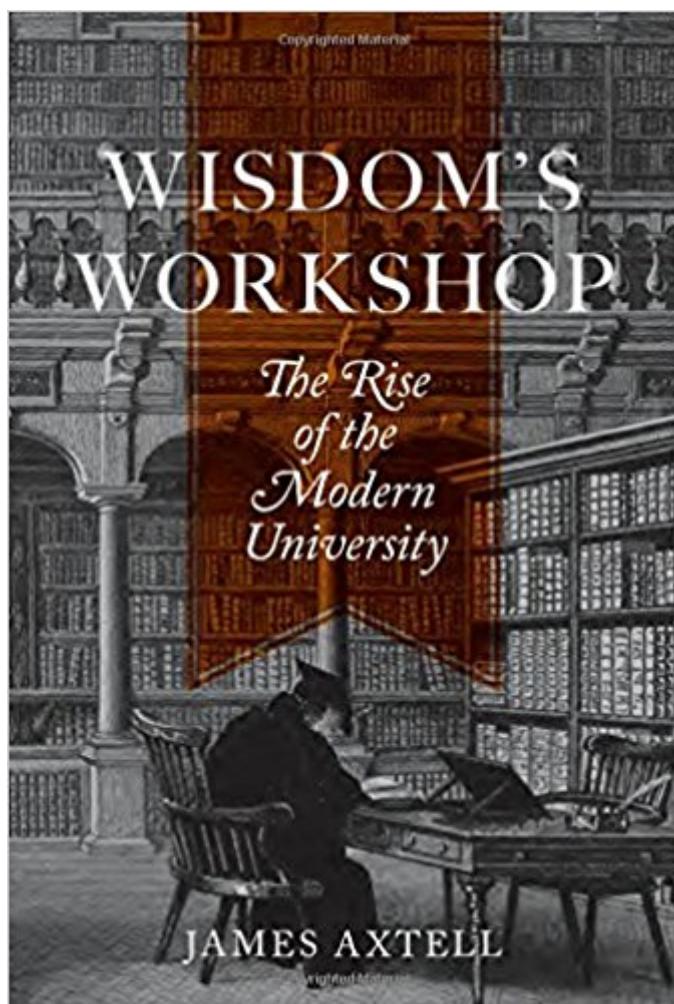


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Wisdom's Workshop: The Rise Of The Modern University



Synopsis

When universities began in the Middle Ages, Pope Gregory IX described them as "wisdom's special workshop." He could not have foreseen how far these institutions would travel and develop. Tracing the eight-hundred-year evolution of the elite research university from its roots in medieval Europe to its remarkable incarnation today, *Wisdom's Workshop* places this durable institution in sweeping historical perspective. In particular, James Axtell focuses on the ways that the best American universities took on Continental influences, developing into the finest expressions of the modern university and enviable models for kindred institutions worldwide. Despite hand-wringing reports to the contrary, the venerable university continues to renew itself, becoming ever more indispensable to society in the United States and beyond. Born in Europe, the university did not mature in America until the late nineteenth century. Once its heirs proliferated from coast to coast, their national role expanded greatly during World War II and the Cold War. Axtell links the legacies of European universities and Tudor-Stuart Oxbridge to nine colonial and hundreds of pre-Civil War colleges, and delves into how U.S. universities were shaped by Americans who studied in German universities and adapted their discoveries to domestic conditions and goals. The graduate school, the PhD, and the research imperative became and remain the hallmarks of the American university system and higher education institutions around the globe. A rich exploration of the historical lineage of today's research universities, *Wisdom's Workshop* explains the reasons for their ascendancy in America and their continued international preeminence.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am on the faculty of the Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh and an emergency physician. Agree with Prof Neuman's assessment in toto. I quite enjoyed the book, but unusually for a history book, wished it were longer. While it covers the antecedents of American research universities in the European university, it totally ignores what spurred the development of European universities in the 1200s. I'm no Islamic scholar, but I've certainly heard of the great universities of al-Andalus, Islamic Spain, in the early Medieval period, and how European scholars studied the works of Avicenna (Ab' 'Al' al-'usayn ibn 'Abd All'h ibn Al-Hasan ibn Ali ibn S'n') and Averroes ('Ab' I-Wal'd Mu'amad Ibn 'A'mad Ibn RuÅjd) before the advent of European universities, and traveled to the great universities as Cordoba and Fez to study. As far as I can tell from the minimal amount I know, both of these were true universities in the modern sense, in that they had separate faculties of theology, arts and sciences, law and medicine, and granted advanced degrees. The one in Fez, originally founded in the 900s, and where Pope Sylvester II was a visiting scholar, is still in operation, and can arguably claim to be the oldest University. (They have just completed a renovation of the library there.) You can argue that the great Islamic empires that included North Africa were heirs to ancient Greece and Rome as much as "Christendom" – they absorbed much of the learning preserved in Constantinople) and passed it on through their universities, "How the Irish Saved Civilization" notwithstanding – and the mixing of Muslim and Christian scholars in places like al-Andalus and Sicily led directly to the founding of European universities 300 years later. Why didn't we hear anything about this?

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