History of Higher Education in the U.S.
EDUC 265/165/ History 158C/Am Stud 165
Winter 2024
Stanford Graduate School of Education
Wednesdays, 9:30 AM - 12:20 PM
Building 160, Room 323
3 to 5 units

Professor
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Course Description
Higher education was central to the emergence of modern societies, cities, and nation states. The premise of this course is that institutions of higher learning have long emerged from contracts in which they receive autonomy and patronage in exchange for services to society. A series of different contracts iterated by academic founders in the United States from the early Republic through the last quarter of the twentieth century became the basis of different institutional designs.

We will use the modern research university as the primary example of this process of institutional change against which we will view the broader currents of higher education, including the liberal arts college, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), and professional schools. Modern research universities, like their nation state hosts, developed in a globalizing world. Our assumptions about credentials, funding, and the organization of knowledge are tested when viewed from a wider lens. Topics include the competitive dynamics among cities, cultural transfer, global competition, and selective admissions policies.

Questions that we will take up include: What makes the US model distinctive? How does the university enrich our understanding of the emergence of urbanization, nationalization, and globalization? And what does history reveal about the university’s capacity to evolve? We will consider what sources and methods are available for the study of the university and how these accounts might inform the public conversation today.
Course Objectives

By the end of the course students will:

- Appreciate the role universities play in urban, national, and international development.
- Understand the methods and sources used to study the history of education.
- Use historical insight to inform current policy debates about the cost, value, purposes, and appropriate patronage of higher education.

Course Requirements

Students will submit weekly online written responses to the readings and participate actively in discussion. The instructor will provide a brief overview at the beginning of class and the bulk of class will be devoted to the discussion of secondary and primary texts. The instructor will also tap students to recap the previous week's discussion.

At the end of the quarter, students will submit a final project which adheres to one of the following criteria. You will check in during week 3 to discuss your project ideas.

Option 1 (3 or 4 credits): Compose a book review essay which discusses 2-3 books on one of the following topics in the history of higher education: “Identity, Admissions, and/or Inclusion and Belonging in the University,” “Extracurricular Life,” and “Universities as a Private and/or Public Good.” Subtopics and potential sources will be provided in a separate Google doc. Be sure to pick a subtopic that aligns with your current scholarly and professional needs. Students will write an essay which synthesizes the books’ arguments and makes an original argument concerning the books’ contributions, strengths, and weaknesses. Examples of scholarly review essays will be provided.

Option 2 (5 credits): Same as option 1, but the essay must analyze 4-5 book sources.

Option 3 (5 credits): Students will write an essay on “Memory and How Institutions Remember their Past.” This option is more theoretical than options 1 and 2 and will require more consultation with professor and/or TA.

Evaluation and Attendance

Attendance is mandatory and students are permitted only one missed class without penalty. After that, the attendance grade will be reduced by the proportion of classes missed. Grades will be based on the thorough completion of weekly readings and seminar participation as well as the final project.

Additionally, all students are expected to consult with the professor at least once during the quarter.

Grade Breakdown:
Attendance = 10%
Participation = 10%
Peer Review = 10%
Discussion Board = 30%
Final Paper (Option 1 or 2) = 40%

**Academic Integrity**

Please familiarize yourself with the Stanford University Honor Code, itself an artifact of university history [here](#). Students will be expected to abide by the code. Violations to it will lead to no credit and possible further disciplinary action.

**Academic Accommodations**

Students who require academic accommodation based on disability should initiate a request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE) [here](#). Please reach out if an aspect of the course or assignments pose a challenge to your learning.

**Secondary sources:**

Nearly all of the primary and secondary sources assigned are available online or on Canvas, under the “Files” tab for the appropriate week. The selection focuses on books that make arguments about specific periods and reflect a particular methodological approach. While there is no required textbook, it is recommended that those students who are not familiar with the history of American higher education consult as an overview, Roger Geiger’s *The History of American Higher Education: Learning and Culture from the Founding to World War II* (Princeton University Press, 2015) or John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019). These sources are especially helpful for those who are unsure what they want to focus on for their final projects.

**Education and Humanities Workshop:**

[The Education and Humanities Workshop](#), convened by Professors Emily J. Levine and Mitchell L. Stevens at the Stanford Humanities Center, invites scholars both internal and external to Stanford University to present cutting-edge scholarship 2-3 times each quarter. The goal of the workshop is to create a long-term network and interdisciplinary space on campus that serves a previously untapped group: humanists who are interested in the rigorous study of educational ideas and institutions.

As students of the history of education, you are strongly encouraged to attend these workshops, which convene Fridays at the Stanford Humanities Center, 10:30am-noon. This winter quarter, we have four guests (titles forthcoming):

February 2: Anna Krücken and Anna Kosmützky

February 9: Susanne Antje Schmidt
February 23: Ansley Erickson

March 1: Matthew Kelley

March 8: Kabria Baumgartner

These workshops serve as valuable enrichment opportunities for students in this course. Additionally, these events can also serve as make-up opportunities. Students can attend one workshop event to make up one missed class period. If a student misses a discussion post, a one-page written reflection of the event can serve to make up the assignment.

Tentative Course Outline

* Designates reading is available as a PDF in the files folder in Canvas.

**Wednesday, 1/10**

**Week 1. Introductions, Approaches, Definitions – The University between Nations and the World**


**Read:** Ernst Kantorowicz, “The Fundamental Issue: Documents and Marginal Notes on the University of California Loyalty Oath,” Statement Read Before the Academic Senate, June 14, 1949 [link].

**Wednesday, 1/17**

**Week 2. Roots of Higher Education in Europe**

**Read:** Emily J. Levine, Introduction and Chapters 1, in *Allies and Rivals German-American Exchange and the Rise of the Modern Research University* (University of Chicago Press, 2021).*


**Read:** Robert Anderson, “Before and After Humboldt: European Universities Between the Eighteenth and the Nineteenth Centuries,” *History of Higher

Wednesday, 1/24

Week 3. Roots of American Higher Education

Read: Craig Steven Wilder, Prologue, Chapter 4, and Chapter 6, Ebony & Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America’s Universities (Bloomsbury, 2013).*


Sign up for individual meetings

Wednesday, 1/31

Week 4. Cooperation, Competition, and Knowledge Exchange

Read: Emily J. Levine, Chapters 2–3, in Allies and Rivals German- American Exchange and the Rise of the Modern Research University (University of Chicago Press, 2021).*

Read: The Morrill Act (July 2, 1962), “An Act Donating Public Lands to the Several States and Territories which may provide Colleges for the Benefit of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts,” [link].


**Individual meetings about final project ideas**

**Wednesday, 2/7**

**Week 5. Group Dynamics and Meritocracy**

**Read:** Harold Wechsler and Steven Diner, Chapters 1–4 on “African Americans,” “Ethnic Minorities,” “Streetcar Colleges” and “Minority Student Experiences,” in *Unwelcome Guests: A History of Access to American Higher Education,* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021).*


**Read:** Ethan W. Ris, Chapter 5, “Separate and Unequal,” In *Other People’s Colleges.* University of Chicago Press, 2022.*

**Turn in 1-2 page plan for final project**

**Wednesday, 2/14**

**Week 6. Credentialing and Professionalization**


**Wednesday, 2/21**

**Week 7. Selective Admissions, Affirmative Action, and Parallel Systems**

**Read:** Marcia Graham Synnott, Introduction and Chapters 3–4, in *The Half Opened Door:...*


**Wednesday, 2/28**

Week 8. The Cold War, Massification, and University Leadership


**Wednesday, 3/6**

Week 9. The Multiversity, Free Speech, and Black Activism

Read: Clark Kerr, Chapter 1, “The Idea of a Multiversity,” in *The Uses of the University* (Harvard University Press, 1963).*


**Wednesday, 3/13**
Week 10. The Present and Future of Higher Education

Students Will Select Two of the Following Readings:


**Read:** Ronald J. Daniels, “What Universities Owe Democracy,” in *Democracy*, Spring 2022 [link].


**Listen:** Tressie McMillan Cottom Interviews Louise Seamster for the “Ezra Klein Show” November 2, 2021 [link].

**Due:** Submit draft of final project for peer review before class

**In class:** Peer review

**Final paper due on Canvas by 5 PM on Tuesday, March 19.**