Bill Hendricks covers a lot of territory in his essay "Teaching Work: Academic Labor and Social Class." I read Hendricks as aiming primarily to provoke consideration of a host of issues. Thus, my response is intended not as a critique of his essay but more an enactment of the kinds of considerations I take him to be calling for. Specifically, I'll comment on those parts of his essay that suggest that instructors—tenure and nontenure track, full and part-time—are increasingly "working class," and that this will encourage increasing numbers of these instructors to identify as a collective with a, or the, labor movement, in the form of unionization across the track of tenure lines. In support of the first of these points, Hendricks marshals not only the depressing and depressingly familiar data on the increasing reliance on contingent labor to staff college-level teaching positions, the lousy working conditions of those holding these positions (low pay and lack of job security, work autonomy, and health insurance), the privatization of funding for all institutions of higher education, and the growing commodification of that education, but also attacks on the professional managerial class (PMC) status of all academics as well as those in such other fields as law and medicine. While some readers may wish to quibble with some of the specific data Hendricks presents, the general trend seems clear: colleges and universities
are replacing more and more tenure-line positions and faculty with contingent labor, who by definition can be "shed" more easily, paid less, offered fewer or no health and other benefits, and granted little or no say in their work. And not only that, those few tenure-line faculty remaining are finding their salaries, benefits, and work autonomy decreasing, work expectations growing, and tenure status both more difficult to attain and, if attained, increasingly under threat.

But whether these deteriorating conditions make these jobs somehow "working class" and whether these threats to the PMC status of college teachers will lead them to identify more strongly with the labor movement or to participate in it is unclear.¹ For starters, both questions raise the notoriously difficult issue of class identity. Hendricks, drawing especially on Michael Zweig's argument in *The Working Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret*, argues that the jobs of college teachers are "working class" insofar as they offer low salaries and little or no health insurance, work autonomy, and job security (602-09). Put together, these features of their jobs put college teachers in positions of relative powerlessness in relation to those with higher salaries, decent health insurance, work autonomy, and job security. And so, if to be a member of the working class means to be relatively powerless and have such unappealing working conditions, college teachers are, indeed, increasingly "working class."

However, this is but one way to define "working class," one that elides both the role of forms of capital other than economic in the definition of one's place in relations of power, and the ways of responding to that placement that contribute to the "making" of class identity.² Here it is useful to distinguish between how one is socially positioned, how one positions oneself, and what is called "class consciousness." Observing that "Forty years ago, the large majority of college teachers were in, if not necessarily from, the middle class. Today, most college teachers, whatever their class origins, have working class jobs," Hendricks asks, "To what extent, if any, does this affect their self-images as teachers and how they work with students? This is unclear to me" (613). Hendricks allows
for the possibility only of "lots of individual cases and maybe a couple of emerging trends" but not any "general answers to that question." It's possible, however, that the distinctions between how one is positioned in terms of class, how one positions oneself, and class consciousness might be helpful in identifying the factors that would shape these trends. If we were to accept Hendricks' claim that the majority of postsecondary teaching jobs are now "working class" (in Zweig's definition), this speaks to how those holding those jobs are presently positioned economically. But any such positioning operates in conjunction with other social positionings (in terms, for example, of race, gender, and cultural and social capital), and all of these can call forth different ways of positioning oneself in response, including responses that do, and don't, produce something we might term "class consciousness." And there may be any number of factors shaping those responses.

The gendered, raced, sexed, as well as classed character of composition work is by now fairly well established (see, for example, Bloom, Elliot, Johnson, Karamcheti, Logan, Miller, Schell, Tuell). Operating in contingent conjunction and intersection with these are other factors of social and cultural capital. I'd guess that a sizable percentage of those holding positions as college teachers enjoy significant, if differing, degrees of both. If we think of class in terms of dispositions, then it seems likely that the holding of postsecondary teaching positions—both tenure and nontenure track—is for a majority as much a sign of their PMC background—their possession of the social and cultural capital associated with being members of the PMC—as it is a means of achieving or maintaining that status. The relative scarcity of postsecondary teachers coming from explicitly "working-class" backgrounds, the reluctance of these teachers to admit to having such backgrounds, and the field's high degree of interest in those individuals who do (see Dews and Law, Ryan and Sackrey), supports this. (Were the phenomenon more common, interest in it would be less: imagine, by contrast, the degree of interest or lack thereof that the field might have in accounts of academics with PMC parents.) We may all agree with Hendricks that "it's time to put to rest (if only we knew
how) the popular misconception that associates ‘college teacher’ with a lifetime sinecure” that would signal at least PMC status (602). However, the association of PMC status with postsecondary teaching is not entirely without foundation. Even if it is increasingly true that, for example, the salaries of postsecondary teachers are decreasing relative to their putative and past social peers, they continue to enjoy some degree of work autonomy and also social status: to shift the emphasis in a statement of Zweig’s that Hendricks quotes, while “class is strongly related to income,” “income doesn’t determine class” (qtd. in Hendricks 603). If anything, it’s in the disparity between these teachers’ ostensible PMC rank, on the one hand, and, on the other, their decrease in job security, income and benefits, and work autonomy, that any potential for a shift in class alliances and consciousness may reside. More on this later.

The accounts Hendricks cites of those postsecondary teachers who “come from” the working class at least implies a complicated definition of class identity. As Hendricks notes, contributors to the collections _Strangers in Paradise, This Fine Place So Far from Home_, and _Liberating Memory_ who are or have been college teachers write of having a “working class background” and “working class identity,” report struggling to “balance” dual class identities, and have a working class consciousness that “has persisted in their university work” (611-12). This would suggest that class identity is neither something one has and brings with one to one’s place of work, whatever the nature of that work, nor something determined wholly by the conditions of one’s work. Instead, one can have “dual” class identities—hence the fact that college teaching jobs are “working class” in terms of salary, benefits, degree of work autonomy; and job security does not make college teachers working class, nor does one’s personal history of class relations dictate that identity. Instead, as E.P. Thompson has observed, “class happens when some men, as a result of common experience (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs”
(Making 9). While, as Hendricks argues, composition teachers may increasingly share a common experience, it is not clear whether they will "feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other[s]." As Thompson puts it, "If the experience appears as determined, class consciousness does not. We can see a logic in the responses of similar occupational groups undergoing similar experiences, but we cannot predicate any law" (Making 10). And as he explains:

[P]eople find themselves in a society structured in determined ways . . . , they experience exploitation (or the need to maintain power over those whom they exploit), they identify points of antagonistic interest, they commence to struggle around these issues and in the process of struggling they discover themselves as classes, they come to know this discovery as class-consciousness. Class and class-consciousness are always the last, not the first, stage in the real historical process. . . . But no examination of objective determinations (and certainly no model theorized from it) can give one class and class-consciousness in a simple equation. Class eventuates as men and women live their productive relations, and as they experience their determinate situations, within "the ensemble of the social relations," with their inherited culture and expectations, and as they handle these experiences in cultural ways . . . [C]lass defines itself as, in fact, it eventuates. ("Eighteenth-Century" 149–50)

The stories Hendricks cites of teachers who "come from" the working class, in whatever sense, to the academy are stories of this process, of the various ways these teachers respond to this common experience and come to define themselves in terms of class: as continuing "working-class" outsiders, as converts to the PMC, as filled with tension about their class identity, and so on. I see Hendricks at least hoping that the composition teachers' common experience will lead them to "feel and articulate" an identity as "working-class," which he then speculates will tend toward greater participation in the labor movement. While clearly the common experience would seem to be a requisite to such
identification, or class consciousness, the other factors I've dis- 
cussed of social and cultural capital, and specific personal histories 
and institutional frameworks, would seem to play significant roles 
in whether or not such identification "happens."

For the purposes of this response, I'll speculate as to what 
several of these factors might be, based on my experience as a 
WPA at a large public university, which I present for readers to test 
against their own experiences working in whatever capacities at 
comparable institutions, and offer with Thompson's caveat against 
predicating any law concerning class and class consciousness. 
While the individual circumstances of instructors at institutions 
staffing composition sections with a mix of GTAs and contingent 
instructors inevitably vary (some with other incomes and some 
without, some with dependents and some without, some with more 
teaching experience than others, some earning more than others, 
some with PhD's and some with only MA's), we can assume that 
at most such institutions, their working conditions match those 
Hendricks describes for contingent academic labor: low salaries, 
no job security, less work autonomy than tenure-stream instruc-
tors, and minimal or no health benefits. At such institutions, they 
would thus share the "common experience" requisite to the making 
of a class, working or otherwise, and this might eventually lead 
them to articulate an "identity of their interests as between them-
selves, and as against other men [and women] whose interests are 
different from (and usually opposed to) theirs."

However, while we can assume that all such instructors would 
be aware of and would like to improve their salaries, benefits, job 
security, and degree of work autonomy (each and all would 
presumably want more), only some might think in terms of "class 
consciousness," if by this we mean identifying and aligning them-
selves with their fellow contingent teachers in a shared relation of 
power either to capital or simply to local institutional management. 
Aside from this possible response, I'll speculate two other likely 
responses, and the conditions that might encourage either. First, 
many such instructors might position themselves either as "pass-
ing" or in feudal relations to others. That is, they might view their
current positions as unfortunate but, fortunately, inevitably tempo-
rary delay stations on the sure path of their PMC careers as tenure-
line faculty elsewhere, despite the ever lengthening odds against
this possibility. These would identify themselves, in other words, as
simply “passing” through, and so attempt to “pass” and pass
themselves off as inherent members of the PMC—not as “working
class.” Others—say those who are former graduate students of the
school—might identify themselves primarily as affiliates with those
tenure-stream faculty they consider their “patrons” and expect to
be assigned teaching positions and contracts essentially as a
matter of traditional noblesse oblige: compensation due them for
their history of fealty to these patrons, charity they deserve in light
of the vicissitudes of their personal circumstances, and a require-
ment in keeping with the long tradition of their having been so hired.
Those most likely to think in terms of the collective self-interest of
contingent teachers might well be those who have earned their
degrees at other schools and thus can claim no personal ties to the
department’s tenured faculty, have already worked elsewhere as
contingent teachers (and so perhaps have fewer expectations of
career “advancement”), and have the fewest dependents and thus,
perhaps, the least at stake in openly professing collective class-
conscious thinking.

We may put these speculations to heuristic use as a point of
departure for considering the particular conditions that are likely to
shape how individuals positioned as contingent labor position
themselves in response to their ostensibly “common” experience.
For example, instructors might respond differently depending on
whether or not there are any significant legal barriers in their state
in the way of instructors joining a union. Whether they affiliate with
particular faculty sponsors might depend at least in part on whether
any faculty have encouraged them to believe that teaching assign-
ments are a reward for personal fealty to them, or whether there is
any history of such “rewards.” If there is a history of the institution’s
contingent instructors having success at getting offers of tenure-
stream positions, then more contingent instructors are likely to
think of their current condition as a temporary way-station on the
path toward the tenure stream. Depending on which of these conditions obtains, individuals would tend to respond accordingly: attempting, for example, to exploit feudal relations when they can or to pass themselves off as prospective peers, rather than employees, of tenure-stream faculty. Babies do tend to need new pairs of shoes.

This is not to say that no current or incipient class consciousness exists or could among instructors in which they will recognize "the identity of their interests as between themselves," only to acknowledge the considerable forces that might operate against its explicit emergence. To understand whether and how, if at all, postsecondary teachers might come to a class consciousness of this sort, I suggest that we can learn more from investigating the stories of those teachers who are experiencing the threat of diminished, rather than the possibility of heightened, class status—that is, those who are now attempting to reconcile their PMC backgrounds and expectations with the increasingly "working-class" conditions of their work as academics—than from the stories of the still comparatively few postsecondary teachers self-identified as having working-class backgrounds or identities which they now wrestle to "balance" with their ostensibly PMC-status jobs. This is not because instructors with PMC backgrounds are more likely to acquire class consciousness than instructors with working-class backgrounds but rather because despite the fact that in certain respects college instruction is increasingly a "working class" job, the majority of those holding such jobs are still likely to bring PMC backgrounds and expectations to their work. How such teachers reconcile the contradiction between their job expectations and the working conditions they experience will help to determine not so much whether they will lead or follow but whether they will join the next decade of efforts at unionization that Hendricks speculates (615).

At least some of the stories of attempts at such reconciliations do not offer much to support the hopes that Hendricks and others of us hold. These stories do frame the issue the authors face in terms of a contradiction between their professional expectations
and the working conditions of the jobs they tend to end up with, but they do not resolve that contradiction in terms of solidarity with their fellow workers. Danell Jones, for example, reports that she quit a job at Rocky Mountain College that she landed after graduating from Columbia University because it seems to require her to be not a “scholar” but a “social servant” “the bulk of [whose] labor serves not [her] personal career but the college’s survival” and who must “sacrifice [her] special interests, ostensibly for the greater good” (42, 43). Eric Gadzinski is disturbed rather than pleased by his year’s “initiation into the ranks of what might be called the blue-collar faculty—teachers at small regional public institutions who try to remain active in scholarship while laboring under the considerable demands of teaching often reluctant students to think” (35). Sharon O’Dair characterizes the choice most graduate students face as either taking the risk that they as individuals have the luck and resources to be a “star” or ending up “just like an increasing number of America’s workers—holding down three or four part-time jobs” (52). But faced with choosing between the “horrifying situation” of “occasionally, teaching composition,” O’Dair says she would choose a(nother) profession: choose “business school or law school” because “teaching composition isn’t fun or challenging or respected or rewarded” (50, 51). Stories like these suggest that, as Terry Caesar writes, “A phantasmic mode is not relinquished just because the material basis for it becomes exhausted; indeed, lack of material basis might drive a phantasmic mode the more” (69). In other words, what happens after “it’s clear that you’re only staying in place, with part-time jobs in two institutions, no prospect of anything better at either, and nothing more on the horizon” is that you “remain free to dream that a book will get you tenure, or a commute will get you Harvard” (69).

These stories, while offering details of the library holdings, course loads, salary, and students the authors encountered in their new jobs, say little about the dispositions the authors brought to those jobs (at most we can infer these from their comments and the schools where they earned their degrees), nor about other circumstances of the work that might account for why they responded as
they did. While they describe their expectations and the jobs in class-related terms ("professional" versus "servant" or "blue collar," being a "star" versus being "like an increasing number of America's workers," lack of "respect" and "reward"), we don't know, for example, whether the colleagues at their new jobs are unionized, what the tenure prospects might be, and so on.

There is one constant I find in the dispositions expressed in these stories: a disdain for and ignorance of composition scholarship and students, suggested, for example, not only by O'Dair's comments quoted above but also by her claim that today's students "cannot construct a coherent sentence" and that therefore "teaching composition is—or should be—a matter of rudimentary drill, dull and dulling, although necessary and important" (51), and by Gadzinski's expressed hope that the "burden of service courses such as freshman composition" could be alleviated by "some kind of self-paced online or on-disk composition courses," since "in writing courses I can enforce mechanical correctness, but I cannot cultivate satisfactory fluency, for that requires an ear for language that can be gained only through reading," and, alas, "many of my students simply do not read" (35, 36). Such claims manifest a shocking ignorance of the most ordinary insights of composition scholarship of the past fifty years. To go by these examples, past graduate training in English at these individuals' alma maters has much to answer for. Moreover, they are of a piece with the ideology that supports class distinctions between particular forms of work by deeming some "mechanical," even "unskilled," and therefore less worthwhile and deserving, than those forms of work deemed "professional" on the basis of their putatively more intellectual character, which (according to class ideology) is more deserving, worthwhile, and so on. The denigration of composition, in other words, constitutes an attempt at "fractioning," or "fracturing," the "middle class" of academic workers through maintaining a distinction in the cultural capital associated with the teaching of literature versus the teaching of composition.

The stories that offer more hope for Hendricks and the rest of us are stories of current and former graduate students politicized
through their graduate student teaching experience as well as their subsequent experience with a bleak job market. Like the stories cited above, these begin by registering a disconnect between PMC expectations and working conditions. Crystal Bartolovich, for example, notes that while many graduate students come to graduate school aspiring "to academic life precisely because it seems to offer a measure of freedom and control over time, thought, and labor largely unavailable elsewhere under conditions of capitalism," "what we encounter en route to a PhD and tenure rarely conforms to the fantasy we nurtured" (78). Instead, she says, they discover "the vagaries and impossible odds of the job market (and, later, for tenure)," and "the hierarchy of institutions, and what this hierarchy will mean, materially, for our lives after graduate school should we manage to get a job at all" (78). Kali Tal, hired and then fired without explanation as a nontenure-track faculty member at Arizona International Campus, a "new experimental nontenure college of the University of Arizona," notes that while "back in 1984 it was still possible to think of graduate teaching as an apprenticeship, as a gateway into a profession that would keep me out of the working class. . . . [t]en years (and a long job search) later it was hard for me to imagine that anyone could still believe that a PhD—even a Yale PhD—was a sure ticket to a tenure-track job" (95, 105).

While in this respect, these stories do not differ from those cited above, their authors' responses to this disconnect between professional aspirations and "working-class" prospects do differ. Tal, for example, argues that graduate students' experience of exploitation has created a "bond between graduate students and young faculty in nontenure-track positions" because the former "can see the writing on the wall. They understand that in today's market they are more likely to wind up as itinerant intellectual labor than they are to land that elusive tenure track position which provides them a reasonable course load and time for research" (103). These writers, in contrast to Gadzinski, Jones, and O'Dair, respond to the contradiction between PMC expectations and the "working class" features of their actual jobs in the academy by dropping the fantasy and thinking in terms of, as well as sometimes forming or joining,
collective identities in union, figurative or not, with their peers. Tal's own experience at AIC as well as her graduate school experience at Yale and on the job market, for example, seems to have led not to a lament on her misfortune at failing to secure "that elusive tenure track position" but to her transformation into an "activist." Bartolovich, active in the Yale graduate student organization GESO, notes that graduate students faced with the unlikelihood of securing a tenure-track job have come to see unions as representing not a divisive threat to academic community but rather "a chance at belonging . . . to an 'academic community' of which they too have dreamed but which seems increasingly elusive," and she expresses the hope that "If [GESO] succeeds in unionizing the teaching staff at a major private university, GESO will have set an important precedent which will be helpful not only to graduate student organizing, but also the organizing of part-time faculty and even full-time faculty at private schools far less privileged than Yale" (87, 92).

This is a hope founded to some extent on the expectation of continued and even increased immiseration: increased "downsizing" of faculty, increased use of part-time and graduate student labor, higher teaching loads (in sections and section size), the degradation and elimination of job security. To find hope in such a prospect is, of course, perverse, and it is not one Hendricks (or Bartolovich or Tal) advocates. Hendricks does not, for example, welcome the prospect of further erosion of tenure. He does speculate, however, that a decrease in tenure-track jobs might "stimulat[e] remaining tenure-track faculty to look harder for allies," and "have the beneficial effect of shifting college teachers' gaze from a pallidly narrow opposition (careers versus jobs) to a more broadly interesting one: good teaching jobs versus bad teaching jobs" (614, 615). Thus, he imagines that instructors may increasingly abandon pursuit of that elusive "professional" academic career in favor of collective efforts at improving working conditions: "good teaching jobs."

The stories of Gadzinski, Jones, and O'Dair suggest that many are not yet willing to give up the ghost of being an academic
“professional”; conversely, the stories of Bartolovich and Tal support Hendricks’ speculation that the worsening quality of academic jobs will have the “beneficial effect” of shifting the demand from one for an individual professional career to one for “good teaching jobs.” But Hendricks’ phrase brings out what’s absent in that speculation, in these stories, and, as Hendricks acknowledges, in much of his own argument: a consideration of the teaching performed in those jobs—not just whether the jobs themselves are good or bad in terms of pay, job security, and benefits, but what might constitute good teaching (610).

I read this absence of attention to teaching as a manifestation of what Allan Luke has identified as a division of labor in which “pedagogy has come to be seen as a concern of ‘professionalism,’ while teaching as work is seen as a concern of trade unionism.” This division, Luke notes, while understandable as an historical development, “contributes, however unintentionally, to a questionable assumption about teachers’ work: that pedagogy and curriculum can be debated in intellectual and professional forums independent of debates about industrial, teaching/learning conditions in schools and classrooms, which are rightly the domains of collective bargaining and industrial negotiations” (309). The statements by Gadzinski, Jones, and O’Dair that betray complete ignorance about (and disdain for) composition pedagogy while arguing against “bad jobs” should give us pause about how “good teaching jobs” are defined, since at least in their arguments, the quality of a job appears to be defined not only by good job security, benefits, and pay but also by escape from concern with pedagogy: a “good job” is, for them, a job that does not involve what many in composition would recognize as “good teaching.”

As the statements quoted from these writers suggest as well, the disdain for pedagogy is accompanied by a disdain for students. But a labor movement among instructors that disdains students is not a movement I’d want to join, any more than I’d want to join a movement that disdains composition pedagogy, nor is it one likely to succeed. Disdain for the work of composition pedagogy shows a failure to connect with those engaged in such work—teachers
and students both—the vast majority of whom do not see what they do as “dull and dulling” or a matter of “rudimentary drill” best relegated to educational software, whatever their discontent with the conditions in which they carry out that work.

Such a failure would be fatal to any movement toward collective dispositions or unionization, which Hendricks hopes for. It’s true, of course, that, as Hendricks observes, “casualization [of postsecondary teaching labor] has not provoked a sustained public clamor for securing students’ investment in higher education by entrusting it to only teachers with ‘full professional status’” (598). But we need to remember that public clamor is not an automatic reaction by a preexisting body to phenomena. Instead, publics are called into being (and into clamoring) through the making public, and of interest, to various individuals and groups phenomena such as casualization, exploitation, environmental degradation, and so on. Successful organizing includes the creation of such publics. Thus, when Hendricks points out as a “general principle” that “faculty unions can’t move far without involving themselves in other social institutions,” I want to extend the “social institutions” to which Hendricks refers—legislators and lawyers who will improve labor laws—to include the public generally (615). A collective movement that pursues parochial concerns of good jobs for its members is in many ways justifiable, but it is unlikely to succeed, at least nowadays, without the support of others, support garnered by publicly identifying the interest of good jobs with students’ interest in good teaching.

This is all the more appropriate in light of the increasing degree to which teachers share equivalent job prospects with their students. Luke notes that in the past, teachers “have always been able to stand apart from our students with a complacency that we were talking about their futures in risky economies, new technologies and changing workforces—not ours” (309). But now teachers, too, are living in “new times” in which their work is changing “from tenured careers to casual contracts, increases in the outsourcing and privatization of specialists” (309). While Luke is arguing for teachers to recognize and address the link between the traditional
"professional" concerns of pedagogy and the "labor" concerns of "better wages and working conditions" (311), his observation also points to the appropriateness of linking both of these concerns with the concerns of students and their families (see also Daniel). Both teachers and their students suffer under poor working conditions brought on by these "new times." Both suffer from the deskilling and downsizing of teachers' work through "formulaic teaching and packaged, commodified curricula" (Luke 311) represented by the development of the kind of "self-paced online or on-disk composition courses" that Gadzinski mistakenly hopes for. Such teaching is by definition inattentive—and disdainful of—the specific local concerns of individual students and classes and their writing that good teaching of writing requires. We can fight against such teaching as both a "professional" and a "labor" concern that is a matter of interest to ourselves, our students, and the public.

Hendricks speculates that efforts toward collective dispositions, unionization especially will be "led by teachers with working class jobs" (615). But this speculation merits more specificity. To the extent that compositionists are collectively defined by their commitment to good teaching, I will speculate that effective efforts toward "collective dispositions" will be led not just by teachers with "working class jobs" but by composition teachers, and that the "collective" will need to include students as well, working with their teachers in the shared interest of both.

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Notes

1. "Working class" has, of course, multiple (and contested) significations. For example, at certain times and places a "working-class" job has meant at least to some a "blue-collar" job at a factory or mill that may have lower status than white-collar work but pays good wages and benefits and comes with significant job security. Conversely, there are types of work—for example, what Andrew Ross has termed "no collar"—not associated with "the working class" but which commonly come with long hours, little in the way of job security, and unstable pay.
2. One could instead, for example, see the challenge facing college teachers as a fracturing of the middle class along lines of disparities in the distribution of types of capital among them. As Bourdieu advises, "The differences stemming from the total volume of capital almost always conceal . . . the secondary differences which, within each of the classes defined by overall volume of capital, separate class fractions, defined by difference in asset structures, i.e., different distributions of their total capital among the different kinds of capital. . . . Once one takes account of the structure of total assets . . . one has the means of making more precise divisions and also of observing the specific effects of the structure of distribution between the different kinds of capital" (114, 115).

3. By contrast, see Jorgette Mauzerall's account of her "plunge" from doctoral work at the "southern Ivy" University of Virginia to teaching at Fort Valley State College (now Fort Valley State University), an historically black land-grant institution in Georgia. Mauzerall reports discovering "real pleasure" in working with her students, seeing "entering freshmen improve their writing skills enormously," and finding her students unmatched in their enthusiasm for poetry, and she praises the experience of her new job for allowing her "to recognize others in amazing and unforeseen ways" (41).

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![Feelings]

**Feeling Academic**

**Jeffrey J. Williams**

No doubt everyone reading this can attest to a sense of well-being about his or her job, the healthy and generous ways that his or her colleagues act, and the fair and rational ways that the profession operates. However—and this may shock you—academe is often known as a snakepit, in Henry Kissinger's famous quip a scene of vicious battles over petty stakes, and it seems a law of academic life that departments are dysfunctional and professors neurotic, with a store of ready complaints, foibles, and affectations.

For instance, one might be in the kind of department where animosity lends an acrid tinge to the hallway air and, like the Crips