

# Why College?

## ENGL009C/HIST001C

- Burke, Buurma
- Swarthmore College
- Spring 2019, Monday, 1:15-4 pm
- Kohlberg 116
- Office hours:

This writing-intensive first-year seminar asks why we go to college - as individuals and as social groups. Why does college matter, and to whom? Drawing on evidence including memoirs, fiction, opinion essays, demographic data, sociological writing, course catalogs and syllabi, and much more, we will examine how access and financial aid, curricular decisions, diversity, inequality, governance, and knowledge production play out in the context of liberal arts education.

### Schedule

#### Week 1 (January 23, 2019): Why College? An Introduction

Lecture: Welcome and Introduction

#### Week 2 (January 28, 2019): The History of Higher Education in the US

Lecture: a brief history of higher ed in the US

Reading/viewing: + The Freshman (1925, 1 hour 15 minutes): <https://swarthmore.kanopy.com/video/freshman>  
+ Higher Learning (1995, 2 hours 7 minutes) + Media U, Introduction + Labaree, A Perfect Mess, Conclusion (Ch. 9)

Writing: Write a page (300-400 words) on the main argument of *Media U*.

Workshop: revise main argument of *Media U*

#### Week 3 (February 4, 2019): Choosing a College

Lecture: the relation between HS and college; the range of higher ed institutions; the admissions process

Reading: + Tressie McMillan Cottom, *Lower Ed* + Rev of *Lower Ed* in *Inside Higher Ed* <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/confessions-community-college-dean/lower-ed-review> <http://hepg.org/her-home/issues/harvard-educational-review-volume-87-number-4/herbooknote/lower-ed> + Rev of *Lower Ed*, *New York Times* <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/07/books/review/lower-ed-tressie-mcmillan-cottom.html> + Jason England, “Admissions Confidential”,

*Chronicle of Higher Education*, Dec 3 2017 <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Confessions-of-an-Admissions/241919>

Writing: + Lower ed title and chapter outline + Select three brief representative excerpts from Lower Ed + Describe evidence in Lower Ed + Anatomize one of the *Lower Ed* reviews, paragraph by paragraph

Workshop: writing a review

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/15/magazine/new-sentences-from-lower-ed-by-tressie-mcmillan-cottom.html>

**Lili Loofbourow and Aaron Bady on public writing (optional but recommended)**

Thursday, February 7, 4:30-6 pm, Scheuer Room

**Week 4 (February 11, 2019): The Sophomore Plan**

Lecture: general education, curricula, courses

Reading + Eliot, “Liberty in Education” + Louis Menand, “The Problem of General Education,” *The Marketplace of Ideas* (2010) + “The Occupation of Hum 110,” *Inside Higher Ed* (Sept 11 2017) <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/09/11/reed-college-course-lectures-canceled-after-student-protesters-interrupt-class> + Catalogs (selected, tba)

Writing: + A review of *Lower Ed*

**Week 5 (February 18, 2019): The Aims of Education: Liberal and Vocational**

Lecture: Struggles over the purpose of education: a primer for reading contemporary public debate

Reading + W.E.B. Dubois, *Of the Wings of Atalanta*, *The Souls of Black Folk* + W.E.B. Dubois, *Of the Training of Black Men* (1902) <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1902/09/of-the-training-of-black-men/308774/> + W.E.B. Dubois, *The Afterthought*, *The Souls of Black Folk* + Booker T. Washington, *The Awakening of the Negro* (1896) <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1902/09/of-the-training-of-black-men/308774/> + Book T. Washington, *The Fruits of Industrial Training* (1903) <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1903/10/the-fruits-of-industrial-training/531030/> + Lani Guinier, from *The Tyranny of the Meritocracy*, Chapter Three (2015)

Writing: + final draft of Lower Ed review due

Workshop: + personal narrative

### **Week 6 (February 25, 2019): In Class - Teaching and Learning**

Lecture: Pedagogy: what it is, how it happens, how college faculty experience it

Reading: + Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, “The University and the Undercommons,” *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* + Josephine Miles, *Fields of Learning* + Sara Ahmed, *Against Students* <https://feministkilljoys.com/2015/06/25/against-students/> + Kristen Doerer, “Colleges Are Getting Smarter About Student Evaluations. Here’s How,” *Chronicle of Higher Education* <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Colleges-Are-Getting-Smarter/245457>

Writing: + Personal narrative writing assignment, draft 1

Workshop: sentences

### **Week 7 (March 4, 2019): Residential Life and Moral Citizenship**

Lecture: *In Loco Parentis*, Moral Citizenship: The More Things Change?

Reading: “Magill’s 100 Rules For Conduct”, <http://swat150.swarthmore.edu/magills-rules-1.html> Black Liberation 1969 website <https://blacklib1969.swarthmore.edu/> Michael Sokolove, “A University Comes Undone: How Scandal and Corruption Brought Down a College Powerhouse”, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 28 2018, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/How-ScandalCorruption/244666> Anand Giridharadas, *Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing the World*, Chapter One Scenes: “Animal House”

Writing: + Personal narrative writing assignment, draft 2

Workshop: writing about data

### **Week 8 (March 11, 2019): SPRING BREAK**

Reading + Richard Powers, *Galetea 2.2*

### **Week 9 (March 18, 2019): The academic mission - disciplines, research, scholarship, tenure**

Reading + Richard Powers, *Galetea 2.2* + Ben Schmidt, Should I Major in the Humanities? <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/08/the-humanities-face-a-crisisof-confidence/567565/> + Supercut: Professors in the movies

Writing: + Dataset essay, draft 1

**Week 10 (March 25, 2019): Cost, debt, FAFSA**

Lecture: Why Is the Tuition So Damn High?

Reading + TBA + Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, “Debt and Study,” The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study + Ryann Liebenthal, “The Incredible Rage-Inducing Inside Story of America’s Student Debt Machine” + Nate Kreuter, “Customer Mentality” + James V. Koch, “No College Kid Needs a Water Park to Study” <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/09/opinion/trustees-tuition-lazy-rivers.html>

Writing: + Final dataset essay due + historical syllabus analysis draft 1 - notes and outline

**Week 11 (April 1, 2019): Governance and Community: To Whom Does a College Belong?**

Lecture:

Reading + Brian Mitchell and Joseph King, How To Run A College, Chapter 1 and 4 (Governance and Advancement) + The Big Chill + Uncommon Women and Others + Frederick Van de Water, “The Saturnalia of College Reunions”, Harper’s, 1929

Writing: + historical syllabus analysis draft 2 + Op Ed writing workshop

**Week 12 (April 8, 2019): Putting it all together I**

Reading: + Richard Rodriguez, The Hunger for Memory + Ta-Nehisi Coates, Beautiful Struggle, Chapter 3 (“Africa’s In the House”) and We Were Eight Years in Power (“Why Do So Few Blacks Study the Civil War?”)

Writing: + Op Ed draft 1

Workshop: Op Ed revision

**Week 13 (April 15, 2019): Putting it all together II**

Reading: + Zadie Smith, On Beauty

Writing + Op Ed final draft due + Manifesto draft 1

Workshop: Manifesto work

**Week 14 (April 22, 2019): Putting it all together III**

Reading: + Lev Grossman, The Magicians

Writing + Manifesto draft 2 due

Workshop: Manifesto work

## **Week 15: April 29, 2019**

Wrap-up and final presentations

### **Course Objectives**

To teach students to compose effective arguments and write compelling prose across multiple genres of writing commonly found in public writing about higher education.

The course will teach students to write alone, to workshop individually-authored writing with peers, to receive and integrate feedback from instructors, and to write and revise multi-authored pieces. The course includes twenty pages of writing with significant required revisions, in-classroom writing instruction, in-class peer workshops, and individual and collective conferences with instructors. Writing in this course emphasizes both individual and collaborative modes of composition and revision.

Students will learn to draw upon the shared and divergent methodologies of literary study, history and adjacent disciplines in shaping and revising their written work in the class. We will not just teach techniques and approaches to the interpretation of class materials, but also competing and complementary ideas about the purpose of interpretation. This seminar is intended not only to contrast and compare two disciplinary modes of understanding, but to provide a road map to other disciplinary approaches that might be fruitful.

We have designed this course to help first-year students connect their own experiences with and aspirations for college to long-running conversations and debates about the nature and purpose of higher education. Students will learn to understand the histories that have shaped their current experiences, and to critically interpret controversies and questions surrounding academic institutions. Students will be asked to apply their learning experiences to inform and shape the ongoing work of the Aydelotte Foundation in pursuit of these same questions and concerns.

### **Course Format**

Most days we will roughly divide our meeting into three sections. During our first hour, we will lecture (with some opportunities for questions and discussion); during the second hour, we will convene in two smaller discussion groups, each led by one professor. We will dedicate our third hour to writing (and revising our writing) about the things we are talking about - as individuals and in groups.

### **Policies, Platforms, and Advice**

#### **Books**

The main books you will need to buy are: Tressie McMillan Cottom, *Lower Ed* Richard Powers, *Galeata 2.2* Richard Rodriguez, *The Hunger for Memory* Zadie Smith, *On Beauty* Lev Grossman, *The Magicians*

The books are available at the bookstore. You are also welcome to buy the books online or at a different store. Be aware that you need to have your own copy of the specific edition of each of the books listed above. All other texts will be available on Dropbox unless otherwise specified. Please print out, read, mark up, and bring to class ALL of the texts assigned as required reading for each week (this subject to modification in class).

If you are curious about what *we* have read in order to give our weekly lectures, you will find a partial list of background readings for each week's lectures in the Why College folder of the (in-progress) Aydelotte Foundation Zotero bibliography:

[https://www.zotero.org/groups/1720498/aydelotte\\_bibliography/items/collectionKey/5L6V5W8C](https://www.zotero.org/groups/1720498/aydelotte_bibliography/items/collectionKey/5L6V5W8C)

## **CMS**

We will not use a Course Management System (CMS) like Moodle in this class. Instead, we will use Dropbox to share readings and final drafts of writing and Google Docs on Google Drive for other drafts of writing. We will keep the most up to date version of our course syllabus on Github. We will discuss in class why we have made these imperfect choices, and how we might have chosen differently.

## **Mastodon**

We will use our Twitter-like, Swarthmore-hosted Mastodon accounts for sharing weekly questions, posts, and links. Sign up for an account here: <https://mastodon.fishtank.swarthmore.edu/web/getting-started>

## **Grading**

We will be evaluating your attentiveness during lecture, your participation in second-hour discussions, and your work in third-hour writing workshops in addition to the large body individual, paired, and collective writing you will do over the course of the semester.

## **Accommodations for disability**

We want to work to make sure that everyone in this class has the access to the materials, resources, and support they need in order to learn most effectively. You are always free to talk to us about your own situation. A key Swarthmore resource in this area is the Office of Student Disability Services. Their accommodations policy is here: > If you believe you need accommodations for a disability

or a chronic medical condition, please contact Student Disability Services (Parish 113W, 123W) via e-mail at [studentdisabilityservices@swarthmore.edu](mailto:studentdisabilityservices@swarthmore.edu) to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs. As appropriate, the office will issue students with documented disabilities or medical conditions a formal Accommodations Letter. Since accommodations require early planning and are not retroactive, please contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. For details about the accommodations process, visit the Student Disability Services website. You are also welcome to contact me [the faculty member] privately to discuss your academic needs. However, all disability-related accommodations must be arranged, in advance, through Student Disability Services.

### **Dean's Discretionary Fund and Dean's Office resources for basic needs**

If purchasing your textbooks or other materials for this or any other class present a serious financial difficulty for you, you should be aware of the Dean's Discretionary Fund and other resources such as the Course Book Collection in Underhill Library in Lang Music.

The Dean's Office describes the fund this way:

The spirit of this funding is primarily to support emergency circumstances and priority is given to students in the highest financial need tiers. Funding is usually limited to under \$500 and most grants are under \$300. Please note the Dean's Office may not be able to fulfill all requests.

Examples of eligible non-academic requests include, but are not limited to, expenses associated with emergency medical, dental, vision procedures, unanticipated trips home due to a family emergency, and various fees related to postgraduate opportunities.

The Student Life office at Swarthmore is very committed to making sure that all students having living situations that support their ability to work and live here successfully. If you find that you are having sustained difficulties with your food or housing situation and believe that this may affect your course performance, you should contact your class dean; you are also free to contact me if you wish so that I can help you find the support you need.

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a very serious offense. It includes both the direct copying of the words of another person without crediting him or her and paraphrasing the ideas of another person without giving credit. If you have any questions about how to properly cite another person's work, please do not hesitate to ask me.

### **Attendance and due dates**

Because this is a seminar, attendance is essential. Missing seminar (except for cases of illness or true emergencies) is inadvisable. However, if you are really ill, try to contact me ahead of time, but do plan to miss class! *Again, because this is a seminar involving in-class workshops, deadlines for writing is firm, firm, firm.* Plan ahead.

### **Devices Policy**

We will sometimes use laptops, primarily in the third hour when we are workshopping writing. Please keep your laptops closed at other times unless you are using a laptop as part of an accommodation. If you have not already, please a fill out our laptop survey.

### **Syllabus versions and acknowledgements**

Here is a partial, in-progress list of writing we drew on to create this syllabus and to write our weekly lectures: [https://www.zotero.org/groups/1720498/aydelotte\\_bibliography/items/collectionK](https://www.zotero.org/groups/1720498/aydelotte_bibliography/items/collectionK)

This syllabus is necessarily an incomplete document; we will revise and save versions of it as the class progresses. The most up-to-date copy will be available on our organization page on github:<https://github.com/WhyCollege>

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