

Prof. Wendy Moffat
Office: East College 408
Hours: M, W 3-5 and by appointment
Phone: x 1499
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1:30-2:45 M TH
Spring 2009
Blackboard URL
EC 107

Librarian: Chris Bombaro (bombaroc@dickinson.edu)
Writing Center Tutors: Chris Gross and Sylvia Warren (WC x 1620)

First Year Seminar: Campus Life The Cultural Meaning of College in Contemporary America

Required Texts: (available for purchase at the College Bookstore)

Armstrong, Study is Hard Work (Godine)

Golden, The Price of Admission (Three Rivers)

Hessler, River Town (Harpercollins)

Horowitz, Campus Life (Chicago UP)

Lemann, The Big Test: The Secret History of American Meritocracy (Farrar Straus & Giroux)

Nathan, My Freshman Year (Penguin)

Steinberg, The Gatekeepers: Inside the College Admissions Process of a Premier College
(Penguin)

Recommended:

Hacker, A Writer's Reference (Bedford St. Martin's)

Course description:

These days in America a college education is an “experience,” a commodity, a necessity, a scarce resource, and a decisive measure of intellectual and social “merit”—but the cultural meaning of a post-secondary education has changed significantly since the liberal arts college was created in the founding colonies in the eighteenth-century. We will study how and why college—specifically a college like Dickinson—has come to have the significance it has today, and what attitudes towards higher education tell us about (perhaps conflicting) American values.

Writing and Grading:

Your papers will emphasize different approaches and skills. I will assign personal essays, summaries of arguments, research papers, and argument papers. Some writing will be required on Blackboard, our web site for the class. Some will be graded, some not. Some will be assigned in stages, to help you develop your ideas and research; you will have a chance to redraft one graded paper.

You must complete all written assignments, including those on Blackboard, to pass the class. You must consult with a designated writing center tutor for TWO papers. Failure to

use the Writing Center in the mandated way will result in a grade of F for the paper in question. Papers are due in class, along with your alert mind, on the date specified; late papers will receive a grade of F.

The College has clear-cut rules regarding plagiarism, which you will learn through classes with Ms. Bombaro. I will enforce these rules, and also require that you read the chapter on plagiarism in the MLA Handbook, which will be available on Blackboard.

In compliance with the Dickinson College policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be recommended for students with disabilities. Such requests are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester. Students are required to register with Academic Resource Services, located on the first floor of Biddle House (contact x 1080 or waybranj@dickinson.edu) to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.

Papers will be assessed as following:

Paper #1 10%

Paper # 2 20%

Paper #3 10%

Paper #4 (including prospectus and Bibliography) 30%

Revision 10%

Participation: Attendance, Preparation, Class Discussion, Blackboard Postings 20%

Reading Schedule:

17 Jan. (Sat.) First meeting: Reading the Syllabus and Advising

Note that this class meeting will occur 11:15-12:30 in EC 107

Assignment # 1: 2 page paper. Imagine you are an anthropologist. Describe the culture of your secondary school and its preparation for higher education. Give it some snap: characterize and assess. Be empirical. Don't be overly idiosyncratic: this is not about your personal experience, it's about your school.

“Getting In”: Selectivity and “Merit in Postwar American Higher Education

19 Jan. Steinberg, The Gatekeepers (to 119) *Paper #1 due: post on Blackboard **

22 Jan. Your High School : an analysis.

26 Jan. Steinberg, The Gatekeepers (end)

29 Jan. Lemann, The Big Test (Book One)

2 Feb. Lemann, The Big Test (Book Two)

5 Feb. Lemann, The Big Test (Book Three)

9 Feb. Defining “Merit”
No class 12 Feb. (Moffat lecture at Tulane University)
Paper # 2 due: 4 pages. If access to college is a scarce resource, how should we allocate spaces for students? Use Steinberg and Lemann in your argument. *

16 Feb. Golden, The Price of Admission (Introduction, chs. 1-3)
19 Feb. Golden, The Price of Admission (chs. 5-7))

23 Feb. Dean of Admissions Stephanie Balmer
26 Feb. Comparative Views of Contemporary Higher Education: Ms. Bombaro

The Birth of the Liberal Arts College

2 Mar. Horowitz, Campus Life
5 Mar. Dickinson College Common Reading (Handout)
Paper #3: 1 page. Summarize Rush’s argument for founding Dickinson College. *

SPRING BREAK

16 Mar. Horowitz, Campus Life
19 Mar. Horowitz, Alma Mater (selection on Blackboard)

Campus Cultures

23 Mar. Nathan, My Freshman Year (Chs 1-3)
26 Mar. Issues for Research Paper: *prospectus due*
30 Mar. Nathan, My Freshman Year (Chs 4-6)
2 Apr. Nathan, My Freshman Year (end)
6 Apr. Exploring Dickinson Campus Culture: Sex (selected readings)
9 Apr. Sex (continued)
13 Apr. *Research Questions: Post Preliminary Bibliography on Blackboard*
16 Apr. Exploring Dickinson Campus Culture: Diversity
20 Apr. Comparative Cultures: China—selections from Hessler, River Town:
Students from Asian Programs
23 Apr. Big Questions: *Research paper (Paper #4) Due*

27 Apr. Comparative Cultures: Britain: Students from UEA
30 Apr. Last Class: Evaluations

5 May (Tues.) 5pm: Revised essay due. You may revise any of the paper topics marked with an asterisk. Revision guidelines will be distributed.