

This is a theory seminar on the University of California, Berkeley. You can only take this course if you have already passed the theory sequence, Sociology 101-102. The first five weeks will be devoted to reading books with a perspective on the modern university in general and the University of California in particular. In the second part of the course we will share and discuss the results of chosen research projects based on theory reading from last semester. Each student will study UC Berkeley through the lens of one of theorists we read in Sociology 101 or 102. Putting theory to work!

Over the last half century our university has undergone a major transformation, variously referred to as privatization, corporatization, financialization. Among the changes that have received public attention are: decline in public funding; search for private donors; sky-rocketing student fees and increased cost of living; broader social access among students; administrative bloat and escalating administrative salaries; rising numbers of non-tenured faculty (lecturers); increasing inequalities in faculty remuneration; impoverishment of lower paid, often outsourced, service workers; unionization of workers at all levels; threats to benefits such as health insurance and pensions, degradation of conditions of student learning.

How should we understand these changes?

- A Marxian approach might look at how the university has become a creature of capitalism, has come to look like a corporation in search of profit, and internally (class?) stratified. A century ago the great American sociologist Thorsten Veblen wrote a classic book, *The Higher Learning* (1916) which pointed to the way business interests already then dominated the university. More recently Robert Samuels' *Why Public Higher Education Should be Free* (2013) writes of the financialization of the university, and Christopher Newfield's *Unmaking the Public University* considers the public university as a bastion of middle class progressiveness that faced reaction from conservative middle classes.
- A Fanonian approach might look at the university in terms of its racial order. We can read Troy Duster's *Diversity Project* (1992) or the account of African American student protest at Oberlin, Nathan Heller, *Report from Oberlin*. The operation of the Athletics Department, and in particular its football, might be seen in such terms. A recent analysis of who graduates underlines the importance of racial and class background - William G. Bowen, Matthew M. Chingos & Michael S. McPherson, *Crossing the Finish Line* (2011). We might also read W.E.B. Du Bois' accounts of the university.
- A Durkheimian approach might look at the university in terms of equality of opportunity. Here there are many accounts both of the way the university has created possibilities of social mobility and how it has also reproduced inherited inequalities. Susan Mettler's,

Degrees of Inequality (2014) examines how the structure and funding of higher education has contributed to a deepening of inequality in society. Or the more poignant ethnography of the reproduction of class among female students – Elizabeth Armstrong and Laura Hamilton, *Paying for the Party* (2013). One might also look at the university from the standpoint of its division of labor, and underline the contributions of all sectors of its employees as does the report by Purser, Schalet and Sharone, *Berkeley's Betrayal* (2004).

- A Weberian approach might see the university as a bureaucracy subject to rule bound standardization and rationalization as part and parcel of its modernization. One might look at Clark Kerr's famous lectures *The Uses of the University* (1963) that famously developed the idea of the multiversity or the Free Speech Movement's reaction to Kerr's mass university in [Mario Savio](#)'s speech of December 2, 1964. Another possibility is Benjamin's Ginsberg's *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters*.
- A Foucauldian approach might look at the university in terms of its tactics of discipline through surveillance, policing and risk management. See, for example, Amanda Armstrong, [Securitization, Risk Management and the New University](#). Or Wendy Brown's book, *Undoing the Demos* which describes new forms of governing the university according to principles of "economic reason" – competition, human capital appreciation, market inequalities, a new managerialism.
- Finally, a feminist perspective might look at questions of sexual harassment of students by faculty and administrators or by sexual assault of students against students and the way the university tries to hush these matters up. We might look at the film, *The Hunting Ground* or investigate the Title IX office on campus. We might look at blocked mobility and gender discrimination.

ASSIGNMENTS

Each week you will post 250 word memos on bcourses based on the readings for that week. I will pose the questions for your discussion. Readings will be shorter once you launch into your own projects.

There will be a mid-term that will involve a 1,000 word book review, related to your project and then a 1,000 word proposal for your project.

The final paper will be a research paper which you will work on throughout the semester. It should be 3,000-5,000 words.

Kara Young will be the GSI for the class and she will work with me, responding to your memos and helping you to define your projects.

My office hours are 4-6p.m. on Mondays in Barrows 454

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

August 30: INTRODUCTION

September 6: Perspectives on the University of California

September 13: Robert Samuels' *Why Public Higher Education Should be Free* (2013)

September 20: W.E.B. Du Bois, Selected Essays. Troy Duster, *Diversity Report*; Nathan Heller, *Letter from Oberlin*

September 27: Susan Mettler's, *Degrees of Inequality* (2014)

October 4: Clark Kerr, *Uses of the University*

October 11: Midterm: Book Review Due; Film: *The Hunting Ground*

October 18: Proposals Due

October 25: Reading + Discussion of Projects

November 1: Reading + Discussion of Projects

November 8: Reading + Discussion of Projects

November 15: Reading + Discussion of Projects

November 22: Reading + Discussion of Projects

November 29: Review Session

December 5-9: R&R Week

FINAL PAPER DUE: Friday, December 16th.