Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce doctoral students to critical questions currently facing the American higher education system, while providing opportunities for students to learn and practice important skills necessary in their development as doctoral students. The course begins by examining myriad critiques of the American higher education system, including questions about why college has become so expensive, whether the investment is worth it for all students, who has access to different postsecondary options, and how this might change given recent rulings on affirmative action. Additionally, we will contemplate how a number of “disruptive technologies” may be changing the traditional ways in which higher education has operated in this country and how facets of globalism and technology are changing the ways in which we prepare students for the challenges of tomorrow. The course is designed to engage students in a critical examination of these questions, particularly questions around justice and equity, and to evaluate the various arguments and assumptions that underlie the major writings on these topics. Students will have an opportunity to reflect on these questions through blogs and class discussions, as well as an opportunity to explore important questions related to their own research interests through presentations and written reports. The class will also allow students to engage in a writing workshop and facilitation exercise in which their peers will provide feedback related to students’ final projects. Finally, throughout the course we will focus on emerging questions related to the doctoral journey, providing an open space to share, discuss, and contemplate the various roles and opportunities available to graduates of the program.

Course Objectives:

Through participation in the Proseminar, students are expected to:

1. Develop a critical understanding of the major issues and questions facing American higher education today;
2. Apply a critical lens to each of the course topics, with a particular emphasis on understanding the various dimension of justice and equity that underlie these issues;
3. Formulate a research topic based on individual interests and develop both written and presentation skills necessary in communicating their ideas;
4. Understand the goals, norms, and practices of the doctoral journey.

**IDEA Learning Outcomes:**

The following learning outcomes are considered either essential or important based on the IDEA course rating system:

1. Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view
2. Learning to apply course material (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions)
3. Developing skill in expressing oneself orally or in writing
4. Learning how to find and use resources for answering questions or solving problems

**Conceptual Framework:**

A conceptual framework that emphasizes “Social Action through Education” guides instructional, extracurricular, and professional activities at Loyola’s School of Education (see [www.luc.edu/education/mission/](http://www.luc.edu/education/mission/) for more information). The Loyola School of Education faculty are dedicated to promoting social action through education by developing students’ knowledge, skills, ethics, and service to improve educational opportunities for all members of society. This course contributes to the realization of this framework by asking students to apply a social justice lens to each of the major issues facing higher education today, with an emphasis on deconstructing the underlying assumptions that makeup a particular argument or perspective on an issue. In this regard, students will contemplate important questions about who can afford higher education, who has access to higher education, and how different advances in higher education serve to maintain or disrupt historical patterns of inequality that constitute the history of American higher education.

**Diversity:**

Loyola’s School of Education is committed to the value of diversity in all of its courses. This course presents and encourages diverse perspectives on issues related to course topics, with particular attention to how current practices and policies can serve to reproduce or eradicate social inequalities present in our current higher education system.
Technology:

This course will rely heavily on technology offered through the Sakai course management system. Students will be expected to maintain an electronic blog throughout the course and access different electronic content and media through the course management system. Additionally, students will incorporate technology in their individual teach-in sessions and receive additional instructional support in accessing electronic resources and using online technologies.

Livetext Dispositions:

All students in the course will be assessed across the following dispositional areas: **professionalism, inquiry, and social justice**. The rubric can be found on Livetext and will be assessed at the end of the semester (see LiveText for more information about using LiveText).

Course Pedagogy:

This is a student-centered, collaborative course, and as such, each of your unique backgrounds and past experiences are considered essential in understanding how you approach, frame, and interpret the educational content covered in this course. Based on the concepts embedded in constructivist learning theory, collaborative learning, and self-authorship, I see myself as a guide, tutor, and facilitator in the learning process, helping each of you achieve your individual learning objectives through a variety of teaching and learning mediums. I understand and acknowledge that we all learn differently and express our mastery of learning topics in forms that are often unique to the individual learner. Therefore, my expectations of each of you will vary based on your expressed learning styles and objectives for this course. Ultimately, I see this class as a community of scholars who are both teachers and learners albeit at varying stages of development based on our own life experiences, interests, and motivations. As such, the class will be focused around the following learning tenets:

1. Shared responsibility among all learners (both teachers and students) for constructing and making sense of knowledge within a community of practice;

2. Students active involvement in all phases of the learning process, with a special emphasis on “thinking out loud” in class;

3. An appreciation of and support for multiple perspectives on knowledge and practice as well as opportunities to apply such understandings to relevant, open-ended, and realistic contexts;
4. An emphasis on the critical role that peers play in the learning process, especially as it relates to helping one another decode, make meaning, and promote understanding of the subject.

Course Expectations:

I expect each of you to take an active role in your learning both inside and outside of the classroom. Central to the achievement of this goal is an expectation that each of you will actively participate in classroom discussions and activities that are designed to help you achieve mastery of the varying topics related to the course. Thus, attendance is essential to the learning process and repeated absences will likely hinder your achievement of the objectives for this course. You have a responsibility to our classroom community to come to class prepared having made an earnest attempt to read the assigned readings and complete assignments by their respective due dates. My hope is that you will not merely try to complete the readings for the sake of completion but that you will take the time to critically read and reflect in order foster your own development and to stimulate classroom discussions. Each of you will be expected to participate in a number of group-based discussions and activities and I ask that you take this role seriously and become a productive colleague and collaborator throughout this course.

Required Texts (Available at the Loyola University Bookstore):


Recommended Text: (Available through Amazon and other retail outlets)


In addition to these texts, I have assigned a number of required and recommended readings that are available on the Sakai course website. Students
should also regularly review *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Ed* in order to promote informed discussions about current events related to course topics.

It is also recommended that students become familiar with the following publications in the higher education field (although there are certainly other journals to explore in addition to this list):

2. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis
3. Journal of College Student Development
4. Journal of Diversity in Higher Education
5. Journal of Higher Education
6. Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice
7. Review of Higher Education
8. Research in Higher Education
9. Teachers College Record

**Course Assignments:**

1. **Participation (10%)**

   This class is largely dependent on your presence in class (especially given our small numbers), including your participation and engagement in class discussions, exercises, online sessions, and other planned activities. Please come to class prepared, having critically and thoughtfully evaluated the weekly readings as well as engaging in other outside sources that might be beneficial to our class-based discussions.

2. **Weekly blog: Life as a doctoral student (10%)**

   As all of you are in different phases of your doctoral journey, I would like you to keep an active blog (through Sakai) that details your journey, including your thoughts, reactions, and contemplations about your experience as a doctoral student. I want this to be an open and honest space where you can ponder your collective experience as a doctoral student both inside and outside of the classroom. While I will be reading your blogs each week, I will leave it up to each of you to decide whether you want to keep this private or open to others in the classroom (which I would encourage you to consider).

3. **Current Event Facilitation (10%)**

   Given the focus of the class on critical issues facing higher education, each of you will work with a partner and facilitate an open discussion about current events during the weeks of *Feb. 13th, 20th, 27th, and March*
While I encourage you to connect your presentation to the week’s topic, I recognize with a changing administration and many unknowns as they relate to higher education and other pressing social issues, there may be other important topics to be bring to the class’s attention. I do ask that you make an earnest attempt, regardless of the current events you choose to focus on, in connecting your topic to the higher education landscape more broadly. You will have the first half of the course (approximately 1 hour) to lead the discussion (I will facilitate the second half of the class that will focus on the assigned readings). During this time, I encourage you to practice and test out different pedagogical approaches, including the use of media, interactive exercises, and different discussion prompts to engage your classmates and I in the topic. You can certainly include additional readings, but I ask that you keep these concise and provide time during class for participants to engage in these readings. Additionally, I am happy to meet with your group to help you think creatively about this process. I encourage each of you to take risks in how you approach this exercise. As a class, we will spend a few minutes after your presentation debriefing and providing our collective feedback on your facilitation. A sign-up sheet will be provided during the second week of class.

4. Issues Paper: 3-5 pages (20%)

In order to develop a better sense of your individual writing styles, I would like you to develop a short paper in response to the following questions facing higher education today: Given the escalating costs of a college degree, do you think college is worth the investment? Additionally, do you think a college-for-all mentality is the right approach to instill within our educational system? Due date: February 13th at the beginning of class. All assignments should be turned in using the assignment tab in Sakai.

5. Literature review: 20 pages (40%)

The final project for this course is a literature review on a topic of your choice. My hope is that you will choose a topic that is close to your heart and one that you are contemplating as a potential area of dissertation research. The literature review should ideally:

- Provide a good sense of the topic by clearly defining it and then identifying the mains themes or perspectives, key issues and points of contention or consensus;
- Provide a more detailed analysis of critical and significant works in the field, evaluating the quality of the research—and thus one’s confidence in the conclusions—as well as reporting key findings;
- Provide an overview of what is missing, yet to be done, or in need of resolution.
A strong literature review is an important first step to any research project and the cornerstone of your comprehensive examination and a critical aspect of your dissertation. I encourage you to focus on a well-defined topic (versus aiming for an exhaustive review—e.g. almost everything written on the topic) and an in-depth analysis and critique of a finite number of carefully selected, substantive works (15 or so depending on your topic). Please provide me with a written prospectus of your topic (1-2 pages) by Monday, February 27th. The final paper will be due at the beginning of the last day of class on May 1st. Please submit your assignment using the assignment tab in Sakai.

6. **Teach-In/Writing Workshop: 1 hour session based on your research interests and literature review project (10%)**

In addition to your literature review, each of you will be charged with teaching the class about your topic during the final four weeks of the semester. You will each have approximately thirty minutes to introduce your topic to the class, and I will leave the format of your teach-in to your own creative style and pedagogical interests. During the remaining 30 minutes, we will engage in a writing workshop in which your classmates and I will provide feedback on a writing sample you provide based on your final paper (please provide the writing sample to your classmates and I one week prior to your assigned session with some flexibility given to the first group of presenters). Given that some of you will present much earlier than others, I ask that you provide a writing sample of a minimum of five pages and no longer than ten pages in total. We will collectively develop the guidelines for providing feedback, and you will then have the option of using this feedback to revise your work before it is due on May 1. The dates of these teach-ins/writing workshops will occur on April 3rd, 10th, 17th, and 24th. A sign-up sheet will be provided during the second week of class.

**Evaluation Procedures:**

The following criteria and procedures will be used to evaluate your work in this course.

**Evaluation Criteria:**

1. Evidence during class discussion and in written assignments that course readings have been completed on time and with thought;
2. Effective use of relevant literature and its vocabulary and frameworks to support claims;
3. Balanced and critical discussion of ideas and arguments, with particular attention to underlying values and assumptions;
4. Original thinking that adds insight;
5. Consistent, well-prepared class attendance and participation;
6. On-time submission of assignments;
7. Correct grammar, spelling and punctuation; concise writing (i.e., not wordy).

The most common problems that detract from grades on assignments are:

1. Superficiality – Lack of adequate thought and substance, usually due to inadequate time spent on the assignment;
2. Inattention to instructions – Each assignment includes detailed instructions that should be read carefully before starting the project and reviewed again before submitting your work;
3. Poor editing – particularly “typos” and grammatical errors
4. Lateness – See policy below.

Note that all of these problems can be reduced by starting projects early, and the first two can be reduced by revising and asking others to review drafts.

Due Dates and Policy on Lateness and Absences:

All assignments are due on the dates posted in this syllabus. Late assignments may be penalized one half-grade for each late day (or portion of a day). To avoid a reduction in grade, students with emergency situations must contact me in advance of the class to negotiate an alternative due date. Regular class attendance and active participation in class discussions and activities are a requirement for this course. Therefore, missing class or coming to class unprepared will be reflected in the final participation grade for this course.

Grading:

1. Participation (10%)
2. Weekly blog: Life as a doctoral student (10%)
3. Current Event Facilitation (10%)
4. Issues Paper: 5 pages (20%)
5. Literature review: 20 pages (40%)
6. Teach-In/Writing Workshop: 1 hour session based on your research interests and literature review project (10%)

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Course Outline:

January 23: Course overview and introductions: Building a community of learners

January 30: The lost decade: Just how much trouble is higher education in, really?

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:

February 6: The cost disease in American higher education: How did college become so expensive and is it worth it?

Required Readings:


Recommended Reading:


February 13: Access and opportunity in American higher education: Is higher education a passive agent in the systematic reproduction of White racial privilege across generations?

Required Readings:


**Recommended Readings:**


**February 20: The educational benefits of diversity: What is the future of affirmative action policies in the aftermath of the *Fisher* case?**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**February 27: Globalism and higher education: What steps are necessary in preparing students to become global citizens?**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**

March 13 (Online Session—NASPA Conference): The digital age in higher education: How has (and will) technology transform the academy?

Required Readings:


Recommended Reading:


March 20: Community colleges: Are they currently meeting the needs of students in the 21st century?

Required Readings:

Recommended Reading:


March 27: For-profit colleges (Online Session—ACPA Conference):
Disruptive technologies or innovations within pre-existing structures?

Required Readings:


2. United States Senate (2012, July 30). *For profit higher education: The failure to safeguard the federal investment and ensure student success (Executive Summary)*. Majority Committee Staff Report and Accompanying Minority Committee Staff Views: U.S. Senate, Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee.

Recommended Readings:


April 3: Student topical presentations and writing workshop

Required Readings: TBA

April 10: Student topical presentations and writing workshop

Required Readings: TBA

April 17: Student topical presentations and writing workshop

Required Readings: TBA

April 24: Student topical presentations and writing workshop
Required Readings: TBA

May 1: Course Conclusion

Required Readings:


***Celebratory breakfast at the home of Mark Engberg and concluding thoughts and reflections on the course.
IDEA Course Evaluation Link for Students
Each course you take in the School of Education is evaluated through the IDEA Campus Labs system. We ask that when you receive an email alerting you that the evaluation is available that you promptly complete it. To learn more about IDEA or to access the website directly to complete your course evaluation go to: http://luc.edu/idea/ and click on STUDENT IDEA LOGIN on the left hand side of the page.

Dispositions
All students are assessed on one or more dispositional areas of growth across our programs: Professionalism, Inquiry, and Social Justice. The instructor in your course will identify the dispositions assessed in this course and you can find the rubrics related to these dispositions in LiveText. For those students in non-degree programs, the rubric for dispositions may be available through Sakai, TaskStream or another platform. Disposition data is reviewed by program faculty on a regular basis. This allows faculty to work with students to develop throughout their program and address any issues as they arise.

LiveText
All students, except those who are non-degree, must have access to LiveText to complete the benchmark assessments aligned to the Conceptual Framework Standards and all other accreditation, school-wide and/or program-wide related assessments. You can access more information on LiveText here: LiveText.

Syllabus Addendum Link

- www.luc.edu/education/syllabus-addendum/

This link directs students to statements on essential policies regarding academic honesty, accessibility, ethics line reporting and electronic communication policies and guidelines. We ask that you read each policy carefully.

This link will also bring you to the full text of our conceptual framework that guides the work of the School of Education – Social Action through Education.