

Education 355X / Sociology 355: Higher Education and Society

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Class Schedule: Thursdays 3:15pm-6:05pm. First class meeting is April 1, 2004.

Location: Higher Ed Conference Room, 5th Floor CERAS 513

Course Units: 3

Overview

This course examines the relationship between higher education and society in the United States from a sociological perspective. It is appropriate for undergraduates and graduate students interested in what colleges and universities do and what society expects of them. The main objectives are: to acquaint students with critical features of U.S. higher education; to increase student's understanding of the nature of reform and conflict in colleges and universities; to examine higher education as a site of processes of education and citizenship in the modern world; and to cultivate critical thinking skills about tensions in the design of higher education systems and organizations. Toward those ends, we focus on a mix of empirical research and conceptual developments through rigorous reading and writing assignments.

The course begins with an introduction to the U.S. system as a whole, its structural characteristics, its dramatic expansion in the second half of the 20th century, and its enormous institutional heterogeneity. As part of this introduction, we examine the social charter between higher education and society, the social charter being the implicit understanding of their respective rights and responsibilities. Among other things, colleges and universities of all types expect academic freedom and a certain degree of institutional autonomy. Society in turn expects that higher education will be accessible and affordable for all who seek it, while simultaneously rewarding merit, advancing knowledge, training the workforce, and educating citizens. Moreover, in recent years, there is increased societal pressure on colleges and universities to demonstrate accountability, especially for how they use public funding.

The course is then organized to address three sets of tensions in U.S. higher education.

First, we examine the tensions between egalitarian and meritocratic purposes as they are manifest in diverse campus missions: from colleges with open access, to moderately selective, to elite campuses that pride themselves on having a concentration of talent and resources to provide excellence in teaching and research. We consider how this institutional division of labor within the national system, and the public system design at the state level, function as an effective solution for reconciling competing ideologies in society. Yet the solution is imperfect. One problem is stratification that limits access and student choice.

Second, we analyze the tensions in educational purposes that are manifest in the undergraduate curriculum, focusing on the divergent aims of studying knowledge for its own sake as opposed to its instrumental value. We read about the foundations of liberal education, including pervasive rationales that higher education (especially the university) is responsible for cultivating citizenship. Focusing on a primary arena of curricular reform, we examine changes in general education requirements for undergraduates, exploring how social movements and wider societal pressures have been catalysts for change. We consider contemporary pressures to reflect society's diversity and multiculturalism, as well as market pressures for practical and vocationally-oriented curricula.

The third set of tensions focuses on the complex nature of authority in colleges and universities: bureaucratic authority embedded in organizational structures, professional authority embodied in faculty as academic professionals, and managerial authority enacted by an administrative cadre that gained momentum during the last quarter of the 20th century. We examine the conditions in which these distinct forces are apt to co-exist in conflict or in harmony as "shared authority." To illustrate these dynamics, we look at organizational

restructuring, where some academic programs and departments are targeted for elimination or consolidation in times of budget cuts. The tensions in authority become evident as each campus is challenged to identify what knowledge matters most and should be protected, how it should be organized and supported, and what are legitimate decision-making procedures to make these determinations. We also look at the ideological underpinnings of a significant trend in restructuring, how it is anchored in an industry logic that asks academic organizations to function more like businesses and to establish deeper ties with industry.

We conclude the course with a reinterpretation of the social charter between higher education and society. We consider how well higher education is fulfilling its responsibilities and adapting to changing societal expectations for educating citizens and workers. We also examine the extent to which society is fulfilling its responsibilities, in terms of ongoing public investment to sustain higher education's institutional capacity, to trust professional authority, and to protect campuses for their unique societal functions as places that foster critical thinking and even social dissent.

Readings

Assigned readings are drawn from published literature: for the most part, sociological theory and research on higher education in the United States, and to a lesser degree, philosophical writings on the nature and purposes of higher education in a democratic society.

Required readings are collected as a *Course Reader*, available from the Stanford Bookstore.

Assignments

1. Readings: Students will complete assigned readings prior to each class and participate in discussions.
2. Students will write **two short papers, approximately 5-7 pages each**, reflecting on two of the three sets of tensions. The precise focus of the paper is up to each student. Options include characterizing the nature of the tensions, identifying how they are manifest in different institutional settings, or exploring what exacerbates or ameliorates any given tension. Papers should refer to some of the required readings. A student may do three reflection papers, and then choose the two highest grades.

Due dates correspond to approximately one week after a topic has been covered in class.

Tensions in campus missions and/or public system designs: April 29.

Tensions in the undergraduate curriculum: May 20.

Tensions in the nature of authority: June 3.

3. Students will design and complete a field project on one of the tensions as it plays out in the contemporary era. The project can include interviews with students, faculty, administrators, and other relevant stakeholders as a basis for analyzing divergent viewpoints. The product will be **a project paper, approximately 10-12 pages**. The paper should make clear the goals for the field project, the activities undertaken to address them, and the findings or lessons learned. Students must first submit **a two-page proposal** that identifies the topic and the project's proposed activities, and obtain approval from the instructor. Proposal is due by May 6, but it may be submitted before then. Project paper is due June 7.

NOTE: The two reflection papers, the proposal for the field project, and the final project paper should be typed and double-spaced, no smaller than 12 pt. font. Please observe page limits. Hard copy of papers must be submitted by noon of the due dates. Tardy material will result in a lower grade.

Course Evaluation

Grade is based on class participation 20%, 2 short papers 40%, field project proposal and paper 40%.

Weekly Topics & Reading Assignments

Week 1: 4/01/04 Overview and Introduction to the U.S. Higher Education System

We begin by considering the structural foundations of the U.S. higher education system, its institutional heterogeneity and its evolution, especially expansion during post WW II decades. We discuss: differentiation during expansion, massification, how a college degree replaced high school diploma, students' different pathways as well as simultaneous attendance at multiple institutions, the Carnegie Classification and its functions; and basic distinctions between publics, privates, and for-profits.

Week 2 4/08/04 The Social Charter

In this week, we introduce the idea that higher education is shaped by society – its external environment. We examine the social charter between higher education and society, the social charter being the implicit understanding of their respective rights and responsibilities. We also identify distinct groups of stakeholders in higher education and a range of evidence regarding how they view higher education as a national system.

Required:

Trow, Martin. 1970. "Reflections on the Transition from Mass to Universal Higher Education." *Daedalus* 99: 1-42.

O'Neil, Robert. 1999. "Academic Freedom: Past, Present and Future." In Philip Altbach, Robert Berdahl, & Patricia J. Gumport (eds.) 1999. *American Higher Education in the 21st Century: Social, Political, and Economic Challenges*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. Pages 89-108.

Berdahl, Robert and T.R. McConnell. 1999. "Autonomy and Accountability: Who Controls Academe?" In Philip Altbach, Robert Berdahl, & Patricia J. Gumport (eds.) 1999. *American Higher Education in the 21st Century: Social, Political, and Economic Challenges*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. Pages 70-88.

Week 3: 4/15/04 First Set of Tensions: Egalitarian vs. Meritocratic Purposes

The first set of tension we consider is between egalitarian and meritocratic purposes as they are manifest in diverse campus missions. Readings explore how egalitarian interests and elite interests are evident in the structure of the national system and the public higher education system in each state. Examining California public higher education as the prototype for state systems, we consider how states attempt to reconcile these divergent interests by establishing an institutional division of labor through mission differentiation. Yet, as California and other states make apparent, differentiation functions as stratification and institutionalizes status hierarchies that are at once local and national. Commonly acknowledged dysfunctions are considered.

Required:

Trow, Martin A. 1984. "The Analysis of Status." In Burton Clark (ed.), *Perspectives on Higher Education*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pages 132-64.

[Week 3 Readings continued on next page]

Smelser, Neil J. 1993. "California: A Multisegment System." In Arthur Levine (ed.), *Higher Learning in America, 1980-2000*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Pages 114-30.

Gumport, Patricia J. and Michael N. Bastedo. 2001. Academic Stratification and Endemic Conflict: Remedial Education Policy at CUNY, *The Review of Higher Education* 24 (4): 333-349.

Recommended:

Brint, S. and J. Karabel. 1991. Institutional Origins and the Case of American Community Colleges. In W. Powell and P. DiMaggio. *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Pp. 337-360.

Merton, Robert. 1967. "The Matthew Effect in Science," In N. Storer (ed.), 1973. *The Sociology of Science: Theoretical and Empirical Investigations*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pages 439-459.

Week 4: 4/22/04 Who Goes Where? And What Forces Determine It?

Continuing with our examination of egalitarian and elite interests, we look at mechanisms that undermine the promise of access and reproduce stratification.

Required:

McDonough, Patricia. 1994 "Buying and Selling Higher Education" *The Journal of Higher Education* 65(4), 427-446.

Burton Clark, 1960. "The 'Cooling Out' Function in Higher Education," *The American Journal of Sociology* (May): 569-76.

Dougherty, Kevin. 1992. Community Colleges and Baccalaureate Attainment. *The Journal of Higher Education* 63 (March/April) 2: 188-214.

Recommended:

Karabel, Jerome. 1984. "Status-Group Struggle, Organizational Interests, and the Limits of Institutional Autonomy: The Transformation of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, 1918-1940." *Theory and Society* 13 (January): 1-40.

Stevens, Mitchell. 2003. *The Five Affirmative Actions*. Unpublished manuscript.

Week 5: 4/29/04 Second Set of Tensions: Knowledge for its own sake vs. its utility (part I)

To examine the divergent aims of studying knowledge for its own sake as opposed to its instrumental value, we read about foundations of liberal education, then the nature of knowledge, and the educational functions of the university. First we look at the Victorian legacy regarding knowledge and liberal education as being the focus of the university intellectual life. Both Newman and Arnold are influential in (even modern-day) considerations regarding what it means to be "learned," what counts as knowledge, and how that knowledge can best be disseminated. Key questions during their time include: Is the type of knowledge one cultivates through university education the bridge between intellect and virtue, thereby being "vocational" in the sense of

training in how to lead a “good life” (this being in tune with virtue and actualizing “human potential” or “self-creation”)? Or does “the good life” have no place in the university’s scope?

Required:

Newman, John Henry. 1873. *The Idea of a University*, ed. Frank Turner. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996. Pages 76-126.

Arnold, Matthew. 1869. *Culture and Anarchy*. Ed. J. Dover Wilson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963. Pages 43-71.

Recommended:

John Stuart Mill. 1867. “Inaugural Address at St. Andrew’s”, in *Collected Works*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963-1991.

Carnochan, W.B. 1993. *The Battleground of the Curriculum*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Pages 39-50.

Week 6: 5/06/04 Second Set of Tensions: Knowledge for its own sake vs. its utility (part II)

This week focuses on modern discussions of Newman and Arnold’s views concerning the aims of university liberal education. Are these views outdated? What aspects of their notions of intellectual excellence perhaps transcend time and place?

Required:

Frank M. Turner. 1996. “Newman’s University and Ours.” In Frank M. Turner (ed.), *The Idea of a University*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Pages 282-301.

Fuller, Timothy (ed.). 1989. *The Voice of Liberal Learning: Michael Oakeshott on Education*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Pages 17-42 and 95-104.

David McCabe. 2000. *Michael Oakeshott and the Idea of Liberal Education in Social Theory and Practice*, Vol. 26, No.3, Fall: 443-464.

Richard Rorty. 1989. *Education Without Dogma: Truth, Freedom, and our Universities in Dissent*, Spring: 198-204.

Week 7: 5/13/04 The Undergraduate Curriculum: General education requirements and challenges to Western Civ.

Through its curriculum and required courses, a university makes apparent what knowledge it espouses as necessary, but not necessarily sufficient, for every “educated” person within its walls. When attitudes change regarding specific bodies of knowledge, the curriculum will often reflect these changes. We examine some major debates regarding the aims and constitution of general education, exploring the evolution of such requirements, various intellectual reactions, and then examine how to think about curricular reform more broadly.

Required:

Bloom, Allan. 1987. *The Closing of the American Mind*. New York: Simon and Schuster. Pages 336-356.

Stone, Robert I. 1989. *Essays on the Closing of the American Mind*. Chicago Review Press. Pages 362-369.

Nussbaum, Marth C. 1997. *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Pages 50-84.

Thornton, Bruce. 2001. "Cultivating Sophistry." Chapter in Hanson, V., J. Heath, B. Thornton (eds.), *The Bonfire of the Humanities*. Wilmington, DE: ISI Books. Pages 3-27.

Carnochan, W.B. 1993. *The Battleground of the Curriculum*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Pages 112-126.

Recommended:

Bloom, Allan. 1987. *The Closing of the American Mind*. New York: Simon and Schuster. Pages 25-43.

Slaughter, Sheila. 1997. "Class, Race, and Gender and the Construction of Post-Secondary Curricula in the United States." *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 29: 1-30.

Brint, Steven. 2002. "The Rise of the 'Practical Arts.'" Pp. 231-259. In Brint (ed.) *The Future of the City of Intellect*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Week 8: 5/20/04 Third Set of Tensions: The nature of authority and shared governance

We examine the nature of authority in colleges and universities, focusing on the basis for bureaucratic authority embedded in administrative structure, the foundations of faculty's professional authority, and the nature of managerial authority that gained momentum during the last quarter of the 20th century.

Required:

Keller, George. 2001. "Governance: The Remarkable Ambiguity." In Philip Altbach, Patricia J. Gumpert, and D. Bruce Johnstone (eds.) 2001. *In Defense of American Higher Education*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. Pages 304-322.

Gumpert, Patricia J. and Brian Pusser. 1995. A Case of Bureaucratic Accretion: Context and Consequences, *Journal of Higher Education* 66 (September/October) 5: 493-520.

Birnbaum, Robert. 2000. *Management Fads in Higher Education*. SF: Jossey-Bass. Pages 12-31.

Recommended:

Etzioni, Amatai. 1964. "Administrative and Professional Authority." In Etzioni (ed.) *Modern Organizations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Friedson, Elliot. 1986. "Professional Powers in Work Organizations." Chapter 8 In *Professional Powers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Week 9: 5/27/04 Academic Restructuring: Pressures for Change and Academic Responses

We consider tensions between bureaucratic and professional authority evident in organizational restructuring: who decides and what are the decision-making procedures for campuses as they identify which academic programs and departments should be eliminated, consolidated, or protected in times of budget cuts? We look at ideological underpinnings of restructuring, its anchor in an industry logic that asks academic organizations to function like businesses.

Required:

Eckel, Peter D. 2000. "The Role of Shared Governance in Institutional Hard Decisions: Enabler or Antagonist?" *Review of Higher Education* 24: 15-39.

Gumport, Patricia J. 2000. "Academic Restructuring: Organizational Change and Institutional Imperatives." *Higher Education* 39: 67-91.

Collis, David. 2002. "New Business Models for Higher Education" in S. Brint (ed.) *The Future of the City of Intellect*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. PP. 181-202.

Recommended:

Bok, Derek. 2003. "Preserving Educational Values." Chapter 9 In *Universities in the Marketplace: The Commercialization of Higher Education*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Pages 157-184.

Slaughter, Sheila. 1993. "Retrenchment in the 1980s: The Politics of Prestige and Gender." *Journal of Higher Education* 64: 250-82.

Gumport, Patricia J. 1993. "The Contested Terrain of Academic Program Reduction." *Journal of Higher Education* 64: 283-311.

Week 10: 6/03/04 The Social Charter Revisited

We conclude the course with a reinterpretation of the social charter between higher education and society. Newman defends liberal education (having no professional end) yet also contends that the practical end of a university is "that of training good members of society." Arnold sees such an end as a natural consequence of "culture," but not of any specific civic training. Should civic responsibility be the most important practical goal of the University? Is this the correct arena for such development? We consider how well higher education is fulfilling its diverse responsibilities and adapting to changing societal expectations for educating citizens and workers. We also examine the extent to which society is fulfilling its responsibilities, in terms of ongoing public investment to sustain institutional capacity, trust professional authority, and protect campuses for their unique societal functions as places that, among other functions, foster critical thinking and even social dissent. Finally, we reconsider the social charter, how it may be changing, how would we know, and where is there place for deliberation?

Students report on Field Projects.

[Week 10 Readings continued on next page]

Required:

Newman and Mill revisited

Juile A. Reuben. 2000. *The University and Its Discontents* in *The Hedgehog Review*, Vol. 2, No.3, Fall: 72-91.

George Marsden. 2000. *The Incoherent University* in *The Hedgehog Review*, Vol. 2, No. 3, Fall: 92-105.

Richard Rorty, Reuben, Marsden. 2000. *The Moral Purposes of the University: An Exchange* in *The Hedgehog Review*, Vol. 2, No. 3, Fall: 106-119.

Benjamin R. Barber. 1989. *The Civic Mission of the University* in *Kettering Review*, Fall: 160-169.

Gerhard Casper, *The University as Public Service*. 1998 Freshmen Convocation, Stanford University.

Recommended:

Edgar Eugene Robinson.1928. "Citizenship in a Democratic World" In Carnochan, W.B. 1993. *The Battleground of the Curriculum*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Pages 129-144.

Levine, Arthur. 2001. "Higher Education's New Status as a Mature Industry." In Philip Altbach, Patricia J. Gumport, and D. Bruce Johnstone (eds.) *In Defense of American Higher Education*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. Pages 38-58.