

AMER ST 515: THE NEOLIBERAL UNIVERSITY
Spring 2017
Thursdays 1:10-4:00 pm, Wilson-Short 101

Professor Lisa Guerrero

Office: Wilson-Short 121

Office Hours: **Tuesdays 12 pm-2 pm, and by appointment**

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(E-mail is the preferred method for reaching the professor. It is also the method that will yield the quickest response.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES:

While there is considerable debate over the definition of “neoliberalism” in the 21st century, the primary characteristic of economic liberalization remains central to most definitions. And since the 1980s, policies and attitudes buttressed by the economic philosophies of neoliberalism have had far-reaching, and often devastating effects, in every facet of society, both domestically and globally. Henry Giroux has stated that neoliberalism “legitimizes a culture of cruelty.” And Noam Chomsky has called “the very design of neoliberal principles” a “direct attack on democracy.” The mutually dependent systems of neoliberalism, capitalism, and globalization have created severe social and economic conditions in the 21st century and transformed the fundamental purposes and understandings of institutions that have historically been positioned to serve the social good, including higher education.

In this graduate seminar we will be thinking critically about the emergence of the neoliberal university and its attendant issues. What should the function of the university be? What has it become? Specifically, the seminar will introduce students to the debates surrounding the neoliberal university in the 21st century and ask them to engage critically with the myriad issues that make up the neoliberal university including: *the corporatization of public universities, the privatization of public higher education and its implications for democracy, performance-based budgeting and its implications for institutional governance, rising tuition rates and their implications for working class and minority students, the assault on ethnic studies and its implications for academic freedom and the curriculum, and flexible labor and the dramatic increase of adjunct faculty members.* As students prepare for a professional life in the institution of higher learning whose contours have changed radically over the last 40 years, perhaps most radically since the turn of the 21st century, it is professionally and pedagogically responsible to be able to think critically about their own positions within that institution, about what is at stake in investing in the future of that institution, both individually and more broadly.

REQUIRED READINGS (in alphabetical order):

1. Ahmed, Sara –
On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life
2. Piya Chatterjee –
The Imperial University: Academic Repression and Scholarly Dissent
3. Frank Donoghue –

- The Last Professors: The Corporate University and the Fate of the Humanities*
4. Roderick A. Ferguson –
The Reorder of Things: The University and its Pedagogies of Minority Difference
 5. Henry A. Giroux –
Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education
 6. Lani Guinier –
The Tyranny of the Meritocracy: Democratizing Higher Education
 7. Matthew T. Lambert –
Privatization and the Public Good: Public Universities in the Balance
 8. Christopher Newfield –
The Great Mistake: How We Wrecked Public Universities and How We Can Fix Them
 9. Christopher Newfield –
Unmaking the Public University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class
 10. Ellen Schrecker –
The Lost Soul of Higher Education: Corporatization, The Assault on Academic Freedom, and the End of the American University

All texts available at The Bookie.

In addition, throughout the semester there may be supplemental readings assigned by the professor. The professor will announce any such additions during class.

Course Requirements:

• General Requirement

Students are expected to do all course readings prior to class and come prepared to discuss the readings in depth. Class is run in a seminar-style with the expectation that students will actively engage in and drive the discussions. You can also expect to be called on by me at any time during class.

• Attendance

Though your attendance will not be formally used to calculate your final grade, your attendance at each meeting is required. You need to arrive on time and participate in an informed and consistent manner. Anything less will not be tolerated and will result in

problems in this class. Despite not being a formal component of your course evaluation, attendance does have the potential to affect your grade.

- **Participation (30% of final grade)**

You are expected to be **present intellectually as well as physically** in the classroom. This means that not only must you attend, but that you must endeavor to contribute to the flow and body of the course. You will be expected to prepare carefully for each class by completing the required readings by the day on which they are listed in the course schedule. This course asks you to read texts closely and responsively, and to participate actively in class discussion and debate. Additionally, your participation will be crucial in the reviewing and revising of each other's work. If you do not: 1) participate in an informed manner, (in other words, in a way that is not merely personal opinion or conjecture, but rather demonstrates you have both done the reading and critically considered it); 2) consider and comment on the work of your peers in a serious and constructive manner; or 3) participate at all, your grade will be significantly affected.

- **750 Word Op-Ed Essay (20% of final grade)**

Choosing ONE topic highlighted in the supplemental readings write your own "op-ed"-style piece that critically frames the issue, the ways in which it is impacted by neoliberal forces, policies, and/or ideologies, and the substantive effects it will have/is having on higher education and its role in society. While this assignment needs to be written as an editorial, it should be strongly and intelligently grounded in course texts and discussions.

- **Discussion Questions (20% of final grade)**

Each week students will be responsible for choosing a passage from the day's assigned reading and posing a question about the passage within the context of our discussion on the neoliberal university. Pull out a passage from a reading that you find intriguing or provocative. The passage should be **NO LESS THAN FOUR (4)** sentences long and **NO LONGER THAN TEN (10)** sentences long. The passage and question should be typed on an 8 ½ x 11 in. sheet of paper that leaves space on the page for someone to respond to the question.

During class, you will exchange your passage with a fellow classmate, and you will then spend 10-15 minutes responding to the passage and question. Your response should examine the implications of the passage's argument in relation to larger theoretical claims both within the day's reading and our larger discussion of neoliberalism and higher education.

Every passage you submit should include the following heading in the upper left corner:

Your name

The date

The book title and author

The pages of your chosen passage

- **Final Project (30% of final grade)**

1. The corporate/customer service model of education
2. The adjunctification of university teaching
3. Student debt crisis
4. Academic Freedom
5. The objectification of “diversity” in the neoliberal university
6. The abandonment of the mission of higher education/liberal arts

The purpose of the project is for the student to distill her own position on a particular aspect of the neoliberal university and locate it amongst the myriad conversations surrounding the topic.

For the project the student will collect five (5) different stories from various news outlets that focus on some aspect of your chosen topic. The requirements for the stories are:

1. They must be from an outlet that is frequented/engaged by a large audience. In other words, you may use a story from a blog, for instance, as long as the blog has a robust audience.
2. The stories must represent at least two (2) different points of view on the topic.
3. One of the stories must be about a public institution in Washington state.
4. The stories may be from any time during the last five (5) years.

Once the student has collected her five stories she will write a **5-10 page** essay responding to the perspective on the topic created collectively by the five stories, grounding her response in the course texts and class discussions. In response, the student will likely want to consider the following questions for each story:

1. Who is offering the opinion?
2. Who is at the center of the story?
3. What are the stakes outlined in the story?

The final project should be appropriately formatted, proofread, use proper citation form, and include a “Works Cited” page. (NOTE: You may use any citation form you choose, but you must use it correctly. The most common citation forms used in academic publications are: MLA, Chicago style, and APA. The particular requirements of each style can be found online.)

Policies:

Written Work

- I do not accept assignments via e-mail unless otherwise stated.

Late Assignments

No late assignments will be accepted unless negotiated with me **prior** to the original due date. If you do not discuss a late assignment with me prior to the original due date, the assignment will be marked down by a whole grade for each day it's late and will not be accepted after 1 week following the original due date, with the exception of the final paper which will not be accepted after 2 business days after the original due date.

Incompletes

I reserve "Incompletes" **ONLY** for students who are on their deathbeds or are experiencing a comparable catastrophic event. Everyone else will receive a grade in my class. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

Communicating in the classroom

While it is obvious that we should avoid abusive and hateful speech, given that we must deal with plenty of that everywhere else, I also want to encourage you to exercise your academic freedoms in thoughtful, intellectually honest discourse. So, speak your mind. Just remember as you do so, people can disagree without being disrespectful.

Plagiarism

Really? I would hope that in a graduate seminar I would not have to remind people that academic dishonesty of any sort, particularly plagiarism, will **NOT** be tolerated. The penalty for academic dishonesty is at the professor's discretion. In the case of my

graduate seminars, if any academic dishonesty is discovered it will result in an automatic “F” in the course. No discussion. Period. Accordingly, make sure you are familiar with the university’s policies on plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty so you are well informed as to what constitutes a violation. Finally, be aware that plagiarism includes not providing proper citation for ANY work including information found on any website, book, pamphlet, etc., as well as copying in full or part someone else’s work, (including fellow students AND yourself from a previous essay or project without proper citation.).

University instructors have the authority to intervene in all situations where students are suspected of academic dishonesty. In such instances, responsible instructors retain the authority to assign grades to students considering, from an academic standpoint, the nature of the student action. More information regarding responding to academic integrity violations can be found at: <http://conduct.wsu.edu>.

Grade Problems

During the semester use my office hours to talk to me about any problems you are having with your progress and/or evaluations for the course so we can try to fix any bad situation **early**, before it’s too late. You must communicate any problems you may be having that are affecting your coursework early on so that I am aware of the situation as I continue to evaluate your work. Any explanations for poor performance, relevant or not, will not be accepted at the end of the semester and will have no effect on your final grade. Please do not come to ask me to change your grade after you have failed the course. Also, do not come to ask me to give you an “I” because you are failing or have failed the course.

Disability Accommodation

Students with Disabilities: Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please either visit or call the Access Center (Washington Building 217; 509-335-3417) to schedule an appointment with an Access Advisor. All accommodations **MUST** be approved through the Access Center. Please notify me during the first week of class of any approved accommodations needed for the course.

Campus Safety

Washington State University is committed to maintaining a safe environment for its faculty, staff, and students. Safety is the responsibility of every member of the campus community and individuals should know the appropriate actions to take when an emergency arises. In support of our commitment to the safety of the campus community the University has developed a Campus Safety Plan, <http://safetyplan.wsu.edu>. It is highly recommended that you visit this web site as well as the University emergency management web site at <http://oem.wsu.edu/> to become familiar with the information provided.

[Your continued enrollment in this course after the first week means that you have read and understand the information contained within this syllabus, and that you agree to follow the procedures and rules explained within it.]

• **Grade Breakdown:**

By Grade Point:

A = 4.0

A- = 3.8

B+ = 3.5

B = 3.0

B- = 2.8

C+ = 2.5

C = 2.0

C- = 1.8

D = 1.0

By 100 Point Grading Scale:

94-100 = A

90-93 = A-

87-89 = B+

83-86 = B

80-82 = B-

77-79 = C+

73-76 = C

70-72 = C-

60-69 = D

0-59 = F

Course Learning Goals:	This objective will be assessed primarily by:
Demonstrate an understanding of the concepts connected to neoliberalism and corporatization in higher education	In-class discussions; Discussion questions
Demonstrate an understanding of the different components of neoliberal forces and structures that mediate and construct student learning and higher education work environments in a sociocultural and socioeconomic context	In-class discussions; Discussion questions; Op-ed assignment
Explore the role of higher education and its relationship to broader society from different theoretical and historical perspectives	In-class discussions
Engage the multiple locations within academic institutions impacted by neoliberal policies and ideologies	In-class discussions; Op-ed assignment; Final project
Critique and analyze contemporary issues in higher education contexts based on concepts	Final project

mentioned above	
Engage in critical self-reflexivity, identifying one's own position and the purpose of higher education in light of the concepts mentioned above	In-class discussions; Op-ed assignment; Final project

Course Schedule:

- Jan 12:** Introduction to class
- Jan 19:** *Unmaking the Public University* – Newfield
- Jan 26:** *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education* – Giroux
- Feb 2:** *The Tyranny of the Meritocracy* – Guinier
- Feb 9 :** *On Being Included* – Ahmed
- Feb 16:** NO CLASS – Catch-up day
- Feb 23:** *The Lost Soul of Higher Education* – Schrecker
- Mar 2:** *The Imperial University* – Chatterjee
- Mar 9:** View “Ivory Tower” in class
- Mar 16:** NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK
- Mar 23:** *The Last Professors* – Donoghue
- Mar 30:** *The Reorder of Things* – Ferguson
- Apr 6:** *Privatization and the Public Good* – Lambert
DUE IN-CLASS Op-Ed Essay
- Apr 13:** *The Great Mistake* – Newfield
- Apr 20:** Course Wrap-up
- Apr 27:** No class – work on final project

**FINAL PROJECT due in professor's mailbox in Wilson-Short 111
by Thursday, May 4, 2017, by 4 pm**