



# Reimagining Popular Notions of American Intellectualism: Literacy, Education, and Class

*Kelly Susan Bradbury*

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The image of the lazy, media-obsessed American, preoccupied with vanity and consumerism, permeates popular culture and fuels critiques of American education. In *Reimagining Popular Notions of American Intellectualism*, Kelly Susan Bradbury challenges this image by examining and reimagining widespread conceptions of intellectualism that assume intellectual activity is situated solely in elite institutions of higher education.

Bradbury begins by tracing the origins and evolution of the narrow views of intellectualism that are common in the United States today. Then, applying a more inclusive and egalitarian definition of intellectualism, she examines the literacy and learning practices of three nonelite sites of adult public education in the United States: the nineteenth-century lyceum, a twentieth-century labor college, and a twenty-first-century GED writing workshop. Bradbury argues that together these three case studies teach us much about literacy, learning, and intellectualism in the United States over time and place. She concludes the book with a reflection on her own efforts to aid students in recognizing and resisting the rhetoric of anti-intellectualism that surrounds them and that influences their attitudes and actions.

Drawing on case studies as well as Bradbury's own experiences with students, *Reimagining Popular Notions of American Intellectualism* demonstrates that Americans have engaged and do engage in the process and exercise of intellectual inquiry, contrary to what many people believe. Addressing a topic often overlooked by rhetoric, composition, and literacy studies scholars, it offers methods for helping students reimagine what it means to be intellectual in the twenty-first century.

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