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The New School for Social Research provides an education grounded in history and informed by a legacy of critical thought and civic engagement. The school's dedication to academic freedom and intellectual inquiry reaches back to the university's founding in 1919 as a home for progressive thinkers and the creation of the University in Exile in 1933 for scholars persecuted in Nazi Europe. The interdisciplinary education offered by The New School for Social Research today explores and promotes global peace and justice as more than theoretical ideals.

Liberty and Fear:
Reflections on the New School's
Founding Moments (1919 and
1933) (PDF)
by Ira Katznelson

The New School for Social Research is a second home for students from a variety of geographical, cultural, economic, and political backgrounds. It enrolls more than 1,000 students from all regions of the United States and from more than 70 countries. Here, civic engagement begins in the classroom. Seminar-style classes facilitate mutual respect and intellectual rigor and take advantage of the school's diversity and location in New York City.

The New School
66 West 12th Street
New York, NY 10011

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History

The New School was founded in in New York City 1919 by a distinguished group of American intellectuals. Some of them were teaching at Columbia University during the First World War. When they took a public stand against U.S. entry into the war, they were censured by the Columbia's president. The outspoken professors resigned from Columbia and joined with other progressive educators to create a new model of higher education for adults, a school where ordinary citizens could learn from and exchange ideas freely with scholars and artists representing a wide range of intellectual, aesthetic, and political orientations. The original faculty of The New School for Social Research, as the founders named it, included Charles Beard, Thorstein Veblen, James Harvey Robinson, Wesley Clair Mitchell, and John Dewey. Other brilliant and innovative scholars of the period, including Franz Boas, Harold Laski, Bertrand Russell, Lewis Mumford were associated with The New School for Social Research.

From the beginning, The New School maintained close ties to Europe. Its founders had, in part, modeled the school after the Volkshochschulen for adults established in Germany. Then during the 1920s, Alvin Johnson, The New School's director, became co-editor of the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. While working on this massive undertaking, Johnson collaborated regularly with colleagues in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. It was they who made him aware of the danger the Nazi movement presented to democracy and the civilized world before many in the United States had grasped the seriousness of the situation. In 1933, when Hitler came to power and began to purge Jews and politically hostile elements from German universities, Johnson responded. With the financial support of philanthropist Hiram Halle and the Rockefeller Foundation, he obtained funding to provide a haven in the United States for scholars whose careers (and lives) were threatened by the Nazis. This University in Exile was given a home at

The New School and sponsored more than 180 individuals and their families, providing them with visas and jobs. Some of these refugees remained at The New School for many years and some moved on to other institutions in the United States, but the influx of new people and new ideas had an impact on the U.S. academy far beyond any particular university's or institute.



Alvin Johnson created faculty positions for nine distinguished scholars: five economists (Karl Brandt, Gerhard Colm, Arthur Feiler, Eduard Heimann, and Emil Lederer); two psychologists (Max Wertheimer and Erich von Hornbostel, who was also a leading musicologist); one social policy expert (Frieda Wunderlich); and one sociologist (Hans Speier). A year later, in 1934, the University in Exile received authorization from the Board of Regents of the State of New York to offer master's and doctoral degrees. The New School became a university, and the University in Exile became the Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science.

Other leading figures of Europe's intelligentsia joined the Graduate Faculty, representing the breadth and depth of social sciences and philosophy and further enhancing the reputation of The New School for Social Research. Several members of the Graduate Faculty, including economist Gerhard Colm, political scientist Arnold Brecht, and sociologist Hans Speier, served as policy advisors for the Roosevelt administration during the Second World War.

As a group, they helped to transform the social sciences and philosophy in this country, presenting theoretical and methodological approaches to their fields that had been poorly represented in American universities. When, for example, Max Wertheimer came to the United States and joined the faculty at The New School, he challenged behaviorism, the dominant paradigm in American psychology, with his Gestalt, or cognitive, psychology. Cognitive psychology has become a major subfield in the discipline today. Similarly, the work of Hans Jonas was virtually ignored when the philosopher first came to the Graduate Faculty after the war, but it now frames many of the questions of scholars writing on bioethics and the environment. Hannah Arendt, who came to The New School after the war, had tremendous influence on theoretical and policy debates about revolution, totalitarianism, and democracy. Many other German scholars associated with the Graduate Faculty remain influential today, including philosophers as Alfred Schutz, Leo Strauss, and Aron Gurwitsch, and economist Adolph Lowe, who introduced his critical analysis of classical economic theories and developed his institutional approach to the study of economics at The New School.

The New School also promoted French scholarship in the American intellectual community by giving a home in the early 1940s to the École Libre des Hautes Études. With an official charter from de Gaulle's Free French government-in-exile, the école libre

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attracted refugee scholars including the philosopher Jacques Maritain, anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, linguist Roman Jakobson, and political thinker Henri Bonnet, the father of the European Economic Community. After the war, this institution returned to Paris, where it evolved into the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, which, to this day, maintains close ties to The New School for Social Research. In recent years, several distinguished members of this French institution have come to teach at The New School.

In 2005, acknowledging the name popularly used during its nearly 90 years of existence, the university officially changed its name to The New School, and the division known as the Graduate Faculty claimed the institution's original name, The New School for Social Research.

Today, many decades removed from the world in which The New School for Social Research was founded, we remain true to the ideals that inspired Alvin Johnson and his colleagues to create an academic home that welcomed diversity of ideas and nationalities and beliefs, a "new school" willing to take intellectual and political risks. The New School for Social Research today is one division of a leading urban university that enroll thousands of students in undergraduate and graduate programs in the liberal arts and humanities, social sciences, art and design, management, and the performing arts.

The New School for Social Research currently enrolls more than 1,000 students from all regions of the United States and more than 70 countries. It offers master's and doctoral programs in anthropology, economics, philosophy, political science, psychology, and sociology; and interdisciplinary master's programs in historical studies and liberal studies. The list of recent doctoral degree recipients and their dissertation titles hints at the range and depth of topics studied by at The New School for Social Research.

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