

# **SO211 Sociological investigation of the university**

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## **Course Description**

The goal of this course is to (re)think the meaning and function of the “modern university” by following its transformation from its (re)configuration in the era of Enlightenment to today, the “Information Age”, “post-modern”, “post-truth” society, characterized by fast flows of knowledge and financial capital. After a brief introduction to the conceptualization of the university by the Enlightenment philosophers such as Kant and Idealists such as Fichte, we will follow how the perception and function of the university changed with the consolidation of the nation-states, enhancement of social-democracy and welfare states, and then with their demise in the era of globalization and ascendancy of finance. What kind of discussions have taken place within the universities between public intellectuals and academics in each era? How did the public perception of the university change? What re(formations) and re(formulations) of policies took place at the political and policy-making level? How did the citizens of the nation-state come to see the university as the regime characterized by social democratic values? Through a close look at several countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Germany and Turkey, the readings and discussions in this course will try to answer these and similar questions. The US, UK and Germany are cases that stand for the conceptualization and materialization of the “modern university”, therefore investigation of the transformation in these countries is crucial. The Turkish case represents the transformation in question in a Southern country in which not only the economic developments but also the hegemonic political and economic paradigms emulate those of the Northern ones. The final session(s) of the course will be devoted to thinking and discussing what the transformations in question mean for the value of knowledge and freedom of thought.

## **Course Requirements**

### **Attendance and participation**

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. Regular attendance is essential to the collaborative work of learning in seminar format and forms part of the participation grade. Please complete the required readings, be on time for each class, and contribute energetically and meaningfully to the discussions. A class participation mark will be awarded on the basis of your preparedness and engagement in class discussions. Attendance and participation make up 30% of the final grade. To account for minor circumstances, one absence from this once-per-week course should not affect the participation grade or require documentation but missing more than one session may certainly affect your participation grade. If more than one absence is unavoidable, please be in touch with the instructor before the class to determine whether you need to provide documentation to excuse the absence. Every unexcused absence lowers the participation grade by one step (i.e., from B+ to B). Please consult the Student Handbook for more details on BCB’s attendance policy.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

**SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPRING 2021:** Some students may need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Instructors should make efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

### **Readings**

On a weekly basis, you will be expected to devote 2-3 hours to complete the readings. Most of the texts you will be required to read are included in the syllabus. However, due to the highly topical nature of this course the instructors may spontaneously send around up-to-date articles, essays, and videos to enrich in-class discussions. Students are encouraged to do the same.

### **Assignments**

This class will include several graded assignments that will add up to your final grade for this class alongside your participation grade: 1) student presentations (20%); 2) in-class midterm exam (25%); 3) a 1500-2000 word final paper (25%). See below for deadlines and grading criteria. The mid-term exam will take place in class. The final paper is to be submitted to your instructor by email.

### **Academic Integrity**

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

### **Policy on Late Submission of Papers**

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours. Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

## **Grade Breakdown and Deadlines**

Class participation: 30%

Student presentations: 20%

Take-home midterm exam: 25%

Final paper: 25%

### **Grading criteria for the midterm**

A = Extraordinary. The exam demonstrates the student's full command of the material and reflects in-depth engagement with the readings.

B = Good to very good. The exam demonstrates student's general familiarity with the material and some engagement with the readings but lacks critical engagement and close reading of the texts.

C = Acceptable. The exam demonstrates student's selective familiarity with the material; it contains misreadings or gaps in understanding of the texts that have been discussed in class.

D = Very poor. The exam demonstrates student's lack of engagement with the readings and lack of familiarity with the key concepts discussed in class.

F = Unacceptable. The exam demonstrates the student's unfamiliarity with basic concepts discussed in class and/or fails to adhere to the academic standards as set out in the Student Handbook.

### **Grading criteria for the final**

A = Extraordinary. The paper demonstrates a full command of the material, reflects the author's in-depth engagement with the selected readings, clear and compelling thinking, and skillful writing.

B = Good to very good. The paper has a solid, consistent focus and demonstrates clear argumentation, but some paragraphs are not fully developed and at times the paper doesn't quite know why it does what it does. The paper contains occasional stylistic, grammatical, and spelling mistakes.

C = Acceptable. The paper fulfills the minimum required by the assignment. It might lack skillful argumentation, offer irrelevant evidence, and rely on generalities (and generalizations), but shows basic understanding of the material. The paper contains multiple stylistic, grammatical, and spelling mistakes.

D = Major deficiencies in writing and argumentation, the paragraphs are not logically organized, and the paper lacks overall cohesion.

F = Unacceptable, fails to follow the basic points of the assignment and/or fails to adhere to the academic standards as set out in the Student Handbook.

**Note:** Students are advised to visit BCB's Learning Commons before turning in their final papers.

### **FINAL PAPER (25%)**

Your final paper will be a 1500 – 2000-word essay, reflecting critically on the university as institution in historical continuity. Your analysis must have a thematic focus, inspired by the topics discussed in class (be it related to the history of the university or the current state of academia), and be informed by at least two readings we have covered throughout the semester.

Deadline for final paper submission is midnight of **May 27, 2022.**

**Evaluation:**

Participation and presentations: 50 points

(Presentations will NOT receive any points without regular participation in discussions.)

Midterm and Final examination: 50 points

**Readings:**

Aronowitz SA (2000) *The Knowledge Factory. Dismantling the Corporate University and Creating True Higher Learning*, Beacon Press.

Bousquet M, Nelson C (2008) *How the University Works - Higher Education and the Low-Wage Nation*. NYU Press.

Clark W (2006) *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University*. Chicago University Press.

Evans M (2004) *Killing Thinking: Death of the University*. Continuum

Flood M, Martin B, Dreher t (2013) “Combining academia and activism. Common obstacles and useful tools”. *Australian Universities Review* vol. 55, no. 1.

Harvey D (2005) *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press

Held D, McGrew A et.al. (2000) *Global Transformations - Politics, Economics, and Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ignatieff M, Roch S (2018) *The Global Challenge*. Central European University Press.

Oatley T (2012) *International Political Economy*. Routledge

Özatalay C (2020) “Purge, Exile, and Resistance: Rethinking the Conflict of the Faculties through the Case of Academics for Peace in Turkey”. *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [Online], 30 | 2020, Online since 15 December 2020, connection on 22 May 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/6746> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejts.6746>

Ravenhill J (2005) *The Global Political Economy*. Oxford University Press.

Readings B (1997) *The University in Ruins*. Harvard University Press

Slaughter S, Leslie L (1997) *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Smith N (2000) "Afterword: Who Rules this Sausage Factory?". *Antipode* 32(3), pp. 330-339.

Telli-Aydemir A (2020) "Dissent in Higher Education. an International Overview at Pandemic Times and Beyond". *Forum Wissenschaft* 3/20, pp. 53-56.

The Edu-Factory Collective (2009) *Toward a Global Autonomous University: Cognitive Labor, the Production of Knowledge, and Exodus from the Education Factory*. Autonomedia.

Tian Lee S (2018) *Rethinking the University: Structure, Critique, Vocation*. Oxford: Counterpress.

Vatansever A (2020) *At the Margins of Academia. Exile, Precariousness, and Subjectivity*. Leiden: Brill.

Wallach Scott J (2018) "Academic Freedom: The Tension Between the University and the State". In *The Global Challenge*, pp. 11-26

## **Schedule**

**Class 1 (Jan 31 - Feb 4):** Introduction: aims, course content, requirements, goals. Overview on main themes and concepts. No readings are required for the first week.

**Class 2 (Feb 7 - 11):** University in the "early modern era" and the age of Enlightenment. Transformation of the university from its theological underpinnings to "scientific" and "research-based" orientation.

1. William Clark, Chapter 1 (until page 14 "Academic Charisma", then from page 21 "the empirical base" onwards until page 29 "structure of the book")
2. Bill Readings, Introduction + Chapter 4

**Class 3 (Feb 14 - 18):** Transformation of the university during the "modern era". The effects of Romanticism on the university. The emergence of the German "research university" and the Oxbridge traditions.

1. Bill Readings, Chapter 5
2. William Clark, Epilogue (p. 435ff.)

**Class 4 (Feb 21 - 25):** The social and political background of the 20th-century transformation of the university under the impact of the consolidated nation-state system and the rise of Keynesian social democracy.

1. Held & McGrew, (pp. 8 -19, From "Political power and civil society" until "Towards a global economy")
2. Thomas Oatley. 2012. *International Political Economy*. Routledge. pp. 15-20 (the period until the Bretton Woods)

3. John Ravenhill. *The Global Political Economy*. Oxford University Press. pp. 10-18 (From “The world economy pre-1914” until the end of “the world economy post-1945”)

**Class 5 (Feb 28 - Mar 4): Student presentations (each 10-15 minutes)**

**Mar 7 - 11: (Mar 8 - National Holiday - since our class is on Tuesdays, we'll have no class this week)**

**Class 6 (Mar 14 - 18):** The transformation of the university during the Cold War era; the consolidation of university's role as a democratizing institution

1. Tian Lee, Chapter 1 and 2
2. (Recommended): Mary Evans, Chapter 1 (Through the looking glass)

**Class 7 (Mar 21 - 25): Midterm exam**

Deadline for the submission of the Take-home Midterm Exam: **Midnight of March 25, 2022.**

**Class 8 (Mar 28 - Apr 1):** Globalization and the neoliberal restructuring of the university

1. Harvey, chapter 1.
2. Slaughter and Leslie, chapter 1 (pp. 11-24) and chapter 2.
3. (Recommended): Slaughter and Leslie, chapter 3

**Class 9 (Apr 4 - 8):** Commodification of academic labor

1. Slaughter and Leslie, chapter 6
2. Jessop 2018
3. Smith, Sausage Factory
4. (recommended) Vatansever 2020, Chapter 1 (part 1.1.)

**Apr 11 - 18: SPRING BREAK**

**Class 10 (Apr 18 - 22):** Academic freedom between authoritarianism in the Periphery and precarization in the Core

1. Aronowitz, chapter 1, knowledge factories
2. Wallach Scott “Academic Freedom: The Tension Between the University and the State”, pp. 11-26
3. Özatalay 2021
4. Vatansever 2020 (part 1.2.)

**Class 11 (Apr 25 - 29):** Labor Struggles in the 21st-Century Academia

1. Telli-Aydemir 2020
2. Flood, Martin, Dreher 2013

**Class 12 (May 2 - 6):** Political Struggles at Campuses

Readings: TBA

**Class 13 (May 9 - 13): Making a Living in Academia - GUEST LECTURE**

*\*Readings can be suggested by the guest lecturer.*

**Class 14 (May 16 - 20): The Future of the University / The University of the Future**

1. Stanley Aronowitz, "Dismantling the Corporate University"
2. Toward a Global Autonomous University, Introduction: "All Power to Self-Education", page 0 and "Global Autonomous University", Vidya Ashram, p. 165)