Cover Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

I send you this essay in response to the email announcement for the Prince Alwaleed Center for American Studies and Research 2017 Essay Award.

My name is Aseel, a senior student of political science, specialising in International Relations, Middle East Politics and Political Economy, in addition to a double minor in History and Development Studies. I am interested in studying institutions, and their underlying power relations, in addition to constructions of the self and other, dialectics and discourse, and resistance studies.

This essay is a reformulation of the main premises of an ethnography I conducted for my economic anthropology class (ANTH 4065) during November- December 2016, covering the AUC Strike. Of particular interest to this essay are the institutional contradictions it revealed pertaining to the mission and identity of AUC, and the success of this model of American Liberal Arts Education.

I hope you find this to be an enjoyable and fruitful read.

Many thanks,

Aseel

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University in Limbo: the Case of the American University in Cairo (AUC)

The American University in Cairo, in espousing a liberal arts education, is seen to be a unique representative of American higher education in Egypt, and along others such as the AUB, AUK, and AUS in the Middle East. Emphasising the liberal arts, such a university has a particular set of institutional principles and objectives that are very different from a research university within the American field of education, or even comparable to public and other private universities in Egypt. It is my understanding that the mission of the liberal arts education entails the teaching and exploration of civic and communal values, instilling in students an interest for civic engagement, offering the space for them to pursue social and political change, and prepare, if not at least inspire them to act as catalysts for social change. A liberal arts education thus emphasises societal issues and communal relations, in stark contrast to the political theory of liberalism, which emphasises individual liberty, and view of Man as *homo economicus*, rational self-helping and maximizing individual. It is my contention that a liberal arts education does not conform to the values espoused by the current phase of capitalism, and the zeitgeist of our era: neoliberalism. The contradictions between the global forces of neoliberalism and the principles and objectives of a liberal arts education find expression in universities all over the world, and the AUC is no stranger to this conflict. The AUC thus becomes a contested ground for the promotion of these two different projects, and the principles and objectives they espouse, giving rise to two contesting discourses; and although neoliberalism seems to be winning at the moment, and represents the dominant discourse, my ethnography sheds the light on a discourse of resistance that seeks to lead AUC’s fight against the neoliberal forces instead of succumbing to them, and that values the communal essence of an education, over the view that sees the latter as a step towards vocational specialisation and financial stability in a world witnessing the fall of more and more people into précarité, under the auspice of neoliberalism.

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*Situating AUC in Egypt*

Egypt's public higher education system is in shambles, and has been described by the OECD as "not serving the country’s current needs well” (OECD, World Bank, 2010, Qtd. in Barsoum 2). Barsoum describes the exact problems beginning

with limited funding and a politically constrained institutional environment, the country’s higher education system has been unable to cope with a growing demand for higher education and an ever largest youth population. The increasing demand for higher education posed by the sheer demographic pressure of the size of the youth population has placed significant pressures on the system with a direct negative impact on issues of quality. Concerns usually focus the four issues of access, quality, relevance to the labor market needs and research capabilities. The system graduates hundreds of thousands every year, with little assurance that these graduates have the skills needed to enter an already constrained labor market. The outcome is an oversupply of university graduates, mismatch of skills, and weak research and institutional capacity (Barsoum 2).

Another outcome is the establishment and proliferation of private universities, particularly around the 80s and 90s. Three global aspects characterise this scene: the first being the prevalent "neoliberal logic embedded in the universities' self-definition (exemplified through the use of such conceptual frameworks as individual choice, healthy bodies, market logic, achievement, scientific rationality)", and it is important to note that structural adjustment policies were first implemented in the late 80s early 90s. The second refers to the" urban reconfiguration as manifested in the location of university campuses in a (secure/clean) suburban periphery versus the (unsafe/dirty) urban centres where public universities have been traditionally located". The third is due to the "construction of 'flexible subjects' through the configuration of global and local processes - partnerships with Western institutions, emphasis on Egyptian identity discourses, formation of new healthy bodies and educated minds" (Ahmed 3). I noticed that the literature draws a strong distinction between private universities and the AUC, in fact the latter is not considered in the discussion.

This amounts to its unusual situation as a private but not for profit American institution on Egyptian soil[[1]](#footnote-1). Now it is a university rooted in the liberal arts tradition, and that denotes certain principles and values. The origin of the liberal arts can be found in Greek education that focused on the trivium of grammar, rhetoric, and logic. This education was considered essential for a free individual active in civic life, which at the time, entailed being able to participate in public debate, to defend oneself and serve in court and on juries, and to perform military service. To them were added the quadrivium of medieval scholastics: arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy. The trivium was a prerequisite to the quadrivium, the quadrivium in turn being considered preparatory work for the more serious study of philosophy and theology. A student of the liberal arts was thus one of virtue and ethics, with extensive knowledge in various aspects and very articulate: in modern times liberal arts universities have expanded their scope and subjects heavily, but retain the core principles of this form of education, that is: develop well-rounded individuals with general knowledge of a wide range of subjects and with mastery of a range of transferable skills - perhaps a jack-of-all-trade, master of One. A liberal arts university is more inclined to prioritise teaching over research, to dedicate more faculty members to teaching, encouraging student engagement and discussions, with small faculty: student ratio. The concept is thus a tradition of teaching that develops the mind and morality, and is not attached to a particular discipline or “school” as opposed to another. The aim is not however to graduate apolitical classes of specialised experts in technical vocations, with little concern for their roles in society and as agents of politics and social change. A liberal arts university does not bend to the demands of the market and the desires of employers and what they need from the system of higher education.

As much as I find many aspects of this concept that are not liberal and revert to pre-enlightenment and humanism in the civic of the classics and the medieval, it is the understanding of liberal arts education, and for the purpose of this paper, the main pillar upon which AUC’s identity is founded. The University’s Mission Statement[[2]](#footnote-2) highlights the relevant aspects, and one cannot say that this is not also found in the daily institutional rhetoric. But just as equally do we find inclinations to be market driven, to focus on the “knowledge economy”, and to be in tune with the needs of the technological community. The provost reaffirms this notion in an interview, along with education for citizenship[[3]](#footnote-3) as part and parcel of the education AUC should provide, despite the contradictions either extreme of these constitute to one another. The University’s Strategic Plan published 2015 going forward till the centennial (2019), speaks of how “we consider our place in the world, and particularly as we make investments in curriculum and research, we will decide in which fields and disciplines we should make special investments so as to ensure student success, provide graduates with twenty-first century skills that are prized in both the local and international market, and ensure faculty retention and global competitiveness” (Strategic Plan). Neoliberalism has not replaced the Liberal Arts discourse entirely, but coexists with it, at least in the mind of the administration.

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*Neoliberalism and Education for Citizenship*

Neoliberalism is conventionally thought to emerge a few years after WWII and the failings of the welfare state, and became all the more pervasive in the Reagan/Thatcher years and the deregulation of the financial sector. A Marxist definition of Neoliberalism is what Harvey refers to it as

a theory of political economic practices proposing that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to be concerned, for example, with the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up military, defense, police, and juridical functions required to secure private property rights and to support freely functioning markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution), then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture. State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interests will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit (Harvey 22).

The consequences of the "neo-liberal competitive state [include] the extension and intensification of economic colonization – the commodification of everything [such as education] – and the extension and intensification of alienation – the almost entire loss of control over economic property, political decision making, and value definition in all realms of life ( Flew 46).

Commercialisation of education[[4]](#footnote-4) is a term I use to denote the tendency to view, whether consciously or subconsciously, education as a commodity with attached economic value, that value being decided by market forces. A commercialised university is one that provides the "three ingredients most essential to continued growth and prosperity: highly trained specialists, expert knowledge, and scientific advances others could transform into valuable new products or life-saving treatments and cures" (Bok 1). Certainly such inventions and products that serve humanity are good, and should be encouraged; but the concern with commercialisation is with regards to the political apathy and alienation it brings along. Given the competitive nature of the globalised market, the institution of higher education finds itself in a crisis of survival. Its own survival is dependent on a cycle of providing disciplines that are lucrative market-wise, that then feed into the system and allow for others to invest in it, whether its own alumni or businessmen. The global statistics show that corporations share of total academic research support in universities has increased from 2.3% in the early 1970s to just about 8% by 2000 (Bok 12). The trend is either legitimised by, or becomes a part of the prevalent discourse, that supports the spirit of private enterprise, entrepreneurship, competition, the rapid growth-money-making financial sector and ensuing "opportunities provided by a more technologically sophisticated, knowledge-based economy", all while risking academic values (Bok 15). Bok highlights that the academic disapproval of commercialisation of education is due to revering the "search for truth and knowledge as a worthier calling than the quest for material wealth"; as romanticised an ideal as that may be, it sheds the light on how the pursuit of knowledge under these circumstances becomes exclusive to those questions which are of interest either to a "particular segment of society or to society understood mainly in terms of one aspect: the economic" (Chorney 20). The extent of the discourse is far reaching. During the second week of the strike I attended the WorldCur congress on undergraduate research in Qatar. A panel on the future of undergraduate research in fields other than research looked at how research is potentially market oriented and market driven. The talk was dominated by a sense of how this research can feed into technology and industry - it lacked an overview or discussion on humanities and social sciences, and stressed how much students are missing when they do not have employability skills.

The development of neoliberalism into what "Ong views [as] ‘malleable technology of government’ that produces new ‘graduated’ forms of sovereignty and a new ‘interactive’ mode of citizenship in which rights and benefits are distributed in accordance with entrepreneurial capacity, and not necessarily nation-state membership"(Kingfisher 119), breaks with the social understanding of welfare and solidarity, and more importantly the role of a student of the liberal arts as an informed social agent[[5]](#footnote-5) concerned with the betterment of society. It is not an individualistic or entrepreneurial spirit, amidst the "attractiveness of [neoliberalism's] political ideals of individual liberty and freedom as sacrosanct" (Harvey 24). The civic consciousness is created as a result of the students’ “inclination to identify with the collective and so feel ethical responsibility to the collective, feel compelled not only to participate in the political institutions of their society, but also to act out of concern for the welfare of others within it, assume social responsibility, nurture tolerance and respect, as well as a belief in their own capacity to make a difference.”(Chorney 12) The emergence of “globalizing forces [constructing] an audience of a particular type...addicted to a certain lifestyle with artificial wants, an audience atomized, separated from one another, fragmented enough so that they don’t enter the political arena and disturb the powerful. In many ways, these complex circumstances foster a climate where many individuals are increasingly “lacking a deep sense of belonging.” to any collective group, which makes individual interest the easiest aspect of moral and ethical agency to identify and achieve within given legal frameworks” (Chorney 10). According to Chorney, the moral values in the education-as-commodity model stands in contrast to the values of ethical citizenship: since moral agency in the "corporate context is limited to the contingencies of the market economy that also regulate relationships among individuals and groups", it does not correspond with an ethical citizenship, “the responsibility on which it rests presupposes resistance to all attempts to create absolute power, in practice and theory, and, in this case, the laws of the market economy and consumerism, because not all aspects of human and social existence can be subsumed under the economic” (15). There is also a vulnerability attached to the commercialization of education involving the "redesigning of the way universities function to use more part-time and contract employees, who are paid less, have fewer benefits, fewer legal rights, and are less likely to unionize" (Chorney 20).

The emerging rhetoric defines education within a market perspective: "faculties and office administrators should view themselves as providers, and students as consumers of a commodity called 'knowledge'. Social forces that contribute to the support of the system are now dubbed as 'stake-holders', who can be 'reasonably' expected to demand and receive tangible short-term and long-term returns on their investment" (Prasad 44). But it is not a unilateral force that legitimises this discourse: students are similarly interested in the prospects such a system provides (Prassad 46). But with it emerges questions of administration and utility which may be overlooked. The connections with the market allow for a process of scientific exploration through a "collaborative process, requiring input and stimulation from a wide variety of sources, of which some, at least, may reside in the more practical world of industrial science (Bok 63). A few days ago the NEWS@AUC wrote a small article on internal audits in AUC, and this culture of management and "quality assurance" stresses "performativity" (Shore 16) with its virtues, burdens the institution with more costs and bureaucratic processes less and less related to the pedagogical mission itself. Shore also notes that, supposedly existing to "encourage transparency...in reality [it] produces the opposite – opacity and complicity". It is this conflict between "institutional visions and managerial agendas [that] are producing increasingly schizophrenic university" (Shore 28).

This schizophrenia is also testament to the contesting discourses. The logic of neoliberalism does not "replace once dominant logics", (Kleinman 23). Similarly, the "notion of the student as a consumer has not replaced the notion of student as citizen” (Kleinman 23). One culture has not replaced another[[6]](#footnote-6). Instead, we see two conflicting identities existing side-by-side. One of these identities is not more stable than the other; rather what is stable is their contradictory coexistence" (Kleinman 24).This applies to AUC as a university that is expected to give society educated citizens, but also asks for them to pay for the cost of an expensive education. The study below thus looks at the administration not as the dominant hegemon and students as dominated, nor neoliberalism as the only, albeit dominant discourse. I look further at how both groups reaffirm this discourse, if this is inevitability for success, and how the alternative discourse engages differently.

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*Geography & Exclusion, Architecture and Confinement*

Universities are not traditionally constructed in urban isolation from communities, and the decision to move universities in Egypt eastwards, into the confines of suburbia, has had an undeniable impact on the homogeneity of their student constituency and their capacity to influence communities and be involved in social and political activism. With AUC’s move from Tahrir square campus to the 5th settlement, comes along the process of graduating apolitical classes of students, the majority of whom have little knowledge of downtown Cairo, and even less interaction with different social classes. Students of AUC become detached from society, confined to a series of gated communities and malls in uptown Cairo, surrounded by consumption outlets, and thus whatever liberal arts education they get in theory, is not translated into opportunities for practice. In fact the way the liberal arts education is introduced in AUC limits its capacity for widening students’ horizons, as from the outset, the impression students receive upon admission, is that the core curriculum is a tedious and cumbersome list of subjects they must check off their list in order to focus on maintaining a GPA high enough to ensure they declare their majors, and to ensure they not be forced to stay an extra needless semester to complete the core requirements. The university, with the all too common excuse of budget cuts, has also been cancelling a number of programs, like LEAD and MEPI, that had previously ensured some slight representation of diversity within AUC, fostering and funding provincial students, and those of educational backgrounds and class different from the dominant American-style, upper middle class environment.

While the geographical move leads to exclusion, the architecture of the new campus emphasises confinement, and categorization based on schools, and activities (see Appendix 1). Each school has its own building, and students of different discipline or schools rarely take courses outside of their building. This essentially amounts to fragmentation of the student body on the basis of their specialisation, and the common core courses do little to rectify this issue. The SSE and School of Business, harbouring the greatest number of students, are situated in the plaza, the place whose most commonly identified features are club booths, and loud music during the assembly hour. The schools with considerably smaller student capacities (HUSS and PVA) are situated infront of and adjacent to the administration building, separated spatially from the other two schools across a linear line of architecture that fragments, instead of really assembling the student body. In other terms, the greatest portion of the student body is led spatially to occupy a particular area remarkably away from the administration building, during a designated hour of the day, as a form of distraction, while classes handle the rest of the day. The concept of the public space therefore does not exist on campus, and it is therefore not surprising that the place the students chose to hold their strikes was the courtyard in front of the admin building, usually detached and safe from student life and rarely populated. The architecture of the university, its geographical position, the way the core curriculum is taught, are all aspects that essentially render the values of a liberal arts education waste.

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*Discipline and Indoctrination: Student Activities*

If there is one word students at universities, and sometimes even at schools are made aware of early on through their educational years, is the CV. The importance of having a solid document detailing the student’s capacity to “work well in a team”, excel in “time management” and “develop” their leadership and management skills, is ingrained in the minds of students of all disciplines. No matter the level of excellence a student shows in academics, an equally strong CV is essential to succeed in any job application. Consequently, the essential drive and motivation for students is to immerse in activities, not primarily for the purpose of civic engagement, not for social and political activism, but to gain the previously defined, and very limited set of skills deemed necessary by the job market, increasing the students’ attractiveness and therefore “employability”. Students are indoctrinated to think through this form neoliberal governmentality, and act to self correct whenever they fall outside the course drawn for them, the formula for success of our day: good expensive education = employability = financial stability and secured future. Student activities, as promoted by the job market and reinforced through university discourse, policies and offices, are perceived primarily as enhancement to employability.

When this becomes the mentality determining student behaviour in student activities, the body responsible for defending student rights, for raising political awareness, and for spearheading political and social change, namely the Student Union, becomes institutionalised, subject to the same forces of governmentality. As the administration and university offices continue to treat the Student Union as a club, to refer to it in association with other student activities, to provide it with a budget extracted from the student activities fees, and regulated under the supervision of student development office advisors, the perception of the Student Union as a bigger club, becomes normalised and widespread across student body and union members alike. Through feedback cycles and self reinforcing mechanisms, the student body continues to elect into office students with little to know political experience, negotiation skills, and willingness to pursue the goals for which student unions were originally created. It also means that the student union is ill equipped to lead successful strikes and approach negotiation with the administration successfully, as was the case with the AUC strike. Instead, the student union becomes an entity that provides experience in logistics, concert and other events organisation, and the provision of services. This should not however be seen in isolation, as student unions across the world are becoming depoliticised, and universities are no longer spaces of social and political interaction to inform and encourage civic and political engagement in public spaces and on national and international levels. The student union becomes depoliticised as student rights are reformulated to comply with a neoliberal understanding of rights: individual, and service-based. Students are increasingly expecting their student unions to lobby for better services (internet, bus and transportation quality, food etc.) and academics related rights (lower GPA and declaration requirements, absence and presence policy etc). The purpose and objectives of the student union, essentially political, are reduced to menial services, and depoliticised.

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*Culture of Debt*

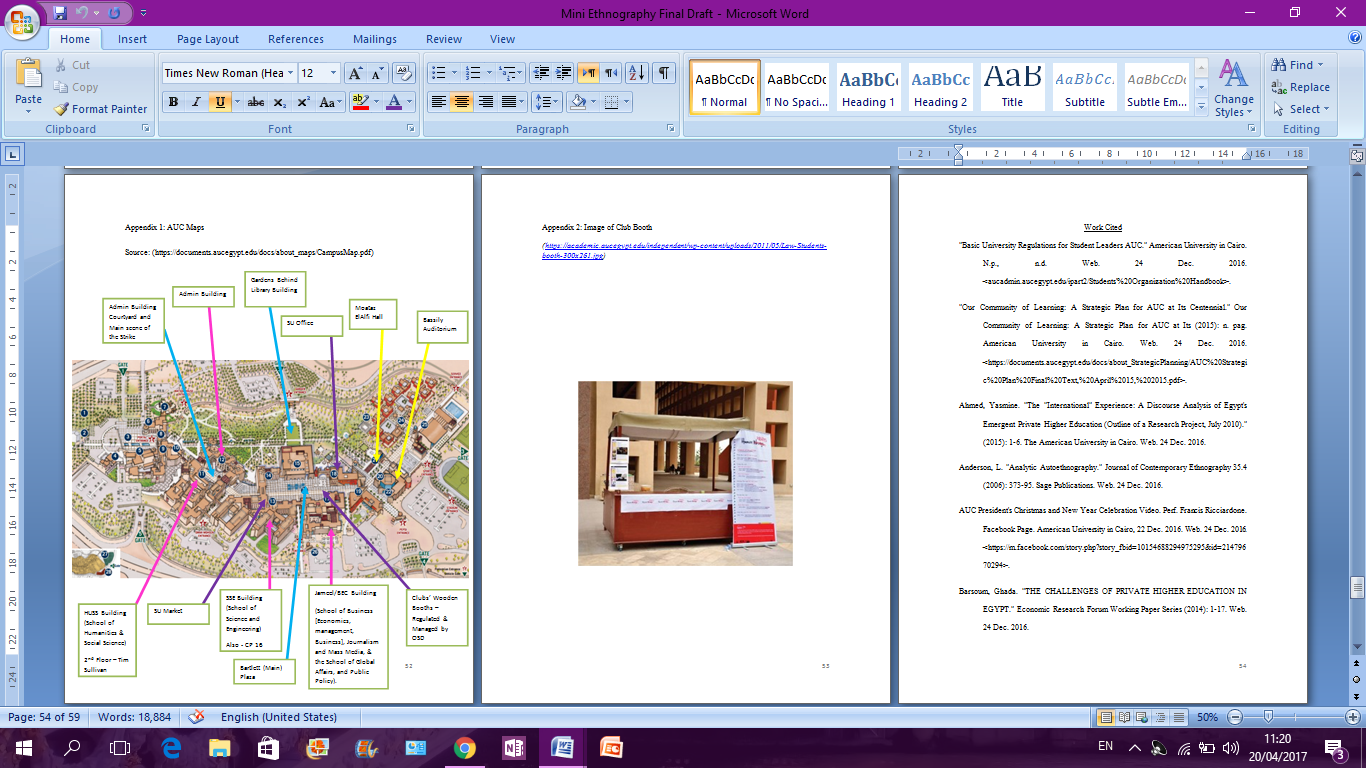
Although student debt is an essential part of American culture, the case is not the same at AUC, not only because the majority of the population in Egypt is not accustomed to loans and following a lifestyle of credit cards and payable debts, but because for the most part, students do not pay for their education: they are still considered under the responsibility of their parents, and the latter cover the cost of tuition. What emerges in AUC is thus a different culture of debt, a culture that makes current students constantly conscious of the generosity of past donors, and the duty they have not to ask for too much lest they compromise the rights of future students. This rhetoric features heavily in the administration’s language and speeches, but also physically and spatially. Every building has an alternative name denoting its donor, every courtyard or plaza has a name denoting its donor, even benches, and fountains, trees, small plants and lampposts are engraved with the names of a donor. Students are constantly reminded of the debt they owe to those who have paid so much more than annual tuition fees to make AUC the lavish, state of the art, commercial and consumer-driven campus it is today. By reminding each present generation of its shortcomings in comparison to the generosity of the past, and reinforcing feelings of guilt towards future generations whenever students contest the university management or the amount of money withdrawn from the endowment to cover operational expenses, the present generation is always at a disadvantage, but the future generation always becomes the present generation, the past and the future being abstractions reproduced to reinforce the discourse, and the concept of the supportive and conscious community in AUC is redefined into a technique of discipline. Additionally, individual donors who provide scholarship to students may seemingly provide it in the form of an unconditional gift, but students are constantly reminded of the individuals in whose debt they are, and this restricts their capacity to engage in political resistance, especially against the administration, as with instances during the 2012 gate closure, and the AUC Strike.

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*Conclusion*

Universities are not static institutions engraved in stone, but interact with, and are heavily influenced by global forces that determine their reproduction. Promoting a liberal arts education since its inception, the American University in Cairo was never apolitical, or constructed in social isolation. In as much as it was part in its nascent years of the missionary and imperialist tradition of the era, it is now interacting with neoliberalism as the era’s stage of capitalism, and I argue that it remains ground for contention between the discourse of neoliberalism that emphasise employability, financial stability, entrepreneurial spirit and individual freedom, and the communal and social essence of a liberal arts education. These two competing discourses are also non-bipartisan, meaning that is not the administration and the Board of Trustees solely that espouse the former against the staunch resistance of student, faculty and parents together. There are members of each constituency that support one side over another, and some individuals display support for both discourses. Students for instance, deeply immersed in neoliberal governmentality, reproduce the former discourse by referring to themselves as stakeholders, by formulating their resistance to the administration in monetary terms, and by constantly referring to their future being on the line if the administration does not revert on its decision to reduce the fees. They do not challenge the formula previously mentioned, but they refuse to have their chances of staying within the system reduced or compromised. Parents’ participation in the struggle similarly reinforced the strengths of neoliberal governmentality, as they continuously referred to the investment they have made in their children instead of land and funds, and yet expressed their desire to ensure all their children, current and future have a fair chance to enrol regardless of the parents’ ability to finance their education, thus calling for communal equality. By reverting to the courts they emphasise the administration’s view that the relationship between the university and students (and by extension their parents) is legal and contractual, as opposed to being communal, and therefore one of alienation. And as the strike came to an end, it seemed that the manner by which the student resisted the administration’s decision reproduced rather than transformed the social relations within the institution. It has nevertheless opened a physical and intellectual conversation, and gave rise to questions regarding the mission and identity of AUC, the extent to which it remains true to a liberal arts education, the extent of successful realisation of liberal arts values and objectives, as well as addressing the fragmentation of the student body, and the impact that has on its potential for civic engagement.

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1. Brian McDougall "AUC is a not for profit private institutions, not for loss, but there are no shareholders and profits made and distributed to the shareholders. It is not owned by anyone and there is a voluntary BoT committed to ensure the long-term health of the institution academically and financially. The university also operates under the protocol agreement in 1975 signed by the President of Egypt, and before that the 1962 cultural agreement between U.S and Egypt ". [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “AUC is a premier English-language institution of higher learning. The University is committed to teaching and research of the highest caliber, and offers exceptional liberal arts and professional education in a cross-cultural environment. AUC builds a culture of leadership, lifelong learning, continuing education and service among its graduates, and is dedicated to making significant contributions to Egypt and the international community in diverse fields. Chartered and accredited in the United States and Egypt, The American University in Cairo is an independent, not-for-profit, equal-opportunity institution. AUC upholds the principles of academic freedom and is dedicated to excellence”. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Strategic plan Education for Citizenship and Service:

   We believe that a sound education not only prepares students for professional success but also for responsible citizenship and community engagement. The liberal arts tradition, with its emphasis on the broad education of a common core curriculum and the experiential learning of rich extracurricular programs, strengthens the curiosity and courage of AUC graduates and promotes civic participation. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Giroux (185) puts it in much more blunt terms: "Bare pedagogy is a political and social practice that mirrors the economic neo-Darwinism of neoliberalism. It places an emphasis on winning at all costs, a ruthless competitiveness, hedonism, the cult of individualism, and a subject largely constructed within a market-driven rationality that abstracts economics and markets from ethical considerations. Within this pedagogy, compassion is a weakness, and moral responsibility is scorned because it places human needs over market considerations. Bare pedagogy strips education of its public values, critical contents, and civic responsibilities as part of its broader goal of creating new subjects wedded to the logic of privatization, efficiency, flexibility, the accumulation of capital, and the destruction of the social state". [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. A citizen is a "member of a political community who enjoys the rights and assumes the duties of membership. Citizenship has three main dimensions: legal, political, and individual identity. In terms of legal status, citizenship refers to civil, political, and social rights allowing the freedom of citizens as 'legal persons' to act according to the law and having the right to claim law’s protection. The political dimension of citizenship refers to citizens as political agents who actively participate in a society’s political institutions. The third dimension of citizenship refers to membership in a political community that furnishes a distinct source of identity” (Chorney 9). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Interviews with senior members of the administration reflect that their own discourse includes a mix of pure academics, education for citizenship, and commodification of education. The president said he finds ease and utility in using metaphors of the market; however he thinks not of students as clients but as the “us” of his speeches. In an interview he spoke of the need always to fundraise and secure funding to preserve the institution given the state’s struggle to provide good Higher Education, even if education for him means “the reproduction and transmission of knowledge”. He believes that there is nothing wrong with being rich: they subsidize goods and create green spaces; they can help societies, but if "we are not producing thoughtful, ambitious citizens, then we are failing". He recognises the geographical barrier resulting from the move from Tahrir to New Campus, and wishes to counter it by enriching the cultural experience of 5th settlement residents. It is important to note that while his predecessor, Dr. Lisa Anderson was an academic; the trend has been for most presidents to come from non academic backgrounds. The Executive VP believes the faculty senate may act as a governing force with things academically relevant but could not possibly manage financials of which they had little specialised knowledge – and understandably so given his background. The provost believes in the legitimacy of the strike and views it as healthy, and laments the fact that solutions are being reached through conflict and concessions as opposed to shared governance, but our conversation had an overall authoritative and patriarchal tone: students have to leave their homes and spend more and more time on campus. They have to make full use of campus experience and facilities, he says. He believes all universities are detached from the urban centres because they have to create their own communities, but given that it is situated in a wealthy middle class suburban area, and is becoming more homogenous by the minute, how can it be expected to build diverse communities? He similarly wants diversity from other governorates, from different diplomas, but also wants to select the pool from which students are chosen in order to shape the graduating classes: 70% of SSE Majors applicants hold American Diploma certificates when it is the weakest diploma offered in terms of science. This percentage had to change according to him. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)