Academic Affairs in Higher Education/EDUC 785  
Fall 2023

INSTRUCTOR:  
Genyne L. Royal Professor  
Assistant Vice President for Student Life  
and Engagement and Assistant Dean for  
Student Success Initiatives  
Michigan State University  
Schedule Appointments: Please Contact  
Office Hours: By Appointment

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:
The University of Michigan is located on the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabe people, the  
Ojibwe, Odawa, and Bodewadami Nations. We acknowledge and reaffirm the Anishinaabe peoples’ contemporary and ancestral ties to this land.

OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE:
The course is designed for individuals whose intellectual and professional goals will be supported by a broad understanding of “academic affairs” in U.S. higher education institutions. In this course, we will analyze how oppressive structures and behaviors impede academic outcomes for students and explore experiences of just and equitable learning for students. Furthermore, we will look at academic administration, leadership, and the work of faculty related to curriculum, teaching, and learning. To support your learning and goals -- as a graduate student, an instructor, a researcher, a policymaker, an advocate, activist, and/or student affairs professional -- we will explore a variety of perspectives through commentaries, empirical studies, examples of practice, and presentations by guest speakers that pertain to higher education academic leadership, policy, curriculum, academic programs, pedagogy, and student learning. This requires that we understand the role of administration in the academic affairs function and of faculty in planning, teaching, and assessment of student learning in the broader institutional context. Importantly, we situate these understandings by examining the complex set of past and present factors that shape postsecondary teaching, learning, and student success across higher education institutions in the U.S.

During the term, we will consider key questions facing higher education institutions and educators in the United States, focusing primarily on undergraduate education. Our reading and class discussions will promote critical reflection on current practices and how these are influenced by social, cultural, economic, political, and other influences that affect what is taught, how it is taught, and how it is experienced. As we read and talk with one another, we will be challenged to imagine how to transform oppressive structures and habituated actions.
A range of “study pathways” are available so you can pursue topics of particular interest to you through active engagement with undergraduate students, faculty, and administrators and/or through deep engagement with theory and research on a specific topic of your choosing.

**Course Objectives:**
The primary goal of this course is to enhance your understanding of the academic affairs function in U.S. colleges and universities, with a primary focus on systems and trends in academic leadership and governance as well as instruction and assessment of learning. This course will also help you:

- identify and understand the array of ideologies, values, and educational philosophies that have shaped American postsecondary education in the past and present;
- recognize and analyze how various influences -- external and internal -- to higher education institutions affect teaching and learning in higher education institutions;
- understand the evolution of the undergraduate curriculum (e.g., general education, academic majors);
- understand the various and evolving roles and responsibilities of faculty and administrators in developing and overseeing academic programs in different types of higher education institutions;
- examine how cultural contexts shape learning and metrics for student success;
- explore emerging models of pedagogy and instruction grounded in decolonizing and anti-racist perspectives;
- appreciate the scope, processes, and complexity of decision-making about postsecondary curricula.

**REQUIRED READINGS:**
All readings for this course will be on the Canvas course site or Internet websites.

**EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS:**
*Class Participation:* This is a discussion-based course. Our class and small group discussions are an opportunity to raise questions, clarify understandings, constructively challenge ideas and perspectives, consider how ideas can be translated into practice in different higher education settings, and learn about others’ perspectives. Effective discussions are marked by attentive listening to and thoughtful consideration of ideas that are circulating – and a willingness to think out loud with one another. Learning is facilitated when we are open to others’ viewpoints and willing to reconsider our own beliefs and ideas.

Thoughtful reading and note-taking also support deep learning. As you read, take notes on key points, pose questions, and connect ideas so you can actively participate in class. Your comments, whether fully developed or still under construction, are welcome as we work together to understand the strengths and limitations of specific ideas and their utility for guiding higher education practice and scholarship.
Please review the schedule of readings in advance so that you will have time to fully prepare for each class meeting. The quality of our discussions relies on your ability to talk and think about the ideas we encounter.

Class participation will contribute 25% of your final grade.

**Assignment 1: Purposes of Higher Education**
The readings and discussions in the first few weeks of this course introduce and critique different perspectives regarding the purposes of higher education, the assumptions that underlie various purposes, and the content and pedagogy viewed as suitable for achieving those purposes. How do your ideas reflect, challenge, or extend the ideas about the purposes of higher education – and how they should be achieved – that we have read to date? As you write, consider what your personal commitments to this view of educational purposes suggest about the types of educational settings that you might choose -- whether you plan to be a faculty member, researcher, administrator, or professional working in a government, policy, or advocacy organization?

**Assignments 2–6. The remaining course assignment are based on your choice of a Study Pathway and each assignment contributes to your culminating assignment for the course.**

The three Study Pathway options are described below. For each Study Pathway, the combined assignments account for 65% of your final grade. Two of the Study Pathways can be pursued in a teams of two. Your choice of a Study Pathway will be made no later than Tuesday, September 26.

Regardless of which Study Pathway you choose, you will either share out your work-in-progress on Tuesday, November 21 or opt for a reflection (written, audio, or some other format; please talk with the instructional team for guidance on non-written formats) on other work-in-progress that is presented on November 21. This presentation or reflection contributes 5% to your final grade.

Pathway descriptions follow.

**Study Pathways:**

A) **Student Success Trends, Metrics, and Best Practices** (Individual or Team Pathway)

B) **Research Review: Your Choice of Academic Affairs Topic** (Individual Pathway only)

C) **Practice Study and Report** (Individual or Team Pathway)

**Study Pathway A: Student Success Trends, Metrics, and Best Practices**

This Study Pathway is linked to the presentation and data shared in class 4, held on September 19 - Student Success in Higher Education. As an academic leader you will need to be attentive to college completion rates and all the factors that contribute to or serve as barriers to students’ ability to persist. Additionally, a function of this role is to establish and maintain policies, procedures, and practices that will help retain students through completion. And finally, as an equity-minded and inclusive administrator you are also attentive to the opportunity gap that exists at many institutions across the country.
For our Academic Affairs course, your assignments will be related to your role as a higher education consultant to a postsecondary institution who is working to increase persistence/retention and graduation rates. With a group of your peers you will work to select the institutional type, collect the available data on graduation rates, and provide recommendations for that organization on how they might increase persistence, retention, and graduation rates for that institution. There should also be a literature review focusing on communities that are subject to the opportunity gap identified through research on the phenomenon identifying relevant resources or helping them work through the university in the planning and development of the university community. In addition to documenting your work with this group through a series of “reflective memos,” you will also describe and analyze your learning experience as well as that of your student group using relevant educational research and theory from this course and from other professional or educational experiences you have had.

Assignment 2: Description of Initial Consultancy Plan (Due Friday, September 29)
In this two-page description, you will briefly describe the topical focus of the student group that you will work with during the term. Please include your initial plan for working with this group (e.g., meetings, providing materials) and the interim memos that you will provide to us and that contribute to your final report on this consultancy. This assignment is not graded; we will provide feedback on your ideas and suggest how we can support your work.

Assignment 3: Annotated Bibliography for Course Project (Due Friday, November 3)
By November 3rd, submit an annotated bibliography consisting of no fewer than 10 key resources that will inform your project. You will likely add to this list of references as you develop and complete your final report. Your annotations should briefly but carefully describe each article and why you selected it – what will this article or chapter contribute to your learning about this practice or policy and your report? Greater specificity will help you capture key ideas in your sources that will contribute to your learning and your final report. This assignment is worth 15% of your course grade.

Assignments 4 & 5: Reflective Memos (due dates to be arranged with your instructors)
An important component of this Study Pathways is your documentation of your student group’s learning and progress in a series of reflective and analytic memos. These memos should include specific information on the questions and problems that the group is encountering and specific details to demonstrate how you are supporting their learning process. The thinking you do in your memos will contribute to your description and analysis of your group’s learning experience, and your own learning, in your final report. Each of the three memos will contribute 10% toward your course grade.

Assignment 6: Final Course Presentation (Due Friday, December 1)
Using what you have learned throughout the term, some of which will be documented in your reflective memos, you will present 1) chronology and careful description and analysis of your group’s learning experiences and 2) your own learning experience as their consultant. For this presentation, please bring in key ideas and readings to support
your analysis, using resources from this course and others. **Your final presentation contributes 40% of your final grade.**

**Study Pathway B: Critical Review of Research on an academic affairs topic**

Study Pathway B offers students with deep interests in theory and research related to a particular academic affairs topic to focus their attention on this topic throughout the course. This project will be completed in phases so you can get feedback on your work along the way. You will first develop an annotated bibliography of sources, then develop and share an synthesis matrix or map with your instructors, and then present your final project. Your goal in this project is not only to present the work of others, but to critically analyze what you find using resources from this course and your own life experiences. Your project should identify, examine, and evaluate the assumptions and implicit understandings that scholars have brought to your topic as you synthesize and evaluate the literature, and identify directions for future research.

**Assignment 2: Proposal for Course Project (Due Friday, September 29)**

Your proposal for your project should focus on a specific academic practice or problem in higher education. In this two-page proposal you will briefly describe the topic that you wish to study and why an examination and critical analysis of this topic is important for higher education educators, scholars, or policy makers. You must also provide an initial reading list of at least five sources directly related to the topic that you have chosen. You will add to this list of references as you develop your project.

In choosing a topic for this course, focus on a specific concern or issue related to the academic affairs in higher education. You do not have to use everything you learn as you review your sources; you will gain most if you explore particular connections in depth and detail. Examples of potential topics include: the impact of contingent faculty on student learning; students’ experiences of instruction in online learning; faculty members’ adoption of critical pedagogy or inclusive teaching practices. We will be happy to talk with you about options. **This assignment is not graded; we will provide feedback on the scope of your topic and your chosen sources.**

**Assignment 3: Annotated Bibliography for Course Project (Due Friday, November 3)**

By November 3rd, submit an annotated bibliography consisting of no fewer than 10 key resources that will inform your project. You will likely add to this list of references as you develop and complete your final report. Your annotations should briefly but carefully describe each article and why you selected it – what will this article or chapter contribute to your learning about this practice or policy and your report? Greater specificity will help you capture key ideas in your sources that will contribute to your learning and your final report. **This assignment is worth 15% of your course grade.**

**Assignments 4 & 5: Synthesis Memos (Due to be arranged)**

We will provide a resource that will guide you through the development of your synthesis. Please set up an appointment to discuss your outline if that would be helpful to you. **These synthesis memos are worth 10% of your course grade.**

**Assignment 6: Final Course Presentation (Due Friday, December 1)**
Remember, your final project is not a literature review; rather it explores the implicit and explicit ideas about academic leadership, governance, curriculum, teaching, and/or learning, and student success in a set of readings. Thus, your presentation should reflect not only your understanding of the articles you have identified, but also your knowledge and understanding of the ideas, theories, concepts, and research literature we have read, discussed, and analyzed throughout the course. Your final presentation will contribute 40% of your course grade.

Study Pathway C: Academic Practice, Policy, Praxis
Students in this Pathway choose to focus on how a specific academic practice or policy is implemented, and possibly evaluated, in one or more colleges or universities. You can collect information on this policy or practice through interviews with practitioners, observations of practice, analysis of policy documents, and other sources of “data.” This Study Pathway also requires that you identify scholarly treatments of the practice or policy (e.g., research studies or theoretical treatments) and bring these into conversation with what you learn about your chosen practice or policy through your information gathering.

Assignment 2: Proposal for Course Project (Due Friday, September 29)
In this two-page proposal you will briefly describe this practice or policy and why it is important for you to understand. How will taking a deep dive into this practice or policy help you achieve personal and/or professional goals? You must also provide an initial reading list of at least five sources directly related to the practice or policy that you have chosen. You will add to this list of references during the term. Your proposal will not be graded. Instead, we will provide feedback on your topic and sources.

Assignment 3: Annotated Bibliography for Course Project (Due Friday, November 3)
By November 3rd, submit an annotated bibliography consisting of no fewer than 10 key resources that will inform your project. You will likely add to this list of references as you develop and complete your final report. Your annotations should briefly but carefully describe each article and why you selected it – what will this article or chapter contribute to your learning about this practice or policy and your report? Greater specificity will help you capture key ideas in your sources that will contribute to your learning and your final report. This assignment is worth 15% of your course grade.

Assignments 4 & 5: Reflective Memos (To be arranged with instructors)
An important component of this Study Pathways is your documentation of how you gathered your data and your ongoing reflections on what you are learning from the information you collect in a series of reflective and analytic memos. These memos should include specific information about the process of the policy/practice implementation, the questions that arise for you during this process, and the meaning you are making of what you are learning. Each memo is worth 10% of your course grade.

Assignment 6: Final Presentation (Due Friday, December 1)
Please refer to your prior memos to provide some of the chronology of your experience as well as your analysis of the information you gathered and your own experiences in collecting and making sense of this data. Your final presentation should reference scholarly treatments of the practice or policy, including how the implementation of the
policy or practice aligned with, expanded, or challenged the literature that you found. Please also include a set of recommendations for research, practice, or policy based on your findings. This final presentation will contribute 40% of your final grade.

**WRITTEN REQUIREMENTS**
All written assignments will follow APA Style (7th edition), and be double-spaced, 12-point Times Roman, with one-inch margins. Please consult the Assessment Rubrics on Canvas for guidance as you write.

**DUE DATES:**
All assignments for the course are due on the dates posted in this syllabus. If you have a pressing commitment or circumstance, we will negotiate an alternative date in advance of the due date for a specific assignment. As we strive to be flexible, we also seek to support your learning by establishing due dates that will allow you to finish the course on time. If you consistently miss due dates, we will request a conversation to understand the difficulty you are experiencing and find ways to support your completion of the assignments. A request for an Incomplete grade for the course may be granted after a discussion with your instructors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Due Dates</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of Study Pathway</td>
<td>Tues., Sept. 26</td>
<td>credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1: Purpose of Higher Education (All students)</td>
<td>Friday, Oct. 6</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Pathway Assignments:**
- Assignment 2:
  - Pathway A: Initial Plan for Consultancy
  - Pathway B&C: Proposal
  - Assignment 3: Annotated Reference list (All Pathways)
- Assignment 4–6:
  - Pathways A&C: Reflective Memos
  - Pathway B: Synthesis Memos
- Assignment: Work-in-Progress
  - Option 1: Share Out Your Work in Progress
  - Option 2: Reflection on Works-in-Progress
- Assignment: Final Presentation (All Pathways)
- Presentation Day

**EVALUATION CRITERIA:**
In general, assignments will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- demonstration of complex understanding of the subject in analysis, argumentation, and elaboration of important ideas;
- knowledgeable and effective use of relevant literature to support claims;
- organization (logical progression of ideas and arguments);
- clear and engaging writing;
- balanced and critical discussion of ideas or arguments; and
- compelling conclusions supported by persuasive evidence or rationales.
An assessment rubric that explains the evaluation criteria for each assignment will be posted on the Canvas course website in advance of the assignment due date.

**Grading Scale:** The scale used for determining final course grades will be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.4</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.39</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
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<td>1.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Rewrite Policy:**
Credit lost due to lateness cannot be regained through rewriting.) There is no grade cap for a voluntary rewrite; however, *a rewrite does not guarantee an increase in your grade*. To improve your grade, your rewritten assignment should address the feedback provided on the original paper. Rewriting typically also requires attention to the conceptualization, content, and organization of a paper. It may also require attention to synthesis, evaluation, and/or analysis.

We strongly recommend that you set up an appointment with one of us to discuss the feedback you received and provide guidance before you begin your rewrite.

**Attendance:**
Engagement in class activities and discussions is a fundamental component of this course and critical to your learning. For that reason, class attendance is expected. Of course, some circumstances may prevent you from attending a class session (e.g., religious observances, illness, family emergencies). If at all possible, please let us know in advance that you will be absent from a class session so we can plan class activities accordingly. The uncertainty of the Covid pandemic may require that one or more class sessions are held virtually. If this occurs, we will use the chat as well as group discussions to track participation.

If you become ill or must quarantine for a period of time, please email Dr. Royal so we can find ways to support you as you attend virtually or miss class sessions.

A single absence during the term will not be a cause for concern; two absences (unless due to religious observance or illness) may affect your participation grade. Absence from three or more class sessions is strongly discouraged; Dr. Royal will contact you for a meeting if this occurs.

**Academic Integrity:**
All SOE graduate students are expected to understand and observe the Rackham Policy on Academic Integrity ([https://rackham.umich.edu/academic-policies/section8/](https://rackham.umich.edu/academic-policies/section8/)). The Rackham policy defines serious violations of academic integrity. These include, but are not limited to, falsifying or fabricating information, plagiarizing the work of others, facilitating or failing to report acts of academic dishonesty by others, submitting work done by another as your own, and submitting work done for another purpose to fulfill the requirements of a course. If you are unsure what constitutes a violation of academic integrity, please come talk with one of your instructors.
ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED NEEDS:
If you need an accommodation for a documented need, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way I teach may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities to help us determine appropriate accommodations. I will treat any information you provide as private and confidential. For more information about services for students with disabilities, please visit this website: https://ssd.umich.edu/.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVATIONS:
This class observes University defined holidays (such as Martin Luther King Day, Winter Break). However, other days may be of more significance to you than a university-designated holiday. If that is the case, please let your instructors know if a class meeting or due date for a class assignment conflict with your observance of a holiday that is important to you. We will work with you to accommodate your needs.

TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS BY CLASS SESSION

CLASS 1  August 29 - Introduction to Academic Affairs in Higher Education

- Introductions
- Opening Discussion: What’s learning?
- Syllabus -- What do we learn in a course on Academic Affairs?

CLASS 2  September 5 - Purposes of Higher Education

On Canvas:


NOTE: You are welcome to read the entire chapter, but please focus in particular on section 1, The Talented Tenth (pp. 1984-196) and Section 4, The Negro College (pp. 199-204)


**CLASS 3  September 12 - Academic Administration & Leadership**

**On Canvas:**
- Chapter 2: Understanding academic organizations
- Chapter 11: Governance of the academic core
- Chapter 12: Academic departments and departmental leadership
- Chapter 13: The faculty
- Chapter 14: The student experience

**CLASS 4  September 19 - Student Success in Higher Education**

**On Canvas:**


**Recommended Reading:**


**CLASS 5   September 26 - Sociocultural Influences on Teaching & Learning in Higher Education**

**On Canvas:**


CLASS 6 October 3 - Disciplining Knowledge

On Canvas:


Class 7 October 10 - Contemporary Curricular Trends

On Canvas:


Recommended Reading:


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall Study Break</th>
<th>October 17</th>
<th>NO CLASS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CLASS 8</strong></td>
<td>October 24</td>
<td>Learning-in-Sociopolitical Context *****</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**On Canvas:**


**Recommended Reading:**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASS 9</th>
<th>October 31</th>
<th>Faculty Working Conditions: Tenure and Non-Tenure Track</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**On Canvas:**

Association of American Colleges & Universities (2021, June 8). Ten institutions selected to participate in AAC&U institute on reframing institutional transformation to include non-tenure-track STEM faculty. Association of American Colleges & Universities. https://www.aacu.org/newsroom/ten-institutions-selected-to-participate-in-aac-u-


### CLASS 10 November 7 - Roles and Responsibilities of Faculty and Academic Staff

**On Canvas:**


- Read page 5-9 ONLY.


power-has-risen-at-department-level-fallen-at-campus-level-aaup-finds?sra=true&cid=gen_sign_in


CLASS 11  November 14 - Pedagogical Implications of Learning-in-Sociopolitical-Context

On Canvas:


Recommended Reading:


CLASS 12  November 21 - Aligning Instruction and Assessment

On Canvas:
https://sites.nationalacademies.org/cs/groups/dbassesite/documents/webpage/dbasse_072628.pdf

https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1027&context=wgss_fac


- (Please click on the links for examples)

**Recommended Reading:**

https://dgmg81phhvh63.cloudfront.net/content/user-photos/Research/PDFs/OntheSamePage_FINAL_2-15-22_pdftoprint.pdf

**Class 13 November 28 - Academic Program Planning & Instructional Development**

**On Canvas:**


Association of College and University Educators. (2019). ACUE student, faculty and institutional impact research: Independent review process and findings. Association of


**Recommended Reading:**


**CLASS 15 December 5 - Final Presentations**