**Linda Rogers**

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Office: **HM 204D *~*** Hours: **MW 3:15-4 & TR 1:15-2:30**

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## *Fall 2011:* Liberal Studies 300, Forms of Interdisciplinary Inquiry

## Class meets on Thursdays at 4:00; we plan to move from HM 220 to Stevenson 307 at the beginning of the term.

***Required Text: In Defense of American Higher Education –*** Altbach, Gumport, & Johnstone, eds.

***Course Description:*** The course will investigate several forms of inquiry used in contemporary academic disciplines, emphasizing individual students’ experiences in their chosen fields. We will gain an overview of higher education and its historical context as well as looking at its contemporary functions and considering its future roles. As part of the course work, students will read, reflect, write, and make individual and group presentations, occasionally attending guest lectures or other activities arranged for our class sessions.

***Goals / Learning Outcomes:*** Through readings, discussions, and class presentations, you will enhance your understanding of Liberal Studies, disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to learning, and significant issues in American higher education. We will work toward these projected outcomes: (1) learning to address complex issues as you take different perspectives into consideration, (2) demonstrating your knowledge of the basic content and methods of your areas of concentration, and (3) demonstrating your ability to write and speak about issues from the perspectives of the disciplines that comprise your areas of concentration.

***Work Requirements:* (1) To further your awareness of complex issues in higher education, including interdisciplinary pursuits and the quest for social justice, we will read and discuss the text along with relevant outside material. As evidence of your engagement in our course work, you will keep a weekly journal**\* **of reflections on our course activities. I will respond to your journal entries each week, and later in term, to your accumulated portfolio material. In addition to working with the text, we will generate an extended range of discussion topics and collaborative projects that will be enhanced by presentations on outside materials by you, your classmates, and our guest speakers. (2) To demonstrate knowledge of the content and methods of your areas of concentration, you will give a brief presentation on your Liberal Studies program, including a discussion of your studies in each area of concentration. (3) To demonstrate your ability to write and speak about issues from the perspective of the disciplines that comprise your areas of concentration, you will make a major presentation exploring these areas in greater depth. Because your goal is to help others understand your work, you may decide to explain how the approach taken in one or more key areas of concentration would compare to and interact with other areas, and explain how you plan to incorporate your areas of interest in the future.**

\* Turn in your weekly journal entry before class. Each entry should be equivalent to one or more typed pages in length (preferred font size: 11 to 13). I encourage you to e-mail your entry, but you may also submit it during English 309 on Tuesday or deliver it to my HM 315 mailbox. I expect informal but coherent responses to your experiences in the course, with a significant part of each entry reflecting on assigned reading topics. Other possible topics include (1) *guest lectures or other university activities:* Respond to aspects of these events that are significant to you, especially in terms of your academic or vocational interests; (2) *your own work:* Explain what you are studying, how your work is going, and what you are learning in the process. If you wish, discuss aspects of college life not related to Liberal Studies itself, while continuing to focus on the pursuit of a college degree; and (3) *student presentations:* Comment on presentations by your classmates; for a presentation of your own, turn in a brief summary or other material relating to your talk. Completed work requirements should be represented by supporting materials in your final portfolio.

*Basic Grading Criteria:*

A - Work that is thorough, imaginative, and thoughtful, with active participation in class assignments, discussions, & other activities

B - Good work that moves beyond basic requirements to demonstrate engagement in assignments, discussions, & other activities

C - Acceptable work; “doing the minimum to get by”

D - Some assignments complete without adequate participation in class activities

F - Few or no assignments complete; inadequate participation in class

*Also,* a plus (+) is assigned to work exceeding the requirements for a given grade; minus (-) to work falling below these requirements.

*General Policies – (1) Assignments:* You are responsible for keeping up with all of the course work, including weekly journal entries and presentations. Keep all the written work done for this class to demonstrate your fulfillment of the written requirements for the course. (To avoid losing track of your completed journal entries, save each on a reliable storage device and send a copy to your own e-mail account.)

*(2) Due dates:* Journal entries and presentations are due on the assigned dates. If you have a problem with a due date, discuss it with me privately as soon as possible.

*(3) Attendance:*Your course work involves participation in discussions, attending lectures, and working with your classmates, so regular attendance is essential. **Because we meet only once a week, I expect to hear from you if you must be absent from class.** Send a message to <laroge01@gmail.com> or call 852-4737.

***Special Conditions or Disabilities:*** If you have a condition or disability that may impair your ability to complete assignments or otherwise satisfy course criteria, please arrange to meet with me to identify, discuss, and document any feasible instructional modifications or accommodations. You should notify me no later than the second week of this semester, or no later than the end of the second week after a disability or condition is diagnosed, whichever occurs earliest. (Contact the Disability Resource Center, 852-6938, for further assistance.)

***Grievance Procedure:*** If you have questions or concerns about grades, the class, or any assignment, see me as soon as possible. If you remain unsatisfied, you may arrange to see Dr. John Hale (852-2247).

***Important Dates:*** **Thurs., Aug. 25:** **First day of this class**

(Friday, Aug. 26: Last day to drop/add)

(Monday, Sept. 5: Labor Day – no classes)

(Wednesday, Sept. 14: Last day to apply for December degree)

(Mon.-Tues., October 10-11: Midterm Break – no classes)

(Thursday, October 13: Last day to withdraw)

**Thursday, November 17: Due date for final portfolios**

**Wed.-Sun., November 24-28: Thanksgiving Break – no classes**

**Thursday, December 1: Last day of class; portfolios returned**

**Tuesday, Dec. 6, 1 to 3 PM: Office hours for return of late portfolios in HM 204 D**

Wed.-Tues., December 7-13:Final Exam Period (no final in this class)

Friday, December 16: Commencement & degree date

**Continuity of Instruction:**  In the unlikely event of severe weather or other problems requiring the university to cancel classes, I plan to continue our work online, using electronic software (Blackboard) and e-mail correspondence.

**Please note:***I reserve the right to make changes in the syllabus when necessary to meet learning objectives, to compensate for missed classes, or for similar reasons. Whenever possible, such changes will be announced in class as well as on Blackboard.*

*TENTATIVE COURSE PLAN*

8/25 – Journal entry, syllabus and introductory material, & first presentation sign-ups. We will begin to look at various perspectives on higher learning, sharing observations and reflections with one another.

First journal entry: Write for 20 minutes or so about how you came to be here today. Consider some of the following suggestions as you write:

1. *Did your family or friends offer advice about higher education or specific colleges? Did some of them tell you stories about their own experiences with vocational or academic schooling after high school?*
2. *What did you know or assume about the college experience before you arrived? Before enrolling here, did you have previous experiences with college classes (including advanced placement programs)?*
3. *How did you come to attend U of L?*
4. *What led you to consider the Liberal Studies program?*

After this writing session, we will begin to discuss our educational experiences and aspirations, as well as our areas of interest in higher education.

**Syllabus:** I will go over this briefly, but I welcome additional comments or questions at any time.

**Introduction to the course material:** We’ll discuss focal points of the course and primary concerns in higher education. One of our goals here will be to envision a better future for colleges and universities.

**Sign up** for the first presentation on your individual LBST program (these will begin on Sept. 1st).

**Homework:** Look over Ch. 1 on “The American Academic Model.” *Here Altbach explains that our system of higher learning has been considered “the worldwide ‘gold standard’ for higher education” (11). In “Historical Perspectives” (14-16) he summarizes the history of higher education, explaining that American college traditions began in Europe and were strongly influenced by the emergence of British schools like Oxford and Cambridge in the Middle Ages.*  **Before the next class,** turn in a journal responseequivalent to 1 or 2 double-spaced pages.Bring a printout to Eng. 309 on Tuesday (HM 221), e-mail[laroge01@gmail.com](mailto:laroge01@gmail.com) by Wednesday, or put it in my mailbox (HM 315) by 1:00 p.m. Thursday. Also, note the date for your brief presentation.

*Please note:* **Class sessions may include guest speakers and student presenters as well as class discussions. Your journal entries should include responses to some of speakers or notable presentations after they take place.** Also, if you know people who are knowledgeable about and willing to discuss situations or events related to our work, please ask if they are willing to share some of their observations and experiences with you—or with the class as a whole—in order to extend the range of ideas and information available to the class*.*

**9/1 –** We will discuss Ch. 1 in class, taking a closer look at the history of American higher education and its first centuries of elitism—how it functioned as a kind of exclusive club until the late 19th century. We will also have our first set of brief presentations and begin to work on collaborative projects. **Homework: Look over Ch. 2 & 3** (38-84), focusing on several sections in particular:

*Ch. 2 – Levine’s businesslike approach presents higher education as a “mature industry.” Levine reviews critical questions asked about the “industry” (38-42) and suggests that educators could do more to answer these questions effectively. “New Competitors” (42-50) explains that traditional colleges have not met all students’ needs. Which problems raised by Levine seem most serious to you? How might they be resolved?*

*Ch. 3 – Here we look again at problems in higher education, this time from a historical perspective, reviewing “crisis” points that have been raised at different points in time. I recommend that you read the chapter more closely from “The Pandemic Crisis and Attention to Resources” (72) to the conclusion (78), taking special note of the next to last paragraph written in defense of colleges and universities, as well as the final sentence of the chapter, which offers a rationale for acknowledging successes in higher education.*

**9/8 –** Today we will hear more brief presentations, discuss Chapters 2 and 3, and spend time working on collaborative projects. **Homework: Look over Ch. 4 & 5** (85-109), especially the following:

*Ch. 4 – I recommend focusing on “The Legitimating Idea” (87-88) and “The Public Interest . . .” (104-07).*

*Ch. 5 focuses on the “American Advantage,” its emphasis on mass education and widespread access to college. I will leave the highlights for you to discover for yourself.*

**9/15 to 11/10 –** We will decide together on how we will focus our attention on the text and determine which chapters seem particularly helpful, and which outside material we should include. As we finish the brief presentations, I will pass out another sign-up sheet for the major presentations that will take us to the end of the term. Homework assignments will be announced in class and on Blackboard.

**11/10 –** Presentations and portfolio drafting

**11/17 –** Final presentations and collection of portfolios.

**11/23-27 – Thanksgiving Break – no classes**

**12/1 – Last day of class; portfolios returned.**

# On Tuesday, 12/6, I will hold two extra hours in HM 204 D from 2 to 4 p.m. to return portfolios as needed.