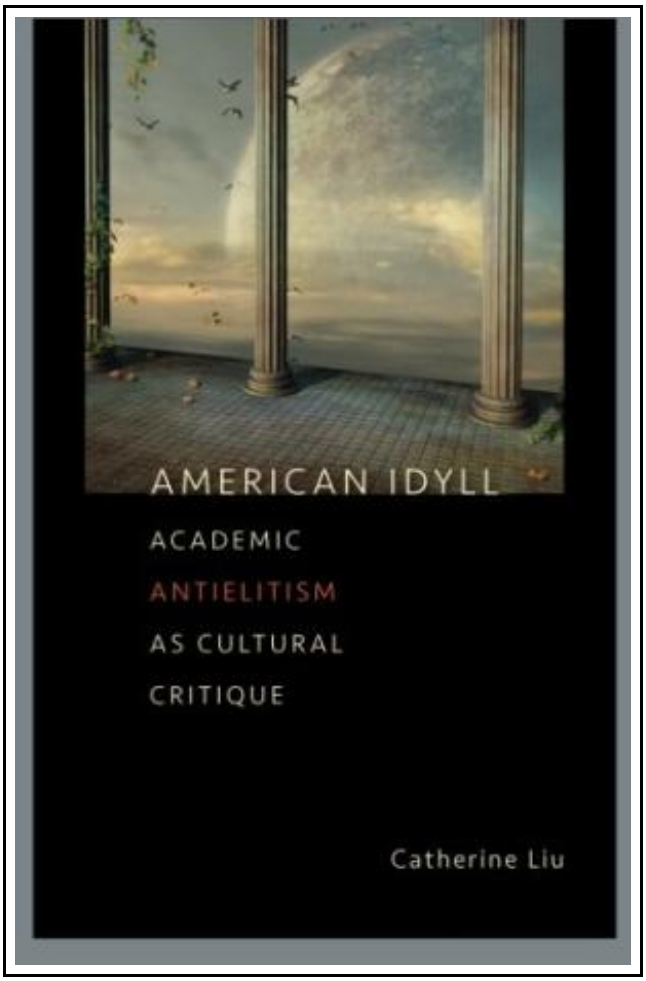
American Idyll: Academic Antielitism as Cultural Critique



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AMERICAN IDYLL: ACADEMIC ANTIELITISM AS CULTURAL CRITIQUE

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University of Iowa Press. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, American Idyll: Academic Antielitism as Cultural Critique, University of Iowa Press, Catherine Liu, A trenchant critique of failure and opportunism across the political spectrum, "American Idyll" argues that social mobility, once a revered hallmark of American society, has ebbed, as higher education has become a mechanistic process for efficient sorting that has more to do with class formation than anything else. Academic freedom and aesthetic education are reserved for high-scoring, privileged students and vocational education is the only option for economically marginal ones.Throughout most of American history, antielitist sentiment was reserved for attacks against an entrenched aristocracy or rapacious plutocracy, but it has now become a revolt against meritocracy itself, directed against what insurgents see as a ruling class of credentialed elites with degrees from exclusive academic institutions. Catherine Liu reveals that, within the academy and stemming from the relatively new discipline of cultural studies, animosity against expertise has animated much of the Left s cultural criticism.By unpacking the disciplinary formation and academic ambitions of American cultural studies, Liu uncovers the genealogy of the current antielitism, placing the populism that dominates headlines within a broad historical context. In the process, she emphasizes the relevance of the historical origins of populist revolt against finance capital and its political influence. "American Idyll" reveals the unlikely alliance between American pragmatism and proponents of the Frankfurt School and argues for the importance of broad frames of historical thinking in encouraging robust academic debate within democratic institutions. In a bold thought experiment that revives and defends Richard Hofstadter s theories of anti-intellectualism in American life, Liu asks, "What if cultural populism had been the consensus politics of the past three decades?""American Idyll" shows that recent antielitism does nothing to redress the source of its discontent...

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