

Instruction that moves, Leadership that inspires, Research that makes a difference.

**The Florida State University
College of Education
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies**

American College Student (SDS5624) – 3 credits

Fall Semester, 2011

Class Meets on Monday afternoon, 4-6:45, room 3305 Stone Building

Instructors

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Course Description

The course is a study of college students in the United States—who they have been, who they are, and who they will be—and of the stakeholders who have interests in these students.

Course Objectives

1. To develop an understanding of college students in the United States: their characteristics, demographics, needs, goals, etcetera, during the college years.
 - a. Historical/traditional norms
 - b. Current conditions and emerging trends
 - c. Future projections
2. To identify, recognize, and adapt to varying stakeholder interests in college students.
3. To build the comfort, confidence, and skills required to effectively communicate, using varied media and toward varied audiences, about college students.
4. To develop a research project that will enhance your understanding of college students, contribute to others' understanding of college students, and help FSU students stand out on the job market in higher education and student affairs.

Class Materials

There are no *required* textbooks for this class. Unless otherwise noted, readings will be available electronically – either through blackboard, course reserves, FSU Library E-Journals, or other sources accessible by students. Students are responsible for acquiring the assigned readings (it is a skill important to anyone working in an institution of higher education, and may familiarize you with previously unknown resources).

However, I ***STRONGLY ENCOURAGE*** you to get a copy of the following two books. If enough students wish to purchase either or both of these books, I will place a bulk order for them (at a discount, maybe 20%) after the first week of class.

*Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research* (Vol. 2). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This book is one of the handful of books that everyone working with college students should have on their personal book shelves. The first volume (1991) has a white cover; the second volume (2005) has a blue cover.

*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th edition.

This book provides details about the “APA style” that is used throughout higher education and that should be used throughout your time in graduate school.

Other materials – including voice recorders, video cameras, and computer software – can likely be checked out from the library or LRC should you want to use them for your project. Finally, I encourage you all to get a copy of some software to manage your references/sources. Endnote is my personal favorite, but there are several other products (free and paid) that do similar things.

Assignments and Grading

Details about each assignment will be provided elsewhere as they approach.

- 1 Page (Paper), 1 Minute (Presentation) (10% of overall course grade)
- Quiz on required readings (10%)
- Project Proposal (5% for draft + 15% for final = 20% total)
- Project Paper (5% for draft + 15% for final = 20% total)
- Project Presentation (5% for draft/outline + 15% for final = 20% total)
- Individual Meetings [& Progress Reports] with Instructors (5% each x 3 meetings = 15%)
- Contribution to Class (5%)

Assignments and Grading (cont.)

Although students have multiple assignments upon which grades will be based, three elements characterize successful completion of any assignment: insight, evidence, and clarity.

Insight: Insightful responses demonstrate a deep understanding of subject-matter complexities; present novel, efficient, and effective applications of theory and research; integrate concepts from multiple theories, viewpoints, perspectives, or fields of knowledge; and recognize areas of uncertainty, contradiction, and potential complications.

Evidence: All arguments must be supported with evidence. All completed assignments will be subjected to the “how?” and “why?” tests: any assertion should explain *how* one reaches a particular conclusion and *why* that conclusion is the most appropriate. Successful responses will use source material (e.g., data, research findings, theoretical relationships) to build a cohesive and logical argument to support their conclusions. Complete responses will also anticipate and address potential challenges to and critiques of the argument/conclusion.

Clarity: Clarity of presentation is critical to persuasion, teaching, and discussion. In both verbal and written communication, clear presentations are guided by logical, theoretical, or conceptual frameworks; present accurate and relevant information; limit superfluous, misleading, or redundant information; employ methods of presentation that most effectively convey the author’s intent; and meet professional standards for language and grammar.

Stakeholder Analysis (10% of overall course grade)

1-page paper (due on Blackboard BEFORE start of class on September 12, 2011)

1-minute presentation (to be made and recorded in class on September 12, 2011)

Identify a person/organization/population who has an interest in college students. The interest may be direct (e.g., faculty members, parents) or indirect (e.g., state lawmakers, the general public). The stakeholder may have any level of previous/current knowledge about college students. When conducting your stakeholder analysis, keep the following questions in mind.

- Who is the stakeholder? Be precise. Who is included, who is excluded? How is this stakeholder distinct from other stakeholders?
- What is the stakeholder's interest? Why would they care about college students? What about college students affects them? How might the stakeholders affect college students?
- What does the stakeholder already know (or think they know) about college students?
- Where do these stakeholders currently get their information? What are the characteristics of that source? Its strengths, weaknesses? Does that source target a specific audience, have a narrow/specific purpose?
- What information *should* the stakeholder have? What information is critical, what is peripheral, what is irrelevant? Why does this information matter?
- How would a better understanding of college students affect these stakeholders? What might change if the stakeholder were to acquire this information? Who would benefit from such information?

**SDS5624 – American College Student
(Fall 2011)
“Who are College Students in the United States?”
Project Proposal Guidelines**

Draft Due: September 26th (5% of class grade)
Final Proposal Due: October 17th (15% of class grade)
Proposals should be between 1,000 and 1,200 words

Throughout the course, we will be asking the question “Who are college students in the United States?” The project for which you are writing this proposal is intended to be a cumulative and integrative activity addressing each of the four course objectives. Your project should draw from class materials to demonstrate your understanding of college students and your ability to address the interests of specific stakeholders. The project is also intended to give you a taste of the research process, enhance your understanding of college students, and contribute to others’ understanding of college students.

Stakeholder Analysis

The stakeholder analysis for the project proposal should follow the same format and address the same issues as the 1-page/1-minute assignment from the first class session. The stakeholder for the big class project does *not* need to be the same stakeholder used for the 1-page/1-minute assignment. If you choose to address the same/similar stakeholder(s), do not simply copy and paste the text from the one-pager; although the one-pager can serve as the foundation for the stakeholder analysis in the proposal, this section of the proposal should reflect revisions you have made in response to instructor feedback, course materials, and other students’ presentations.

Subject/Issue

College students are complex, meaning any effort to describe college students will present only a partial picture of the population. In this section of the proposal, describe and justify your choice regarding the part of that picture upon which your project will focus. It is important to find an appropriate balance between specificity and generality. Your issue should be of interest/importance to more than just you, and should be sufficiently broad to allow you to find/collect data on the issue. But the issue should also be sufficiently specific to provide your project clear direction while being able to be addressed in the time/space allowed.

When considering potential issues to address with your project, use the following questions to help guide your thinking: What do your stakeholders need to know about college students? What current misconceptions do the stakeholders have about college students? Are there recurring concerns or questions that these stakeholders continually face? Are your stakeholders most interested in demographics, finance, student activities, student attitudes,

student learning, student outcomes, etc? Is data about the issue currently available, or can it be obtained while you are working on the project?

Approach/Framework

There are lots of ways to frame one's investigation into, and presentation about, college students. Although any number of approaches may be possible for your project, you are to articulate a single/primary framework that will guide your inquiry and presentation. The framework should help you determine what pieces of data you should be seeking and can serve as a structural/organizational guide for the project. Thus, because theories offer a "set of propositions regarding the interrelationship of two or more conceptual variables relevant to some realm of phenomenon" (Rogers, 1980), the student development theories or models of college effects from EDH5045 are well suited to provide such a framework.

Although the Rogers quotation is specific to theories, similar descriptions could be used almost any framework. Therefore, if student development theory doesn't seem to apply to your project, you could choose to approach your project from one of the perspectives highlighted in the readings for this SDS5624 class. You could choose to do explicit comparisons over time (e.g., historical analysis vs. future projections) or across contexts (e.g., institution types or international differences). You could take a typological approach or frame the project in terms of generations. You could also apply the constructs and definitions used in discussions of cultures, subcultures, or climates.

Presentation Type

Throughout the course, we have seen information about college students presented in a variety of ways. Your project should be presented in a manner that 1) effectively conveys the substance of your findings, 2) addresses the key interests of the target audience/stakeholder, and 3) accommodates the distinctive needs, preferences, abilities, and availability of the targeted stakeholder. Although a slideshow (e.g., PowerPoint, Prezi) may be appropriate for your project, it is not a requirement for the class. Websites, videos, infographics, pictures, audio clips, posters, policy briefs, proposals for an educational program, or some other presentation format may be most appropriate. The strongest presentations are likely to incorporate more than one presentation format. Regardless of the format(s), during the last class session you will be required to *present* your project (e.g., if you do a poster, you'll still need to walk the class through it).

For the proposal, be as specific as possible. Of course, your presentation may need to be adjusted slightly after you've actually done your data collection and analysis. But the proposal should specify the primary presentation format, outline the structure or key components, and justify that format as an appropriate way to address points 1, 2, & 3 in the paragraph above.

Research Method

Data source(s), including how you plan to gain access to the data

Analytic procedures, describing how you will convert raw data into useful information with meaningful implications for your stakeholders

Timeline for data collection, analysis, writing, and presentation preparation.

Final Paper Guidelines

Draft Due: November 7th (5% of class grade)

Final Paper Due: November 21st (15% of class grade)

Papers should be between 2,000 and 2,500 words (excluding executive summary)

Executive Summary (one side of one 8x11 page)

The executive summary should be targeted at a specific audience and address the biggest issue(s) of interest to those stakeholders. Briefly introduce the issue to be addressed and why the issue matter to the stakeholders. The bulk of your executive summary should focus on the results of your study (i.e., the important facts you uncovered) and their implications for the stakeholder. A description of your data collection and analyses procedures is necessary only in as much as it adds credibility to your findings and implications; no more than a couple of sentences or a footnote about methods are needed for the executive summary. The executive summary can be organized and structured in any manner, but must be appropriate for the intended audience.

Sections for the Main Paper

Introduction

- Articulate the purpose of your project and describe why it is important
 - Identify the project’s primary target audience (note that the project is likely to be relevant to several audiences, which is OK to acknowledge)
 - Define the issue(s) and/or question(s) to be addressed in the project (*what* about college students are you going to address?)
 - Briefly discuss the current state of knowledge (using theories or research from the literature)
- Note any current/common/stereotypical understandings
 - Describe the current/common/stereotypical depictions/perceptions of college students, particularly as they relate to the specific issue/topic or population addressed in your project.
 - If possible, focus on the understandings of the stakeholders toward which you are directing the presentation
 - Discuss the reasons that such an understanding currently exists
- Preview the structure of the rest of the paper

Methods

- Articulate your data sources and collection methods (e.g., participants, instruments, questions)
- Describe your analytical processes – how did you turn data into results (e.g., how coded, which statistics)?
- Acknowledge limitations and delimitations (what did your study ignore, assume, or just touch on?)

Findings

- Describe *your* findings and present results from *your* analyses (don’t simply repeat others’ literature)
 - Although primarily narrative, this section may include tables, charts, and other graphical representations of findings. Be sure to introduce and describe any graphics.

Discussion

- Place your findings into context (refer back to your intro as appropriate)
 - Compare your findings to those of other scholars
 - Compare/contrast your findings with current perceptions/stereotypes
- Discuss implications for the target audience (and secondary audiences, if appropriate)
 - Address the “so what” question – why does your study matter?
 - Provide stakeholders an idea of what they should *do* with the information you provide
- Project forward, suggest future directions
 - Has your research caused you to raise previously un-asked questions?
 - How can future research overcome some of this study’s limitations?