Motivation

The authority of scholarly knowledge depends not only on the observance of sound research methodologies, but on a number of other institutional mechanisms, including tenure, faculty governance, peer review, scholarly communication, public funding for ‘basic’ research, doctoral training, etc. Under the rubrics of service, teaching, and advising, a significant portion of the academic life is devoted to the management of these mechanisms, and their successful performance is a requirement for promotion at all levels of the academic ladder. In recent years, these long-standing institutional structures of the scholarly experience have come under important pressures, among others:

- Growing reliance on contingent faculty and corresponding diminished relevance of faculty governance and academic freedom;
- Globalization of “knowledge economies”, and the role of the University as training facility for “flexible” workers and citizens;
- Rising costs of both scholarly communication and higher education and corresponding calls for open access to public knowledge and greater user of technology (online teaching, electronic textbooks, etc.)
- Growth of the academic-industrial complex, including increasing encroachment of economic concerns on independent scholarly inquiry, perceived irrelevance of humanistic/liberal arts education to contemporary life, and general redrawing of the boundaries between publicly- and privately-funded knowledge

This course will examine current critiques of the contemporary environment for scholarship as well as concrete instances of requirements for academic professional performance, as an opportunity for students to further their

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*I am indebted to Richard Cox for advice, and for his syllabus for LIS 3000, “Introduction to the Doctoral Program” at the School of Information Sciences, University of Pittsburgh; to Kavita Phillips, Ron Day, Michael Wartenbe, and Katie Shilton for feedback; as well as to Kim Fortun for initiating this experiment several years ago.
understanding of all dimensions of the scholarly experience. The course will complement methods courses concerned with the design epistemologically sound research in two ways: (a) provide participants with critical tools to analyze and proactively engage with the changes affecting the practice of scholarly inquiry and the institutions that support it; (b) enable future academic workers to identify and eventually develop the professional skills needed to conduct their preferred mode of scholarly inquiry.

**Course Objectives**

TBA

**Method**

Readings will consist of historical material, research papers, critical scholarship, and actual policy documents defining the institutional landscape of academia.

Participants will identity an academic position they would like to hold at an existing department, and create an application packet for the position, including cover letter, self-statement, and supplemental material (curriculum vitæ, publications, syllabi, teaching and advising philosophy, etc.). Participants will write letters of recommendation for two other course participants.

Participants will also prepare and lead class discussions.

There is a lot of material out there diagnosing the various ailments of higher education, more than one can ever hope to even briefly survey in ten weeks. The syllabus is thus designed as a resource providing points of entry that may be explored beyond the lifetime of the course. If you want to take a look at some of the essays and collections listed in the syllabus, you may be able to borrow them directly from me.

**Required readings**


**Suggested readings**

The “Advice” columns of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* provide personal testimonies, commentaries, and insider knowledge on the formal and informal aspects of academic work.
Gary Lee Downey, Joseph Dumit, and Sharon Traweek, “Corridor Talk”, in Gary
Lee Downey and Joseph Dumit (eds) Cyborgs and Citadels: Anthropological
Interventions in Emerging Sciences and Technologies, School of American Research

Phil Agre, Networking on the Network: A Guide to Professional Skills for PhD
Students, March 20, 2002.

Academic novels also offer a wealth of information about academic culture, often
from personal experience. The vast majority of them take place in English
departments. And of course, there are academic essays about academic novels,
including Elaine Showalter, Faculty Towers: The Academic Novel and Its Discontents.

**Some Academic Novels**
Hynes, James. Publish and perish : three tales of tenure and terror. New York:
Picador USA, 1997.
**Academic Mysteries**


**Academic Memoirs**


There are also a number of movies taking place in academia or featuring academics, among them, *The Paper Chase, Dark Matter, Oleana, Wonder Boys*. Again, the vast majority of them feature (womanizing, pot-smoking) English professors, with the notable exception of *Dark Matter*, which takes place in an astrophysics laboratory. With all the respect owed to David Foster Wallace, *Good Will Hunting* is just silly.

**Schedule, readings, and due dates**

**Week 1 (March 29): Institutionalizing**

**Read:** Lucas, *American Higher Education*

**Policies:**


Additional materials/summary of the plan:

http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/~ucalhist/archives_exhibits/masterplan/


http://www.strategicplan.uci.edu/content/pdf/SP_mission.pdf

**Week 2 (April 5): Teaching**

It is a unique feature of research universities that they expect professors to both conduct research and teaching activities. The two activities seem to involve very dissimilar set of skills: communicating basic ideas to laymen, and producing esoteric knowledge for consumption by other experts. Some of the most common
complaints about the research university revolve around this issue, e.g., excellence in research does not automatically translate into teaching skills, and PhD programs often provide little or no training in pedagogy, and excellence in teaching is not rewarded in the same way that excellence in research is. These complaints have been heard ever since the late 1800s, after the German higher education model was imported by admiring American university administrators, and with it, the idea that scholarly investigation should be awarded priority over instruction.

**Read:** Baynes, *What the Best College Teachers Do.*


“During the 1990s, as president of the University of Michigan, James Duderstadt had tried to make that institution run more like a business, promoting the idea of responsibility center management. To this engineer-turned-administrator, the Internet marked the logical next stage in the transformation of higher education. In the wired academy, he declared, there would be a handful of academic celebrities, a larger number of “content providers,” and a still larger number of “learning facilitators” to devise “learningware products” for “an array of for-profit service companies.” “Quite a contrast,” Duderstadt wrote, with evident relish, “with the current enterprise!””

**Policies:**

“Remote And Online Instruction At The University Of California: A Report From The Academic Senate Special Committee On Remote And Online Instruction And Residency” UC Academic Senate, October 2009.

**Additional Readings:**


“… we sometimes cannot specify our objectives clearly. We may believe that we are training people for an unknown future. We do not know what we want them to know, because we cannot specify the problems and situations they will have to cope with. This may be because the situations that lie ahead of them are too complicated for us to deal
with in detail or because we believe the world is going to change so much that we cannot forecast how things will be and thus what a person will need to know to act effectively. Given such a diagnosis, we generally settle for inculcating proper orientations from which students will be able to deduce correct lines of action in specific circumstances, general skills which can be used in a variety of situations, and an ability to learn new material as it becomes available. (p. 104)

Due: copies of your vitae.

Week 3 (April 12): Reproducing

Read: Dews and Law, This Fine Place Far Away from Home.


“I didn’t understand why the two things I wanted most in life, mothering and writing, had to be so conflicted.”

Sharon O’Dair, “Vestments and Vested Interests: Academia, the Working Class, and Affirmative Action”, in Working-Class Women in the Academy, Michelle M. Tokarczyk and Elizabeth A. Fay (eds), The University of Massachusetts Press, 1993, pp. 239-250.

“Higher education is, perhaps, the best route out of working-class life; higher education also helps keep the majority of the working class firmly embedded there.”

Policies:

“Code of Professional Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct of University Faculty, and University Disciplinary Procedures” (a.k.a., UCLA Faculty Code of Conduct), last amended and approved by the Regents on July 17, 2003.

Additional Readings:


Due: choice of position/department + justification.
Week 4 (April 19): Writing

Read:


“There are, in fact, quite large numbers of genres that operate to support and validate the manufacture of knowledge, directly as part of the publishing process itself, or indirectly by underpinning the academic administrative processes of hiring, promotion and departmental review. … These latter have some interesting characteristics. On the one hand, they are typically formal documents which remain on file; on the other, they are rarely part of the public record.”


“For Erasmus, the scholar must school himself or herself to write, over and over again, professing friendship and concern to critics as well as supporters, to enemies as well as friends. By doing so, he or she would knit the raveled sleeves of particular relationships, but would also become a true friend, one genuinely devoted to and concerned for others. The vast series of letters that fill dozens of volumes in every great European library are the relics of a great effort, inspired by Erasmus and many others after him, to create a new kind of virtual community that was sustained not by immediate, direct contact and conversation so much as by a decades-long effort of writing and rewriting.”


Policies:

Academic Analytics: http://www.academicanalytics.com/
Faculty Scholarly Productivity Index: http://chronicle.com/stats/productivity/

Additional Readings:


“The first useful concept is the idea of short assignments. Often, when you sit down to write, what you have in mind is an autobiographical novel about your childhood, or a play about the immigrant experience, or a history of—oh, say—say women. But this is like trying to scale a glacier. It's hard to get your footing and your fingertips get all red and frozen and torn up. Then your mental illnesses arrive at the desk like your sickest, most secret relatives. And they pull up chairs in a semicircle around the computer, and they try to be quiet but you know they are there with their weird coppery breath, leering at your behind your back.”

Week 5 (April 26): Tenuring

Academic freedom is one of the best-known and most controversial aspects of the academic system. It is comprised of specific species of freedom of speech, i.e., freedom in research and publication, and freedom in teaching. In practice, it is accomplished through the institution of tenure. These freedoms are not absolute however, and their exercise is predicated on the observance of concomitant duties, e.g., controversial teaching material must be related to the course topic, personal opinions distinguished from professional ones, etc. There is no shortage of criticism of tenure — absolute job security is rarely an incentive for creativity, and granting special rights to freedom of speech is tricky business.

In any case, the defining contemporary trend in the organization of academic labor is a reduction in tenure-track faculty line, and a corresponding increase in reliance on adjunct/part-time faculty to carry on teaching duties: between 1969 and 1998, the number of full-time faculty grew by 60%, while the number of part-time faculty grew by 369%. Nationwide, traditional tenure-track faculty performs only about a third of the teaching in colleges and universities. As part-time faculty does not enjoy the incentives and freedoms in research and teaching associated with tenure, this shift has important implications on all other dimensions of the academic system. Thus, the case for academic freedom must be made anew, in the face of the changing conditions for the professional practice of scholarship.

Read:


“What has happened, historically, is that a star system has been superimposed on a model of recruitment and compensation based on lifetime tenure and service that, even in this century and despite a good degree of professionalization, largely resembled that of the clergy. … Currently, therefore, a gap exists between the realities of our market situation, and the ways we think about ourselves and our roles in higher education and in society. … Acting like stars, we continue to think like quasi-monastic teachers, and such mental dissonance causes problems.”


Policies:
American Association of University Professors, “1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, with 1970 Interpretive Comments.”

Office of the President, University of California, APM 210, “Review and Appraisal Committees”, University of California Academic Personnel Manual,

Academic Bill of Rights (Wikipedia).

http://www.studentsforacademicfreedom.org

Additional Readings:


“The proportion of faculty members who today think of their own careers as bearing responsibilities one might associate with a “sanctified” vocation is unknown—although that age-old sense of a higher calling undoubtedly remains strong among many faculty members, perhaps especially at church-related colleges (to which, it might be argued, their customary view low pay attests).


Due: 1st draft, self-statement, research section.

Week 6 (May 3): Evaluating

Peer review is the fundamental and nearly universal scholarly mechanism for quality control in the production of knowledge. The evaluation of a scholarly product by competent peers of the author involves several tensions, for example, the peers most competent to evaluate the quality, veracity, and originality of a scholar’s research are by definition either her competitors or her collaborators. As well, many other characteristics of the academic field induce bias in the peer-review process — f.ex., “halo” and “Matthew” effects, as described by Merton — and tend to reinforce the overall conservative force of peer-review on knowledge production.

Read:


“… in German and British LRs (which used a listing of facts as support), length does not seem to correlate to the writers’ commitment. Offering support through a listing of facts, as in German and some British LRs, can come across as abrupt, unfriendly or stuffy, especially when compared to the more informal storytelling support of American letters. Lists of facts require careful attention inferring the evaluative statements in order to get the intended sense of the LR. The British LRs tend to include one criticism of the applicant in the body, although this criticism often does not cause any serious damage to the applicant.”


“Being second-rate is not a fraud—as long as one knows one’s place, and keeps it. But, then, can there be something genuinely second-rate? The question is similar to that about whether there can be genuine kitsch, which usually receives the following answer: not if kitsch actually aspires to art.”


“ … to be unprofessional is not simply to have violated some external rule of piece of decorum. It is to have ignored (and by ignoring flouted) the process by which the institution determines the conditions under which its rewards will be given or withheld. These conditions are nowhere written down, but they are understood by everyone who works in the field, and, indeed, any understanding one might have of the field is inseparable from (because it will have been produced by) an awareness, often tacit, of these conditions.”


Policies:
UCLA Faculty Diversity & Development, “Faculty Search Committee Toolkit”, October 2009.

Additional readings:

Due: 1st draft self-statement, teaching section.

Week 7 (May 10) Funding

A defining transformation of the academic landscape in the last 25 years has been the increasingly tight relationship between academic research and industry. One model of this relationship involves university professors performing research using funds from industry — for example, running clinical trials for drug makers. Another model involves professors entering into profit-sharing agreements with universities over the commercialization of their research. These arrangements seem profitable to all parties: researchers and universities gain access to important sources of research funds, in an era of diminishing public funding for higher education; industrials find a relatively cheap outlet for outsourcing their R&D activities, and in the process, benefit from the aura of neutrality of academic research. Less clear are the implications for the University as an institution devoted to the production of impartial knowledge that benefits the whole of society.

Read: McSherry, Who Owns Academic Work.

Policies:
UCLA Office of Intellectual Property, “Guide To Faculty Consulting Activities
and Consulting,” September 1, 2009

“Guidelines on Industry Activities for the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and the UCLA Medical Enterprise”, October 7, 2009.

Additional readings:


“Participation in such decision making makes one, for the moment at least, an ‘equal.’ In peer review we jointly constitute an ephemeral peership, among ourselves as reviewers as well as vis-à-vis those whom we are evaluating.”

Due: 1st draft self-statement, diversity section.

Week 8 (May 17): Reading

Admission to a PhD program requires an important, yet rarely acknowledged transition for the aspiring scholar: reading as professional skill. With full-time course loads often requiring students to absorb 4-5 academic books a week, in addition to the readings required for their own research, reading in academic settings becomes a full-fledged professional activity, and “skimming,” a core survival skill. Faculty members are similarly faced with constant requests for simultaneously fast and deep reading, from evaluating promotion cases to peer review, administrative duties, grading, and the extensive literature reviews required by new research endeavors. Yet, we lack concepts to acknowledge and describe the various kinds of readings academics must, by necessity, perform on documents, beyond the pragmatic response of skimming.

Read: Bayard, How to Talk About Books You Haven’t Read.

“What we preserve of books we read—whether we take notes or not, and even if we sincerely believe we remember them faithfully—is in truth no more than a few fragments afloat, like so many islands, on an ocean of oblivion.”

Additional readings:


“Oh Benjamin, he makes our heads hurt. Why does he torture us so?”


Week 9 (May 24): Governing

In James Hyne’s The Lecturer’s Tale, Anthony Pesecane, the English department chairman at Midwest University, declares: “the finest thing in life is to take an academic department and bend it to one’s will.” To fully appreciate this fictional
remark, one must consider that the daily running and long-term planning of a University requires massive amounts of decision making, from curricular decisions to hiring, maintenance, funding, long-term planning, etc, etc, etc. In American higher education, decision-making power is most often distributed between an external board (Trustees, Regents, Overseers etc.), administration (including the university president, deans, etc.), and faculty, who on some issues vote directly in departmental meetings, and on others, are represented by academic senates or unions. Staff and students also exercise various degrees of representation through unions and student associations. Specific equations for power sharing vary across institutions. In the UC system, “shared governance” delegates curriculum development, hiring and promotion issues to faculty while university administrators deal with budgetary issues, admission, and facilities.

Read:

Readings, The University in Ruins.

Policies:


Additional Readings:


“Kant asks of governmental power that it create, on its own, conditions for counter-power, that it ensure its own limitation and guarantee to the university, which is lacking in power, the exercise of its free judgment in deciding the true and the false. The government and the force it represents, or that represent it (civil society), should create a law limiting their own influence, submitting statements of a constative type (those claiming to tell the truth), or indeed of a ‘practical’ type (insofar as implying a free judgment), to the jurisdiction of university competence, and to something within it, we shall see, which is finally most free and responsible in respect to the truth: the philosophy faculty.”


“Tell them everything: share every piece of information you have the moment you have it, and they will be quite happy to leave the governance to you, especially if as you distribute the information you invite them to talk about the issues it raises. They get to feel that they are part of what is going on; you get the benefit of hearing their views without having to promise that you will act in accordance with them. This is also the way to deal with students who always want to have a say in everything.”


“Unless you live and work in a for-profit educational environment, it is almost impossible to know this culture from the perspective of traditional higher-education. The world of for-profit higher education is a unique environment that combines the hard edges of American capitalism and the altruistic vision of an educational institution serving society. For readers who have never set foot inside a for-profit university, I hope
to provide a guided tour of what it’s like to live and work in these institutions from my perspective as someone who is also intimately familiar with the culture of several non-profits.”


**Week 10 (May 31): Class presentations**

**Due:** application packets and letters of recommendation.