

# Thought on Tap December 2019 Transcript

## Future Visions of Work and Money

Bretton  
Rodriguez 00:00

You're listening to thought on tap a monthly podcast with the role of the humanities in the world today. Brought to you by the College of Liberal Arts and the Core Humanities program at the University of Nevada, Reno. I'm Carlos Mariscal. I'm Bretton Rodriguez and I am Caitlin Earley and every month we convene a panel of local experts to discuss the issues of the day and have a moderated discussion. This month we are talking about future visions of work and money. Now let's turn it over to our moderator OK. So this is brought to you by the University of Nevada, Reno, College of Liberal Arts, and the Department of Core Humanities.

Carlos Mariscal 00:34

I'd like to thank the Department of Core Humanities. I also want to thank Laughing Planet for being generous hosts for providing us space, buying rounds for our panelists, providing all of you guys with snacks.. this is the last event of the decade for Thought on Tap. Thank you for being a part of this since we started. You can hear all of our earlier episodes on our website [thoughtontap.com](http://thoughtontap.com)

Carlos Mariscal 01:07

and soon we will be a radio show and a podcast. This is the last event the next event is gonna be in February where we're going to discuss future visions of Sex and the body. But today. We're discussing future visions of work and money. We're gonna have a panel discussion after the panel, we will open it up for audience participation so you guys can ask all of the questions that you want to hear answered. Work and money.

Carlos Mariscal 01:38

Americans are workaholics. We work more hours and more days than nearly all developed European nations and it's had an effect. The DOW has never been higher unemployment has never been lower, and yet three in five of us would go into debt if we had an unexpected car repair, or had to take an unexpected flight somewhere, or if we had to call in an ambulance in case

something unfortunate happened. The median income of four in nine of us,

Carlos Mariscal 02:08

So count out nine of your best friends. Four of you. The median income is eighteen thousand dollars a year. And there's lots of causes of this divide. This economy has affected lots of groups differently. There is a generational aspect. Millennials control 3 percent of the wealth in this country, whereas when the baby boomers were this age they controlled 21 percent.

Carlos Mariscal 02:39

Of the wealth. We spend less on clothing food and large appliances than all prior generations. And yet we spend much much more on health care and education. And in fact more than any other developed country in the world. And both of those middle wage work is declining low wage work is increasing.

Carlos Mariscal 03:03

Four of the five fastest growing jobs in the United States are in health care, the five fastest declining jobs are being lost to technology, and technology is changing everything. In the past century, we've seen the decline of farmers as a job, The Rise and Decline of professional secretaries as office jobs increased, and then computers rendered a lot of secretarial work obsolete. Manufacturing jobs have become automated and exported.

Carlos Mariscal 03:32

We now live in a country where the most common job and three out of every five states is professional driver, professional truck driver. And very soon, but that itself is gonna be automated away. And these are the changes that we know about. It's a... If you tell this story from the perspective of technology, it's a story of achievement. It's a story of success. If you tell the story from the perspective of the worker, you get an entirely different story.

Carlos Mariscal 04:04

And so tonight we're gonna talk about that and we're going where there's a lot of ground to cover. And we have a couple of panel a range of panelists that represent very very different perspectives on these issues. So I'd like to introduce them. [inaudible] In order from my left. As an associate professor in the department of philosophy, he received his PHD from McMaster University. His work covers the range from

American pragmatism to social and political philosophy focusing on issues of distributive justice specifically egalitarianism.

Carlos Mariscal 04:37

Published several articles and books including his most recent monograph from Oxford University Press. Pragmatic pragmatist egalitarianism. I have a signed copy in my office and you can too if you thought to bring your coffee. Please welcome Dr. David Rondel. Very good. Yes. Excuse me for wearing this preposterous like Britney Spears microphone. I think that's all that was left over. So nice to see everybody.

Carlos Mariscal 05:07

Thanks for coming out next. Next. She's the director of internship and experiential learning at the Reynolds School of Journalism. She received her M.A. from the City University in New York and her J.D. from the Ohio State University. She has worked as a technology reporter for CNN en Espanol covering major tech companies in Silicon Valley and prior to that she launched a local news site on behalf of AOL hyper local news project where she served as editor. Please welcome Claudia Cruz. Muchas Gracias. Thank you I love the music at this place by the way. Great Music.

Carlos Mariscal 05:40

And finally he's the assistant professor of equity and diversity in education. He earned his PHD from the University of Utah. He's a critical theorist who uses a range of disciplinary perspectives to study the relationship between neo liberalism and education as well as emerging social insecurity. He's also interested in social movements environmental justice and technological issues in contemporary education. He's published many papers and book chapters on these topics. Please welcome Dr. Graham B. Slater. [Applause].

Graham B. Slater 06:11

It's on but. Alright can we hear you? Yeah, alright. Can you hear me, is the question. No! It's not like I can hear you. People can hear me. That's pretty loud. Of course you can hear me all right. I'll just scream. Yell as loud as I can. Let's do it. It's going to be a shouting match y'all. OK. I wanted to start this off with a plus for question for philosophy. Good. So. We're talking about work and money.

Carlos Mariscal 06:41

But not all work is equal. So premiere perspective as a political philosopher, what makes a good fulfilling job. Yeah it's a great question. I think that unsurprisingly the philosopher Karl Marx is actually very good on this question. So I'm sure many of you are familiar with this idea. But for Marx he endorses a certain conception of human nature in defense of you about the kinds of creatures that we are and according to Marx we are propulsive,

David Rondel 07:16

Creative inherently productive creatures. That's that's in our nature and it follows for him that one of the things that we need in order to fulfill our essence fulfill what he calls our species being is meaningful work work from which we can derive fulfillment and importantly work in which these natural capacities which are constitutive of our nature creativity spontaneity the ability to sort of plan out how to execute different kinds of tasks in a particular order.

David Rondel 07:47

We need work that that that gives us some channels to exercise those inherent capacities. And I think you know I think that's deeply right. I think Marx is deeply right about the kinds of creatures we happen to be. I think we all maybe recognize that this is true about work as well. I mean maybe here is just like a baby thought experiment. How many of you would be sort of OK with a job that maybe paid OK but you know your job every day was to like scrape gum off of objects.

David Rondel 08:20

You work in like a cubicle and you know they wheeling objects here. Your job is to like Peel gum off. You don't like making your city more beautiful or you think you're just you're just a gum scraper. And like you know what does that was like one hundred thousand dollar a year job. And let's stipulate you have to like that's your job. You can't like all going to do it for a couple of years and squirrel away some money and think that's your job. I think most of us would be like No I don't want to do that.

David Rondel 08:45

And that highlights maybe another sort of cartoonish example the extent to which we really do need work that fulfills us that work in which we're able to sort of exercise these natural capacities that are inherent in our

nature. It's an indictment on our contemporary economy that there are so few jobs like that. I mean there are some but most people have jobs that we use words like soul crushing soul destroying that's what we're talking about. No sense of fulfillment is derived from from this work.

David Rondel 09:16

One of the things I'd like to see incidentally. I mean we talk a lot about jobs from an economic or social policy perspective in quantitative terms. We want to know how many new jobs were created. What are the job numbers. What's the unemployment rate. These are also numerical quantitative indicators but I'd like to see us sort of talk about jobs in the qualitative sense. Maybe we can start asking not only how many jobs are there but are they are they good jobs not merely in terms of remuneration and benefits but do they provide workers with opportunities to plan out their work to take on different tasks to actually use their creativity and so on.

David Rondel 09:52

We could call it like an alienation index or something like that. And I think that would revolutionize the way we think about job. So I don't know that that's actually that could me to some of the work that you've done and I'm interested in your thoughts and how and what we measure in terms of education jobs and successful society.

Graham B. Slater 10:17

Yeah I mean I think that one of the interesting things that we're facing right now is the degree to which there is a tight linkage between the way that we conceptualize the purpose of education and then issues like microphone. I think that there's like a really high degree of integration between the way that the purpose of education is conceptualized and the way that we think about success in terms of jobs. And I think that it's really boiled down to these issues of remuneration remuneration right.

Graham B. Slater 10:49

So there's like social and cultural forms of value that are attached to certain jobs in a lot of cases they're not particularly socially socially useful they're they tend to be the work that people tend to do it's poorly remunerated is really alienating. It's nice to be in a panel the first thing that comes up is species being like that. I could just leave right now you know it really is an

apology. Yeah well it's now it's just it's stuck. So I have to go home with this. Now I'm going to live like this for the rest of my life.

Graham B. Slater 11:20

So anyway I mean I think that you know this is a perfect setting to ask questions about these issues of value and measure in education because there's a significant degree of instrumentality that's attached to contemporary education. We see that in the K through 12 round we see it in the realm of higher education where people are taking out extensive amounts of debt in a lot of cases with very little job prospects and so there is this irrationality built into the system where we're being told go to go to school go to go to more school take out more debt than any generation has ever taken out just to get educated which most people agree is like one of the lynchpin linchpins of like a healthy society and human flourishing.

Graham B. Slater 12:00

Yet there are so many dead ends built into it. And I think we really need to critically interrogate that in a lot of ways. So do you work in the front lines of this. You work as the director of internship and experiential learning. There you go. So. So what are you hearing from students are you hearing that they get. They find it deeply fulfilling jobs like the way they measure measure of success is getting a job presumably. But tell us more about what you're hearing there.

Claudia Cruz 12:30

Hi again thank you for having me on the panel tonight at the Royal School of Journalism we're very excited and happy that more than 90 percent of our students find a job after graduation. We're actually higher than you and our average. So whenever you hear about people in journalism not getting jobs somehow there they are. And I think part of maybe tying some of this competition together is that these inherent capacities can include and we we stresses as educators transferable skills. And at the core of our.

Claudia Cruz 12:59

Profession is writing and research and communicating. So if you're able to at the very least any student regardless of the major or have strong writing skills strong communicating skills and strong research skills that could carry you into other areas. I did not start off in journalism I started off actually in public relations

which we also teach at the School of Journalism. But luckily again it's transferable skills. I worked in the law transferable skills I've been I worked up then tons of other little random things along the way just to make ends meet.

Claudia Cruz 13:33

But what's helped me is that I can answer a phone and have a polite conversation with sentences that I know and I ask questions and I am able to pull out information from someone that can then help out. A prosecutor can help out an admissions officer can help out a doctor's office so. I recommend offering to stay employed at the very least to get that first job out of college. Have those skills. Matt we are writing communications research.

Claudia Cruz 14:03

There are other skills that you will need in journalism. I guess I kind of stumbled upon it all along the way my career but I am inherently unhappy. I think it's one of those play that one of those professions that it's a public service. So if you're in journalism you see it you know you're like a doctor or you see it as a way to help the community get more information. So if you're happy doing that then journalism. And I'm a very very curious inquisitive person. And I talk a lot. So there are certain things you can be an introvert to be a great reporter.

Claudia Cruz 14:34

I just also happen to be an extrovert and like to get information from people. But if I landed in journalism and it's the right job for me I could have been doing something else. I was in the Bay Area. I could've stayed in the Bay Area made double the amount of money I make here. But I would've had to leave journalism. And as we know this profession is being attacked. Every single day.

Claudia Cruz 14:55

And I want to help make sure that our students stay in the profession and continue to continue to get jobs but I to go back to what Graham is saying about the stressors you know you or you just can't you may not want to pick gum scrape gum from something. Four hundred thousand dollars. But. I have over one hundred grand in school debt still. All right so I need to know and I'm not making enough money to meet them but to be paying loans for as long as I can pay.

Claudia Cruz 15:26

No not me. Unless they are my next year. So if people will forget about us we also have to make sure we also have loans. Now I'm not a millennial. And you know we're not we're not we're not buying homes we don't have. We're also struggling with health care and you know we are also. But luckily I found a profession that I love so I hope to stay in there. And that's something that's again those that's the advice I give students. You. Work on your transport skills that'll keep you employed.

Carlos Mariscal 15:55

The Gen Xers actually also had less proportional income than the boomers. Roughly gauge millennials are now. Thank you for acknowledging that we could get the Gen X more than we forget about the Silent Generation which is weird. Guys I didn't even know there was this gender. I thought that with a great the greatest. Everybody speaks out. So. So journalism has journalists have some degree of autonomy right.

Carlos Mariscal 16:27

We all of us here in the panel have some degree of autonomy in our jobs. But there's a lot of jobs that don't have this. And David on it to turn this to you. So a lot of people when they go into work they enter into these relationships with their bosses. Where bosses employees. This is like extraordinary power over them that we would never accept if we thought about this as like a governmental system or any number of other systems.

David Rondel 16:59

Is that a problem. Yeah I think that's it. That's a huge problem. You know the premise of your question I think is drawing on on Elizabeth Anderson's recent work so I can't recommend this enough Elizabeth Anderson recent recipient of the Genius Grant MacArthur. So she's a philosophy professor at the University of Michigan I'm and I'm an enormous fan. She visited us here in Reno last year for our Leonard lecture. But anyhow she has this new book it's called private government in which she I mean she begins by sort of detailing some of the ways in which sort of workers are treated today in the contemporary United States.

David Rondel 17:35

So you know Wal-Mart employees are not permitted to sort of have casual chit chat with other employees that Wal-Mart calls that time theft. Tyson poultry workers



are denied bathroom breaks. Some of them are so soiling themselves forced to wear diapers in many cases companies are putting exerting pressure on employees to sort of support particular political causes and things of that nature.

David Rondel 18:03

And you know many companies are subjecting their employees to suspicion less searches. Apple does this and various other things so look I mean I think Anderson's point is it is spot on. I mean if a government treated citizens in this exerted this kind of authority over citizens we would very quickly on problematically judge that government to be illegitimate and unjust and yet somehow these kinds of practices are I don't know people kind of shrug. I mean yeah I guess employers could do it.

David Rondel 18:30

And so I think that the premise for Anderson's book and I really recommend that you go read this book is why why is it that we think of workers as being free at work when in fact that's that's clearly not the case. She speculates. I mean we don't have to go sort of to deep down the rabbit hole here. But she speculates that there's a there's a kind of erroneous conflation of the labor market with sort of the ordinary markets in everyday goods.

David Rondel 18:57

So you know if you and I exchange a good for money sort of a market transaction there's this sort of general assumption that neither of us is less free either before or after the transaction. And I think there's a tendency erroneous in her view to construe the labor market in those terms but that's not true once you sign up for a job. Once you accept the terms of employment once you sign the contract you're turning over enormous authority over to to an employer. And so that's a myth.

David Rondel 19:27

It's something we have to think seriously about she actually suggests among various other things that we should institute what she calls like work like workers bill of rights. New news sort of sets of rights. It sort of designed for workers in precisely these contexts. That's not an idea without precedent. FDR had had such an idea way back when. But I think it would radically transform the sort of the everyday reality for many

many workers who are.

David Rondel 19:58

I mean we could we could probably go around and share stories of how awful different jobs are. And they really are awful. You know. In a very palpable way. Have you guys had actual jobs. Is this a meal. My first job was delivering pizzas. It was it was great. You know I worked at Burger King. That really sucked. Yeah yeah. I had internships. Why why pushing internships upon students from very early on I've been able to avoid some of these other jobs because so I can I just jump in quickly and I'm curious because you know I get I can put on my legal hat.

Claudia Cruz 20:34

No it's a contract. So when you sign away and you sign to work for someone signed up to work for someone you've signed the contract to follow the rules and if it's a private company we had this. Colin Kaepernick now we're going to relate to Colin Kaepernick and no he's you're not Brad. But he has no free speech according to the NFL right. So you know it's been harder for him to get him to be employed. A lot of the free speech has been banned across companies.

Claudia Cruz 21:00

So but when you sign up to work for a company do you realize that you've given up your free speech and that's why the workers bill of rights may come in and then the issue is how enforceable is that it's still a private company whether or not. You know a company is going to oh should more than half of the employees are not supporting English as. Its. People to be able to speak Spanish in the workplace which is another issue. English language only policy. Whether or not companies won't take that seriously. But you know depends on what reaction the public has as well perhaps.

David Rondel 21:31

I mean I take the point and I think you know I think there's a presumption that as long as workers have the right of exit they can leave the job than anything that might be sort of contained in the contract is legitimate. I think I think you know we should push back on that idea. I'm sorry. You know. Every worker should get to use the bathroom when they need to use the bathroom whatever the fine print may have said. And so I think workers below Bill bills of rights among other things means strengthening of the labor movement and so on

what would go that distance. But I think you're right. I mean what you're voicing is the sort of the the dominant view. I mean you saw you sign a contract and sort of.

David Rondel 22:02

Anything is fair game under the terms of that contract and that's precisely I think the idea that Anderson and his wonderful book wants to push back against a little bit. But no point Point well taken. I wanted to get you in on this. When I hear some of these discussions like the word neoliberalism pops up in my head it keeps shining. But some of the students here are some people here might not know what that means. So I was hoping that you could educate us and maybe tell us the impact that it might have had on say education or something.

Graham B. Slater 22:33

Yeah yeah absolutely. I mean so all of these things make a lot of sense and I think that kind of group these phenomena historically under the umbrella the conceptual umbrella of neo liberalism is a valuable way of understanding some of some of the reasons behind these types of development the rise of increasingly alienating labor the degree to which it's normalized that. Right. Workers don't have the right to complain and habitation clauses gobblers have been fighting arbitration clauses that me to a movement why people haven't been able to.

Claudia Cruz 23:03

File claims against their employers because there were clauses in there that prevented them from doing so. Yeah yeah absolutely and so you know within the last five decades at least under under the rise of neo liberalism these types of egregious violations have just been entrenched.

Graham B. Slater 23:18

But I mean to kind of really try to compassionately define neo liberalism as a concept I think that the easiest way to evade becoming overly technical and to just get at the root of the problem is to think about a political a political project starting in the late 60s and early 70s and then particularly in the US kind of taking flight in the early 1980s in which the the class power of capital the owning class really worked to

Graham B. Slater 23:48

kind of stabilize consolidate and expand their power and wealth through a variety of mechanisms but primarily

through instantiating both in policy and governance but also in ideology and culture the idea that basically all social relations should sort of proceed according to market logics and this reduces the complexity of human social interactions in a variety of ways and we see that landing in education particularly and I think that that's intentional I don't think it's just sort of an apple phenomenon or an accident that that neo liberalism has taken root in education I think it's in part because you know this sort of public sector of schooling and education is profitable and neo liberals wanted to expose it to market forces so that profit could be extracted from it in a variety of ways but also because it's an intense sphere of ideological and cultural struggle.

Graham B. Slater 24:42

And so it does sort of work of expanding a neo liberal social order. The dead example is actually a really good case where the sort of market logics also produce and enforce these types of self-governing types of social control and it is pernicious it's an extremely misguided educated project. And I think one of the areas that maybe a lot of people can imagine this is in the tech sector right so so glad I wanted to bring you in on this.

Carlos Mariscal 25:10

You've worked as a technology reporter covering some of the major corporations that people are aware of. And there's this libertarian neo liberal like approach that dominates the psychology there. But but I guess I just wanted to ask you a more open ended question like is there anything there that is interesting to you though you think we should be paying attention to that you want to draw attention to. Well I mean I just was thinking about.

Claudia Cruz 25:38

Neo liberalism neo liberalism and we have this movement now with influencers on social media but those influencers take jobs from people some other people right like well. I read somewhere about how how amazing it is that someone can just open a box like for tech gadget all of a sudden there they are phenomenon was announced on YouTube but then you have. Professional adults. Working and now getting usurped by a 12 year old in their house because they have a computer and a camera.

Claudia Cruz 26:09

Opening up a box and now they're chatty and they have friends said they are getting. Endorsement deals and sponsors. And someone who's been working 30 40 years as a photographer or as a tech reporter isn't right isn't getting those deals. So that's one of the things that to consider among yourselves as Millennials is Gen zingers of some of you might be here. That. All the social media is great to promote yourself and to start these channels and and become an influencer.

Claudia Cruz 26:38

I'm not saying don't do it because I encourage my students to do it. But you also have to keep in mind that any and when when you're. Where you are now taking a lower paid job or a low low wage job and somebody else was is a mom and was media made it 50 dollars an hour for this photography gig but you're taking 15 you know you're undercutting them. So you are now that. You are union boss you are your scab. You're like the union buster.

Claudia Cruz 27:07

You're like you're the people who are not part of this like social contract that was trying to be established over the years that workers support each other again. Am I saying you are the only one. It happens. It's just technology has created this this phenomenon where we can take jobs from other people. Who are more prepared to do them. But in addition to that is obviously there's artificial intelligence and what artificial intelligence does for even reporters and you have stock market stories that can just be plugged in with numbers every single day after the dog.

Claudia Cruz 27:39

The DOW Jones closes a machine can do that now but I think reporters are still important because you have the context and an interview that you need to start to still have with people in the real world. We also have I think the gig economy again is similar to being an influencer.

Claudia Cruz 27:56

Obviously we had a taxi unions or a medallion in the issue of medallions in New York or San Francisco and uber comes around and disrupts the entire industry all of a sudden the medallion the taxi driver that spent a hundred thousand dollars to get a permission from the city to to drive a cab and then hopefully make money to pay for their child's education and pay off their

mortgage all of a sudden you have over coming in and now not knowing that just not even paying their drivers enough money to be able to stay employed or make enough to make their ends meet.

Claudia Cruz 28:30

So that technology has disrupted so many some of the upsides that I can come up with as someone who know there are opportunities if you are a coder if you are if you are a STEM professional if you are even if you're bilingual if you if you have multiple languages nowadays we need anybody play video games here. And if you see if video games are now translate. Video games are not translated into as many languages as possible so you can get to the markets Netflix movies. So if you are bilingual and you are a fantastic.

Claudia Cruz 29:03

Artistic voice a voice for television or video games you can get a job now because technology is not making it easier to distribute content around the world. So there are certain skills. There are certain things that technology opens up opportunities for. But there are also things that it creates disadvantages especially if you can't keep up with the technology that that that's available. I also made another point of point of sale. I don't know where we are at a store right now that at one point may have had.

Claudia Cruz 29:30

Plenty more cashiers or it wasn't they weren't taking online orders or overreach wasn't coming to delivery here. At one point. They paid delivery drivers or they pay had more people. Servicing you. Now that that's gone away. So online the more we shop online the less jobs out there for people that store. So again technology has had impacts on obviously on ups. Yeah. Yeah just. Just one thing to add to that I mean I think a couple of your examples are really useful for understanding some of the forces that neo liberalism has put into play.

Graham B.  
Slater 30:02

I mean like this influencer phenomenon which is worthy of significant roles but that's an example of the degree to which in the type of precarious economic circumstances that we're being pushed into. People have to become these entrepreneurs of themselves right. You have to do all these forms of self branding because any form of worker protection workers rights et cetera are really being eviscerated by the capitalist class.

And so we spend all this time.

Graham B. Slater 30:30

For instance I mean in your example of influencers I mean you were kind of focusing on people who are basically displacing more traditional forms of workers. But I mean think about the work that people do to try to become an influencer with the hope of translating that into some sort of profit or a wage rate that we're doing all this work of self branding that shouldn't be necessary just to become basically a worker. And so it compounds the work ethic that we're exposed to and really pernicious ways further incorporating us into these deepening circuits of exploitation so that like all of our lives become work.

Graham B. Slater 31:05

I mean I know that for the at the very least the professors and faculty in the house like when does work really stop when your phone is like blinking with student emails or variety of things. Right. But that's something that I think we can probably most of us think about how that lands in our lives or even just the way that we think about future prospects the decisions that we make. And that's an educational problem specifically.

Claudia Cruz 31:27

I just wanted to add one more thing to that extreme point and I was in Silicon Valley covering this if you remember when the YouTube and the woman went to shoot up the YouTube offices in San Bruno and I was I wrote that I wrote up the story and it turned out was because YouTube had changed the algorithm for how her video posts could be seen and that meant that all the sort of her income was dropping because she wasn't getting as many subscribers to watch her videos. And it was a decision by YouTube. But it caused her to go and shoot up.

Claudia Cruz 31:57

the San Bruno office, because she was losing income all of a sudden but from a decision from this. Gigantic company that could have been paying for money. But she. But that's what she did. I mean she had. There was other issues involved but the trigger was that she was making it was gonna be making less money. Yeah. That's. Depressing and sad. Much like you guys not filling out your feedback forms. So I think we're gonna turn it to the audience in a little bit.

Carlos Mariscal 32:25

If any of you have questions for any of our panelists please there's a microphone making its way over to Erica there and anybody else that has their hands raised. Over the over there is say right. You. Hi.

Audience Member  
#1 (32:52)

So speaking of YouTube and creating content in the gig economy I notice another platform that has popped up that people use to support themselves called Patreon. And I'm sure there are smaller versions of this out there but Petron is one we all hear about Subscribe link support me on Patreon. I got bills to pay like literally they phrase it like that because they're like in a tight spot and they're relying on people being generous not only with their time but with their money on a month to month basis.

Audience Member  
#1 (33:24)

And we're literally subscribing to individuals now instead of magazines which then pay their reporters for instance we're actually subscribing to an individual creator. And you talked about Uber not paying their employees enough. You talked about YouTube messing with their algorithms and Massena messing with our Terms of Agreement. Stuff like that but like what. What is what is Patreon represented.

Audience Member  
#1 (33:48)

And other things like patron in all of this because it feels different than just YouTube and their algorithm that like you know you get advertisers on your videos and then you get a cut of that like what does that represent. I would just say it goes back to the fact that employers should be playing their employees but it's not you should you should be making enough at your job. You should have a living wage you should have enough. Health care. You shouldn't have. So that you don't have to go to somebody else to help you out.

Claudia Cruz 34:20

So I think that I think that's what the go fund means represent what the patrons represent. Even the Kickstarter Kickstarter is more can be more creative but sometimes you you're doing something that your employer could have been helping you with or you could've gotten done at another job if they had supported you but you just left because you would do your own thing because you weren't supported at the workplace. So I I support go fund me for when



someone's in Journey's medical bill or something very. Extreme. But.

Claudia Cruz 34:48

Employers should be plain paying employees enough and we should be supporting the kind of endeavor that paper newspapers pay for. Online and the pay paper news. So. That's what I can do. There shouldn't be Go Fund BS for medical needs. Me a couple. Thanks guys.

Audience Member  
#2 (35:18)

So my question is can we talk about unions because that seems like absolutely not. That is the neo liberalism that seems like a really important part of this conversation that we haven't quite touched on in the unions. Well what would you like to say. What would you like to talk about. I mean one of the things that strikes me when we talk about the erosion of workers rights is that that's something that unions used to work for. So this is partly about technology and partly about a changing economy.

Audience Member  
#2 (35:50)

But I see I see the declining influence of unions as a really instrumental factor in this that more people probably should be talking about. Yeah. That also seems tied to neo liberalism and the individualism of it. Yes I mean absolutely nail on the head. I mean I think that that's that's why it's probably starting with thinking of neo liberalism historically as as a political project that's a class project. I mean one of the central pillars of neo liberalism has been union busting eradicating unions and basically all sectors.

Graham B. Slater 36:21

You know just to sort of bring education into it one of the things that's really interesting in terms of contemporary political phenomena is the degree to which we see teachers increasingly going on strikes and also engaging in oppositional activity. That's right down and. Engaging in forms of oppositional activity that mirror the of the the various tactics that unions have used for a long time even in instances where it's illegal for some teachers to strike. I'm thinking of the Detroit teachers sickout out a couple of springs ago right.

Graham B.  
Slater 36:51

So for instance you have teachers in the state of Michigan who are you know allowed to unionize but they're not allowed to strike which is a really interesting sort of contradiction just to think through because that's just doesn't make any sense right. So what it sort of the

teachers do in that particular instance. Well they all basically called in sick one day in March. Right. Like the phones at the school start ringing and all that you know assistants are picking up the phone and it's just a bunch of teachers kind of I'm I'm sick. I don't think I'm gonna be there.

Graham B. Slater 37:20

You have like 85 percent of teachers calling in sick. This is just an example of a type of tactic that's emblematic I think of the fact that unions are being suppressed and broken up in a variety of ways. But but workers figure out strategies to respond but I think that this is at the core and just the broader question of labor collectivity building oppositional power in collective forms. When you're when you're individualized when you're a gig worker there's not the same type of foundation for that and that's intentional.

David Rondel 37:50

That's a long term consequence though is very much intentional. Know if I could jump in I think I think that's you know strengthening reinvigorating the labor movement is probably the single most important thing that we can do. I mean we're talking about work and money. Yet the unions have been the whole labor union movement in general has been sort of decimated over a number of decades. But yes I mean to the extent that workers enjoy you know safe working conditions decent wages. That's.

David Rondel 38:20

That's thanks to the unions. If one sort of goes back and reads sort of accounts of early industrial capitalism I know the jungle Absolutely yeah. Yep yep yep. That weekend is absolutely 40 hour work week. I mean we were all greatly in the debt of the labor unions and I think that's this to my mind the single most important thing that we can do fight could be permitted a little sort of indulgent sort of personal remark by my own family is sort of deeply connected with this sort of labor struggle I come from like a long line of Belgian factory workers.

David Rondel 38:55

My mother remembers sort of stories like brutal sort of labor strikes with you know tear gas and billy clubs and her job about all the little kids job was to sort of throw a bunch of marbles into the street to kind of like displace the crowd control horses and there's you know like

smoke everywhere and so you know I think of the labor movement. I mean I'm so glad you brought it up not only as morally you know it's not only morally correct which it is but I also find it sort of personally inspiring and invigorating. So thank you very much for raising that.

Claudia Cruz 39:25

Yet there are very few examples. I mean there are examples of the big unions SEIU a w you the UAW as big as. But I think that millennials and vinyls have no idea really what a strong labor movement looks like. So you know that's something that they you know authors educators maybe the community in general but I I'm going throw it back on the Millennials and the and the seniors here to look it up to understand to learn more about about the movements in Europe around the world and obviously here a couple more questions.

Audience Member  
#3 (40:09)

She has talked about earlier how you're really proud of the quantitative amount of jobs that students get out of community college in journalism and maybe the university as a whole. So as that is. Are you analyzing that in a qualitative way also or is that something you guys are interested in kind of chasing in the future or is it a little too difficult to do so. I. Have.

Claudia Cruz 40:38

To be quite honest I don't. We don't. I couldn't give you an answer about how we how we measure it qualitatively but we as someone who tries to place students in internships and Reno. I think I'm going to mention is just paying students right. They shouldn't be free internships so I know that we know is not new york that L.A. San Francisco so they may not be enough money here but part of the quality of a job experience is getting paid.

Claudia Cruz 41:10

And if that helps your enjoyment of it and it helps you not stress about whether or not your making ends meet any any other way. The other thing that I that look at is as I've gone as a journalist is the lack of more journalism opportunities in Reno. And the ones there are also don't pay because there isn't enough money in journalism anymore. So we do try to measure that. But I knew I started the semester so I think that I would stop to go back and kind of measure that.

Claudia Cruz 41:39

But but yes paying your student interns you can help change the conversation about labor. If I could just add something I may think it's really important that you bring in this question of the distinction between quantitative metrics of getting jobs students getting jobs out of college etc. and the qualitative component I feel like David's opening remarks are pretty crucial here asking like what is socially necessary labor what is socially meaningful labor right.

Graham B. Slater 42:07

I mean is it worthwhile to be a university professor and funnel students into jobs that have all of these embedded structural contradictions and problems. I mean I think that all of you need to be also asking these questions about what types of work are we being steered towards. What are the narratives that we're being exposed to about the types of work that is meaningful or that we should aspire to and pursue. I mean these are questions about what sort of society we have right because labor is the way that we produce societies and in an economic sense.

Graham B. Slater 42:36

And so the qualitative component I think is arguably more critically important than the quantitative component because a solely quantitative way of looking at the problem can actually just reproduce like a really exploitative set of relations. So I think that that's an important question. Thanks. Gonna a couple more questions. So this is my last thought on taps I wanted to ask a question before I left.

Audience Member  
#4 (43:02)

But you know I think a lot about this because I've been talking to a lot of social psychologists and economists and particularly in a capitalist society there doesn't seem to really be a good way to stop money from pooling at the top. And I was just wanting what you thought about universal basic incomes as an antidote to that and if not you have an alternative solution. So I you know I like universal basic incomes.

David Rondel 43:32

I mean I've I've sort of there that sort of inventions of philosophers from Marxist philosophers from quite a while back. So I don't think of John Romer at Yale and Philip Van Perry as the Belgian philosopher various others have been talking about you be eyes for a long

time. I mean I don't know. I'm not an expert in sort of crafting policy and so on. I think we have to raise taxes to be honest with you. It's pretty simple.

David Rondel 43:57

I don't like we need some elaborate sort of innovation because you know taking more tax revenue and use that tax revenue to alleviate some of the wealth inequality that you're talking about that's that would be my two cents. But again I'm not you know the author of white papers on this kind of. Yeah it's I mean UBI is an interesting question. I think that we find people on the left who are excited by the premise because for one I mean like just in a very practical sense I think a lot of people in the current moment are like this could change.

Graham B. Slater 44:30

Change people's lives in an immediate sense. Then there are other people on the left that I think are concerned that UBI universal basic income programs are basically just a palliative measure that actually stabilizes some of the internal contradictions. Right so if we all get a little bit of universal basic income what would that do to the sort of rising sentiments of rage and opposition that people are feeling once they start to realize and become critical of the economic system realize that it is a dead end game realize that you know these are not accidental consequences but that the nature of inequality that we see today is it's just a total total logical consequence of the system.

Graham B. Slater 45:07

So I think that it's I think is actually a valuable political question at the moment but one that we should kind of move beyond just like is it good is it bad what are its effects. But kind of thinking philosophically about what ideas are actually being expressed by the premise of universal basic income it could be a stopgap measure potentially but not maybe if it actually reduces some of the rising you know radical sentiment that we're seeing. High.

Audience Member  
#5 (45:38)

So I had a question on students entering college and finding fulfilling jobs. So we face a lot of pressure I think to choose a major as soon as we come into college and kind of go along that track and get out in four years do our internships and do exactly what we're supposed to do. But it doesn't work like that and it's kind of hard to find fulfilling employment when you're not quite sure

what fulfilling means.

Audience Member  
#5 (46:05)

So how do we find a fulfilling thing that we enjoy while still following that traditional track. I think I think that most of us are adults and this class will tell you that we didn't have a traditional kind of path or that our lives were in just a straight line to the dream job we wanted. It's always like I kind of jumped around here for a little bit. I had to pay bills. Oh I moved because my family had to move. So I kind of ended up over here.

Claudia Cruz 46:36

So I guess I'll go back to those transferable skills. If you have certain skills you will just move around. But then while you move around you'll start exploring things you'll realize Oh I don't want to work at a corporation maybe it's a non-profit. Oh I don't want to be in the West Coast I want to be on the East Coast or north or south or city small town. I've lived the next seven eight different states three or four different countries. And when you do that you explore more and then you can compare.

Claudia Cruz 47:04

So I just say don't stress too much about whether or not the one you got a dream job after college or how long it'll take you gain the skills get good jobs you'll start learning at those jobs. Maybe that first job is. I just met someone yesterday who's been in that same job for almost 18 years. Right out of college. So she signed up at 18 she's about long before you do something. But if you just kind of experiment is why internships are great.

Claudia Cruz 47:32

Like if you do as many interviews as possible while in college that's why you try it out and then maybe you get a great job or you hope you get a break up of the college. But I stayed in my first job for a year then I left for college and I tried something else for a year and I tried something else. Now I'm a lot more stable. But we understand as also employers who hire that you are still discovering yourself.

Claudia Cruz 47:58

Not everybody knows that when to go to law school immediately after college or go to med school or you know take a year off if you can and travel that might help you understand but you will you will be fine. Just get the skills and keep meeting people and you'll end up where you where you want to be. Can I jump in quickly.

I mean I think there's there's a venerable philosophical tradition that agrees wholeheartedly with what you just said you know so what Henry David Thoreau calls experiments in living is sort of very apropos to what you just said we can't figure out in advance what it would mean for us to live a life that was fulfilling and rich and to our ultimate choosing.

David Rondel 48:36

That's not something you can just sort of figure out by consulting some algorithm or something like that. Really the only way to do it is to engage in these kinds of sort of experiments and living. That's the Rose phrase but I think the point is is generally generally right. So if you go out there and you know follow your your nose and try your best and over time the hope is that you'll discover. So I always joke with people because they're like I'm from New York hi I'm the new yorker end up in Reno but I'll tell you that because of my life experience I can I know that this is a great standard of living I put in so many places a great it's a great university.

Claudia Cruz 49:10

I'm close to Tahoe which I love one of the authors. The more you you travel the more you meet people the more you understand the world the more you'll find where you'll end up. And I think that a place like Reno for me a new yorker is kind of could be home for me for the rest of my life. So I think that just experiment and tried to find things that I really like the question because I think it's it's a deeply kind of theoretical question that identifies some of the contradictions that are embedded even in this institution.

Graham B.  
Slater 49:38

I mean ask yourself like for those of you who are students here I may get the slogan wrong but what is it like 15 to complete like this sort of administrative notion that great to keep certain levels of financial aid or to be eligible for a variety of different scholarships and things like that that you're being exhorted by the university administration to take a certain amount of credits every semester so that you'll complete in a certain amount of time. And that's a direct threat to open ended processes even if it's the experiments in living right.

Graham B. Slater 50:06

It's a structural barrier to you engaging in that intellectual project on autonomous terms. So I mean I think that in addition to like these kind of you know

maybe not abstract philosophical questions but I mean this is like is also like a policy question. It's a governance question we need interrogator institutions what are they funneling us into. What type of educational experiences are they forcing us to go through to be accommodated to a social order.

Graham B. Slater 50:33

There's actually very little guarantee that even if you do find yourself find your passion that that's going to translate into a certain type of economic set of conditions. And I think though radical collective experimentation on the behalf of students are on the part of students is actually key to this right. Like not not an individualized project right. Like don't just go through this project thinking about how do I find myself. Talk to each other which I know you do and think about the things that get in the way of answering that question a way that makes sense to you right.

Graham B. Slater 51:04

It's a collective problem I think. Last question from the audience. You got it. You've been raising your hand through a. In the spirit of future visions I am interested in hearing from you all. If you could make some radical or substantive change that you want to see happen what kinds of future visions could be enabled by that.

Audience Member  
#6 (51:33)

So what kind of changes would you put in place to make the kinds of future visions of work and money that you want to see happen. I'd love to see student loans eradicated free education. That's right straight. I think that's I think it'll be easier to envision a amazing future for myself and others without the burden of loans which would then open up opportunity to buy homes right. I guess I'm part of that generation too.

Claudia Cruz 52:03

People can buy homes I know when I'm one of my own. So you know and that's part of the economic the burden on our economy. That's fewer of us can buy homes. Because of our debt burden. Yeah. No that's great. I mean I guess uh maybe. I mean. Yeah. Uh I don't know that I have any original ideas here. I mean one thing that I kind of touched on would be a kind of German thinking about new ways to sort of think about work in general so not just in quantitative ways.

David Rondel 52:37

You know how many jobs are there how many new jobs



are being created and not just in the sort of. First order qualitative ways. Are they good jobs. Do they pay well. Do they provide good benefits but really the thing sort of maybe to go back to my opening remarks about the kind of spiritual quality of work work can be wonderful when it when it provides the worker opportunities to express their nature and flex their different kinds of skills their creativity their their autonomy and so on.

David Rondel 53:08

That's just not part of the way we talk about employment in the United States right now. Not even not even a little bit. And so even because that crumb of that kind of way of thinking could sort of enter the mainstream discourse I think that would be a stunning change. I mean yeah that's it's something I spend a lot of time thinking about but I don't have a good answer. I mean I think that one of the things that we do have to bring into the discussion though just to make sure that it's not left aside is the relationship between ecological collapse climate crisis and the way that we think about the nature of work.

Graham B. Slater 53:41

All right. Thanks for that kind of work. Way to leave it out Carlos. But I think I mean like just to kind of I mean when I think about futures and I think about the nature of neoliberalism and these educational issues that I study I mean I think that this is the the paradigm that we're confronted with in which we have to sort of ask deep questions about. I mean because for instance right there are ways in which alternative forms of social relations that are more egalitarian remain ecologically destructive.

Graham B. Slater 54:09

And so I think that centering this type of problematic in the way that we think about what we're going to spend our lives doing producing what realities are we're going to be producing together has to sort of situate ecological environmental issues at the center. And fortunately there are a lot of youth who are actually telling people who are older exactly what they think that that should look like and this is a heartening phenomenon. All right.

Graham B. Slater 54:31

So I think that that's that's something that's really crucial to thinking about futures is not just sort of thinking about social relations and equality within social

relations but recognizing that social relations have to be ecological relations and I think that we can produce a lot of exciting experiments with that kind of mentality at the at the forefront of our minds and maybe maybe related to this like one last Capstone questions like wrap it all up for all of you what what scares you or gives you hope.

Carlos Mariscal 54:59

So some of you gave answers to the last question of things that is that scare you things. Others gave answers that are things that you desire. But like what. What are the things that scare you or give you hope moving forward. For anybody. I mean I have a list so I think one of the things that scared me in terms of also employment going back to tangible skills and writing is a lot of the written language.

Claudia Cruz 55:24

So I really encourage you to when you write write correctly write sentences on emojis use them sparingly because not everybody understands you when he moves them and. We don't have a codex we we don't people will interpret emojis differently. And I would say we're not we're not trying to go back to hieroglyphics. We're trying to create a body of work that can last forever and if you're only writing in emojis I will know what you mean in 100 years especially because in my country by country we'll have different meanings.

Claudia Cruz 55:57

I'm also scared about surveillance inside the issue of cybersecurity and then what that means for us as workers as well. Because now you know besides the fingerprinting maybe the scanning and how you scan to get into work whether or not you take bathroom breaks and how they measure that in this surveillance that that's what's happening internally or in your on your systems computer systems. On the positives I want. I think someone who's helps people find jobs.

Claudia Cruz 56:25

I think a positive thing is how many resources are for finding jobs in handshake. LinkedIn indeed. Google do a search Google Jobs Reno or Facebook has it. If your location is Reno a Facebook a tab again we love to hate Facebook but it's helping you. It can help you find the positions that you're looking for. Again if we're still doing this topic in the very last day. Yeah more better

jobs software.

Claudia Cruz 56:54

And I mentioned how much I hate student loans so that's what scares me. Whether now we can get out from underneath that to then have them to be able to contribute more to society. So what scares me what gives me hope. So I mean like everything scares me. I kind of go through life like especially with what scares me because I constantly trembling with anxiety. So like yeah everything is scary but maybe a hopeful note. I mean one thing that I find really hopeful right now is that the U.S.

David Rondel 57:24

labor movement appears to be sort of gearing back up gaining momentum gaining strength in ways that we haven't seen in a long time. So just a tiny little factoid in 2018 last year there were 20 major work stoppages strikes involving more than half a million workers. First of reference that's the highest number since 1986 1986 you'll remember right smack dab in the middle of Ronald Reagan's all out assault on organized labor.

David Rondel 57:55

So there are hopeful signs the word socialism is now part of the mainstream American political vocabulary for the first time in a century. And I just I think there are reasons to be cautiously optimistic. So yeah everything scares me. But the labor movement is helpful. Yeah. I mean I concur with David I think that when people band together collectively in the interests of justice and equality there's actually not so much to be scared of.

Graham B. Slater 58:21

And I think that that's at the same time what's particularly hopeful about the moment I think you're right to point to a variety of emergent movements that take a variety of forms that are becoming increasingly integrated and I think that that's that's a really good sign for the for the near-term future successful teacher strikes in deep red states like Oklahoma. It's something something is afoot and I think so that's. Absolutely. Even reporters are unionizing so that's maybe college professors too.

Carlos Mariscal 58:52

So thank you guys so much. I want to thank the Laughing Planet for hosting us. I did want to mention one thing to what Brandon said a little while ago we are having a future visions of the planets in the spring. So

we will discuss environmental issues. I will be a panelist then so I'll keep talking to you in the spring. You're going to talk about how these tech billionaires want to leave the planet. Oh yeah. Leave us all behind. They're going to New Zealand.

Carlos Mariscal 59:22

They want to go to Mars. I think there are bunkers in Indiana too. Apparently they think we can terraform Mars but we can't terraform Earth. That's very interesting. So I want to thank Laughing Planet again. I want to thank Daniel Enrique Perez, David Fenimore, Bretton Rodriguez, Caitlin Earley, Stephen Pasqualina, Chris Stancil, the unknown grad undergraduate student Maddie Rose, the Core Humanities department,

Carlos Mariscal 59:49

I want to thank Debra Moddelmog and the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Nevada and the entire Reno community for this spectacular evening. And in addition especially I want to thank our panelists Graham Slater, Claudia Cruz, and David Rondel. Thank you guys so much for it for a wonderful evening. For this decade of thought on time. I'm Carlos Mariscal. Thank you and good night.