In *Failing the Future*, one of the books we’ll be reading this semester, Annette Kolodny, former Dean of the Humanities at the University of Arizona, reflects on the challenges that lie ahead for higher education. While she believes that the performance of institutions of higher learning would be improved by increasing the role that faculty plays in the decision-making process, Kolodny acknowledges that most faculty members and most students don’t have a full enough understanding of how learning institutions are organized and funded to participate constructively in bringing about change in the places where they teach and learn. One way to change this situation, Kolodny believes, is to help graduate students (and their teachers, I would add) “develop a fuller appreciation of the complex interface between campus, community, and nation.”

This laudable project requires asking the following fundamental questions: What is a university for? What are the responsibilities of the Board of Trustees? The President? The Provost? The Dean? Why are there Divisions and Departments? What is the work of the faculty and how is it assessed? Where do students fit into discussions about higher education? Are they learners? Consumers? Future donors? These are the questions that we will explore this semester and the answers that we come up with will help us to participate more fully in discussions about how higher education should respond to the challenges posed by technological advances, the economic downturn, changes in the workforce and in the student population, increased specialization, vocationalism, and lifetime learning. One might say, in other words, that this is a course about academic citizenship.

As we consider these issues, I would also like for all of us to be rethinking what it means to teach and to learn as adults. Nearly all of the scholarship in my field, composition studies, is concerned with the teaching of undergraduates: little attention has been given to graduate education or the pedagogies of faculty development and mentoring. But, if we are to imagine that it is possible to change how institutions of higher education go about their work, then we must consider—and then try to create—the conditions that make it possible for adults to learn together in public spaces.

**Responsibilities**

What is the relationship between graduate training and the actual work that academics and administrators do? This is one question that we will return to throughout the semester and it is a question that has led me to rethink the read-discuss-write paper format I had originally planned for this course. All of you have received or will receive extensive training in 15 weeks worth of reading and discussion into a 30 page paper on a topic of your choosing. With this area of your training already so well covered, I’ve put together three different kinds of work that I like each
of you to complete over the course of the semester:

**The Group Precis/Summary (20%)**: we all know that graduate school requires a great deal of reading and we all know how hard it is to keep up with these responsibilities as the semester goes forward. In this course, you will be assigned readings from five different books and will be responsible for a number of additional readings and reports, as well. The Group Precis is meant to assist the seminar members in handling the reading load by providing, a week ahead of time, a critical gloss of the assigned reading, along with recommended passages, and questions to consider while reading.

For this assignment, you will work with at least one other seminar member to produce a summary of the following week’s assigned reading. Your precis, which should be no more than two pages, single-spaced, should answer the following questions:

- What problem does the assigned reading seek to address?
- What is the approach/critical frame/school of thought that is adopted in the assigned reading?
- What sections of the reading do you recommend focusing on?
- What questions does the reading raise for you that you would like the rest of the class to discuss?

The week before the assigned reading is scheduled, your group will make an oral presentation of your precis and you will distribute copies of your precis to the class. You and your group will be assessed both on the quality of the precis and on the quality of the presentation, so make sure that both the oral presentation and the document are lively and engaging. The oral presentation should be no more than 10 minutes long.

**FYI/Connecting Contribution (20%)**: one of the goals of this course is to gather information about the forces shaping higher education and to consider how those forces shape the choices and the lives of those who work and study in institutions of higher learning. If all goes well, throughout the semester, you will find issues raised by the readings and by class discussion that require further investigation. How does one find out, for instance, how much the state contributes to the university’s annual operating budget? How is admissions handled? What are the consequences of posting student evaluations online? Posing questions of this kind is easy enough; finding the answers is another matter. This is where the “fyi/connecting contribution” comes in.

At least twice during the semester, you will present the results of your own “mini-research” project on a question raised by the readings or by class discussion. Your research should bring new information to the class’ attention and, ideally, it will assume the form of a handout, which you will then discuss. As I imagine these contributions, they might begin something like this: “Although X maintains that issues of gender equity have improved over time, I’ve looked into this further and discovered that . . . .” Or they might begin, “Last week, during our discussion of tenure and academic freedom, we were wondering about how many tenure decisions get
reversed. I looked into this further and . . . .”

The “fyi/connecting contribution,” in short, allows you to use the assigned readings and the class discussions as launching points for further research. You’re required to do a minimum of two such contribution; more are, of course, welcome. You will sign up for one in advance and another you’ll present spontaneously (I’m hoping to avoid everyone presenting in the last two weeks.....) Here, too, you will be assessed on the quality of the contribution you make and the quality of the presentation. The oral presentation should be no more than 10 minutes long.

**Final Project/Presentation (50%)**: higher education provides any number of research possibilities, some of which you will undoubtedly find more interesting than others. While this seminar will give you a broad overview of how higher education is organized, your final project will offer you the opportunity to explore an issue, question, problem, or area in higher education in greater depth. For your final project, you have the option of presenting the results of your research in a variety of formats:

- a 15-20 page research paper;
- a 15-20 page report with action items;
- a web site that you’ve designed and populated with content and commentary;
- a 20-30 minute presentation, with documents, graphs, and charts as needed, to be delivered on May 8th or May 15th.
- a take home final exam to be completed and returned by 3PM, May 8th.

The report, web site, and the presentation can be completed collaboratively.

By the sixth week of the semester, you will need to have decided which format you are going to use to present your research and you will need to have decided, in consultation with me, on your research question.

**Citizenship (10%)**: being on time, attending all meetings, participating regularly. Be forewarned: I value punctuality.

**Tentative Schedule**  
*(Subject to change as the semester progresses)*

**Jan 23rd** Introduction  
What is a university? What is a business? What is a bureaucracy?  
How do you distinguish between them?  
*Dangerous Minds*  
FAS Report on Undergraduate Education

**Jan 30th** The Social Function of Institutions  


Feb 6th  The University’s Mission Defined and Assessed: Part I


Robert Maynard Hutchins, *The State of the University, 1929-1949*.

Feb 13th  The University’s Mission Defined and Assessed: Part II


Feb 20th  Rounding Out the Presidential Perspective: Academic Duty


**Prospectus for final research project due**

March 6th  “The City of the Intellect” and Emotional Intelligence: A View from the Business World


March 13th  Gender, Equity, and Reform: A Dean’s Perspective


March 20th  Spring Break


April 3rd  The Life of a Faculty Member: Tenure


April 10th The Life of a Faculty Member: Research, Publication, Departmental Service, and Minority Status


April 17th The Life of a Part-Timer


April 24th A View of the Future: Academic Capitalism


May 1st A View of the Future: Academic Capitalism


May 8th Oral Presentation of Final Projects (Attendance Optional)
May 15th  Oral Presentation of Final Projects (Attendance Optional)