that the attempt to reduce education to a tool of the gross national product has created serious problems. She believes this shortsighted focus on profitable skills has eroded our ability to criticize authority as well as reduced our sympathy with the marginalized or those different from us. Without the humanities, she fears that complex and troubling global issues will never be resolved.

Martha C. Nussbaum is the Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics in the Philosophy Department, Law School, and Divinity School at the University of Chicago. She has published numerous books, including *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law*, also available from Princeton.

Not for Profit is required reading for educational administrators, government analysts, and liberal arts instructors at all levels. As the world has evolved into an interdependent global marketplace, we have left behind the most precious gifts of the human race. For the sole purpose of monetary advancement, large portions of our libraries are neglected, while students explore only select shelves that will give them the economic clout necessary to survive in a society based on a dollars-and-cents mentality. This may be our country's greatest mistake.

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