EDUCATION 760:
ACCESS AND EQUITY IN AMERICAN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

University of Michigan School of Education
Tuesdays, 9:00am-12:00pm; Fall 2015 semester
Room 4212 School of Education Building
610 E. University Ave.
Ann Arbor, MI 48109

Instructor:
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Teaching apprentice:
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Doctoral Candidate, CSHPE
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Email: esmerahe@umich.edu
Office hours: Monday 1:00pm-3:00pm, or by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course analyzes trends in access to postsecondary education and the social processes and institutional practices that shape student access, especially as they concern longstanding disparities by race and socioeconomic status. Although most of the semester will involve a focus on student access to U.S. higher education, we will also discuss equity for faculty and administrators.

The course begins with an assumption that access and equity are individual, organizational, and policy concerns; therefore, we will consider access and equity from these multiple levels of analysis. Similarly, we will take up the course foci from empirical (i.e., research), theoretical, and applied perspectives. Most readings will focus on research and theory, and course activities will challenge students to engage these questions in terms of personal development and professional practice.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


Additional required readings are posted on CTools.
RECOMMENDED/ OPTIONAL TEXTS:

GRADING & COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Your grade will be calculated based on the following requirements:

a. **ATTENDANCE & ENGAGEMENT**
   25% of course grade
   Attendance is required, except in cases of sickness and conference travel. If you are ill, please stay home, take care of yourself, and notify one of the instructors. If you have conference travel, please work this out with me well in advance. More than one absence, except in unusual circumstances that have been discussed in advance, will negatively affect your course grade. Please come to class on time (i.e, before 9:10am).

   Engagement means actively supporting our collective learning. I am committed to creating a focused, non-competitive atmosphere in which we come together to build understanding about critical questions and consider how they integrate with our professional development and practice. To this end, I expect your engagement through asking and answering questions (of me and one another) and contributing to discussion in ways that demonstrate you have given thought to the weekly readings. You can expect my engagement as well, and we will take time to discuss what this means to you.

   Each week, by 9:00pm on the night before class, you will make a submission to the week’s CTools forum. Most weeks the submission will be discussion questions for the following class, which should reflect in-depth analysis of individual articles and/or cross-reading analysis or synthesis. Other times, I will ask you to write a brief response to a class activity, current event, or specific reading.

   Engagement also means turning OFF your phone altogether during class (unless you have a child or other caregiving responsibilities) and not pulling up email or social media.

b. **PAPER/ BOOK REVIEW & LEAD DISCUSSION** (2-3 pages)
   10% of course grade
   Scholars are frequently called upon to conduct manuscript reviews for their colleagues—either formally for a journal, conference, publishing house, etc. or informally to guide revisions before the manuscript is submitted. Rarely do graduate students get practice in this type of review, however. Therefore, each person will have the responsibility of writing up a review and leading the class in discussion of a book or article on one of the major topics we are studying. You will have the opportunity to sign up for this early in the class, and instruction in how to write such a review will be provided.

c. **MIDTERM REFLECTION PAPER** (5-7 pages- Individual)
   25% of course grade
   We will come together in this class through the course readings; however, each of us will engage these readings from the standpoint of our own understanding and experiences with higher education equity, access, and diversity. Your midterm project is an opportunity to reflect upon and synthesize your learning in the course – linking the material we read and the discussions we have with your experiential knowledge. One possible format for this paper, which will we discuss early in the class, is Tara Yosso’s model of counterstorytelling.
d. **COURSE PROJECT** (20-25 pages; In groups of 2-3)  
40% of course grade  
As a class, we will be developing a common course project focused on **current issues of access & equity in public universities**. Individuals will pair up with a partner to conduct original research projects. You will have considerable leeway in developing a study oriented around one of the following themes, or another of your choosing:

- Changing state & federal financial aid policy  
- Shifting institutional aid priorities from need-based aid to merit-based  
- Declining state appropriations to higher education  
- Affirmative action bans & responses  
- Development of university-community relationships (e.g., CEO, Detroit Center)  
- Rising standards for admission to selective universities  
- Use of standardized high school exit/college entrance exams  
- Proposals for free community college  
- Community college transfer (e.g., articulation agreements, developmental ed, transfer adjustment)  
- Increasing stratification in residential experiences (e.g., res hall, commuter students, Greek Life, luxury apartments, study abroad)  
- Academic support services & bridge programs  
- Access to STEM majors  
- Changing character of urban public universities  

The course project begins early in the semester, and will develop into an original, rigorous, conference-ready inquiry by the end of the semester, including a ~20-25 page paper (double spaced; 1 inch margins; excluding tables, figures, references, appendices) and 15 minute presentation. I call this a course project, not a final project, because you will be working on it throughout the semester.  

Only the final paper and presentation will be graded. You will have the rubric for the final paper and presentation well in advance of their due date. Please use APA format for all assignments turned in toward the course project (unless you are from a discipline in which another publication style is normative; if this is the case, please notify me).  

- Proposal (1 page)  
- Literature review (5-10 pages)  
- Meeting with one of the course instructors  
- Rough draft of whole paper (20-25 pages; Peer review with another project team)  
- FINAL WEEK: Complete paper, including introduction and conclusion and formal 15 minute presentation, including feedback from instructors and class:  
  (This is a hard deadline, to which no exceptions will be made except in case of unlikely prior arrangement with the instructor.)

Grading will be on the A-F scale for three (3) semester credits.  

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<td>93% and up</td>
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<td>90%-92%</td>
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<td>87%-89%</td>
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<td>83%-86%</td>
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<td>77%-79%</td>
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Incomplete grades are strongly discouraged, and must be arranged with the instructor before the end of the last regular class meeting (does not include the session(s) for final paper presentations). Per Rackham and CSHPE policy, courses with grades below B- do not count toward graduation.
ON DIVERSITY:

Diversity is critical to building both our academic knowledge in this course and an equitable learning community. Research by UM professor Scott Page finds that when a diverse group comes together around a shared problem, they solve it more successfully and innovatively than homogeneous groups of experts, because diverse individuals contribute more angles on the problem and ideas toward its solutions (Page, 2008). However, this is only true when members of the group believe in the value of diversity (Ely & Thomas, 2001).

Please see the attached discussion guidelines, which we will review and adapt on the first day of class as part of our collective framing of this course. I expect that our discussions and work together will be respectful and encouraging of different perspectives, and inclusive of people regardless of background and identity. I also expect that there may be moments in the class where identities are triggered—positively and negatively. Learning often involves cognitive dissonance, and deep learning about matters of equity and social justice often involves taking risks and asking hard questions of ourselves and one another. Neither of these are easy or comfortable, so I hope to create conditions in which we can grow to trust each other. I am comfortable pausing our regularly scheduled discussion to honestly address such issues as part of our learning during class. After all, this is a class about equity in postsecondary education. If you have concerns about anything that comes up in your experience of the class or as a graduate student, generally, please know that my office is a safe space to raise them.

In selecting the course readings, I have tried to reflect a diverse array of interests. I have also selected readings with an eye toward developing your capacity to consume and critique research that focuses on race, gender, socioeconomic status, and other systems of inequality. You may be interested in the institutional resources about diversity matters, non-discrimination, ADA, and more that the University of Michigan’s Office for Institutional Equity has posted online: http://www.umich.edu/~hraa/oie/

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; ssd.umich.edu) typically recommends accommodation through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

SEMESTER-LONG LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. Knowledge: What do we mean by access and equity?
   a) Understand the empirical, theoretical, and practical dimensions of students’ diverse pathways to and through postsecondary education.
   b) Understand the structural and cultural dimensions of equitable access to postsecondary education.

2. Application: How can I apply this course content toward professional practice?
   a) Critique course readings & concepts
   b) Reflect upon the relevance of readings and concepts to your internship and/or other professional settings and scenarios.

3. Interaction: What does this course content mean for my interactions with other professionals and students in higher education?
   a) Through course discussions, strengthen my ability to interact with other emerging scholars and
practitioners.
  b) Through course activities and written assignments, practice critical self-reflection about the role of personal experience, identities, and positionalities for work in higher education.

4. Engagement: Are my professional and research interests refined and strengthened through this course?
   a) Through the course project, refine and strengthen motivation for research and professional interests.
   b) Critically examine the assumptions of scholarship in your area of interest.
   c) Understand perspectives that are different from your own about your area of interest.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE:

Complete all readings before class so you’re able to fully participate. Remember to upload discussion questions to the CTools forum each week no later than 9pm the night before class. Your questions should include a combination of in-depth analysis of individual articles and questions that demonstrate cross-reading analysis or synthesis.

We may need to move faster or slower through the material depending on the group’s needs, so be prepared that some readings may be moved around, added, or eliminated.
PART I: CONTEXTS OF ACCESS & EQUITY

Learning Outcomes for Part I:
1. Develop norms and ground rules for discussion, as well as the beginnings of trust in discussing access & equity with one another.
2. Gain familiarity with the current and UM context and the issues we are facing.
3. Compare two university presidents’ responses to race-related issues to consider the complexity of leadership on access & equity (e.g., the multiple constituencies and priorities that professionals must satisfy).

WEEK 1: SEPT 8  INTRODUCTION: CURRENT & LOCAL CONTEXTS OF COLLEGE EQUITY
Activity:
Required:

Recommended:

WEEK 2: SEPT 15  MACRO-LEVEL PATTERNS IN COLLEGE ACCESS
Activity: Introduce course paper
In-class video: Racism 101 & Discussion
Required:
   a. Executive Summary, pp. i-xxi
   b. Ch. 3: Access and Equity, pp. 37-49
Recommended:


PART 2: INSTITUTIONAL STRATIFICATION AS A FRAMEWORK FOR EQUITABLE ACCESS

Learning Outcomes:
1. Identify common patterns and variation in the dynamics of equitable access to different institutional environments and undergraduate, graduate, and faculty opportunities.
2. Reflect upon one’s own experiences with postsecondary education access in light of broader trends identified in the research.
3. Begin to cultivate an equity & access mindset about one’s current work and professional future.

WEEK 3: SEPT 22 COLLEGE ACCESS TRENDS & COUNTERSTORIES
DUE: Proposal for final project
Required:

   a. Chapter 2: Improving college access and choice (pp. 10-33)
   a. Chapter 1: Why use critical race theory and counterstorytelling to analyze the Chicana/o educational pipeline? (pp. 1-20)

WEEK 4: SEPT 29 COMMUNITY COLLEGE ORIGINS & BACCALAUREATE SUCCESS
Required:


**Recommended:**
   a. Chapter 7: The potential of community colleges to increase bachelor’s degree attainment rates (pp. 115-139)

**WEEK 5: OCT 6 ACCESS TO SELECTIVE UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTIONS (Esmeralda teaching)**

**Required:**
   a. Chapter 3: Diversity & college admissions decisions: Adding ebony to the ivory tower (pp. 35-54)

**Recommended:**

**WEEK 6: OCT 13 ACCESS TO & EQUITY IN GRADUATE EDUCATION**

**Due:** Mid-term paper

**Required:**

**Recommended:**
WEEK 7: OCT 20  NO CLASS: FALL STUDY BREAK

WEEK 8: OCT 27  ACCESS & EQUITY IN THE PROFESSORIATE
Due: Literature review draft
In-class activity: Mid-term evaluations (self-evaluation & course evaluation)
Required:
1. Tierney & Bensimon, Promotion and Tenure
Recommended:

PART III: SOCIAL PROCESSES

Learning Outcomes:
1. Understand major social and organizational theories used to explain and face inequities, and the reciprocal nature of “top-down” policy and “bottom-up” pressure.
2. Consider one’s personal and professional role in developing more equitable, inclusive colleges and universities, and in broader systems of inequality.
3. Bring learning throughout the semester to bear on one’s course project; gain experience reporting what has been learned in both oral and written.

WEEK 9: NOV 3  AFFIRMATIVE ACTION DEBATES
In-class activity: Kahlenberg/ Kennedy debate
Required:
OR
Recommended:

WEEK 10: NOV 10  CULTURAL CAPITAL & COMMUNITY CULTURAL WEALTH
Due: Course project research methodology
Required:

**Recommended:**

**WEEK 11: NOV 17   ASPIRATIONS & COLLEGE CHOICE: STUDENT AND INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVES**

**In class:** See also podcast interview with Lehmann at http://soe.sagepub.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/content/suppl/2013/09/12/0038040713498777.DC1/SOE_Wolfgang_Lehmann.mp3

**Required:**

**Recommended:**

**WEEKS 12: NOV 24 ACTIVISM, ORGANIZING & CHANGING ACCESS POLICY**

**Required:**
1. Rojas, F. (2007). *From Black Power to Black Studies.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Ch. 1: The movement that became an institution (pp. 1-21; Additional chapters and readings as assigned)

**Recommended:**
2. Skrentny, J. D. (2002). The Ironies of Affirmative Action. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 4: Crisis management through affirmative action (pp. 67-110) Ch. 5: Administrative pragmatism and the affirmative action solution (pp. 111-144)
WEEK 13: DEC 1  UNDOCUMENTED STUDENT ACCESS
(Esmeralda teaching)
Due Dec 4: Circulate rough draft of final paper for peer review.
Required:

WEEK 14: Dec 8  COURSE PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

WEEK 15: Dec 15  FINAL PAPER DUE AT 9AM