

EDUC 355x Higher Education and Society

Fall 2013 / Stanford Graduate School of Education

Professor Mitchell L. Stevens

meeting time/place: Tuesdays 5.15 – 8.05 pm / Cummings #04 (ART4)

office/hours: Littlefield 246 / meetings by appointment

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Overview

This course provides an overview of the political economy of US higher education. It is premised on the notion that US higher education is a distinctive organizational phenomenon: linked to K-12 education but not coextensive with it, globally peculiar, and changing rapidly. The perspective of the course is essentially sociological. It depicts how higher education formally certifies legitimate knowledge, capacities and persons, structures much of the modern life course, coalesces and segments social networks, and ceremonially integrates a secular cosmology. Implications of the inherited character of US higher education for its current turbulence are a central theme of the course.

EDUC 355x is offered as a cognate of Education's Digital Future (edf.stanford.edu). Each and every class session is open to the general public.

Required Readings

There is one required book for this course, which I encourage you to purchase. It is available in the Stanford bookstore and also is easily available online:

Kerr, Clark. 2001. *The Uses of the University* (fifth edition). Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

All other readings are available on the edf website, edf.stanford.edu, and/or via SIPX. Citations to specific readings for each course session are below.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- appreciate the varied social functions of higher education in modern societies;
- conceive of higher education as a complex, epochal organizational system;
- understand the fundamental organizational, financial, and political challenges facing US higher education at the present moment;
- participate responsibly in the national conversation about the future of US higher education.

General Expectations

Come on time, attend every class, complete all readings, participate in the presentation of particular readings, make every Piazza post on time, and participate actively throughout the seminar.

Assignments

Weekly written work: In preparation for each session, seminar participants will complete a written assignment on Piazza, piazza.com, *in advance of* each weekly course meeting: typically **at NOON on the day of our scheduled meeting**.

On some occasions these assignments will be directed; on other occasions they will be open-ended; some assignments may be a mix of directed and open. These instruments are designed to ensure that participants receive credit for careful reading, to provide me with feedback on participants' questions, insights, and to create a community of discourse in the class. *Weekly assignments will not be accepted late.*

In advance of some of our sessions I will assign particular students to briefly summarize, critique, and integrate course readings. Details of this work will be discussed the first day of seminar.

Evaluation and Grading

Grades will be based on your thorough completion of weekly readings and assignments and seminar participation.

weekly Piazza posts 50%
final write-up 20%
attendance, participation 30%

Each student is allowed one missed Piazza post and one missed class without penalty. After that, scores will be reduced proportional to the number of classes and assignments missed.

Final write-ups are 4-5 page reflective documents that develop a theme from the course that was of particular interest to the student.

In addition, every enrolled student is required to make two brief appointments with me: the first during the initial three weeks of the quarter, and the second near or soon after the end of the quarter. Please contact Ashley Buckner (abuckner@stanford.edu) to schedule the first appointment asap.

Schedule

24 September Sieve, Incubator, Temple, Hub

This session provides a broad conceptual overview of the course and its substantive content. Colleges and universities are considerably more complex than many observers, academic personnel, and students understand. This complexity is both a signal asset and a constitutive problem of US higher education.

Stevens, Armstrong, and Arum, "Sieve, Incubator, Temple, Hub: Empirical and Theoretical Advances in the Sociology of Higher Education." *Annual Review of Sociology* 34 (2008):127-151.

Assignment 1: Due on Piazza by NOON on 24 September: In 500 words or less, provide a narrative of (a) what led you to graduate school (b) what program you are in, and why (c) your professional goals for the near and middle term.

1 October Sieve I: Higher education and social differentiation

Higher education mediates multiple dimensions of inequality in the United States and worldwide. Just how college does this mediating work and with what consequences is of central importance to social scientists and public policy.

Fischer, Claude S., and Michael Hout. 2006. *Century of Difference: How America Changed in the Last One Hundred Years* (excerpt). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Hout, Michael. 2012. "Social and Economic Returns to College." *Annual Review of Sociology* 38:379-400.

Roksa, Josipa, Eric Grodsky, Richard Arum, and Adam Gamoran. 2007. "United States: Changes in Higher Education and Social Stratification," pp. 167-191 in Yossi Shavit, Richard Arum, and Adam Gamoran, eds., *Stratification in Higher Education: A Comparative Study*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

8 October Sieve II: Educational assortative mating

One of the most important ways in which higher education intervenes in social and class reproduction is through the segmentation of erotic and marital markets. Whether, where, and when one attends college does much to shape the pools of people with whom one considers as appropriate partners for sex, intimate relationships, and marriage. This in turn has consequences for individual life chances and the socioeconomic stratification of households.

- Buchmann, Claudia, and Thomas A. DiPrete. 2006. "The Growing Female Advantage in College Completion: The Role of Family Background and Academic Achievement." *American Sociological Review* 71;515-541.
- DiPrete, Thomas A., and Claudia Buchmann. 2006. "Gender-Specific Trends in the Value of Education and the Emerging Gender Gap in College Completion." *Demography* 43:1-24.
- Arum, Richard, Michelle J. Budig, and Josipa Roksa. 2008. "The Romance of College Attendance: Higher Education Stratification and Mate Selection," *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 26:107-121.

MONDAY 14 October: Author/critics event for *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality* (Harvard, 2013)

Sociologists Elizabeth Armstrong and Laura Hamilton spent five years tracking a cohort of college women at a large Midwestern public university from freshman year through graduation and into the labor force. Their book is a vivid portrait of how the structure and culture of universities variably shapes the character of women's academic and social experiences.

author: Elizabeth A. Armstrong, University of Michigan
 critics: Michelle Jackson, Corrie Potter and Myra Strober

time: 3 – 4.30 pm with reception to follow
 place: CERAS Learning Hall, lobby level, 520 Galvez Mall

15 October: Public Forum -- Is Higher Education a Business?

The number and variety of parties providing higher education services have exploded in recent years. With a wide array of new and often online options, college seekers need no longer assume that they will enroll on an ivy-trimmed physical campus. Nor can they assume that their private college is a tax-exempt organization. This panel will explore what this newly entrepreneurial higher education means for students, parents, academic professionals, and the legacy of higher education as a public good.

speakers: Jonathan Feiber, General Partner, Mohr Davidow Ventures
 David Palumbo-Liu, Louise Hewlett Nixon Professor of
 Comparative Literature, Stanford University
 Amin Saberi, Founder, NovoED
 Linda Thor, Chancellor, Foothill/De Anza Community College
 District

time: reception 5 – 6 pm; forum 6 – 7.30 pm
 place: CERAS Learning Hall, 520 Galvez Mall, lobby level

22 October **Temple: Higher education and the sacralization of secular knowledge**

An essential function of higher education worldwide is to codify and categorize what counts as official knowledge in modern societies. This session will investigate this peculiarly religious function of higher education, note its relationship with higher education's other purposes, and consider how universities are implicated in knowledge production more generally.

Meyer, John W. 1977. "The Effects of Education as an Institution." *American Journal of Sociology* 83:55-77.

Meyer, John W., John Boli, and George M. Thomas. 1994. "Ontology and Rationalization in the Western Cultural Account," pp. 9-27 in W. Richard Scott et al., *Institutional Environments and Organizations*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Meyer, John W., Francisco O. Ramirez, David John Frank, and Evan Schofer. 2007. "Higher Education as an Institution," pp. 187-221 in Patricia J. Gumpert, editor, *Sociology of Higher Education: Contributions and Their Contexts*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Schofer, Evan, and John W. Meyer. 2005. "The Worldwide Expansion of Higher Education in the Twentieth Century." *American Sociological Review* 70:898-920.

29 October **Hub I: The cold war university**

Between 1945 and 1990 the United States created the largest and arguably most productive higher education system in world history. Just why the nation pursued this massive feat of social engineering has only recently come into scholarly view. This session provides a synthetic overview of the cold war university and considers how Americans understand the value of higher education in a post-cold war era.

Kerr, *The Uses of the University*, Chapters 1-5

Christopher Loss, Chapter 5, "Educating Global Citizens in the Cold War," pp. 121-161 in *Between Citizens and the State: The Politics of American Higher Education in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

5 November **Hub II: Universities as chaotic organizations**

The scale, multiple purposes, and distributed governance structure of US universities make them singularly complex organizations. Whether this complexity is for good or ill as an open question. Some observers view it as coextensive with the very purpose of higher education, while others bemoan the inefficiencies of the

organizational model and call for a more focused attention accountability and transparency.

Cohen, Michael D., James G. March, and Johan P. Olson. 1972 A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 17:1-25.

Labaree, David. (Forthcoming 2014). College – What is it good for? *Education and Culture*.

Lohmann, Susanne. 2004. "Can't the University Be More Like a Business." *Economics of Governance* 5:9-27.

Spellings Commission. 2006. *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of US Higher Education*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education.

Winston, Gordon C. 1999. "Subsidies, Hierarchy and Peers: The Awkward Economics of Higher Education." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 13:13-36.

12 November Hub III: Higher education in transformation

US higher education has been undergoing steady change since the end of the cold war, yet the pace and depth of dynamism has dramatically expanded in the last few years. This session considers the current turbulence in light of longer organizational change and considers whether informed prediction about the near future is warranted.

Barber, Michael, et al. 2013. *An Avalanche is Coming: Higher Education and the Revolution Ahead*. London: IPPR.

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

Hansman, Henry. 2012. The Evolving Economic Structure of Higher Education." *University of Chicago Law Review* 79:161-185.

Kerr, *The Uses of the University*, chapters 6-9

19 November Public Forum -- The Art and Science of Online Learning Environments

There has been a great deal of discussion about the promise and problems of online learning – less about the subtlety of building online learning environment that are scientifically sound, productive of learning, and pleasurable to experience. This panel brings two international leaders in this field into a dialogue about the technical and creative skills required to craft meaningful learning environments online.

speakers: Greg Niemeyer, Director and Co-Founder of the
 Berkeley Center for New Media
 Candace Thille, Assistant Professor, Stanford GSE and
 Founder of the Open Learning Initiative

time: reception 5 – 6 pm; forum 6 – 7.30 pm
place: CERAS Learning Hall, 520 Galvez Mall, lobby level

26 November Thanksgiving break / no class / schedule final appointments

3 December dead week / no class / schedule final appointments

Final write-ups due at NOON today via e-mail
to Ashley Buckner (abuckner@stanford.edu)