Problems of Mass Higher Education
Prof. James. Côté

Class time & place: Wed 9:30-12:30 @ SSC-2020
Office Hours: after class or by appointment (SSC 5208) or Skype
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Course Description:

This course examines the problems that emerge when post-secondary education is provided on a mass scale. These problems include mission drifts to corporate and the consumer models, the competing interests of stakeholders that produce dysfunctional systems normalizing academic disengagement and grade inflation, and put undue stress on students and professors. Alternatives to these degraded mass systems are examined and solutions to problems facing Canada’s university system are discussed. This course will be of special interest to those planning careers in, or associated with, education.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course students will be able to:

* distinguish between forms of education that constitute liberal arts as opposed to pseudo-vocational substitutes for a liberal education
* understand the history of higher education and the mission drifts that are taking place toward pseudo-vocationalism
* identify the interests and conflicts among the various stakeholders pulling and pushing the mass-educational system
* appreciate the differences among élite, mass, and universal educational systems
* have an in-depth comprehension of the origins and consequences of academic disengagement, at the individual and institutional levels
* identify the stresses experienced by students and faculty and how these are related to the mission drifts and pressures on the system by various stakeholders
* know the pedagogical uses of new technologies, and the reasons for the hype about them
* understand international variations in higher education as well as how students are prepared at the secondary level and offered alternatives to academic tracks
* generate potential solutions to the problems faced by mass systems in various societies, especially those governed by neoliberal ideologies

**Course Requirements:**

**Motivation and active learning:**

Students are expected to read in preparation for lectures as specified in the lecture outline. Readings will be explained in class to some extent, but there will also be extensive and in-depth class discussions of material in the readings based on the assumption that students have prepared for class. Accordingly, the more students prepare for class by reading the relevant material in advance, the higher the quality of classes and the more everyone will benefit personally and intellectually from the course. The motivation of all students in the class to engage in deep learning is essential to making this a rewarding experience for everyone.

Classes will involve a Socratic Method, an active learning technique whereby I will summarize the readings somewhat but will mainly ask questions about key aspects of the readings and their implications, with the class following the logic of various assumptions and conclusions as part of critical thinking exercises. It is thus essential that students prepare for class by reading in advance and contemplating the significance and implications of the content of the readings. These questions will constitute the basis of the questions asked on the exams.

**Required Readings:**


2. Various PDFs of journal articles and other readings listed with each relevant lecture topic, available on the course OWL site.
Grade Breakdown:

Exams: 70%

A midterm exam and a final exam will determine 70 per cent of the final course grade. The exams will be based on lecture material, class discussions, and assigned readings.

The midterm is worth 30% and the final is worth 40%. The questions will be drawn roughly 50% from classes and 50% from readings, with some overlap, and involve a variety of formats (multiple choice, short answer, and essay). The final exam will cover all the material in the course.

Engagement: 30%

Engagement is defined in terms of motivation and active learning: preparing for class by doing—and thinking about—the assigned readings in advance of class each week, and making insightful contributions to class based on the readings. To be fully engaged, students should expect to spend six hours per week preparing for classes in these ways, plus the additional three hours in weekly class attendance. Those who feel shy about speaking up in class can email me their questions/comments before or after classes, and I will read them if they are appropriate and there is time, or I will respond to them by email and circulate the emails to the entire class if I think others will benefit.

“80 percent of life is showing up.” (Woody Allen): Engagement also means attending classes on time and giving them your full attention. Everyone will be given a “tent card” with his or her name on it. This card will be picked up by each student at the front of the room at the beginning of each class and returned at the end of class. This will allow me to get to know everyone’s name and to take attendance in an unobtrusive manner. Full attendance earns 20%. Participation earns the other 10% of this 30% component. The participation component of the grade is based on my appraisal of each student’s engagement in the course, as defined above.

"Civility costs nothing, and buys everything." (Mary Wortley Montagu): Classroom civility is expected and incidents of incivility will result in penalties in this component of the grade (e.g., 1% per incident). Texting in class and using laptops inappropriately (checking social media or playing games) are the two most common forms of incivility in contemporary classrooms. They are very distracting to professors who are trying to reach/teach everyone in the class, but also to neighbouring students who are trying to concentrate on what is being said/done in class.
Lecture schedule

**Week 1 (Jan. 8): Course Introductions**

**Week 2 (Jan. 15): Mass societies; Neoliberal economies; The paradox of lower standards and poorer outcomes in knowledge societies**


**Week 3 (Jan. 22): History: from elite to mass (to universal?)**

LHE, Ch. 1


**Week 4 (Jan. 29): Mission drifts, corporatization, competing interests and stakeholder gridlock**

LHE, Ch. 2 & 4


Week 5 (Feb. 5): Consumer model I: disengagement and its impact

LHE, Ch. 3


Week 6 (Feb. 12): Consumer model II: defenses of disengagement

LHE, Ch. 5


Week 7 (Feb. 19): Institutionalized disengagement week

Week 8: (Feb. 26): In-Class Test

Week 9 (Mar. 5): Proposed solutions: New technologies/old pedagogies

LHE, Ch. 6


Week 10 (Mar. 12): The paradox revisited: graduate experiences


Weeks 11 & 12 (Mar. 19 & 26): International comparisons; preparations and outcomes

LHE (pp. 114-118)


Week 13 (Apr. 2): Is mass liberal education possible in Canada?

LHE, Ch. 7


Week 14 (Apr. 9): Wrap up and loose ends
University Regulations

Prerequisite(s): Sociology 1020 or 1021E and third or fourth year standing in a module in Sociology.

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites. If you do not have the requisites for this course, and you do not have written special permission from your Dean to enroll in this course, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

From the webpage http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/havingproblems.asp

Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking: All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (http://www.turnitin.com).

Missed Exams and Late Assignments: You should understand that academic accommodation will not be granted automatically on request. If, due to medical illness, you cannot write a test or exam, or submit an assignment by the due date, it is your responsibility to follow the University’s new “Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness”. This policy can be accessed at: http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2013/pg117.html

Compassionate Grounds: Serious Illness of a Family Member: Inform your instructor as soon as possible and submit a medical certificate from the family member’s physician to your home faculty’s Academic
Counseling office. In Case of a Death: Inform your instructor as soon as possible and submit a copy of the newspaper notice, death certificate or documentation provided by the funeral director to your home faculty’s Academic Counseling office.

MAKE-UP EXAMS. You should note that make-up exams are not routine in this course. Moreover, I will not agree to provide make-ups so students can go on family holidays, attend weddings or “conferences”, or otherwise pursue various personal/hedonistic activities.

If you cannot write a test for a justifiable reason (see the university regulations above) see me in person or telephone me at the earliest possible opportunity and then obtain permission from your Faculty’s Academic Counseling Office (The office for Social Science is in Room 2105, Social Science Centre: telephone 519 661-2011 or fax 519 661-3384). Be prepared to submit documentation of your difficulties.

Class cancellations or changes: Regularly check the Department of Sociology web site (www.ssc.uwo.ca/sociology/)

SUPPORT SERVICES
Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.
Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.