



**Higher Education in the UK and the USA since Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan:
Converging Models?**

<http://www.univ-paris3.fr/conf-higher-ed>

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The Moral Projects of Neoliberalism and Higher Education Reform in the US and the UK

Abstract:

If one of the ultimate goals of neoliberalism was to “change the soul,” as Margaret Thatcher famously put it, higher education reform has become one of the means through which this change has been orchestrated both in the UK and the US. Over the last few decades both systems have seen substantial changes to their autonomy and social role through the introduction of a variety of new practices, such as knowledge transfer systems, devolved budgeting arrangements, research assessments, new public management, an increase in user fees and student loans and the introduction of new accountability agencies and mechanisms. This paper links the changes occurring in higher education in both countries to neoliberal forms of governmentality and political efforts to generate a new moral order. The first part of the paper traces the recent history of higher education reform efforts in both countries and links them with specific neoliberal national and transnational knowledge society policies. The second part of the paper examines how these reform efforts are connected to the larger neoliberal political agenda of “decollectivizing” society and generating a new social arrangement built on markets, individualism, contractualism and consumerism.