

Liberal Arts Institutions in Europe

*CHEA International Seminar
Washington DC, 25 January 2012*

Liberal Arts and the origin of the European University

The Seven Liberal Arts

The *Trivium*

literary arts: grammar, logic, and rethoric

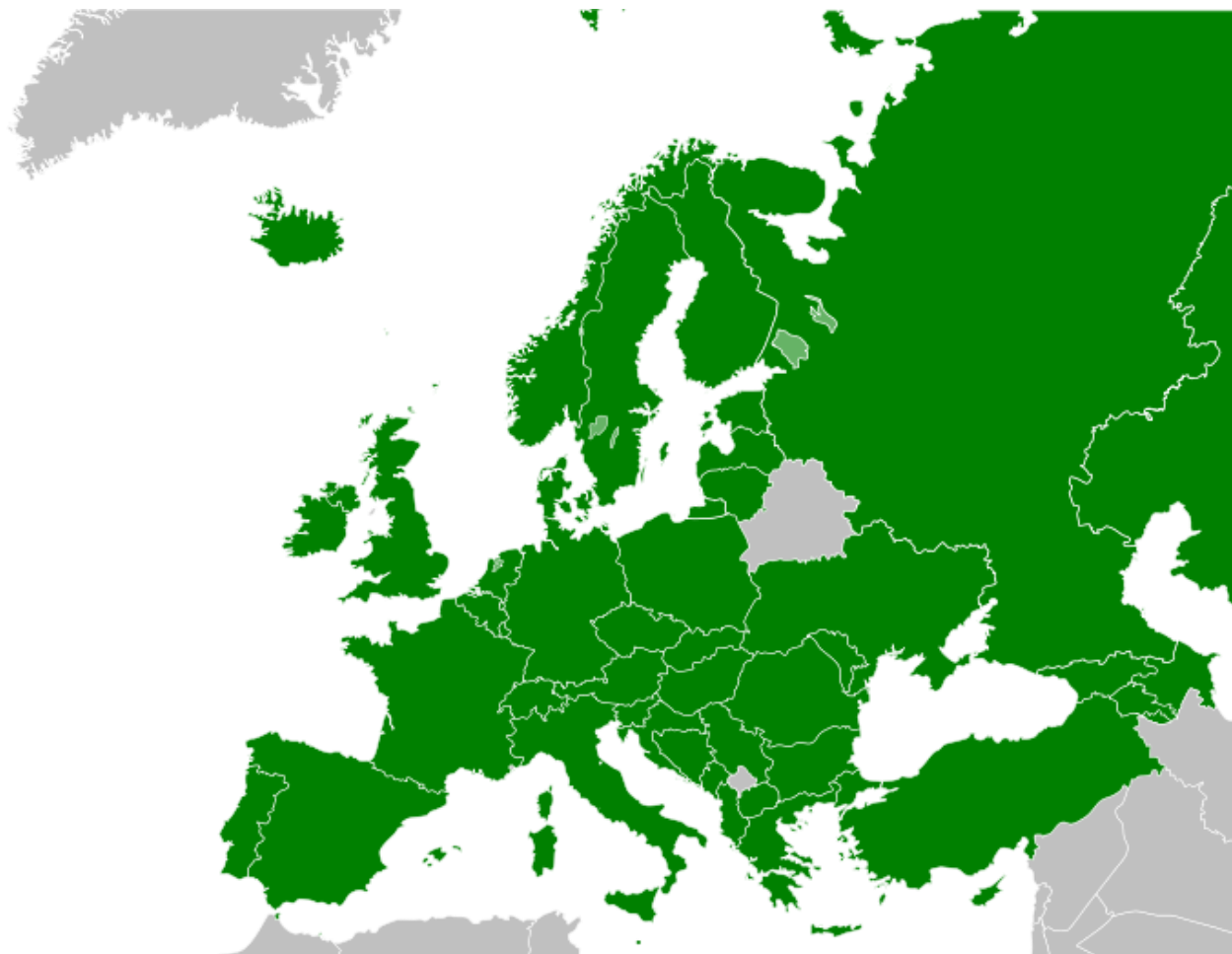
The *Quadrivium*

mathematical arts: arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy



The Atheneum Illustre (1632)
Predecessor of the University of Amsterdam

The “Bologna Zone” or European Higher Education Area



Why Did Liberal Arts (almost) disappear in Europe?

Liberal arts beyond humanism and enlightenment.....

19th century influences:

- **Napoleon**
- **Von Humboldt**
 - **Dominance of professions and disciplines: early and over-specialisation**

20th century trends:

- **Massification**
- **Democratisation**
 - **Egalitarianism & lack of differentiation**
- **Dominance of public government & funding:**
 - **Over-regulation and a weak private sector**

Mapping the emergence of Liberal Arts Colleges Across Europe

Year of establishment	Institution	USA affiliated	Europe affiliated	Private
1886	American College of Thessaloniki	X		X
1923	American College of Greece	X		X
1962	American University of Paris	X		X
1969	American University of Rome	X		X
1969	Franklin College, Switzerland	X		X
1972	Richmond, The American International University in London	X		X
1972	John Cabot University. An American university in Rome	X	X	X
1988	Vesalius College (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) (Belgium)			X
1991	American University in Bulgaria	X		X
1991	Central European University	X		X
1992	Collegium Artes Liberales (Interdisciplinary Studies Institute at the University of Warsaw) (Poland)		X	
1998	Gotland University (Visby, Sweden)		X	
1998	University College Utrecht (Utrecht University, the Netherlands)		X	
1999	Smolny College (St. Petersburg) (Joint degree programme of Bard College (USA) and Saint Petersburg State University) (Russia).	X		
1999	European College of Liberal Arts (Berlin)	X	X	X
1999	Jacobs University Bremen (Germany)	X	X	X
2000	Liberal arts degree at St Mary's University College, Belfast (UK)		X	
2002	University College Maastricht (Maastricht University, the Netherlands)		X	
2004	Roosevelt Academy (Utrecht University, the Netherlands)		X	
2004 – 2006	Liberal arts programs at the University of Amsterdam, Tilburg University and Utrecht University's main campus (the Netherlands)		X	
2006	BISLA, Bratislava (Slovakia)	X	X	X
	Faculty of Liberal Arts, Charles University (Prague, Czech Republic)		X	
2007	Academia Vitae, Deventer (the Netherlands)			X
2009	Amsterdam University College (joint degree program of VU University Amsterdam & University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands)		X	
2010	Leiden University College (Leiden University, the Hague Campus, the Netherlands)			
2010	Liberal arts program at Winchester University (UK)			
2011	Liberal arts program at University College London (UK)			
2011/12	Liberal arts program at Freiburg University			

Similarities and differences between the US and the European model(s)



Similarities

- **Range of profiles, with a rather frequent focus on the humanities and the social sciences, but also some with an emphasis on the sciences or even an exclusive science and engineering profile.**
- **Majority focuses exclusively on undergraduate education.**
- **Both the models of a separate, usually residential college (although these are in many cases associated with a larger university) and that of a college or degree program integrated within a larger university can be found.**
- **Liberal arts education in Europe is taught in English.**

Similarities and differences between the US and the European model(s)



Differences

- **In the USA a college degree takes four years. The European liberal arts degree usually takes three years (although the American (accredited) colleges & universities in Europe also offer 4 years bachelor degrees).**
- **Liberal arts colleges and programs in Europe are usually not accredited under a specific framework and are not compared with each other in any sort of league table, such as the Liberal Arts Colleges Rankings in the USA.**
- **In the USA private liberal arts colleges outnumber public institutions. In Europe the majority of European liberal arts colleges are public.**
- **The liberal arts sector is (still) significantly smaller in Europe than in the USA.**
- **Uneven geographical spread: the majority of initiatives seem to be concentrated in the north-western part of Europe (notably in the Netherlands and the UK) and in Central and Eastern Europe.**

Explaining the (re-)emergence of liberal arts in Europe

"Uniformity in provision and a lack of differentiation due to a tendency to egalitarianism and to over-regulation" (EC, 2003)

A response to the need to differentiate the massified and (overly) egalitarian European HE systems:

1. Quest for broader bachelor programs

- **overcome the disadvantages of early and over-specialisation**
- **enhance learning effectiveness**
- **generate graduates with skills relevant for the knowledge economy**

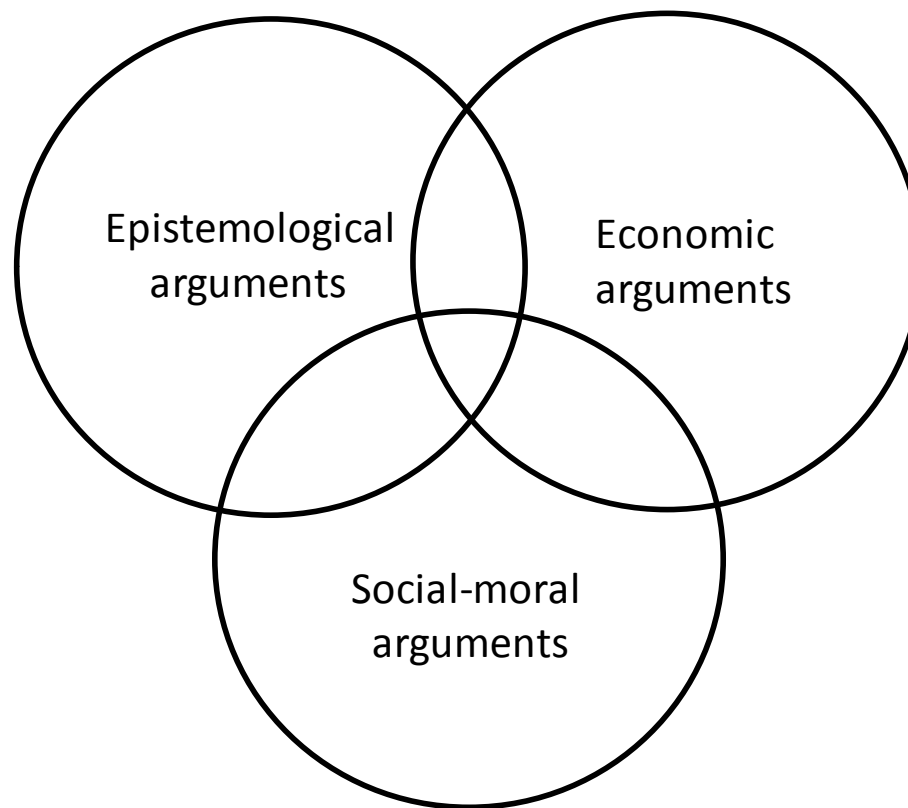
2. The search for elite education:

- **establish more selective branches of higher education focusing explicitly on excellence.**

Facilitated by the implementation of the Bologna Process

- **Recognizing the bachelor (undergraduate) as a phase in its own right**

Defining global excellence: the drivers for liberal arts education in the 21st century



Defining global excellence: the drivers for liberal arts education in the 21st century

Interdisciplinarity and the role of disciplines

- Real-life situations, broad themes and “big questions” motivates learning
- The need for rigorous teaching of the disciplines
- The role of the humanities and the sciences

Generic skills and the specificity of regional contexts

- 21st century skills: creativity and innovation, critical thinking, problem solving,, communication, collaboration, information, IT, and media literacy, social and cross-cultural skills, leadership and responsibility

Citizenship and the need for a truly global perspective

- Democratic citizenship
- Global citizenship

The Dutch Context: Liberal Arts as an Approach to Excellence

Greatest number of LAS initiatives (5 UCs; more to follow)

OECD (2008): *"Dutch higher education demonstrates an insufficient level of differentiation, excellence is underrepresented, the international dimension should be enhanced, and too-early specialization should be avoided"*.

Excellence initiatives

- **Bottom-up institution-driven innovations (honours programmes and "university colleges")**
- **Formalized experiments**
- **National Programme for Excellence in HE (targeted funding)**
- **Adjustment of legislation (special status for UCs)**
- **Government push for further differentiation of HE**

Trends in secondary education: bi-lingual education, growth of IBs & EBs, re-valuing of elite tracks



Amsterdam University College

Excellence and Diversity in a Global City

Vision

"We decided to establish AUC because the leaders of the future will have to be successful in working together across the boundaries of nationalities, cultures and disciplines.

They will have to perform on an international competitive level in scientific, corporate and public service sectors.

The global city of Amsterdam with its two major research universities is the perfect context where excellence and diversity can meet very naturally."

Rene Smit (President of the VU University Amsterdam)

Lodewijk Asscher (Alderman of Finance, Youth Affairs and Education)

Karel van der Toorn (President of the University of Amsterdam)



AUC SF Sponsors meeting
September 2009

"The AUC initiative is both useful and necessary as it accommodates the needs of a talented student group with an interest in a broad university education".

***Alexander Rinnooy Kan
President of the Socio-Economic Council
of the Netherlands***



Press Conference, 2008

Mission

Two major research universities have joined forces to create a liberal arts and sciences undergraduate experience in Amsterdam that demands **excellence** from its students, preparing them for high-level performance in a 21st century knowledge economy that is fuelled by innovation, and equipping them for today's **globally** engaged and culturally **diverse** society.



Grand Opening September 2009

AUC and the Sciences

“Many of our students will later be in a position to make important decisions, whether in business, government, policy, or academia. The **scientific way of thinking** and approaching life could be valuable if not crucial for their success”.

Professor Robbert Dijkgraaf, KNAW President, was the chief scientific advisor on the development of AUC's curriculum. He teaches AUC's Special Seminar Series on Climate for Science.

Profile

Selective honours college

Liberal arts & sciences bachelor

Taught in English

Small class size

Residential

Community outreach

Joint degree from two major research universities



International campus

Interdisciplinarity

Scientific reasoning

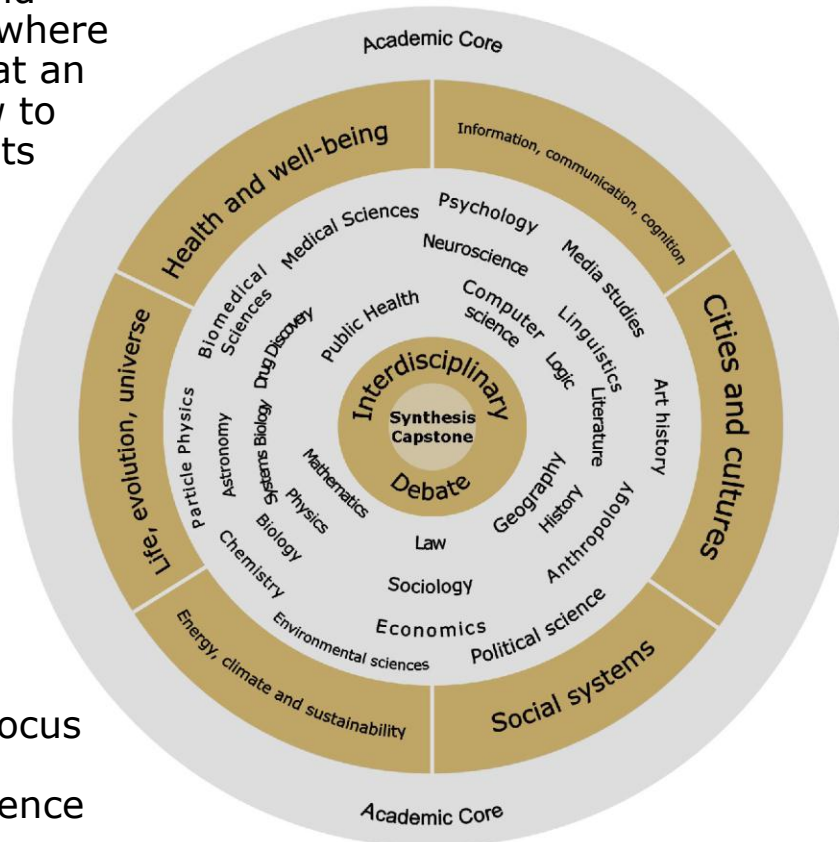
Global knowledge, international competence

Civic knowledge and community engagement

Inquiry and project-based learning

AUC's Curriculum Circle

The curriculum is organised around broad themes, where students learn at an early stage how to integrate insights from various disciplines.



At the same time, students achieve depth of knowledge in their chosen major(s), allowing them to participate meaningfully in the interdisciplinary debate.

These themes focus on far-reaching questions in science and society.

Towards the end of their studies, they bring their knowledge and expertise together in a capstone project.

Principles of Excellence in Teaching and Learning

- A reciprocal commitment to demanding academic standards and engagement on the side of the teacher and the student.
- Students take ownership of their learning process: prepare, participate, interact, and engage in self-reflection.
- Students are encouraged to learn more than expected, think critically, and make connections with what is going on in science and society.
- The teacher is an inspiring source of knowledge and provides guidance to learning.
- The student needs knowledge, to develop understanding, to analyse, and before being able to critically discuss a subject.
- While focusing on core concepts in their course, teachers relate course subjects to other fields and disciplines.
- The teacher varies the forms of class activities and evaluation.

Excellence and Diversity in a Global City

Facts:

- **50% international students / 15% non-western minority**
- **Selectivity rate: 25% (out of 15% of the age group)**
- **Retention: > 90% / full credit load earned by 95%**
- **65% faculty with international background**
- **30% PhD from top-100 university (Shanghai)**
- **Average teacher / course quality: 4.2 (/5)**
- **Study abroad: 30-35%**
- **Scholarship students: 15%**
- **94% students find general climate at AUC tolerant of diversity**
- **85 - 90% of the students report positive feeling of belonging**
- **80% master between two to four languages (62% at least two at the level to study; 34% three or more).**

International exchange

35% of students study abroad for a semester (class of 2012)

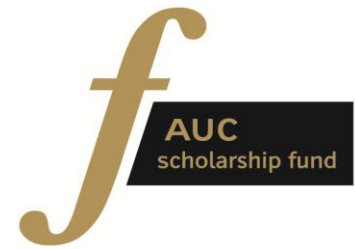
Students value AUC's strong international focus and the ability to provide students with more international opportunities.



Hanh Nguyen (class of 2012) at Boston College, USA



AUC Scholarship Fund 2012-2015



References

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www.auc.nl