FORG 280 College
Spring 2017 • MWF 11:00-11:50
Classroom TBD
Instructor: John Alcorn • 297-2182 • jalcorn@trincoll.edu • Seabury 110
Office hours: MWF 8:45-9:45 a.m. & 1-2 p.m.

Course description:
An interdisciplinary analysis of selective liberal-arts colleges and kindred universities. Students will take a step back from the institution they inhabit and view it through the lens of the social sciences. Topics include rankings, admissions, diversity, athletics, social life, curriculum, governance, and payoff. The course has a seminar format. The seminar serves as a case study in formal organizations.

The seminar will feature guest visits by experts from the field. There will be occasional short presentations and discussions of ‘college in the news.’

Enrollment is limited to 15 students.

Course requirements:
• Five writing or media assignments. These will be a mix of online writing (e.g. blogs), papers (1,250 words each), & a final project. Students may substitute multimedia projects for papers.
• A presentation about the assigned materials.
• A policy debate.
• A presentation about the final project-in-progress.
• Participation in seminar discussions & in ‘college in the news’ discussions.
• Attendance at classes and at supplementary public lectures TBA.

Note: Students may switch dates (topics) of their presentations and debates with another student, if the switch is mutually agreeable, and if they provide ample notice.

Grade policy:
• The cumulative score is on a scale of 100 points and may be graded on a curve.
• Each of the ten requirements (5 short papers or media projects, 2 presentations, 1 debate, participation in seminar discussions, and attendance) is worth ten percent of the course grade.
• Work is graded on five criteria: (a) focus, (b) integration of assigned materials, (c) argument or analysis, (d) evidence, and (e) prose or presentation (clarity, concision, organization, polish).
• A seminar is a collaborative effort in which we count on one another. Penalties apply to students who have more than 3 unexcused absences.

Purchase list.
• David W. Breneman, Liberal Arts Colleges: Surviving, Thriving, or Endangered? (Brookings Institution Press, 1994).
SYLLABUS
Unless otherwise noted, materials that are not on the purchase list are PDFs & URLs.

A. What is college for?

1. The $64,000 question: Is college worth it?

   Chetty & others (2017a): https://goo.gl/VynsR1

   Supplements (for debate & projects):
   Beattie & others (2016)
   Times Higher Education (2015)
   Zimmerman (2016)

2. Human capital, signal, or consumer good?

   Mare (2016): https://goo.gl/fNKWGb

   Supplements (for debate & projects):

Debate: Should government subsidize college?
3. Liberal Arts Colleges

Breneman (1994) 

Short items about Trinity:
Alcorn (2015c) & (2015d)
Moody’s (2016)

Debate: Should liberal-arts curricula change to include a vocational component?

Writing assignment due on following Monday at 3 pm

4. Rankings

Lau & Rosen (2015) 
Myers & Robe (2009): https://goo.gl/h0ZzDd
Rankings methodology statements:
USNWR, Parchment, Forbes, LinkedIn, Brookings, & Equal Opportunity Project.
See URLs at Moodle & in Bibliography at end of syllabus.

Short items about Trinity:
Alcorn (2015a) & (2016b)

Debate: Should colleges base policy on rankings?

5. Selectivity (causes & consequences)

Avery & others (2013) 
Dale & Krueger (2011)

Debate: External criteria vs. Applicants making their own cases

Writing assignment due on following Monday at 3 pm
C. Admissions

6. Pricing & financial aid
   Visit by Prof. Stater
   
   Altonji & Zimmerman (2017)
   Roth (2015)
   
   Short items about Trinity:
   
   Supplements (for debate & projects):
   Bulman & others (2016)
   Cappelli & Won (2016)
   Turner & others (2016)

   Debate: High sticker w/ price discrimination vs. a uniform, lower price.

   
   Avery & Levin (2010)
   Conley (1995)
   Goldin & others (2006)
   
   Supplements (for debate & projects):
   Arcidiacono & Lovenheim (2016)
   Espenshade & others (2004)
   Georgetown policy (2016)
   Supiano & others (2015):
   http://chronicle.com/article/The-Financial-Aid-Fine-Print/190131

   Debate: Should Admissions mainly target academic excellence?

8. Composition of student body (2): Athletics, legacies, frontiers
   
   Hurwitz (2011)
   Hoxby & Turner (2013)
   Sanderson & Siegfried (2015)
   
   Supplements (for debate & projects):
   Hoxby (2000)
   Hoxby (2013): https://goo.gl/PD8FP1

   Debate: Pay-for-play for collegiate athletes?
Writing assignment due on following Monday at 3 pm

D. Social life

9. Sorting & mixing

Arcidiacono & others (2013) Reports:
Bauer (2013)
Hartmann (2015)
Hinrichs (2015)

Supplements (for debate & projects):
Mendelberg & others (2016)
Pérez-Peña & Taylor (2014)

Debate: Should residential colleges return to in loco parentis?

10. Informal social control by students

Concepts: Reports:
Friedman (MS): https://goo.gl/bdMt0p

College field studies:
Muller (2003)
Giberson (2012)
Allison & Risman (2013)

Debate: Should students make & enforce the rules at college?

Writing assignment due on following Monday at 3 pm
E. Governance & curriculum.

11. Trustees, Faculty, & Students

Brennan & Magness (2016)  Reports:
Ehrenberg & others (2015)

Trinity College Faculty Manual:  
http://www.trincoll.edu/Academics/dean/Pages/Manual.aspx

Trinity College Student Integrity contract:  
http://www.trincoll.edu/StudentLife/AroundCampus/honor/Pages/IntegrityContract.aspx

Debate: TBA

12. Curriculum

Courant & Turner (2017)  Reports:
Lazear (2010)
Perkins & Salomon (1992)

Debate: Should liberal-arts colleges return to a core curriculum?

13. An online revolution in higher education?

Cowen & Tabarrok (2014)  Reports:
Cochrane (2014a) & (2014b)
McPherson & Bacow (2015)
Tabarrok (2012)

Supplements (for debate & projects):
Deming & others (2016)
Goodman & others (2016)

Debate: Should liberal-arts colleges offer online courses for credit?

14. After college

Rivera (2015)  Reports:

Roundtable: The future of college.

Final project due on exam date at 3 pm
Bibliography (other than purchase list) - PDFs


**Friedman (MS).** “Feud law,” manuscript chapter 15 in *Legal systems very different from ours.* Available online: http://www.daviddfriedman.com/Legal%20Systems/LegalSystemsContents.htm

**Georgetown Policy (2016).** “Georgetown to give slave descendants priority for Admission,” *AP* (1 September 2016).


**Hoxby (2013).** Caroline M. Hoxby, “Endowment management based on a positive model of the university” (NBER 2013).


McDonald & others. Heather McDonald & others, “The truth about sexual assault” (Manhattan Institute, March 10, 2015). Podcast available online: http://media.manhattan-institute.org/podcasts/031015CAU.mp3


