COURSE OBJECTIVE: This course will assume a problem-centered approach to the study of post-secondary education in today's society with a specific focus on the community college. While there is a body of literature concerning community colleges, there is very little theoretically-based social science research in this area. In the past, the fields of anthropology and sociology have focused almost exclusively on primary and secondary schools. Post-compulsory education has received less scrutiny; perhaps because academics may be adverse to “studying themselves.” Undaunted, we will make this our task: to critically investigate the role of post-secondary education in the context of today’s society (post-industrial, post-modern, late modern, post-capitalist, or whatever else you want to call it). We will try to expand our perspective of “higher education” by viewing post-compulsory education as a continuum of options including (with equal weight) university education, community colleges, continuing and adult education, workplace training, and unstructured forms of “life-long learning.”

COURSE STRUCTURE: We will begin the semester by reading and discussing Brown’s Degrees of Control (available at local bookstores). This is a sociological treatment of the history of American higher education as a credentialling system. Brown’s very thorough historical research and straightforward thesis provides a model for examining current trends. (This text also might be useful as an inquiry model for those of you interested in historical research). We will also spend some time reading and talking about basic sociological concepts useful to understanding post-secondary institutions in their social context. In addition, we’ll read a few articles on success, social change, and “post-modern” society (available on reserve in the library). During this portion of the class, we will also poke around our local region for case examples to inspire our group discussions. This will require some sleuthing on everyone’s part, but is not intended to be a monumental project—see next page.

In the second portion of the course, we will focus more intently on post-secondary education as a marketplace with consumers and producers. Because it houses a variety of post-secondary alternatives (further extending our continuum), we will take a look at Kevin Dougherty’s The Contradictory College as well as some more readings on reserve. The reading from this point on will become necessarily lighter as you each begin to explore your own research interests. We’ll also use our rubric question of the role of post-secondary education to examine a specific topic: rural economic development. Again, this will require some sleuthing on everyone’s part, but should yield a lively debate and some good questions—see next page.

Finally, we will use our own research to inspire discussion as we read and discuss rough drafts of each person’s research paper. While a little intimidating, this is a very useful way to share ideas and get help for the final “push” to a finished piece.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Talk a lot! Expand your perspectives of post-secondary education. Follow-up on your interests. Grades will be based on the following areas:

**Participation:** with such a small class and such a big topic, we'll have plenty to talk about. Participation requires preparation, however, so careful reading and thinking about class topics is important. Attendance, of course, is also significant.

**Inquiry projects:** these projects are intended to be short “sleuthing” assignments to provide information for our class discussions and to help you familiarize yourself with inquiry methods and materials for your research project.

**The Origins Project:** by looking at public domain documents (and any archival material easily accessed, each member of the class will prepare a brief overview of the origins of a local post-secondary institution. We’ll concentrate on institutions that changed roles and try to determine what credentialing function they served. The institution does not have to be currently operating (if it closed, try to find out why). Skill: archival research

**Annotated Bibliography:** As a group we’ll tackle the issue of rural economic development from as many angles as possible. Each member of the class will prepare a short annotated bibliography (@ three sources). We’ll collaborate on who looks where in order to avoid overlap and help each other learn about databases for primary and secondary source material. Skill: document research

**Research paper:** During the first part of the semester, think long and hard about what aspect of this topic you’d like to explore in more detail. The requirements of the paper are simple: an article length (20-25 pages) paper on the topic of your choice. Skim through some pertinent journals to get ideas about form and style. You might want to do a literature review, a historical case study, a “think piece,” or complete the preliminary phase of a larger project. A rough draft of your paper will be due before the end of the semester so that we may have a group discussion of each topic and each person can receive some useful feedback. This will be in lieu of the traditional “presentation”—a much more useful exercise, I believe.

**Course Schedule** (We’ll adjust as needed)

- **Jan. 25**
  Introductions and overview of course/ theory primer

- **Feb. 1**
  Brown, *Degrees of Control*, Bennett & LeCompte, “Theoretical and Historical Overview of the Purposes of Schooling”

- **Feb. 8**
  Brown, *Degrees of Control*, Excerpts from Paulo Freire on Higher Education, Bourdieu, Social Reproduction

- **Feb. 15**
  “Life in the Knowledge Society”, “Secrets of Success in Postmodern Society”

- **Feb. 22**
  March 1 Assignment #1: Origins Project

- **March 8**
  Dougherty, *The Contradictory College*

- **March 22**
  Dougherty, *The Contradictory College*

- **March 29**
  Dougherty, *The Contradictory College*

- **April 5**
  April 12 **DRAFTS DUE!**

- **April 19**
  Assignment #2: Annotated Bibliography

- **April 26**
  Writing Workshop: Discussion of Individual Projects

- **April 23**
  Writing Workshop: Discussion of Individual Projects

- **April 30**
  Final Discussion of Individual Projects/ Wrap Up