

GSTR 110: Student Loan Debt as a “Wicked” Problem

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Teaching Assistant/Peer Leader (TAPL): Nathaniel Whitt whitt@bera.edu

Location: Online

Mandatory Synchronous Sessions: 7 Wednesdays from 12:00–2:00PM EDT (August 12, 19, 26, September 2, 9, 16, 23)

***Our last day will be October 2, 2020. Meanwhile, October 12, 2020 is when grades are due.

***August 14, 2020 is the Last Day to Add a Course for First Seven-Week Session. It is also the Last Day to Drop a Course without W on Record for First Seven-Week Session

Course Description: Writing Seminar I: Critical Thinking in the Liberal Arts

This course is designed to help students with transitions from their experiences to the challenges of college academic life and culture, also emphasizing writing, reasoning, and learning as foundations for continuing academic success in General Education and beyond. Each section of the course involves explicit, continuing attention to writing, reasoning, research, and reflective engagement with various texts, written and non-written. All sections initially address with students' questions about the nature of education, liberal arts education, and links to lifelong learning and living. Offered in multiple sections each year. Taken in the first term of the freshman year.

Section Description: Student debt is a “wicked” problem, not a “tame” one. This course will operate from civic engagement perspective that draws from the work of Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne (2004), who in their co-authored article “What Kind of Citizen” put forth a taxonomy of engagement that asks critical questions but also one that engages citizens in action. This civic engagement course will impact the Work College Community (Berea College) in meaningful ways that will lead to critical questioning and action (justice-oriented students) when it comes to issues of higher education access and affordability. This course will incorporate civil discourse, community-based research and learning, and social responsibility as critical elements of the educational experience by having students engage in the following projects and collaborations:

- Student-led and moderated Twitter chats organized around the 10 tenets of “Wicked” problems as they relate to student loan debt.
- Traditional scholarly research papers on the student loan debt crisis that will lead to resources that Work College (Berea College) and other non-Work College communities can benefit from, such as the following: (1) Public Student Loan Forgiveness Tutorials and FAQs, (2) YouTube videos that share information about neoliberal higher education financing, and/or (3) a publicly-available bibliography of journalistic, academic, and blogs on student debt.

It isn't enough to study the student debt crisis from afar. The course also will result in a summit, hosted at Berea College, whereby speakers, activists, Berea Community

members who may or may not carry student debt, can voice their concerns and solutions. Students will evaluate how the course altered their understanding as well via pre- and post-questionnaires.

Student Learning Outcomes of this Course:

Successful students in this course will learn:

1. to develop, compose, and complete college-level essays that are documented, that engage and use various kinds of texts, and that are expository (i.e., develop reasons, evidence, support for a thesis);
2. to identify and use properly some common modes of reasoning (e.g. analogy, argument), patterns of reasoning, and basic critical thinking concepts such as consistency, ambiguity and vagueness, and general criteria in thinking well about a variety of topics and texts;
3. to use the Hutchins Library facility and its resources, including the Library Home Page and library web resources;
4. to research, read, and evaluate a variety of sources, to assemble an appropriately diverse bibliography, and to appreciate how different types of sources can work together;
5. to understand how preparation, engaged attentiveness, reflection, and thinking with appropriate criteria leads to learning from experiences beyond the formal classroom.

Advice From Your Teaching Assistant/Peer Leader (TAPL):

1. Be ready to be introduced to new ideas and perspectives. Be it course material or the thoughts of a fellow student, you are going to learn about different trains of thought and see the world through different sets of lenses. This does not mean you have to agree with everything you hear, but it's essential that you understand the value in genuinely listening to your peers as they express their thoughts. Be open minded, be accepting, and be respectful.
2. Communicate with your professor(s) and TA's. We are here for your success. While the idea of reaching out to your educators may seem frightening at first, it is highly encouraged and recommended. These are the years that prepare you for your success, so communicate with transparency.
3. Creating a schedule can make or break you. Whether you are proficient in storing important information or not, create a schedule for what you need to have done and by when. Procrastination only suffocates you in stress and worry, so even a rough outline of what you need to do can be extremely helpful. While I recommend this for students on and off campus, this will really help those of you participating in distant learning. In addition, create goals for yourself. Maintaining an average, making dean's list, or simply aiming to be receptive of new ideas are all wonderful goals that inspire drive and instill a desire to truly learn.

Accessibility

Your classroom success and ability to access classroom curriculum is my goal. Berea College will provide reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities so that learning experiences are accessible. If you experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, please see Lisa Ladanyi (Disability & Accessibility Services, 110 Lincoln Hall, 859-985-3327, lisa.ladanyi@berea.edu) to discuss options. Students must provide an accommodation letter to their instructor before any accommodations can be provided. Accommodations cannot be provided retroactively. Please meet with me in a confidential environment to discuss arrangements for these accommodations.

Resources for this Course

Resources for Writing

<https://www.berea.edu/ctl/writing-resources/tip-sheets/>

Grammarly

Using grant funds, Disability & Accessibility Services (DAS) purchased a four-year (July 2019-June 2023), campus license for [Grammarly Premium](#). Berea College faculty, staff, and students can use their @berea.edu email address to register for a Grammarly Premium account [at this link](#). Grammarly Premium can support faculty, staff, and students with:

- Critical grammar and spelling checks
- Conciseness
- Readability
- Vocabulary enhancement suggestions
- Genre-specific writing style checks
- Plagiarism detector that checks for more than 16 billion webpages (Grammarly, 2019)

Research

www.plectica.com [It is free, but you will need to create an account]

Required Texts:

The Trail Guide to Writing will be provided to you from Berea College.

Other texts and readings will be provided to you in the course on Microsoft Teams.

Weekly Course Schedule

Week	Module Activities
1 August 12–16, 2020 What are the Liberal Arts?	Take 24-question Information Literacy Skills Survey Don't stress—while this survey is required, it is NOT graded; instead, the survey is used to see what you already know about using an academic library's resources and doing research. After all the first-year

	<p>writing students take the survey, our awesome librarians plan workshops for you based on any skills folks need extra help with.</p> <p>Read: Deductive and Inductive Reasoning</p> <p>Read: Only Connect</p> <p>Read: “Live and Learn: Why We Have College”</p> <p>Watch: This is Water</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial meetings with students last names A–M [Calendly] Week August 17-23 • Initial meetings with students last names N–Z [Calendly] Week August 24-30
<p style="text-align: center;">2 August 17–23, 2020 What are Wicked Problems?</p>	<p>Choose the Paper Assignment You Will Work on for the duration of this course:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interview Paper: Interview a peer who has gone to college and/or someone who has decided not to attend college. You have options on who you interview. (4-7 pp. in length) 2. Formal Intersectionality Research Paper: Write about how sex/gender/class/age/race intersect with student debt. (4-7 pp. in length) 3. Personal Narrative Paper: Share your personal story about why you chose to attend Berea College if there is a focus on cost/affordability. (4-5 pp. in length) 4. Book Chapter: Nicholas is writing a chapter and up to two students can join in as co-authors. The chapter is tentatively titled: “The (In)visible (Wo)man: How Sexism and Racism Accelerate The Feminization of Student Loan Debt.” If interested, please let him know asap. (pp. length TBD) <p>Read: Crowley & Head’s (2017) “The Enduring Challenge of ‘Wicked Problems’: Revisiting Rittel and Webber”</p> <p>Read: “Shitty First Drafts”</p> <p>Read: The Tangled World of Debt</p>

	<p>Begin contributing to A People's Annotated Bibliography on Student Debt [post 10 readings and include hyperlinks]</p>
<p>3 August 24–30, 2020 How can we respond to Wicked Problems?</p>	<p>Outline of Paper Assignment Due for Class on August 26. <i>Please Note: During the fourth week of class you will need to schedule an appointment with the writing center so you should begin writing once your outline is completed. Don't procrastinate!</i></p> <p>Watch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheme and Scandal (CNN, October 23, 2019) on YouTube • How a Kentucky college has offered tuition-free education for more than a century (CBS This Morning, January 19, 2019) on YouTube • Robert Smith's TIME100 Talk on YouTube <p>Read: Here is a powerful alternative to student loans</p> <p>Read: Be Careful With Income Share Agreements (ISAs) To Pay For College</p> <p>Read: Income share agreements could mean interest rates for students above 18%</p>
<p>4 August 31–September 6, 2020 Why is student loan debt a Wicked Problem?</p>	<p>Meme Assignment is Due for class on September 2.</p> <p>As soon as possible, please schedule a 50 minute appointment with the Berea College Writing Center. You will need to upload your essay outline and assignment sheet/rubric. Here is information how to do this.</p>
<p>5 September 7–13, 2020 What kind of citizen are you?</p>	<p>First Draft of Paper Assignment is Due for class on September 9.</p> <p>Read: Westheimer and Kahne (2004)</p>
<p>6 September 14–20, 2020 How can we plan for action?</p>	<p>Plan for Twitter Chat and/or Hashtag Challenge During Class</p>
<p>7 September 21–27, 2020 Taking Action</p>	<p>Host Twitter Chat Second Draft of Paper Assignment is Due for class on September 26.</p>

***Our last day will be October 2, 2020. If you want to revise your paper once more, this will be permitted. Meanwhile, October 12, 2020 is when grades are due.