EDUC 606 Topics Course

Representing “U”: Popular Culture, Media, and Higher Education

Winter 2015 Tuesday 530-830pm

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Office hours: Please contact me to make an appointment. I like writing and working in my office so finding times to meet shouldn’t be difficult.

Course Description

Higher education is an inspiration for a lot of popular culture. Superheroes go to college, biweekly manga chart the adventures of professors, films explore college life, tv reality shows are set on college campuses and we follow some of our favorite high school characters to college. Not only that but music extols the virtues or lack thereof of a college education, and novels have been telling tales of students and professors since the 1800s. This description just scratches the surface of the popular culture texts and media that use institutions of higher education and the people in them as the source and setting for narratives.

Higher education is pervasive in US popular imagination, in US culture, in ways that go beyond that of other countries. In fact I describe this as a unique US phenomenon that is related to one of the defining characteristics of US higher education – inclusion. As US higher education became more accessible, visible and possible for more people it has become pervasive in the popular imagination. However, as we know, despite the US’s comparative inclusivity there still remains a tension in US higher education between inclusion and exclusion that keeps facets of HE as a privilege. Hall (2003) writes that US culture has a propensity for fascination with the glamorous, the privileged and wealthy in contemporary tv (unlike British soap operas which revolve around the working or middle class). Within this framework interest in higher education in population culture comes from two contradictory extremes, from places of inclusion and exclusion in US society.

This class explores the representation of higher education in popular culture for three reasons – to identify ways in which higher education is represented, to subsequently understand more about the dominant and alternative socio-cultural values associated with higher education, and finally to apply what is learned about these areas to research and practice in higher education. Hopefully, while throwing ourselves into these areas we’ll have a lot of fun thinking about the relevance of popular culture to higher education and how we as professionals can apply what we learn to our practice.

By the end of this course students will be able to:

* analyze and evaluate representations of higher education in different popular culture texts,
* appraise the influence (or not) of popular culture media on aspects of higher education,
* discuss and evaluate how to use popular culture media and texts to inform higher education practice,
* write and talk about their work effectively and knowledgeably, and
* provide a safe space for class peers to make mistakes and excel.

General Expectations

*My philosophy and expectations*

If you were expecting to come to this class and be told what to think about our material, I’m afraid you are definitely in the wrong class! Some of you may have been working in higher education in some capacity for many years, others may be just beginning your exploration in the field but all of us are bound by an interest in this subject matter. We will have individual responses and contexts from which to build our own understanding of the material we will expose ourselves to, all of which will be valuable for our in-class experience. I see myself as a facilitator of our class where we will all contribute to each other’s continuing learning and development in thinking about the subject matter. As such, I expect all of us to work hard in our class sessions, to contribute to discussion and activities, and to be prepared for class by not only reading the material but thinking about it too.

*In our class meetings:*

* We will respect one another and contribute to making the classroom one that is a safe place for all of us to explore our understanding of the material, to take intellectual risks, and to respectfully challenge ideas.
* We will be prepared through the completion of assignments and our reading to fully engage in the class. We can learn a lot from engaging with the material and with one another’s perspectives, critiques and agreement with the material. I am urging you to work hard in class, to get everything you can out of our time together each week.
* An essential part of respecting each other, providing a safe place for dialogue, and working hard is actual attendance. I know life happens sometimes but we only have twelve meetings, we should get the most we can from them.
* Please try not to be late to our class sessions. Late arrivals can be very distracting for your student peers and myself.
* Please put cell phones on vibrate or silent and only answer calls you suspect may be important or emergencies by briefly stepping outside the room.

*Accommodations for religious observances*

If any student requires academic accommodations for a religious observance, please provide me with a written request to consider a reasonable modification for that observance by the end of the second week of the course.  Please contact me after class or by individual appointment to discuss the issue.

*Students with disabilities*

The University is committed to full compliance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) ADA As Amended (2008) and state and local regulations regarding students and applicants with disabilities. If you need accommodations for any physical, psychological, or learning disability, please connect with our disabilities services on campus by contacting Amy Wilms, Associate Dean for Academic Success and Disability Services. She can help you design a plan for your specific needs which will be indicated in an accommodation letter for your instructors. Please also speak to me after class or make an appointment to speak with me.

*Attendance Policy:*

* Missing class – as a graduate program that only has 12 meetings per course I have a no-miss policy for class. The catalogue states that students missing two or more classes will be administratively dropped from the course by their instructor. If students miss two classes they will need to petition to not be automatically dropped from the class.

*Academic Honesty Policy:*

You are responsible for being aware of, abiding by, and understanding the University of Redlands’ policies regarding academic honesty and integrity. Part of academic honesty is ensuring that all work you submit in this and all your courses must be in your own words with the words and ideas of others appropriately attributed. The University of Redlands catalogue (2007-09) describes plagiarism in this way, “Plagiarism occurs when the words of another are reproduced without acknowledgement or when the ideas or arguments of another are paraphrased and presented in such a way as to lead the reader to believe they originated with the writer. It is the responsibility of all University students to understand the methods of proper attribution and to apply those principles in all written submissions” (p. 15).

Please make every effort to make sure you understand what plagiarism is as it can result in failing a class or, in a worse case scenario, by dismissal from the university.

Everyone in this class should have taken an online tutorial regarding plagiarism. If you have not please make sure you speak with me to get the information to fulfill this task and avoid plagiarism. You were also encouraged to read Lipton’s “Doing honest work in college” before starting the program. I have a no tolerance approach to plagiarism, especially as all students should have taken the tutorial. Students who plagiarize in my classes fail the course.

*“Life Happens” Policy*

* I understand that events outside our control can negatively impact our work. Please contact me ***before*** missing a due date if an emergency occurs which impedes you from being able to finish your assignments on time.
* The same goes for class. If you know you will need to miss a class due to an unavoidable event please let me know ***before***. We can arrange individual ways for you to earn some of your participation points for the week you missed. It doesn’t take long or much effort to pop me an email or to leave me a phone message.

*Getting in touch with me*:

* Email is the easiest and fastest way to contact me. However, please be aware that I have a life too so don’t expect an immediate reply to any urgent emails sent in the middle of the night, for example. I’ll let you know if I’m out of town and not available. In general, I will get back to you within a couple of days, usually sooner.
* If you’d like to chat to me about the class or our assignments we can talk a little after our class meeting depending on your schedules. We can also arrange other times to meet. Just pop me an email or ring me in my office to arrange a time. I prefer not to meet with students in my office right before class as I’m getting mentally prepared for class but I am very flexible with times otherwise.
* When you do email me please make sure you put the reason for your email in the subject line. If you want to meet with me always have that in the subject line so I don’t miss it.
* If I don’t get back to you in a few days please email me again, if only to forward your previous email. I never intentionally don’t reply to students but mistakes happen. I will be pleased to receive the reminder.

*Class communication:*

* I will be contacting you about the class through your Redlands email account. It is your responsibility to check this regularly. If you prefer to use other email accounts please make sure you forward your U of R email to that account.
* I will also be using Moodle for our class. Class announcements and materials from class will be posted on there. I have also compiled some information that may be useful to you as you work on your assignments that I have placed on there. For example, information about journals and sources you may wish to use, such as links to interesting or useful websites.

*Assignments:*

* Assignments should follow the APA format guidelines. Please check out this website if you need assistance using APA style guidelines http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/
* All assignments should be double-spaced.
* They should use 12 point font, have normal formatting, and use Times New Roman font.
* I expect that all papers will be of professional quality. This means that your papers will have been proofread before handing them in for spelling, grammar, typos etc. This is a graduate degree after all and I expect quality writing. This means that you should consider starting your papers well before their due date.
* You will submit your assignments to me before or during class on the due date.
* Make sure you keep a copy of your paper. To my horror, I once misplaced a student paper and although I hope it never happens again, accidents happen!
* Late papers – I expect all assignments to be handed in when they are due. Any assignments not handed in when they are due will have a deduction of 10 points for every day late.

*Credit hour compliance:*

University policy regarding credit hour compliance requires students to spend at least 45 hours of work per credit hour, so for this 3 credit hour class the course requirements anticipate at least 135 hours of engagement. In addition to your class attendance it is expected that your weekly preparation for this graduate course will take 9-12 hours per week. This time should be spent doing the following tasks:

* reading, understanding, thinking about, and developing an individual perspective on the readings for the week,
* ongoing reading, research and writing for your assignments, and
* preparation for in-class activities and responsibilities such as group presentations.

The credit hour policy reflects the individual investment of time and energy a student puts into their education. A graduate degree isn’t something that a student buys, it is something that you earn, something that changes you. This doesn’t happen passively but through your engaged choices.

*University recording policy:*

You may not record our class sessions with any device unless you have permission from the instructor. This provision protects the privacy of all students in the class.

*Grading:*

Grade assessment will use the following guidelines:

A Excellent achievement. Your work shows a very thorough command of course content; very high level of scholarship.

A- Very good achievement. Your work shows a thorough command of course material.

B+ Good achievement. Your work illustrates a solid, acceptable performance.

B Decent achievement. You did nearly all what was expected but nothing more.

B- Fair achievement. Your work is acceptable but is lacking in some areas.

C+ Not wholly satisfactory achievement. Your work demonstrates a marginal performance on some aspects of the requirements.

C Marginal achievement. Your work displays a minimally acceptable performance of

course requirements.

Textbooks and readings

There is one book for the course this yea and readings will be available through our moodle page. I’ve also provided you an extensive list of additional scholarly sources on the moodle page.

Reynolds, P.J. (2014). Representing ‘U’: Popular culture, media and higher education

Your major preparation for the class involves “cultural texts” that you will be expected to get hold of yourself. The cultural text requirements could be listening to Kanye West, watching movies or tv shows, or reading online comics. Some of these you can watch through Netflix if you have it, Hula, tv channel websites, spotify, loan from libraries or buy through ITunes or Amazon as part of your reading costs. Alternatively you can make arrangements to share with class mates.

A note about class preparation.

When I assign popular culture texts such as novels, shows, films, music, comics etc. you need to approach them the same way you do your articles and research books. Be intentional. Be critical. Ask questions (what is this saying about higher ed?) And take good notes. As you make notes consider the following questions: What HE topics does the text touch on? How does the text represent these HE topics? What important narrative or visual elements manifest related to HE? What important themes are embedded in the text? How does using theoretical lens/concepts influence your interpretation? How might this text “(mis)educate” regarding HE? Why could all this be important for student, faculty, practitioners and administrators in HE?

Assignments

*In-class participation 30%*

As you have probably gathered by now, I am very much interested in what you have to say about what we are watching, reading, talking, and thinking about so I expect you to come to class having done the required reading/text viewing for the day *and* having thought about it enough that you have something to say about it. I invite all of you to speak thoughtfully in class and I look forward to having some excellent in-class discussions. In-class participation will also require completing in-class exercises. Just so we are clear, successful “participation” requires more than attendance.

*Peer group participation*– 20% (10% from me and 10% as part of peer evaluation)

In our first class we will form peer groups. These groups will have a dual purpose.

1. Peer class facilitation: Each group will take the additional responsibility of being in-class co-facilitators with me for discussion of the week’s scholarly and cultural “reading”. Depending on the size of the class and groups, each group will fulfill this role 2 or 3 times throughout the term. This requirement makes explicit your foundational responsibility for class preparation and co-learning. I want you all to be really invested in class, all of you to feel responsible for continuing our learning rather than waiting for the instructor for leadership. This peer facilitation requirement helps you to do what I feel you should be doing as graduate students in the class. As part of your preparation for class there are 3 basic foundations I would like as part of class design 1) discussion of any reading, 2) discussion of the cultural texts, and 3) consideration of the “so-what.” How this is achieved can be determined by the groups.
2. Peer writing support: Each group will comment on draft papers of their group members for the papers due week 12. You will be sent these drafts in time to discuss them with each other in-class during week 10. Arrange with each other when you will send the drafts giving each other enough time to read and comment on the work with the assistance of the assignment rubric.

Good writing is important for our programs at the U of R and this is one way I’ve thought of to help support your on-going writing improvement. Different peers will have different skills that can help you improve what you’ve done. Also, improvement to writing occurs through early preparation, planning and writing. This peer draft forces you to start your paper early and forces you to organize and start writing as well as giving you the opportunity to get feedback from several people and to rewrite based on that feedback. Your final paper for the program is supported in this way. I encourage you to get the most you can from this structured peer support. I am only requiring you to send drafts of each paper but as a group if you choose to support each other in final draft proofreads you may do that too.

*Midterm paper –*

*Using popular culture and media. 20% of course grade. Due week 6.*

You work for a department in the university who are using your expertise to develop and provide them with a program or resource that uses media to achieve their desired objective.

In small groups you will use media of your choice (e.g. cartoons, video, music etc) to develop a program or resource in response to the department’s needs and write a joint 5-8 page paper to accompany that resource which academically supports the choices you have made with its development.

Departments include:

 Study Abroad

 Diversity and Inclusion

 SOE Student Services

* Be prepared to think out of the box. Creativity and innovation is a plus.
* Your paper should be supported by ***at least 6* peer-reviewed** scholarly pieces.
* Please make sure you quote and cite appropriately and paraphrase properly. If you are still unsure about this means please make sure to ask for my help before handing in your work.

*Final paper – total of 30% of course grade*

Your final research paper is an 18-20 page paper exploring popular culture linked with some kind of concept, issue, question or knowledge domain in HE.

Here are some examples of topics students have done in the past:

* the representation of college finances in film
* the representation of academic advising in the online comic www.alternateuniverse.com
* a comparative paper around the question of “what is higher education” that explores the different ways higher education is represented in the cultural texts of different countries
* a comparison of early college novels with more recent novels
* an examination of the relationship between the horror genre and higher education narratives
* an in-depth analysis of a particular cultural text

The options for your paper are limited only by your imagination. Be creative. Think outside of the box and have fun choosing your topic. You could chose something related to the ideas you’re having for your final MA project or you can pick something completely different.

Naturally once you’ve picked a topic your paper will have some kind of argument or perspective related to it that will be explored throughout your paper. This is important.

For HE students, your experience with this paper will model the HE section 637 experience to help you prepare for that final class. Related to this paper you will do a final presentation in our last class, work with a peer-writing group, and provide a topic paragraph with preliminary bibliography and draft to me and your group.

Final paper requirements:

1. Topic paragraph with preliminary bibliography for final paper due week 5 (to me and peer writing group)
2. Draft of final paper due, week 10, (to me and peer writing group.)
3. Final paper and presentation due week 12.

Preparing for class

Week 1

 Introduction to the course

Week 2. The image of higher education I.

Scholarly Reading

* Reynolds Chaps 1 and 2 (p.1-42)
* Tobolowsky - Beyond Demographics: Understanding the College Experience Through Television (M)

Cultural texts

* Good Will Hunting (film)
* First episode of season one of the TV show “Community”
* First episode of TV show “Greek”
* Watch The Simpson’s “Homer goes to College” and “Secrets of a Successful Marriage”
* Read the first 10 comics for Dumbing of Age starting with “Home”. http://www.dumbingofage.com/2010/comic/book-1/01-move-in-day/home/

Week 3. The image of HE II.

Read

* Reynolds: Chaps 3 and 4 (p.21-52)
* Imagining Harvard: Changing Visions of Harvardin Fiction, 1890-1940.

CK Anderson, DA Clark - American Educational History Journal, 2012. (M)

Cultural texts

* Flandrau: The Diary of a Harvard Freshman. Read Chaps 1 and 2. (M)
* Watch “College” (1927). (**Warning**: Buster Keaton’s silent comedy is very much of its time and contains some content related to race which is offensive to viewers today).
* Watch “College” (2011). You can watch this film short on its imdb page. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1954338/>
* Watch “Monster U” (2013).
* Listen to/read the lyrics to Kanye West- “School Spirit.”
* Doonesbury for-profit colleges comic strip
	+ <http://www.gocomics.com/doonesbury/2012/08/09#sentinel=8aa1092695972564c575b627c46903a9&loc=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.gocomics.com%2Fdoonesbury%2F2012%2F08%2F09&dref=&title=Doonesbury%20Comic%20Strip%2C%20August%2009%2C%202012%20on%20GoComics.com>

*Week 4. Marketing HE. (This week is a lighter in prep so you can get a lot done on your midterm projects and the topic prep for your final paper).*

Read

* Selling the Dream of HE: Holm and Farber (2005) in Imagining the Academy. (M)

Cultural texts

* Find, watch and bring to class two tv adverts for higher ed.
* Find and bring to class marketing materials from two colleges (not U of R). These could be published materials or things you find online.

Reminder:

*Come to class having thought about your interpretation of these cultural texts. Think about the values, meanings, beliefs and assumptions they intentionally or unintentionally suggest about higher education in. Be prepared to talk to the class about your interpretation of these texts.*

*As always, please come to class prepared to discuss your readings too. Think about the values, beliefs, meanings and assumptions that are associated with the popular culture discussed. Think about the interpretation of the authors. Is it convincing? What is your response to the readings? What intrigued you when you were reading? What did it make you think of?*

*Week 5.* Students in pop culture

\*\*\*Load your draft final paper topic paragraph and bibliography through email to me and your peer group members.

Read

* Reynolds- Chap 6 (p. 81-108)
*

Cultural texts

* Read at least 10 strips from [www.candicomics.com](http://www.candicomics.com) This is an online comic about students living in a scholarship house in Florida. You might want to start at the beginning. Sometimes
* Read at least 10 Alternate University comic strips, a strip about academic advising at <http://www.alternateuniversity.com>
* Read several strips from the comic “P(iled) H(igher) and D(eeper)”
	+ http://www.phdcomics.com/comics.php
* Look at Assistant Professor Tommi Cahill’s pictures documenting moments in fraternity life at http://www.tommicahill.com/sigma.html
* Revisit two episodes from a show you’ve watched where the main character goes to college or that is set on a college campus (e.g. Felicity, Gilmore Girls, Buffy, A Different World, Greek... the list goes on and on. We’ll list what everyone has watched in class.)
* Listen to/read the lyrics to Foo Fighters-“Fraternity” and Chesney-“Keg in the closet”
* Look through magazines such as Life, Ebony, Time for portrayals of college students. The library has a huge back copy of these and other magazines and can help you. Look at the way students are represented through time and come to class prepared to talk about it and with some examples for us all to look at (e.g. a couple of photocopies- if you scan them we can have them on the screen)

Week 6. Faculty and HE.

*\*\*\*Hand in midterms. You should have been working on this since the beginning of the course.*

Read

* Reynolds Chap 5 (p. 53- 80).

Cultural texts

* Watch “Krippendorf’s Tribe”
* Watch “The Mirror has Two Faces”
* Watch “Tenure”
* Read 10 comic strips from Piled Higher and Deeper focusing your interpretation on the professor.

Week 7. Collegiate athletics and popular culture.

Read

* Inness, S.A. (1993). “It Is Pluck But Is It Sense?”: Athletic Student Culture in Progressive Era Girls' College Fiction. *The Journal of Popular Culture, 27*(1), 99–124. (M)

Cultural texts

* Read the short story “Revenge” in *College Girls* by Goodloe. (M)
* Watch “The Mighty Macs”
* Watch “The Program”
* Plus another college sports film of your choice (we’ll list in class)
* Look at and analyze 5 Tank McNamara comic strips involving collegiate athletes.

Week 8. Gender and Sexuality in the context of HE

Read

* Reynolds, P. (2008). The Celluloid Ceiling: Women academics, social expectations, and narrative in 1940s American film. *Gender and Education*(M)

Cultural texts

* *The Accused (1949*). [This film is out of copyright therefore you can watch this from my own videotape on campus so plan ahead and perhaps arrange to watch together in groups in the library. You can borrow the tape from me by arrangement. I also have some DVDs of the tape. Please be careful with it!]
* *Sorority Boys (2002).*
* *Dawson’s Creek (pick an episode related to either fraternity and Jack episodes in Season 5 or Jack married professor relationship in Season 6)*
* *Greek (Calvin coming out episodes)*

Week 9. Race and class in the context of HE

Read

* Parrott-Sheffer, A. (2008). Not a laughing matter: The portrayals of black colleges on television. In *Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Triumphs, Troubles, and Taboos* By Marybeth Gasman, Christopher L. Tudico, 207-222. (M)

Cultural texts

* Watch “Breaking Away”
* Watch “Spinning into Butter” (see next page)
* Watch “Dear White People”
* Two episodes of the reality show “College Hill” (from any season)

**Before** week 10 class– **load draft paper onto through email for me and peer groups so that your peers can comment on your papers before class. We will be in our peer groups in class on week 10 to do a workshop conference about each other’s papers.**

Week 10. HE outside of the US (…ok…mostly UK)

\*\*\*Load draft of final paper through email for me and peer groups the weekend before class so that your peers can have read it before class and be prepared to make comments in this class to one another.

Cultural texts:

* Watch “Starter for 10”
* Watch “Educating Rita”
* Watch “Footnote” (Israeli film)
* Watch “The Riot Club”
* Watch Season 1 Episode 1 of “Fresh Meat” (on Hulu)

Week 11. Representing “U” Today.

Read

* Reynolds: Chap 7 (p. 109-125).
* Wasylkiw, L. and Currie, M. (2012). The "Animal House" Effect: How University-Themed Comedy Films Affect Students' Attitudes. *Social Psychology of Education: An International Journal, 15*(1*),* 25-40. (M)

Cultural texts

*Watch/read three cultural texts of your choice. You need to have one of each of the below categories so two from one of them.*

* *A life after college film (e.g. St. Elmo’s Fire, Reality Bites, and others)*
* *A documentary about higher ed (e.g. First Generation, College Inc., Cartoon College, and others)*

Week 12. Truly Representing “U”: Your work.

Wrap up and final paper presentations. Bring a handout for your classmates.

Please load your final paper onto moodle.

As always, this syllabus is subject to change and continued development.