**Linda Rogers**

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Office: **HM 204D *~*** Hours: **MW 1:15-3:15** & by appointment

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## Spring 2012: Liberal Studies 300 – Forms of Interdisciplinary Inquiry

##  After the first day in HM 210, we will meet in Stevenson 307 on Thursdays at 1:00.

***Text:******In Defense of American Higher Education***(Former LBST students have made textbooks available.)

***Course Description:*** This course investigates several forms of inquiry used in contemporary academic

disciplines, as well as providing an overview of higher education from a variety of perspectives.

***Goals / Learning Outcomes:*** Through our readings, discussions, and class presentations, we will gain a better understanding of Liberal Studies degree programs, of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to learning, and of significant issues relating to higher education today, with special attention to issues of social justice. We will work toward these projected outcomes: (1) learning to address complex issues from the point of view of a number of relevant disciplines, (2) demonstrating your knowledge of the basic content and methods of your areas of concentration, and (3) demonstrating the ability to write and speak about issues from the perspectives of the disciplines that make up your areas of concentration.

***Work Requirements:*** Your work includes reading, reflecting, writing, and making presentations, as well as listening to guest speakers during our class sessions. In keeping with the goals described in the section above, you will engage in the following activities:

1. To further your awareness of complex issues in higher education, including interdisciplinary pursuits, we will read and discuss *In Defense of American Higher Education* along with relevant outside material. As evidence of your engagement in the course work, you will keep a series of weekly journal entries and online comments\* on course-related activities. This material will be collected in an electronic (or printed) final portfolio. In addition to working with the text, we will generate an extended range of discussion topics 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 and an explanation of how each discipline’s approach compares to and interacts with the others. This presentation should touch not only on your academic motivation and the design of your program but also on some of the ways that your chosen disciplines approach higher learning.
3. To further demonstrate your ability to write and speak about issues from the perspective of disciplines that encompass your areas of concentration, you will make a major presentation that explores these areas in greater depth, illustrating your future career goals by focusing on one or more applications of your future work. Schedule a short meeting with me to discuss your project as you plan your approach.

\* Weekly journal entries to be turned in by the Wednesday before class: You may e-mail your entry to me or post to the Blackboard discussion forum(s)—or turn in one or more single-spaced pages. I expect informal but coherent responses to your experiences in the course, with a significant part of each entry reflecting on class readings and related issues. Other suggested topics include *GUEST LECTURES & OTHER CLASS ACTIVITIES* (explain which aspects of these events are most significant to you, especially in terms of your academic or vocational interests); *YOUR OWN WORK* (tell how your work is going and what you are learning in other courses related to your program and if you wish, discuss aspects of college life not closely related to Liberal Studies, while continuing to focus on the pursuit of a college degree); as well as *OTHER STUDENT PRESENTATIONS*. Please note that all work should be noted in your final portfolio (including a list of online journals &/or discussion posts)

*General Course Policies:*

* You are responsible for keeping up with all of the course work, including weekly entries and comments, so you will need to **keep all the written work done for this class to demonstrate your fulfillment of the written requirements for the course.**
* **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.**

***Attendance:*** Your course work involves participation in discussions, attending lectures, and working with your

 classmates, so **regular attendance is very important**. **Because we meet only once a week, I expect to hear**

 **from you if you must be absent from class.** E-mail me at **laroge01@gmail.com** or call **852-4737**.

***Grading Criteria:* A - work that is thorough, imaginative, and thoughtful, with full participation in class assignments,**

 **discussions, & group activities**

**B - good work that moves beyond basic requirements to demonstrate active engagement in assignments, discussions, & group**

 **activities**

**C - acceptable work; “just doing the minimum to get by”**

###### D - most of the course work complete

###### F - little or no course work complete

*With modifying factors:* Plus signs acknowledge work exceeding the grading criteria; minus signs, work below the criteria.

***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 as soon as possible if such a disability or condition is diagnosed. (Contact the Disability Resource Center, 852-6938, for further assistance.)

***Grievance Procedure:*** If you have questions or concerns about this class, see me as soon as possible. If you are not satisfied with our discussion, you may arrange to see Dr. John Hale (852-2247).

***Important Dates:* Thursday, January 12: First day of class**

**(Friday, Jan. 13: Last day to drop/add)**

**(Monday, Jan. 16: Martin Luther King Day – no classes)**

**(Thursday, Feb. 2: Last day to apply for degree)**

 **(Thursday, Mar. 1: Last day to withdraw)**

**Mon.-Sun., March 12-18: Spring Break – no classes**

**Thursday, April 12: Portfolio due date**

**Thursday, April 19: Last day of class; portfolios returned.**

**Tuesday, April 24: 1 to 3 pm – Office hours for return of late portfolios in HM 204 D**

**Wed.-Tues., Apr. 25-May 1: Final Exam Period (no final in this class)**

**Sat., May 12: Commencement & Degree date**

*INITIAL COURSE PLAN:*

# 1/12 – First journal entry, syllabus distribution, sign-ups for the first presentations, and introductions. Today we will begin to look at various perspectives on higher learning and liberal studies, sharing our own observations and reflections with one another.

First journal entry & individual introductions: Write for 20 minutes or so about how you came to be here today. I’d like to know more about your educational motivation. Here are a few questions to consider:

1. *How did you develop the goal of pursuing your degree? Were there family members or others who encouraged you in the pursuit of higher education or of specific career goals?*
2. *What led you to consider the Liberal Studies program?*
3. *What are some of your post-graduate plans or aspirations? How do you hope to find meaning in your life and in your work?*

After the writing session, we will begin to discuss educational experiences, goals, and aspirations for learning.

**Homework for 1/19:**

1. Note the date that you have chosen for the brief LBST presentation.
2. Begin to read the Introduction and the **first chapter** dealing with “The American Academic Model: A Comparative Perspective” (1-37), and tell me about your reactions to the reading. Were you aware of our system’s recognition as “the worldwide ‘gold standard’ for higher education, respected for . . . research and scholarship and for providing access to large numbers of students”? The author, Philip Altbach, reminds us that the U.S. was the first to focus on mass education at the college level rather than allowing only a few select individuals to move beyond primary and secondary education, as has been the tradition in other countries. After giving a bit of historical background, Altbach provides a context for understanding our system and discusses some of our current challenges*.*

**The normal requirement for a journal entry** (equivalent to 1 or 2 pages) **is to e-mail it, post it, or turn in a printout by the Wednesday before the next class session—in this case, Jan. 18th—** so that I will have time to read responses before we meet in class. If you wish, you may turn it in during the English 309 class that meets at 1:00 on Tuesdays in HM 113.

***Also, our activities may include guest speakers and student presenters as well as discussions. Your journal entries should include responses to some of speakers or to notable presentations after they take place.*** *And if you know people who are knowledgeable about and willing to discuss situations or events under discussion, please ask if they are willing to share some of their observations and experiences with you so that we can extend the exchange of thoughts available in class.*

**1/19 –** We will discuss **Ch. 1** on “The American Academic Model.” In “Historical Perspectives” (pp. 14-16), Altbach provides an overview of our collective history in higher education. He explains that traditions in the U.S. began in Europe and were strongly influenced by the emergence of British colleges like Oxford and Cambridge during the Middle Ages. We will take a closer look at the history of higher education and the way it functioned as an exclusive club until the mid- to late 19th century, as well as discussing other parts of the reading that seem especially informative or interesting. **Homework:**

**Journal response for 1/26: 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” (59-60) 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.

**1/26 –** Today we will hear more brief presentations, discuss Chapters 2 and 3, and spend time working on collaborative projects. **Journal response for 2/2: 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.

**2/2 –** Discussion of Ch. 4 & 5 and ongoing class work. **Journal response for 2/9:** **Read Ch. 6** on the costs of higher education. We will look at how money is spent at colleges across the country and how the costs of education are handled by students at the University of Louisville.

For **2/9, 2/16, and future sessions,** we will decide together on how to focus attention on future sections of 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. As usual, journal responses will be due by the Wednesday before class on Thursday. A summary of potentially relevant chapters follows here*:*

**Ch. 7** focuses primarily on small “elite” colleges, but in some ways curriculum choice in a Liberal Studies program can resemble that of the small schools.

**Ch. 8** looks at technological innovation. Because this book was written at the end of the 20th century, we will want to discuss more recent developments in technology and their impact on our academic and social lives.

**Ch. 9** was written by a former university president and discusses the role of the president in higher education.

**Ch. 10** focuses on graduate education but is somewhat out of date. We may want to focus a session on each person’s postgraduate aspirations.

**Ch. 11** on “College Students Today” gives us an opportunity to look at changes in student population over time and to consider how student behaviors and behavioral expectations have changed in the 20th and 21st centuries.

**Ch. 13**, “Understanding the American Academic Profession,” looks at the roles and responsibilities of college professors.

# By 4/12, we will hear any remaining presentations, and final portfolios will be due.

On **4/19**, we will have our **last day of class** and I will return portfolios.

# On Tuesday, 4/24 (the “reading day” before final exam week), I will hold two extra hours in HM 204 D from 1 to 3 p.m. to return late portfolios.

***Please note:*** *I reserve the right to make changes in the syllabus as necessary to meet our learning objectives, to compensate for missed classes, or for similar reasons. I will make every effort to notify you of such changes in class and by postings to Blackboard.*