Poli Sci 601 – The American University

This course explores philosophical, political, and policy issues surrounding an institution important to us all: the American university. Historically, the United States was the site of the creation of many aspects of the modern university; some elements were incorporated from British and especially German practice, but to a very great extent the development of the modern research-and-teaching university coexisting with a system of liberal arts colleges and public institutions devoted to skills development is specifically American. After World War II the developmental trend continued, to the point that by the 1960s the basic global model of a “university” was the American one. Today something like 80 of the 100 top ranked universities in the world are in the U.S.

At the same time, the lists are full of books proclaiming that the American university is in crisis. They may even have a point.

The readings for this course introduce questions about education from a philosophical perspective, then turn to the early history of American higher education. After that, we will spend individual weeks talking about particular issues. The readings will be a combination of books available in the bookstore, readings that I will distribute (or make available on moodle), and articles and news items that cross my desk during the course. I will also have a stack of copies of the Chronicle of Higher Education available just so you can see what the public discourse about universities looks like these days.

$25.22

Allan Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today’s Students*
$13.81

Goldie Blumenstyk, *American Higher Education in Crisis?: What Everyone Needs to Know*
$13.80

Charles T. Clotfelter, *Big-Time Sports in American Universities*
$20.77
Stanley Fish, *Versions of Academic Freedom: From Professionalism to Revolution*
$20.49

William G. Bowen, *Crossing the Finish Line: Completing College at America’s Public Universities*
$27.00

Thomas J. Kane, *The Price of Admission: Rethinking How Americans Pay for College*
$19.95

Anne Colby et. al., *Educating Citizens*
$25.10

The work for the course will consist of three short (5-7 pages) papers and a final research paper. In addition, students will be expected to present the readings one or more times during the course of the semester, including circulation of a 2-3 page critical synopsis.

Jan. 19 – what is “education”?
Plato, *The Laws* Book II, excerpt (handout)

Jan. 26 -- historical visions
Rush, Franklin, Wayland, Emerson (handouts)
Presenter: Madison Laning

Feb. 2 The Challenge of Modernity?
Alan Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*
Presenter: Sam Erickson

Feb. 9 -- Anti-Intellectualism in American Life
C.P. Snow, “Two Cultures” (handout)
excerpts from Mark Bauerlein, ed., *The State of the American Mind: 16 Leading Critics of the New Anti-Intellectualism*
Presenter: Eva Jacobs

Feb. 16 – NO CLASS

Feb. 23 -- Academic Freedom
Stanley Fish, *Versions of Academic Freedom: From Professionalism to Revolution*
Presenter: Kevin Dlugos

March 1 -- Getting In
Excerpt from Jerome Karabel, The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton (handout)
Excerpt from Lani Guinier, The Tyranny of the Meritocracy (handout)
Excerpt from Daniel Golden, The Price of Admission (handout)
Presenters: Matt Lupini,

March 8 -- Success and Failure:
Bowen et. al., Crossing the Finish Line: Completing College at America’s Public Universities
Excerpt from Douglas Massey, The Source of the River: The Social Origins of Freshmen and America’s Elite Colleges
Presenter: Ethan Kay

March 15 -- Paying your way
Thomas Kane, The Price of Admission: Rethinking How Americans Pay for College
Presenter: Lisa Geller

MARCH 19-27 SPRING BREAK

March 29 -- Bread and Circuses: Sports!
Charles Clotfeller, Big-Time Sports in American Universities
Excerpt from Bowen et. al., Reclaiming the Game
Presenters: Negassi Tessamichael, Noah Habenstreit

April 5 -- A Current Crisis?
Excerpt from Leonard Kassuto, The Graduate School Mess: What Started It and How We Can Fix It (handout)
Goldi Blumenstyk, American Higher Education in Crisis?: What Everyone Needs to Know
Presenter: Elli Pappas, Chali Pittman
April 12 -- Education and Democracy, Global Perspectives
   Excerpts from:
   Sabrina Ramet, Democratic Transition in Croatia: Value Transformation, Education, and Media (excerpts, handout)
   Patrick Blessinger, Democratizing Higher Education: International Comparative Perspectives
   Cambridge Univ. Task Force, Transforming Post-Communist Political Economies
Presenter: Jake Skubish, Colleen Lennon

April 19 -- The Future of the University
   Phillip Altbach and Patricia Gumport, American Higher Education in the 21st Century: Social, Political and Economic Challenges (excerpts)
   Bowen, William, Equity and Excellence in American Higher Education (excerpt)
Presenters: Lauren DiCarlo, Spencer Jastrow

April 26
Education and Reform – Civic Education on Campus
   Dewey, Education and Democracy (excerpt)
   William Deresiewicz, Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite (excerpt)
   Anne Colby, Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility

Presenters: Sydney Steele, Bridget Greaney

May 3
Free Speech on Campus?
   Excerpt from Greg Lukianoff, Unlearning Liberty: Campus Censorship and the End of American Debate
   excerpt from Donald A. Downs, Restoring Liberty and Free Speech on Campus (handout)
No presenter – free for all!