CHANGE AND CRISIS IN UNIVERSITIES:
RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND EQUITY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Instructors: Katherine K. Chen and Ruth Milkman

This course examines recent trends affecting higher education, with special attention to how those trends exacerbate class, race/ethnicity, and gender inequalities. With the rising hegemony of a market logic, colleges and universities have been transformed into entrepreneurial institutions. Inequality has widened between elite private universities with vast resources and public institutions where students and faculty must “do more with less,” and austerity has fostered skyrocketing tuition and student debt. Tenure-track faculty lines have eroded as contingent academic employment balloons. The rise of on-line “learning” and expanding class sizes have raised concerns about the quality of higher education, student retention rates, and faculty workloads. Despite higher education’s professed commitment to diversity, disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups remain underrepresented, especially among faculty. Amid growing concerns about the impact of micro-aggressions, harassment, and even violence on college campuses, liberal academic traditions are under attack from the right. Drawing on social science research on inequality, organizations, occupations, and labor, this course will explore such developments, as well as recent efforts by students and faculty to reclaim higher education institutions.

This is a reading course with a seminar format. Requirements include:

- Faithful class attendance and active participation in discussion of required readings.
- Completion of required readings.
  - Recommended readings are optional readings for those who wish to learn more about a topic.
- Weekly written reaction papers on the required readings (about 300 words), due 24 hours by email before each class meeting.
- Oral presentations (about 10 minutes) on the course readings, and preparing several questions for group discussion, starting with the Feb. 27 class meeting.
- A research paper on a topic related to the course content and approved in advance by the instructors. This may be an empirically grounded research paper, a literature review, or a research proposal. The instructors will schedule meetings to discuss paper topics with each student individually.

NOTE: Auditors are welcome on the conditions that they do all the readings, participate during discussions, and submit the weekly reaction papers. Oral presentations are optional for auditors.
Schedule of Class Meetings and Readings:

Jan. 30  Introduction

Required reading:


Recommended readings:


Feb. 6  Historical Perspectives on the University

Deadline: One-page proposal for research paper (including possible goals for paper).

Required readings:


Recommended readings:

Feb. 13  The Imposition of “Market Logic”

Required readings:


Recommended readings:


Feb. 20  No Class (Individual Meetings with Instructors TBA this week)

Feb. 27  Funding, Rankings, and the Corporatization of Universities

Required readings:


Recommended readings:

March 6  Admissions Processes and the Changing University

Required readings:


Recommended readings:


March 13  Gender and Class Inequality in Public Universities

Required readings:


Recommended reading:

March 20  Racial and Class Inequality on Campus

Required readings:


March 27  

**Class Inequality and the Effects of Higher Education**

*Guest speaker: Paul Attewell*

**Required readings:**


**Recommended reading:**


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**Spring Break  ****

April 10  

**Politics on Campus in the 21st Century**

**Required readings:**


[https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/05/30/the-new-activism-of-liberal-arts-colleges](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/05/30/the-new-activism-of-liberal-arts-colleges)

April 17  

**“Making It” in Academia**

**Required readings:**


MacMillan.


Recommended readings:


April 24  Contingent Academic Employment and Union Organizing

Required readings:


Recommended reading:

May 1  Recent trends: Online learning & empowerment projects in higher education

**Circulate papers for May 15 workshop**

Required readings:


Recommended readings:


Example of a local, contemporary free university. http://freeuniversitynyc.org/

May 8 How to Be “Public,” How to Be “Slow,” How to Create Affinity

Required readings:


Recommended readings:


May 15 Workshop on student research papers (details to be announced).

Required readings:
ASA style guide and recording.

Recommended readings:

**Deadline** for final papers: 5pm EDT Fri., May 25, 2018.