



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on December 8, 2011

Harvard Professor Calls OWS Protesters “Inchoate”

His biggest disappointment, he said, was “at how poorly informed the ... protesters seemed to be. As with much of the Occupy movement across the country, their complaints seemed to me to be a grab bag of anti-establishment platitudes without much hard-headed analysis or clear policy prescriptions.” He allowed that perhaps the protesters “were motivated by an *inchoate* feeling that standard economic theory is inherently slanted.” (Emphasis added.)



“Inchoate” is defined as “imperfectly formed or formulated.” And indeed that is the proper descriptor of the Occupy Wall Street movement. From its [de facto website](#) one learns such “anti-establishment platitudes” as

OWS is fighting back against the corrosive power of major banks and multinational corporations over the democratic process, and the role of Wall Street in creating an economic collapse that has caused the greatest recession in generations.... [OWS] aims to fight back against the richest 1% of people that [sic] are writing the rules of an unfair global economy that is foreclosing on our future.

Inchoate, indeed. Cornel West, the liberal Princeton professor and supporter of OWS, couldn’t determine exactly what it stands for, calling it a “democratic awakening” that couldn’t be “translated” into “one demand or two demands.” *Financial Times* [couldn’t find](#) a unified aim for the movement either, while Bloomberg BusinessWeek said that the protesters want more and better jobs, more equal distribution of income (socialism), bank reforms, and (once again) a reduction of the influence of corporations on politics.

Even [the best description](#) that Adbusters, the founder of the OWS movement, could come up with was “to protest corporate influence on democracy [sic]” and “the main thing we want to see is for people to be in control of their government, not corporations.”

Mankiw said, “I don’t view the study of economics as laden with ideology. Most of us agree with Keynes who said: ‘The theory of economics does not furnish a body of settled conclusions.... It is a method rather than a doctrine.’” He added, “The recent financial crisis, economic downturn and meager recovery are vivid reminders that we still have much to learn.... A prerequisite for being a good economist is an ample dose of humility.”

Perhaps that is what Mankiw’s students need. As [Dr. Kenneth McFarland](#) said, “There is no arrogance more vicious than the arrogance of ignorance.” Some observers say that it appears that all that happened in professor Mankiw’s class was a temper tantrum by intemperate, ignorant, and immature young people who have been educated beyond their intellect.



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Photo: Professor Greg Mankiw



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