Open Education
As The Practice of Freedom
for Both Students and Faculty

Jonathan A. Poritz

jonathan@poritz.net
www.poritz.net/jonathan
Center for Teaching and Learning and
Department of Mathematics and Physics
Colorado State University-Pueblo

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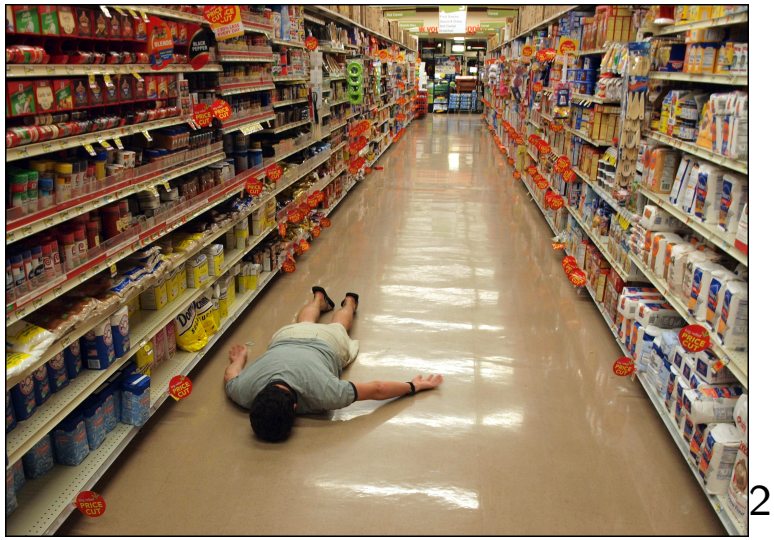
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These slides available at poritz.net/j/share/OEasPoF4SaF/ .

“Drill-and-kill classes”

Education which does not center on the autonomy and agency of student and instructor, like *drill-and-kill classes* is only a tool to turn us all into better – more docile – factory robots and consumers.

 [1]

 [2]

[1] Publicity photo of Charlie Chaplin for the film *Modern Times* (1936); [Public domain in the United State (maybe not in other jurisdictions!) since it was published between 1924 and 1977 without a copyright notice], via Wikimedia Commons, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chaplin_-_Modern_Times.jpg

[2] *Planking in the supermarket* by TheeErin from www.flickr.com/photos/27073477@N00/4112368718, released under a CC-BY-SA 2.0 license.

bell hooks and Paulo Freire

Thinkers like Paolo Freire and bell hooks had very much this perspective[3] but nevertheless found their way to a kind of optimism: a late book of Freire's was called **Pedagogy of Hope**.

> *"The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom."*
>
> emphasis added, **Teaching to Transgress**, bell hooks[4], 1994, p.207

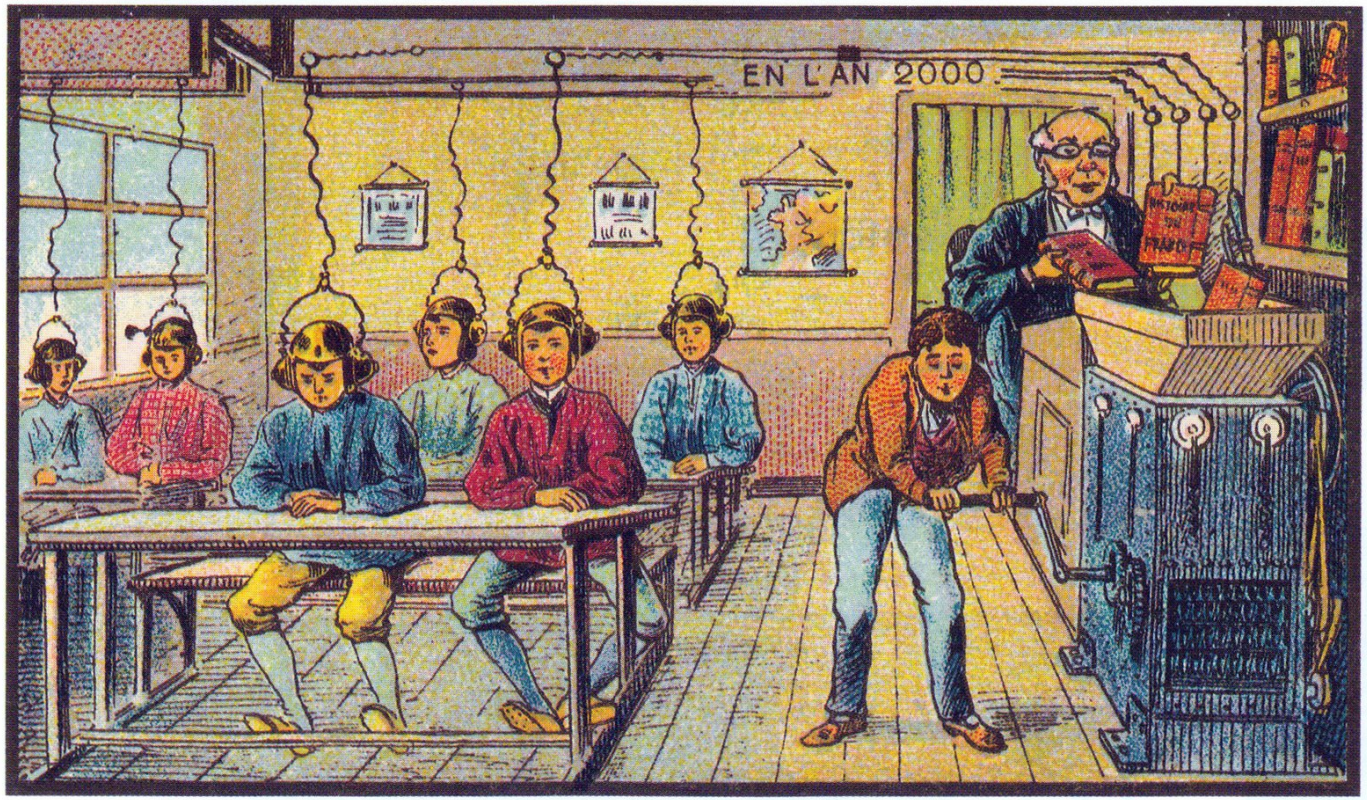
hooks likely was nodding here at Freire's first book, **Education as the Practice of Freedom**.

[3] although rooted much more complex and deep-rooted injustice: hooks is a queer, female, African-American academic and Freire lived colonialism, and had to flee a military dictatorship in Brazil!

[4] pseudonym of Gloria Watkins

The *e-banking model* of education

Freire criticized what he called the *banking model* of education, where teachers are thought to *deposit* knowledge into the minds of students.



At School

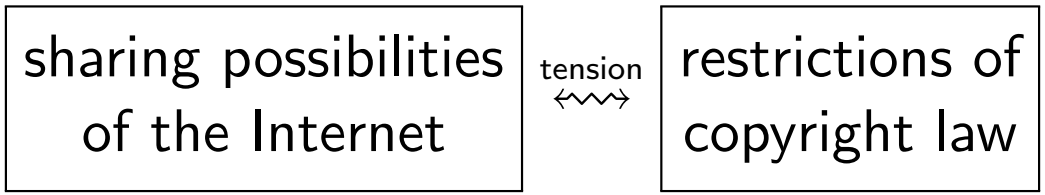
Jean Marc Cote publicdomainreview.org/2012/06/30/france-in-the-year-2000-1899-1910/ [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:France_in_XXI_Century._School.jpg

The tension that drove the creation of Creative Commons

The Creative Commons nonprofit was founded in 2001. Their licenses, alternatives to traditional all-rights-reserved copyrights[5], are the key legal technology which enables the OER and open education movements.

> *"The internet has given us the opportunity to access, share, and collaborate on human creations (all governed by copyright) at an unprecedented scale. The sharing capabilities made possible by digital technology are in tension with the sharing restrictions embedded within copyright laws around the world."*[6]

I.e.,



[5] Well, actually CC licenses are built on top of traditional copyrights. If you are unfamiliar with the basics of copyright, CC licensing, and the CC organization, ask me now or at the end.

[6] from the 2020 Course Content of the Creative Commons Certificate, which is by the Creative Commons and released under a CC BY 4.0 International license.

The **5Rs** of OER: pedagogical academic freedom codified

But notice that | faculty autonomy and agency | = | pedagogical academic freedom |

If you stop to write down in detail the specifics of pedagogical academic freedom, it's not hard to end up at David Wiley's **5Rs**[7], the rights

- **Retain** - to make, own, and control copies of the content
- **Reuse** - to use the content in a wide range of ways
- **Revise** - to adapt, adjust, modify, or alter the content itself
- **Remix** - to combine the original or revised content with other open content to create something new
- **Redistribute** - to share copies of the original content, your revisions, or your remixes with others

[7] For which, see his 5Rs of Open and The Access Compromise and the 5th R, both released under CC BY 4.0

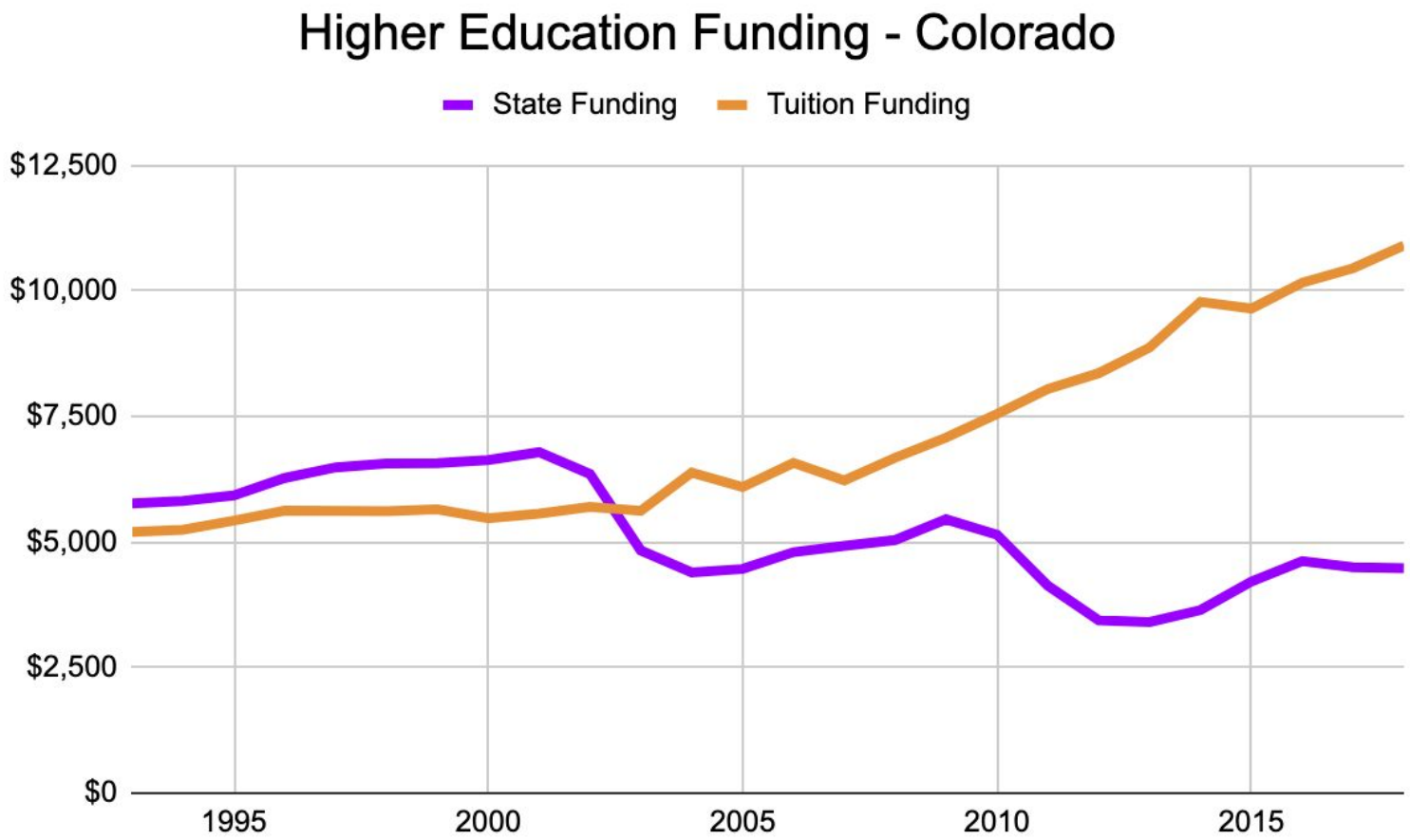
Impediments to student autonomy and agency ()

[Note this is a **before covid-19** discussion!]

- Well, *drill-and-kill classes* themselves.
- Standardized testing, standardized educational resources.
- Course material and approach which hasn't changed in decades (centuries?).
- Lack of student engagement.
- Culturally insensitive teaching.
- The so-called "achievement gap" between student populations that are traditionally under-represented in higher education and other students.

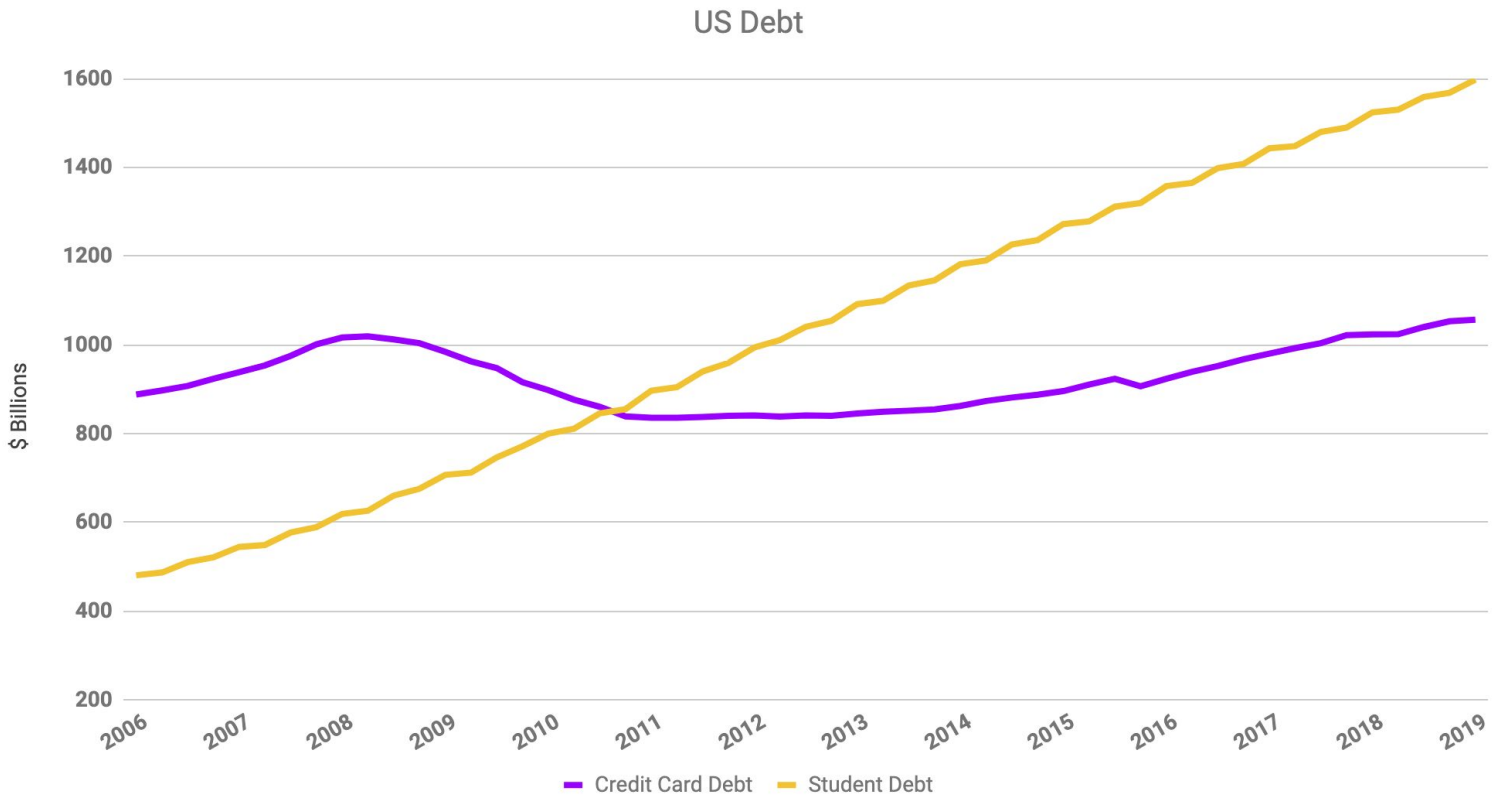
Impediments to student autonomy and agency ($) 1

We're probably all aware that public higher education doesn't exist any more in the US: [data from State Higher Education Executive Officers Association]



Impediments to student autonomy and agency ($) 2

With the well-known consequence for total student debt in the US



Federal Reserve http://www.federalreserve.gov/releases/g19/Current/

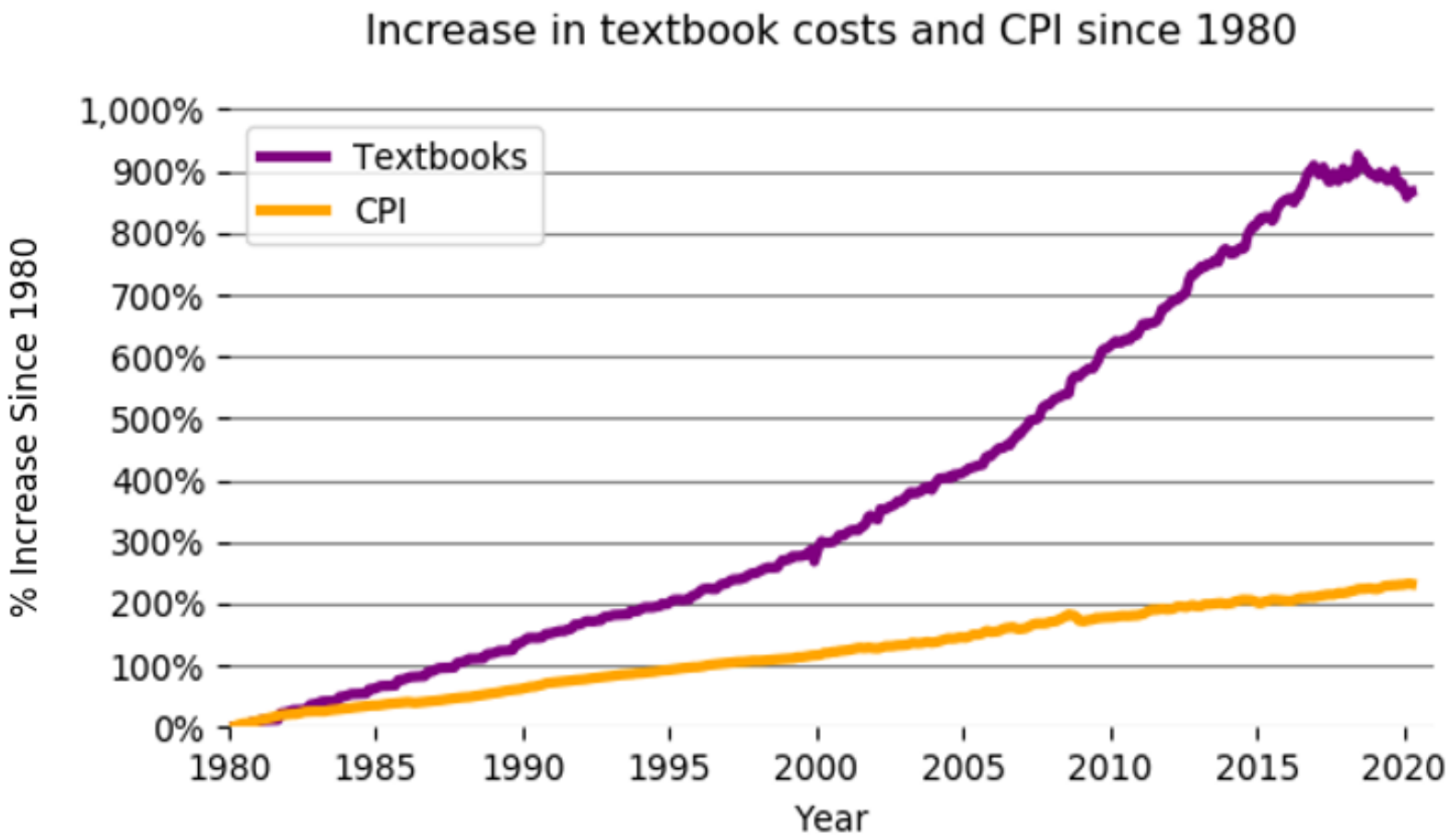
"...like marshmallows."

As I said in a piece, I wrote in Inside Higher Ed on 27 February 2019:

> *"Total student debt in the United States stands at approximately $1.5 trillion - yes, trillion, with a T. It increased by approximately $37 billion in the third quarter of 2018: that's a quarterly increase by about the endowment of Harvard University or, annualized, by more than the GDP of three-quarters of the nations on Earth.*
>
> *Public institutions of higher education in a majority of U.S. states are funded more often much more by tuition than by state support, calling into question the adjective public in that traditional terminology.*
>
> *... It's not so much that as a society we are eating our seed corn with this treatment of the next generation, it is more that we have set the global climate on fire, skewered our children on pointy sticks and are roasting them like marshmallows."*

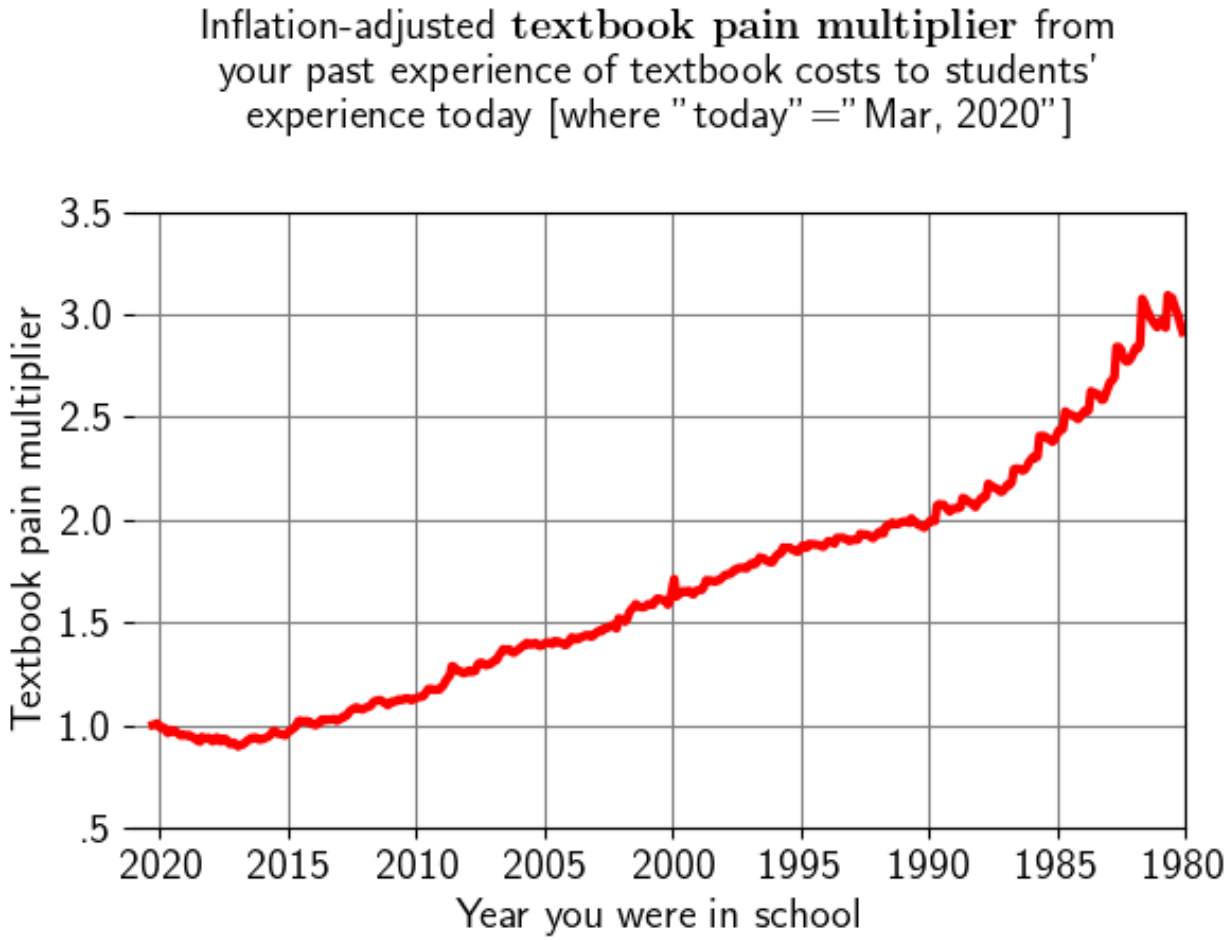
Textbooks, in particular

As everyone in this group surely knows, textbooks are a surprisingly large part of the financial burden on students today:



Textbooks pain multiplier

I like to point out how this means that many educators' intuition about textbook costs, particularly if they have some grey hair like me, is quite wrong:



But it gets worse

The #RealCollege Survey found[8] in 2019 that for students in higher education in the United States

- 39% were food insecure in the 30 days before taking the survey,
- 46% were housing insecure in the last year, and
- 17% were homeless at some point in that year.

Now ask yourself: if you were a student in debt, [sometimes or often] hungry, and concerned about keeping a roof over your head ... where would your economic priorities be?

And for a faculty member who teaches a large class with 100 students, around 17 of them have recently been homeless; if the class 25 students, around four were homeless.

[8] *#RealCollege 2020: Five Years of Evidence on campus Basic Needs Insecurity*, Baker-Smith, Coca, Goldrick-Rab, Looker, Richardson, Wilson, 2020, on the web here.

What do students do?

We know what students do in response to these economic pressures:

- First of all, while CNCC estimates[9] that students should spend in the range $900–$1,800 per year on books and supplies, students[10] actually spend around $415.
- They buy an older edition of the textbook.
- They delay purchasing the textbook.
- They never purchase the textbook.
- They share the book with other students.
- They take fewer courses to save on textbook costs.
- They choose which course to take based on the price of its required textbook.
- They download pirate copies of the textbook from the Internet.

[9] on your "Tuition and Costs" web page

[10] in a national survey, averaged

Briefly, **after covid-19**

Students are now under far, far higher financial pressures. To the extent that they are able to continue in school, they will have far less money available to purchase expensive textbooks.

Additionally, many of the coping mechanisms we know they use – sharing a book is very common, getting a book from the library when they are on campus, *etc.* – are now impossible.

I hypothesize that a large but hard to measure part of the fall in academic success which probably happened this spring semester is due to the fact that all of those students could no longer come to campus to get access to course textbooks in the above ways... so they were put under all of the current stresses while trying to continue their courses (those who did try) *but without their course textbook(s)!*

Last financial argument: think about the ADA

We've seen that you have students in your classes who are or have recently been homeless. We're now going into another Great Recession/Depression. Even if you can find a very cheap textbook, some students will be unable to afford it while putting a roof over their heads or food on their tables.

You might say that such desperately poor students are only a handful, and why should the large majority of other students suffer a sub-optimal textbook just to save the small minority?

But if you had only one blind or deaf student in your class, you would find a way to make accommodations – if not, you would be in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act! There is no group of disabled students that is small enough that you are permitted to let slip through the cracks.

Why then do we permit **any** financially disadvantaged students to miss their chance at success? If the free books you find are not quite as good, surely we can compensate by the excellence of our teaching, and so loose no students at all between these financial cracks?

OER *vs* ZTC

I hope you've been persuaded by the economic arguments. You might then ask if the only important thing about OER is their cost – typically, **$0**.

If cost were the primary driver in this movement, then we should probably be talking about "**Zero Textbook Cost** [**ZTC**] courses," rather than "courses which use OER." ZTC courses can use expensive (to the library) materials which are free (to the students).

This can be a particularly attractive perspective for funding entities such as legislatures, because they are often concentrated on the *return on investment* for their dollars spent, which is measured by total amount students save – *i.e.*, it only cares about cost.

In Colorado, for example, public institutions of higher ed are currently competing to meet the Governor's ZTC Challenge incentivizing a range of activity from ZTC degree pathways to *Z-Professors* who use only free textbooks in their classes.

Open Pedagogy, or OER-Enabled Pedagogy, or...

On the other hand, the pedagogical academic freedom which OER provides has lead to various approaches to pedagogy which are called *open pedagogy*, *OER-enable pedagogy*, *critical digital pedagogy*, *etc.* Some of the brilliant folks working in this area include Maha Bali, Robin DeRosa, Rajiv Jhangiani, Sean Michael Morris, and Jesse Stommel; see also The Open Pedagogy Notebook. *E.g.,* some of these authors talk about

disposable assignments: assignments that support an individual student's learning but add no other value to the world *and*

renewable assignments: assignments that both support individual student learning and add value to the broader world. With renewable assignments, learners are asked to create and openly license valuable artifacts that, in addition to supporting their own learning, will be useful to other learners both inside and outside the classroom.

[Although I confess I'm not sure I dislike "disposable assignments" as much as the name implies I should....]

Open Pedagogy's **5Rs**

Rajiv Jhangiani's blog post 5Rs for Open Pedagogy[11] gives a new set of **Rs** expressing the ideals that underpin his view of open pedagogy:

- **Respect** for the agency of students and creators including whether they wish to perform public scholarship or not
- **Reciprocate** by not just drawing on but also contributing back to the commons, by sharing resources, practices, and ideas
- **Risk** is ever present with open pedagogy
- **Reach** involves having an impact that extends well beyond the classroom, a course, or a semestern objectives.
- **Resist** against forces that conspire to pit increasingly precarious faculty against increasingly precarious students. Resist against the commodification of learning. Resist against the neoliberal university.

[11] which he released under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

The Practice of Freedom

Using OER sits in the eye of this storm.

Designers and instructors have the academic freedom to build customized, engaging courses out of remixes of OER.

Students see the benefits of those more engaging courses, and of the ($0!) price tag.

The results **enhance equity**!

University of Georgia

Change from non-OER to OER

	Δ Grade	Δ DFW
Non-Pell eligible students	+7.4%	-2.05%
Pell eligible students	+12.3%	-4.43%
All Students	+8.6%	-2.68%

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[12] Colvard, N., Watson, C., Park, H. (2018, July) **The Impact of Open Educational Resources on Various Student Success Metrics**. Retrieved from www.isetl.org/ijtlhe/pdf/IJTLHE3386.pdf

Questions, Comments, and Contact Info

Questions? Comments?

Email (feel free!): jonathan@poritz.net ; Tweety-bird: @poritzj .

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Also, tons of useful stuff at the OER site of the Colorado Department of Higher Education masterplan.highered.colorado.gov/oer-in-colorado/ .

[13] subject to CC-BY-SA