



Join AITU if you want to  
read stuff, write stuff, or make stuff



[bit.ly/AITUreadinggroup](http://bit.ly/AITUreadinggroup)

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critical  
uni  
studies

**WSA**  
Working Students of Aotearoa

**AITU**

# *Spaces of Resistance*

LEARN

ORGANISE

SUPPORT

## *Disorientation?*

Where this University appears as a neutral educational space, Disorientation tears at its apolitical appearance. The conditions of this university are not natural or inevitable, but the result of deliberate political decisions informed by the unrelenting avarice of Capital. As the university champions neoliberal futures, we know that capitalism comes into being “dripping from head to toe, from every pore with blood and dirt”.

In a situation that demands utility from every endeavour, it's important to express that education can still be an end in and of itself. We want to remember that this place is more than an institution. And also, like, in the midst of overwhelming suffering, it's nice to get involved in things with other people.

UoA can be so fucking isolating and it's not at all obvious what's going on upon arriving here. We wanted to put something out there that would serve as an invitation for you to join us or one of the other groups around campus.

*Who's us?*

AITU ('catastrophe') is a community dedicated to the collective study of the horror of capitalism in order to guide our work in social movements. The Anti-Imperialist Theory Unit meets fortnightly on campus to discuss key texts in the decolonial communist tradition.

One day, as we discussed *How Finance Colonised Aotearoa*, our discussion of the colonial architecture remaining at the University of Auckland campus sparked dim memories from the withered elders of the group about the practice of Disorientation.

We thought we might resurrect it.

Along the way, we invited the Critical University Studies Reading Group, Working Students Aotearoa, and Students for Fair Rent to contribute.

In addition to the voices we directly hosted throughout this pamphlet, these here are other groups and resources that stand outside of the usual prescribed modes of engagement within the university, these groups are consciously political and are spaces where alternatives are imagined and enacted. You'll find posters for these groups around campus:

**People Against Prisons Aotearoa (PAPA)**

[papa.org.nz](http://papa.org.nz)

[my.papa.org.nz/auth/discord/join](http://my.papa.org.nz/auth/discord/join)

**Organise Aotearoa (OA)**

[organiseaotearoa.nz](http://organiseaotearoa.nz)

[facebook.com/OrganiseAotearoa](http://facebook.com/OrganiseAotearoa)

**Communist Refoundation Aotearoa (CRA)**

[communist.org.nz/about-us](http://communist.org.nz/about-us)



**Student Justice for Palestine (SJP)**

[linktr.ee/uoasjp](http://linktr.ee/uoasjp)



**Students For Fair Rent (SFR)**

[sfr.org.nz](http://sfr.org.nz)

[facebook.com/studentsforfairrent](http://facebook.com/studentsforfairrent)

**International Socialist Organisation (ISO)**

[contact@iso.org.nz](mailto:contact@iso.org.nz)

[iso.org.nz](http://iso.org.nz)



**Platypus Affiliated Society**

[platypus1917.org/](http://platypus1917.org/)

[linktr.ee/pas1917newzealand](http://linktr.ee/pas1917newzealand)

**Young Workers Resource Centre**

[www.ywrc.org.nz](http://www.ywrc.org.nz)



**Arts Emergency Fund**

[auckland.ac.nz/en/arts/current-students/student-support/foa-student-emergency-fund.html](http://auckland.ac.nz/en/arts/current-students/student-support/foa-student-emergency-fund.html)

# GET ORGANIZED

## Students for Fair Rent

Our mission is to fight for safe, secure, and affordable accommodation for students, and our purpose is to remove barriers to education stemming from the cost of living. Education is not a privilege but a right.

Students for Fair Rent began due to the 8% rent increases that the university has been setting year-on-year. In 2024, first-year students at a catered hall could pay as much as \$540 a week in rent. This figure is absurd when compared to the maximum student allowance of ~\$375.

In August 2023, we began conducting our research by gathering data and stories of the struggles students face with paying their rent. We found that approximately 43% of our respondents work over 10 hours a week to cover their rent. Based on this, we submitted a petition with ~1500 signatures to the university demanding lower rent prices. On the 15th December 2023, we met with university representatives who would not even acknowledge it as a problem. Since then, we've taken more drastic action, like organising a rent strike. The university continues to refuse to work with us.

Our focus now shifts to the government as student accommodation remains completely unregulated. Section 5(1)h of the Residential Tenancies Act 1986 (RTA) excludes student accommodation from the provisions of the legislation. The RTA is not fit-for-purpose for student accommodation, thus we are advocating for greater regulation on accommodation providers.

We aim to reform legislation governing student accommodation. Universities are education institutions, not businesses; students are not customers. Student costs should align with their incomes, student accommodation should be regulated appropriately, and universities should be funded to a level where they can provide the necessary care and attention to student wellbeing.

To learn more about our campaign, visit us on Instagram [@studentsforfairrent](https://www.instagram.com/studentsforfairrent) or at [sfr.org.nz](http://sfr.org.nz)

## Welcome to the ruins of the social democratic university

While our aging left-wing academics yearn for a return to the 'golden era', the reactionary right continues its brutal assault on the working class, unabated by the swings of parliamentary democracy. 40 years deep in this neoliberal nightmare, we cannot expect the university to imagine a future beyond the infinite subsumption of labour under capital.

As the University celebrates its sad, desperate, clawing ascension up the global rankings, we find ourselves in a dire situation.

We work bullshit jobs just to be able to do the work of study. We traverse ever-developed spaces on curated educational journeys. We're barraged with vocational demands and consumptive appeals.

Rent goes up. Transport goes up. Food goes up. Our fees always go up. They call it a cost of living crisis.

But it's not a crisis, because the line must go up.

As the University dismantles the few spaces of sociality we have left, stress overflows in a hellscape of consumerist futurity. The University responds with *well-being weeks* and *state-of-the-art suicide prevention technologies*. This is neoliberalism unfolding as planned, and the university is its beating heart.

Hand in hand with central government, University management has worked to turn UoA into a corporate machine that functions to produce governed citizen-workers, to commodify knowledge, to absolve the state of responsibility for social welfare, and to ensure the accumulation of private property and wealth. In their world, we aren't learners—we're buyers investing in ourselves to become more attractive commodities in the labour market, transmuted into self-regulating, atomised market entities. Their Manichean world, built on a racialised class divide, is split along material/ideological lines and works to uphold the hegemonic power of the bourgeois settler-colonial state.

However, the totalising appearance of capital is not reality. Because amongst the ruins and between ourselves, there is always opportunity for something else.

Under the institution, in the decaying corpse of the commons, there are roots that we might dig out, raise up and cast into the light as something new. What is politics if not the making of new worlds possible?

UNIVERSITY OF  
GAY SHIT

## Student politics

Where the university promotes its collaboration with AUSA and the 'raising of student voices', its antagonistic relationship to student politics is obscured. Stripped of material independence by central government and university management, and having eschewed any semblance of solidarity with its former allies, the AUSA is indiscernible from the university.

**WE ARE THE UNIVERSITY**

But the end of AUSA as a political entity could never mean the end of student politics. While on-campus protests contest the future of tertiary education, student politics always also extends beyond the boundaries of the university.

Through our involvement in wider struggles

we find our strength, making different presents and futures possible.

**ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL**

AUCKLAND STAR  
student protest  
~~Gang rampage at varsity~~

**Join the movement:  
Working Students of Aotearoa**

rend is  
Who are we?

expansion  
plan can  
proceed

Welcome to Working Students of Aotearoa! We're a relatively new 'club' aiming to build collective strength and educate students about their rights as workers. Over the past year, we have grown our presence and have a branch at Victoria University of Wellington.

**What's our goal?**

WSA supports students with student life and workplace struggles by connecting people with unions and engaging with union organising theory and practice. Our mission has since expanded to fill the gap in student politics on campus (see: the empty husk of AUSA). We now organise against the colonial capitalist university to support issues that matter to students. You don't have to be a worker to join us!

**So, what do we do?**

- Educational sessions:** Talks connecting with unions and holding open meetings which answer students' questions.
- Protests & direct action:** We have working groups to support a free Palestine, Living Wage, organising Resident Advisors, and Toitū Te Tiriti within and beyond the university.
- Social events:** The university isolates students through creating an environment that prevents students from building collective movements. So, come to our movie nights and pub visits, and make some friends to go to protests with!

**Want to join?**

University life is rough and filled with unexpected challenges, but it's also a place where you can make lifelong friends and join communities that make real change. We'd like to think we've made one of them.

[link.tree/workingstudents](http://link.tree/workingstudents)



# Critical University Studies Reading Group

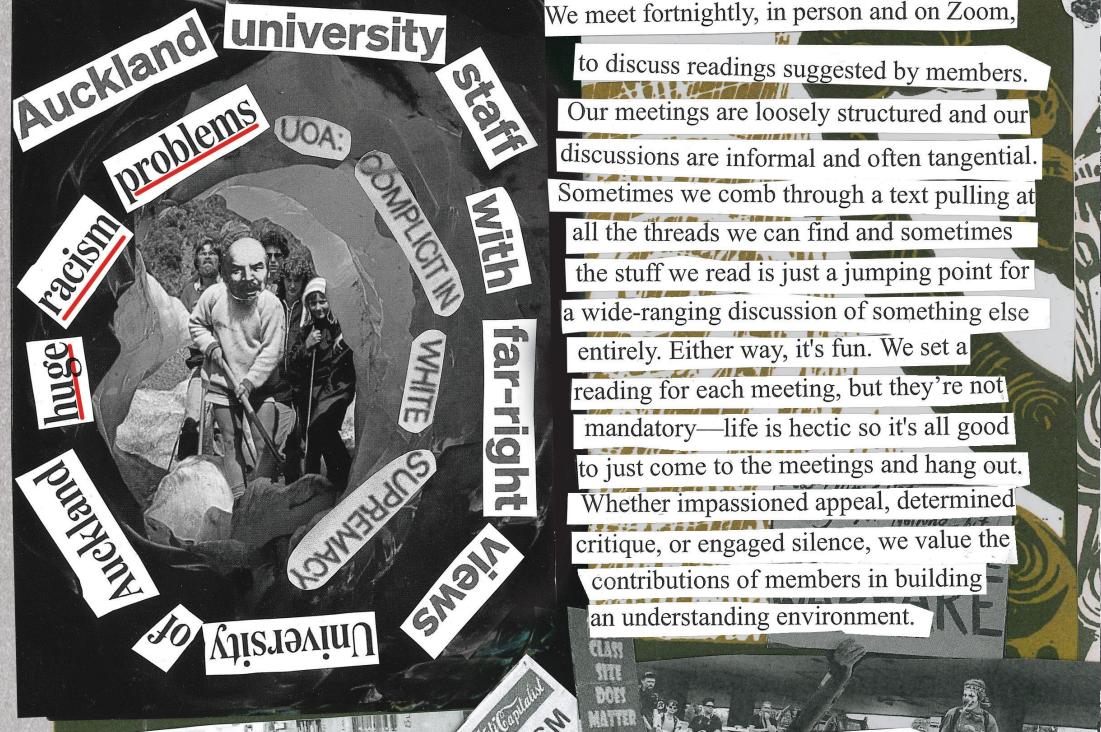
Critical University Studies

The Critical University Studies Reading Group examines the idea of the university in light of its reality, considering alternative ways of education-being, research and social good. Through discussion and the sharing of experiences we support the flourishing of participants, seeking possibilities beyond the lines of the academy. We are an interdisciplinary group across a range of faculties, from the freshest undergraduates to seasoned activists and academics, our focus is on exploring ideas in a supportive environment, where conversation is free to flow beyond the boundaries of any given text.

FEE INCREASES ARE DESTROYING THE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY  
RESIST THE CORPORATISATION OF THE UNIVERSITY.

NIGEL HAYWORTH // CHRIS SHORE  
STAR SHAW // JOE McCORMICK  
EFFE // JOHN MINTON

GAY



Where the university understands us as buyers and sellers of knowledge, we, as a community, understand the university itself, stoking the flame of knowledge warming us all. Come join us and make this space together.

[bit.ly/CritUniStudiesReadingGroup](http://bit.ly/CritUniStudiesReadingGroup)



## History

As the towers of liberal progress climb ever higher, claiming great swathes of our sky, we turn to the earth and dig at their foundations.

The University of Auckland is built on the whenua of Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, on the site of the Albert Barracks military installation. The land here was wrested from Māori control and settled with soldiers to achieve what Marx calls primitive accumulation—to transform the collective property of iwi Māori into the private property of the colonial capitalist class.

As Māori resistance to colonisation was defeated, the University shared in the glut of war spoils, financed by the sale of land stolen by the Crown from Waikato-Tainui, Ngāti Awa, and Ngāpuhi.

Just as Albert Barracks protected paranoid settlers from resistance to colonisation, the University protects paranoid capitalists from ideological resistance. It supports the economic development of the colonial capitalist state, ensures new generations of workers are deradicalised by a heavy debt burden, and disciplines the proletariat by dividing us into 'qualified' and 'unqualified' workers.

