



EDLF 8640: INEQUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Instructor

Joshua Travis Brown, Ph.D.

Class: Synchronous via Zoom Wednesdays 5:00-6:30p; Asynchronous via Hypothesis

Zoom link: <https://virginia.zoom.us/j/3236306571>

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Description

Why is there so much inequality in college entry and completion? How can higher education provide opportunity while sorting, selecting, and certifying students? What is the relationship between higher education and economic prosperity on individual and national levels? By addressing these, and related questions, we will examine the complex interplay between inequality and opportunity and the relationship between higher education and the society at large. Through readings and course discussions, you will not only become familiar with the main theoretical propositions, and empirical evidence pertaining to higher education, but also engage with diverse perspectives and think critically about a range of pressing issues in higher education.

Learning Objectives

The core mission of this course is to illuminate the contours of inequality in higher education and provide you with the tools to competently engage in discussions regarding contemporary debates in higher education. By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Understand the theories of social stratification in higher education
- Examine patterns of inequality through a sociological lens
- Critically evaluate claims, policies, and practices in higher education
- Build compelling, evidence-based arguments about higher education issues
- Appreciate the complexity of contemporary debates in higher education
- Recognize the importance of individual and collective decision-making

Instructional Methods

This is a discussion course. We will be using Zoom for the *synchronous* portion of the weekly class period, Hypothesis for the *asynchronous* portion of the weekly class period, and CANVAS for posting readings and assignments.

Required Course Texts

- Armstrong, E., & Hamilton, L. (2013). *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*. Harvard University Press. Free via UVA Library: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy01.its.virginia.edu/lib/uva/detail.action?docID=3301285>
- Bowen, W., Chingos, M., & McPherson, M. (2010). *Crossing the Finish Line: Completing College at America's Public Universities*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7rp39>
- Jack, A. A. (2019). *The Privileged Poor: How Elite Colleges are Failing Disadvantaged Students*. Harvard University Press. Free via UVA Library: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy01.its.virginia.edu/lib/uva/detail.action?docID=5649585>
- Stevens, M. (2009). *Creating a Class: College Admissions and the Education of Elites*. Harvard University Press. Free via UVA Library: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy01.its.virginia.edu/lib/uva/detail.action?docID=3300046>

Required Articles

Other required course readings listed on the syllabus will be available on Canvas.

Alfonso, M. (2006). The impact of community college attendance on baccalaureate attainment. *Research in Higher Education*, 47(8), 873-903.

Arum, R., & Roksa, J. (2011). Channeling students' energies toward learning. In *Academically adrift: Limited learning on college campuses* (pp.91-120). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Arum, R., Roksa, J., A Cook, A., & Kim, J. (2014). Making it in the labor market. In R. Arum & J. Roksa (Eds.), *Aspiring adults adrift: Tentative transitions of college graduates* (pp. 53-81). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Bettinger, E. P., & Baker, R. B. (2014). The effects of student coaching: An evaluation of a randomized experiment in student advising. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 36(1), 3-19.

Binder, A. J., Davis, D. B., & Bloom, N. (2016). Career Funneling: How Elite Students Learn to Define and Desire "Prestigious" Jobs. *Sociology of Education*, 89(1), 20-39.

Cabrera, A. F., & La Nasa, S. M. (2000). Understanding the college-choice process. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, (107), 5-22.

Carnevale, A. P., & Strohl, J. (2014). How increasing college access is increasing inequality, and what to do about it. In R. Kahlenberg (Ed.), *Rewarding Strivers: Helping Low-Income Students Succeed in College* (pp. 122-144). New York, NY: Century Foundation Books.

- Chetty, R., Friedman, J. N., Saez, E., Turner, N., & Yagan, D. (2017). Mobility Report Cards: The Role of Colleges in Intergenerational Mobility.
- Collier, P. J., & Morgan, D. L. (2008). "Is that paper really due today?": differences in first-generation and traditional college students' understandings of faculty expectations. *Higher Education*, 55(4), 425-446.
- Grodsky, E., & Riegle-Crumb, C. (2010). Those who choose and those who don't: Social background and college orientation. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 627(1), 14-35.
- Hamilton, L. T. (2016). College outsourced. In *Parenting to a Degree: How Family Matters for College Women's Success* (pp. 187-209). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Hamilton, L. T., Roksa, J., & Nielsen, K. (2018). Providing a "Leg Up": Parental Involvement and Opportunity Hoarding in College. *Sociology of Education*, 91(2), 111-131.
- Kingston, P. W., Hubbard, R., Lapp, B., Schroeder, P., & Wilson, J. (2003). Why education matters. *Sociology of Education*, 76(1), 53-70.
- Labaree, D. F. (1997). Public goods, private goods: The American struggle over educational goals. *American Educational Research Journal*, 34(1), 39-81.
- Lamott, A. (1994). Shitty First Drafts. In *Bird by bird* (pp. 21-27). New York, NY: Anchor Books.
- Lareau, A. (2011). Class differences in parents' information and intervention in the lives of young adults. In *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life* (2nd ed, pp. 263-311). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Lehmann, W. (2007). "I just didn't feel like I fit in": The role of habitus in university dropout decisions. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 37(2).
- Loes, C. N., Salisbury, M. H., & Pascarella, E. T. (2013). Does race moderate the cognitive impacts of good teaching?
- Loss, C. P. (2014). Institutionalizing in Loco Parentis after *Gott v. Berea College* (1913). *Teachers College Record*, 116(12).
- Lucker, K. (2010). Harvarding. In *Salsa dancing into the social sciences: Research in an age of info-glut* (pp. 92-97). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Manzoni, A., & Streib, J. (2018). The equalizing power of a college degree for first-generation college students: disparities across institutions, majors, and achievement levels. *Research in Higher Education*, 1-29.
- McDonough, P. M. (1997). A cross-case analysis of high school guidance. In *Choosing colleges: How social class and schools structure opportunity* (pp. 89-109). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

- Neumann, A. (2014). Staking a claim on learning: What we should know about learning in higher education and why. *The Review of Higher Education*, 37(2), 249-267.
- Perna, L. W., & Titus, M. A. (2005). The relationship between parental involvement as social capital and college enrollment: An examination of racial/ethnic group differences. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 76(5), 485-518.
- Roderick, M., Coca, V., & Nagaoka, J. (2011). Potholes on the road to college: High school effects in shaping urban students' participation in college application, four-year college enrollment, and college match. *Sociology of Education*, 84(3), 178-211.
- Roksa, J., & Arum, R. (2015). Inequality in skill development on college campuses. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 39, 18-31.
- Roksa, J. & Silver, B. (Forthcoming). Does higher education contribute to inequality? In Kinsley & Rycroft (Eds.) *Inequality in America: Causes and Consequences of the Rich-Poor Divide*, Santa Barbara: Greenwood, ABC-CLIO.
- Rosenbaum, J. E., Deil-Amen, R., & Person, A. E. (2007). Student information problems with college procedures. In *After admission: From college access to college success* (pp. 94-110). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Slaughter, S., Slaughter, S. A., & Rhoades, G. (2004). Undergraduate students and educational markets. In *Academic capitalism and the new economy: Markets, state, and higher education* (pp. 279-304). Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Small, M. L., & Winship, C. (2007). Black students' graduation from elite colleges: Institutional characteristics and between-institution differences. *Social Science Research*, 36(3), 1257-1275.
- Stephens, N. M., Hamedani, M. G., & Destin, M. (2014). Closing the social-class achievement gap: A difference-education intervention improves first-generation students' academic performance and all students' college transition. *Psychological science*, 25(4), 943-953.
- Torche, F. (2011). Is a college degree still the great equalizer? Intergenerational mobility across levels of schooling in the United States. *American Journal of Sociology*, 117(3), 763-807.
- Torche, F. (2018). Intergenerational Mobility at the Top of the Educational Distribution. *Sociology of Education*, 91(4), 266-289.

Course Outline*

8/26	Week 1: Introduction to the Course	<p>Readings and handouts provided in class</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corse (nd). How to read a sociological study • Lamott (1994). “S**** first drafts” excerpt • Lucker (2010). “Harvarding” excerpt • Roksa & Silver (2020). Does Higher Education Contribute to Inequality?
9/2	Week 2: How Do Students Choose Colleges?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabrera & LaNasa (2000). Understanding the college choice process. • Grodsky & Reigle-Crumb (2010). Those who choose and those who don’t... • McDonough (1997). A cross-case analysis of high school guidance. • Roderick et al. (2011). Potholes on the road to college...
9/9	Week 3: How Do Colleges Choose Students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BOOK – Stevens (2009) <i>Creating a Class: College Admissions and the Education of Elites</i>. • Guest Speaker – Mitchell Stevens, Stanford University
9/16	Week 4: How Unequal is College Completion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bowen et al. (2010). Chapters 1-4. In <i>Crossing the Finish Line...</i> • Carnevale & Strohl (2014). How increasing college access is increasing inequality, and what to do about it.
9/23	Week 5: Explaining Inequality in Degree Completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bettinger & Baker (2014). The effects of student coaching... • Bowen et al. (2010). Chapters 5 & 6. In <i>Crossing the Finish Line...</i> • Collier & Morgan (2008). “Is that paper really due today?”... • Lehmann (2007) “I just didn’t feel like I fit in”...
9/30	Week 6: Do Institutions Matter? (Variation Across Institutions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alfonso (2006). The impact of community college attendance on baccalaureate attainment. • Bowen et al. (2010). Chapters 7, 10, 11. In <i>Crossing the Finish Line...</i> • Rosenbaum et al. (2007). Student information problems with college procedures. • Small & Winship (2007). Black students’ graduation from elite colleges.
10/7	Week 7: How College Life Structures Inequality (Part One)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BOOK - Armstrong & Hamilton (2013). <i>Paying for the Party...</i>
10/14	Week 8: From Between to Within Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stich (2018). Stratification with Honors • Marginson (2016). The Worldwide Trend to Participation in Higher Education • Warikoo & Fuhr (2016). Legitimizing Status • Guest Speaker – Amy Stich, University of Georgia

10/21	Week 9: How College Life Structures Inequality (Part Two)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BOOK - Jack (2019) <i>The Privileged Poor</i> • Research Question & References due (Wed)
10/28	Week 10: What, if Anything, Are Students Learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arum & Roksa (2011). Channeling students' energies toward learning. • Loes et al. (2013). Does race moderate the cognitive impacts of good teaching? • Neumann (2014). Staking a claim on learning... • Roksa & Arum (2015). Inequality in skill development on college campuses.
11/4	Week 11: How Did we Get Here?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labaree (1997). Public goods, private goods... • Loss (2014). Institutionalizing in Loco Parentis after Gott v. Berea College (1913). • Slaughter et al. (2004). Undergraduate students and educational markets.
11/11	Week 12: Family & Parental Backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hamilton et al. (2018). Providing a "Leg Up"... • Lareau (2011). Class differences in parents' information and intervention in the lives of young adults. • Perna & Titus (2005). The relationship between parental involvement as social capital and college enrollment... • Stephens et al. (2014). Closing the social class achievement gap
11/18	Week 13: Returns to Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arum et al. (2014). Making it in the labor market. • Binder et al. (2016). Career funneling... • Hamilton (2016). College outsourced. • Kingston et al. (2003). Why education matters •
11/24	Week 14: Peer Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer Review due 11/24 by 11:59pm (Tues)
12/2	Week 15: Research & Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions on paper as needed • Active Engagement due 12/2 by 11:59pm (Wed)
12/7	Week 16: Research Paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Paper due 12/7 by 11:59pm (Mon)

*Note: course schedule and readings are subject to change. Any changes will be announced via email and posted on Canvas.

Grading

Students in Inequality in Higher Education are expected to complete all assignments and will be graded as follows:

- Active Engagement via Zoom (15%)
- Active Engagement via Hypothesis (15%)
- Peer Review (20%)
- Research Paper (50%)

Assessments

1. Synchronous Active Engagement via Zoom (15%)

Understanding challenges facing education and engaging competently in cross-disciplinary debates requires not only familiarity with the course material, but an active engagement with it. Coming to class, being prepared to discuss the readings, and participating in class discussions and activities are thus crucial for the success of this course. Please bring assigned course readings to class. Class meetings for this course are discussion-based seminars, students are expected to engage with one another and the instructor in the three means available – audio/video, chat, and group break outs. You must do all assigned readings to be prepared to contribute to discussions and participate in class meetings. Justifications of *synchronous* active engagement (half page) are due to Canvas by Wednesday 12/2 at 11:59pm.

2. Asynchronous Active Engagement via Hypothesis (20%)

An important aspect of learning is an ability to distill the essence of the argument and to apply ideas to new situations and contexts. Students will comment on 20 of 25 *articles* during Weeks 4-13 earning one percentage point toward their final grade for successfully posting three annotations and three responses to peer annotations. Your task is to move beyond simply summarizing the readings and instead to actively engage with them in thoughtful ways. Further instructions are posted on Canvas. Books cannot be uploaded into the Hypothesis platform but are expected to be read prior to class and engaged substantively during class. Students will work asynchronously to discuss the assigned readings no later than 11:59p each Tuesday. The weekly time expectation for the synchronous portion of the course is 90 minutes, whereas the weekly time expectation for the asynchronous portion of the course is 60 minutes.

3. Peer Review (15%)

Peer review is a foundational practice within the university, both in its curricular and co-curricular divisions. Scholars and higher education professionals are regularly expected to provide critically constructive feedback for the purpose of improving the ideas, communities, and the organization itself. This skill is expected of educators in their work on school committees, accreditation reports, and scholarship, among others.

In this vein, this course provides students the opportunity to display and further refine their critical thinking and constructive feedback skills through a peer review process aimed to improve the ideas presented in their final paper. Students are expected to exchange a complete electronic draft of the final paper with a classmate no later than 11/22. Reviewers are expected to provide feedback on the completed paper using the edit/comment features in MS Word or comment features in Adobe Reader. Reviewer comments should address the following aspects of a peer's paper:

- The extent to which the draft meets the “essential elements” of a four paragraph introduction.
- Grammatical and typographical errors in the paper.
- The extent to which the literature or methods of analysis may be incomplete.
- Constructive feedback on the ideas of the proposed study (e.g., Did the data and method of analysis align? Were authors mischaracterized? How could the ideas be further aligned to improve flow or logic? How could the research question be further clarified? etc.).

Please note, *what is graded in this assignment is not the substance of the manuscript draft, but rather the substance of the reviewer feedback.* Student authors are expected to examine the reviews of their manuscript draft and give serious consideration as to which items should be incorporated for the final paper. Peer reviews should be uploaded to Canvas by Tuesday 11/24 at 11:59pm.

4. Research Paper (50%)

The research paper will address an individually designed question in 12-15 double-spaced pages (excluding references). Choose a specific area of interest in the field of higher education, and begin by reading widely to learn about the scope and nature of the discussion. Once you have an overall understanding of the subfield, design a specific question you wish to address and prepare a reading list of 15-20 books/articles that will help you answer that question. Once you have the list and the question, upload it to Canvas for review/comments by October 21st. The final paper is due to be uploaded to Canvas by 11:59p on December 7th.

Statement on Academic Fraud

According to the UVA Honor Committee, “All students at the University of Virginia are bound by the Honor Code not to commit Academic Fraud, which is a form of cheating. “Consequently, it is required or implied that all work conducted by students conform to the following honor pledge: “On my honor as a student, I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment.” If you are not familiar with or require further information about the honor system, please see <http://www.virginia.edu/honor/>.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

All students with special needs requiring accommodations should present the appropriate paperwork from the Learning Needs and Evaluation Center (LNEC). It is the student’s responsibility to present this paperwork in a timely fashion and follow up with the instructor about the accommodations being offered. Accommodations for test-taking (e.g., extended time) should be arranged at least one week before an exam. The LNEC is located in the Department of Student Health and can be contacted at 243-5180/5181. For more information, please see <http://www.virginia.edu/studenthealth/lne.htm>.

Class Attendance and Excused Absences

Regular attendance in all classes is expected. Absences traditionally excused are those that occur because of death in a student's family, important religious holidays, or authorized University activities. Students who anticipate absence for cause should obtain permission from the instructor in advance of the absence. *Unforeseen absences resulting from sickness, or from other circumstances considered to be emergencies, may be excused by the instructor and arrangements may be made with the instructor to complete the assignments missed.*

Students in Distress

Services for students in various forms of distress are offered by Counseling and Psychological Services (<http://www.virginia.edu/studenthealth/caps.html>) in the Elson Student Health Center. During evenings and weekends, emergency crisis assistance (434-972-7004) is available. In addition, if you are concerned about another student, call 434-243-5150 during business hours, and request the consulting clinician.

Classroom Civility Statement

Students are asked to refrain from conducting private conversations (both in-person and electronically) in class and are requested to use appropriate language and behavior that are not demeaning or disruptive to either the instructor or the other members of the class. Failure to consistently abide by these attendance policies will have an adverse impact on one’s final grade.

Netiquette Statement:

When engaging on Canvas, Hypothesis, or Zoom it is important to understand how to interact respectfully with one another online. Best practices, include:

- If you would not say something in person, then do not say it online.
- If you would not share something in public, don’t share it with your classmates.
- Respond to others promptly and thoughtfully.
- Respect individual’s privacy. Do not share class discussions outside of the classroom.
- Respect the opinions of others.
- If you are uncomfortable with another person’s post or language, reach out to your instructor for assistance.