FORG 280 College  
Spring 2019 • MWF 11:00-11:50  
Classroom:  
Instructor: John Alcorn • jalcorn@trincoll.edu • Seabury 110  
Office hours: MWF 8:30-9:30 a.m. and 1:00-2:00 p.m.; and by appointment.

Course description:  
An interdisciplinary analysis of selective liberal-arts colleges and kindred universities. 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.’  
There will be workshops with educational technology specialists.  
Enrollment is limited to 15 students.

Course requirements:  
• Three writing or media assignments. These are a mix of papers (2,000 words each) & a final project. (Students may substitute multimedia projects for papers.)  
• A presentation about the assigned materials.  
• A policy debate.  
• Participation: Seminar discussions, a sketch of a final project, & attendance at classes and at supplementary public lectures.  
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 six requirements (3 papers or media projects, 1 presentation, 1 debate, and participation) has equal weight in the course grade. Penalties apply to tardy work.  
• 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 tardiness and unexcused absences. A seminar requires full attention during class – Extraneous software must be turned off. Students should not exit during class time, unless there is reasonable urgency.

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. Issues Jan. 23, 25
   The more-than-$64,000 question Alcorn (Slides); Kling (2018a): https://tinyurl.com/yckyle
   Social mobility Chetty & others (2017a): https://goo.gl/VynsR1
   Bias Hartocollis (2018), Zimmerman (2018)
   BS Melchior (2018)

2. General interpretations (1) Jan. 28, 30, Feb. 1
   Alchemy (transformative education) Caplan (2018), Intro. & Ch. 1 Report:
   Disconnect of curriculum & career Caplan (2018), Ch. 2 Report:
   Payoff: Employer perspective Caplan (2018), Ch. 3 Report:

3. General interpretations (2) Feb. 4, 6, 8
   Signs of signaling Caplan (2018), Ch. 4 Report:
   Payoff: Student perspectives Caplan (2018), Ch. 5 Report:
   Payoff: Taxpayer perspective Caplan (2018), Ch. 6 Report:

4. General interpretations (3) Feb. 11, 13, 15
   Policy implications: Austerity? Caplan (2018), Ch. 7 Debate:
   Policy implications: Vocational ed? Caplan (2018), Ch. 8 Debate:
   Humanism? Caplan (2018), Ch. 9-10 Debate:

5. General interpretations (4) Feb. 18, 20. No Class on Friday (Trinity Days)
   Subsidies, hierarchies, & peers Winston (1999):
   https://goo.gl/uVcpBY Report:
   Review: Effectiveness Brint & Clotfelter (2016) Report:

Paper or media project due on Friday at 3 pm

B. Nuts & bolts

6. Liberal Arts Colleges Feb 25, 27, Mar 1
   Breneman (1994) Chs. 1-2 Report:
   Economic model Breneman (1994) Ch. 3 Report:
   Course enrollments Course Match PDFs Report:
   https://mba-inside.wharton.upenn.edu/course-match/
7. Rankings & selectivity  Mar 4, 6, 8

History & current brands  Myers & Robe (2009): https://goo.gl/h0ZzDd

Rankings methodology statements:  USNWR, Parchment, Forbes, LinkedIn, Brookings, WSJ, Money, & Equal Opportunity Project. See URLs at Moodle.

Debate:

A revealed-preference ranking  Avery & others (2013)  Report:


8. Composition & diversity  March 11, 13, 15

Affirmative action & local justice  Arcidiacono & Lovenheim (2016)


Debate:

Gender ratio, athletes, legacies  Goldin & others (2006), Hurwicz (2011)

Avery & Levin (2010)

Sanderson & Siegfried (2015)  Debate:

Spring Vacation

9. Sorting & mixing  March 25, 27, 29

Segregation among colleges  Hinrichs (2015)  Report:

Segregation within colleges  Arcidiacono & others (2013),  Report:


Review

10. Resource & allocation issues  April 1, 3, 5


Curriculum & Faculty  Courant & Turner (2017),  Hemelt (2018),

Brennan & Magness (2016)  Report:

Amenities  Stange (2018)  Report:

Paper or media project due on Friday at 3 pm

11. Standardized tests  April 8, 10, 12


Goodman (2018)  Report:

Test-optional admissions  Saboe & Terrizzi (2018)  Debate:


Review
12. Trinity April 15, 17, 19

Performance metrics (1) Alcorn, various short reports posted at Moodle  
Moody's (2016), Course Match Report:

Performance metrics (2) Alcorn, various short reports posted at Moodle  
Report:

Roundtable Students share field observations  
Debate:

13. Informal social control; Title IX April 22, 24, 26

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

Field studies Muller (2003), Giberson (2012) Report:  
Allison & Risman (2013), Arm (2017)  
Hartmann (2015), Pérez-Peña & Taylor (2014)  
Slides from project

14. Review April 29, May 1

Debate:

Final paper or media 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


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


Please note the following Trinity College policies:

• **Credit hours.**
  For this course (0.5 credit), students should plan to spend an average of 30 hours per week studying and completing assignments.
  (Guidelines from the Curriculum Committee and the Dean of Faculty)

• **Academic accommodations.**
  “Trinity College is committed to creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you have approval for academic accommodations, please notify faculty during the first two weeks of the semester or a minimum of 10 days prior to needing your accommodations. Please be sure to meet with me privately to discuss implementation.”
  (Statement of the Office of Student Accommodations)

• **Academic Integrity.**
  “In accordance with the Trinity College Student Integrity Contract, students are expected to abide by the highest standards of intellectual honesty in all academic exercises. Intellectual honesty assumes that students do their own work and that they credit properly those upon whose work and thought they draw. It is the responsibility of each student to make sure that he or she is fully aware of what constitutes intellectually honest work in every examination, quiz, paper, laboratory report, homework assignment, or other academic exercise submitted for evaluation in a course at Trinity College.”
  (Trinity College Student Handbook, p. 13)

• **The syllabus is subject to change.**
  “The content, policies, requirements, and assignments listed in the syllabus are subject to change.”
  (Guidelines from the Curriculum Committee and the Dean of Faculty)