College Students Studying College (A FYS)
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Syllabus Outline

Course Description
This seminar will examine student experiences in -- and outcomes of -- college; because college is such a multi-faceted area of study, and because the field of Higher Education is an interdisciplinary field, our work will draw not only on education research but also on such disparate traditions as psychology, writing studies, statistics, and documentary filmmaking. Reading and employing both quantitative methods (including survey design and statistical analysis) and qualitative methods (including focus groups, interviews, and document analysis), we will aim to describe true college experiences, while staying deeply attuned to the reality that collegians may have different experiences depending on what identities they hold. (Note: this seminar is designed as a (potential) gateway for the Vertically Integrated Project (VIP) of the same name, ideally serving as a way to bring students into ongoing undergraduate research projects in the field of higher education.)

Class Session Outline
- Each week we’ll begin with one current topic of concern/news in Higher Education.
- We’ll dive into a particular content area of higher education research.
- And we’ll also examine a particular research method (e.g. focus groups, survey design).
- All of that will be in service of our larger understanding of the possibilities of Higher Education research, which we’ll engage with each class in very practical ways as we head toward our own original projects of college students studying college.

Original Research Process
Students will get the chance to create, run, and write up their own original research in Higher Education. Scaffolded assignments:
  a) *Who am I?* Identify an area of interest and write a researcher’s stance statement: what draws you to this content, what do you bring to it (both as expertise and bias)?
  b) *What do I want to know?* Articulate and pitch your Research Question(s): we’ll spend multiple classes honing and revising your study goals and RQs.
  c) *How can I come to know that?* Explain your Methodology: we’ll explore the relationship between research questions and methods (note: revising your RQs is totally part of the process).
  d) *Who will I engage with to know that?* Map out your Site, Participants, Target Populations, Data Sources: you’ll describe who you’re studying (and what your object of analysis is).
  e) *Wait, am I doing research?! (Yes.)* You’ll gather, collect, create your original data and lay it out in a way that others can understand, which is to say that you’ll write up your Results.
  f) *What does it all mean?* You’ll explore multiple interpretations, contextualizations, explanations, limitations of your discoveries in a Discussion section.
g) **Who’s listening?** Final Presentations and Papers. You’ll present your findings to the group and answer questions about what you’ve discovered. You’ll also put all your previous assignments together into a full original research paper, which means you’ll have to do, at the end, the thing you could not have done at the beginning: write an Introduction.

**Weekly Content Area Outline**

Week 1: A Brief History of American Higher Education  
Week 2: A Brief View of American Higher Education Today  
**Week 3-9: College Impact, aka How College Affects Students**  
Week 3: How College Affects Intellectual Development  
Week 4: How College Affects Attitudes and Values  
Week 5: How College Affects Moral Development  
Week 6: How College Affects Psychosocial Change  
Week 7: Career and Economic Outcomes of College  
Week 8: Quality of Life Outcomes  
Week 9: Persistence: Who Graduates and Why  
Week 10: Different Experiences of Different Student Populations/Identities  
Week 11: Studies of Institutions  
Week 12: Studies of Educational Practices  
Week 13: Studies of States, Regions  
Week 14: Final Presentations

**Weekly Methods Outline**

Week 1: History  
Week 2: History/Contextualizing  
Week 3: Quantitative Survey Design  
Week 4: Qualitative Interviews  
Week 5: Quantitative Survey Design, Part2  
Week 6: Qualitative Interviews, Part2  
Week 7: Qualitative Focus Groups  
Week 8: Outside Numerical Data Sources  
Week 9: Institutional Data  
Week 10: Qualitative Written Data  
Week 11: What Does Choosing a Method Say About Your Research?  
Week 12: Method problems in the Field  
Week 13: Method problems in the Field, Part2  
Week 14: Final Presentations

**Back-end Stuff**

*Grade calculation and assignment lengths:*

Researcher’s Stance (3 pages): 5%  
Research Questions (1 page): 10%  
Methodology (3-5 pages): 10%
Data Sources (1-2 pages): Ungraded
Results (page limit varies by methodology!): 10%
Final Paper (15 pages; but notice that you’ve already written at least 8 pages): 35%
Final Presentation: 15%
Class Participation (including ungraded homework): 15%

Required Book
*How College Affects Students, Vol 3: 21st Century Evidence That Higher Education Works* (available free online via NYULibraries). We’ll read approximately a chapter a week (most are around 50 pages). This is a dense book, because it’s actually meta-analysis, which means that it’s a book about/summarizing other research. We’ll make sure to dig out actual articles it references as well, so that you can see both the small and big picture. But give yourself plenty of time for reading, since 30 pages in this book is closer to 60 pages in any other.

All other readings available online via Higher Education journals in NYULibrary databases. Because HCAS is quantitative, all of our qualitative research articles will be read this way, and we’ll make sure to read as much qualitative as quantitative (probably ~3 articles a week, each of which will be ~20-30 journal pages). Values translation: just because there’s a book about the quantitative side of things doesn’t mean it’s more important, it’s just easier to put together in one place, both methodologically and physically. :)