

HC 232H: HOW UNIVERSITIES WORK
University of Oregon – Winter 2021 – CRN [22608](#)

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Meeting times: MW 10:15-11:45 (REMOTE) in [our Zoom classroom](#)

Course website: <https://canvas.uoregon.edu/courses/170995>

Office hours: Use this [signup sheet](#), then meet me in [my Zoom office](#)

Course description

The university is one of the world’s longest-lived institutions, yet those of us who work and study in universities typically spend little time thinking about their history, and how that history affects how we work, study, live, and think today. But throughout their existence, universities have continually taken on new missions, mandates, and functions. They have added research to teaching, accreted massive medical centers, and shed their prior elite status to embrace mass education. Today, higher learning has come to be seen as indispensable to democratic citizenship and career success in a rapidly diversifying and globalizing world.

In this course, we will focus on changes in U.S. higher education from the 1960s until today, asking how we got to where we are now. Readings will require you to engage with and comment upon facets of university life that may or may not be familiar to you, but whose histories are invariably surprising and sometimes discomfiting. Early on, you will choose a major public research university in consultation with me, and continue to study it throughout the term. Exercises each week will help you “peek under the hood” at the inner workings of university administration, campus politics, student life, and higher education policy—typically by impersonating a university leader and writing in their voice, from an informed perspective.

Near the end of the course, armed with your newfound expertise, you will all form a mock consulting firm, organized in teams, and charged with envisioning the future of the public research university at this unsettling moment in history. You will then present your findings to a mock Board of Trustees meeting, answering questions posed by real university administrators.

Expected learning outcomes

- Acquire a basic understanding of U.S. higher education, with a specific focus on public research universities and their histories over the past 60 years.
- Learn how universities are organized academically and administratively, with specific attention to teaching, research, student life, faculty management, budgets and finance, governance and policy, leadership, and national/international competition.
- Learn how to research the histories and current operations of specific universities using primary sources, including materials accessible on public universities’ own websites.
- Develop and practice skills of analytical close reading, critical thinking, clear and compelling writing, and articulate discussion and debate.

Requirements

- Six (6) weekly 250+ word *blog posts* on the assigned readings, due on Canvas at [Discussions](#) by 10:00am Mondays on 1/11, 1/18, 1/25, 2/1, 2/8, and 2/15 (40% total)
- Six (6) weekly *exercises*, due on Canvas at [Assignments](#) by 10:00am Wednesdays on 1/13, 1/20, 1/27, 2/3, 2/10, and 2/17 (40% total)
- One *written report* of roughly 1250-1500 words due on Canvas at [Assignments](#) by 10:00am Monday on 3/8 (20% ; detailed instructions will be given on 2/22)

Class logistics

Because the pandemic has upended regular life, I have made the rhythm of work in this class as stable and predictable as I can. I will still try to keep things lively and varied! Here's the plan:

Mondays at 10:15am Attend required* Zoom meeting; *blog posts* typically due

Wednesdays at 10:15am Attend required* Zoom meeting; *exercises* typically due

Thursdays after 12:00pm Check [Panopto Recordings](#) for my 30 min. preview of next week
I will give prompts for the *blog posts* and tips on the *exercises*

*Zoom Meetings will be recorded and posted (at the "[Cloud Recordings](#)" tab) for those unable to attend. I will try to keep them under an hour, and make the last half hour *optional* for those with questions or who want to chat. You can also schedule 1-on-1 office hours on my [signup sheet](#).

Zoom etiquette: the whole Zoom experience is less dehumanizing if you can stand to keep your camera on. Please stay muted unless you're talking. Don't forget to unmute when you do speak up, or feel free to use the chat feature. You can raise your hand either physically or digitally, whichever is easier. We will often be using breakout rooms for work in 3-5 person groups.

Readings: There are no books to buy. All the readings are posted on Canvas as PDFs, filed by last name at [Files > READINGS](#). Both the Monday blog posts and the Wednesday exercises require you not just to *do* the readings in advance but also to *engage* with them creatively! Consider reading ahead—but not more than one week, since I may make changes as we go.

Grading

All items are graded as follows. Active class engagement, in whatever form (i.e. on Zoom or otherwise), may improve your individual assignment grades and/or final course grade.

- | | |
|---|---|
| A | Engages creatively with the assignment's underlying rationale—and the readings |
| B | Competently fulfills all aspects of the assignment, including use of the readings |
| C | Gaps/problems (e.g. poor writing, superficial analysis, doesn't engage readings) |
| D | Highly deficient (garbled, incoherent, missing critical elements) |

SCHEDULE

NOTES: (1) *AHET* = Wilson Smith and Thomas Bender (eds.), *American Higher Education Transformed, 1940-2005* (Baltimore, 2008).

(2) An asterisk (*) below means: treat this as a primary source, i.e. not necessarily as a scholarly authority or objective reference, but as a reflection of its historical context. For these readings, pay extra close attention to the author's identity and agenda, the nuances of their language, and the publication year and venue.

Week 1 Liberal ideals and practical realities

1/4 *William Cronon, "Only Connect," *The American Scholar* 67 no. 4 (1998), 73-80

ALSO: See if you can get in the habit of regularly reading the [Chronicle of Higher Education](#) (UO login required) and [InsideHigherEd.com](#) to keep abreast of current trends in higher education.

1/6 David F. Labaree, *A Perfect Mess: The Unlikely Ascendancy of American Higher Education* (Chicago, 2017), 1-24, 71-93

Andrew Abbott, "The Disciplines and the Future," in Steven Brint (ed.), *The Future of the City of Intellect* (Stanford, 2002), 205-10, 215-20

ALSO: Pick a major public research university to use as a touchstone throughout the term—i.e. as a basis for subsequent weekly exercises. Your chosen university should be an [AAU-member](#) public university (sort [membership list](#) on "Control" = "Public") and/or belong to the top 40 *public national universities* according to [US News & World Report](#) (USNWR). Browse your university's website extensively, making bookmarks to return to. Pay close attention to administration, academics, admissions, student life, and anything else that seems relevant.

Week 2 The multiversity and its discontents (1960s)

1/11 *Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University* (Cambridge, MA, 2001 [1963]), 1-34

Nancy Weiss Malkiel, *"Keep the Damned Women Out": The Struggle for Coeducation* (Princeton, 2016), 3-27

1/13 *"A Master Plan for Higher Education in California" (1960), *AHET*, 97-100

Exercise: As a vociferous, activist Student Council President at your chosen university in early 2020 (i.e. pre-pandemic), write a 5-10 minute speech marking

the 60th anniversary of the California Master Plan in which you recall its ideals and reimagine them—realistically—for the present day, and for your chosen state. Your aim is to create a media event that will persuade state legislators and/or private donors to better support your institution and particularly its students. You should do some research on the academic missions, finances, and administrative organization of public universities in your chosen state, with particular attention to their history of state support (or neglect) and to the political traditions of the state in general.

Week 3 The decade of the student (1970s)

1/18 *MLK Holiday – no Zoom meeting, but blog posts are still due*

Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Chicago, 1987), 245-73

*Frank Newman et al., *Report on Higher Education* (Washington, DC, 1971), vii-ix, 2-3, 8-11, 17-21

1/20 *Jean W. Campbell, “Women Drop Back In” (1973), *AHET*, 116-18

**“El Plan de Santa Barbara: A Chicano Plan for Higher Education” (1969), *AHET*, 141-43

Exercise: As Director of Communications for the Admissions Office at your chosen university, design a 2-3 page recruitment brochure for married mothers over 30 or Chicano students (your choice) that will attract them to enroll for a B.A. degree or night school extension program. Assume that the year is still around 1975 (i.e. not 2021) and adopt the lingo, imagery, and ideals prevalent at that time, as best you can tell from the assigned readings plus any outside research you may want to do. For extra credit, research the demographics of your chosen state at the time (i.e. how many married mothers and/or Chicano students you could reasonably expect to enroll with, at best, a few scholarships to hand out).

Week 4 Capitalism, canons, and the purposes of knowledge (1980s)

1/25 Roger Geiger, *Research and Relevant Knowledge: American Research Universities Since World War II* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2008), 301-09

Martin Kenney, *Biotechnology: The University-Industrial Complex* (New Haven, 1986), 28-31, 90-106

1/27 *Nathan Huggins, “Afro-American Studies: A Report to the Ford Foundation” (1985), *AHET*, 130-36

*Dinesh D'Souza, *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus* (New York, 1991), 59-93

Exercise: As a Professor of Sociology circa 1991, propose a curriculum for a new Afro-American Studies minor that would satisfy Huggins and pacify (or at least not enrage) D'Souza *and* also pass muster with your University Senate. You will need to do some research into how your chosen university's curriculum approval process works. Assume it hasn't changed since the 1990s. (Usually, college-and university-level committees make recommendations to the full Senate before a final vote.) If your proposal doesn't provoke heated debates along the way, and may even an ambush at the very end, you're not doing it right. For extra credit, see if you can find real faculty Senate debates [like this one](#) (which allegedly led to an altercation between two UO professors).

Week 5 The Management asserts itself, corporate-style (1990s)

2/1 *John V. Lombardi, *How Universities Work* (Baltimore, 2013), 1-23, 39-44, 55-60, 86-95, 107-25

David L. Kirp, *Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line: The Marketing of Higher Education* (Harvard, 2003), 110-29

2/3 Ronald G. Ehrenberg, *Tuition Rising: Why College Costs so Much* (Cambridge, MA, 2002), 50-61

*Ellen Chaffee and Lawrence Sherr, *Quality: Transforming Postsecondary Education* (Washington, DC, 1992), 1-9, 79-91

Exercise: As Provost (chief academic officer, also sometimes called “Senior [or [Executive] Vice President for Academic Affairs”) of your chosen university, prepare a PowerPoint presentation to your Board of Trustees explaining how you propose to improve your institution's academic quality *and* move it up in the USNWR rankings. Your presentation should consist of roughly 10 slides with just the right sprinkling of bullet points, statistics, anecdotes, and images to engage a trustee, who is probably an accomplished businessman or -woman, and has just eaten lunch. Each slide should include 2-4 good sentences of notes to yourself, both to remind you of your argument and to provide further details if asked.

Week 6 Meritocracy vs. diversity, excellence vs. access (2000s)

2/8 *Michael M. Crow and William B. Dabars, *Designing the New American University* (Baltimore, 2015), 240-97

2/10 **University of California Regents v. Bakke* (1978), *AHET*, 442-46 (skim)

**Gratz v. Bollinger* and *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003), *AHET*, 446-50

Exercise: As your university's General Counsel (top lawyer), write a concise 3-4 page memo to the president's cabinet explaining how, under the Supreme Court's 2003 rulings, your institution can (or cannot) follow its strategic goals around diversity, equity, and inclusion. You will need to do some research to find out exactly what those goals are, paying close attention to those related to student admissions and faculty hiring. For extra credit, you can also follow the current case, [*Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*](#) and delve into specific issues concerning Asian-Americans, who contribute to non-White diversity but are statistically *overrepresented*, relative to the general population, under many meritocratic (e.g. SAT- or GPA-based) admissions schemes. (Note that a "cabinet" includes the campus president or chancellor; provost, other vice-presidents—especially, for these purposes, the Chief Diversity Officer; and possibly other top university officials.)

Week 7 The Great Recession and the limits to reform and innovation (2010s)

2/15 *Holden Thorp and Buck Goldstein, *Engines of Innovation: The Entrepreneurial University in the Twenty-First Century* (Chapel Hill, 2010), ix-xiv, 1-21, 38-84

2/17 John G. Cross and Edie N. Goldenberg, *Off-Track Profs: Nontenured Teachers in Higher Education* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), 35-51

Mark Garrett Cooper and John Marx, *Media U: How the Need to Win Audiences Has Shaped Higher Education* (New York, 2018), 198-207

Exercise: As Dean of Arts and Sciences at your chosen institution, you have been promised \$5 million a year for each of the next five years to improve student retention and graduation rates. You get to decide how many tenure-track faculty (at \$100,000/year), non-tenure-track instructors (at \$50,000/year), and academic advisors (student services professionals, at \$35,000/year) to hire. Write up a budget to send to the provost and attach a 2-3 page justificatory memo to it. Tips: (1) don't tempt the provost to fire you for risking your university's ranking, which depends a great deal on faculty research; (2) don't anger state legislators, who care far more about in-state students and the jobs they get after college than they do about research in the liberal arts; (3) add 50% in health insurance and pension benefits to the salary figures above arrive at the true cost of each employee.

Week 8 Preparing consultants' reports

2/22 Readings TBA (see below)

2/24 Consultants caucus in groups (see below)

During this week and next, the students in this class will be transformed into a higher education consulting firm. That firm has recently been hired by the Board of Trustees of a prominent Pacific Northwest public research university to help it plan for a deeply uncertain future. On Monday, I will present and explain the Trustees' "charge" to you, the consultants, and answer any questions you may have. On Wednesday, you will caucus in four (4) teams, each tasked with a different aspect of the charge, and I will hop from team to team to provide coaching.

Week 9 Mock Board of Trustees meeting: consultants present

3/1 Teams 1 and 2 present to Board subcommittee on Academic and Student Affairs

3/3 Teams 3 and 4 present to Board subcommittee on Finance and Facilities

Each group must present orally to the Board of Trustees on its appointed day, then submit its written report to me by next Monday. Pending availability, I will invite several practicing academic administrators from across the United States (members of my own [ACE Fellows cohort](#)) to grill you on your presentations over Zoom.

Week 10 Where are we now and where are we going? (2020s)

3/8 Consultants' written reports due

Debrief on mock Trustees meeting (and watch the [real UO Board of Trustees meeting](#) scheduled for Monday and Tuesday)

3/10 Wrap-up

We'll discuss whatever's in the [Chronicle of Higher Education](#) and [InsideHigherEd.com](#)

Other policies and resources

Accessible education

Please let me know within the first two weeks of the term if you need assistance to fully participate in the course. Participation includes access to lectures, web-based information, in-class activities, and exams. The Accessible Education Center (aec.uoregon.edu) is part of the Office of Academic Advising. Students can request an instructor notification letter that outlines possible accommodations and adjustments to class design that will enable better access. For additional assistance with access or disability-related questions or concerns, contact the Accessible Education Center.

Academic misconduct

The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students' obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act.

Discrimination and harrassment

Students experiencing any form of prohibited discrimination or harassment, including sex or gender-based violence, may seek information and resources at safe.uoregon.edu, respect.uoregon.edu, or investigations.uoregon.edu or contact the non-confidential Title IX office/Office of Civil Rights Compliance (541-346-3123), or Dean of Students offices (541-346-3216), or call the 24-7 hotline 541-346-SAFE for help.

As a department head, I am a “[designated reporter](#)” when it comes to matters involving student disclosures of sex and gender-based harassment and violence. For information about my reporting obligations as an employee, please see [Employee Reporting Obligations](#) on the Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance (OICRC) website. I am also a mandatory reporter of child abuse. Please find more information at [Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect](#).

Still more course policies

My standard policies regarding attendance, making up work, classroom etiquette, use of technology in class, paper formatting and citation, and recording of lectures and sharing of notes are [posted online](#). Feel free to ask me if you have any questions or concerns at all.