

IDST 301.003
American Colleges and Universities
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Office hours: Tuesday 11 – 3PM (in Steele); Thursday 1 – 3PM; by appointment

Course Overview

This course will examine American colleges and universities from a variety of perspectives ranging from the individual experience to the role of higher education in larger social systems. Students will read interdisciplinary texts and engage in experiential learning activities exploring multiple facets of higher education such as faculty, teaching and learning, curriculum, student life, organization, leadership, governance, and higher education policy.

The course will explore various types of institutions in American higher education such as community colleges, historically black colleges and universities, private liberal arts colleges, and research universities. Students will compare the unique needs of these varying institutions as well as the diverse populations they serve. The course will explore the lived experiences of students in higher education as well as the demographic make-up of the college student population in the United States. Differences among various campus subgroups, including differences related to age, gender, race, religion and sexual orientation, will also be explored. Readings, activities and class discussions will consider student growth and development during college, the effects of educational environments on student learning in college, and best practices for student success.

In addition to reading relevant literature and research on American colleges and universities in multiple frameworks (historical, political, educational, psychological, and social) students will collect qualitative data and reflect on their own experiences as participants in higher education. Specifically, students will explore questions such as "What is the value of a liberal arts education?", "What is the role of diversity in higher education?" and "What does it mean to be a member of a community of scholars?" Through field work experiences, students will collect and organize qualitative data from members of the University community. For the final project, students will analyze the research data they have collected from interviews and observations as well as reflect on their participation in higher education. Students will report research findings in a 5-8 minute class presentation.

Some words about our classroom...

One goal of a liberal arts education is for you to develop abilities of analytic thinking, writing, and speaking. I find useful the following definition of “analytic” or “critical” thinking: “a practical reflective activity that has reasonable belief or action as its goal” (Teaching Thinking Skills: Theory and Practice, ed. Joan Baron and Robert Sternberg, p. 10). In the context of this course, such thinking is “practical” in that it requires us to gain (through the readings) substantive knowledge about actual conditions and dilemmas in contemporary society. It is “reflective” in that we will be evaluating the authors’ descriptions and assessments of these dilemmas. And we will engage in deliberation about what is a “reasonable belief or action” with respect to particular dilemmas. Of course, we will not all end up in agreement, which is fine. What is important is that we each practice the ability to make an argument for our judgments, in terms of identifying stated and unstated assumptions, offering textual or empirical

evidence, considering counterarguments, and explaining and defending our reasons (including reasons for making particular value judgments, since that is also part of critical thinking).

You can probably tell that this work involves a lot of creativity and effort on your part. It is my hope that you will also experience—at least occasionally!—the exhilaration that can come with doing this kind of practical intellectual work. Another goal of your liberal arts education is to cultivate an affection for a sustained and serious examination of the world and of oneself. The aspiration here is that the search for knowledge through ongoing critical thought and learning will become an habitual and pleasurable activity for you, one that continues to shape your life and give it meaning long after college. I always try to hold this intention when I take the seat of the teacher, and I ask that you do the same as you undertake the work of this course.

A note about contacting me: Coming to my office hours is the best way to communicate with me. I prefer face-to-face interaction with students, and always for substantive questions. If you cannot make my office hours, we'll set up another time to meet. Email is fine for some things. I usually respond within 24 hours, except on weekends, when I will often not respond until Monday morning. Please do not expect an automatic reply. Be patient. I'll get back to you. Calling my office number is also great.

Always bring the readings to class, as you will need them for reference. Bring hard copies; no laptops allowed in class, no exceptions.

Junior Transfer Seminar

This course is designated as the Junior Transfer Seminar. The Junior Transfer Seminar program was designed to help junior transfer students make a successful transition to the University. All students who register for this course are junior transfer students. The goal of this seminar is to give new transfer students the opportunity to work closely with an instructor in a small-class environment and to meet other transfer students. This seminar will emphasize class discussion as well as learning in creative ways. The seminar is also designed to help students refine their communications skills, including the ability to speak clearly and write persuasively, as well as build critical thinking and research skills. Participating in this seminar may help transfer students build a network of peers with the common experience of transferring. This support system can help smooth their transition to the University.

General Education Requirements

This course fulfills EE, experiential education, and SS, social science, general education requirements. For information on the General Education requirements, please visit Academic Advising (<http://advising.unc.edu/>) and see the Making Connections Curriculum overview on The Undergraduate website: http://www.unc.edu/depts/uc/Curriculum/Curriculum_Overview.html.

Research Intensive Course

This course is designated as a research intensive course. Over half of the course is devoted to students conducting original research and presenting research conclusions. You may use this course toward earning the Carolina Research Scholar designation on your transcript. For more information on the Carolina Research Scholar program and to register, visit: http://www.unc.edu/depts/our/students/students_crsp.html.

Required Readings

Readings for the course include selections from books, journal articles, and on-line resources. All readings are posted on Sakai. You must print the readings. Complete the assigned reading BEFORE

class. Take notes as you read. Bring the printed readings and your notes to every class. Expect that on occasion these notes will be collected by the instructor. If you fail to bring the readings to class, your participation grade will reflect this.

Recommended Readings:

- Dembo, M. H. (2007). *Motivation and Learning Strategies for College Success: A Self-Management Approach*. New York: Routledge.
- Patton, M. Q. (2001). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Field Work

Students will complete two hours of field each week. This field work will focus on collecting qualitative data from interviews with members of the University community and from on-campus observations. Each week, students must complete one interview or one observation. In total, students will complete 30 hours of field work over the course of the semester. The final paper and presentation for this class will analyze the qualitative data in an autoethnography.

By the end of the semester, students will have completed 10 interviews and 5 observations all within the University community.

Interviews

Students will use the interview protocol attached to this syllabus as a starting point. Students may choose to add to this protocol, but they cannot deduct from it. You must take notes or record each interview. (Before recording an interview, ask permission!) Students will interview:

1. A faculty member in their major (or intended major)
2. A faculty member not in their major (or their intended major)
3. A staff member in academic services (The Learning Center, The Writing Center, Academic Advising, The Math Help Center, etc.)
4. A staff member who works on campus in student affairs (The Dean of Students, Residential Education, The Campus Y, Career Services, Counseling & Wellness Services, etc.)
5. A person on campus who was the first person in their family to attend college.
6. Someone who studied abroad as an undergraduate.

You will decide whom to interview for interviews 7-10. You may choose to interview individuals from a group you are personally or academically interested in. For example, you may interview:

- A student who is working on undergraduate research.
- Someone who works at the hospital.
- A student-athlete.
- A graduate student.
- A student who writes for the Daily Tar Heel.
- A fellow transfer student.
- A scholar, artist, musician or actor currently working on campus.

Observations

Students will complete 5 on-campus observations. Each observation must be at least 30 minutes. You must take field notes for the duration of your observation. You should not participate in the

activity you are observing. Your role is to watch the scene and take descriptive field notes. Students can pick their observation locations based on their interests. Here are some suggestions:

- The Pit at lunch time.
- The first floor of the Undergraduate Library.
- A student organization meeting.
- An on-campus cultural event (play, concert, film).
- A gallery in the art museum.
- A scholarly guest lecture or forum.
- An athletic event.
- A research lab.
- A book reading at Student Stores.

Fulfilling the Two Hours per Week Fieldwork Requirement

You must spend two hours per week on fieldwork. You will need to record your time in a log (found at the end of this syllabus). The time you spend on fieldwork can include:

- interviewing
- observing
- scheduling interviews
- organizing data
- transcribing fieldnotes

Final Project & Presentation: The Autoethnography

Your final project and presentation will analyze the data you have collected over the course of the semester in an autoethnography. Autoethnography is a form of social science research in which the researcher synthesizes data collected from observations and interviews with their own lived experience. Your autoethnography must include:

- A Statement of Positionality (Who are you? Where are you from? How do these things influence the way you analyze the data?)
- A section on methodology (Who did you interview? What questions did you ask? What did you observe? When and for how long?)
- A discussion of the themes that emerge from your data.
- Direct quotes and descriptions from your interviews and observations.
- A story: What is the story that links this data together?
- Your lived experience: describe your experience collecting this data, participating in this class and transferring to Carolina.

Autoethnographies are written in the first, person narrative and explore the author's lived experience during the research process. To complete this assignment successfully, you will need to describe your experience and use the data. If you do just one or the other, you will not fulfill the assignment requirements.

You may write your autoethnography in narrative form (at least 10 double-spaced pages). Or, you may choose to present your autoethnography in a visual, electronic or web-based format. For example, your autoethnography may be a video, multimedia presentation or a webpage. If you

choose an alternative format, please discuss your plans with your instructor beforehand. Remember that you still must weave in direct quotes and descriptions from your interviews and observations. Each student will make a 5-8 minute presentation on their research-based autoethnography.

Class Format

This course meets two days per week (Tuesdays and Thursdays). On Tuesdays we will focus on discussing interdisciplinary readings on higher education. You should come to class on Tuesdays:

1. with a printed copy of the reading,
2. having completed the assigned reading for the day,
3. and with at least one-page of notes and critical thinking questions on the reading (expect this page to be collected by the instructor).

Classes on Tuesdays will be devoted to lectures and seminar discussions concerning the readings. Thursdays will be devoted to developing your skills as a qualitative researcher through workshops and collaborative learning activities. On Thursdays you should come to class:

1. with a printed copy of the assigned reading,
2. having completed the assigned reading for the day,
3. prepared to discuss your field work experiences,
4. with your plans for keeping your research project moving forward,
5. and with questions or concerns regarding your research.

Critical Thinking Questions

Critical thinking skills are imperative to your success as a university student. Critical thinking is a process of reflecting and questioning assumptions. Critical thinking skills include observation, interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation, and metacognition (thinking about your thinking). As you progress as a scholar asking the right questions becomes as important, if not more important, than finding the "right" answers. Each week, for your Tuesday reading, you must develop a list of questions about the reading. It is up to you how many questions you write each week, but if you are really engaging the material I would expect that you would have at least 4-5 questions per article and closer to 10 or 15 questions for longer chapters or segments from books. Completing a list of questions each week will count for 10 points of your final grade. Your questions may not be collected every class, but you should expect that they will be collected. Questions should be typed and include your full name as well as the title of the readings for the day. Your questions should be detailed and challenge you to think critically about the text.

Mid-term and Final Exams

The mid-term and final exams will focus on content from the required readings and class lectures. The exams may include short answer essays questions and multiple choice questions. To perform well on the exams, students should complete all required reading, come to every class meeting, and take thorough notes.

Grades

Your letter grade is determined by total number of points you earn. Points can be earned from the following class components:

Critical Thinking Questions, Attendance, & Short Writing Assignments 10
Fieldwork Log 5
Midterm Exam 15

Final Paper 35
Final Paper Presentation 20
Final Exam 15

This table shows the percentage of points required to get each letter grade:

94 - 100 = A 86-89 = B+ 76-79 = C+ 66-69 = D+

90 - 93 = A- 83-85 = B 73-75 = C 60-65 = D

80-82 = B- 70-72 = C- Less than 60 = F

Course Expectations

Academic Honesty

The Honor Code is in effect at all times to ensure the integrity of our learning experiences. In accordance with the Honor Code, students must sign a pledge on each paper and exam to state that they have complied with the Honor Code. For our exams, this means that you take them without the help of notes, books, other people or any other kind of external aid. It also means that you take steps to reduce the possibility of others' cheating by protecting your own examination paper from the view of others.

Late Papers

If you anticipate some conflict with a paper deadline, then submit EARLY. Late submissions will not be accepted. No exceptions.

Final Exam Schedule

The class will take the final exam at the time assigned to us by the University. If you have two exams at the same time or three exams within 24 hours, you must see an academic advisor or assistant dean in Academic Advising for an exam excuse form if you wish to reschedule the final exam.

Reading Assignments

You are expected to prepare the readings by the day for which they are assigned. By "prepare" I do not mean simply giving them a cursory reading. Rather, I mean read them carefully, think about them, identify sections or parts of the readings that you think work well or that you have problems with, use whatever note-taking system works best for you, and be sure to come to class with any questions you may have. I will sometimes pass out reading questions or thoughts to help guide your reading; these are designed to help you think about the text, and you are to work through these questions before class as part of your preparation. Remember that these readings are not like textbooks, but are much more dense and complex; they will probably take you longer to read, and you may need to read tough sections a few times, so be sure to plan accordingly.

Recommended Readings

Occasionally, I will post recommended readings on Sakai. These are meant to supplement our required readings, and to give you more context and background. While you are not required to complete these readings, I strongly recommend that you do. Also, if there is ever a particular subject that interests you and you'd like to do more reading on your own, don't hesitate to ask me for further reading suggestions.

Class participation

This course requires a considerable amount of active and sustained participation. You will need to come to class ready to work actively on your understanding of the readings, to analyze ideas and texts, using

critical thinking, and to consider complex social and political issues. Your work for this class will involve both autonomous and collaborative learning. The idea of autonomy stresses your personal responsibility for your own learning, while the idea of collaboration stresses your responsibility for teaching and learning from one another. It is my responsibility as the teacher to secure the necessary conditions in which both types of learning can occur, and to engage in analytic thinking with you. So this class is not like a theater, where you come and watch me perform for you. Instead, it is best thought of as a lab, where you come in to work with, examine, and enhance the knowledge gained from the readings and from your own experiences.

You will work in participatory learning groups for much of the semester. We will keep the same group for several class periods in a row before switching to new groups. (Please look at the instructions for learning group interaction in Appendix A.) In addition to small group work, the class as a whole will work together to discuss and analyze issues and questions in the readings. I expect everyone to participate in the larger discussions as well, in order to practice and develop your communicative abilities, or, in other words, in order to help you come to voice (Note: participation in the learning groups will not suffice to do well overall on participation.) If you find yourself struggling with this, please feel free to come to my office hours so that we can discuss strategies to help you become more comfortable speaking aloud in class. The good news is that I have a very broad notion of participation, including active listening, asking questions of one another (including, “What do you mean? Can you say more about that?”), reading relevant passages aloud, helping another person find the right page, explaining why you agree or disagree with what someone else has said, taking detailed notes, and engaging in and facilitating discussion. Everyone must experiment with a variety of forms of participation, rather than always playing the same role.

Important Note

Turn off all cell phones before class begins. I ask that you not take out phones at any point during class to check or send messages. Also, the **use of laptops will not be allowed, no exceptions**. I find them distracting and unnecessary for the kind of work we will be doing together, which, as I hope I’ve made clear enough by now, relies heavily on your engagement with other classmates with whom you are working to create and sustain a stimulating and engaged learning environment. If you are someone who usually takes notes on your laptop, you will need to work on developing different listening and writing skills that work for this course. I am happy to work on developing alternative strategies with you. You will also need to print out the Sakai readings and bring them into class; there are quite a few of them. So be sure to budget accordingly.

Your participation grade will rely on both subjective and objective measures. Subjective measures include my evaluation of your labor in the classroom, including group work, class discussion, and in-class writing assignments. Objective measures include attendance, possession of readings, and the quality of group reports (see Attachment A).

Attendance:

You are responsible for contributing to our learning in this class, and you cannot do this if you are not here. You will receive one attendance credit for each class you attend (we have 29 scheduled meetings including the first day). Regardless of the quality of your other participatory work, attendance credits will operate as a baseline for your overall participation grade. To be clear: Attendance credits are a “floor” for your overall participation grade, which includes a variety of components; it does not guarantee you a particular grade.

To be eligible for an A for your participation grade, you must have at least 29 attendance credits.

To be eligible for an A-, at least 28.

To be eligible for a B, at least 27.

To be eligible for a C, at least 26.

In order for an absence to be excused, you must: a) provide written documentation of a medical or family emergency AND, b) meet with another student in the class to replicate the participation that you missed, and affirm to me that you have done so. Excused absences will not count against your attendance credit total. I will send an attendance sheet around at the beginning of each class. Should you need to sign it at the end of class because you were late, you will need to note that you were late.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center is an excellent resource on campus to support your development as a writer. If you have never gone to the Writing Center, I encourage you to make an appointment for a face-to-face session with a Writing Center tutor. The Writing Center is not a proofreading service, but a tutor will gladly discuss your plans for your autoethnography as you begin working on the assignment. You can make an appointment online: <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/>

For students working with Disability Services: Please see the instructor as soon as possible to discuss any alternate arrangements. Tuesdays Thursdays Activities and Assignments.

Week	Tuesdays	Thursdays	Assignments & Activities
1	8.20 Class 1 Syllabus Review & Introductions	8.22 Class 2 Readings Due: 1. What are the Liberal Arts and Why a Liberal Arts Education Matters 2. Types of Educational Research	Start 2 hours of field work
2	8.27 Class 3 Readings Due: 1. Claiming an Education 2. College at Risk	8.29 Class 4 Reading Due: Bucking Cultural Norms, Asia Tries the Liberal Arts	2 hours field work Visit the Ackland
3	9.3 Class 5 Readings Due: 1. On Writing Fieldnotes 2. Tips for Writing Fieldnotes	9.5 Class 6 Reading Due: Tolstoy in the Slaughterhouse	2 hours field work
4	9.10 Class 7 Readings Due: 1. On Writing Fieldnotes 2. Tips for Writing Fieldnotes	9.12 Class 8 Readings Due: 1. 911 and Higher Education 2. A Student Veteran Moves On 3. Watch <i>Altered Paths</i> Video	2 hours field work
5	9.17 Class 9 Reading Due: Qualitative Interview Design: A Practical Guide for Novice Investigators	9.19 Class 10 Assignment: Bring questions for senior transfers	2 hours field work In-class workshop on interviews (Tu) Senior transfer students visit (Thu)

6	9.24 Class 11 Readings Due: 1. Ethnographic Designs (Creswell pp. 472-496) 2. Shakespeare in the Bush	9.26 Class 12 Readings Due: 1. Real Work 2. A Matter of Degrees	2 hours field work
7	10.1 Class 13 Reading Due: Narrative Research Designs (Creswell pp. 511-532)	10.3 Class 14 MIDTERM	2 hours field work Review for midterm
8	10.8 Class 15 Reading Due: An Autoethnography on Learning About Autoethnography	10.10 Class 16 Readings Due: 1. The Future of American Colleges May Lie, Literally, In Students Hands 2. The University Gazette—Inmate Education	2 hours field work Memoing Practice (Tu)
9	10.15 Class 17 Guest Speaker	10.17 NO CLASS	2 hours field work
10	10.22 Class 18 Readings Due: 1. Strategies for Qualitative Data Analysis 2. Turning In: Positionality, Subjectivity, and Reflexivity	10.24 Class 19 Reading Due: Emerging Adulthood	2 hours field work Sign up for presentations In-class workshop on positionality Review Rubric for Final Paper (Tues)
11	10.29 Class 20 Readings Due: 1. Reflexivity in Research 2. Qualitative Data Analysis	10.31 Class 21 Reading Due: Authority and American Usage *Note: This reading is long and dense. Take your time with it, by which I mean, allow yourself plenty of time to read it carefully. That will be helpful.	2 hours field work
12	11.5 Class 22 Readings Due: 1. Academic Motivation (Dembo) 2. Academic Self- Management (Dembo)	11.7 Class 23 Readings Due: Finding Your Story	2 hours field work In-class Workshop on Coding Data
13	11.12 Class 24 Reading Due: Towards a Positive University, Journal of Positive Psychology	11.14 Class 25 Reading Due: Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality: Working Through Dangers Seen, Unseen, Unforseen	2 hours field work Peer Activity: States of Positionality
14	11/19 Class 26 Presentations	11/21 Class 27 Presentations	2 hours field work Presentations

15	11/26 Class 28 Presentations Fieldwork Log Due	11/28 NO CLASS	Presentations Fieldwork Log Due
16	12/4 Class 29 Presentations Final Paper Due		Presentations Final Paper Due

****Our final exam is scheduled for Thursday, December 12, at 4PM in our regular classroom. Unless you have an excused absence issued from Academic Advising, you must be present on this day and at this time in order to pass this class.**