



# In Pursuit of Knowledge: Scholars, Status, and Academic Culture (Stanford Law Books)

*Deborah Rhode*

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Although academics have never lacked for critics, publications on the profession tend to be either popularized polemics, which are engaging but misleading, or scholarly analyses, which are intellectually responsible but of little interest to anyone but specialists. *In Pursuit of Knowledge* offers an alternative: a unique portrait of academic life that should appeal to both experts and a general audience.

Drawing on a wide range of disciplines, including higher education, history, law, sociology, economics, and literature, the book focuses on the ways in which the pursuit of status has undermined the pursuit of knowledge. Deborah Rhode argues that both individual scholars and institutions in higher education are caught in an arms race of reputation. The result has been to skew priorities in scholarship, erode commitments to teaching, compromise efforts of public intellectuals, and impede effectiveness in administration.

The book offers several solutions to counter these pervasive problems in our research institutions. Rhode makes a case for increasing accountability and realigning reward systems. She argues that what is needed is a greater sense of responsibility among universities and their faculties to narrow the gap between academic ideals and practices.

*In Pursuit of Knowledge* is meticulously researched and elegantly written. It is also exceptionally entertaining in its use of quotations culled from over a hundred academic novels, including works by Kingsley Amis, Saul Bellow, David Lodge, and C.P. Snow. (For example, from P.G. Wodehouse's *The Girl in Blue*, "The Agee woman told us for three quarters of an hour how she came to write her beastly book, when a simple apology was all that was required.") The result is a highly readable but also deeply reflective analysis of the academic profession.

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