Current Controversies in Urban Higher Education
EDPS 415, CRN 43673
Fall, 2019
Thursdays, 6:00-9:00, BSB 219

Instructor: Dr. Theresa A. Thorkildsen (Terri)
Office: 3549 ETMSW
Hours: Wednesdays, 3:00-4:00, but preferably by appointment
Phone: (312) 996-8138, E-mail: thork@uic.edu
Web: https://thork.people.uic.edu/fair/

Purpose
This course addresses critical controversies in urban higher education, helping students learn how urban leaders meet the demands of individuals, local communities, and global contexts. Topics such as free speech, academic freedom, college affordability, intercollegiate athletics, substance use and abuse, relationship management, mental health, academic integrity, and the roles of education in society will be debated with the aim of improving critical thinking and problem-solving in higher education settings.

Specific Learning Outcomes
Students will be able to...
- Explore how campus leadership requires self-awareness as well as knowledge of key themes and issues in higher education.
- Identify current controversies, challenges, and debates.
- Describe the impact of various factors that are salient in campus life and higher educational settings.
- Explore changing norms and expectations that are salient in urban, higher educational contexts.
- Discuss the political context and processes as these shape higher education and student experiences.
- Examine and critique student rights and responsibilities as these intersect with rights and responsibilities in the society at large.

Readings
Students who want to remain abreast of controversies in higher education would be well advised, but not required to subscribe to The Chronicle of Higher Education and/or to regularly look for the essays published in that outlet.

The primary book for this course will be,

Suggested books that offer a deeper dive into specific topics include,
Self-awareness and leadership


**Free speech & academic freedom**


**Equity and access**


**Relationships**


Athletics  

Mental health  

**Library-related resources.** Using the library’s databases will be essential for meeting the course requirements. Annie Armstrong, Associate Professor & Liaison Librarian (Education & Psychology), Coordinator of Teaching and Learning Services, Richard J. Daley Library (rm 2-121), University of Illinois at Chicago, 312-413-3045 (annie@uic.edu) is very helpful for those who need tutorials and other forms of assistance with library resources. **Some common questions that Annie can help you with include:**  
Do you have a RefWorks account? How do I find doi #s when I am not using RefWorks? How can I find journal rankings easily? Can I download eBooks from UIC? (Yes, but download the app first.)

Assignments  
Outstanding leadership, regardless of individuals’ roles or responsibilities requires clear written and oral communication, even when goals are unclear or in a state of flux. Assignments for this course will encourage you to develop and practice clear communication skills and I will do my best to engage in similar forms of development. Oral presentation skills will be displayed in the form of 4 Oxford debates during which the class will craft a question for debate, form opposing sides, and build arguments for why each side has the “correct” view of the issue at hand. Written communication will be evident by crafting reflection blogs in preparation for the debate where authors use evidence to justify their own position on the issue at hand. Leadership skills will be displayed in class during regular discussions in large and small groups as well as by crafting a leadership plan designed to improve at least one aspect of campus life. Final grades will be based on the following 6 assessments of your communication skills.

**Debate participation.** Across the semester, four sessions will be structured as Oxford debates (link). In preparation for those sessions, class members will share the task of reading essays from *College Ethics* text as well as any support materials they might find to strengthen their positions. Participation in the actual debate will be rated 1 (involved) or 0 (uninvolved) with the percent of involvement being used in the final grade calculation.

**Reflection blogs.** Four of the assessments will take the form of reflection blogs in which class members offer statements of what they have learned about the topics that are selected for the Oxford debates. Each blog should have a clear beginning, middle, and end and communicate at least one but no more than 3 main thoughts about the topic at hand. The introduction of our text *College Ethics* does a fine job of outlining the qualities of a strong argument and blogs will be rated on the extent to which authors use clear evidence to support their position. Essays included in the text offer examples of strong blogs, even though some are not especially well-defended. Blogs will be rated on a scale of 0-100 and scores will be averaged for the final grade.

**Leadership plan.** To remain actively involved in higher education, employees need to be continually looking for ways to improve their own work as well as the settings in which they work, and controversial issues are consciously or unconsciously addressed as leaders strive to improve the quality of any university. Leadership plans allow leaders to generate plans for building coalitions, promoting core values, and conveying the wisdom of their
decisions. Compelling plans read like white papers that open with a short executive summary and includes a strong defense of a particular policy and course of action. As a capstone project for this course, class members will choose a controversial topic that is related to their work plans and draft a plan for leading others in the quest for a safe and effective, albeit temporary, resolution to the controversy. Leadership plans will be rated on a scale of 0-100 and scores will be averaged with the percent of participation and average blog score when calculating the final grade.

Considerations When Designing Course Goals

All leaders set and regularly revisit goals for themselves by maintaining an awareness of a wide range of competing pressures. Such pressures invariably lead to performance disparities across tasks. Mental health in the juggle of jobs, school, and life is maintained by setting different priority levels across tasks, and students retain more information from their courses when they tell themselves stories about the content of the course and their personal goals in relation to that content. Below is a list of ideas designed to assist with this type of planning.

**Not everyone wants a trophy.** Course grades are earned, yet it is sometimes necessary to strive for adequacy and not excellence. Setting goals for course grades helps to promote mental health and the following guidelines may be useful in that effort. Students who wish to *work toward an ‘A’* in this course should complete all assignments and integrate the concepts from the assigned tasks into their overall professional plans. When specific controversial topics do not directly coincide with professional goals, leaders in higher educational settings remain responsible for doing what they can to support the agendas of those who are leading controversial conversations. In this respect, knowledge becomes a form of power and having background knowledge is useful when deciding how to act wisely.

*Grades of “B”* will include the successful completion of all assigned tasks even if some do not show a high level of excellence and/or even if there is minimal evidence of a professional agenda emerging across assignments. *A passing grade of “C”* will be possible if students complete some of the course tasks, and a final leadership project. In graduate level programs, students who do not earn at least a grade of B are usually asked to retake the course.

*Enhancing communication.* There will be many ways in which we can converse with one another across the semester. First, everyone will be added to a class listserv that is reserved only for practitioners who hope to work as professionals in an educational organization. Second, the syllabus is posted on a website that is open to the public for viewing: [https://thork.people.uic.edu/](https://thork.people.uic.edu/) (not on Blackboard) and the timetable will be continually updated as the semester progresses. If class members bookmark the syllabus, they may need to hit the refresh button periodically to update the hyperlinks. Syllabi can be found by doing a search for Terri Thorkildsen and scrolling down to the bottom of the link that includes the word “people” in the text. Finally, I welcome information on how to improve our class discussions in any form students find comfortable, but prefer to use email (thork@uic.edu). I am rarely in a position to receive phone calls without making a prior appointment.

As a facilitator of a graduate-level course, I will be responsible for supporting discussions and strengthening conversations about the material we will be discussing. I will pay particular attention to the quality of evidence individuals bring to the conversation and urge class members to refer to the readings as often as possible when making their case. I will also offer timely feedback on any written communications and assignments, conduct a midterm progress assessment for each student, offer supportive materials for the various themes raised as part of the course, and help to draw attention to commonalities and differences in our conversations.

As a member of a graduate program, students will be responsible for tracking their own professional growth, labeling skills they are acquiring and skills they still need to learn, and preparing themselves to use the information being shared as part of this course. Ideally, students will generate a narrative to help them align the content of this course with other courses they are taking as well as a story about how they might embrace or reject various controversial ideas in ways that promote growth in higher educational settings. Such intellectual work requires regular reading, speaking, and writing.

By the end of the semester, each student’s leadership goals should be clear to all the members of our class. Students typically communicate their interests in several ways, including our class listserv, contributions to class discussions, or more private conversations with the instructor and classmates. Students and faculty in the COE have learned over the years that when everyone participates, we can all learn, have fun, and avoid unnecessary resentments. As is common in academic communities, people who do not join in are typically ignored rather than punished—active learning, in other words, is an assumed requirement for all our courses.
**Academic integrity.** UIC’s Honor Code as well as the ethical standards of the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, Association for Psychological Science, Sigma Xi: The Scientific Research Honors Society, and Society for Research in Child Development govern all work in this and all other courses offered in the College of Education. Students are responsible for becoming familiar with these codes and standards which are available online. Especially important when conducting research, students should pay attention to the proper use and citations of others’ work, and avoid plagiarism. More information on UIC’s Disciplinary Policies can be found at: [https://dos.uic.edu/conductforstudents.shtml](https://dos.uic.edu/conductforstudents.shtml)

Academic dishonesty, intentional or accidental, seems to be on the increase in higher education. Two issues are especially important to discuss as part of our course activities: plagiarism and the use of assignments for more than one course. First, a review of research should represent the authors’ version of the main information they are able to obtain from the readings. Students should ideally try to avoid quoting directly from the articles they read, and should highlight the qualities of the data offered in the research. Occasional quotations are acceptable if the quote is accurately cited; including the last name of all the authors, the year of the publication, and the page number where the language appears. More importantly, authors should ideally try to support all their ideas with empirical evidence rather than rely on the “appeals to authority” logic that is salient when quoting. There is a wide variety of information that would qualify as evidence and a set of formal rules for citing these sources properly. Failure to cite sources for borrowed ideas is an act of plagiarism. More information can be found at: [https://researchguides.uic.edu/etds/plagiarism](https://researchguides.uic.edu/etds/plagiarism)

Second, in this course, students are encouraged to use information from other courses. That sort of sharing is very helpful among professionals. Many students will be using this course as one of several lenses through which they explore their area of research and will be learning how to communicate their ideas to non-experts. When crafting all assignments, be sure to consider the evaluation rubrics that are used to evaluate the assignment, but it is perfectly acceptable to invite more than one professor or peer to read a literature review. The posted grading rubrics offer an outline of how to meet the requirements of the assignments, and these will differ across courses. Adapting material for each course, but considering the grading rubric, is accepted professional practice as students become less dependent on coursework and more established as a scholar in their field. Formal funding and journal submissions similarly require compliance with rubrics.

**Accessibility.** UIC strives to ensure the accessibility of programs, classes, and services to students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations can be arranged for students with various types of disabilities, such as documented learning disabilities, vision or hearing impairments, and emotional or physical disabilities. All students should know that the University of Illinois at Chicago is committed to maintaining a barrier-free environment so that individuals with disabilities can fully access programs, courses, services, and activities at UIC. Students with disabilities who require accommodations for full access and participation in UIC Programs must be registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). Please contact DRC at (312) 413-2183 (voice) or (312) 413-0123 (TDD).

UIC also offers a wide range of resources for students who need extra help. Prospective researchers may want to pay particular attention to the resources available at the UIC Writing Center. It is essential that students get in the habit of writing at least something as often as possible, preferably every day. More details on support services can be found at: [http://www.uic.edu/academics/student-support](http://www.uic.edu/academics/student-support)
## Tentative Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tentative Agenda</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assigned Chapters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Aug. 29<sup>th</sup> | Self-awareness and leadership  
*What’s your color?* | Fisher Introduction; Collins; Scott; Sinek; Williams & Dempsey  
*Signature strengths* |
| Sept. 5<sup>th</sup> | Critical thinking and problem-solving challenges  
*Common reasoning fallacies* | Fisher Introduction; Vaillant; Vaughn; White  
*Building arguments* |
| Sept. 12<sup>th</sup> | Free speech—rights and responsibilities  
*Inside the UIC protest* | Fisher essays 23-28; Bowen; Chemerinsky & Gillman  
*Free speech agenda critique* |
| Sept. 19<sup>th</sup> | Academic freedom—knowledge, wisdom, and citizenship | Fisher essays 53-55; Fish; Policano & Fethke  
*Choosing a school of thought* |
| Sept. 26<sup>th</sup> | Educational opportunity—diversity & inclusion  
*Dominant culture critique*  
*Blog critique suggestions & evaluation of the final debate position* | Fisher essays 12-20, 40 & 41; Simon; Stewart & Valian; St. John Daun-Barnett & Moronski-Chapman; Simon  
*First draft reflection blog due* |
| Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup> | *UIC-Style Debate #1 Invitation*  
Debate purpose  
Debate format  
*Debate resource: Trends for Generation Z* | *Reflection blog due*  
*Posting suggestions*  
*Suggested reading* |
| Oct. 10<sup>th</sup> | Educational opportunity—admissions & cost | Fisher essays 21, 22, 33, 34, & 52; Armstrong, E., & Hamilton; Bok; Heller; Smith |
| Oct. 17<sup>th</sup> | *UIC-Style Debate #2 Invitation*  
*Debate resource: AUC information*  
*Debate resource: State of UIC*  
*Debate resource: APLU studies* | *Reflection blog due*  
*Wild West essay*  
*Great Recession essay*  
*Shrinking Chicago universities* |
| Oct. 24<sup>th</sup> | Culture and campus life  
Centers for Cultural Understanding | Fisher essays 1-8; 35-39; Arum & Roska; Becher & Trowler; Gelfand; Nocera & Strauss; Reece et al.; Sax |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tentative Agenda</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assigned Chapters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Oct. 31<sup>st</sup> | **Mental health—time use and academic integrity** | Fisher essays 42-45; Barden & Caleb  
Fisher essays 46-51; Anderman & Murdock; Dweck; Ritchhart, Church & Morrison |
| Nov. 7<sup>th</sup> | **UIC-Style Debate #3—Invitation**  
*Debate resource: UIC’s CCUSC* | Reflection blog due  
Patton |
| Nov. 14<sup>th</sup> | Relationships and substance use/abuse  
**College of Nursing Visit—meet in CON 136** | Fisher essays 29-32; Correia, Murphy & Barnett; Mikulincer & Shaver; Walters & Baer |
| Nov. 21<sup>st</sup> | **Demonstrating personal leadership on a complex campus—no class** | Draft leadership plan due |
| Nov. 28<sup>th</sup> | Thanksgiving—no class | Enjoy your holiday! |
| Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> | **UIC-Style Debate #4—Invitation**  
*Debate resource: Office of the Provost* | Reflection blog due |
| Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> | Finals week—no class | Leadership plan due |