University of South Carolina  
College of Education  
Department of Educational Leadership and Policies

EDHE 832 (Special Topics)  
Higher Education in Fiction & Film  

Summer I Semester 2009 (June 1 – July 2)

Instructors: Christian K. Anderson & Barbara Tobolowsky

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Class time:  
Tues. & Thurs.,  
4:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Classroom: 122 Wardlaw College

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to how higher education is portrayed in fiction and film and to examine what that means to higher education.

We will ask questions such as: What do these representations of campus life and culture mean to the study of higher education? How accurate are fictional portrayals of colleges, universities, faculty, and students? (And what does it mean if they are accurate—or not?) What can we learn about colleges and universities, and students and faculty through fiction and film?

Of course, we’ll also have fun looking (and laughing) at depictions of higher education.

Course Requirements and Expectations

• Students are expected to act professionally and ethically in the class and in completing their assignments.
• Students are expected to attend, participate fully in discussions, and submit work on time.
• Please refer to the University’s Academic Calendars at http://registrar.sc.edu/ for deadlines and other important University-wide dates.
Required Reading

Required texts are available at the University Bookstore and through online stores:

*Changing Places* by David Lodge.

*I’ll Take You There* by Joyce Carol Oates.

*Stoner* by John Williams.


A Course Reader, available at Universal Copy (on Main Street).

Films will be viewed in class and do not need to be purchased.

Grading

You will be graded on your performance on the required assignments and class participation based on the following scale:

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<th>Letter Grade</th>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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Course Assignments

1. **Book or Film Review**: Choose an example of fiction or film, published or produced since 2000, and write a review of 1,000—1,500 words. Write your review as if you were writing it for the *New York Times Book Review* or *Variety* (for film reviews) or a similar publication. Be sure to include in your review a discussion of what the book or film tells a general audience about higher education. If possible, identify how this book or film is different from or similar to academic fiction/films from previous eras. Lists of novels and films are available on Blackboard. Please submit your title to the instructors as early as possible but no later than June 9th; preferably no two students will review the
same book or film. Reviews are due on June 23rd and will be discussed in class on June 25th. The review is worth 30% of your grade.

2. Writing Project: There are two options for the final writing project. You will be expected to present a short summary of your project on the last day of class, June 30th, and it is due the last day of finals, July 2nd via Blackboard. It is worth 45% of your grade. You should indicate the nature and topic of your project early in the term to the instructors.

Option A – Essay: Write an essay, 10 – 15 pages, in which you discuss some aspect of academic fiction or film. To assist you in finding a topic and developing your essay, a bibliography of literature on academic fiction and a (non-exhaustive) list of academic films is available on the course web site. Your essay should be focused around a key theme or question. (Correctly and consistently use a reference system—APA, Chicago, or MLA—in the paper.)

Examples of the type of essay you could write include:
- Examination of the portrayal of a certain academic discipline, administrative position, type of institution, or type of student in fiction/film
- Analysis of how a certain institution or institutional type is portrayed in fiction or film
- Comparison of academic novels or films in two different periods in history
- A critical review of the literature on criticism of academic fiction or film
- Comparison of an academic novel and its film counterpart—or, a comparison of academe in films vs. novels (focusing, perhaps, on students, professors or administrators, etc.)

Option B – Short Story: Write a short story that would be classified as academic fiction. Your story should follow the conventions of fiction and should center, in a significant way, around students or professors and a campus setting. You would likely need at least 15 – 20 pages to write a fully developed short story. Your story will be graded on how well it exemplifies the issues that a professors and/or students might face.

3. Class Participation: All students are expected to actively participate on a regular basis. Missing more than one class will affect your final grade. Class participation is worth 25%.
Class Schedule

Week 1 – Overview of Higher Education in Fiction and Film

June 2       Introductions, Course Overview, Introduction to Higher Education in Fiction and Film

Film: “Accepted” (2006)


Website with tools for analyzing films: http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/student/humanities/film.shtml

June 4       Short Stories, Why we Read Academic Fiction, Why we Write It

“Strawberry Spring” by Stephen King (short story)

“Professors” by Tom Whalen (short story)


Week 2 – Professors

June 9  Professors in Film

Film: “Wonder Boys” (2000)

*The Art of Watching Films*, Chapters 12 – Analysis of the Whole Film and Chapter 13 – Adaptations.

Variety review of Wonder Boys (on Blackboard)

Due: Title for Review

June 11  Professors in Fiction

*Changing Places* by David Lodge


Week 3 – Students

June 16  Students in Film


_The Art of Watching Films_, Chapter 4 – Visual Design start at, “The Script: The Starting Point” (page 96 in 6th edition and 97 in 7th edition) through “Setting and Its Effects” (page 104 in 6th ed or 105 in 7th ed), and Chapter 6 – Editing (if you read the 6th edition you can omit the special effects portion and in the 7th you can omit the Freeze frame section).

June 18  Students in Fiction

_ I’ll Take You There _ by Joyce Carol Oates


Week 4 – Historical Perspectives

June 23  Historical Perspective in Film


Due: Review

June 25  Historical Perspective in Fiction, Discussion of Reviews

_Stoner _ by John Williams

Week 5 – Conclusions on Higher Education in Fiction and Film

June 30  Conclusions, Presentation of Writing Projects

July 2  Final Projects Due via Blackboard