Spectator to Citizen: Denver Urban Issues & Policy
‘Barriers to High School Graduation’
Winter Quarter 2016
AH/SS2581

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303.871.4281
Office hours by appointment

Course Meeting Times:
January 5 - March 8, 2016
Tuesdays, 2:00pm - 3:50pm
Sturm Hall 476

Photo Credit: Oscar Rohena via flickr
Spectator to Citizen Sequence Overview

This three-course sequence of two-credit courses is designed to help DU students develop a set of public skills and civic knowledge base that will allow them to actively participate in their communities' public lives. Specifically, the sequence of courses will help students:

1. Understand critical policy issues and salient community problems within the Denver metro area.
2. Develop a set of public skills that will allow them to actively and skillfully participate in the public life of their communities.

These courses strongly encourage students of diverse backgrounds, politics and values to learn together, and from one another, in a safe and challenging learning environment.

Course Description

A strong democracy depends on its citizens to use their power, knowledge, ethics, and strengths to identify problems and work with others to build stronger, healthier communities for all people. As citizens of the city of Denver, it is our responsibility and right to investigate important issues and be involved in developing a city that betters the lives of the people in our communities. We do this through a community organizing model that includes: relationship building, research of multiple forms of knowledge/knowing, public action, evaluation, and critical reflection. The community organizing process teaches tangible skills necessary to live in any democratic community, here in Denver, or around the globe.

This course will focus on Colorado's high school graduation rates and the diverse community initiatives working to address this issue. Students will read and discuss relevant background materials as well as learn from several organizations engaging in this work from different perspectives.

Students will also collectively partner with a community organization to conduct community-based research on the root causes of barriers to graduation as well as the strategies employed by community stakeholders to increase graduation rates throughout Colorado. Research topics will be co-selected with the community organization and results will be presented by students at the end of the course.

Learning Outcomes

Students in this course will develop civic skills and leadership by learning and practicing the community organizing method, collaborating with the local community, and creating a community-based research project. As a result of participation in this course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze complex community issues and the policies that affect these issues.
2. Conduct community-based research to uncover root causes and learn how they are currently being addressed by community stakeholders.
3. Build public relationships and learn to bridge differences when working to address issues.
4. Critically reflect and present research and reflections to the community.

Course Texts and Materials

- Back to School - This American Life #474 (online)
- The Problem We All Live With - This American Life #562 (online)
- Answering the Call: A Report on Colorado’s High School Dropouts and Best Practices for Improving Educational Outcomes, Colorado Graduates Initiative (Canvas)
- Girls Tend to Stop Going; Boys Get Told Not to Come Back: A Report on Gender and the Dropout Problem in Colorado Schools, Colorado Graduates Initiative (Canvas)
- The Graduation Gap in Colorado, Governor’s Colorado P-20 Council Brief (Canvas)
- The High Cost of High School Dropouts: What the Nation Pays for Inadequate High Schools, Alliance for Excellent Education (Canvas)
- Graduation Profile, Education Week (Canvas)
- Research Sheds Light on the Students Most at Risk of Dropping Out - and How to Keep Students on the “Graduation Track,” Education Commission of the States (Canvas)
- Educating Vulnerable Pupils, Voices in Urban Education (Canvas)

Assignments

RDQ Critical Reflection
Due each week by 12:02am on Tuesday
200 Points

Each week, students will utilize Canvas to reflect on the readings for that week as well as their personal experiences within the education system. Reflection will focus on what issues/topics/quotes/facts/opinions resonated with you, what you disagreed with, and what questions you have. (20 points per week x 10 weeks in winter quarter = 200 points)

Class Discussion Participation
Due each week during class
200 Points
Each week, points for active participation in classroom discussion and reflection will be self-determined. Instructor reserves the right to adjust points as necessary. (20 points per week x 10 weeks in winter quarter = 20 points)

**Community-based Research Project Check In**  
Due Week 7, Tuesday, February 16, 2016  
200 Points

Students will collectively develop an interactive map of the Denver metro area and Colorado that enables communities, schools, and school districts to better understand the impact of high student mobility rates on graduation rates. The map will feature graduation relevant 2014-15 data from all 178 school districts in Colorado including: population, number of students, number of dropout students, alternative schools, post-secondary schools, tech & community colleges, workforce centers, graduation requirements (or none listed), and biggest employers of the region. Each Check In Presentation should also include at least half of the final data necessary and provide a roadmap to completion by week 10.

Students will identify and work with the necessary data from the Colorado Department of Education and school district/local government/community websites/databases and work in small groups to compile, analyze, and integrate their findings into the class map.

Check In Presentations will consist of a 10 minute PowerPoint/Prezi where each group member speaks and shares an overview of their region and school districts, group process, questions that arose during the research process, and findings on graduation rate root causes and impact of high mobility students. Colorado Youth for a Change staff will be present for check-in presentations to share questions, perspective, and feedback.

**Community-based Research Project Presentation**  
Due Week 10, Tuesday, March 8, 2016  
400 Points

Students will collectively develop an interactive map of the Denver metro area and Colorado that enables communities, schools, and school districts to better understand the impact of high student mobility rates on graduation rates. The map will feature graduation relevant 2014-15 data from all 178 school districts in Colorado including: population, number of students, number of dropout students, alternative schools, post-secondary schools, tech & community colleges, workforce centers, comparisons/differences to Denver metro area, graduation requirements (or none listed), biggest employers of the region, number and percent of students experiencing homelessness, number and percent of mobile students, and number and percent of free and reduced lunch students.
Students will identify and work with the necessary data from the Colorado Department of Education and school district/local government/community websites/databases and work in small groups to compile, analyze, and integrate their findings into the class map.

The final map will be presented to representatives from Colorado Youth for a Change, Colorado Reengagement Network, and the Colorado Department of Education during class on March 8. The map will also be featured on the Colorado Youth for a Change website to serve as a resource for communities, schools, and districts.

Presentations will consist of a 15 minute PowerPoint/Prezi where each group member speaks and shares an overview of their region and school districts, group process, questions that arose during the research process, recommendations focused on supporting students, and findings on graduation rate root causes and impact of high mobility students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>% of Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Discussion Participation</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>RDQ Critical Reflection</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-based Research Project Check In</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-based Research Project Presentation</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>100%</td>
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### Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week Date</th>
<th>In Class Agenda</th>
<th>Due Today</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| One January 5, 2016| ● Introductions  
● Syllabus and Course Timeline Review  
● Course Expectations & Group Norms | ● DUE: Class Discussion Participation  |
| Two January 12, 2016| ● Community Organizing Process  
● Colorado Graduation Snapshot  
● Roadmaps to a | ● Read: Dropping Out (Introduction & Chapter Two, pages 1-46)  
● Read: Answering the Call  
● Read: Graduation Profile  
● DUE: RDQ Critical Reflection by |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Diploma</th>
<th>12:02am</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>January 26, 2016</td>
<td>● Individual and Social Consequences of Dropping Out</td>
<td>● Read: Dropping Out (Chapters Four and Five, pages 86-142)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>January 26, 2016</td>
<td>● Barriers and Supports to Graduation</td>
<td>● Read: The High Cost of High School Dropouts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>January 26, 2016</td>
<td>● Community Panel</td>
<td>● DUE: RDQ Critical Reflection by 12:02am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>February 2, 2016</td>
<td>● Social Determinants of Education</td>
<td>● DUE: Class Discussion Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>February 16, 2016</td>
<td>● Community-based Research Projects Check In Presentations</td>
<td>● Read: Dropping Out (Chapter Eight, pages 207-233)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>February 23, 2016</td>
<td>● Effective Solutions to Addressing Barriers to Graduation</td>
<td>● DUE: Community-based Research Project Check In</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>● DUE: RDQ Critical Reflection by 12:02am</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>● DUE: Class Discussion Participation</td>
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Denver Urban Issues & Policy: Barriers to Graduation - Winter Quarter 2016 Syllabus - 6
Nine  
March 1, 2016  
- Community-based Research Project Check In  
- Case Studies of Success  
- DUE: RDQ Critical Reflection by 12:02am  
- DUE: Class Discussion Participation

Ten  
March 8, 2016  
- Community-based Research Project Presentations  
- DUE: Community-based Research Project Presentation  
- DUE: RDQ Critical Reflection by 12:02am  
- DUE: Class Discussion Participation

Grading

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<tr>
<th>Assessment Classification</th>
<th>Range (points)</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Excellent Work (above course expectations)</td>
<td>930-1000 900-929</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Work (meets course expectations)</td>
<td>880-899 830-879 800-829</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Work (meets minimal course expectations)</td>
<td>780-799 730-779 700-729 680-699 630-679 600-629</td>
<td>C +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failing Work</td>
<td>0-599</td>
<td>F</td>
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Course Policies

Late Assignments

Late assignments will not receive credit. Should events in your life arise that make it difficult for you to complete your work in a timely manner, please speak with me before the assignment due date.
DU Writing Center

The Writing Center supports and promotes effective student writing across the University of Denver campus. In a non-evaluative collaborative setting, we help DU students with all kinds of writing projects: class assignments, personal writing, professional writing, and multimedia projects. We serve any student affiliated with the University and invite students in all classes, at all levels of writing ability, and at any stage of the writing process to visit us at http://www.du.edu/writing/writingcenter or in Anderson Academic Commons, Room 280.

Honor Code/Academic Integrity

All work submitted in this course must be your own and produced exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly acknowledged and documented. For the consequences of violating the Academic Misconduct policy, refer to the University of Denver website on the Honor Code (www.du.edu/honorcode). See also http://www.du.edu/studentconduct for general information about conduct expectations from the Office of Student Conduct.

Students with Disabilities/Medical Issues

If you qualify for academic accommodations because of a disability or medical issue please submit a Faculty Letter to me from Disability Services Program (DSP) in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. DSP is located on the 4th floor of Ruffatto Hall; 1999 E. Evans Ave. 303.871. / 2372 / 2278 / 7432. Information is also available on line at http://www.du.edu/disability/dsp; see the Handbook for Students with Disabilities.

Religious Accommodations

DU students are granted excused absences from class if needed for observance of religious holy days but should contact instructors to make alternate arrangements during the first week of class. Please visit http://www.du.edu/studentlife/religiouslife/about-us/policy.html for information and a list of religious holidays.

Student-athletes

Student-athletes are responsible for informing their instructors of any class days to be missed due to DU sponsored varsity athletic events in which s/he are participating. Student-athletes are provided with a schedule of travel dates that coincide with class dates and an absence policy to present to instructors. This must be signed by the instructor and is the student-athlete’s responsibility to return the signed forms to an assigned athletics adviser. In the event that a team reaches post-season play (i.e. Conference or NCAA Tournament), letters will be sent to instructors informing them of additional missed class dates. It is the responsibility of the student-athlete to make arrangements with instructors regarding any missed lectures, assignments, and/or exams.