

Reinventing the University

Course Syllabus

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Comm 825.001 – Fall 2023

TH: 3:30–6:20PM

Location: Dey Hall 302

Professor

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Office Hours: by appt.

Course Description

This seminar will take a critical, decolonial look at the development of the modern university. It will include material on the history of the university system, its entwinement with industry and state interests, its role in military efforts, and its current politicized landscape. Along the way, we will also discuss the construction and regulation of professional scientific norms, differential experiences for academics, and pedagogical challenges. Finally, there will be a provocation for what reinvention could look like and how it might be achieved.

Learning Outcomes

1. At the conclusion of the course, students should have a nuanced understanding of the ideological composition of the modern university system and the ways that scientific knowledge is shaped by that context.
2. Additionally, students should have developed analytic skills at “reading” universities through an institutional lens such that they can decipher how social structures and power relations are reproduced by systems of higher education more broadly.
3. Finally, students will produce their own critique of a particular university crisis and propose interventions that could lead to progressive “reinvention” of the university.

Grading*

Critical Reaction Essay #1	20%
Critical Reaction Essay #2	20%
Book Review	20%
Final Paper	30%
Participation	10%

[* A note on grading: Because this seminar aims to spark alternatives to the status quo of harmful university practices, I am open to “ungrading”¹ variations on student assessment. We will discuss these as a group during our first few sessions.]

¹ A few current takes on ungrading: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/grades-can-hinder-learning-what-should-professors-use-instead/>; <https://zeal.kings.edu/zeal/issue/view/2>

Course Expectations

Attendance: This class will be conducted as a seminar with a focus on in-class discussion. Because of this format, you are expected to attend all classes for the full scheduled time. Excessive tardiness will be counted as an absence. Provided you hand in all due materials on time, you can miss one class throughout the semester without penalty. Please let me know in advance if you are planning on missing a class.

- *COVID-19 Note:* If you have a positive COVID diagnosis, please do not come to class. If you don't have a positive diagnosis but are experiencing COVID symptoms, please consider donning a mask and practicing social distancing to the best of your ability.

Reading: Complete all readings (and other assignments) prior to the class meeting for which they are scheduled. Most of the readings will be drawn from the required texts for the course or articles posted to Sakai. You must bring readings (or copies of them) to class for the dates they are assigned. See the course outline below for details.

Participation: Through communication, ideas are formed, revised, borrowed, and developed. It is through argument, description, explanation, and improvisation – within a community – that individual learning flourishes. This course requires full participation (including active listening, facilitating, note-taking, and question-asking) to create an environment of open and shared learning. An effective participant is not someone who simply talks frequently, but someone who reliably offers thoughtful insights that help others to learn.

We will have weekly common readings around which we will focus our discussion. Each class meeting will begin with some contextual background provided by me and then proceed to a brief summary of the arguments made in the reading. Next, we will generate an in-depth critique of the arguments and then pursue questions sparked by the reading or discussion – as guided by the overarching course goals. Each student should prepare for these steps in advance of the seminar meeting.

Discussion Facilitation: Each student will be responsible for facilitating discussion for one week's reading, in partnership with one other student. The facilitation should include two components: (1) highlighting and critically responding to a few dominant themes or concepts of the reading for the week [**10 minutes**] and (2) posing reading-based questions to the rest of the seminar and guiding the discussion [**40 minutes**]. (For the first component, please also produce a 2-page handout that outlines the key themes and some illustrative quotes; these handouts should be copied and shared with your fellow seminar participants.) Please do not exceed the allotted time. This is not the place for summarizing the reading or making abstract connections to social or cultural phenomena—instead, keep the conversation focused on the texts and direct your colleagues toward critical insights about the strengths, tensions, and limitations of the work in question. A sign-up sheet will be distributed during the first few weeks of the semester.

Current Events: You will be responsible to share at least one current event during the semester. Simply find a popular media story that connects in some obvious way to readings for the week and be prepared to explain how it illustrates, complicates, or extends some of the ideas covered in the reading.

Technology: Laptop computers and other portable technologies should be used in class only as learning-facilitation tools. During class, it is not acceptable to play games, send email, surf the web, answer cell phones, text message, or engage in other non-class-related activities. Additionally, you should refrain from wearing headphones or earbuds unless you have permission to use them as part of an approved learning accommodation. Your participation grade will be penalized if you break these rules. Why? Not only do these practices negatively affect your learning and participation, but they also distract others and create an environment of disrespect.

Course Assignments

There will be four writing assignments in the course: two “critical reaction” essays (5-6 pages each) that analyze the reading for two or more weeks, aiming at comparison and integration across texts, leading to the development of a clear normative position on your part; one book review of an assigned book (5 pages); and one final paper (20 pages) that draws upon the course concepts to analyze a particular university crisis of your choosing.

The two essays are due no later than the following dates: (1) September 14; (2) October 12. The book review is due no later than November 9. You are encouraged to submit the essays and book review earlier if you'd like. The final paper is due November 30.

You should meet with me early on in the semester to discuss ideas for your final project paper. This final assignment should be approached as an academic journal article, and it will be evaluated using comparable criteria; for instance, it should be roughly 7,000-8,000 words in length (including footnotes and references) and adhere to typical article genre conventions (e.g., include an abstract, literature review, presentation and analysis of examples, conclusion, references, etc.). Get an early start and maintain steady progress throughout the term in order to avoid the end-of-the-semester rush.

More information about these assignments will be provided in the seminar. No late writing assignments will be accepted.

I reserve the right to distribute unannounced quizzes on the reading or lecture material. Any missed points on these quizzes will be deducted from your participation grade. Quizzes may not be made-up if you are absent.

Academic Honesty

In order to avoid plagiarism, your assignments must provide full citations for all references: direct quotes, summaries, or ideas. Make sure you put all quotes in quotation marks and include references. While you are encouraged to develop your thinking with your peers, you cannot use their material without citing it. Work from other courses will not be accepted. In this course, any unquoted or uncited use of Generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT) text will also be considered a form of plagiarism and subject to the same disciplinary outcomes. Allowing your writing to be copied by another student is also considered cheating. Please review the Honor Code for complete guidelines on academic honesty: <http://studentconduct.unc.edu/>. If you have any questions about how to avoid plagiarism, do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Gender-Fair Language

Language structures thought and action. Biases in language can (and do) naturalize inequalities. Imprecise language also signifies un-interrogated values and sloppy thinking. For all of these reasons, the use of gender-fair language is expected in this course. For example, do not use words like “mankind” or “men” when referring to people in general; alternate between “she” and “he” instead of always using “he,” or construct sentences in the plural instead of the singular so you can use “they” or “them” and avoid the problem altogether. Additionally, please communicate your preferred pronouns and respectfully refer to others using their preferred pronouns.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

The Department of Communication is committed to social justice, equity, and inclusion. This course reflects these commitments by creating an environment that fosters critical thinking, represents diverse viewpoints and ideas, and invites thoughtful, respectful, analysis of the issues and ideas that are discussed in the course. Each of us has the right be recognized for who we are, referred to in the identities that we inhabit, and included and represented in the course. Acknowledging and mobilizing diversity is a powerful resource for learning and growth. At the same time, we must be respectful of any of our differences whether they are due to race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, nationality, religion, and/or culture. We all make mistakes in what we say or even what we do not say, and it’s important to hold each other accountable in a respectful way that can ensure that the classroom space is one where everyone contributes—regardless of whether it is always comfortable or easy.

Counseling & Psychological Services

CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: <https://caps.unc.edu/> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more. (source: Student Safety and Wellness Proposal for EPC, Sep 2018)

Title IX Resources

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>. Please contact the University’s Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim – titleixcoordinator@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

Accessibility Resources & Services

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities.

Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state

and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or email ars@unc.edu. (source: <https://ars.unc.edu/faculty-staff/syllabus-statement>)

Required Texts

Ahmed, Sara. 2012. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Fleming, Peter. 2021. *Dark Academia: How Universities Die*. London: Pluto Press.

Harris, Kate Lockwood. 2019. *Beyond the Rapist: Title IX and Sexual Violence on US Campuses*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hextrum, Kirsten. 2021. *Special Admission: How College Sports Recruitment Favors White Suburban Athletes*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Kezar, Adrianna, Tom DePaola, and Daniel T. Scott. 2019. *The Gig Academy: Mapping Labor in the Neoliberal University*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Leslie, Stuart W. 1993. *The Cold War and American Science: The Military-Industrial-Academic Complex at MIT and Stanford*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Marez, Curtis. 2020. *University Babylon: Film and Race Politics on Campus*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Robinson, Mark Dennis. 2019. *The Market in Mind: How Financialization is Shaping Neuroscience, Translational Medicine, and Innovation in Biotechnology*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Stein, Sharon. 2022. *Unsettling the University: Confronting the Colonial Foundations of US Higher Education*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Winling, LaDale C. 2018. *Building the Ivory Tower: Universities and Metropolitan Development in the Twentieth Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Course Schedule (subject to revision)

Week One: Introductions

August 24: Introductory Discussion

Readings:

- Fleming, Peter. 2021. *Dark Academia: How Universities Die*. London: Pluto Press.

Week Two: Colonial Contexts

August 31:

Readings:

- Stein, Sharon. 2022. *Unsettling the University: Confronting the Colonial Foundations of US Higher Education*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Skim website: <https://www.landgrabu.org/>

Week Three: Universities and Cities

September 7:

Readings:

- Winling, LaDale C. 2018. *Building the Ivory Tower: Universities and Metropolitan Development in the Twentieth Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Week Four: Filmic Representations and Exclusions

September 14:

Readings:

- Marez, Curtis. 2020. *University Babylon: Film and Race Politics on Campus*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Due: Critical Reaction Essay #1.

Week Five: Military Shaping of Science

September 21:

Readings:

- Leslie, Stuart W. 1993. *The Cold War and American Science: The Military-Industrial-Academic Complex at MIT and Stanford*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Week Six: Entrepreneurial Imperatives

September 28:

Readings:

- Robinson, Mark Dennis. 2019. *The Market in Mind: How Financialization is Shaping Neuroscience, Translational Medicine, and Innovation in Biotechnology*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Week Seven: Confronting Sexual Violence

October 5:

Readings:

- Harris, Kate Lockwood. 2019. *Beyond the Rapist: Title IX and Sexual Violence on US Campuses*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Week Eight: Institutional Knowledge Production

October 12:

Readings:

- Lievrouw, Leah A. 1989. The Invisible College Reconsidered: Bibliometrics and the Development of Scientific Communication Theory. *Communication Research* 16 (5):615-628.
- Hess, David. 1997. *Science Studies: An Advanced Introduction*. New York: New York University Press, pp. 59-64.

Recommended:

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1975. The specificity of the scientific field and the social conditions of the progress of reason. *Social Science Information* 14 (6):19-47.

Due: Critical Reaction Essay #2.

Week Nine: Fall Break

October 19:

- No Class.

Week Ten: Interrogating Diversity

October 26:

Readings:

- Ahmed, Sara. 2012. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Khalid, Amna, and Jeffrey Aaron Snyder. 2020. Why diversity training on campus is likely to disappoint. *The Conversation*, August 5. Available from <https://theconversation.com/why-diversity-training-on-campus-is-likely-to-disappoint-143644> [accessed August 12, 2023].

Week Eleven: Sports and Inequality

November 2:

Readings:

- Hextrum, Kirsten. 2021. *Special Admission: How College Sports Recruitment Favors White Suburban Athletes*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Week Twelve: Normalized Precarity

November 9:

Readings:

- Kezar, Adrianna, Tom DePaola, and Daniel T. Scott. 2019. *The Gig Academy: Mapping Labor in the Neoliberal University*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Due: Book Review.

Week Thirteen: NCA Conference Week

November 16:

Readings:

- No readings.

Week Fourteen: Thanksgiving

November 23: No Class

Week Fifteen:

November 30:

Due: Final Papers.

Credit: The inspiration for this course came from Shannon Mattern's workshop/seminar, "Redesigning the Academy" -- <https://redesigningacademy.wordsinspace.net/spring2022/>