



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on May 13, 2021

New Educational Startup Promises Non-“woke” Instruction

An online education startup is challenging the “wokeness” of liberal academia, and if the number of scholars applying to teach non-“woke” courses is any indication, it appears to be off to a great start. As the “woke” narrative has taken over more and more of academia, the classical liberal instruction promised by this program serves as a refreshing alternative.

As the *Epoch Times* [reports](#), the project — named “[American Scholars](#)” — was started several months ago by Matthew Pohl, former University of Pennsylvania admissions officer. As the report states:



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Pohl described the project as the fruit of his gradual disillusionment with his career in the academic world, where he drove admissions at several prestigious universities. He noticed that with regard to education, most students weren’t getting their money’s worth, attributing that to the “administrative bloat” of establishment colleges, as well as the spread of quasi-Marxist ideologies that have come to be collectively known as “wokeness.”

Pohl told the *Epoch Times*, “There is a massive and unrecognized demand for actual professors, business leaders, real thinkers whom regular people can associate with and learn from to better understand how they can live better lives through the Constitution and through conservative values.” Pohl added that the guiding principles of the project could be more accurately described as “classical liberalism.”

That American Scholars does not describe its courses as “conservative” — a word that for the past generation has seemed to lack any real definition — appears to be helpful in attracting a wider group of both teachers and students. And that seems to be by design. “We actually expect a significant number of people who do not identify as conservative to join us — simply because they agree with our values,” Pohl told the *Epoch Times* in an e-mail.

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For instance, Michael Rectenwald, a retired liberal studies professor at New York University — who left that position after abandoning his communist beliefs and speaking out against the ideology of “wokeness” — has taken the role of chief academic officer for American Scholars. In between working for New York University and coming on board with American Scholars, Rectenwald wrote several books on [corporate socialism](#).

As the *Epoch Times* reports:

[Rectenwald has] already received applications from several hundred scholars, including



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some prominent names, from which he'll be soon picking the first 10 instructors.

"We even have chairs of departments interested in working for us," he said.

Given that academia has been known for pressuring instructors to teach various elements of extreme Leftist ideology — something Rectenwald knows first-hand — he said he has his own list of "top-notch talent" from he will be recruiting, telling the *Epoch Times*, "It's going to be something where they're able to deliver content in the way they want to, without the pressures that are being exerted on them in the university system to accommodate various ideologies like critical race theory and socialism and postmodernism and so forth." He said that those ideas will be addressed in courses, but will be treated critically.

Courses offered as part of the program will include history, the Constitution, the natural sciences, math, writing, business, economics and personal finance, ideological studies, literature, technology science, law, and religious studies.

To offer a quality education suited for homeschoolers and college prep, as well as adult learning, American Scholars will use an interactive format of part-lecture, part-documentary video with quizzes and feedback sessions. And the project aims to do all of that for a fraction of the costs usually associated with education. Pohl told the *Epoch Times* that he plans a subscription model starting at \$19 a month and scaling up to about \$39 a month for premium access.

The first courses — starting in the fall — will focus on history, the Constitution, economics, and personal finance, Rectenwald said.



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